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TG safe investment destination

Govt will protect investors: Revanth Reddy to CII



Hyderabad, July 31 (GNS) Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Friday invited industry leaders to invest in the state, assuring them that Telangana is a safe investment destination and that the government would provide all necessary support and protection to investors.

Addressing representatives of the CII Northern Regional Council at the MCRHRD Bodhi Pavilion, the Chief Minister said Telangana is implementing progressive policies while continuing good initiatives of previous governments, ensuring there is no "policy paralysis." He said the state's goal is to increase its contribution to the national economy from the present 5 per cent to 10 per cent by 2047 and transform Telangana into a one-trillion-dollar economy by 2037.

Outlining the state's growth strategy, Revanth Reddy said the region within Hyderabad's Outer Ring Road (CORE) would focus on the services sector, the area between the Outer Ring Road and the proposed 360-km Regional Ring Road (PURE) would be developed as a manufacturing hub, while the region beyond the RRR (RARE) would prioritise agriculture and allied sectors.

He said the government would provide land, infrastructure, radial roads and connectivity to Machilipatnam Port through a proposed 12-lane highway to attract industries.

The Chief Minister said Telangana is positioning itself to benefit from the global "China Plus One" strategy and highlighted

Oppn MPs stage street play-like protest in Parliament over Ram Temple donation theft

New Delhi, July 31 (GNS) Opposition MPs, including Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, and Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Purnia MP Pappu Yadav, on Friday staged a unique protest in Parliament over the alleged embezzlement of donations made to the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. The MPs also questioned the absence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah from Parliament.

Pappu Yadav arrived at Parliament dressed in a saffron attire and staged a street play kind of demonstration. He was carrying a donation box to highlight the allegations of financial irregularities related to the Ram Temple donations in Ayodhya. During the protest, Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, Priyanka Gandhi, and several other Opposition leaders were seen making symbolic



donations into the box.

Speaking during the protest, Pappu Yadav raised slogans and accused those responsible for allegedly misusing funds collected in the name of Lord Ram. "Ram Ram japiyo re, sab maal hadapiyo re. Man mein Ram, Chintan mein Ram, Kan mein Shiv, Jivan Mein Sanso Mein," he told reporters. Samajwadi Party MP, Dharmendra Yadav, said the demonstration was aimed

at drawing attention to allegations that devotees who made donations were not issued receipts and that CCTV footage related to the matter had allegedly been deleted.

"This is a symbolic protest to highlight what has happened in Ayodhya. Devotees made donations, but there are allegations that receipts were not issued and CCTV footage was deleted. We want a discussion on this issue in Parliament," he said. He also

alleged that there had been irregularities in the handling of temple donations and urged the Speaker to allow a debate on the matter. The protesting MPs were also seen carrying a banner that read, "Amit Shah Sansad Se Gayab Kyun? (Why is Amit Shah absent from Parliament?)."

Earlier, on July 26, the Uttar Pradesh government officially reconstituted the SIT to investigate allegations of irregularities in donations

and offerings made at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Meanwhile, after Ayodhya's Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, responsible for overseeing the Ram Temple's administration, appointed IIT Bombay alumnus Jagdish Aphale as its first secretary, the Opposition leaders questioned the government as well as the organisation regarding measures to prevent misappropriation of the temple's funds in the future.

Aphale has also been reportedly made the joint signatory for the temple body's financial transactions, following allegations of embezzlement of donations made at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Samajwadi Party spokesperson Ashutosh Verma urged the government and the Trust to explain "whether the appointment will prevent future irregularities and what measures are being put in place for that?"

Lok Sabha Passes Births and Deaths Amendment Bill Amid Opposition Uproar

New Delhi, July 31 (GNS): The Lok Sabha cleared the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill on Friday, amid noisy protests and constant sloganeering by the Opposition. The Bill, presented by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai, was passed through voice vote amid intense chaos and ruckus, as the Opposition Benches amped up pressure on the NDA government for a debate on the Ram Temple donation theft controversy and also chanted slogans demanding accountability from Home Minister Amit Shah over alleged police brutality during the students stir in the national Capital over



the NEET paper leak.

While the Chair made repeated requests for smooth functioning of the House, the Opposition members trooped into the Well of the House raising slogans and waving placards. 'Sadana mein aao (Come to Parliament)' chants reverberated in the House even as Dilip Saikia, presiding over the

House proceedings, sought to conduct the legislative business. When the House reconvened at 12 noon, many members made their submissions.

Nityanand Rai sought the House's consent for the Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill and it was passed within minutes without any discussion, amid the din.

The Bill provides that if a birth or death is reported to the Registrar more than one year but within two years after its occurrence, it may be registered only with the approval of the District Magistrate, SDM or Executive Magistrate authorised by the District Magistrate. The amendments have been brought to make provisions for delayed registration more stringent and to encourage timely reporting of births and deaths. Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Kiren Rijiju, stood up to denounce the Opposition's conduct, cautioning them against disruptive tactics when Bills of national importance are being brought in the House.

Connect Grassroots Innovators With Formal Ecosystem: Minister

New Delhi, July 31 (UNI): Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh on Friday called for a seamless national innovation pathway to connect grassroots innovators with the formal innovation ecosystem. Addressing the 'Grassroots Innovator Recognition Ceremony 2026' at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre here, the minister honoured 26 grassroots innovators.

These innovators developed practical, affordable and community-driven solutions across agriculture, healthcare, clean energy, assistive technology, water management, circular economy and sustainable livelihoods.

Jaishankar urges Iran to avoid attacks on commercial shipping

New Delhi, July 31 (GNS) External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on Friday held a telephonic conversation with Iran's Foreign Minister, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, during which he expressed India's deep concerns at the ongoing hostilities in the region.

