

INDIA FOCUS



India is a welfare state. We ensured that the government itself reaches every eligible beneficiary

NARENDRA MODI,
Prime Minister of India



India will be among top 5 semiconductor ecosystems by 2029

ASHWINI VAISHNAW,
Minister for Communications and IT

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India announces 4 astronauts for first manned space mission



India has announced the names of 4 astronauts who will be part of the Gaganyaan mission to space. The four are Indian Air Force pilots: Group Captain Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair, Group Captain Ajit Krishnan, Group Captain Angad Pratap and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla.

During a visit to Vikram Sarabhai Space Center (VSSC) in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the progress of the Gaganyaan mission and bestowed "astronaut wings" on the four astronaut-designates.

The Gaganyaan mission aims to send three astronauts to an orbit of 400 km and bring them back after three days. India's space agency Isro has been carrying out a number of tests to prepare for the flight. In October, a key test demonstrated that the crew could safely escape the rocket in case it mal-

functioned. After its success, Isro said a test flight would take a robot into space in 2024, before astronauts are sent into space in 2025, the BBC reported.

Successful completion of the project will make India the fourth country to send a human into space, after the Soviet Union, the US and China.

Space tech has applications in agriculture, weather, calamity warning, irrigation and navigation. Speaking at the event, the PM said space science can help in border safety, education and health services. "All of you, ISRO and the entire space sector have a huge role in building a Viksit Bharat."

Modi also inaugurated three important space infrastructure projects worth around Rs 18 billion. The projects are the SLV Integration Facility (PIF) at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota; the new "Semi-cryogenics Integrated Engine



PM at the inauguration of various ISRO projects at Vikram Sarabhai Space centre (VSSC) in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

and Stage Test facility" at ISRO Propulsion Complex at Mahendragiri; and the "Trisonic Wind Tunnel" at VSSC, Thiruvananthapuram.

Underlining that every nation's development journey has its special moments that define not just the present but the future generations, the Prime Minister said this is one such occasion. He recalled Chandrayaan success, which made India the first nation to land on the South Pole of the moon.

The Prime Minister also said, "Whether it is Chandrayaan or the Gaganyaan, no such project can be imagined without women scientists." He said that more than 500 women are in leadership positions in ISRO.

Underlining that India's space sector is a major contributor in sowing the seeds of scientific temperament among the young generations, Modi said: "The countdown of a rocket inspires lakhs of children in India, and those making paper planes today dream of becoming scientists like you (at ISRO)."

The Prime Minister said that as per estimates, India's space economy will grow five-fold and touch \$44 billion in 10 years. The country is becoming a global commercial hub in the field of space. He said Venus is also on the radar. By 2035, India will have its own space station.

Drawing comparisons about India's recent achievements in the space sector in the last 10 years with the decade before 2014, Modi said the nation has launched around 400 satellites compared to only 33 earlier, and the number of youth-driven space startups have gone up to



Gaganyaan Mission

India's first human space flight programme

Aims to put astronauts in an orbit 400 km above Earth for 3 days and bring them back

Project developed at the cost of Rs 90 billion, says BBC

Will make India fourth country to send a human into space

200 from two or three. He lauded their vision, talent and entrepreneurship. The recently approved FDI policy of 100% foreign investment in the space sector will bring the world's biggest space institutes to India, he said. "Space science is not just rocket science, but it is also the biggest social science. Society benefits the most from space technology."

Written using agency reports



India-EFTA sign Trade & Economic Partnership Agreement

STRENGTHENING TRADE TIES

India, EFTA ink FTA; \$100 bn investment target in 15 years

Written using agency reports

India and the four-nation European bloc EFTA signed a free trade agreement under which New Delhi has received an investment commitment of \$100 billion in the next 15 years.

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal described the signing as a "watershed moment", as it is India's first modern trade pact with a bloc having developed countries. He said that for the first time in a trade agreement, EFTA had committed to invest \$100 billion in the next 15 years. It would take around a year for the agreement to come into force.

The agreement has 14 chapters, including trade in goods, rules of origin, intellectual property rights (IPRs), trade in services, investment promotion and cooperation, government procurement, technical barriers to trade and trade facilitation.

"EFTA countries gain market access to a major growth market. Our companies strive to diversify their supply chains while rendering them

more resilient. India, in return, will attract more foreign investment from EFTA, which will ultimately translate into an increase in good jobs...All in all, the TEPA will allow us to make better use of our economic potential and create additional opportunities for both India and the EFTA States," Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, speaking on behalf of the EFTA member states, said.

Under free trade pacts, two trading partners significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them, besides easing norms to promote trade in services and investments.

India and EFTA have been negotiating the pact, officially dubbed the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), since January 2008. Thirteen rounds of talks were held till November 2013 before negotiations were put on hold.

Both sides resumed the negotiations in October 2023 and concluded it in a fast-track mode.

EFTA countries are not part of the European Union (EU). It is an inter-governmental organisation for the promotion and intensification of free trade. It was founded as an alternative for states that did not wish to join the European community.

India is negotiating a comprehensive free trade agreement separately with the EU, the 27-nation bloc.

India had earlier used the strategy of expediting or fast-tracking FTA negotiations successfully with the UAE and Australia.

