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## Taxpayers to Benefit as New Financial Year 2025-26 Brings Significant Income Tax Reforms



**New Delhi, March 19, 2025** — As the financial year 2025-26 approaches, taxpayers are set to experience substantial relief owing to the income tax reforms announced in the Union Budget 2025-26 by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. These reforms, effective from April 1, 2025, aim to enhance disposable incomes and stimulate economic growth. The most notable change is the increase in the basic exemption limit, ensuring that individuals earning up to ₹12 lakh annually will not be liable to pay any income tax.

Additionally, the revised tax slabs aim to simplify the tax structure while offering significant relief across various income groups. For those earning above ₹12 lakh, tax rates range from 5% to 30%, depending on the income bracket. To further support taxpayers, the rebate under Section 87A has been enhanced from ₹25,000 to ₹60,000, resulting in zero tax liability for individuals with taxable incomes up to ₹12 lakh. Moreover, a standard deduction of ₹50,000 for salaried individuals under the new tax regime aims to simplify tax calculations while

providing additional relief. These reforms are expected to leave more money in the hands of taxpayers, particularly benefiting the middle class.

By increasing disposable incomes, the government aims to boost household consumption and savings, stimulating overall economic growth. The measures also reflect the government's commitment to creating a more taxpayer-friendly, simplified, and efficient tax system.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman emphasized that these changes are part of a broader strategy to simplify taxation and reduce disputes. The government's approach seeks to provide greater tax certainty, streamline compliance, and support the long-term growth of the economy. As the new financial year begins, taxpayers can anticipate a more favorable tax environment, which not only reduces their tax burden but also encourages increased participation in the nation's economic activities. These reforms represent a step toward a more inclusive and growth-oriented economy.

## Government Accelerates Ethanol Production with New Schemes and Targets

**New Delhi** — In a concerted effort to enhance ethanol blending in petrol, the Government of India has introduced several initiatives aimed at boosting ethanol production and achieving



environmental sustainability. During the Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2023-24, approximately 672 crore litres of ethanol were produced and supplied to Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) for

blending with petrol. In the current ESY 2024-25, about 261 crore litres have been supplied as of February 23, 2025. To meet the ambitious target of 20% ethanol blending with petrol by ESY 2025-26, an estimated 1,016 crore litres of ethanol will be required. To support this goal, the government has notified various Ethanol Interest Subvention Schemes between 2018 and 2022, encouraging the establishment of ethanol production plants nationwide. Notably, on March 6, 2025, a new scheme was introduced specifically for Cooperative Sugar Mills, facilitating the conversion of existing sugarcane-based plants into multi-feed ethanol production facilities. Additional measures to promote ethanol production include setting remunerative prices for ethanol derived from various feedstocks supplied to OMCs, reducing the Goods & Services Tax (GST) on ethanol intended for the Ethanol

Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme from 18% to 5%, and promoting maize as a significant feedstock for ethanol production. Furthermore, OMCs have established Long Term Offtake Agreements (LTOAs) with Dedicated Ethanol Plants (DEPs) to ensure sustained supply. To support advanced biofuels, the "Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN (Jai Indhan - Vatavaran Anukool Fasal Awashesh Nivaran) Yojana," initially launched in 2019 and amended in 2024, provides financial assistance for setting up advanced biofuel projects across the country. These initiatives underscore the government's commitment to promoting ethanol production, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, and fostering a more sustainable



## India-UK Trade Deal Promises to Reshape Economic Ties

In a landmark development, India and the United Kingdom have finalized a trade agreement that is expected to significantly boost commerce between the two nations. The deal, which has been under negotiation for several years, aims to lower tariffs, streamline trade regulations, and create new

opportunities for businesses in both countries. One of the most significant aspects of the agreement is the reduction of import duties on key products, including textiles, electronics, and pharmaceuticals. Indian businesses, particularly in the manufacturing sector, are set to benefit as their goods become more competitively priced in the UK market. In return, British companies will gain easier access to the Indian market, where demand for high-quality consumer goods and technology is on the rise. Economists predict that the trade volume between India and the UK

could double or even triple in the next decade as a result of the agreement. The deal is also expected to encourage greater foreign direct investment, with British firms exploring new opportunities in India's rapidly growing economy. Beyond the economic implications, the trade deal is being seen as a strengthening of diplomatic ties between the two nations. As global trade patterns shift, India and the UK are positioning themselves as strategic partners, ensuring long-term benefits for their respective economies.



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## US Tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China to Disrupt Global Coatings Supply Chain, Impacting Indian Industry



The American Coatings Association (ACA) has raised concerns over the U.S. administration's newly imposed tariffs on key trading partners Canada, Mexico, and China, warning that these measures will disrupt supply chains and escalate production costs across multiple industries. The move is expected to have ripple effects on global markets, including India's coatings and manufacturing sectors, which rely on international supply chains.

According to ACA, the tariffs will significantly impact essential consumer products, including medical devices, pharmaceuticals, food production equipment, automobiles, and aerospace applications. With higher costs expected across industries, Indian businesses that source raw materials or finished products from the U.S. could also face price escalations and supply

constraints.

Canada and Mexico are the largest trading partners of the U.S. coatings industry, with trade volumes of \$1.26 billion and \$815 million, respectively, while China ranks third at \$117 million. The coatings sector currently maintains a positive trade surplus of \$1.7 billion, underscoring its reliance on international commerce. India, which has a growing coatings and automotive sector, is deeply integrated into global supply chains and could experience indirect cost increases

due to supply disruptions and higher tariffs affecting input costs.

The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) has long provided stability in trade relations, particularly benefiting industries such as automotive manufacturing. However, with coatings playing a crucial role in vehicle production, from protective automotive paints to specialized lightweight coatings, disruptions in the North American market could affect Indian auto component suppliers and OEMs who export to or source from these regions.

Additionally, ACA emphasized that many raw materials essential for coatings production are not

manufactured in the U.S. and are primarily sourced from China, limiting alternative procurement options. This could have a direct bearing on Indian manufacturers that depend on U.S.-based suppliers for specific raw materials, increasing costs and pushing them to explore alternative sources.

The association reaffirmed its willingness to collaborate with the U.S. administration to find balanced trade solutions, advocating for fair agreements that ensure stability, competitiveness, and a level playing field for businesses.

For India, the evolving trade landscape presents both challenges and opportunities. While disruptions could increase costs for Indian manufacturers, they may also open avenues for India to strengthen its role as a reliable supplier in the global coatings industry. Stakeholders across industries will be closely monitoring these developments, assessing their potential impact on production costs, supply chains, and India's broader trade relations with the U.S. and other key global players.



## Govt Unveils Major Reforms to Reduce Dependence on Crude Oil Imports

**New Delhi** – In a strategic move to enhance domestic oil and gas production and reduce reliance on imported crude oil, the Government of India has introduced a series of policy reforms. These measures aim to attract investment, boost exploration, and ensure stable fuel prices for consumers. To accelerate hydrocarbon exploration and development, the



government has implemented several key initiatives over the past decade. The **Production Sharing Contract (PSC) Reforms (2014)** and the **Discovered Small Field Policy (2015)** were introduced to fast-track the monetization of small and discovered oil and gas fields. The **Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) (2016)** replaced the previous licensing regime with a more flexible, investor-friendly model, encouraging private sector

participation in exploration activities. Additionally, the **National Data Repository (2017)** and the **National Seismic Programme (2017)** have helped in gathering and analyzing crucial geological data to unlock untapped hydrocarbon reserves. Further, the government has taken steps to maximize production from existing fields. The **Policy for Extension of PSCs (2016 & 2017)** ensured continued production from mature fields, while the **Enhanced Recovery Methods Policy (2018)** incentivized the use of advanced extraction techniques. The **Unconventional Hydrocarbons Policy (2018)** expanded the scope of exploration to include resources like shale oil, coal bed methane, and gas hydrates, reinforcing India's energy security. In an effort to create a more competitive and transparent fuel market, the **Natural Gas Marketing Reforms (2020)** were introduced, simplifying pricing mechanisms and attracting greater investment in the natural gas sector. The government also reduced royalty rates and implemented a zero-revenue-share model in select offshore basins to attract foreign and domestic investors. As a result, nearly 1 million square kilometers of previously restricted offshore exploration areas have been opened up for private

sector participation. The government has also taken steps to protect consumers from volatile global oil prices. In 2021 and 2022, excise duties on petrol and diesel were reduced by ₹13/litre and ₹16/litre, respectively, providing much-needed relief. In March 2024, Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) further cut retail prices by ₹2 per litre for both petrol and diesel across India. Additionally, measures like diversifying crude import sources, promoting ethanol blending in petrol, and rationalizing intra-state freight charges have helped stabilize fuel prices and ensure affordability for consumers in remote areas. Recognizing the importance of social welfare, the government continues to provide subsidies on domestic LPG cylinders under the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**. Over 10.33 crore beneficiaries receive subsidized cooking gas, with additional financial support from select state governments. This ensures that lower-income households have access to affordable clean cooking fuel. Through these comprehensive policy measures, the government aims to strengthen India's energy independence, encourage sustainable fuel pricing, and create a robust oil and gas sector capable of meeting future energy demands.