"Had a tele-conversation with FM Aragachi of Iran this evening. Conveyed our deep concerns at the ongoing hostilities in the region. Strongly urged that attacks on commercial shipping and seafarers be avoided under any circumstance. India condemns any such attack by any party," EAM Jaishankar wrote on X.

"Was apprised of Iran's

perspective of current developments and discussions underway. India is always supportive of dialogue and diplomacy," he added. Earlier in the day, the US military released fresh details of its operations against Iran, saying American forces have redirected dozens of commercial vessels while maintaining an extensive surveillance and naval presence across the Middle East.

"As of July 30, CENTCOM forces have redirected 24 commercial vessels, disabled 2, and boarded 2 to ensure full compliance," US Central Command (CENTCOM) said, underscoring the scale of the ongoing operation.

Delhi Court awards life sentence to Tahir Hussain, four others in Ankit Sharma murder case

New Delhi, July 31 (GNS): A Delhi court on Friday sentenced former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor Tahir Hussain and four others to life imprisonment in the murder case of Intelligence Bureau (IB) officer Ankit Sharma, who was killed during the 2020 North-East Delhi riots. Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Praveen Singh of the Karkardooma Court awarded life imprisonment to Hussain and the four co-convicts — Javed, Anas, Nazim and Kasim — after holding them guilty of offences including murder, kidnapping, rioting and promoting enmity between different groups.

While pronouncing the



sentence, the court described the crime as a "very serious" incident and observed that Sharma was "brutally murdered" and his body was left "like an animal", adding that the incident had "shaken the conscience of society".

Earlier, the Delhi Police had sought the death penalty for the convicts, de-

scribing Sharma's killing as a "cold-blooded" and "brutal" murder, and argued that the 51 injuries found on his body reflected the extreme brutality of the assault. Opposing the prosecution's plea for capital punishment, counsel for Hussain and the other convicts had argued that the case did not fall within the "rarest of rare"

category warranting the death sentence. The defence had also contended that no evidence of criminal conspiracy under Section 120B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was established during the trial and urged the court to consider the possibility of Hussain's reformation. On July 28, the Karkardooma Court had reserved its order on the quantum of sentence after hearing detailed submissions from both sides. Earlier this month, the court convicted Hussain, Javed, Anas, Nazim and Kasim after holding them guilty of offences including murder, kidnapping, rioting and promoting enmity between different groups.

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Struggle for the freedom from fear

Fraternity, a major value enshrined in the Constitution, is not in good health today

Krishna Kumar

FREEDOM has many meanings and new ones continue to emerge with the passage of history. Which meaning was paramount when India became a free nation is not easy to decide. Semantically, it is more convenient to talk about freedom as independence. However, the choice of a word does not diminish the complexity involved in defining freedom in India's context.

A collective aspiration for the end of British rule found dramatic expression several times over down the years. And it inspired numerous colonised nations of other continents. What distinguished our struggle for freedom was the specific vision it held about a free India. This facet of our struggle was undoubtedly owed to the leadership we were fortunate to have.

Some members of today's younger generation focus more on the limitations of India's anti-colonial leadership and its achievements. They are victims of today's social environment, which is ideologically charged and dominated by the so-called social media. It does not allow anything to be discussed at length or with comfort. Accusations and counter-accusations take over in no time, and the urge to shock overcomes the impulse to talk. The platforms available for discussion on social media are owned by a global plutocracy, but the impres-



sion persists that they are good for democracy.

In his book Techno-feudalism, Greek economist Yanis Varoufakis has demonstrated how the digital empire of the world's wealthiest individuals has turned us all into serfs who produce data for techno-companies to increase their profits. Dependent on social media for information, today's young students perceive the history of India's freedom struggle as both distant and mundane. Worse still, it is now as vulnerable to distortion as are the older phases of India's history.

The uniqueness of Gandhi's leadership of India's freedom movement was a matter of consensus until quite recently. It is now subjected to anachronistic doubts and quick, summary judgment. Gandhi led us

into self-awareness and the recognition of a more comprehensive idea of freedom than we can find in the history of any other colonised country. A major aspect of this idea was freedom from fear. Tagore expressed it in the opening line of a famous poem in his Gitanjali — 'where the mind is without fear'; the poem ends with the phrase 'heaven of freedom'. These words give us a handy compass to decipher the social ethos that surrounds us all today, especially girls and women, for whom freedom from fear is a mirage. The Constitution used this compass to indicate the common sources of fear that had defined colonial rule. The fear of oppression and discrimination underlies the fundamental rights listed in the Preamble. The exercise of these rights

is no small matter, for it demands what Gandhi meant by Swaraj — the term that best represents his idea of freedom. In his compact political treatise, Hind Swaraj, he defined it as the capacity to rule oneself.

The term Swaraj offers a remarkable sense of the purpose of education, which today is overshadowed by the delusory discourses of job-readiness and technology-driven growth. Education for Swaraj meant that citizens could be trusted to guide themselves, that they wouldn't rush to seek the state's intervention to manage their daily life. It also meant that the state would trust civic wisdom and concerns. A small, rain-fed rivulet flows through Chandigarh. It swells when the rains persist; then, it settles down into its dense

little valley, inhabited by water hens and peacocks. It was not easy to keep it clean, but during the Covid-19 years, this beautiful little choe became a convenient place to throw litter. I noticed cars stopping by, windows rolling down, to let garbage be hurled down into the choe. A few months ago, the administration decided to erect tall and strong chain-link metal frames on the bridges. They now stand as stern reminders that citizens couldn't be trusted to keep the tiny river's bed clean. In Delhi, citizens have sought help from the highest court to control stray dogs. These are two instances showing that the sense of community — based on common, secular concerns — has no presence in urban life, except in the shape of NGOs.