India-Singapore sign key MoU on law, dispute resolution

India and Singapore have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation between the countries over law and dispute resolution. The MoU is aimed at boosting cooperation on issues such as international commercial dispute resolution, a press release issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice said.

The agreement was signed in a virtual meeting, in which India

was represented by Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and Singapore was represented by Edwin Tong, the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth and Second Minister for Law.

"The MoU is for further cooperation between the two countries in the areas of common interest such as international commercial dispute resolution; matters relating to promotion of robust alternative

dispute resolution mechanisms in respective countries and establishment of Joint Consultative Committee to oversee the implementation of the MoU," the release said.

Meghwal hailed the MoU as a bid to harness synergies between the legal regimes of the two nations. It signifies "our collective commitment to deepening collaboration" in law and dispute resolution.

MACRO WATCH

India's GDP growth may be closer to 8% this fiscal year: RBI Governor

Written using agency reports

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das said the Indian economy is poised to surpass the central government's Second Advance Estimate of 7.6% growth for the ongoing financial year.

"I would not hesitate to say that India's GDP growth in FY24 will exceed 7.6%, it might be closer to 8%," Das said in an interview with ETNow. "I am quite optimistic about next year's GDP growth."

State Bank of India also expressed a similar thought in Ecowrap research report. According to the report, the third-quarter GDP figures had a profound impact on market sentiment, catching many off guard and pleasantly surprising others. It underscores the significance of adopting prudent policy approaches and viewpoints, which can outshine unwarranted expectations that often lead to vulnerabilities.

In the third quarter of FY24, the Indian economy expanded by 8.4%, surpassing analysts' projections of 6.6% growth. However, despite this positive development, concerns have been raised by economists regarding the moderation in GVA (gross value added) growth. Additionally, the central government has revised its forecast for India's FY24 growth upwards, raising it from 7.3% to 7.6%.

Crisil, in its India outlook report, projected that the Indian economy is poised for substan-

tial growth in the upcoming fiscal year, forecasting a GDP growth rate of 6.8%. This indicator, the GDP growth rate, measures the year-over-year or quarterly change in a nation's economic output, offering insight into the pace of economic expansion.

Currently, India's GDP stands at \$3.6 trillion, positioning it as the world's fifth-largest economy, following the United States, China, Japan, and Germany. According to Crisil projections, the Indian economy is anticipated to witness substantial growth, reaching \$6.7 trillion by the fiscal year 2031.

Barclays has raised its GDP growth forecast for India for 2023-24 by a massive 110 basis points to 7.8%, while the bank's economists also revised upward their prediction for 2024-25 by 50 basis points to 7%.

The huge improvement in the growth outlook for India by Barclays comes after the release of blowout GDP numbers for October-December 2023 on February 29, with the statistics ministry estimating an astonishing 8.4% growth in the economy. This was sharply higher than the general expectation of a 6.5% growth rate and 6.7% by Barclays.

"We also raise our forecast for 2024-25 GDP growth to 7.0% from 6.5% earlier. We expect the steady domestic growth momentum to continue, supported by continued increases in government capex, much anticipated rising private investment, and monetary easing," said Rahul Bajoria, managing director and head of EM Asia (ex-China) Economics at Barclays, in a note late on February 29. ■

India on course to enter the upper-middle income category

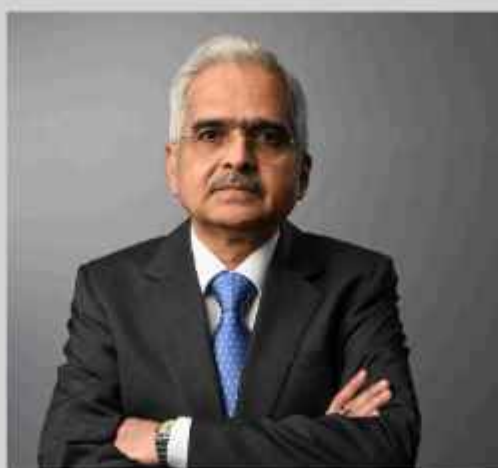
Written using agency reports

The current estimated GDP of \$3.6 trillion in FY24 could pave the way for India to enter the upper-middle income category (per capita income \$4,466-13,845) between FY33 and FY36, reaching a milestone of a \$15-trillion economy by FY47, according to India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra).

Ind-Ra has, however, set an ambitious estimate of the country becoming a \$30 trillion economy by 2047, dependent on certain factors.

Sunil Kumar Sinha, Senior Director and Principal Economist at Ind-Ra, emphasised the pivotal role of real GDP growth, inflation (GDP deflator), and the INR/USD exchange rate in shaping India's economic trajectory.

"The onward journey of Indian economy from India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) estimated \$3.6 trillion dollars in FY24 will depend on the rate at which the real GDP growth, inflation (GDP deflator) and INR/USD exchange rate evolve," Sinha said. "We expect the Indian economy under different scenarios to enter into



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SHAKTIKANTA DAS,
RBI Governor

the upper-middle income category (per capita income \$4,466-13,845) over FY33-FY36 and to a \$15 trillion economy over FY43-FY47."

