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## 6 Oil marketing companies invest Rs 290 cr to support 303 startups: Hardeep Puri

New Delhi: Six oil marketing companies (OMC) in India have invested Rs 290 crore from their Rs 550-crore startup fund — nurturing 303 startups so far — Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, said on Tuesday. The Union Minister said the country continues to stand as the world's third-largest startup ecosystem. "India's startup journey is not just about numbers. It is about dreams, determination, and a future shaped by innovation," said the minister in a post on X social media platform.

Hardeep Puri further stated that the country has over 1.5 lakh startups and 120 unicorns. "Contributing to this remarkable progress are the 6 Oil Marketing Companies under @PetroleumMin, which have created a Rs 550 crore startup fund. Already, Rs 290 crore has been invested to support 303 startups," the Union Minister informed. According to the minister,



this is real empowerment, real impact, and a real vision for the "future-enabled by the far-sighted leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi". The government, in the Union Budget 2025-26, made a substantial allocation towards developing deeptech and AI-enabled platforms through the Rs 10,000-crore Fund of Funds scheme.

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, while addressing the 'Startup Mahakumbh' event recently,

said that the government is committed to supporting startups as a facilitator, not as a regulator. Highlighting India's growing strength in innovation, Goyal expressed confidence in the country's potential in deep technology, artificial intelligence, and data analytics.

"This is the foundation on which I am confident India will foray in a big way into the world of innovation. We will make our presence felt on the global stage," Goyal said.

## India's gold demand crosses 800 tonnes in 2024

Mumbai, May 29 (GNS): India's gold demand surged past 800 tonnes in 2024, driven by a rise in jewellery consumption and increased investments in gold exchange traded funds (ETFs), according to a new report released on Tuesday. The report by Zerodha Fund House revealed that India was the world's largest consumer of gold jewellery in 2024, with total consumption reaching 563 tonnes. The value of this consumption was estimated at around Rs 3.6 lakh crore. Gold continues to hold a significant place in Indian culture, particularly during weddings and other auspicious

occasions, where its use is widespread. Apart from jewellery, Indians are also investing heavily in gold in the form of bars and coins. In 2024, the country purchased 239 tonnes of gold in bar and coin form, valued at approximately Rs 1.5 lakh crore. This marks a 60 per cent increase compared to 2023, making India the second-largest investor in gold bars and coins globally.

The report also highlighted that Indian investors are increasingly showing interest in gold ETFs. Over the past five years, gold ETF holdings in India have grown.

## India, Netherlands agree to strengthen economic ties



New Delhi, May 29 (GNS): India and the Netherlands have agreed to strengthen bilateral trade and economic cooperation at high-level meetings held by Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal during his visit to the European nation, according to an official statement issued on Tuesday. The Commerce Secretary's visit from April 24-26 underlined India's commitment to strengthening its economic engagement with the Netherlands, a key European partner. The discussions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economic Affairs laid the groundwork for enhanced collaboration. The CEOs Roundtable fostered new business connections, with Dutch companies expressing keen interest in India's growing market and investment opportunities, the statement said. The engagements at the Port of Rotterdam and ASML opened new avenues for cooperation in maritime infrastructure and semiconductors, aligning with India's economic priorities. Barthwal commenced his visit with a productive discussion with Michiel Smeets, Director General for Foreign Economic Relations, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in The Hague. The discussions focused on strengthening bilateral trade and economic ties, inter alia,

through the setting up of the Joint Trade and Investment Committee (JTIC) mechanism. Further, the meeting covered diverse issues of bilateral trade and economic relationship, advancing strategic economic cooperation, fostering policy alignment, and addressing trade barriers to facilitate smoother market access for Indian and Dutch businesses. A highlight of the visit was the CEOs Round-table Conference organised by the Embassy of India. Attended by approximately 40 representatives from leading Dutch and Indian companies, as well as business chambers and trade organisations, the round table facilitated discussions on trade opportunities, challenges and actionable solutions. The Roundtable also featured the showcasing of One District One Product (ODOP) handicrafts by the Embassy, celebrating India's rich artisanal heritage.

Barthwal visited the Port of Rotterdam, Europe's largest and one of the world's most advanced ports. Received by Boudewijn Siemons, CEO of the Port of Rotterdam Authority, at the World Port Centre. The Commerce Secretary held in-depth discussions on enhancing cooperation between the Indian ports and Rotterdam.

The talks explored opportunities for knowledge

sharing, technology transfer, and sustainable port management practices. A tour of the port facilities, including the fully automated APM Terminals at Maasvlakte II, provided insights into Rotterdam's state-of-the-art infrastructure and operational efficiencies. He highlighted the potential for collaboration in modernising Indian ports, aligning with India's Maritime Vision 2030, which aims to enhance port capacity and logistics efficiency.

