

INDIA BLOCK PROTEST

Rahul, Priyanka, others detained

NEW DELHI, Oct 6 (UNI): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was briefly detained along with his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday night after their over eight-hour sit-in inside Akashvani Bhawan premises for not being allowed to march towards the Election Commission's office. Police forcibly removed Rahul Gandhi, as well as Congress MPs and leaders including K C Venugopal, Charanjit Singh Channi, Pawan Khera, K Suresh, Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, Deepender Hooda, Praniti Shinde, Varsha Gaekwad, and Imran Pratapgarhi, as the All India Radio (AIR) premises were cleared of all protesting MPs and leaders.

Later, Rahul Gandhi and other Congress leaders were released around 10 pm, the party said.

The detainees were taken to New Police Lines at King-



■ OPPOSITION PROTEST TURNS INTO DAY-LONG FACE-OFF WITH DELHI POLICE

sway Camp. Earlier, several police personnel caught hold of Rahul Gandhi as they forcibly removed him from the site and was taken into a bus. Gandhi and other MPs including Venugopal initially resisted the police action, but they were removed from the premises within minutes.

Gandhi had earlier entered the AIR premises on Parliament Street around noon

and started the dharna after police thwarted an attempt by opposition MPs to march towards the Election Commission office, barely 300 metres away, over the "vote chori" charge.

The police later said around 250 people were detained on Tuesday night, including 50 MPs, following an over eight-hour sit-in protest. The opposition MPs were

protesting over "vote chori" charges and were seeking the removal of CEC Gyanesh Kumar in the wake of media reports alleging differences within the Election Commission over Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls and other issues.

Earlier, Rahul Gandhi occupied the centre stage of the opposition's street protest, forcing a total lockdown of

Parliament Street as he tried to march towards the Election Commission's office nearby with hundreds of supporters and other opposition MPs. At one point, buoyed by cheers of onlookers, he climbed atop multi-layer steel barricades, stood on it and waved the tricolour, before slipping through the police cordons to sneak into the premises of All India Radio.



SME growth fund is a big boost for MSME sector: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, Oct 6 (UNI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that the Cabinet's approval for the Rs 10,000 crore SME Growth Fund is a big boost for the MSME sector and represents a major step towards creating the next generation of Indian business leaders.



"The fund offers the platform for SMEs to scale up, adopt advanced technologies, expand manufacturing, enter global markets and integrate with global value chains," PM Modi said in a post on X. Most of the allocation from the fund will be made towards small and medium manufacturing-focused enterprises. The fund will also consider SMEs operating in industrial clusters in Tier II and Tier III cities.

By providing long-term capital, the initiative will enable Indian SMEs to scale operations, invest in technology and manufacturing capacity, expand into international markets, integrate into global value chains, and

undertake strategic investments. The government expects the Fund to accelerate the emergence of a strong pipeline of Indian companies with the scale, innovation capability, and competitiveness required to become champions in their respective sectors, according to an official statement.

SMEs constitute the backbone of the Indian economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, exports, manufacturing output, and innovation. While various initiatives have enhanced access to credit for SMEs.

Rajnath Singh launches first India-Made fleet support ship in Vizag

NEW DELHI, Oct 6 (GNS): Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday launched FSS-1, the first of five Fleet Support Ships being built for the Indian Navy. Later in the day, he laid the keel of the fifth, FSS-5, and opened the yard's upgraded Slipway-4 and a new 300-tonne Goliath Crane. The slipway can now build and launch ships of up to 45,000 deadweight tonnes.

It took 18 months for FSS-1 to go from the first cut of steel to the waters of the Bay of Bengal. When these 43,500-tonne vessels enter



service, they will refuel and re-supply warships at sea, letting the Navy stay out longer and range farther across the Indian Ocean Region. Navy chief Admiral Krishna Swaminathan was present at the event along with others. Singh called HSL a pillar of India's maritime strength during his first visit to the yard on Tuesday. "With the upgraded Slipway and 300-tonne Goliath Crane, HSL is ready to build larger, more complex ships," he said. "The launch of FSS-1 and keel laying of FSS-5 show Aat-

manirbharta taking shape in steel, extending our Navy's reach across the Indian Ocean."

"The maiden visit of Hon'ble Raksha Mantri is a moment of immense pride and inspiration for every member of HSL," Raghuram said. Chairman and Managing Director Rear Admiral C Raghuram (Retd.) credited the people behind the day. "Today's milestones reflect the dedication of our employees, the trust of the Indian Navy and the support of our business partners," he said.

CJI Surya Kant administers oath to three new SC Judges

New Delhi, Oct 6 (GNS): Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant on Tuesday administered the oath of office to three new judges of the Supreme Court — Justices Sunita Agarwal, Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya, and Aparesh Kumar Singh.

The swearing-in ceremony, which was live-streamed, was held at 3.30 p.m., marking a departure from the usual practice of administering the oath to



newly appointed Supreme Court judges in the morning. Newly appointed Supreme Court judges usually take the oath of office at

10.30 a.m., coinciding with the time when the top court assembles on working days to conduct hearings.

The three Chief Justices

of the High Courts took the oath as judges of the apex court after the Centre cleared their elevation on the recommendation of the Supreme Court Collegium this week. "The Supreme Court Collegium in its meeting held on 28th September, 2026 has recommended elevation of the following Chief Justices of the High Courts as Judges in the Supreme Court," the Collegium had said in a statement upload-

ed on the apex court's official website. Acting swiftly on the Collegium's recommendation, the Centre on Monday approved the elevation of Justices Agarwal, Upadhyaya, and Singh.

In a post on X, Union Minister for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal announced that the President, after consultation with CJI Surya Kant, had appointed the three Chief Justices as judges of the apex court.

Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit named next IAF Chief, to take charge on Oct 31



New Delhi, Oct 6 (GNS): The Centre has appointed Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit as the next Chief of the Indian Air Force. He will take over on October 31, when the present IAF Chief, Air Chief Marshal AP Singh, superannuates. Air Marshal Dixit is presently serving as Vice Chief of the IAF. Born on December 9, 1966, Air Marshal Dixit was commissioned into the fighter stream of the Indian Air Force in December 1986. Prior to assuming charge as Vice Chief of the IAF, Air Marshal Dixit served as the tri-services Chief of Integrated Defence Staff. He has commanded the IAF's Central Command.

Air Marshal Dixit has more than 3,500 hours of extensive flying experience on various aircraft, including the Mirage-2000, various variants of MiG, Jaguar, Hawk and Tejas. He is an Experimental Test Pilot and a Qualified Flying Instructor. During his service career spanning approximately four decades, he has been actively involved in numerous operations and exercises, including Op-Safed Sagar, Op-Rakshak and Op-Sindoor.