Until 2006, the World Bank classified India as a low-income country. In 2007, India moved to the lower-middle income country and since then has remained there. India's per capita GDP stood at \$2,390 in 2022, the report stated. ■

India on track to be \$10 trn economy: WEF president

Written using agency reports

India is on track to become a \$10 trillion economy in coming years and grab the third-largest slot soon, World Economic Forum (WEF's) President Borge Brende said. He also said that the country is a place with optimism not seen elsewhere in a very fragmented and polarised world.

In an interview with PFI, Brende also said that the WEF hopes to come back to the country with the WEF India Summit in collaboration with the Government of India when the time is ripe. "The Indian economy is the fastest growing among all large economies of the world. We saw in Davos this year that there was a huge interest in India and I think this will only continue," Brende said.

Geneva-based WEF, which describes itself as an international organisation for public-private cooperation, holds its annual meeting in the Swiss ski resort town Davos every year in January. "When you come to India, you feel some optimism which is not the case all over the world. We are facing a geopolitical recession, a very fragmented and polarised world, but still there are areas where we can collaborate and it is important to find those areas," he said.



India is well placed and it is just a question of time before India becomes the third-largest economy in the world after the US and China

BORGE BRENDE,
World Economic Forum President

He said India has gone through important reforms and is seeing a good increase in foreign direct investments. ■

India's outward FDI rose by 24% in February

Written using agency reports

India's outward foreign direct investment (FDI) commitments increased to \$3.47 billion in February 2024 from \$2.82 billion in February 2023, an increase of around 24%.

Sequentially, FDI commitments were also up from \$2.18 billion in January 2024, according to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data.

Outbound FDI, expressed as a financial commitment, comprises three components: equity, loans, and guarantees. The equity commitments declined to \$502.14 million in February 2024 from \$776.79 million a year ago. It was also lower than the \$764.29 million recorded in January 2024.

Debt commitments decreased to \$251.08 million in February 2024, down from \$334.75 million in February 2023. It was also lower than \$306.59 million in January 2024.

Guarantees for overseas units swelled to \$2.71 billion in February 2024 from \$1.71 billion in February 2023. They were also substantially higher compared to \$1.11 billion in January 2024, RBI data showed. ■

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

'Strong policy thrust' led India to eliminate 'extreme poverty': Brookings

Written using agency reports

US-based think tank cited that India has now officially eliminated "extreme poverty" and PM Narendra Modi government's "strong policy thrust on redistribution" should be credited for it, according to a report in the Mint. The report is prepared by the think tank Brookings and authored by Surjit Bhalla and Karan Bhasin.

The report stated that India has now officially eliminated extreme poverty, which can be seen through the sharp decline in headcount poverty ratio and stark increase in household consumption. Official consumption expenditure data for 2022-23, which was released recently, shows real per capita consumption growth has been recorded at 2.9% per year since 2011-12. Under this, rural growth at 3.1% was significantly higher than urban growth of 2.6%. The report is the "first official survey-based poverty estimates for India in over ten years".

It said relatively higher consumption growth

in rural areas should not come as a surprise given the "strong policy thrust on redistribution through a wide variety of publicly funded programmes." The data also presented an unprecedented decline in both urban and rural inequality, according to the Mint report.

These two factors, i.e. high growth and large decline in inequality, have worked in combination to eliminate poverty in India for the purchasing power parity \$1.9 poverty line, as per Brookings, added the report.

The data show a strikingly lower number of poor people in India, at both thresholds, than those estimated by the World Bank.

Notably, these estimates do not take into account the free food (wheat and rice) supplied by the government to approximately two-thirds of the population, nor utilisation of public health and education, the think tank stated. ■

NUCLEAR MUSCLE

Core loading starts at India's first indigenous fast breeder reactor

Written using agency reports

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 4 saw commencement of "core loading" at India's first indigenous fast breeder reactor (500 MWe) at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu. The milestone marked the country's entry into the vital second stage of India's three-stage nuclear programme.

India has developed comprehensive capabilities spanning the entire spectrum of the nuclear fuel cycle. The government had approved in 2003, the creation of Bhartiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Ltd (BHAVINI) to construct and operate India's most advanced nuclear reactor – prototype fast breeder reactor (PFBR).

In line with the true spirit of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, PFBR has been fully designed and constructed indigenously by BHAVINI with significant contribution from more than 200 Indian industries. Once commissioned, India will only be the second country after Russia to have a commercial operating fast breeder reactor.

In terms of safety, the PFBR is an advanced third-generation reactor with inherent passive safety features ensuring a prompt and safe shut down of the plant in the event of an emergency. As it uses the spent fuel from the first stage, FBR also offers great advantage in terms of significant reduction in nuclear waste generated, thereby avoiding the need for large geological disposal facilities. ■

India 'seeking \$26 bn of private nuclear power investments'

Written using agency reports

The central government will invite private firms to invest about \$26 billion in its nuclear energy sector to increase the amount of electricity from sources that don't produce carbon dioxide emissions, according to a report by Reuters quoting two government sources.

This is the first time India is pursuing private investment in nuclear power, a non-carbon-emitting energy source that contributes less than 2% of India's total electricity generation. The funding would help India to achieve its target of having 50% of its installed electric generation capacity use non-fossil fuels by 2030, up from 42% now, said in the report.

The government is in talks with at least five private firms including Reliance Industries, Tata Power, Adani Power and Vedanta Ltd to invest around Rs 440 billion each, the two sources, who are directly involved in the matter, told Reuters.