The visit laid the groundwork for setting up a Green and Digital Corridor between the Port of Rotterdam and Indian ports like the Deendayal Port Authority Kandla, and export of Green Hydrogen and carriers like Ammonia and Methanol from India to Europe, with the Port of Rotterdam acting as a gateway to Europe. Later, Barthwal travelled to Veldhoven to visit the headquarters of ASML, a global leader in photolithography systems for the semiconductor industry. In a productive meeting with ASML CEO Christophe Fouquet, the Commerce Secretary discussed deepening India-Netherlands cooperation in the semiconductor sector. The discussions focused on leveraging ASML's expertise to support India's ambitions to become a global semiconductor manufacturing hub, as outlined in the India Semiconductor Mission.

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sharing, technology transfer, and sustainable port management practices. A tour of the port facilities, including the fully automated APM Terminals at Maasvlakte II, provided insights into Rotterdam's state-of-the-art infrastructure and operational efficiencies. He highlighted the potential for collaboration in modernising Indian ports, aligning with India's Maritime Vision 2030, which aims to enhance port capacity and logistics efficiency.

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## Contribution of Directorate of Enforcement will be extremely important in an economically secure India: Pankaj Chaudhary



New Delhi, May 29 (GNS): Union Minister of State for Finance Shri Pankaj Chaudhary presided over the 69th Foundation Day of Directorate of Enforcement (ED) in New Delhi, today. Also present on the dais were Shri S.V. Raju, Additional Solicitor General; Shri Rahul Navin, Director, ED; Shri Subhash Aggarwal and Shri Prashant Kumar, Special Directors, ED; and Shri Naval Kishore Ram, Joint Secretary, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance. The 69th Foundation Day celebrations were also attended by ex-Directors of ED; heads of various investigative agencies; international delegates from various organisations; all India officers of JD and above level; senior officials of Government of India; and also from Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.

In his address on the occasion, Shri Chaudhary said, "The vision of our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi is that no economic offender should be able to deprive the common and poor citizens of their rights, and prevention is essential for this as well as ensuring that the offender receives appropriate punishment. The role of the Enforcement Directorate is extremely important in both areas." Chaudhary also stated that as India is marching towards achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the nature of the economy and economic activities will also change, and complexities will also increase, which might result in evolution of the nature of economic crimes. The Minister emphasised on the critical role the Enforcement Directorate will play in the future.

"The vision of a developed India inherently includes the vision of a secure India. The contribution of the Enforcement Directorate will be extremely important in an economically secure India," the Minister added. In his address on the occasion, Shri Navin emphasised on the significant step-up in enforcement activity from 2014 to 2024, with 5,113 new PMLA investigations were initiated averaging more than 500 cases per year. Building on this momentum, Shri Navin noted that in the Financial Year 2024-25, 775 new PMLA investigations were launched, 333 Prosecution Complaints were filed, leading to 34 individual convictions.

During this period, Shri Navin said that ED has issued 461 provisional attachment orders valued at Rs. 30,036 crore – a 44% increase in the number of attachments

## BSF search operation on after suspected infiltration in J&K's Jammu district

Jammu, July 29 (GNS) Border Security Force (BSF) troopers on Thursday continued a search operation along the international border (IB) after suspected infiltration in the R.S. Pura sector of Jammu district.

BSF officials said the operation began late on Wednesday night and continued through the early hours of Thursday.

Troopers carried out coordinated searches in the forward villages, agricultural fields, and dense vegetation near the border fence. "An infiltration alert was also issued across the R.S. Pura and Arnia sectors, prompting night patrolling and intensified surveillance measures. Additional personnel, dog squads and thermal imaging equipment to monitor any move-



ment across the border," a BSF official said.

Drone surveillance was also pressed into service to aid ground troops in scanning difficult terrain. The heightened activity comes

amid ongoing concerns over attempts by terrorists to exploit vulnerable stretches of the border to infiltrate ahead of upcoming national events and festivals. Villagers resid-

ing near the zero line have been advised to remain vigilant and report any suspicious movement to the nearest security post.

According to the BSF official, though no contact or

exchange of fire was reported during the search, the alert would continue for the coming days. "All border outposts have been put on maximum alert and coordination with other intelligence and security agencies has been strengthened to ensure a robust multi-tiered defence mechanism," an official said.

After the April 22 Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist attack backed by Pakistan in Baisaran meadow of Pahalgam in which 26 civilians were killed, J&K Police and the security forces have been aggressively carrying out anti-terrorist operations targeting terrorists, their overground workers (OGWs), and sympathisers in order to dismantle the complete ecosystem of terror in J&K.

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# 32% Rajya Sabha MPs face criminal cases, 31 billionaires: ADR

New Delhi, May 29 (GNS) Around 32 percent of sitting Rajya Sabha Members of Parliament have declared criminal cases against themselves, according to a report released by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). The report also states that about 14 per cent of the MPs analysed are billionaires, highlighting significant variations in the financial backgrounds of members of the Upper House. The analysis was based on affidavits of 229 out of the 233 sitting Rajya Sabha MPs. One seat from Jharkhand is currently vacant, while affidavits of three MPs were unavailable for analysis.

The report also includes details of 37 recently elected



Rajya Sabha members. Out of the 229 MPs analysed, 73 MPs, accounting for 32 per cent, have declared criminal cases against themselves. Among these, 36 MPs, or about 16 per cent, have disclosed serious criminal cases. The report noted that one MP has declared a case

related to murder. Four MPs have declared cases of attempted murder.