India, Switzerland hold talks on fast-tracking bilateral investment treaty

NEW DELHI, Oct 6 (GNS): Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman held discussions with Swiss President Guy Parmelin on Tuesday on taking forward negotiations over the Bilateral Investment Treaty between the two countries, with a view to enhancing investment flows and deepening economic engagement.

"Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Smt. @nsitharaman called on H.E. Mr. @ParmelinG, Swiss President, in New Delhi, today. They held discussions on issues of common interest to both India and Switzerland, including taking forward negotiations on the Bilateral Investment Treaty which is mutually beneficial to both nations with a view to enhance investment flows and deepening economic engagement," the Finance Ministry said on X.

India and Switzerland are strengthening their economic partnership with a focus on expanding market access, facilitating investment and deepening cooperation in infrastructure, technology, innovation and supply chains, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal had said. In a post on X, Agarwal said India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries had implemented the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) last year, describing it as India's first free trade agreement with a European economic bloc. The agreement pro-



vides a framework for investment, innovation, jobs and shared prosperity, he added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasised the importance of translating the growing India-Switzerland partnership into concrete outcomes in trade and investment. Addressing a joint press conference with President Parmelin after their talks here on Monday, PM Modi said the two countries agreed that reforms in global institutions were essential to address growing global challenges.

India Condemns Attack On Commercial Vessel In Black Sea

New Delhi, Oct 6 (GNS): The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Tuesday strongly condemned the attack on M V Royad Mammadov, a commercial vessel in the Black Sea, in which two foreign seafarers were killed and three Indian nationals injured.

"We condemn the attack on MV Royad Mammadov in the Black Sea, in which two foreign seafarers were killed and some members of the crew, including Indian nationals injured. The injured have been rescued by Romanian authorities and are receiving medical attention. The three Indian nationals, who were part crew of the ship, are safe. We thank Romanian authorities for their swift action in this incident," read a statement released by the MEA. "India views these attacks on commercial shipping and seafarers with grave concern.

India, Germany vow to strengthen defence partnership and technology ties

New Delhi, Oct 6 (GNS): Chief of Defence Staff, General N S Raja Subramani and his German counterpart, General Carsten Breuer, met on Tuesday and reaffirmed the enduring India-Germany defence partnership. "Gen NS Raja Subramani, CDS, accorded a warm welcome, along with a ceremonial guard of honour, to General Carsten Breuer, Chief of Defence, Germany, on his official visit to India on 06 October 2026. The discussions between the two leaders reaffirmed the enduring India-Germany defence partnership and focused on strengthening military cooperation and deepening strategic & technological engagements," the Integrated Defence Staff Headquarters stated on X.

Last month, addressing defence cooperation between India and Germany, Germany's Ambassador to



India Jasper Wieck said the proposed submarine deal has effectively been finalised from the German side. He stated that the necessary documents have already been agreed upon by Germany and that the matter now rests with the Indian side to complete its internal procedures before concluding the agreement.

"In terms of the documents, it has already been finalised, and the German

side has agreed to it. It is now up to the Indian side to complete and conclude its internal processes," Wieck said. Earlier in September, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephonic conversation with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, with both leaders reaffirming their commitment to deepen the Strategic Partnership between the two countries across key sectors.

Union Budget 2026-27 Signalling Stability with Intent

Prof D Mukherjee

The Union Budget for the financial year 2026-27 was presented in the Lok Sabha on 1 February 2026 by the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman. Prepared in accordance with Article 112 of the Constitution of India, the budget constitutes the Union Government's principal financial statement, detailing projected revenues, planned expenditures, taxation measures, and the overarching fiscal policy framework for the ensuing year. Notably, this occasion marked the Finance Minister's ninth consecutive budget presentation, underscoring a rare degree of continuity, administrative stability, and accumulated experience in fiscal governance.

The economic backdrop to Budget 2026 was defined by steady domestic growth despite heightened global uncertainty. Real GDP growth for 2025-26 was estimated at approximately 7.4 percent, while nominal GDP growth for 2026-27 was projected at close to 10 percent, signalling sustained economic momentum. In keeping with its medium-term fiscal strategy, the Government set a fiscal deficit target of 4.3 percent of GDP, reaffirming its commitment to fiscal consolidation. Central Government debt was projected at around 55.6 percent of GDP, reflecting a manageable level of public sector indebtedness. From an institutional perspective, the budget presentation was followed by extensive deliberations in both Houses of Parliament. Members examined the proposed allocations across sectors, evaluated taxation measures, and debated the broader socio-economic priorities reflected in the fiscal plan. The Annual Fi-



ncial Statement and the Finance Bill, 2026 continue to serve as the definitive legal instruments governing the implementation of budgetary proposals. Within this framework, the budget sought to reconcile the objectives of economic growth, fiscal responsibility, social inclusion, and structural reform amid an increasingly complex global environment.

The Union Budget 2026-27 was built upon a policy framework that is recognisable yet progressively refined. Its core pillars-sustained public investment, a measured approach to fiscal consolidation, focused social sector spending, and carefully calibrated tax reforms-together constituted the structural foundation through which the Government aimed to maintain economic momentum without compromising macroeconomic stability.

At the macroeconomic level, the budget was premised on the expectation of continued expansion, supported by strong nominal GDP growth and a clearly articulated path of deficit reduction. By anchoring

the fiscal deficit in the lower range of four percent of GDP, the government reaffirmed its commitment to post-pandemic fiscal correction. This stance conveyed a clear message to financial markets and credit rating agencies that growth-oriented expenditure would remain consistent with medium-term debt sustainability objectives.

A prominent feature of the budget was the sustained emphasis on capital expenditure. Public investment allocations were maintained at historically elevated levels, reflecting the Government's assessment that infrastructure spending delivers high multiplier effects. Investments in transport networks, railway upgradation, urban infrastructure, logistics systems, and digital connectivity were prioritised. Importantly, the focus extended beyond the creation of physical assets to include improvements in execution quality, project integration, and delivery efficiency.

In parallel with physical infrastructure, the budget underscored the growing strategic importance of the

digital economy. Measures aimed at strengthening data infrastructure, expanding cloud services, and increasing broadband reach signalled an ambition to position India as a foundational hub in the global digital ecosystem. Long-term policy and tax assurances were employed to provide certainty to technology investors, while continued investment in domestic digital public infrastructure reinforced this direction.