High-wage jobs can rev up Punjab

Employer compliance needs to be decriminalised, deregulated and digitised

Manish Sabharwal
Jayashri Patil

THE oft-quoted Punjabi aphorism, Khaada peeta lahe da, Baki Ahmed Shahe da (eat and drink whatever you can because the invader will take the rest), may feel like it explains some of the high discount rate, low savings rate and consumption preferences of the state. But such cultural explanations are at best the soft bigotry of low expectations, and at worst, racism. We argue that policymakers can reverse involuntary migration and transform Punjab into a rich habitat for high-wage jobs through a principles-based programme of decriminalisation, deregulation and digitisation of employer compliance.

India's problem isn't jobs and unemployment, but wages and employed poverty. This arises from the shortage of high-productivity, formal, non-farm employers — our 63 million enterprises only translate to 29,500 companies with a paid-up capital of more than Rs 10 crore. Why? One possible explanation is regulatory cholesterol; employers face 69,233 compliance requirements, 6,618 filings and 26,134 jail provisions. The problematic philosophies embedded in this excessive compliance include "permitted until prohibited," "show me the person and I'll show you the rule," and the notion that drunk driving is an ar-



gument against cars.

This complexity breeds corruption, uncertainty and informality, and many of our employers are dwarfs (small that will stay small) and not babies (small that will grow). As quality guru Edwards Deming reminded us, a bad system always beats a good man.

Punjab, like India, does not have a shortage of land, labour or capital, but faces challenges in how these three factors of production combine into productive enterprises (economists call this Total Factor Productivity, while people in general call it entrepreneurship or technology).

Punjab, with a GSDP of Rs 8.9 lakh crore, is home to over 12.8 lakh MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises), 4.06

lakh businesses that pay GST and 26,952 registered companies. However, formalisation in the state is low, with only 1.1 per cent of entities making monthly provident fund contributions. Other issues on the employment and wage landscape include manufacturing employment, good urbanisation, exports, services and women's labour force participation. Employers in Punjab face a complex array of 827 Acts (150 state ones), 29,758 compliance requirements (4,221 from state laws), 2,410 filings (128 from state laws) and 7,153 jail provisions (1,914 from state laws). We propose three reforms that would help make Punjab a productive ground for high-wage job creation:

Decriminalisation: Punjab must leapfrog the limited success of Jan Vishwas 1.0 (which removed only 110 employer-related jail provisions) by adopting the principles-based philosophy articulated by the Ministry of Commerce that advocates thinking about (a) if the provision involves a procedural action, inaction or compliance; (b) if the provision is a general contravention where singular punishment is prescribed for multiple unspecified offences; (c) whether the offence would result in physical harm or externalities so large that compensation is not feasible (e.g. threats to national integrity or public order); (d) whether it involves mala fide intent to defraud any stakeholder

such as employees, shareholders or the government; (e) number of ongoing or pending cases under that provision; (f) whether the prescribed punishment is appropriate and proportionate; (g) if the offence is already punishable under another legislation; and (h) whether the offence is better regulated through civil penalties, particularly for first-time violations.

Decriminalisation is not about being soft on crime but bright about regulation. Given that hardly any employers are in jail, despite numerous ways to be jailed, it's clear that the law is not working due to corruption or selective enforcement. Using these principles, two Bills one for state laws and another for concurrent laws could eliminate 90 per cent of the current.