Three MPs have reported cases related to crimes against women. The report also examined the party-wise distribution of MPs with criminal cases. Among BJP MPs, 27 out of 99 mem-

bers have declared criminal cases. In the Congress, 12 out of 28 MPs have reported criminal cases. Among other parties, four of the 13 MPs from the Trinamool Congress and four of the 10 MPs from the Aam Aadmi Party have declared criminal cases. Three MPs each from

the CPI(M) and the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) have also disclosed criminal cases. The ADR report further highlighted the wealth profile of Rajya Sabha members.

According to the analysis, 31 MPs, representing about 14 per cent, have declared assets worth billions of rupees. Several MPs across parties have reported assets exceeding Rs 100 crore. These include six MPs from the BJP, five from the Congress, four from the YSR Congress Party, two from the Aam Aadmi Party, two from the BRS, and three from the Nationalist Congress Party. The report also stated that the average assets of a Rajya Sabha MP stand at approximately Rs 120.69 crore.

Among major parties, the

average assets per MP vary significantly, with BJP MPs averaging Rs 28.29 crore and Congress MPs Rs 128.61 crore. The average assets for MPs from the Trinamool Congress stand at Rs 17.70 crore, while those from the Aam Aadmi Party average Rs 574.09 crore.

Other parties include the YSR Congress Party with average assets of Rs 522.63 crore, the Samajwadi Party with Rs 399.71 crore, the Biju Janata Dal with Rs 105.63 crore, and the DMK with Rs 11.90 crore. Among individual MPs, BRS member Bandi Partha Saradhi has declared the highest assets at more than Rs 5,300 crore. He is followed by AAP MP Rajinder Gupta with assets exceeding Rs 5,053 crore.

# Congress opposes VBSA bill, flags centralisation



New Delhi, May 29 (GNS) The Congress on Thursday launched an attack on the Centre over a "shockingly high" number of vacancies in the country's top higher education regulatory bodies, while simultaneously rejecting the proposed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill, 2025.

Citing the latest report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh, in a statement, warned that the administrative paralysis in the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is being used as a pretext for an "excessively centralised" legislative overhaul.

Ramesh outlined several concerns with the Bill in its present form. He said the ministry had not consulted state governments during its drafting, despite education being in the Concurrent List of the Constitution and the Bill having a direct bearing on State universities. Referring to the constitutional framework, the Congress leader said the Bill has been in-

troduced under Entry 66 of the Union List.

"However, Entry 66 of the Union List gives limited and specific legislative powers to Parliament, that is, only for 'co-ordination and termination of standards in institutions for higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions," he said. The Rajya Sabha MP argued that the proposed legislation goes beyond this scope and encroaches upon the powers of State governments. Citing constitutional provisions, he added that Entry 44 of the Union List restricts Parliament from legislating on the incorporation, regulation, and winding up of universities, while Entry 32 of the State List vests such powers with State legislatures. "The Bill is therefore violative of the federal structure of the Constitution," he said.

Ramesh also pointed to a divergence from the framework envisaged under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. He said the policy had proposed a Higher Education Council of India with four verticals, including a separate body for grant allocation.

# BJP fields RSS loyalist in Tripura bypoll



Agartala, May 29 (GNS) The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday announced its candidates for the April 9 by-elections to two Assembly constituencies in the Northeastern states of Tripura and Nagaland.

According to a notification issued by election authorities in both states, the filing of nominations began on March 16, while the last date for submission is March 23. The scrutiny of nominations will take place on March 24, and the final date for withdrawal of candidatures is March 26. Results will be declared on May 4.

As per a press statement issued by BJP General Secretary Arun Singh, Jahar Chakraborti will contest from the Dharmanagar Assembly constituency in North Tripura district, while Daochier I. Imchen will make his electoral debut from the Koridang Assembly constituency in Mokochung district of Nagaland.

Singh stated that the BJP's Central Election Committee, in a meeting chaired by party President Nitin Nabin on Wednesday, finalised candidates

for by-elections in four states -- Tripura, Nagaland, Goa and Karnataka. The meeting, held at the party headquarters in New Delhi, was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, and other members of the election committee.

In Tripura, 59-year-old Jahar Chakraborti, the BJP's North Tripura district Vice President, will contest from Dharmanagar Assembly constituency for the second time. In 2013, Chakraborti, known as a staunch Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) activist, contested from the same seat but lost to then Congress candidate Biswa Bandhu Sen.

Chakraborti's wife, Barnali Goswami, previously served as Chairperson of the Tripura State Commission for Women. He will now face CPI (M)-led Left Front candidate and former MLA Amitabha Datta. The bypoll in Dharmanagar Assembly constituency became necessary following the death of Biswa Bandhu Sen, who was serving as Speaker of the Tripura Assembly.

# Varanasi iftar boat arrests spark political row in UP

Lucknow, May 29 (GNS) A political controversy has emerged following the arrest of 14 Muslim youths accused of organising an iftar gathering on a boat in the Ganga River in Varanasi.