From a revenue perspective, the budget deliberately avoided abrupt or disruptive tax changes. Instead, it pursued gradual rationalisation, enhanced predictability, and administrative simplification. The underlying objective was to broaden and stabilise the tax base without adversely affecting consumption demand or investment confidence. Initiatives aimed at simplifying compliance, reducing administrative frictions, and improving procedural transparency were framed as trust-building measures rather than instruments of short-term revenue extraction.

Sectoral allocations fur-

ther reflected a balanced policy approach. Agriculture and allied sectors continued to receive support, with a discernible shift toward diversification, value addition, and income stability rather than reliance on output-linked subsidies alone. Expenditure on education and health followed an upward trajectory, particularly in areas related to skill formation, research capacity, and foundational infrastructure. At the same time, targeted support for MSMEs, start-ups, and innovation ecosystems sought to strengthen the productive core of the economy, which remains central to employment generation.

Equally significant was the restraint exercised by the budget. It consciously avoided populist expenditure expansion, limited reliance on additional borrowing, and refrained from large-scale tax concessions. Through this approach, the budget positioned itself as one focused on consolidation with purpose-placing greater emphasis on policy continuity and institutional credibility than on headline-driven announcements.

Climate that doesn't change in Budgets

Avay Shukla

Preservation and protection of the natural environment has never been a priority in our annual Budgets; all Finance Ministers have taken it for granted and treated it as a resource rather than a living entity to be nurtured and carefully harvested on a sustainable basis.

In July 2014, I had written a blog about precisely this: 'Budget 2014 — Shortchanging the Environment'. Eleven years down the line, this deficiency in planning persists, even though a new, and compelling, dimension has been added with the acceleration of climate change (CC). The need now is not only to provide public funding for measures to counter CC (adaptation, mitigation), but also for rehabilitation of those directly affected by it — poor farmers, landless labourers, fishermen, nomadic tribes. Unfortunately (and predictably), this Budget, like its predecessors, does none of this.

We should perhaps have expected this from the tone of the Economic Survey 2026. In it, the Chief Economic Adviser blatantly bats for growth and neoliberalism at the cost of the environment. Defying all science, it states that cutting carbon emissions should not be our top priority, and that "a 3° Celsius world would be a liveable one"!

Confounding all evidence and scientific global consensus, it goes on to maintain that "growth and prosperity strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability". Yes, sir, they do, but only if done in a sustainable and ecologically-friendly manner, which is not how it is happening in India. Maybe, if the Economic Adviser



had paid more attention to what a fellow economist (without any political bias), Gita Gopinath, had said in Davos, he would have better understood the problem, and how wrong he is.

This government suffers from a severe case of CID (Compulsive Infrastructure Disorder); capex is fine and needed for growth, but so is the environment. There are huge environmental costs to rapid infrastructural expansion — both the World Bank and the IMF estimate this at between 3.5 and 5 per cent of our GDP, which comes to about \$200 billion. The 2026-27 Budget proudly mentions the creation of a mineral corridor (for rare earths) in four southern states, three more high-speed rail corridors, zero duties for maritime catches in India's EEZ or the high seas, but there is no mention of how the environmental consequences of these initiatives shall be addressed or mitigation funded.

Are these corridors necessary at all, given the large number of expressways being built? The corridors shall lead to large-scale land acquisition and displacement, adding to the 60 million project refugees created since Independence. Hundreds of thousands of trees (and mangroves, since rare earths are found in coastal areas) shall be felled. The boost to maritime fisheries is welcome, but where are the guardrails to ensure that the livelihoods of fishermen will be protected, or overfishing curbed?

The damage to the environment by the various corridors will be enormous. The regulations that could have checked this, or compensated for it, such as the Forest Conservation Act, the Environmental Protection Act, or the Wildlife Protection Act, have been so weakened, if not castrated, by this government over the years that we can expect minimum oversight or safe-

guards in the execution of these projects.

Thousands of crores shall be needed to mitigate, and compensate for, the adverse impacts of these projects, but the Finance Minister has not said a word about this. This silence and ambiguity appear to be a deliberate decentralisation of costs: the political credit and financial gains will accrue to the Centre, but the social and budgetary costs will be borne by the states — an innovative (mis)interpretation of federalism!

Finally, it appears that the 16th Finance Commission (FC) is also in lockstep with the Centre, like all so-called autonomous institutions. It has chosen to completely ignore the right of the Himalayan states to fair compensation for the ecological services they provide to the country (water, clean air, carbon sequestration, climate moderation).

These states, supported by a large number of ad-

vocacy groups, had demanded a Green Bonus of Rs 50,000 crore from 2026-2031. Not only would this have been fair compensation, these funds would have met developmental needs without having to resort to unsustainable exploitation of forests, rivers, minerals and tourism potential. Any idiot can see that excessive and unsustainable "development" of the Himalaya (and other ranges like the Aravallis and Western Ghats) is not in the interest of the country as a whole, and therefore these mountain states should be incentivised not to do so. But the 16th FC failed to see this simple truth. Reports indicate that it has not provided any Green Bonus; nor has it provided any special grants (outside the Centre's discretion, which has now become totally politicised) for climate mitigation or disaster relief. All it has done is tinker with the definition of forests which, in pure financial terms, is meaningless.

A strategy forged from revenue deficit

THE story by my colleague, Subhash Rajta, in The Tribune earlier this week, about the Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu government in Himachal Pradesh buying 10 luxury cars for its use — even as the chief minister flew to Delhi to remonstrate with the powers-that-be over the 16th Finance Commission's recommendation to withdraw Revenue Deficit Grants from states and encourage them to tighten their belts — has created an uproar.

People are legitimately asking why ministers and bureaucrats need to use fancy, new cars — literally, privilege the "lal batti" syndrome, hardly restricted just to the purchase of vehicles — when budgets for schools, buses, hospitals, etc are being cut. And why the Himachal government won't take a leaf out of its own party's reform book, launched back in the day in 1991 by then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, ably assisted by Finance Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and Finance Secretary Montek Singh Ahluwalia — which not just helped change India but also gave Indians the confidence to take on the world. (Seems Sukhu has since met former finance minister P Chidambaram for a few tips.) Certainly, with a projected revenue deficit of Rs 6,390 crore, or 2.5 per cent of the state's GDP, Sukhu has a problem. But it's not like Himachal is the only state falling short. Nor is it that spending money is a bad thing — we all know that splurging (as long as it doesn't land you into a debt you can't repay) helps the economy go round. That's why a key data point to measure how broke your state is not to look at bald figures, but what percentage of the state GDP (GSDP) is accounted for by its revenue deficit.