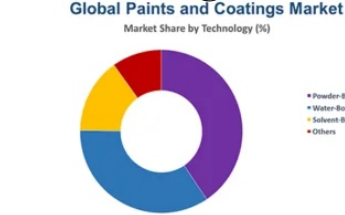
## Auto Parts, Medical Gear Exports Surge Amid Global Slowdown

**New Delhi, March 19, 2025** — Exports of auto components and medical as well as scientific instruments have shown impressive growth over the past three years, according to official data released on Tuesday. This growth has been particularly notable despite the broader decline in merchandise exports, which shrank at the fastest pace in 20 months. Auto parts exports surged to \$7.7 billion in FY24 from \$6.88 billion in FY22, driven by strong demand from the US, Turkey, Germany, Mexico, and Brazil. The growth reflects India's strengthening position in the global automotive supply chain. An official noted that the country's motorcycle parts and accessories segment experienced significant progress, reducing its reliance on imported components. Exports of

motorcycle parts alone grew by 27.09% to \$709.22 million from \$558.05 million in the April-January period of FY25 compared to FY22. The medical and scientific instruments sector also recorded substantial growth. Exports reached \$2.43 billion in FY24, up from \$1.73 billion in FY22, showcasing India's increasing capability to serve the global healthcare and medical technology market. The US, Germany, France, the UAE, and Russia emerged as the leading destinations for these exports, signaling India's deeper integration into advanced markets. However, the robust growth in these sectors contrasts with a broader decline in + merchandise exports, which contracted by 10.9% to \$36.91 billion in February, marking the sharpest

drop in 20 months. Analysts attribute this decline to the high base effect of previous years. Among food products, coffee exports displayed notable growth, rising by 40.6% year-on-year to \$1.54 billion during the April-February FY25 period. Italy led the coffee export market with a 19.01% share, followed closely by Germany at 12.42%. Despite the challenging global environment, India's success in auto parts and medical gear exports suggests a strategic shift toward reducing import dependency and capitalizing on emerging global market opportunities. The government's policies aimed at boosting manufacturing capabilities and minimizing import reliance appear to be paying off, positioning India as a competitive player in high-value sectors.

## Paints and Coatings Market Poised for Strong Growth Through 2034



**Global Market on the Rise** The global paints and coatings market is set to experience significant growth over the next decade, driven by increasing industrialization, urbanization, and technological advancements. Experts project that the market, valued at USD 193.91 billion in 2025, will reach approximately USD 282.45 billion by 2034, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.27%.

**Asia Pacific Leading the Charge** Asia Pacific remains the largest regional market, surpassing USD 74.36 billion in 2024 and growing at a CAGR of 4.40%. Europe follows closely, holding over 28% of the global revenue share in 2023. The architectural and decorative segment dominates the industry, accounting for more than 60% of the total market share in 2024.

**Key Growth Drivers** The market's expansion is primarily fueled by several critical factors. The booming construction industry plays an essential role in infrastructure and residential construction projects. Government investments in public infrastructure further drive demand. Growing automotive production also contributes, as the global automobile sector's increasing need for high-performance coatings is propelling market growth. Environmental regulations and sustainability trends are influencing the market, with stricter policies boosting the demand for eco-friendly, waterborne, and low-VOC coatings. Companies are investing in bio-based technologies to reduce their carbon footprints. Additionally, advancements in technology, including artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, are enhancing R&D and production, leading to improved product adhesion and durability.

Smart coatings with self-healing and anti-corrosion properties are gaining traction. Regional Market Insights Market performance varies across regions, with Asia Pacific continuing to dominate due to rapid construction and automobile production in China, India, and Southeast Asia. Europe benefits from government incentives supporting construction activities, while North America experiences steady growth driven by technological advancements in coatings and increased industrial applications.

**Diverse Market Segmentation** The market is categorized based on product, material, and application. By product, waterborne coatings led the market in 2024, holding a 39.4% share due to their eco-friendly nature and quick-drying properties. By material, acrylic coatings dominated in 2023 with over 45% market share, while polyurethane coatings are projected to grow at a CAGR of 5.8%. By application, the architectural and decorative segment remains the largest, followed by industrial and automotive applications.

**Industry Leaders and Developments** Major players in the market include Akzo Nobel N.V., PPG Industries, Inc., The Sherwin-Williams Company, Jotun A/S, Axalta Coating Systems, LLC, RPM International Inc., Kansai Paint Co., Ltd., and BASF SE. Recent industry developments highlight the market's dynamism. In December 2024, LIC increased its stake in Asian Paints to 7% through open-market acquisitions. In February 2024, Grasim Industries entered the decorative paints sector with an INR 10,000 crore investment.

**Supply Chain Challenges and Opportunities** The paints and coatings industry relies on a complex value chain, involving raw material suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, and end users. Key raw materials such as pigments, resins, solvents, and additives are primarily derived from oil and natural gas feedstocks. Price volatility in crude oil impacts raw material costs, affecting

भारतीय उद्योग में योगदान के लिए इंडियन पेंट्स ट्रेड एसोसिएशन प्रतिबद्ध: राजीव कुमार गुप्ता



overall market dynamics.

लुधियाना, 17 फरवरी: इंडियन पेंट्स ट्रेड एसोसिएशन (IPTA) ने भारत के औद्योगिक विकास में सहयोग देने के अपने संकल्प को दोहराया है। संगठन के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष श्री राजीव कुमार गुप्ता ने लुधियाना में आयोजित नॉर्थ ज़ोन कमेटी मीटिंग में कहा कि एसोसिएशन व्यापारियों और उद्योगपतियों की समस्याओं को सुलझाने के लिए सरकार के साथ मिलकर कार्य करेगी।

यह बैठक लुधियाना के नीरवाना क्लब में आयोजित की गई, जिसमें देशभर से पेंट व्यापार से जुड़े प्रमुख प्रतिनिधियों ने भाग लिया। इस दौरान संगठन के राष्ट्रीय महासचिव श्री अशोक कुमार महेश्वरी, राष्ट्रीय कोषाध्यक्ष श्री संजय गुप्ता, ज़ोनल प्रमुख श्री इश मदान और आरएम ग्रिंडवेल नॉर्टन लिमिटेड के श्री बल्लभ गुप्ता सहित कई अन्य गणमान्य उपस्थित थे।

राजीव कुमार गुप्ता ने प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की आत्मनिर्भर भारत योजना की सराहना करते हुए कहा कि इंडियन पेंट्स ट्रेड एसोसिएशन इस पहल में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाने के लिए पूरी तरह से तैयार है। उन्होंने कहा कि संगठन न केवल व्यापारिक समुदाय को सशक्त करेगा बल्कि भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूती प्रदान करने में भी योगदान देगा।

बैठक में पंजाब, हरियाणा, हिमाचल प्रदेश, राजस्थान, उत्तराखंड और उत्तर प्रदेश सहित कई राज्यों के प्रतिनिधियों ने भाग लिया। इस अवसर पर व्यापार जगत की विभिन्न चुनौतियों और उनके समाधान पर विस्तृत चर्चा की गई। श्री गुप्ता ने कहा कि इंडियन पेंट्स ट्रेड एसोसिएशन उद्योग को आगे बढ़ाने और व्यापारियों के हितों की रक्षा के लिए हरसंभव प्रयास करेगा। उन्होंने व्यापारियों से एकजुट होकर संगठन की गतिविधियों में भाग लेने और सरकार के साथ मिलकर उद्योग को आगे ले जाने का आह्वान किया।

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# Powder Coating: A Sustainable Technology



Dr. Gaurav Chandra Srivastav

**Abstract:** Powder coating is an eco-friendly finishing process that offers numerous environmental, economic, and performance benefits. Unlike traditional liquid coatings, powder coatings are solvent-free, emit negligible volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and produce minimal waste. This technology not only enhances the durability and aesthetics of products but also aligns with global sustainability goals by reducing energy consumption and promoting recyclability.

This presentation explores the advantages of powder coating, its applications, and its role in fostering a sustainable future. In recent years, awareness of environmental conservation and pollution prevention has risen steadily. Government regulations and genuine concern for the environment have motivated chemists to modify all types of coatings to reduce environmental impact. The concept of environmental 'friendliness' has dramatically changed the way coatings are formulated.

Powder coatings are arguably the most environmentally 'friendly'



coatings. They do not contain solvents that release hazardous air pollutants (HAPs). During the baking cycle, powder coatings release very low amounts of VOCs. They produce virtually no waste material and contain very few hazardous chemicals. Notably, with recent advancements in the technology, the few hazardous chemicals that have found their way into powder coatings are decreasing as they are being replaced with safer materials.