The Department of Atomic Energy and Nuclear Power Corp of India Ltd (NPCIL) have held multiple rounds of discussions with the private companies in the past year on the investment plan, the sources said. The Department of Atomic Energy, NPCIL, Tata Power, Reliance Industries, Adani Power and Vedanta did not respond to queries sent by Reuters.

With the investment, the government hopes to build 11,000 megawatts (MW) of new nuclear power generation capacity by 2040, said the sources, who did not want to be identified as the plan is still being finalised.

NPCIL owns and operates India's current fleet of nuclear power plants, with a capacity of 7,500 MW, and has committed investments for another 1,300 MW.

The sources said under the funding plan the private companies will make the investments in the nuclear plants, acquire land, water and undertake construction in areas outside the reactor complex of the plants. But, the rights to build and run the stations and their fuel management will rest with NPCIL, as allowed under the law, they said. The private companies are expected to earn revenue from the power plant's electricity sales and NPCIL would operate the projects for a fee, the sources said.



The plan will not require any amendment to India's Atomic Energy Act of 1962 but will need a final go-ahead from the Department of Atomic Energy, said one of the two sources. ■

SEMICON PUSH

PM Modi lays foundation stone of milestone semiconductor plants

Written using agency reports

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stones of three semiconductor fabrication plants, being built at a cost of Rs 1.25 trillion, as India seeks to join ranks of big chip-producing countries.

The three plants include the country's first high-tech chip manufacturing plant of Tata Electronics, which the company is setting up in partnership with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp at Dholera's special industrial region.



India will be among top five semiconductor ecosystems by 2029

ASHWINI VAISHNAW,
Minister for Communications and IT

The plants, together with Micron's under-construction unit in Sanand, Gujarat, will help cut India's dependence on countries like Vietnam.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister said that only a handful of nations are manufacturing semiconductors today, and emphasised the need for a reliable supply chain after the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

Modi has laid the foundation of three chip plants – two units by Tata Electronics and the third by CG Power – entailing total investment of Rs 1.26 trillion.

The first set of semiconductors will start rolling out from Tata Electronics' plant in December 2026, Union Minister for Communications and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

Speaking at the ground-breaking ceremony of Tata Group and CG Power chip plants, Vaish-

naw said that India will be among the top five chip ecosystems in the world by 2029. "The first chip from Dholera plant will be out in December 2026 and chip from Micron plant will be out by December 2024," the minister said.

The plant will have the capacity to produce 50,000 wafers per month and involve an investment of Rs 910 billion. The Centre will contribute 50% of the capex on pari passu basis.

The PM also laid the foundation of an assembly and test facility of Tata Electronics in Jagiroad, Assam. It will be built with an investment of Rs 270 billion and is expected to generate over 27,000 direct and indirect jobs in the region. Notably, this will be India's first semiconductor unit in the Northeast.

He also laid the foundation of the semiconductor unit of CG Power, which it is setting up in partnership with Renesas Electronics Corp and Stars Microelectronics of Thailand at Sanand in Gujarat at an investment of Rs 76 billion. ■

GREEN POWER

India's 1st green hydrogen plant in steel sector inaugurated

Written using agency reports

The Union Minister for Steel and Civil Aviation, Jyotiraditya M Scindia, virtually inaugurated India's first green hydrogen plant in the stainless steel sector, located at Jindal Stainless Limited, Hisar.

It will be the world's first off-grid green hydrogen plant for the stainless steel industry and the world's first green hydrogen plant with rooftop & floating solar. This project is also a state-of-the-art green hydrogen facility with a target to reduce carbon emissions considerably by around 2,700 tonnes per annum and 54,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions over next two decades.

The minister said this innovative green hydrogen project seamlessly aligns with the government's vision for a cleaner and more sustainable future. "The project not only aligns with the government's vision but also creates valuable



The need of the hour, therefore, is for stakeholders to come together to build a globally competitive as well as sustainable steel industry

JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA,

Minister for Steel and Civil Aviation

employment opportunities, showcasing the potential of responsible industrial practices." He urged other industry stakeholders to enthusiastically adopt clean technologies, actively participating in India's transformative journey towards a greener economy and fostering a conscientious industrial landscape. ■

MOBILITY PUSH

Government approves e-vehicle policy to boost manufacturing

Written using agency reports

The government has approved a scheme to promote India as a manufacturing destination so that e-vehicles can be manufactured in the country with the latest technology. The policy is designed to attract investments in the e-vehicle space by reputed global EV manufacturers.

This will provide Indian consumers with access to latest technology, boost the Make in India initiative, strengthen the EV ecosystem by promoting healthy competition among EV players leading to high volume of production, economies of scale, lower cost of production, reduce imports of crude oil, lower trade deficit, reduce air pollution, particularly in cities, and will have a positive impact on health and environment.

The policy entails a minimum investment of \$500 million and has a timeline of 3 years for setting up manufacturing facilities, to start commercial production of e-vehicles, and reach 50% domestic value addition (DVA) within 5 years. A localisation level of 25% by the 3rd year and 50% by the 5th year will have to be achieved. ■

HEALTHY BUSINESS

'Healthcare innovation a \$60 bn opportunity by FY28'

Written using agency reports

Healthcare innovation in India, currently valued at \$30 billion, is expected to double by FY28, according to a recent report by Bain & Company and HealthQuad.