So Punjab's projected revenue deficit, at Rs 23,957 crore, is a high 2.7 per cent of its state GDP. Tamil Nadu's revenue deficit at Rs 41,635 crore is even higher, but a low 1.17 per cent of its state GDP. Kerala's CPI(M) government — which devotes a large share of its pie to welfare schemes and has a population similar to Punjab — has a larger revenue deficit compared to Punjab, Rs 27,125 crore, but a lower GSDP, 1.9 per cent. Meanwhile Karnataka, one of India's richest states, has a revenue deficit of Rs 19,262 crore, a mere 0.6 per cent of its GSDP.

You see the picture clearly. Tiny Himachal has done well on some parameters, like education, but is unable to raise revenues to fully fund itself. Much larger states like Tamil Nadu, on the other hand, even if they throw money on freebies — which Himachal is also accused of doing — are able to control their budgets because they are able to defray their expenditure with larger investments.

In fact, Tamil Nadu, which goes to the polls this year — along with Punjab and Himachal Pradesh in 2027 — has promised to bring down its revenue deficit even further. Both Punjab and Himachal, on the other hand, are staring at emptying coffers — and few ideas how to fill them.

Still, none of this is new. What has really set the cat among the pigeons these last few days is not the end of Revenue Deficit Grants announced by the 16th Finance Commission, led by the redoubtable economist Arvind Panagariya, but something far more important. The Commission has rewired the devolution of funds from the Centre to the states — as much as 41 per cent of the kitty — by adding a brand new criterion. Which is, that the amount of funds a state gets from the Centre will henceforth depend upon how much it contributes to the national GDP. There are two messages here. The first, that resilient and investor-friendly states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra will benefit; while states like Himachal Pradesh, whose capacity to earn is limited, will be hurt. The first question to ask, therefore, is what this does to Centre-State relations, which, traditionally, have been book-ended by notions of equity and a greater generosity for the underdog. Under the new formula, the underdog will have to work much harder to haul itself out of the red. Now go back to the data. It is fascinating to see that Himachal has actually got a greater share of funds from the 16th Finance Commission than the 15th. This also means that when Mr Sukhu screams blue murder because his state hasn't got enough, the FinMin babus will rightfully point out that actually Himachal has — and that the Congress government must learn to do a better job of managing its finances. (Remember that Himachal goes to the polls in end-2027.)

The second message is equally interesting. States going to the polls over the next 12 months, like Tamil Nadu, Assam, Punjab, Kerala and West Bengal — with the exception of Bengal — have been allocated a larger share of funds than what they were by the 15th. With the exception of Assam, the remainder are all Opposition-ruled states. Even more significant, large states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh — all in the cow belt and all ruled by the BJP — have been given a lower share of taxes this time, as compared to last time.

Pure coincidence or pure strategy? Mr Panagariya will, of course, wager in favour of leaner, meaner and far less wasteful economies; he will argue that money has no colour, and so what if many of these states are ruled by Opposition parties.

But the message from Delhi, it seems, is quite different. Cow-belt states are being given shorter shrift because they are already in the BJP fold. Monies can be better used elsewhere, for example to woo states going to the polls soon.

We know that Punjab, like Himachal Pradesh, is fully on the BJP radar. Even if Kerala is a different kettle of fish, no harm feeding the fish — in fact, it has just bitten the bait in Thiruvananthapuram. Tamil Nadu is larger and a far more difficult pushover (and Karnataka must wait for 2028). It's clear the 16th Finance Commission has sown the seed. Now to water the plant and see how it blooms.

The debate, therefore, is no longer limited to whether states should receive Revenue Deficit Grants. It raises a larger question about the changing philosophy of fiscal federalism in India. If a state's ability to generate economic activity and contribute to the national economy becomes a significant factor in determining its share, the pressure on state governments to attract investment, expand their tax base and improve financial discipline will inevitably increase.

For states such as Himachal Pradesh, the challenge is particularly difficult because of their geographical and economic constraints. Limited industrialisation, a difficult terrain and a relatively narrow tax base restrict their ability to generate revenues at the same pace as larger industrialised states. Such states will argue that equal opportunity cannot always mean applying the same yardstick to fundamentally different economies.

At the same time, the criticism of extravagant government spending cannot simply be dismissed. The purchase of expensive official vehicles may be a relatively small component of a state's overall expenditure, but it carries enormous symbolic significance when governments are simultaneously pleading financial hardship. Fiscal prudence is not merely about cutting large budgetary allocations; it is also about demonstrating that those in power are willing to share the burden of austerity. The Finance Commission's new approach could also intensify competition among states. Governments may increasingly focus on improving infrastructure, attracting private capital, promoting manufacturing and expanding formal employment in order to strengthen their economic contribution. In theory, this could encourage healthier competition and reduce dependence on central assistance. But in practice, poorer and geographically disadvantaged states could require transitional support to build the capacity needed to compete.

The political implications will remain under scrutiny as several major states head towards elections. Any change in the flow of central resources is bound to be examined through a political lens, particularly when Opposition-ruled states claim that they are being treated unfairly. The Centre, meanwhile, will have to convince states that the new formula is based on objective economic criteria rather than electoral calculations.

Rajiv Ranjan Singh Emphasises Tech-Driven Fodder Solutions at ICAR-Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute, Jhansi

New Delhi, Oct 6 (GNS): The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoP-SW) celebrated the 62nd National Maritime Day across the country with great enthusiasm and reverence, honouring India's rich maritime heritage and the exceptional contribution of seafarers to the nation's growth and global connectivity.

This year's theme, "Prosperous Seas – Developed India and Youth for Blue Economy and Green Growth," reflected the importance of sustainable growth in the maritime sector and the critical role of youth in driving innovation and environmental stewardship.

The National Maritime Day Celebration Committee (NMDDC), Delhi chapter, under the aegis of the Directorate General of Shipping, MoPSW, organised the central celebration at the Vinay Marg Sports Ground in New Delhi today. The function was graced by the Union Cabinet Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, as the Chief Guest.

Speaking on the occa-



sion, Union Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal said, "On National Maritime Day, we honour the unwavering spirit of our seafarers and the maritime community who keep India's economy sailing forward. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, we continue to strengthen our ports, empower coastal shipping, and embrace innovation. We reaffirm our commitment to making India a global maritime leader. The ocean connects us not just

to trade, but to opportunity, growth, and national progress."

Week-long celebrations were held across the maritime sector, including flag pinning ceremonies for the Hon'ble Prime Minister and Governors of maritime states, blood donation camps, wreath-laying ceremonies to honour fallen seafarers, and national-level seminars on maritime development and the future of the Blue Economy.