Uttar Pradesh Minister Om Prakash Rajbhar on Thursday criticised Akhilesh Yadav, calling his remarks on the issue "incorrect" and politically driven. He maintained that the government is taking appropriate action. The controversy intensified after Yadav questioned the arrests and the administration's response.

Speaking at an iftar event in Lucknow, he remarked that officials such as the District Magistrate (DM), Superintendent of Police (SP), and Station House Of-



ficer (SHO) could also have been invited to the gathering. He further questioned whether breaking one's fast on the Ganga should be considered an offence, behaviour alleging that such actions may deepen communal divisions.

Yadav also suggested that police behaviour can sometimes be influenced by informal inducements. Responding to these com-

plaints, Rajbhar defended the government's stance, saying there is no religious basis for holding iftar gatherings on boats in the Ganga. He described the act as inappropriate and dismissed Yadav's remarks as politically motivated.

Meanwhile, Imran Masood also weighed in, raising concerns about environmental issues and enforcement priorities. He questioned why authorities do not take similar action against pollution in the Ganga, such as sewage discharge and waste from cruises. He also remarked that a more appropriate location could have been chosen for the iftar.

The issue came to light after a video circulated on social media showing a group allegedly hosting an iftar party on a boat in the middle of the river. The footage, widely shared online, appears to show people consuming food, including non-vegetarian dishes, during sunset. Critics claim the act disrespected the sanctity of the Ganga, which is considered sacred by millions and is central to various religious practices in Varanasi.

# Maharashtra model key to global water push: World Bank

Washington, May 29 (GNS) India's water governance reforms, particularly in Maharashtra, could play a pivotal role in shaping how the world feeds 10 billion people sustainably, the World Bank said on Thursday, highlighting the state's regulatory model as a global example. In a new report, the World Bank added that smarter management of water in agriculture is essential to meeting future food demand while generating millions of jobs, and that India's policy innovations offer lessons for water-stressed regions.

"The way we manage water for food will have profound implications for



jobs, livelihoods, and economic growth," Paschal Donohoe, Managing Director and Chief Knowledge Officer of the World Bank, said. "By making smarter choices about where crops are grown, how water is allocated, and how trade supports food security, we can strengthen resilience, expand opportunity, and safe-

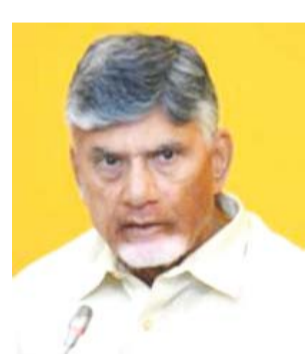
guard the resources which we all rely on." The report, Nourish and Flourish: Water Solutions to Feed 10 Billion People on a Livable Planet, flags growing imbalances in global water use, with regions like South Asia facing overextraction even as other parts of the world underutilise available resources.

# Financial, social security to all is our objective: Andhra CM

Vijayawada, May 29 (GNS) Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said on Thursday that the objective of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP)-led coalition government is to provide financial, social, and health security to every single individual in the state.

Addressing Ugadi celebrations here, the Chief Minister added that the state government over the last 21 months launched several schemes to achieve the objective.

Listing out the welfare schemes, Chief Minister Naidu said that through the 'Talli ki Vandanam' scheme, the state government is providing financial assistance to mothers, regardless



of the number of children they have. Under 'Annadata Sukhibhava,' the state government is providing annual financial assistance of Rs 20,000 each to farmers. Through 'Stree Shakti,' the Andhra Pradesh government introduced free regional transport corporation bus travel for women. As of now, women have undertaken 56

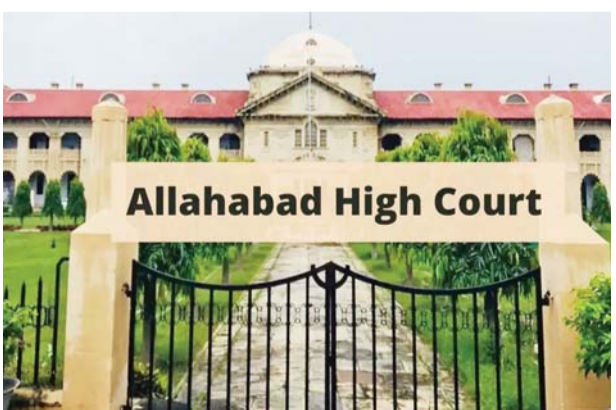
crore journeys. Under 'Divyang Shakti' initiative, the state government is providing free bus travel facility for persons with disabilities.

"We are paying a monthly honorarium of Rs 15,000 to temple priests (Archakas), and we are also providing honorariums to Imams and Muezzins. We are working with the objective of ensuring that everyone in society lives happily." The Chief Minister also spoke about the 'P4' programme, saying it is aimed at elevating the living standards of the poor. "We launched this programme to enable the wealthiest 10 per cent of society to support and uplift the bottom 20 per cent," he said.