The Art and Science of Management

A flash flood refers to the sudden inundation of low-lying areas by a large volume of water within a short time frame. It is often triggered by intense rainfall resulting from phenomena such as cloudbursts, severe thunderstorms, or tropical cyclones, which produce large amounts of water capable of causing abrupt flooding. Additionally, flash floods may occur following the collapse of man-made dams or natural barriers like ice or debris dams. These events typically follow episodes of heavy precipitation and are characterized by their brief duration, highly localized impact, and sharp peak flows-usually materializing within six hours of the triggering rainfall. Several factors determine the likelihood and speed of flash flooding in a region, including rainfall intensity, spatial distribution of precipitation, topographical features, land use patterns, vegetation cover and density, soil characteristics, and existing soil moisture levels. Due to their abrupt onset and immense force, flash floods pose a significant threat to life and property. Unlike slower-developing riverine floods, their rapid flow often becomes a violent surge capable of demolishing everything in its way. There is growing consensus that the increasing frequency and severity of such extreme weather events are strongly linked to anthropogenic influences on the Earth's climate system, particularly through the ongoing processes of global warming and climate change. Even without any alteration in greenhouse gas emissions, the climate continues to be influenced by substantial and often unpredictable natural fluctuations. Phenomena such as El Niño and the North Atlantic Oscillation, which follow semi-cyclical patterns, play a key role in driving this variability. Researchers have made considerable efforts to represent these natural variations as accurately as possible within climate models, recognizing that such fluctuations are an inherent and enduring part of the Earth's climatic behavior. However, there are additional factors that affect climate variability that are not related to the climate system, such as variations in solar output and volcanic activity. This variability is expected to increase the frequency and severity of landslides and landslips. Particularly in regions with steep topography, porous soil, and high levels of rainfall, rising temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns, and more intense rainfall events can cause slopes to become unstable. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns of the possibility of an increase in the frequency and severity of catastrophic weather events like temperature extremes, persistent rain, and windstorms due to the inextricable link between climate change and development. The report also pointed out that climate change has led to extreme weather events in different parts of world in past and will continue in future. The different extreme weather events include heat waves, cold snaps, droughts, tropical cyclones and torrential rains during monsoon season. According to the Weather Climate & Catastrophe Insight's 2020 Annual Report, tropical cyclones now rank first among natural disasters in terms of economic losses, with floods coming in second. The most disastrous and recent incident we have witnessed this month was due to abrupt increases in water levels typically occur during or after a period of heavy rain at many places in India. With the early onset of the monsoon this year, several regions across India are already facing severe consequences due to persistent and heavy rainfall. States including Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Odisha have been severely affected by flash floods, landslides, and urban flooding, leaving thousands of households isolated. Farmlands have been inundated, transportation networks damaged, and essential services such as electricity and water supply have been significantly interrupted. Heavy rains have caused widespread destruction and fatalities leading to loss of life and property. Due to the two days of nonstop rain, there is severe waterlogging in the many districts of J&K. The human-induced factors contributing to flash floods primarily include the collapse of natural drainage systems and unplanned development activities that disregard scientific principles and environmental considerations. Unregulated development that overlooks scientific guidelines further intensifies the issue. The indiscriminate removal of vegetation without implementing effective rainwater harvesting methods significantly heightens the chances of runoff and mudslides. A major contributor to flash flooding is the encroachment on riverbeds and seasonal streams (khads), along with the haphazard and unscientific construction of residential areas and widespread deforestation. Vegetation, particularly trees, plays a crucial role in mitigating surface runoff by providing extensive canopy cover and stabilizing the soil with their root systems. These natural features help to reduce the erosive force of rainfall, while the physical presence of trees creates resistance that slows down the flow of water. Roots, in particular, anchor the soil and prevent displacement during heavy rains. In Jammu division, urban expansion is accelerating rapidly, driven by population growth and developmental needs. However, each new housing unit, colony, or street should incorporate scientifically sound urban planning and environmental safeguards before concrete construction begins. The unchecked pace of urbanization, improper land use, and the worsening effects of climate change are collectively contributing to the increasing occurrence of flash floods, especially during the monsoon season. Such consequences were recently observed in a tragic incident in Poonch, where a government school was struck by a major landslide, resulting in the death of one student and injuries to four others. In another devastating event, a landslide on the old route to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra led to the loss of a pilgrim's life and left several others-around a dozen-injured. Additionally, reports have emerged of severe waterlogging in various parts of Rajouri, further highlighting the growing vulnerability of the region. Encroachment on natural water channels such as nallahs and khads, along with the indiscriminate dumping of waste and plastic-choked drainage networks, are among the primary reasons behind flooding in many urban centers. The widespread presence of impermeable concrete surfaces in cities further exacerbates the risk of flash floods during periods of heavy rainfall. As a result, stormwater is unable to percolate into the ground and instead flows rapidly over impermeable surfaces. Flash floods are particularly destructive due to their sudden onset and extreme intensity. Their effects can be broadly classified into human, environmental, and economic dimensions:

Loss of Human Life: Flash floods rank among the deadliest weather-related disasters globally. Their rapid development leaves little time for evacuation, often resulting in significant loss of life. A large number of fatalities occur when people attempt to cross inundated roads, underestimating the force of the water.

Destruction of Infrastructure: Critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, rail lines, and communication systems often sustains extensive damage during flash flood events. Buildings may be inundated, structurally compromised, or even demolished. The strong currents can sweep away vehicles, uproot trees, and damage essential services like power and water lines. Economic Impact: The financial burden of recovering from flash floods is considerable. Costs include restoring damaged infrastructure, providing relief and compensation to affected populations, and reconstructing entire communities. Flooding of agricultural fields also leads to crop destruction and threatens food security. In locations where flooding seems to be a regular problem, the effects of floods on land value may cause a fall in real estate value. Ecological Damage: Flash floods can significantly reshape landscapes through soil erosion and disruption of natural habitats. Flash floods can cause rapid soil erosion up to the tune of 70 tonnes/ha in hilly areas. Contamination of water bodies with waste, chemicals, and sediments further poses serious health hazards to both people and wildlife, while also upsetting ecological balance.

Dr. Jitendra Singh Calls for Fast-Tracking Geo-Spatial and Blue Economy Collaboration as India, Philippines Ink New S&T Roadmap

New Delhi, July 31 (UNI) In a bid to deepen bilateral scientific engagement, the Secretary of Science and Technology of the Philippines, Dr. Renato U. Solidum Jr., called on Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology; Earth Sciences and Minister of State for PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh, here today.

The meeting marked a renewed momentum in India-Philippines science and technology cooperation, anchored by the recently signed “Programme of Cooperation (PoC)” for the period 2025–2028.

The high-level discussion focused on translating the broad-based cooperation outlined in the PoC into tangible projects, with Dr. Jitendra Singh suggesting geo-spatial technologies and blue economy as immediate priority areas. These themes, he said, hold promise for impactful collaborations, especially in the context of disaster management, maritime resources, and environmental monitoring.

Welcoming the Philippines’ active participation in the India-ASEAN Science and Technology framework, Dr. Jitendra Singh noted that people-to-people linkages, fostered through fellowship programmes and joint events, have significantly contributed to strengthening not just regional integration but also bilateral ties.

“There is immense scope for collaboration in agricultural biotechnology, geospatial technology, and disaster risk mitigation. These can be immediate starting points for joint research,” Dr. Jitendra Singh observed, while underscoring the potential for



knowledge sharing and capacity building.

He highlighted India's National Geospatial Policy 2022, which envisions an ecosystem enabling wide-

spread use of geospatial data across governance, academia, and business. “India aims to establish a high-resolution topographical survey and a

highly accurate digital elevation model of the country by 2030. We are open to sharing our experience with the Philippines,” the Minister said.