**Introduction to Powder Coating:** Powder coating is a finishing technology that can be described as "ground-up dry paint" or "pulverized plastics." It provides a decorative, aesthetic, and highly protective coating that can be applied to a wide range of products. The polymeric resins used in producing powder coatings are similar to those used in both paints and plastics, comprising the combination of resin, pigment, filler/extender, and various additive materials. Powder coatings can be either thermoplastic or the thermosetting.

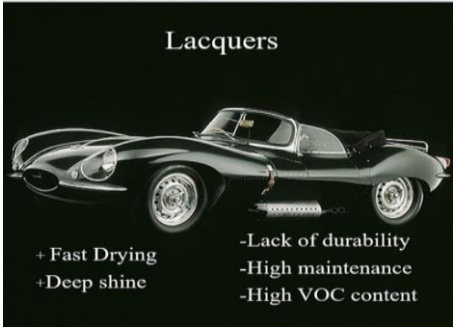
The primary difference between these three types lies in the molecular weight range of the



## Comparison with traditional Liquid Coatings:

Powder coatings offer several advantages over traditional liquid coatings, particularly in terms of environmental, economic, and performance benefits. Environmentally, powder coatings emit low to zero volatile organic compounds (VOCs) since they do not contain solvents, thereby reducing air pollution and health risks. They also generate minimal waste due to high transfer efficiency and the ability to recycle unused powder. Additionally, powder coatings are energy efficient, requiring faster curing times and lower temperatures, and they do not need water for application or cleanup, further reducing environmental impact.

Economically, powder coatings lead to cost savings through reduced material waste, lower energy costs, and decreased labor expenses. They also provide superior durability and longevity, offering enhanced resistance to chipping, scratching, and corrosion, which extends the lifespan of coated products. Moreover, powder coatings comply with environmental regulations without necessitating costly adjustments. Performance-wise, powder coatings deliver a durable finish that resists physical damage and environmental factors, while also providing a smooth, uniform aesthetic with a wide range of colour options. Their versatility makes them suitable for various materials, including metals, plastics, and composites.



## Applications of Powder Coating and market size:

Powder coating is a versatile finishing technology widely used across various industries due to its durability, aesthetic appeal, and environmental benefits. In the automotive industry, powder coating is applied to wheels, engine parts, and body panels to enhance corrosion resistance and provide a high-quality finish. The consumer



goods sector utilizes powder coating for appliances, furniture, and fitness equipment, ensuring long-lasting and visually appealing products. In architecture and construction, powder coating is used on aluminum extrusions, fencing, and metal frameworks to protect against weathering and wear. The electronics industry benefits from powder coating for enclosures and components, offering insulation and protection from environmental factors. Additionally, industrial machinery and equipment often feature powder-coated parts to withstand harsh operating conditions and extend their service life. This technology's adaptability to different materials and its eco-friendly nature make it a preferred choice for many applications.

- Automotive industry
- Consumer goods (e.g., appliances, furniture)
- Architectural and construction materials
- Electronics and electrical components



- Enhanced Performance
- Sustainability/Regulation
- Functionality
- Cost Reduction
- Penetration vs. Liquid

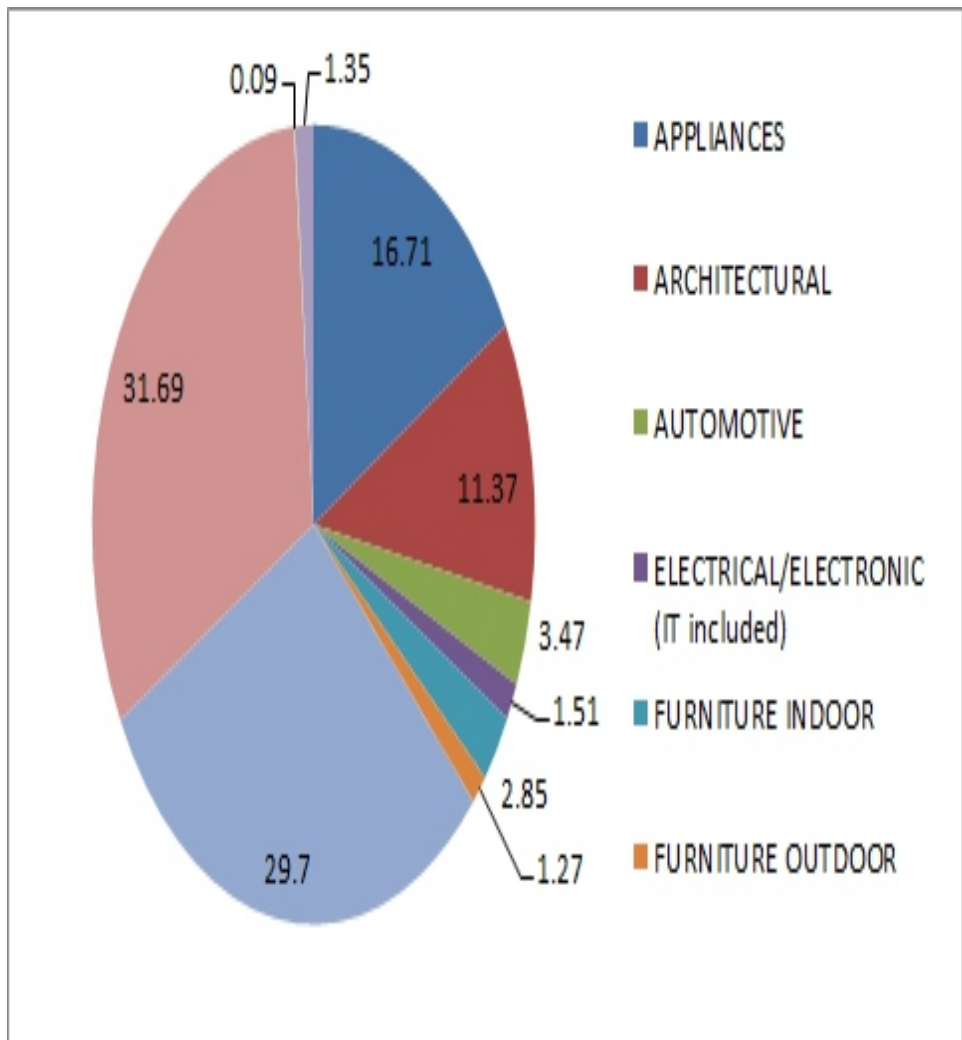
**Future Trends, Innovations and Challenges:** The future of powder coating technology is poised for significant

enhanced durability, flexibility, and resistance to extreme conditions. Automation and digitalization are transforming application processes, with smart systems improving efficiency, reducing waste, and ensuring consistent quality. However, challenges remain, such as addressing the limitations of powder coatings on heat-sensitive substrates and improving the recyclability of powder materials. Additionally, the industry must overcome technical hurdles related to achieving uniform coatings on complex geometries and further reducing energy consumption during curing processes. As these innovations continue to evolve, the powder coating industry is set to play a crucial role in sustainable manufacturing and high-performance applications.

innovations in materials science are leading to the creation of high-performance coatings that offer advancements driven by sustainability, innovation, and evolving market demands. Key trends include the development of eco-friendly and low-VOC formulations, which align with global environmental regulations and reduce the carbon footprint. Few innovations in technologies are:

- UV Curable Powders
  - LTC Powder Coatings
  - ULB-ACURE Powder Coatings
- Conclusion:**

While other eco-friendly technologies like water-based coatings, high-solid coatings, UV



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- Low bake / Fast cure
  - Low bake with good matting efficiency
  - Bio-based raw materials
  - Recyclable raw materials
  - Reduced free TMA, TMA free
  - BPA-free / Tin free/reduced Tin
  - TGIC>HAA
- Special effects / haptics  
Conductive / anti static  
Anti-fingerprint  
Low dirt pick up  
High surface energy  
Edge coverage  
Insulating/thermal conductive

- New substrates:  
MDF,  
Solid wood,  
Plastics  
Fiber cement  
Coil?  
Can
- Single (for wheel, primer + base coat) vs. multiple layers  
Thinner layers, Fit for use,  
High filler loading  
Reduced pretreatment  
Replace epoxy with polyester

curable coatings, and electrocoating offer significant environmental benefits, powder coating stands out for its combination of low environmental impact, high performance, and versatility. Each technology has its own strengths and is suitable for different applications, but powder coating's unique advantages make it a compelling choice for sustainable manufacturing.