Adding further, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal said,

"Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, India's maritime sector is undergoing a historic transformation. With our vast Blue Economy, cutting-edge port infrastructure, and future-ready shipping ecosystem, the sector is emerging as a powerful force multiplier in our journey towards a 'Viksit Bharat'. National Maritime Week is a celebration of our seafarers, our coastal communities, and our unwavering commit-

ment to building a sustainable, secure, and globally competitive maritime future for India."

During the event, Shri Sonowal interacted warmly with the cadets during the refreshment session, engaging in meaningful conversations about their aspirations and training. The Union Minister interacted with female cadets, encouraging them to lead from the front in shaping the future of India's maritime landscape. Shri Sarbananda Sonowal said, "Interacting with the young cadets on the sidelines of National Maritime Week was truly inspiring — their passion and commitment reflect the bright future of India's maritime journey. I wished them best of luck and commended them for their most important role as the nation builders via a strong, vibrant, modern and efficient maritime sector."

To foster community engagement and promote a healthy maritime spirit, sporting events such as football, cricket, volleyball, javelin throw, relay races, and sprints were organised with active participa-

tion from maritime professionals. These activities underscored the values of teamwork, resilience, and camaraderie that are hallmarks of life at sea.

The Ministry also recognised the outstanding services of individuals and organisations in the maritime sector by conferring awards and commendations to honour their dedication and achievements.

The event was also attended by the Secretary (Shipping), Joint Secretary (Ports), Directors, and Under Secretaries from the Ministry, reflecting the strong institutional presence and commitment to maritime advancement. Around 510 trainees and faculty members participated in the event.

The 62nd National Maritime Day not only honoured the legacy of India's maritime pioneers but also reaffirmed the nation's commitment to a greener, more inclusive, and innovation-driven maritime future. National Maritime Day commemorates the historic voyage of 'S.S. Loyalty', the first Indian-owned steamship, which sailed from Mumbai to London.

Nagaraju Maddirala Bats for Unified Pension System for Secure Retirement

New Delhi, Oct 6 (GNS): The First International Research Conference on Pension (IRCP) 2025 held in New Delhi concluded yesterday. It was inaugurated on 3rd April at Bharat Mandapam by Shri Pankaj Chaudhary, Minister of State for Finance, Government of India. The two-day event was organized by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA), to mark a historic milestone in India's journey toward robust old-age income security.

This platform brought together policymakers, scholars, industry leaders, and international experts to deliberate on the evolving dynamics of pension reforms, financial preparedness for retirement, and innovative strategies to secure the future of aging populations.

Highlighting a big change in India's demographic landscape, necessitating urgent and inclusive pension reforms to secure a dignified future for its aging population, Shri Pankaj Chaudhary, Minister of State for Finance in his key note stated that India's demographic landscape is on the profound shift in the coming decades. By 2050, one in five Indians will be over 60, and by 2047, the elderly will outnumber children. With 19 percent of the population projected to be elderly by mid-century—predominantly women—securing financial independence through inclusive pension schemes is not merely a goal, but a vital need for the country. 'Pension for All' must become a national priority, requiring policy action to ensure a dignified and secure future for our aging population.

In his address, Shri Nagaraju Maddirala, Secretary, Department of Financial Services highlighted that India's pension framework stands at a pivotal moment of transformation and through the launch of the Unified Pension System and efforts to broaden coverage, we are creating a robust foundation for secure retirement. UPS provides an assured pension of 50 per cent of the average basic pay drawn over the last

12 months prior to superannuation. India's pension assets, constituting roughly 17 percent of GDP, fall far short of the OECD average, where they typically exceed 80 percent, revealing a stark disparity in retirement readiness.

Welcoming distinguished guests, global thought leaders, and industry stakeholder, Dr. Deepak Mohanty, Chairperson of PFRDA in his address stated that the National Pension System (NPS) has emerged as a cornerstone of India's pension sector, fostering financial security for millions, with an accumulated corpus of Rs 14.4 Lakh Cr and 8.4 crore subscribers under NPS and APY. As we embrace technology-driven initiatives and innovative policy solutions, our focus remains on expanding coverage, ensuring financial sustainability, and building a pension-inclusive society for future generations.

The opening day of the First International Research Conference on Pension (IRCP) 2025 at Bharat Mandapam was a resounding success, featuring three dynamic panel discussions that captivated attendees with their depth and diversity.

The first session, titled "Pension for Future: Building Resilient Old Age Income Security," saw experts explore strategies adopted by various countries for enhanced pension coverage, building a sustainable pension system and challenges faced in inclusion of informal sector and gig economy workers. The panel was moderated by Somya Kanti Gosh, Member-16th Finance Commission and was addressed by Dr Deepak Mohanty, Chairperson, PFRDA, Ms. Astrid Ludin, Deputy Commissioner, FSCA, South Africa, Ms. Omolola Oloworaran, Director General, PENCOM, Nigeria and Mr. William Price, CEO, D3P Global.

This was followed by "Global Lessons on New and Innovative Investment Practices in the Pension Industry," which showcased innovative investment methods, approaches for the product design and sharing of international success stories to inspire India's pension sector.

Labour Participation and Women's Financial Inclusion See Strong Growth; DEMAT Accounts Quadruple Since 2021

New Delhi, Oct 6 (GNS): Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Government of India, released the 26th edition of its publication titled "Women and Men in India 2024: Selected Indicators and Data". The publication offers a comprehensive overview of the gender landscape in India, presenting selected indicators and data across key areas like population, education, health, economic participation, and decision-making, all sourced from various Ministries/ Departments/ Organizations. Utilizing official statistics, it presents gender-disaggregated data across urban-rural divides and geographic regions, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by women and men.

"Women and Men in India 2024: Selected Indicators and Data" serves as a crucial resource, highlighting both progress in gender equality and persistent disparities. By analyzing socio-economic indicators and highlighting trends, it empowers policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders to develop gender-sensitive policies



fostering sustainable and inclusive development.

"Women and Men in India 2024: Selected Indicators and Data" is available at the website of the Ministry (<https://mospi.gov.in/>).

Some of the highlights of the publication are as follows: The primary and higher Secondary levels have consistently high GPI, indicating strong female enrolment. Upper primary and elementary levels saw fluctuations but remained close to parity.