The meeting also emphasized the importance of regular India-Philippines Joint Committee meetings to steer the implementation of projects under the

PoC. The joint mechanism is expected to guide bilateral collaboration across eight thematic areas identified in the agreement — ranging from agricultural biotechnology and AI to energy storage and ocean sciences. Under the PoC, the two countries have agreed to facilitate joint research and development, exchange of scientists, capacity building programmes, and the sharing of non-proprietary scientific data. Indian and Filipino research institutions will also be encouraged to submit joint project proposals annually, with a focus on creating new knowledge and commercially viable technologies.

The bilateral agreement outlines mechanisms for funding, exchange visits, intellectual property rights protection, and organizing annual joint workshops. Both sides acknowledged that the new PoC not only

builds on past cooperation but also aims to respond to emerging scientific challenges with greater agility and coordination.

Dr. Jitendra Singh expressed confidence that today's engagement, held ahead of the Head of State-level meeting scheduled later in the day, would set the tone for a more focused and outcome-driven India-Philippines partnership in science and technology. “This cooperation has the potential to deliver real economic and societal benefits for our people,” he said.

Dr. Rajesh S Gokhale, Secretary of the Department of Biotechnology, and Dr. M. Ravichandran, Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, and senior officials from Department of Science and Technology were also present at the meeting, alongside other senior officials from both India and the Philippines.

NITI Aayog Launches the Report on ‘Unlocking a \$200 Billion opportunity: Electric Vehicles in India’

New Delhi, July 31 (GNS) NITI Aayog today launched the Report on ‘Unlocking a \$200 Billion Opportunity: Electric Vehicles in India,’ which presents a timely and comprehensive assessment of current challenges while highlighting major unlocks essential to accelerate India's Electric Mobility transition. The Report was released by Shri Rajiv Gauba, Member, NITI Aayog in presence of Shri B. V. R. Subrahmanyam, CEO, NITI Aayog, Shri. Kamran Rizvi, Secretary, M/o Heavy Industries, Shri O. P. Agarwal, Distinguished Fellow, NITI Aayog and Shri Sudhendu Sinha, Programme Director – E-Mobility, NITI Aayog among other dignitaries.

India seeks to attain a 30% share of electric vehicles, in the total vehicles sold, by 2030. Sale of EVs in India went up from 50,000 in 2016 to 2.08 million in 2024 as against global EV sales having risen from 918,000 in 2016 to 18.78 million in 2024. Thus, India's transition has been slow to start, but it is picking up. India's EV penetration was only about one – fifth of the global penetration in 2020, but has picked up to over two-fifth of the global penetration in 2024. It continues to show an increasing trend, though relatively slow. This calls for measures to give a stronger push to the EV transition.

Developed through extensive stakeholder consultations across 7 dedicated convenings held at NITI Aayog, this Report has come out with multiple approaches to accelerate India's EV transition. To kickstart the entire effort of accelerating the adoption of EVs, some actions have been recommended as the immediate next steps in the Report. The report serves as a blueprint for accelerating India's EV transition. It identifies key barriers, strategic unlocks, and actionable recommendations

to accelerate EV adoption. By enabling data-driven decisions and cross-sector collaboration, it supports a unified national push.

Launching the report, Shri Rajiv Gauba, Member, NITI Aayog, said that, “India stands at the cusp of a transformative shift in clean mobility. As the nation advances its Electric Mobility ambition, this report provides valuable insights and policy-aligned recommendations to overcome existing barriers and unlock scale.

BVR Subrahmanyam, CEO, NITI Aayog, added that “NITI Aayog has already been at the forefront of enabling the ongoing EV revolution. This report offers a timely and comprehensive review of current challenges, alongside actionable recommendations to fast-track the EV transition in India.”

The report identifies several key challenges slowing EV adoption, including inadequate charging infrastruc-

ture, high upfront vehicle costs, limited domestic battery manufacturing, financing constraints, and consumer awareness gaps. It stresses the need for coordinated efforts by the Centre, states, industry, and financial institutions to address these issues.

NITI Aayog recommends expanding the public charging network, encouraging battery swapping where feasible, and strengthening domestic manufacturing of batteries and EV components to reduce import dependence. It also calls for stable policy support to boost investor confidence and accelerate industry growth. The report highlights the importance of innovative financing models and affordable credit options to make electric vehicles accessible to a wider section of consumers, particularly in the commercial and public transport sectors. It also advocates targeted incentives to encourage fleet electrification.

Aadhaar face authentication doubles to 200 crore transactions in just 6 months

New Delhi, July 31 (GNS) Aadhaar-based face authentication has set new benchmark, doubling from 100 crore to 200 crore transactions in just 6 months, the government said on Monday. Aadhaar Face Authentication lets Aadhaar holders verify their identity instantly, securely, and contactless anytime, anywhere, no documents needed.

On August 10, 2025, UIDAI celebrated a landmark 200 crore transactions of Face Authentication, showcasing India's rapid move towards seamless, secure, and paperless authentication, according to IT Ministry. The pace of adoption has been exponential. 50 crore transactions were recorded by mid-2024. The number doubled to 100 crore transactions in January 2025 in just about five months. In less than six months, this figure has again doubled, reaching the 200 crore milestone, the ministry informed. "Reaching 200 crore Aadhaar Face Authentication transactions in such a short time underlines the trust and confidence that both residents and service providers have in Aadhaar's secure, inclusive, and innovative authentication ecosystem," said Bhuvnesh Kumar, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), UIDAI. The journey from 100 crore to 200 crore transactions in under six months is a testament to its scalability and the country's digital readiness.”

He further added, “From villages to metros, UIDAI is joining forces with governments, banks, and service providers to make Aadhaar Face Authentication a grand success and by giving every Indian the power to prove their identity instantly, securely, and anywhere.”