Pegged at \$180 billion in FY23, India's overall healthcare market is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12% to \$320 billion by the same time, it said.

The report said that healthcare innovation accounts for about 15% (\$30 billion) of the overall healthcare market in India, of which around 55% is export-led.

Aarthi Rao, partner at Bain & Company, anticipates a significant expansion. "We see the \$30 billion healthcare innovation market reaching \$60 billion by 2028," she said.

This growth will not only stem from value-engineering but also from business innovation, particularly in biotech, vaccines and med-tech sectors. She also predicts substantial growth in health-tech and pharma services, which would contribute to this expansion. There are four key segments in the healthcare innovation space — pharma services, which includes contract development and manufacturing organisation, contract research organisation, pharma IT (apart from healthtech, vaccines and biotech), and medtech. ■

India's mobile phone output tops Rs 19 trn during FY14-FY24

Written using agency reports

India's mobile phone production has in value terms topped Rs 19.45 trillion in the last 10 years, data from the India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) showed. The industry has set a goal of mobile phone production worth Rs 20 trillion.

In terms of volume, India produced 2.45 billion units of mobile phones during this 10-year period, against a goal of 2.5 billion units, according to ICEA.



Mobile phone exports

Rs 15.6 bn
in FY15

Rs 1.2 trn
in FY24
(estimated)

Mobile phone production

Rs 189 bn
in FY15

Rs 4.1 trn
in FY24
(estimated)

In the last few years, the growth in mobile phone production has been fuelled by the smartphone production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme. Companies such as Apple and Samsung are the major beneficiaries of the PLI scheme, and have been locally manufacturing their smartphones through contract manufacturers.

In FY15, the mobile phone production was at Rs 189 billion, which is estimated to have touched Rs 4.1 trillion in FY24, registering an increase of 2000%.

The mobile phone exports from India, which were worth Rs 15.6 billion in FY15, is estimated to touch Rs 1.2 trillion in FY24, a 7,500% increase in exports over a decade, ICEA said.

"It is believed that the doubling of India's GDP from the current \$3.7 trillion to \$7 trillion by 2030 will be led by growth in the digital sector and trade. In both these areas, electronics manufacturing led by mobile production will play a critical role," said Pankaj Mohindroo, chairman at ICEA.

The cumulative exports of mobile phones during the period 2014-24 reached a total estimate of Rs 3.2 trillion. ■

PhonePe takes on Google, Apple with homegrown app store

Written using agency reports

Fintech major PhonePe announced the launch of its homegrown Indus Appstore specifically for the Indian market, in a bid to compete with global incumbents like Google Play Store and Apple's App Store.

The Indus Appstore is PhonePe's attempt at creating a more competitive and localised mobile app store economy for India, which is already the world's largest market for mobile apps.



Indus Appstore challenges the status quo, ushering in an era of more healthy competition in the mobile app marketplace, which in turn should help create a more democratic and vibrant Indian digital ecosystem

SAMEER NIGAM,
CEO and founder, PhonePe

"Indus Appstore challenges the status quo, ushering in an era of more healthy competition in the mobile app marketplace, which in turn should help create a more democratic and vibrant Indian digital ecosystem," said Sameer Nigam, CEO and founder, PhonePe.

The store, which promises a level playing field for Indian app developers, will allow them to choose any third-party payment gateway for in-app billing, and they will not be charged any commission if they use an external payment gateway. ■

Google to make Pixel in India, Nikkei reports

Written using agency reports

Alphabet Inc's has told suppliers to start making its Pixel smartphones in India by next quarter at the earliest, as part of its plan to ship more than 10 million Pixel phones this year, the Nikkei newspaper has reported.

Google would start manufacturing smart-phones in India and its flagship Pixel 8 will be available in 2024, it said last October, as it focuses more on a key growth market.

The move will also help Google diversify its supply chain away from China, the Nikkei report said, citing a person with direct knowledge of the matter.

The tech giant will prepare production lines for its high-end Pixel 8 Pro smartphones in the coming weeks and start producing phones in the April-June quarter, the report added, citing multiple sources.

The report did not say how many phones Google plans to manufacture in India nor if the phones will be for sale in the country or for exports. ■

DEFENCE BOOSTER

Cabinet committee nod for 5th generation combat aircraft project

Written using agency reports

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has cleared a proposal to indigenously design and develop a fifth-generation deep penetration advanced medium combat aircraft (AMCA) in line with the futuristic requirement of the Indian Air Force, news agency ANI reported citing sources.

The report said the initial development cost of the project has been estimated at around Rs 150 billion. Under the plan, five prototypes of the AMCA will jointly be built by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) with support from private industries.

Only a very few select countries in the world such as the US, Russia and China have fifth-generation stealth fighter jets. The IAF has been pushing for the AMCA project given its long-term requirement.

Separately, the CCS also cleared a proposal to buy 34 new advanced light helicopter (ALH) Dhruv choppers — indigenously designed multi-role, new-generation helicopters — for the Indian Army and Indian Coast Guard.



HAL will manufacture the indigenously developed helicopter of which nine will be inducted in the Indian Coast Guard and 25 others will go to the Indian Army.