# Allahabad HC orders UP govt to pay Rs 50,000 compensation for unlawful detention

Prayagraj, May 29 (GNS) The Allahabad High Court has granted bail to an accused in a vehicle theft case while directing the Uttar Pradesh government to pay Rs 50,000 as compensation for his prolonged incarceration caused by incorrect criminal history submitted by the police.

Allowing the bail application filed by Furkan, who was booked in a case registered at Quarsi police station in Aligarh district under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), a single-judge Bench of Justice Arun Kumar Singh Deshwal noted that the applicant had remained in jail for an additional 15 days due to an



error on the part of the investigating officer, who had incorrectly reported that the accused faced 12 criminal cases instead of five.

"It is not in dispute that the applicant has remained in jail for additional 15 days for the reason that incorrect criminal history of 12

cases has been sent by the concerned I.O., though the applicant has already explained the criminal history of five cases," Justice Deshwal recorded. The Allahabad High Court, therefore, directed that "compensation of Rs 50,000 shall be paid by the state to the appli-

cant within a period of one month from today". At the same time, Justice Deshwal clarified that there was no mala fide intent on the part of the Investigating Officer and attributed the error to negligence. "From the perusal of record, it is also clear that there was no malafide on the part of the I.O. but there was a mistake because of his negligence that may be due to the workload on him," the order observed.

The bail application had earlier been heard on February 23, when an objection was raised by the prosecution that the applicant had disclosed only five cases, while the case diary reflected 12 FIRs.

# Jharkhand HC raps police over missing girl probe; considers CBI investigation

Ranchi, May 29 (GNS) The Jharkhand High Court on Thursday slammed state police over the handling of a case involving a missing 18-year-old girl from Bokaro, raising concerns over delays and lack of progress in the investigation.

Hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by the woman's mother, a Division Bench led by Justice Sujit Narayan Prasad questioned the Bokaro Superintendent of Police (SP) on why the case should not be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The Court observed that negligence in such sensitive cases cannot be tolerated and expressed dis-



satisfaction with the pace and direction of the probe. It noted the absence of tangible progress despite several months have already passed.

Counsel for the petitioner, Vincent Rohit Marqui, informed the Bench that the girl has been missing

since July 31, 2025. An FIR (Case No. 147/2025) was registered at Pindrajora Police Station in Bokaro in connection with the disappearance. During the investigation, the family reportedly received a phone call on December 11, 2025, indicating that the girl was in Pune. Police subsequently detained the caller, who claimed during interrogation that the girl was staying with an acquaintance in the city. However, in a serious lapse, the detained man managed to escape while being escorted by police to Pune by train, derailing a key lead in the case. Appearing virtually, the Bokaro SP told the court that multiple raids have been conducted in Pune and nearby areas to trace the missing girl. Police have also detained another suspect and are preparing to conduct a narco-analysis test in an attempt to gather further leads.

## Develop Crop Varieties Suited to Weather Conditions: Chouhan

New Delhi, May 29 (GNS) There is a need for proper coordination of improved seeds, organic fertilizers, weather-adaptive methods, modern technology, smart irrigation, and market linkages to sustain farmers. This was stated by Union Agriculture, Farmers' Welfare, and Rural Development Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan during a review meeting of agricultural and rural development schemes in Maharashtra, held today in Nagpur. The review meeting was organized at the auditorium of the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS & LUP) on Amravati Road, with the prominent presence of Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Chief Minister Shri Devendra Fadnavis.

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan directed the agriculture department to develop crop varieties suited to the weather conditions of different regions across the country. He also instructed to make special arrangements to provide each farmer with a Farmer ID and ensure that, in the future, benefits of agricultural schemes are not extended to farmers without an ID.

Chouhan further stated that Maharashtra will receive full support from the Center for various schemes and initiatives in the coming times. He emphasized the need to develop more cotton varieties, especially in the state, suited to climate change and rainfall patterns. There is also a need to develop high-yielding varieties for low-rainfall areas. He directed the development of a 'Best Cropping Model' for the state during the meeting.

Present at the occasion were State Agriculture Minister Shri Manikrao Kokate, Rural Development Minister Shri Jaykumar Gore, Minister of State for Finance Adv. Ashish Jaiswal, Principal Secretary of Agriculture Vikas Rastogi, Principal Secretary of Rural Development Eknath Dawale, and senior officials from the central



and state governments.

Principal Secretary of Agriculture Vikas Rastogi provided information through a presentation on Maharashtra's weather, rainfall, agricultural challenges, Kharif season 2025, availability of fertilizers and seeds, Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan, AgriStack campaign, and plans for the next year. Appreciation for Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis During the meeting, Union Minister Shri Chouhan praised Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis for various innovative initiatives under the state's agriculture and rural development departments. He specifically commended the Chief Minister for initiatives under the Prime Minister Awas Yojana (Rural) and sandbank projects.

During the presentation, information was shared about innovative initiatives undertaken by farmers from various parts of the state. Union Minister Chouhan called for spreading the success stories of farmers like Raosaheb Mohite from Tapargaon in Sambhajnagar district, Eknath Talekar from Rui (Dhanora) in Beed district engaged in sericulture, and Vandana Rathod from Jawla in Yavatmal district involved in orchid farming,

across the country through various platforms.