The swift rise from 100 crore to 200 crore Aadhaar Face Authentication transactions in just six months reflects the core vision of Digital India, transforming

the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

By enabling instant, secure and paperless identity verification across every corner of the nation, UIDAI is strengthening the backbone of digital governance. “This milestone is not just about numbers, it is a testament to how inclusive technology, when scaled efficiently, can bridge divides, empower citizens and accelerate India's journey towards a truly connected and confident digital future,” said the ministry.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology stated that Aadhaar Face Authentication is being increasingly adopted across multiple sectors, including banking, government welfare schemes, healthcare, education, and employee attendance systems. The technology has helped reduce dependency on physical documents and manual verification processes.

UIDAI has been continuously enhancing the security and reliability of the authentication framework through advanced technologies, ensuring privacy protection and preventing misuse. The contactless system provides a convenient alternative, especially for senior citizens and people in remote areas.

The government said the growing acceptance of face authentication reflects the success of digital public infrastructure in India. By integrating secure identity verification with various services, the system is helping improve efficiency, transparency, and accessibility for citizens.

UIDAI further emphasized that expanding digital authentication solutions will remain a key priority in strengthening India's digital ecosystem and supporting the vision of inclusive digital governance for every citizen.

Identifying state-specific species key to boost India’s seafood exports: Minister

New Delhi, July 31 (GNS) Value addition and identifying state-specific species hold key to boosting India's seafood exports, Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh has said. Singh underscored the importance of value addition in Indian seafood to enhance its export potential. Speaking at the ‘Seafood Exporters Meet 2025,’ he highlighted the ongoing government initiatives being taken in the fisheries sector, including the development of a single-window system for better market linkages for all stakeholders, strengthening of High Seas and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) fishing, and upgrading infrastructure, all aimed at further bolstering the fisheries sector.

The minister emphasised on Marine Products Export Development Authority's (MPEDA) pivotal role in navigating the tariff challenges faced by the industry and urged MPEDA, along with state governments, to conduct stakeholder consultations for accurate mapping of state-wise species-specific exports and identifying new export opportunities. He also assured the stakeholders of the government's commitment to further strengthening Indian seafood exports.

Dr Abhilaksh Likhi, Secretary (Fisheries), MoFAH&D, highlighted that only about 10 per cent of India's seafood exports by value are currently value-added products, stressing the need to raise this share to 30–60 per cent in line with global benchmarks through enhanced domestic production or import-and-re-export strategies. He expressed concern over the heavy dependence on a single species, Whiteleg shrimp which accounts for 62 per cent of export value but only 38 per cent of quantity. Dr Likhi stated the urgency of reducing post-harvest losses and assured that issues related to

tariff and non-tariff barriers would be addressed in coordination with the Department of Commerce, Ministry of External Affairs, and other relevant authorities.

He also called for targeted inputs to identify and finance infrastructure upgrades that would significantly boost value addition across the seafood export value chain. India's annual fish production has witnessed a significant growth of 104 per cent, rising from 95.79 lakh tonnes in FY 2013-14 to 195 lakh tonnes in FY 2024-25. Inland fisheries and aquaculture have emerged as key contributors, accounting for over 75 per cent of the total production. The Minister stated that promoting diversified seafood products, improving processing facilities, and adopting modern technologies would help India compete effectively in global markets.

New I-T Bill: No ITR filing exemptions for small taxpayers, late filers can claim refunds

New Delhi, July 31 (GNS) The new Income Tax Bill, 2025, passed by the Lok Sabha, clarifies that late-return filers are eligible for refunds on excess taxes deducted in a financial year.

Analysts said on Tuesday that the bill was missing the proposal to eliminate the requirement for small taxpayers to file returns just to claim tax refunds.

The new I-T Bill kept section 43B intact, which required that ‘every claim for refund under this part shall be made by furnishing a return as per section 263’. So, effectively, the law still requires a return of income to claim a refund, with no alternative methods allowed.

Taxpayers who file late or revised returns after the due date will still be eligible for refunds, the new bill suggested. Small taxpayers, including senior citizens, must file returns solely to claim a refund for excess taxes deducted at source

(TDS), even if their income is below the basic exemption threshold. The committee had recommended that taxpayers should not be required to file a return just to avoid penalties. “The current mandatory requirement solely to claim a refund could inadvertently lead to prosecution, particularly for small taxpayers whose income falls below the taxable threshold but from whom tax has been deducted at source. In such scenarios, the law should not compel a return merely to avoid penal provisions for non-filing,” the parliamentary panel had earlier suggested. Preeti Sharma, Partner, Global Employer Services, Tax and Regulatory Services, BDO India, said, “The biggest advantage of the new law is that the common man may easily understand it with lesser efforts as compared to the old law. The revised bill has incorporated most of the changes

recommended by the Select Committee. Taxpayers still have to undergo the process of assessing the right regime to follow while filing a tax return. Similarly, no changes are proposed in tax rates as introduced in Budget 2025.”

The new bill was passed, incorporating the recommendations of a 31-member parliamentary panel led by BJP MP Baijayant Panda.

Tax experts said the new legislation simplifies the language and structure of the Income Tax Act, making it easier for taxpayers to understand and comply with tax provisions. However, they noted that several procedural requirements, including mandatory return filing for refunds, remain unchanged. The Income Tax Bill, 2025, is aimed at modernising India's direct tax framework by replacing outdated provisions with a more streamlined and user-friendly law while retaining the existing tax structure.

Astral Ltd's shares tumble 8 pc on subdued Q1 results

New Delhi, July 31 (GNS) Building materials and equipment company Astral Ltd's share price fell by nearly 8 per cent during the early trade on Tuesday after the firm reported a decline of over 30 per cent in its net profit for the first quarter of the current financial year (Q1 FY26). At around 11:43 a.m., the company's shares were trading at Rs 1,282.70, down 7.16 per cent. The stock opened at Rs 1,310.10, falling significantly against last session's closing of Rs 1,381.60. The scrip further extended its loss following selling pressure to touch an intra-day low at Rs 1,275.0 (as of the above-mentioned time). The stock fell 22.41 per cent so far this year and 33.79 per cent over the previous 12 months. Meanwhile, its 52-week high and low were, respectively, Rs 2,037.95 and Rs 1,232.30.