Both projects are expected to be worth over Rs 8,000 crore and give a boost to indigenisation ■

PM announces first test flight of made-in-India Agni 5 missile

Written using agency reports

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the first test flight of the made-in-India Agni 5 missile, which has been developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

In his social media account, the Prime Minister wrote, "Proud of our DRDO scientists for Mission Divyastra, the first flight test of indigenously developed Agni-5 missile with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology."

Mission Divyastra is the first flight test of indigenously developed Agni-5 missile with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) technology. According to government sources, quoted by news agency ANI, this will ensure that a single missile can deploy multiple warheads at different locations.

Mission Divyastra's system is equipped with indigenous avionics systems and high-accuracy sensor packages, which ensure that the re-entry vehicles reach the target points within the

desired accuracy.

The Agni-5 – with a range of 5,000 km – is developed considering the long-term security needs of the country, added the PTI report. The missile can bring almost the entire Asia including the northernmost part of China as well as some regions in Europe under its striking range. According to details, Agni 1 to 4 missiles have ranges from 700 km to 3,500 km and have already been deployed. ■

Defence exports to more than double to Rs 400 bn by 2026: Anurag Thakur

Written using agency reports

India's defence exports will more than double to Rs 400 billion in 2 years from Rs 160 billion at present, Union Minister Anurag Thakur said on March 13, adding that the government was dedicated to increasing its defence capabilities.

According to an official government release, Thakur said that India has a defence production worth Rs 1 trillion at present.

Speaking at another defence summit in March, Defence Minister Singh said, "The annual defence production, which was around Rs 400 billion in 2014, has now crossed a record Rs 1.10 trillion. The defence exports today have touched Rs 160 billion, from a meagre Rs 10 billion nine-ten years ago." ■



India's defence production is worth Rs 1 trillion at present, according to

ANURAG THAKUR,
Union Minister



INFRASTRUCTURE BOOSTER

Modi unveils projects worth Rs 410 bn for railways

Written using agency reports

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 554 railway stations as part of the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme on February 26 via video conference. Additionally, he laid foundation stones for around 1,500 road overpasses and underpasses across various states during a virtual event that was held at over 2,000 railway stations and function sites. The entire initiative costs Rs 410 billion.

The Amrit Bharat stations, spanning 27 states and Union Territories, will undergo redevelopment at a budget exceeding Rs 190 billion. These stations will serve as urban hubs and offer modern passenger amenities like roof plazas, shopping zones, intermodal connectivity, children's play areas, kiosks, and food courts. These stations will prioritise environmental sustainability and accessibility for Divyang individuals, drawing inspiration from local culture, heritage, and architecture.

The 1,500 overpasses and underpasses will cost Rs 215 billion. These infrastructure projects aim to alleviate congestion, enhance safety and connectivity, and optimise rail travel capacity and efficiency. ■

15 airport projects worth Rs 98 bn inaugurated

Written using agency reports

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled 15 airport projects worth Rs 98 billion, stating that these inaugurations should not be seen through the lens of the upcoming general elections but as part of the nation's journey to become developed by 2047.

Modi, at a public rally in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, virtually inaugurated the new terminal buildings of Pune, Kolhapur, Gwalior, Jabalpur, Delhi, Lucknow, Aligarh, Azamgarh, Chitrakoot, Moradabad, Shrawasti and Adampur Airports. The 12 new terminal buildings were developed at a total cost of Rs 89 billion, with a combined capacity to serve 61.5 million passengers annually.

The PM also laid the foundation stone for new terminal buildings at Kadapa, Hubballi, and Belagavi Airports. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) will undertake the development of the three terminal buildings at a total cost of Rs 9.080 million. Once completed, the combined passenger handling capacity of these three airports will increase to 9.5 million passengers per annum.



Another major project inaugurated by the PM was Delhi airport's expanded Terminal 1, which can now serve 40 million passengers per annum, more than double its previous capacity, which stood at 17 million passengers per annum. Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), which runs the Delhi airport, said that its total passenger handling capacity has now crossed 100 million passengers per annum. ■

MAKE AI IN INDIA

Cabinet approves ambitious IndiaAI mission

Written using agency reports

To strengthen the vision of "Making AI in India" and "Making AI Work for India", the Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved a comprehensive national-level IndiaAI mission with a budget outlay of Rs 103.7 billion.

The IndiaAI mission will establish a comprehensive ecosystem catalysing AI innovation through strategic programs and partnerships across the public and private sectors. By democratising computing access, improving data quality, developing indigenous AI capabilities, attracting top AI talent, enabling industry collaboration, providing startup risk capital, ensuring socially impactful AI projects and bolstering ethical AI, it will drive responsible, inclusive growth of India's AI ecosystem.

The Mission will be implemented by IndiaAI Independent Business Division (IBD) under Digital India Corporation (DIC).