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis reviewed various centrally sponsored schemes under the Rural Development Department. Principal Secretary of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Eknath Dawale provided details on initiatives under the Prime Minister Awas Yojana, PM Janman Yojana, Prime Minister Gram Sadak Yojana, and self-help group programs. The review of MGNREGA was also conducted, with Union Minister Chouhan appreciating the achievement of MGNREGA targets.

Target of One Crore Lakhpati Didi's - Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis informed during the meeting that the Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana, providing 1500 to women, has offered them significant support. Women have utilized this amount to start various businesses and meet essential expenses. Additionally, the Lakhpati Didi scheme is being implemented to make women financially self-reliant. The state aims to create one crore Lakhpati Didi's in the coming times, he added.

## Foundation Laid for 42.4 Cr Integrated Aquapark in Tripura; State to Be Developed as Organic Fish Cluster: Union Minister

Agartala, May 29 (GNS) Foundation Stone was laid for an Integrated Aquapark under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), worth 42.4 crores in Kailashahar, Tripura by Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Panchayati Raj in an event held in Agartala, Tripura today. In addition, the event featured an exhibition and inauguration of the Fish Festival highlighting the rich culture and diverse fishes of the state. The event was also graced by Shri George Kurian, Minister of State, MoFAH&D and Ministry of Minority Affairs along with Shri Sudhangshu Das, Minister of Fisheries, Govt. of Tripura and Shri Tinku Roy, Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, Govt. of Tripura.

In his address, Union Minister, Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh shed light on the vital role, the sector plays in boosting India's economy, noting that the fisheries sector has exhibited growth at 9.08% since



2014-15, highest amongst Agri and Allied sectors, in India. Recognising the vast potential that Tripura has in the fisheries sector, he stressed upon the need to bridge the gap between demand and supply through use of modern technology, integrated farming and innovation. Shri Rajiv Ranjan highlighted that out of 11 Integrated Aquaparks in the country, 4 are being set up in the North-

east region, including one in Tripura. The Union Minister urged the stakeholders to work diligently towards transforming Tripura into a "fish surplus state" capable of exporting fish, and to strive for a production target of 2 lakh tonnes, significantly exceeding the state's requirement of 1.5 lakh tonnes. He stated that soon Tripura would also be developed into an Organic Fish Cluster like Sikkim. While

laying emphasis on the need to complete the Integrated Aquapark in a time bound manner, the Union Minister emphasized upon the importance of imparting institutional training to fish farmers. Encouraging fishers to utilize government schemes like Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF) and PMMSY, he reiterated the central government's commitment towards

supporting training and capacity building through NFDB. Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh also addressed issues like need to boost scampi production, develop ornamental fisheries, improve infrastructure, ensure easier market access and promote innovation and sustainability in the sector. On this occasion, the Union Minister distributed certificates and sanction orders to various beneficiaries.

George Kurian, Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying and Ministry of Minority Affairs, emphasized the need to enhance fish productivity in Tripura, noting that nearly 98% of the state's population consumes fish. He acknowledged the significant role fisheries plays in the state's food security and economy.

Sudhangshu Das, Minister of Fisheries, ARDD and SC Welfare, Government of Tripura, emphasized the state's commitment to uplifting fishers and fish farmers through targeted interventions.

## Tier 2 & 3 Towns Power India's Startup Surge: Agri Innovation and Deep-Tech Lead the Way

NEW DELHI, May 29 (GNS) Union minister for Science & Technology has hailed the IIT Ropar, which is relatively new compared to other IITs having been established only in 2008, for promoting Agri StartUps in smaller towns and expressed satisfaction at the fact that nearly 50% of India's StartUps are now from Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns. Addressing the Pragati Founder Forum, hosted by IIT Ropar and supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Dr Jitendra Singh observed that India's StartUp revolution is no longer confined to metro cities.

In a compelling and forward-looking address, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Earth Sciences, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, and



Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh debunked the myth that only IT ventures can be StartUps and hailed IIT Ropar for promoting high-potential Agri-StartUps through transformation of traditional sectors. "This shift is a healthy sign of deep-rooted innovation," he said, crediting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for democratizing entrepreneurship across India through

the clarion call "StandUp India, StartUp India" from the ramparts of Red Fort

Dr. Jitendra Singh underlined the role of StartUps as "enablers" propelling India from the 'Fragile Five' to a future among the world's top five economies by 2047. Highlighting India's meteoric rise from 81st to 39th in the Global Innovation Index, he pointed to the role of S&T startups, Agri-innovation, and deep tech

in contributing to India's economic growth. The S&T minister also emphasized that 70% of resource allocation under the upcoming Anusandhan NRF (National Research Foundation) will come from non-government sectors, boosting public-private synergy. Dr. Jitendra Singh showcased the Purple Revolution as a hallmark of grassroots innovation — lavender cultivation that began in hilly towns

of Jammu & Kashmir, now flourishing in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, with over 3,000+ startups profiting in this niche. "30% of these entrepreneurs are not even graduates," the Minister noted, highlighting how government technical and financial support — coupled with market linkages to perfumeries in Mumbai — is transforming rural India into an enterprise hub.