Astral's consolidated revenue decreased 1.6 per cent year over year to Rs 1,361 crore from Rs 1,383 crore. Over the year, its net profit

dropped 33% from Rs 120.40 crore to Rs 81.10 crore.

In the April-June quarter, operating profit fell 14 per cent year-over-year to Rs 185.20 crore from Rs 214.20 crore. Over the year, its profit margin decreased from 15.5 per cent to 13.6 per cent, a decrease of 190 basis points.

Poor first-quarter performance was brought on by a decline in the market for polymer products; low PVC prices also reduced Astral's inventory and had an effect on realisation. While margins remained constant, the EBITDA margin for the company's plumbing division decreased by 150 basis points from the previous year. Additionally, the Paints & Adhesives division experienced a 280-basis-point drop in margins.

In its earnings report, Astral emphasised that the June quarter's overall demand situation remained weak and that inventory losses and realisations were impacted by the volatility of PVC prices.

CM Revanth Reddy Directs TOMCOM to Lead Overseas Job Placement for Telangana Youth

Hyderabad, July 31 (GNS) Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Friday directed that the Telangana Overseas Manpower Company (TOMCOM) handle the entire process of facilitating overseas employment for youth, from skill training and job fairs to passport services and placement in foreign countries. Chairing a review meeting of the Shakti Department, attended by Minister Vivek Venkataswamy and senior officials, the Chief Minister said TOMCOM should play a proactive role in ensuring safe and transparent overseas employment opportunities for aspiring youth.

Observing that a large number of workers from north Telangana migrate to Middle Eastern countries and often fall victim



to fraudulent recruitment agents, Revanth Reddy directed TOMCOM to enter into agreements with manpower agencies in destination countries to facilitate recruitment and assist workers, including in obtaining passports.

He said such agreements would enable TOMCOM to intervene, hold discussions with employers and agencies, and ensure justice for workers facing difficulties

abroad. The Chief Minister also instructed officials to collect details of all agents involved in overseas recruitment and maintain a database of every individual sent abroad through them. He announced that a former Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer would be appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of TOMCOM to oversee its operations. The review also discussed providing Light Motor Ve-

hicle (LMV) and Heavy Motor Vehicle (HMV) driving training to job seekers to improve their overseas employment prospects.

The Chief Minister proposed establishing a research centre at the Young India Skill University to promote innovation and directed that a dedicated department be created within the university to offer training in foreign languages, including German,

Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Russian. He said instructors from the respective countries, along with qualified local language experts, should be engaged for the programmes. The meeting also reviewed the plantation of relocated trees on the university campus and examined the feasibility of providing scholarships for trainees pursuing blue-collar jobs abroad on the lines of overseas scholarships available for higher education.

Revanth Reddy directed officials to provide internship opportunities for students of government engineering colleges, Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), Advanced Technology Centres (ATCs) and polytechnic colleges with leading companies.

TG Launches Family Certificate at Tahsildar, MeeSeva Centres



Hyderabad, July 31 (GNS) Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka on Friday announced that the State Government has made the 'Family Certificate' available at all Tahsildar Offices and MeeSeva Centres to enable citizens to easily furnish details of their family members whenever required by government departments or other institutions. Speaking at the SIR Awareness Programme held at Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Praja

Bhavan, Bhatti Vikramarka said the Indiramma Government introduced the facility to simplify access to authenticated family information. The Deputy Chief Minister said the government already maintains family details of beneficiaries availing welfare schemes such as ration cards, AarogyaSri and fine rice distribution.

He said families can now obtain the Family Certificate from Tahsildar Offices or MeeSeva Centres whenever

they need to submit family details to any government department or institution. He said the initiative would help citizens quickly access verified family information and reduce the need for repeated documentation while availing various services and schemes. Transport Minister Ponnamm Prabhakar, Telangana Minorities Residential Educational Institutions Society Vice-Chairman Faheem Qureshi and others attended the programme.

Minister warns action against underperforming oil palm companies



Hyderabad, July 31 (GNS) Expressing deep disappointment, the Minister noted that while the target was to expand oil palm cultivation to 85,000 acres in the state this year, only 17,090 acres have been recorded so far—representing a progress of merely 20 percent of the goal. He voiced strong dissatisfaction, stating that despite the government providing full support, the companies are not demonstrating the expected level of commitment.

The Minister remarked that although the government has held multiple meetings with the companies and issued clear directives to prioritize oil palm expansion, there has been no visible change in their performance. He emphasized that it is completely unacceptable for companies to act negligently at a time when farmers are showing great interest.

The Minister stated that

notices have been issued multiple times to companies with poor performance. He revealed that notices were served four times to Lohia Company (operating in Jagtial district) and Oilfed (operating in Gadwal, Narayanpet, and Jangaon districts).

Similarly, notices were issued three times to Tirumala Company (Peddapalli district), Priyunic Company (Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Wanaparthy, Nirmal, and Adilabad districts), and Ram Charan Company (Hanamakonda and Warangal districts). He also mentioned that notices were issued twice to Godrej Company (Sangareddy district). The Minister expressed displeasure that, despite issuing notices—five times to Vishwatej, six times each to Cane Bio, Patanjali, and Matrix, and three times to Suven Agro—the expected changes in these companies' operations were not observed.