The mission will propel innovation and build domestic capacities to ensure the tech sovereignty of India. It will also create highly skilled employment opportunities to harness the demographic dividend of the country. IndiaAI Mission will help India demonstrate to the world how this transformative technology can be used for social good and enhance its global competitiveness, according to a government's release. ■

STARTUP ENERGISER

Unicorns to add \$1 trn to economy, 50 million jobs by 2030: CII-McKinsey study

Written using agency reports

New unicorns are likely to add \$1 trillion to the Indian economy, which would reach \$7 trillion size by 2030, and add 50 million new jobs, according to a report. The

Sectors such as retail and e-commerce, next-gen financial services, manufacturing, and SaaS and digital are poised to drive massive growth

in the coming years. The first unicorn was seen in India in 2011, and after a decade, India has crossed the mark of 100 unicorns. The combined valuation of 113 unicorns is \$350 billion as of January 2024. The industry body said that the emergence of over 100 unicorns is a remarkable achievement, attributed to several pivotal factors, which encompass a digitally adept young population facilitated by widespread access to mobile internet, the growth of the middle class, and a supportive regulatory framework.

CIH's President R Dinesh stated that the startup ecosystem is a vibrant tapestry woven with threads of innovation, resilience, and transformative ideas. "As we dissect the components that foster growth, we navigate through the realms of economic contribution, job creation, and ground-breaking innovations that redefine industries," he said.

According to the findings of the CIH report, India's 100-plus unicorns and about 100,000 startups have contributed a significant 10-15% to GDP growth between 2016 and 2023. Moreover, rapid digitisation has not only transformed urban centres but has also permeated rural areas, catalysed inclusivity and driving the creation of 20-25% of all new employment opportunities.

India is home to 20 times more startups today than in 2015, going from 4,000 to over 100,000. Startups and related corporate ventures have contributed an estimated \$140 billion in economic value in FY23.



Gift from startups

10-15%
to GDP in
2016-2023

20-25%
of new
employment
opportunities

EASE OF LIVING

Govt launches portal for consumer protection, digital courts

Written using agency reports

The government has launched a dedicated portal for the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA). The portal is an effort to clamp down on persistent violations of advertising guidelines and will serve as a platform to "name and shame" violators.

CCPA, which reports to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, also launched an e-court facility for State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (SCDRC) in Chandigarh, Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra and Delhi. The e-court will facilitate easy e-filing of complaints by consumers for speedy and hassle-free resolution of complaints. Further, the website will serve as a

unified platform to access advisories, guidelines and orders passed by CCPA which support the rights of consumers, it said.

AI FOR INDIA

Gen AI likely to add \$66-80 bn to financial services GVA by 2030

Written using agency reports

The impact of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) on the gross value added (GVA) within financial services can go up to 26%, and it could add \$66-80 billion in value by 2030, according to recent estimates from Ernst & Young (EY).

According to its report, around 78% of the respondents surveyed said that they had either implemented Gen AI in at least one use case or had plans to pilot it over the next 12 months.

The biggest challenge for financial organisations is the enhanced regulatory scrutiny surrounding governance and standards around building large language models.

The report also revealed that Gen AI's impact on the gross value added (GVA) within the financial services sector is most significant, ranging from 22% to 26%. Consequently, Gen AI could contribute a potential addition of \$66-80 billion to GVA by 2030.

Commenting on the findings, Abizer Diwanji, Head-Financial Services, EY India, said, "In India's fast-evolving financial services sector, Gen AI is a game-changer, fostering innovation and competitiveness. It promises growth, efficiency, and enhanced customer experiences. However, responsible adoption is key, ensuring ethical data use and transparency with customers. Financial firms must promote AI awareness and cultivate a culture that increases its potential for positive impact, while curtailing misuse."

India to come up with AI rules this year: Minister

Written using agency reports

India is scheduled to come up with the first draft of the AI regulations framework by June-July this year, said Rajeesh Chandrasekhar, Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, according to NDTV Profit.

"We will exploit AI to its fullest for achieving the goals of our economic growth, ensuring that it makes a big impact on healthcare & agriculture among others," said Chandrasekhar during a discussion in Mumbai.

On the government's stance on AI, Chandrasekhar added, "We intend to exploit AI to its fullest for achieving the goals of our economic growth, ensuring that AI makes a big impact



We will exploit AI to its fullest for achieving the goals of our economic growth, ensuring that it makes a big impact on healthcare & agriculture among others"

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR,
MoS for Electronics and IT

on healthcare and drug discovery, as well as on agriculture and farmer productivity. Use cases are not about having bragging rights to compete with ChatGPT. That is not the direction we are going in. We will also go ahead and support education and there will be a focus on multiple languages of India, and multiple datasets." ■

MANUFACTURING PROMOTION

DRDO hands over defence technology to industries

Written using agency reports

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) handed over 23 licensing agreements for transfer of technology (LATOT) to 22 industries in presence of Secretary-Department of Defence (R&D) and Chairman of DRDO Dr Samir V Kamatand.

The technologies transferred cover the domains of electronics, laser technology, armaments, life sciences, materials science, combat vehicles, naval systems and aeronautics. The transfers were done during Maharashtra MSME Defence Expo 2024.

These include manufacturing of carbon aircraft brakes for LCA Tejas, 100 m infantry foot bridge floating, anti-personnel grenade, expendable mobile shelter solar heated shelter, weaponisation of hand-held thermal imager and high pressure water mist fire suppression system. The products based on these DRDO technologies will further boost the defence manufacturing sector and self-reliance in defence.