## Sarbananda Sonowal unveils 'Sagar Mein Samman' to boost women participation in Maritime Sector

New Delhi, May 29 (GNS) Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), Shri Sarbananda Sonowal unveiled the 'Sagar Mein Samman' (SMS), a policy initiative of the Government of India to create a future ready gender equitable maritime workforce with the ultimate aim to increase participation of women in the maritime sector. The initiative was launched at the inaugural International Day for Women in Maritime celebrations in Mumbai today, with a clear message of inclusivity, transformation and sustainability of the maritime sector.

The SMS policy aims to build a future where women's participation is integral to all maritime operations; i.e., from the docks to decision making boards. In order to bridge the gender gap in both seafaring and shore based roles, this policy provides a structured road map for enhanced participation by women while addressing



safety, leadership and retention of women in the Indian maritime sector. This programme is also aligned with Government's DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) objective. Major scope of the policy would entail planning & strategy, training & development, research & development, governance & compliance, communications, and community outreach. It aims to secure objectives like empowerment & leadership, inclusivity & equal opportunity, safety &

well-being, and skill development & training for women in maritime sector.

As the Chief Guest at the event, Union Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal underscored the importance of empowering women to drive growth and resilience across the maritime ecosystem. Sonowal also interacted with a group of almost 100 women seafarers at the event.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said, "This day is es-

sential to celebrate women through their recruitment, retention, and sustained employment in the maritime sector. This year IMO is celebrating on a theme that 'An Ocean of Opportunities for Women,' which aligns with the 2025 World Maritime Day theme: Our Ocean, Our Obligation, Our Opportunity. We must introspect and work towards raising the profile of women in maritime and strengthening their presence. The development of women

in various fields is also a top priority for our Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi ji. The Maritime India Vision 2030 document envisages the launch of the 'Women in Seafarer' program, which includes encouraging onshore jobs, awareness and marketing campaigns, incentivising shipping companies, and leveraging scholarships to improve women's participation. We have made significant efforts to bring this vision to reality."

## Markets end higher due to selective buying supports

Mumbai, May 29 (GNS) Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended higher in a volatile trade on Wednesday due to selective buying support amid easing inflation and positive global cues. Besides, heavy rush on metal and industrial counters and unabated foreign capital inflows supported the positive trend in the equity markets, traders said.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 182.34 points or 0.22 per cent to settle at 81,330.56. The gauge hit a high of 81,691.87 and a low of 80,910.03. As many as 2,857 stocks advanced while 1,121 declined and 147 remained unchanged on the BSE. The NSE Nifty rose 88.55 points or 0.36 per cent to 24,666.90.

"Markets were choppy in intra-day trade but managed to end in the green on selective buying support as investors don't want to rush into equities after Monday's strong optimism. While for-

equity fund flows in the domestic market will be critical going ahead, investors are worried that the US-China settling tariff disputes could revive foreign investors' interest in Chinese markets again," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Tata Steel emerged as the biggest winner in the Sensex pack, rising 3.88 per cent, followed by Eternal, Tech Mahindra, Maruti, Mahindra and Mahindra, Infosys, IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services and Bharti Airtel were the major gainers. Telecom operator Bharti Airtel climbed nearly 1 per cent after it posted about a five-fold jump in consolidated net profit to `11,022 crore in the March 2025 quarter, mainly due to the tariff hike impact and one-time gain on tax benefits.

However, Asian Paints, Tata Motors, Kotak Mahindra Bank, NTPC and Power Grid were among the laggards.

Tata Motors dipped over one per cent after the firm reported a 51 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to `8,556 crore for the March quarter, hit by lower volumes and operating leverage.

"The session began on a positive note, supported by encouraging factors, such as easing retail inflation and stable global cues. However, the absence of sustained buying interest and a mixed performance among heavy-weight stocks limited further gains as the day progressed," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.63 per cent and the midcap index climbed 1.19 per cent. Among sectoral indices, metal surged 2.46 per cent, industrials (1.73 per cent), realty (1.71 per cent), commodities (1.49 per cent), oil and gas (1.46 per cent), BSE Focused IT (1.38 per cent) and IT (1.37 per cent).

Bankex emerged as the only laggard.

# Yadav emphasizes India's Regulatory Framework and Global Leadership on Plastic Pollution

New Delhi, May 29 (GNS) An Inter-Ministerial delegation from India, led by the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav, is participating in the Conference of the Parties (COPs) to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions, taking place in Geneva from 30th April to 1st May, 2025. The theme of this year's high-level segment is "Make visible the invisible: Sound management of chemicals and wastes."

At the ministerial roundtable on 'Means of Implementation', Shri Yadav highlighted that the effective execution of the BRS Conventions relies significantly on access to finance, technology transfer, capacity-building, technical assistance, and strengthened international cooperation. He outlined India's integrated approach to implementing the conventions through national legislation such as the Environment (Protection) Act, the Hazardous



and Other Wastes (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules, and the E-Waste Management Rules, 2016, which are supported by sustained investments in institutional and technical infrastructure.