**Author Introduction:** Dr. Gaurav Chandra Srivastav, was awarded Ph.D. in Chemical Synthesis by Indian Institute of Technology working on "Controlled Radical Polymerization". With over 19 years of experience in the Paints-Coatings and Ink Industry, brings expertise in Physical Chemistry, Surface Chemistry, Chemical Reactions and Mechanism with his role as development of new formulations, study on new raw materials and synthesis. Dr. Gaurav owns numerous patents, research papers and authors in-depth technical articles for knowledge enhancement and awareness. Dr. Gaurav worked with many prominent companies in past and now working as Technical Service & Development Manager-India Subcontinent (Powder Coating Resins) in Allnex Resins for development of technology, technical services and business development. Dr. Gaurav Chandra Srivastav Technical Service & Development Manager- PCR INSC





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## Leather Coatings

Typically, a thin lacquer or pigment coating is applied to tanned leather. Such a coating serves a variety of functions, including decoration. Leather's physical characteristics may also be modified by the coating; for example, it may become more stiff and less permeable to air and water. These modifications are subject to the type of coating, particularly the polymer chosen as a film former. The technology used for coating production also affects the qualities; the coating may stay on the leather's surface or penetrate deeply. The structure and level of surface damage of the leather determine the coating technology that is selected. The middle layer of an animal's hide, known as tanned leather, is produced by mechanical and chemical processing. Leather's resistance to bacterial and fungal attack, as well as its resistance to heat and water, increases with processing. The collagen protein, which has a fibrous structure, makes up the majority of the derma. The derma contains collagen in the form of a fibrous mat, with the fibres stretching at different angles to the leather surface. The diameter of these fibres ranges from 100 to 300  $\mu\text{m}$ . The proteinaceous components are joined into multifibre ropy structures by mucosaccharides and other proteins (albumin, globulin) that are found in between fibres. The elasticity and plasticity of leather are determined by its multi component structure. There are several uses for leather, including saddles, shoes, gloves, clothes, handbags, and upholstery for furniture. Each use requires a particular processing method for leather, which may involve using various chemicals in varying amounts and under varying processing circumstances. This results in leathers with a variety of mechanical and physical characteristics: strong and stiff for bottoms, more rigid for shoes, and extremely soft, thin, and flexible for gloves and clothes. Leather frequently becomes colored while being processed. Leather can be dyed by immersing it in a dye solution bath, often in a revolving drum, or by applying a colourful liquid coating to the dry leather surface. The latter method adds a protective layer of leather. Another, less common technique for creating a surface coating is laminating a polymeric film onto the leather's surface. This occurs when a hot plate is used to push the film into the surface, causing it to stick to it. In general finished leather can be undyed, surface dyed by adding a coating, bath dyed and surface coated, or dyed in a bath without a coating (aniline leather). If the leather surface contains multiple imperfections, grinding might be used to get rid of them. The coating

is thicker and creates an artificial grain in these situations. Several coating layers are applied to leather in order to coat it and color it. The first grounding layers aid in bonding the leather by penetrating the derma's surface. The most crucial layer serves both ornamental and defensive purposes. The uppermost layer gives the degree of shine, highlights the primary layer's visual appeal, and frequently shields it from the damaging effects of moisture.

The composition of the coating layers and the state of the leather surface which can be either polished or natural—determine how many distinct coating layers are needed to achieve the desired leather surface quality. The following procedures are often involved in the creation of a leather surface coating:

1. Application of a single non-pigmented seal coating. This coating is done by spraying on leather with a natural top grain and in the case of a polished surface leather, by flow coating. This coating penetrates well, assists in the bonding of collagen fibres, and creates the foundation for the development of a new leather surface.
2. The leather receives a colored ground coating following a period of drying and mild pressing (pressure of 0.6 to 0.9 mPa and temperatures of 55 to 60°C). Brushing is an option to apply this layer.
3. The primary colored coating is applied after drying and is occasionally mild pressed. Two or three distinct applications may be desirable, depending on the hue; for light colors, possibly four applications can be needed.
4. A couple of spray applications are used to apply the top layer. In between the coats, pressure and drying may occasionally be used.

All these steps are not necessary in all cases. Depending on the leather's surface condition, sometimes the first ground coat may be omitted; quite often the second pigmented ground coating is omitted, and its function is performed by the main coat.

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## Understanding TiO<sub>2</sub> through Light Scattering

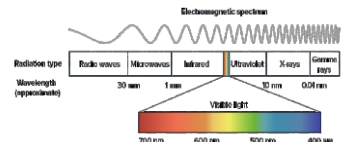
Study and  
Compilation  
by:

**ANUJ AGARWAL - TEXOCHEM INDUSTRIES**

When working with white pigments, it is very important to have a basic understanding about light scattering and its different effects. Since titanium dioxide (TiO<sub>2</sub>) is the most used white pigment, we would study about light scattering using TiO<sub>2</sub> as our reference. In this article, we will share some key points which help you understand your pigment better. Unlike colored pigments that provide opacity by absorbing visible light, TiO<sub>2</sub> and other white pigments provide opacity by scattering light. This scattering is possible because the white pigment can bend light.

*It is easier to get opacity with black pigment than with white pigment. Black opacity is achieved through one light-particle interaction and light absorption. Whereas white opacity requires multiple light-particle interactions and scattering.*

Just like pigment particles are characterized by their particle size, light rays are characterized by their wavelengths. The wavelengths we are concerned primarily is of the visible spectrum, which falls within the range of 400 – 700 nm.

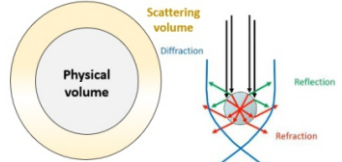


### Refraction, Diffraction and Opacity

Every pigment particle has a scattering volume around its actual physical volume. Light rays entering the scattering volume are scattered by either reflection, refraction, or diffraction. If there is enough

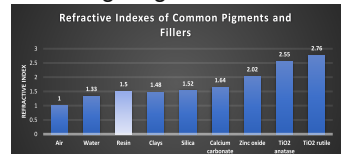
pigment in a system, all light striking the surface will be scattered outward (except for little absorption by the polymer or pigment) and the system will appear opaque and white. Refraction occurs when the light enters the pigment particle and gets bent based on the refractive index of the material. Refractive index is that property which helps in determining the opacity of a pigment. For example, refer to the chart below for refractive indices of various pigments and fillers. We see that the rutile grade of titanium dioxide has the highest refractive index, meaning it has the highest strength of bending light. Fillers (clay, silica, and calcium carbonate) have low refractive indexes, like polymeric resins, hence they can't scatter light as good as TiO<sub>2</sub>.

*The hiding power of a white coating is determined by the magnitude of the difference between the refractive indices of binder and pigment or filler; the greater this difference, the greater is the hiding power. Large differences always result with air, which is why colorless fillers (extenders) appear white in powder form.*

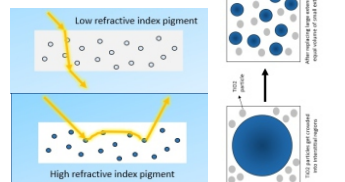


When the particle can bend the light effectively, it sends back the incoming light from the surface, making the surface appear white. When the refractive index is low, light passes easily through the thin film, making the surface appear grayish or less opaque. When the distance between the particle and light ray is less than the wavelength of the light, diffraction occurs. Diffraction is a very important phenomenon in case of TiO<sub>2</sub> particles, because of their low particle sizes. Smaller TiO<sub>2</sub> particles will scatter the lower wavelength, while larger

particles will scatter the higher wavelength region. So, a mix of particle sizes helps in complete scattering of light.



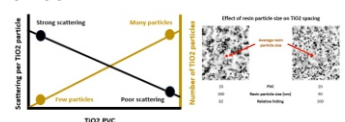
It is important to note that when number of pigment particles is high (Pigment volume concentration is high), there is a lot of overlapping in scattering volume, which decreases the effective scattering volume. Another graph below shows the different regions categorized based on pigment concentration and its respective scattering. For best performance, all formulations should be based in region 2 and region 3.



We can observe that scattering is higher in region 5, but that is due to the air voids which form after exceeding critical pigment volume concentration (CPVC), forming a porous surface.

### Effect of resin and extender size on TiO<sub>2</sub> scattering

Smaller resin size allows easy dispersion of TiO<sub>2</sub>, while larger resin particles push the pigment particles to agglomerate. Similarly, the particle size of the extender used in the paint formulation also impacts the TiO<sub>2</sub> scattering. Larger extender particles tend to push the TiO<sub>2</sub> particles to agglomerate, whereas smaller extender particles reduce TiO<sub>2</sub> crowding. Hence the formulators can expect to see better opacity in systems with extenders having low particle sizes.

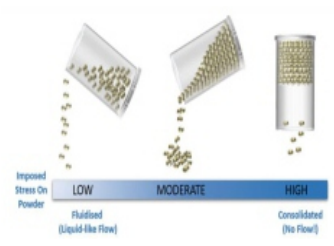


## POWDER COATING RHEOLOGY

**Er KULDEEP VERMA**  
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Particle size, shape, surface characteristics, and inter particle forces that impact the powder's ability to flow freely are important considerations in powder coating rheology, which is the study of how powder coating particles flow and behave under applied forces. In essence, it examines the particles' "flow ability," which is essential for correct application during the powder coating process, especially in terms of how easily the powder can be sprayed and evenly distributed on a surface.

**Important facets of the rheology of powder coating:**

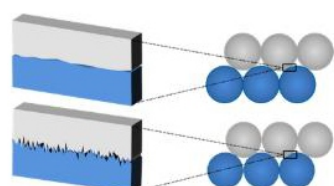


### Assessing the rheology of powder coatings:

**Powder Rheometer:** A specialized device that quantitatively assesses the flowability of powder coatings by measuring powder flow characteristics utilizing methods such as shear cell analysis, tap density, and angle of repose. The significance of comprehending the rheology of powder coatings.