The DRDO handed over the system for advance manufacturing assessment and rating (SAMAR) assessment certificates to nine industry partners. SAMAR is a benchmark to measure the competency of defence manufacturing enterprises. ■

TECH BOOSTER

Digital public infra contributes 0.9% to GDP, to triple by 2030: Nasscom

Written using agency reports

Digital public infrastructures like Aadhaar, UPI and FASTag generated a value of \$31.8 billion in 2022, contributing 0.9% to India's GDP, and the contribution is projected to increase 2.9-4.2% by 2030, industry body Nasscom said in a report.

The Nasscom-Arthur D. Little report titled "Digital Public Infrastructure of India - Accelerating India's Digital Inclusion" said that Indian DPIs' foundational layers are based on transparency and trust, which promotes paperless transactions, reduces bureaucracy, and advances the concept of digital identity and document management.

The report said that mature DPIs such as Aadhaar, UPI (Unified Payments Interface), and FASTag have witnessed exponential adoption by 2022, and the next 7-8 years offer an opportunity for further scalability, reaching even the most remote segments of the population.

"By 2030, adoption across matured and budding DPIs has the potential to scale up. The economic value added by these DPIs by 2030 has the potential to increase to 2.9-4% of GDP from 0.9% in 2022." The report said over 30 countries are either adopting or in early discussions to implement India's DPIs like UPI, Aadhaar, and Bechn in their countries for boosting social and financial inclusion. ■



...DPIs hold vast potential in revolutionising the entire Indian economy and the world and paints a hopeful picture of an interconnected, open, inclusive world with infinite possibilities, empowering each and every one across the globe

BRAJESH SINGH,
President of Arthur D.
Little India

Bilateral Developments

Hon'ble External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar visits Singapore during March 23-25, 2024



India Budget Session Held in Singapore



"India Budget Session 2024 cum Round Table on Trade and Investment Facilitation in India" was organised by the High Commission of India, Singapore, in association with ICAI Singapore Chapter on March 12, 2024. The High Commissioner of India to Singapore, Dr Shilpak Ambule, spoke on "Viksit Bharat" and India's green, digital, sustainable and inclusive growth. He also distributed ODOP products Dheki Sah Tea from Assam and Lakadong Turmeric from Meghalaya to the dignitaries.

Inauguration of #ChaloIndia Global Campaign



On March 7, 2024, the Indian High Commission organised the live streaming of the inauguration of #ChaloIndia Global Campaign by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi. The event was attended by the Indian community members in Singapore.



DGICG Delegation Visits Singapore for the 18th ReCAAP Governing Council Meeting



The High Commissioner of India to Singapore, Dr Shilpak Ambule, interacted with a comprehensive Indian delegation comprising the ICG, IFC-IOR and NMF (led by DGICG) that visited Singapore for the 18th ReCAAP Governing Council Meeting on March 13-15, 2024. India remains a proactive contracting party to the organisation. It ensures discussions focussed on the prospects of strengthening mutual cooperation & synergising collaborative efforts between maritime agencies from India and the ReCAAP towards collectively addressing the maritime challenges and promoting cooperation for security and growth of all in the region.

HUDCO Delegation Visits Singapore



The High Commissioner of India to Singapore, Dr Shilpak Ambule, met with a visiting delegation of HUDCO representatives and discussed avenues of collaboration that can be explored with the Singapore side.

Forthcoming Events In India

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INDIA FOCUS

ISSUE: 336
APRIL 2024
HIGH COMMISSION OF INDIA, SINGAPORE

I. Global Fintech Fest 2024

Date & Venue: August 28-30, 2024;
at Jio World Convention
Center, Mumbai, India
Organiser: Payments Council of India
(PCI), the National Payments
Corporation of India (NPCI),
and the Fintech Convergence
Council (FCC)
Contact: sandeep@fintechcouncil.in,
siddhartha@fintechcouncil.in

Details: The Global Fintech Fest (GFF)
stands as a beacon of innovation and

collaboration in the ever-evolving landscape
of financial technology. Organised annually
by the Payments Council of India (PCI),
the National Payments Corporation of India
(NPCI), and the Fintech Convergence
Council (FCC), GFF has transcended its
inception in 2020 to become the preeminent
gathering of fintech visionaries and thought
leaders worldwide. As we gear up for the
fifth anniversary celebration of the Global
Fintech Fest in 2024, it's imperative to
reflect on the journey that has led us here
and chart a course for the future of
finance.

Website: <https://globalfintechfest.com/>

II. World Furniture Expo 2024

Date & Venue: December 12-14, 2024;
at Bombay Exhibition Center,
Mumbai, India
Organiser: Worldex India Exhibition &
Promotion Pvt Ltd
Contact: contactus@worldexindia.com

Details: WOFX is India's premier international
B2B trade show dedicated to the furniture
+ design marketplace. It was conceived and
implemented as an industry platform wherein
the entire furniture + design marketplace

from India and across the globe can converge,
connect, collaborate, generate business,
exchange market knowledge and information,
network for fresh ideas and demonstrate
innovations. WOFX enables global and
local companies to expand into India's vast
market and showcase their products to a
global audience of brands, as well as leading
importers, distributors, real estate developers,
retail chains (offline and online), industry
professionals, buyers and decision-makers
from India, South Asia and beyond.

Website: <https://wofxworldexpo.com/>

For feedback & comments, please contact:

High Commission of India,

31, Grange Road, Singapore-239702

Email: com2.singapore@mea.gov.in; com.singapore@mea.gov.in

URL: www.hcisingapore.gov.in