The LPFR in usual status for ages 15 years and above has improved from 49.8% (2017-18) to 60.1% (2023-24). Women own 39.2% of all bank accounts and contribute to 39.7% of total deposits. Their participation

is highest in rural areas, where they make up 42.2% of account holders. There is rise in DEMAT account over the years, indicating growing participation in the stock market. From March 31, 2021, to November 30, 2024, the total number of DEMAT accounts increased from 33.26 million to 143.02 million, marking more than a fourfold rise. Male account holders have consistently outnumbered female account holders, but female participation has also shown a growing trend. The number of male accounts rose from 26.59 million in 2021 to 115.31 million in 2024, while female accounts increased from 6.67 million to 27.71 million during the same period.

Rising percentage of female-headed proprietary establishments across manufacturing, trade, and other services sectors over the years 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 has been observed.

The total number of electors increased from 173.2 million in 1952 to 978 million in 2024, with a notable rise in female voter registration. Female voter turnout varied over the years, reaching 67.2% in 2019 but slightly declining to 65.8% in 2024. The gender gap in voting has narrowed, with female turnout surpassing male turnout in 2024.

Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of startups recognized by DPIIT with at least one-woman director, reflecting a positive trend in female entrepreneurship. The total number of such startups rose from 1,943 in 2017 to 17,405 in 2024.

The publication also highlights a steady rise in women's participation in economic and entrepreneurial activities. The growing number of female-headed proprietary establishments and DPIIT-recognised startups with at least one woman director indicates increasing.

States Told to Boost Saline Aquaculture via KVKs; National Panel Proposed

New Delhi, Oct 6 (GNS): The Centre on Monday called for collaborative efforts between the states, Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), and other agencies to develop strategies for utilizing saline land resources more effectively for aquaculture in four states — Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

A virtual review meeting, chaired by Union Fisheries Secretary Abhilash Likhi, discussed ground challenges and gaps faced by farmers in saline water aquaculture in these four states.

Besides collaborative efforts, the meeting emphasised conduct gap analysis for the development of potential clusters and on expanding cultivation area in the identified 25 districts of the four states as well as promoting shrimp consumption in northern India, an official statement said.

The four states were encouraged to leverage Kishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) to disseminate technical knowledge, identify new areas for saline aquacul-



ture, and conduct outreach-based research. Furthermore, the meeting highlighted the need for a National Level Committee to review guidelines for shrimp culture in freshwater/inland farms and to prepare a roadmap for the sustainable development of saline aquaculture in northern Indian states.

The states were also urged to formulate beneficiary-oriented action plans and communicate specific gaps to the Union Ministry for targeted central support in

key areas such as market-based research, disease management, regulatory frameworks, research, and capacity building.

Farmers from Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh raised several challenges that are impacting the viability and sustainability of their saline water aquaculture operations. They highlighted issues of high setup costs, inadequate subsidy coverage, and the restrictive 2-hectare area limit for saline water aquaculture.

Other significant concerns included fluctuating salinity levels, high land lease rates, reductions in subsidies, and the lack of locally available, high-quality seed. In addition, farmers pointed out the absence of proper marketing infrastructure, including markets and cold storage facilities, as well as rising input costs and low market prices for their products.

"These factors are contributing to low returns on investment, prompting farmers to seek increased

State Ministers Discuss Planning, Youth Empowerment and Development Initiatives

New Delhi, Oct 6 (GNS): Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) organized a Conference of State Government Ministers on Strengthening of Statistical Systems on 5th April, 2025 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

Rao Inderjit Singh, the Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge), MoSPI, Ministry of Planning, and Minister of State (MoS) for the Ministry of Culture, chaired the Conference. In his inaugural address, he appreciated the participation and committed involvement of States / Union Territories (UTs) in the conference and underscored the indispensable role of reliable data in shaping effective policies and called for unified efforts to embrace innovation, foster coordination, and uphold transparency in statistical processes, in a continued journey towards attaining the vision of "Vikshit Bharat 2047" and invited cooperation from all the States/UTs to strengthen the national statistical system.

Dr. Saurabh Garg, Secretary, MoSPI, emphasized the importance of robust statistical system for evidence-based policymaking. He highlighted key initiatives of MoSPI, including the Support for Statistical Strengthening (SSS) Scheme and appealed for participation in the National Sample Surveys (NSS). He stressed upon the need for having sub-state level estimates for more granularity. Concluding with a call for strengthened collaboration, he emphasized greater use of administrative and alternate data sources, use of modern technology in data collection, refining statistical frameworks to promote transparency, credibility, accountability, sustainable development and capacity building of States/UTs officials through NSSAT training programmes.

Ms. Nandita Gorlosa, Hon'ble Minister of Sports & Youth Welfare, Welfare of Minorities & Development and Public Works (Buildings & National Highways) Departments, Govt. of Assam; Shri Bijendra Prasad Yadav, Hon'ble Minister of Planning and Development, Govt. of Bihar; Shri Gaurav Gautam, Hon'ble Minister of Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship and Sports, Govt. of Haryana; Shri Radha

Krishna Kishore, Hon'ble Minister, Department of Planning & Development, Govt. of Jharkhand; Dr. Vanlalhlana, Hon'ble Minister, Department of School Education/Higher and Technical Education/Information and Public relations/Information and Communication Technology, Govt. of Mizoram; Shri K K Vishnoi, Hon'ble Minister of Sports & Youth Affairs, Skill & Employment Department, Government of Rajasthan; Shri Bikash Debbarma, Hon'ble Minister, Planning (Statistics) Department, Government of Tripura; Shri Suresh Kumar Khanna, Hon'ble Minister, Finance and Parliamentary Affairs, Govt. of Uttar Pradesh; Shri Saurabh Bahuguna, Hon'ble Minister of Minister of Animal Husbandry, Fisheries.

, Skill development & Employment, Protocol and Sugarcane Development, Govt. of Uttarakhand and Ms Chandrima Bhattacharya, Hon'ble Minister of State, Department of Planning, Statistics and Programme Monitoring, Govt. of West Bengal participated in the conference.

The State Government Ministers/UT Administrators appreciated the Conference of State Government Ministers and suggested that this should be made a regular feature for better coordination and holistic development of the National Statistical System. They also highlighted the importance of producing relevant, accurate, and timely statistics at both the national and sub-national levels and emphasised on the key areas where deeper collaboration and partnership between the Centre and the States is crucial for strengthening both national and state statistical systems.

Additional Chief Secretary, Secretary (Planning), Special Secretary, Director (DES) and other senior level officers from States/UTs also participated in the conference and made their valuable suggestions.