On the sidelines of the COPs, the Union Minister Shri Yadav participated in a consultation meeting organized by Norway on the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on

Plastic Pollution. He apprised participants of India's domestic initiatives such as the ban on identified single-use plastic items and the implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for plastic packaging. Yadav further underlined India's pioneering role in international environmental governance under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, highlighting that India introduced a resolution on single

use plastics at UNEA-4, bringing the issue to the center of global discourse. During the bilateral meeting with Ms. Katrin Schneeberger, Director of the Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland, Shri Yadav discussed matters related to the development of a legally binding international instrument on plastic pollution, and India's support for the establishment of a Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals and Waste, as mandated

by UNEA resolutions. The High-Level Segment of the BRS COPs features ministerial roundtables and interactive dialogues focused on collaborative global action. India remains steadfast in its commitment to multilateral environmental cooperation and will continue to advocate for the interests of developing countries while ensuring equitable, science-based, and sustainable solutions for the planet.

# Piyush Goyal Explores India-UK Business Opportunities

London, May 29 (GNS) Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, currently on a key five-day visit to London, Oslo, and Brussels, engaged in a series of high-profile meetings with top business leaders and industry stakeholders, reinforcing India's commitment to expanding global trade partnerships.

During his London leg, Goyal interacted with members of the Indian business delegation over a dinner meet, exchanging ideas on the robust growth of Indian industries and exploring avenues for greater collaboration with the United Kingdom. Sharing his reflections on social media platform X, Goyal said, "Discussed the robust growth of our industry and avenues for greater collaboration with the UK for mutual prosperity."

The Minister held a significant dialogue with Al Cook, CEO of De Beers Group, discussing global trends shaping the gems and jewellery sector. Goyal emphasized India's emerging opportunities, sustainable business practices, and promising growth prospects in the diamond industry. Further broadening his engagements, Goyal met Martin Gilbert, Chairperson of Revolut, a leading global fintech company. Their discussions centred around India's rapidly growing fintech ecosystem



and the critical role of global partnerships in driving innovation and expansion.

Earlier in the day, Goyal held a productive meeting with UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Kemi Badenoch, to advance the long-awaited Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations.

The discussions aimed to give a final push to the deal as talks have entered their crucial phase. Sharing his enthusiasm, Goyal posted, "Arrived in London for two days of engaging discussions aimed at strengthening bilateral trade and investment relations. In my first engagement, held a productive meeting with the UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade to

advance Free Trade Agreement negotiations, reinforcing our commitment to deepening India-UK economic ties."

The Minister's visit to London comes at a pivotal time as India and the UK work towards finalising the FTA, comprising 26 chapters covering trade in goods, services, investments, and intellectual property rights. Both nations are keen to accelerate the deal amid global trade uncertainties, including potential tariff hikes by the United States. Goyal's packed itinerary highlights India's proactive push to position itself as a trusted global partner in trade and investment, strengthening economic bridges with key international allies.

# Brainstorming Session on Pumped Storage Projects to Power India's Renewable Future organized at SCOPE Complex

New Delhi, May 29 (GNS) A high-level Brainstorming Session on "Pumped Storage Projects: Powering India's Renewable Future" was successfully organized today at the SCOPE Convention Centre, New Delhi, by THDC India Ltd. and Central Electricity Authority (CEA) in association with NTPC, with the support of CBIP & INCOLD.

The session witnessed the participation of over 300 distinguished delegates including top government officials, policymakers, developers, environmental experts, regulators, and senior representatives from the public and private sectors from near about 95 organisations and institutions from all around the country. The day-long event focused on the growing role of Pumped Storage Projects (PSPs) in



supporting India's renewable energy transition and achieving the national target of net zero emissions by 2070. The event was graced by Sh. Pankaj Agarwal (IAS), Secretary, Ministry of Power, GoI, as the Chief Guest, along with Sh. Akash Tripathi (IAS), Additional Secretary (Hydro), Ministry of Power, GoI, as the Guest of Honour. Shri M.G. Gokhale, Member (Hydro), CEA; Shri Gurdeep

Singh, CMD, NTPC; Shri R.K. Vishnoi, CMD, THDCIL; Shri Mohammad Afzal, Joint Secretary (Hydro), MoP; Shri Bhupender Gupta, Director (Technical), THDCIL, Sh. A. K. Dhinkar, Secretary, CBIP along with other senior officers of Power Sector in India were among the dignitaries present at the ceremony.

The event featured four focused panel discussions that covered critical themes,

including the "Policy, Planning, and Regulatory Framework for Pumped Storage Projects (PSPs)", "Geological, Civil, and Material Considerations in PSP Development", "Environmental and Forest Clearance Framework-Challenges & Streamlining", and "Implementation Challenges & Way Forward for PSPs in India". These discussions provided valuable insights into the complexities and

opportunities within each area, fostering a productive dialogue among policymakers, developers, technical experts, and environmental professionals.

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