Police Commissioner conducts field inspection for indur Oorapanduga preparations

Falaknuma News Correspondent M.A.Samad Nizamabad, July 31

In view of the Nizamabad Nagar Oorapanduga scheduled to be celebrated on Sunday, P. Sai Chaitanya, Commissioner of Police, conducted an extensive field inspection on Friday to review the festival arrangements and ensure foolproof security. The Commissioner first visited the areas where idols of Goddess were being crafted for the festival. He interacted with artisans and reviewed the progress of idol preparation. Later, he inspected the proposed procession route, assessing security measures, traffic regulation, barricading, and public movement arrangements. He instructed officials to ensure smooth coordination for the safe conduct of the procession.

The Commissioner also



visited Sirnapally Gadi, where he reviewed the ongoing preparations. During the visit, he held a meeting with members of the Sarva Samaj Committee to discuss festival management, facilities for devotees, and law and order arrangements.

Emphasizing the importance of coordinated efforts, the Commissioner directed all concerned departments to work in close coordination to ensure that the Nizamabad Oorapanduga is

celebrated peacefully, safely, and successfully.

Among those present during the inspection were ACP Prakash Yadav, Special Branch Inspectors Sridhar Reddy and Malesh, Town CI Srinivasa Raj, Town-I SHO Raghupathi, Rural SHO Srinivas, Town-IV SHO Satish, Two Town SI Yadagiri Goud, Sarva Samaj Convener Ramarthi Gangadhar, Secretary Bantu Rajeshwar, committee members, and police personnel.

Sustainable waste management key to environmental protection: Mayor Uma Rani

Falaknuma News Correspondent M.A.Samad Nizamabad, July 31

Reinforcing the importance of eco-friendly waste management practices, Nizamabad Mayor Mrs. Kooragayala Uma Rani participated in the “Waste to Compost – Windrow and Vermicomposting Training & Awareness Programme” held at the Nizamabad Municipal Corporation Dumping Yard. The programme was attended by CDPO Mrs. Hemalatha, Municipal Commissioners Sridhar Reddy and Malesh, Town CI Srinivasa Raj, Town-I SHO Raghupathi, Rural SHO Srinivas, Town-IV SHO Satish, Two Town SI Yadagiri Goud, Sarva Samaj Convener Ramarthi Gangadhar, Secretary Bantu Rajeshwar, committee members, and police personnel.



were also educated on effective solid waste management, sustainable sanitation practices, and the responsibility of local bodies in creating clean, healthy, and environmentally friendly urban communities.

Mayor Uma Rani stressed that proper segregation and composting of wet waste generated from every household can significantly reduce landfill waste while producing valuable organic manure.

She urged citizens and municipal staff to work together in adopting sustainable waste management practices for the benefit of future generations. The programme underscored that awareness, community participation, and scientific waste processing are crucial in achieving the vision of a Clean and Green Nizamabad, while strengthening environmental conservation and sustainable urban development.

Telangana Launches Statewide Campaign Against Bonded Labour

Hyderabad, July 31 (GNS) Marking the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons and the Golden Jubilee of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act (BLSA), the Telangana government, in collaboration with NALSAR University of Law and International

Justice Mission (IJM), on Thursday launched a statewide campaign to eradicate bonded labour. At a state conference held in Shamirpet, Telangana State Legal Services Authority (TSLSA) Member Secretary Ch Panchakshari and NALSAR Vice-Chancellor Prof

Krishna Deva Rao flagged off the 'Swechaa Ratham', an awareness vehicle that will travel across all 33 districts to educate people about bonded labour, legal rights and available support mechanisms.

The conference brought together over 380 bonded

labour survivors, government officials, legal experts, civil society representatives, media and law students to strengthen coordinated efforts for the prevention, rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of bonded labour victims. Speakers stressed

that despite 50 years of the BLSA Act, bonded labour continues to exist, calling for stronger coordination among the Police, Revenue, Labour, Women and Child Welfare departments, legal services authorities and civil society organisations.

They emphasised that re-

habilitation should extend beyond rescue by ensuring sustainable livelihoods for survivors. A Bonded Labour Awareness Song, performed by singer-songwriter Palle Narasimha, was launched to encourage people to identify and report cases of exploitation.

Jupally studies US wine tourism model for Telangana

Hyderabad, July 31 (GNS) Telangana Excise, Tourism, Culture and Archaeology Minister Jupally Krishna Rao on Friday said the State Government is exploring the development of wine tourism by studying successful international models during his ongoing visit to the United States. As part of his tour, the Minister visited the Stone Tower Winery in Leesburg and another winery in Ashburn, Virginia, where he studied vineyard management, winemaking processes, tourism integration and hospitality practices.

He also interacted with winery officials on grape cultivation, fermentation, storage, bottling, quality standards and marketing.

Jupally said Telangana



vineyard-based tourism in Ranga Reddy and Vikarabad districts and that the government would examine climatic conditions, suitable locations and investment models before taking the initiative.

He noted that wine tourism could boost local employment, support grape farmers, attract private investment and offer unique

tourism experiences.

The Minister said the Telangana Tourism Policy 2025–30 is focused on developing innovative tourism products and recalled that the recent Telangana Tourism Conclave attracted tourism investment proposals worth over Rs15,000 crore, including the state's first vineyard resort with a winery walkthrough and

traditional grape-stomping experience. Government Whip Yennem Srinivas Reddy and Tandur MLA Buyyani Manohar Reddy accompanied the Minister during the visit, according to an official statement.

The Minister said the government is keen to adopt global best practices to position Telangana as a unique tourism destination. He noted that integrating vineyards with hospitality, recreation and cultural experiences could significantly enhance the state's tourism appeal. He added that the proposed wine tourism initiative would be implemented in an environmentally sustainable manner while creating new livelihood opportunities for local communities.

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