The workshop featured presentations on key aspects of statistical development and reforms, focusing on strengthening the national statistical system. Discussions covered the Support for Statistical Strengthening (SSS) Scheme, State participation in the National Sample Surveys (NSS) for district-level.

support from the Department of Fisheries to overcome these obstacles and ensure the sustainability of their aquaculture practices," the statement said. In Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, approximately 58,000 hectares of saline area have been identified, yet only around 2,608 hectares are currently being utilized. In the meeting, state fisheries officials from Uttar Pradesh highlighted the vast potential of inland saline aquaculture, covering 1.37 lakh hectares in districts such as Mathura, Agra, Hathras, and Rae Bareilly, with significant initiatives supported under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).

Rajasthan reported growing momentum in shrimp farming in salt-affected districts like Churu and Ganganagar, with approximately 500 hectares dedicated to the cultivation of Penaeus vannamei, milkfish, and pearl spot. Additionally, a diagnostic lab has been established in Churu under PMMSY. Punjab shared its achievements in expanding shrimp farming in south-

western districts such as Sri Muktsar Sahib and Fazilka, bolstered by the Blue Revolution and PMMSY schemes. Notable developments include a 30-tonne cold storage and ice plant and a dedicated training centre. Haryana demonstrated significant progress in saline aquaculture, having achieved a production of 13,914 tonnes with an investment of Rs 57.09 crore under PMMSY. "There is huge potential to convert these saline-affected areas into aquaculture hubs," the ministry said. These saline-affected lands, often unsuitable for traditional agriculture, hold immense potential to be transformed from wastelands to wealth lands.

India, being the second-largest producer of cultured shrimp globally, earns over 65 per cent of its seafood export value from shrimp alone. Despite the country's vast potential in brackish water and shrimp aquaculture, particularly in saline-affected areas, inland saline aquaculture resources continue to remain significantly underutilized.

CM Revanth Reddy orders notices to KCR, family over ‘missing’ land

Hyderabad, Oct 6 (GNS) Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Tuesday directed officials to issue notices to former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and his family members over 45 acres of ‘missing’ land Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Tuesday ordered officials to identify ‘missing’ 45 acres of land in survey number 325 at Erravalli village in Siddipet district, where former Chief Minister and Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) president K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) has his farmhouse. The Chief Minister held a review of the lands concerning Erravalli and the adjacent Venkatapuram villages in Markook Mandal, Siddipet district

As per the official records, a total of 388 acres of land is recorded under survey number 325 in Erravalli village. The officials briefed the



Chief Minister on the survey details for both villages and the details of the survey, which identified only 343 acres. According to a statement from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), 45 acres of land are missing from the records for the particular survey number.

The Chief Minister instructed the officials to issue notices to former Chief

Minister KCR and his family members, whose lands adjoin the area and submit their revenue records to the government. CM Revanth Reddy said that the government is planning to distribute the land in survey number 325 to eligible local farmers.

He also ordered the construction of a "Telangana Martyrs' Colony" within

survey number 325 for the families of those who sacrificed their lives during the Telangana movement.

The officials were also directed to allot housing plots to the martyrs' families and develop a colony with all necessary amenities.

The Chief Minister suggested that the responsibility of constructing the colony be entrusted to the Housing Department. Orders were also issued to complete the construction of the Martyrs' Colony by June 2. The Revenue Department officials had taken up a survey of the lands in Erravalli village last month after the Chief Minister ordered a probe into KCR's landholding, including his farmhouse at Erravalli. The Chief Minister had said in the State Legislative Assembly on September 16 that the inquiry will be conducted within a month.

BRS leader arrested over banner targeting Telangana CM

Hyderabad, Oct 6 (GNS) Telangana Police on Tuesday arrested BRS leader Manne Krishank in a case registered against him for a banner installed outside a hospital in Secunderabad with allegations against Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and his family. The Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) social media convenor was arrested from his residence and was taken to Gopalpuram Police Station of Malkajgiri Commissionerate. A case was registered against him and others on Monday on a complaint lodged by Sai Kumar, a functionary of the ruling Congress party.

The First Information Report (FIR) was registered against Krishank and others under sections 353 (2) and 352 of the Bharat Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). A banner reading “Congratulations, Revanth Garu-for Rs.13,200 crore” had appeared outside a hospital in Secunderabad on Sunday. The same day, police arrested two BRS leaders from Secunderabad Cantonment for installing the banner.

Krishank had alleged that Medicovert Hospital was sold for around Rs 13,200 crore and accused the Chief Minister's family of using the transaction to convert black money into white.

Meanwhile, the BRS leader said he was arrested simply because the ruling party lacked the guts to provide an answer. “I believe this is the first time someone has been arrested for holding a press conference at Telangana Bhavan. I revealed evidence and questioned the fact that individuals serving as directors in Medicovert and Max Bupa.

Owaisi alleges conspiracy to disenfranchise Muslims through misuse of Form 7

Hyderabad, Oct 6 (GNS) Voicing concern over misuse of Form 7 during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, AIMIM President Asaduddin Owaisi on Tuesday alleged that there is a deep conspiracy to delete Muslim voters through fraudulent and bulk submission of applications under it.

The Hyderabad MP complained to the Telangana Chief Electoral Officer, C. Sudharsan Reddy, regarding misuse of Form 7 for targeted deletion of Muslim voters in Goshamahall Assembly constituency in Hyderabad.

He brought to the notice of the CEO that the Goshamahall Assembly constituency, which falls under his



parliamentary constituency, has witnessed the apparent misuse of Form 7 applications in a manner that specifically targets Muslim voters. In a letter to the CEO, Owaisi complained that at polling station number 28, Thudumu Janardhan submitted 122 Form 7 applications. In these forms, the names of the voters against whom deletion is sought are

pre-printed, while the applicant has written his own name and contact number as the person filing the Form 7, he said.

"Upon enquiry, we found that the person who filed the Form 7 is a sympathiser of the BJP party. This makes it clearly evident that Form 7 is being used to target Muslim voters specifically," he noted. The MP said at polling station number 173, around 30 Form 7 applications were submitted to the Booth Level Officer (BLO). These forms do not mention the name of the applicant, whereas the names of the voters against whom the forms are filed are pre-printed. He thanked both BLOs for not accepting the forms.

Severe drought conditions in 320 mandals of Telangana

Hyderabad, Oct 6 (GNS): Preliminary assessments indicate severe drought conditions across 320 mandals in 18 districts of Telangana due to the El Nino effect, officials said on Tuesday. Telangana has a total of 621 mandals across 33 districts.

Telangana Chief Secretary Sanjay Jaju directed officials to immediately prepare a comprehensive report on the drought conditions prevailing in the state.

He held a review meeting regarding the State Disaster Management Department at the Dr B.R. Ambedkar Telangana State Secretariat.