### Optimizing the application process:

Manufacturers can modify powder formulation characteristics, such as particle size, additives, and surface treatments, to attain the required flow behavior for reliable application by knowing the rheological properties. Preventing flaws: By modifying the powder rheology, poor



**Particle size and distribution:** While wide fluctuations in particle size might result in problems with powder settling and uneven application, smaller and more consistent particle sizes often offer greater flowability.

**process:** Manufacturers can modify powder formulation characteristics, such as particle size, additives, and surface treatments, to attain the required flow behavior for reliable application by knowing the

**Particle shape:** Because spherical particles have less surface contact and lower interparticle interactions than irregular ones, they often flow better.

**Surface features:** Features like as charge distribution and surface roughness can affect, flowability by influencing how particles interact with one another.

**Internal particle forces:** Particularly in fine powders factors such as Van der Waals forces and electrostatic attraction can cause cohesiveness between particles, impeding flow.

flowability can be lessened to avoid problems like sagging, uneven coating thickness, and powder accumulation on the spray gun.

**Quality control:** To guarantee reliable powder coating performance, rheological measurements can be incorporated into quality control protocols. By making the bulk particles of a powder larger, the forces that promote movement (such gravity or pressurized air) can overcome the forces of cohesion and cause the powder particles to flow. This is the most conventional method of increasing a powder's flowability.

### Mechanisms that restrict particle movement:

**Friction:** Assuming all other characteristics are the same, particles with smoother surface will typically have a lower frictional interaction and flow more readily than those with a rougher surface. Interlocking Mechanisms Certain shaped particles have the ability to mechanically interlock and impede flow. Inter-particle cohesiveness forces Contacting and nearby particles are subject to inter-particle forces.



## AkzoNobel Unveils Sustainable Wood Coating with 20% Bio-Based Content

New Delhi, February 27, 2025:

AkzoNobel, a global leader in paints and coatings, has launched an innovative wood coating, RUBBOL WF 3350, which incorporates 20% bio-based content. The new product, developed under the company's Sikkens Wood Coatings brand, marks a significant step towards sustainability in the industrial coatings sector.

The waterborne, sprayable opaque coating has been designed to enhance the use of renewable raw materials while maintaining high-performance standards. AkzoNobel's latest innovation reflects its commitment to driving eco-friendly solutions without compromising durability and quality.

"By utilizing bio-based raw materials, we're not only reducing our environmental footprint but also advancing the circular economy in the wood coatings industry. This development also aids our customers in achieving their sustainability goals," said Tessa Slagter, Sustainable Innovation Manager at AkzoNobel. Jim Kavanagh, Director of AkzoNobel's Industrial Coatings business, emphasized the product's technological significance, stating, "RUBBOL WF 3350 stands as a testament to our cutting-edge R&D capabilities. We have successfully formulated a bio-based coating that meets the rigorous performance expectations of conventional coatings, ensuring lasting beauty and protection even in extreme

weather conditions." The product has been developed and manufactured at AkzoNobel's Malmö facility in Sweden and is suitable for both interior and exterior applications. Additionally, it is supported by the Sikkens Wood Coatings Extralife warranty program, ensuring reliability and longevity for customers. To validate its sustainability claims, the bio-based content in RUBBOL WF 3350 has been verified through external C-14 testing in accordance with ASTM International's standard methods (ASTM D6866, Method B). The bio-based materials are derived from renewable



plant-based sources, reinforcing AkzoNobel's push towards environmentally responsible innovations. With this latest launch, AkzoNobel continues to strengthen its position as a pioneer in sustainable coatings, aligning with the global shift towards greener manufacturing practices.

## Sudarshan Chemical Completes Heubach Acquisition, Strengthens Global Presence

Sudarshan Chemical Industries Limited (SCIL) has successfully completed the acquisition of Germany-based Heubach Group through its wholly owned subsidiary, Sudarshan Europe B.V. The acquisition, structured as a combination of an asset and share deal, marks a significant milestone for the Indian specialty chemicals sector, positioning SCIL as a global pigment leader.

This strategic move enhances Sudarshan's international footprint, expanding its operations across 19 sites worldwide, including key markets in Europe and the Americas. The integration of Heubach's advanced technological capabilities with SCIL's established operations is expected to drive innovation, efficiency, and an expanded product portfolio.

Heubach, which has a 200-year-old legacy, became the world's second-largest pigment producer after merging with Clariant's pigments division in 2022. Despite generating over a billion euros in revenue in FY21 and FY22, the company faced financial difficulties in recent years due to rising costs, inventory challenges, and high interest rates. SCIL's acquisition aims to address these issues through a structured turnaround strategy.

Rajesh Rathi, Managing Director and CEO of Sudarshan Chemical, highlighted the importance of this development, stating, "Today marks an exciting new chapter as we unite with Heubach to become an inspirational leader in the colorants industry. Our goal is to build the world's most valuable pigment company with strong financial stability and profitability. This acquisition allows us to drive continuous innovation and deliver breakthrough solutions for our customers globally."



The completion of the transaction underscores SCIL's commitment to global expansion while reinforcing its leadership in the pigments sector. The company's immediate focus will be on streamlining operations, achieving cost synergies, and fully integrating Clariant, Heubach, and Sudarshan into a unified entity. Germany remains a strategic location for Sudarshan Chemical, and with the establishment of its second global headquarters in the Frankfurt region, the company aims to strengthen its European operations further. This move highlights India's growing influence in the global chemicals and specialty pigments industry, with SCIL emerging as a key player on the world stage.

The deal, which involves UltraTech's purchase from the promoters of India Cements and Sri Saradha Logistics Private Limited, is seen as a strategic move to strengthen UltraTech's market position and expand its footprint in India's cement industry. The open offer will allow additional stakeholders to acquire up to 26% of India Cements, further consolidating UltraTech's hold on the company. This acquisition approval comes as part of ongoing industry consolidation and is expected to enhance operational synergies and boost competitiveness in the sector. A detailed order from the CCI on this decision will be issued at a later date, providing further insights into the regulatory body's evaluation of the merger.



## CCI Approves UltraTech Cement's Acquisition of The India Cements Limited

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved UltraTech Cement Limited's acquisition of a significant stake in The India Cements Limited, marking a major consolidation in the Indian cement industry. The approval was granted on December 20, 2024, for UltraTech Cement to acquire a 32.72% stake in India Cements from its promoters and associated entities, as well as up to an additional 26% through an open offer.

### UltraTech Cement's Acquisition

UltraTech Cement, a subsidiary of Grasim Industries Limited, is one of India's leading manufacturers of grey cement, white cement, ready-mix concrete, clinker, and building products. The company is also involved in providing various building solutions across the country. India Cements, similarly, is a major player in the cement industry, with its core business focusing on the manufacture and sale of grey cement and ready-mix concrete.

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## Mutual capacity building is India's belief rather than Transactional relationships in Defence.



During a conclave with 81 countries, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh emphasized the importance of equitable partnerships.

Indian is ready to offer functional technologies and also solutions that are cost-effective to its global partners. International community for co-development and co-production of weapon systems were invited by Rajnath Singh with the aim to empower friendly nations to develop defence capabilities in accordance with their requirements.

According to Singh, The foundation of defence collaboration should be equitable partnership. India's defence industry is set to meet diverse requirements in contexts of budget and advanced technologies and is set to position India as an exporter of weapon systems as per the partnerships.

With a focus on strengthening the capabilities of the partner nations, India's defence exports are targeted to exceed ₹30,000 crore this year with having crossed ₹21,000 crore last year.

The Defence Minister's conclave, 'Building Resilience through International Defence and Global Engagement (BRIDGE)', saw the participation of 81 countries represented by over 162 delegates including 15 Defence Ministers, 11 Deputy Defence Ministers, 15 permanent secretaries and 17 Service chiefs.

Friendly Nations were invited by the Defence Minister to collaborate with India on co-development and co-production of advanced defence systems. Enhancing International cooperation and resilience in defence capabilities among nations are the primary aims of the initiative.

## PPG Industries and C3 Launch 'Green Paint Factory' Digital Lesson to Promote Sustainability in Coatings Industry

In a strategic collaboration that blends education and sustainability, PPG Industries, a global leader in coatings and paints, has partnered with C3, an education platform, to launch the "Green Paint Factory" digital lesson. This new initiative is designed to engage students and young professionals in the process of sustainable paint production, while showcasing the significant environmental benefits of green technologies in the coatings industry.

The "Green Paint Factory" digital lesson series, which is accessible to classrooms across the globe, offers an interactive, hands-on learning experience for students. Through this virtual platform, participants will explore the intricacies of paint production, focusing specifically on environmentally friendly practices, such as reducing energy consumption, utilizing eco-conscious materials, and minimizing waste.

The program introduces students to critical concepts in sustainable manufacturing, such as the role of renewable energy in industrial production, the use of low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) and non-toxic ingredients, and innovations in reducing

carbon footprints. Students will also learn about PPG's commitment to sustainability, which is a cornerstone of the company's business strategy.

### A Key Step Toward Sustainability Education

This initiative aligns with the growing demand for businesses to integrate sustainability into their operations and corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies. PPG has long been at the forefront of developing environmentally responsible coatings that help protect infrastructure, while also minimizing the environmental impact. With this new educational venture, PPG is reinforcing its dedication to sustainability, not only through product development but also by inspiring the next generation of leaders in the field.

The partnership with C3, a nonprofit organization known for its environmental education programs, aims to empower young students with the knowledge and tools to create a more sustainable future. The collaboration will also provide educators with a valuable resource to incorporate environmental science and sustainable manufacturing into their curriculum.

### Benefits to the Coatings Industry and Beyond

The "Green Paint Factory" program is more than just a digital lesson – it is an investment in the future workforce of the coatings industry. By giving students a deep dive into the process of creating sustainable coatings, PPG and C3 are fostering an interest in careers that emphasize green chemistry, environmental responsibility, and innovation. As more industries focus on reducing their ecological impact, understanding and promoting sustainable practices will be crucial for success in the global economy. Furthermore, the initiative highlights the significance of eco-friendly solutions across industries, reflecting a broader trend of environmental awareness in sectors that have historically had a significant carbon footprint, like manufacturing and industrial design.

PPG's collaboration with C3 also underscores the importance of companies working together with educational institutions to close the skills gap and ensure that the future workforce is equipped to meet the demands of an increasingly sustainability-conscious world.

### Looking Ahead

As the global economy continues to pivot toward sustainable practices, the



"Green Paint Factory" digital lesson is poised to serve as a model for other industries looking to merge education with environmental responsibility. PPG's ongoing commitment to research and development in sustainable products, along with its educational outreach programs like this one, demonstrates how companies can play a pivotal role in shaping a more eco-conscious future. By engaging with the next generation of professionals and teaching them about the environmental impact of everyday products like paint, PPG is setting the stage for a future where sustainability is at the forefront of manufacturing and industrial innovation. In the coming months, the company plans to expand the reach of this digital lesson, making it available to an even broader audience of students and educators worldwide. As the coatings industry continues to evolve, the Green Paint Factory initiative will undoubtedly become an essential tool in fostering awareness and driving sustainable change.

## Ashland Announces Global Price Increase for 1-4 Butanediol and Solvent Products

Ashland, a leading global specialty chemicals company, has announced a price increase on 1-4 Butanediol (BDO) and several solvent products across all regions, effective from March 15, 2025, or as per contractual agreements. This move is attributed to rising raw material costs, supply chain constraints, and increased energy expenses that continue to impact chemical manufacturing worldwide.

### Impact on the Indian Market

India, a significant importer of chemical intermediates like 1-4 Butanediol, may experience cost pressures in key industries such as pharmaceuticals, coatings, and polymers. The price increase is expected to raise manufacturing costs for Indian businesses reliant on these essential solvents, potentially leading to adjustments in pricing strategies across various sectors. Industry experts suggest that Indian

manufacturers may look for alternative sourcing strategies or explore local production to mitigate the impact of rising global chemical prices. However, with limited domestic production



capacity for certain high-value solvents, dependence on global suppliers like Ashland remains a critical factor.

Despite these challenges, the price adjustment reflects broader trends in the global chemical industry, where volatility in feedstock costs and supply chain disruptions have forced companies to reassess pricing strategies. Indian businesses will need to navigate these changes strategically to maintain competitiveness in both domestic and international markets.

## Arkema Launches Bio-Based Acrylic Binders, Boosting Sustainability in Textile Industry



Arkema, a global leader in specialty materials, has introduced its new ENCOR® range of bio-based waterborne dispersions designed for textile printing and finishing applications. These innovative binders, containing up to 30% bio-based content and reducing carbon footprint by up to 40% compared to traditional textile resins, aim to support the textile industry's shift towards sustainability.

With the textile sector responsible for 6-8% of global emissions and increasing consumer demand for eco-friendly products, Arkema's bio-based solutions set the stage for the next generation of sustainable textile manufacturing. "Bio-based solutions are critical to reducing the carbon footprint of the sector. Our new ENCOR® dispersions help customers meet their sustainability goals," said Hélène Pernot, Global Sustainability Marketing Director at Arkema's Coating Solutions division.

Industry India, one of the world's largest textile producers and exporters, stands to benefit significantly from the adoption of bio-based acrylic binders. With growing pressure from

global buyers to comply with sustainability norms, Indian textile manufacturers can leverage Arkema's new technology to align with international environmental standards and gain a competitive edge in the global market. Additionally, bio-based binders reduce dependency on fossil-based raw materials, enhancing supply chain resilience. Arkema's approach extends across the entire lifecycle of its products, ensuring compliance with stringent sustainability standards such as Oeko-Tex® Eco Passport. Patricia Beurdeley, Global Market Manager for Nonwovens & Textile at Arkema, emphasized the company's commitment to safer formulations that are free of formaldehyde and APEO. "We are also focusing on enhancing biodegradability, extending durability, and improving color fastness and washing resistance," she noted. With India's increasing focus on sustainability in textiles, Arkema's launch presents a strategic opportunity for the domestic industry to transition toward greener production methods, potentially boosting exports and reinforcing the country's role as a key player in sustainable textile

New Delhi – The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, hosted the inaugural National Association of Impact Leaders (NAIL) Meet 2025 in Goa, bringing together over 100 ESG professionals, policymakers, and corporate leaders. The event focused on emerging trends in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices, regulatory developments, and corporate sustainability under the leadership of Shri Ajay Bhushan Prasad Pandey, Director General & CEO of IICA and Chairman of the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA).

The meet opened with a session led by Prof. Garima Dadhich, Head of the School of Business Environment at IICA, who emphasized the need for corporate strategies to align with global ESG frameworks. She highlighted the growing importance of sustainability-driven business models in ensuring long-term resilience and compliance. Aruna C. Newton, Vice President at Infosys Limited, spoke on the role of governance frameworks in accelerating the adoption of green technology, stressing the need for businesses to integrate sustainability into their operations. A representative from UNICEF's Private Sector Engagement division provided insights into Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) Core, focusing on its social impact dimensions and how organizations can enhance ESG transparency. The event featured a panel discussion moderated by Prof. Garima Dadhich, which included

NAIL members J P Dash, Ashok Sethi, Sridhar L, Shalini Verma, and Paritosh Chauhan. The discussion explored recent regulatory changes, including SEBI's evolving ESG rating framework, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), and the implications of the dissolution of the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) and Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD). Officials from SEBI addressed concerns surrounding compliance, offering guidance on emerging benchmarks and investor expectations in sustainability reporting.

Technological advancements in ESG reporting were also a key focus of the meet. Experts from KPMG India discussed the role of AI-driven ESG analytics in improving corporate sustainability disclosures, while representatives from WRI India and CEEW-CEF examined developments in greenhouse gas accounting, carbon markets, and the transition towards net-zero emissions.

The event concluded with a networking session and the announcement of the third edition of IICA's flagship ESG annual conference, the National Conference on Responsible Business Conduct (NCRBC), scheduled for July 2-3, 2025. Registrations for the conference will open in March 2025.

With NAIL emerging as a premier platform for ESG professionals and impact leaders, the initiative is set to drive corporate sustainability efforts and strengthen India's leadership in global ESG governance.





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## MSME and Policies News

## SC/ST Entrepreneurs Gain Momentum on GeM: A Major Boost for MSMEs

New Delhi: The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is driving a new wave of economic inclusivity by actively fostering entrepreneurship among Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) business owners. With its transparent, efficient, and technology-driven procurement system, GeM is providing a vital platform for SC/ST-led Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to access government contracts and expand their market reach. The MSME sector is a cornerstone of India's economy, contributing significantly to employment and industrial output. To enhance their participation in public procurement, GeM has set a mandatory goal of sourcing 25% of goods and services from MSMEs, with a special sub-target of 4% from SC/ST entrepreneurs. This initiative aims to remove barriers, level the playing field, and create equitable opportunities for marginalized business owners. Image source : PIBThe SWAYATT initiative (Startups, Women, and Youth Advantage Through e-Transactions) is helping

SC/ST entrepreneurs by offering training, onboarding assistance, and market linkage support. This program enables marginalized business owners to navigate the government procurement landscape with greater ease. The Saras Collection, a curated marketplace featuring handmade goods from self-help groups (SHGs), is a testament to India's rich artisanal heritage. SC/ST entrepreneurs engaged in handicrafts, home decor, and textiles are benefiting from increased visibility and direct procurement opportunities on GeM. Recognizing the innovative potential of SC/ST-owned startups, GeM's Startup Runway 2.0 provides a dedicated marketplace where emerging businesses can showcase and sell their products to government buyers. This initiative aligns with the 'Make in India' campaign and fosters homegrown innovation. As of February 28, 2025, GeM has seen a surge in MSME participation. Orders worth ₹4,52,594 Crore have been facilitated in the current financial year, with 37.87% of the total order value

attributed to MSMEs. Over 1,77,786 Udyam-verified women-owned MSEs are registered, and SC/ST entrepreneurs are securing larger contracts, reinforcing their presence in government procurement. GeM is rapidly evolving as a game-changer for SC/ST entrepreneurs, transforming the landscape of public procurement in India. By eliminating middlemen and ensuring direct access to buyers, the platform is reshaping opportunities for marginalized business owners. With continued government support and industry participation, GeM is not just an e-commerce platform—it is a catalyst for inclusive growth, empowering SC/ST entrepreneurs to drive India's



## MOFPI Engages States and UTs in Preparations for World Food India 2025

New Delhi: The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) convened a roundtable interaction with Resident Commissioners and representatives from States and Union Territories (UTs) on February 17, 2025, to discuss collaborations for the 4th edition of World Food India (WFI) 2025. The session, chaired by Secretary Dr. Subrata Gupta, FPI, focused on strategies to enhance investment, innovation, and global engagement in India's food processing sector.