The Chief Secretary instructed officials to gather comprehensive data from various departments—including Planning, Revenue,



Groundwater, Agriculture, Panchayat Raj, and Rural Water Supply—and to identify drought-affected mandals in accordance with established norms.

He advised that the comprehensive drought report be prepared by taking into account 12 standard parameters, including the rainfall recorded during the

Southwest Monsoon season (June to September).

The Chief Secretary directed officials to undertake the process of declaring drought-affected mandals based on government regulations and prescribed standards, and to prepare a comprehensive report on the matter by the end of October. He also instructed officials to prepare a detailed report containing all necessary information for the all-party meeting that the state government has decided to convene regarding the impact of El Nino. Principal Secretary (Finance) Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Principal Secretary (Disaster Management) Rahul Bojja, and Secretaries Dasari Harichandana.

Breakfast for 27 lakh school children in TG is world's largest initiative: DyCM

Hyderabad, Oct 6 (GNS): The breakfast scheme for 27 lakh students in government schools in Telangana is the world's largest initiative, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhattacha Vikramarka said on Tuesday.

He said that providing breakfast every day to 27 lakh students is an initiative that does not exist anywhere else in the world and that Telangana is the first to implement such an innovative programme.

The Deputy CM said the nutritious food being provided to students should not be viewed as free, but as an investment in the state's future human resources. He noted that only when children remain healthy and study well can they contribute significantly to the state's future production and thereby support the growth of the GSDP.

Vikramarka and Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy laid the foundation stone for a centralised community kitchen to be constructed at a cost of Rs 9.6 crore at Munagala village in Kodad Assembly constituency of Suryapet district for school students.

Addressing a public meeting organised on the occasion, Vikramarka said the greenfield kitchen at Munagala would be equipped



with modern technology and hygienic facilities to provide hot breakfast from a single kitchen to nearly 60,000 students studying in 1,020 schools.

He said breakfast was being provided six days a week to students studying in government schools across the state. Milk is being served on three days and ragi porridge on the other three days. He said that while preparing food even for 100 people at home is difficult, providing breakfast simultaneously to 27 million students is an initiative that does not exist anywhere else in the world and is a reflection of the Telangana government's humane approach.

The Deputy CM stated that children can grow into healthy human resources only when they receive adequate nutrition during their formative years. Therefore, the government has taken responsibility for providing quality food to children from poor and middle-class families from an early age and helping them reach higher levels in life.

Vikramarka, who is also the Finance Minister, said the welfare programmes being implemented by the government should not be viewed as freebies. He described the expenditure on the poor, farmers, women, and students as an investment that would ultimately benefit the state's economy.

He said that when people remain healthy, children receive education, women achieve economic empowerment and farmers receive investment support, the productivity of the state increases. He stated that programmes such as Rythu Bharosa, free electricity, supply of fine rice, Rajiv Aarogyasri, free RTC bus travel for women, interest-free loans, fee reimbursement and Indiramma Houses are all aimed at enabling poor families to achieve economic progress.

He said that when people's purchasing power increases, economic activity also grows, thereby contributing to the growth of the state's GSDP.

Free Hyderabad Metro Rides for IntrCity SmartBus Passengers

IntrCity SmartBus Partners with L&T Metro Rail to Simplify First- and Last-Mile Connectivity

Hyderabad, Oct 6 (GNS) IntrCity SmartBus, one of India's leading intercity bus travel brands, has partnered with L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad) Ltd. to offer complimentary Hyderabad Metro rides to passengers travelling to or from Hyderabad.

The initiative is aimed at making first- and last-mile connectivity more convenient for intercity bus travellers. Passengers can use the Metro to reach stations near IntrCity SmartBus boarding points before their journey and travel from Metro stations towards their destinations after arriving in Hyderabad, without paying an additional Metro fare.

How to Avail the Free Metro Ride

Passengers travelling on any IntrCity SmartBus route that starts or ends in Hyderabad need to book their tickets through the IntrCity app or website. They can then present their valid IntrCity booking ticket at the designated Metro station to receive a complimentary Metro travel ticket.

The facility is intended to reduce the inconvenience of navigating Hyderabad's traffic while providing passen-



intrcity smartbus

IntrCity SmartBus CEO Manish Rathie said the passenger journey begins from their home, rather than only from the bus boarding point. He said the partnership is focused on simplifying key stages of the journey, including reaching the boarding point and travelling to the final destination after arriving in the city.

gers with a more convenient and cost-effective travel experience. IntrCity SmartBus

CEO Manish Rathie said the passenger journey begins from their home, rather

than only from the bus boarding point. He said the partnership is focused on simplifying key stages of the journey, including reaching the boarding point and travelling to the final destination after arriving in the city.

He added that the Hyderabad Metro is a reliable public transport system for navigating the city's traffic, and the complimentary Metro facility is aimed at making intercity travel more convenient, predictable and affordable.

The companies said the initiative would also encourage the use of public transportation and contribute to more sustainable urban mobility.

IntrCity SmartBus currently connects Hyderabad with more than 35 cities across over 20 routes, including Bengaluru, Vijayawada, Chennai, Visakhapatnam, Mumbai and Pune.

The complimentary Metro ticket facility is currently available to passengers booking upcoming IntrCity SmartBus journeys to or from Hyderabad through the company's app and website.



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TG hotelier, who set himself ablaze in police station, succumbs to injuries

Hyderabad, Oct 6 (GNS): A hotel owner who allegedly attempted suicide by pouring petrol on himself and setting himself ablaze at a police station in Telangana's Nizamabad district succumbed to his injuries at a hospital on Tuesday. Polasa Sudhakar (60), who had suffered about 90 per cent burns on Monday, died while undergoing treatment at a private hospital on Tuesday morning.

Sudhakar, who ran a small hotel at Nizamabad's Bheemgal Bus Stand, allegedly poured petrol over himself inside the police station premises and set himself on fire. Police personnel reportedly rushed to extinguish the flames and shifted him for medical treatment.

Sudhakar's family members have alleged that repeated police action and harassment over the hotel is-

sue drove him to take the extreme step. They demanded that senior police officials investigate the circumstances and take action if any wrongdoing is established.

Following the incident, family members and relatives gathered outside the Bheemgal police station and staged a protest, demanding justice for Sudhakar. A petty case was registered against the hotel, allegedly operating late at night, and tables being placed outside the establishment after 10 p.m. Sudhakar reportedly claimed that police had questioned him several times and imposed fines on him on three occasions. He allegedly told police that he was earning his livelihood through the small hotel and questioned why action was being taken against him while other establishments were also operating late.



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