## MFPI

Additional Secretary Shri Minhaj Alam, in his welcome address, emphasized that WFI 2025 would serve as a dynamic platform for States and UTs to showcase their strengths, attract investments, and facilitate partnerships with global and domestic business leaders, suppliers, and technology providers. Dr. Gupta outlined the vision for WFI 2025, scheduled from September 25-28, 2025, highlighting its expanded scale compared to previous editions. He detailed key initiatives by the ministry, including the Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLIS), the Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme, and the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY), aimed at strengthening the sector and positioning India as a global food processing hub. The Secretary urged full participation from States and UTs, emphasizing their critical role in ensuring the success of WFI 2025. He invited feedback and suggestions to optimize the event's

impact and encouraged active collaboration across all stakeholders in the food processing value chain. Representatives from various States and UTs expressed their support and shared recommendations, including dedicated sessions for regions with similar food processing ecosystems and increased assistance for MSMEs to maximize their participation.

## MFPI



In his closing remarks, Joint Secretary Shri D. Praveen called on States and UTs to engage proactively with MoFPI to highlight India's food processing capabilities. He announced that the ministry would undertake visits to various states to connect with industry stakeholders, promote WFI 2025, and identify challenges to enhance the ease of doing business in the sector.

WFI 2025 is expected to be a landmark event, fostering collaboration, driving investment, and reinforcing India's status as a leader in food processing and agri-business on the global stage.

## Growth strategies in motion

New Delhi: On Tuesday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman promised additional measures to assist India in maintaining its position as the major economy with the fastest rate of growth in the world. She also claimed that a "speedy rebound" is in progress following the growth slowdown in the quarter ending in September 2024. Despite significant external challenges, she emphasized that the 2025-2026 budget achieved a delicate balance fiscal prudence and national priorities.

Sitharaman stated, "Our main goals in this budget are (to realise) good growth, secure inclusive development, invigorate private investments, and uplift household sentiments," in response to a general discussion on the budget in the Lok Sabha.

According to her, the nation's annual growth rate averaged 8% over the three years leading up to 2024-2025. The pace of expansion has reached the September quarter level of 5.4% or less in two of the previous twelve quarters. Growth in 2025-2026 was projected by the Economic Survey to be 6.3-6.8%. Taking inspiration from the new debt reduction framework introduced by the Centre in the budget, the finance minister called on states to consolidate their debt stocks. She claimed that the framework would give the markets better direction and introduce "greater predictability" regarding the Centre's debt.

## Piyush Goyal Highlights Mutual Funds Industry's Role in India's Economic Growth at AMFI Summit 2025

Mumbai: Union Minister of Commerce & Industry Shri Piyush Goyal underscored the crucial role of the mutual funds industry in shaping India's financial future at the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) Mutual Fund Summit 2025. Speaking as the Chief Guest, he emphasized the industry's contributions to financial literacy, market stability, and wealth creation while urging stakeholders to prioritize investor protection and minimize market volatility. Acknowledging the resilience of domestic investors, Shri Goyal praised their role in stabilizing markets, especially in the post-Covid era, when foreign institutional investors (FIIs) reduced their presence. He noted that Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) and collective investment methods have significantly bolstered the financial ecosystem, ensuring deeper market penetration across India.

Shri Goyal stressed the need for the mutual funds industry to protect small investors and prevent misinformation regarding stock market trends. He highlighted concerns over excessive market optimism, which can create unrealistic expectations and lead to

urging AMFI to take proactive measures, he called for increased vigilance in safeguarding investors from risky financial decisions. He also pointed out that companies with strong fundamentals have maintained stable stock prices despite market fluctuations, reinforcing the importance of sound investment principles.

He reiterated that the responsibilities of the mutual funds industry extend beyond short-term profits and encompass the broader duty of maintaining a fair, transparent, and organized financial market. Discussing the future trajectory of India's investment landscape, Shri Goyal emphasized that domestic investors, rather than FIIs, will play a defining role in the country's economic growth. He noted that the industry's Assets Under Management (AUM) have already reached nearly ₹70 lakh crore and are expected to cross ₹100 lakh crore in the near future, marking a significant shift in market dynamics.

Calling for greater financial inclusion, the Minister urged industry leaders to support investor education, strengthen risk

a collective responsibility. He expressed confidence that such efforts would drive India's economic expansion over the next two decades, ensuring sustainable and equitable growth for all stakeholders. As government spending and private capital expenditure witness a resurgence, Shri Goyal affirmed that the mutual funds industry will continue to play a critical role in mobilizing domestic savings and channeling them into productive investments. With a strong emphasis on stability, transparency, and investor welfare, he concluded that the industry must align its growth strategies with



## Government Enhances Credit Access for MSMEs with Streamlined Loan Processes



## Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India

New Delhi – In a major push to strengthen the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, the Government of India has introduced several measures aimed at improving credit access and financing. One of the key changes includes a directive for banks to make credit decisions within 14 working days for loans up to ₹25 lakh for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) borrowers. This move is expected to provide faster financial support to businesses and enhance their growth prospects.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also established a regulatory framework that allows Regulated Entities (REs) to meet the financing needs of different economic sectors while maintaining prudential norms. With credit-related matters largely deregulated, banks and financial institutions are now guided by board-approved loan policies, statutory requirements, and agreements with borrowers. To ensure transparency, banks must now provide MSME borrowers with a checklist of required documents at the time of loan application. To further aid MSMEs, several government initiatives have been rolled out. Under Priority Sector Lending guidelines, specific lending targets have been set to channel more funds into the MSME sector. Additionally, Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) are barred from demanding collateral for loans up to ₹10 lakh, making financing more accessible for small businesses. For enterprises with borrowing limits up to ₹5 crore, working capital requirements are now calculated at a minimum of 20% of their projected annual turnover. A key measure to address delayed payments to MSMEs is the implementation of the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS). This initiative aims to expedite payments and improve liquidity for small businesses. Meanwhile, interest rates for MSME loans have been linked to external benchmarks, ensuring fairer lending rates for businesses. Technological underserved businesses, while SIDBI's GST

Sahay app enables paperless, invoice-based small-value credit for micro enterprises. Other key initiatives include the Udyam Assist Platform (UAP) for registering informal micro enterprises outside the GST regime and the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), which has undergone process improvements such as simplified application forms, credit guarantees, and better monitoring of loan disbursements. To further simplify access to loans, the government has introduced digital platforms like the Jansamarth portal, which facilitates quick approvals based on digital data analysis. Similarly, the PSB Loans in 5 minutes platform allows MSMEs to receive in-principle loan approvals in less than an hour. To address delayed payments, the SAMADHAAN portal has been launched to monitor and resolve outstanding dues to MSEs. Additionally, various credit guarantee schemes have been introduced to support MSMEs, while Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have developed a new credit assessment model. This model

uses verifiable digital data to automate loan appraisal and decision-making, ensuring faster and more objective credit evaluation. These wide-ranging reforms reaffirm the government's commitment to strengthening the MSME sector by ensuring timely access to credit, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and

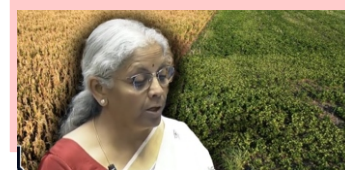
leveraging technology to enhance financial inclusion. These measures are expected to drive economic growth, boost employment, and empower small businesses across the country. advancements are also being leveraged to boost MSME financing. RBI's Account Aggregator (AA) framework and the Third Cohort under the Regulatory Sandbox (RS) for MSME lending are expected to bridge lending gaps using technology and data analytics. The Unified Lending Interface (ULI) by RBI aims to make credit more accessible to

## Ministry of Textiles Leads Post-Budget Webinar on 'Mission for Cotton Productivity'

New Delhi: The Ministry of Textiles took the lead in a dedicated session on 'Mission for Cotton Productivity' during the Post-Budget Webinar on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity, inaugurated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. Organized in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, the event aimed to drive discussions on strategic initiatives for enhancing cotton quality and integrating next-generation materials into the sector.

## TEXTILE

Union Minister of Textiles Shri Giriraj Singh, alongside Smt. Neelam Shami Rao, Secretary of Textiles, and other senior government officials, engaged with key stakeholders from the agriculture and textile industries. Smt. Rao reiterated the government's commitment to strengthening the cotton value chain, highlighting initiatives such as expanding fibre testing infrastructure, increasing Extra Long Staple (ELS) cotton seed production, and advancing the Kasturi Cotton Bharat initiative to enhance India's cotton sector. The session brought together representatives from the Union Ministries of Textiles and Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, state governments, and industry experts, including cotton farmers and ginners. Discussions focused on leveraging technology, strengthening market linkages, and fostering innovation in sustainable cotton production. Industry leaders, policymakers, scientists, and farmers actively contributed insights on advancing cotton productivity through research and innovation. Ministry of Textiles Leads Post-Budget Webinar on 'Mission for Cotton Productivity' The webinar concluded with Union Minister Shri Shriwaj Singh Chouhan reinforcing the importance of coordinated efforts among ministries to ensure the prosperity and empowerment of farmers. The government's continued focus on technological advancements and sustainability in the cotton sector is set to



## Prime Minister Narendra Modi and France President Emmanuel Macron had a summit meeting in Marseille, France

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and France President Emmanuel Macron had a summit meeting in Marseille, France about defense partnership and collaboration in the Defence Industry. France had highlighted a proposed purchase of India's Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher. The key-highlights of the discussion were Defence, security and sovereigns. However, the most significant highlight came out to be the expansion of French Presence in the Indian ocean region. The major emphasises remained to be on strengthening economic partnerships and counter-terror cooperation.

The purchase of Rafale Fighter jets for India's aircraft carrier was confirmed and acquiring three more scorpene-class conventional submarines from France is in considerations. Development of a fighter Jet Engine between India and France is being discussed.

With a DRDO office opened in the Indian Embassy in 2023 to enhance technology collaboration, The Defence Cooperation is reviewed under Annual Defence Dialogue and high committee on Defence Cooperation.



## Will RBI ease the pressure on unsecured loans? Digital lenders on edge!

According to two senior industry insiders, the digital lending sector is reaching out the Reserve Bank of India with a plea for relaxation of the tightened regulations pertaining to unsecured banking. Since their partner non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) discontinued offering short-term credit products, fintech lending platforms also known as loan service providers, or LSPs have been directly impacted. According to industry insiders, consumers who actually need short-term loans may be get pushed to offline moneylenders as a result of the removal of such products.

"In order to determine how the RBI's position affects interest rates locally, we are collecting data. In addition to meeting with senior bankers and bank officials, we have also requested a meeting with the RBI's Department of Regulations," one of the executives stated. "The topic of short-duration loans was discussed in detail at a meeting that was held towards the end of last year with all the stakeholders of the digital lending industry, from banks to NBFCs," he added.

"The same issue was raised at the January 7 meeting held in New Delhi with the Department of Financial Services Secretary and lending companies as well," he stated.



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## Bhavish Aggarwal Pledges ₹588 Crore in Ola Electric Shares to Fund AI Startup Krutrim

**Strategic Move to Bolster India's AI Innovation** Bengaluru-based entrepreneur Bhavish Aggarwal, founder of Ola Electric, has pledged an additional ₹588 crore worth of his shares in the company to raise funds for his ambitious artificial intelligence venture, Krutrim. This latest move brings the total pledged shares to 5.88 crore, representing around 2.43% of Ola Electric's total shares and 8.09% of Aggarwal's personal stake in the company.

**Expanding Investment in AI** Aggarwal has committed to investing ₹2,000 crore into Krutrim in the near term, with total funding expected to reach ₹10,000 crore by next year. The startup is focused on developing a comprehensive AI computing stack, positioning itself as India's answer to global AI leaders like OpenAI's



ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, and Microsoft's Copilot.

**Funding Structure and Share Pledge** The pledged shares serve as collateral for debentures\* issued by Krutrim, with financial entities such as Avendus Structured Credit Fund II, Avendus Finance, and InCred Credit Opportunities Funds I & II facilitating the funding. Axis Trustee Services Limited is managing the pledged.

## Creators Urged to Champion India's Digital Narrative at RISE//DEL Conference 2025

**New Delhi** – Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal, addressed the RISE//DEL Conference 2025, a three-day multidisciplinary event connecting music, creative industries, and startups, held in New Delhi.

In his speech, Shri Goyal emphasized the pivotal role of India's creative ecosystem and digital innovation in shaping the nation's future. He called upon creators to act as India's digital ambassadors, sharing the country's story globally and contributing to economic growth. He underscored the importance of trust, authenticity, responsibility, and accountability in content creation.

Highlighting the impact of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's Digital India initiative launched a decade ago, Shri Goyal noted that affordable data access has transformed India into the largest consumer of data worldwide. He pointed out that combining low-cost data with India's high-quality talent positions the nation for a revolution in creativity and technology.



Shri Goyal also addressed the evolution

assets on behalf of these financial institutions. A Vision for India's AI Leadership Aggarwal's decision to leverage his Ola Electric stake for Krutrim highlights his deep commitment to building an indigenous AI ecosystem in India. By tapping into high-value funding sources, he aims to establish Krutrim as a leading player in the AI space, ensuring India remains competitive in the global race for AI supremacy. This strategic financial maneuver underscores \*the growing intersection between mobility and AI in Aggarwal's vision, reinforcing his ambition to lead both the electric vehicle and artificial intelligence revolutions\* in India

of India's creative sector, which now includes gaming, AI-driven content creation, and digital media, making it a multi-billion-dollar industry employing many across the country. He encouraged participants to leverage events like RISE//DEL to develop future growth roadmaps and recognized influencers' roles in connecting people to India's rich history and culture. The Minister reaffirmed the government's role as a facilitator for individual innovation and highlighted India's increasing global engagement in creativity and content production. He invited international artists to collaborate in India, emphasizing that such partnerships would open more opportunities for Indian creators. Shri Goyal concluded by reiterating India's ambition to become the world's content capital. He urged creators to focus on responsible and innovative content, emphasizing the significance of skills, storytelling, filmmaking, music production, gaming, and digital media in boosting India's export earnings. He expressed confidence that the contributions of the creative industry would be crucial to India's rise in the Amrit Kaal to become a developed nation.



## Ambitio Secures \$2 Million to Revolutionize Study-Abroad Admissions with AI

### Funding to Drive AI-Powered University Admissions for Indian Students

Bengaluru-based edtech startup **Ambitio** has raised **\$2 million** in a seed funding round led by BLinC Invest, with participation from Ritu Bapna, co-founder of Impetus, along with prominent unicorn founders and angel investors from the UK and India. The fresh capital will fuel Ambitio's AI-powered platform, enhancing its technology and expanding its reach to assist over **500,000 Indian students\*** in securing placements at top global universities within the next two years.



### AI-Driven Personalized Admissions

For many students, the university application process is complex and time-consuming, often requiring over **300 hours** of research and preparation. Ambitio simplifies this journey, providing AI-driven assistance that **increases admission chances by more than five times.**

Co-founder and COO **Vikrant Shivalik** highlighted the platform's impact, stating that Ambitio has already helped students secure admission to top-tier universities

## Smartphone Industry Shifts Focus to AI and Personalization

As the global smartphone industry faces slowing upgrade cycles, manufacturers are turning to artificial intelligence (AI) and personalization to reinvigorate demand. Leading brands are now integrating smarter AI-driven features into their devices, ranging from advanced voice assistants to improved battery management systems that adapt to individual user habits.

The push toward AI-driven innovation comes at a time when consumers are holding onto their smartphones for longer periods. With hardware advancements reaching a saturation point, brands are looking to software-driven enhancements to differentiate themselves in a crowded market.

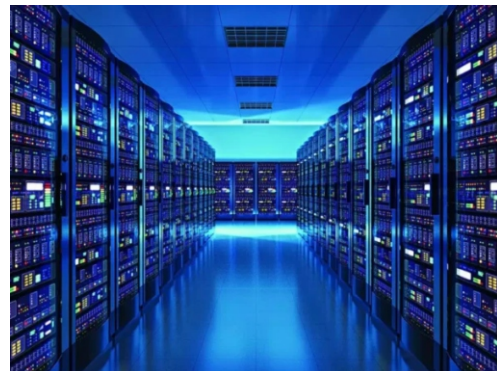
### OPENAI

Another emerging trend is hyper-personalization, where smartphones use machine learning to optimize user experiences. Features such as AI-enhanced photography, predictive app usage, and dynamic interface customization are becoming standard in flagship models.

Industry experts believe that the future of smartphones will be defined by how well manufacturers can integrate AI into everyday functionality, making devices not just smarter, but also more intuitive and user-friendly.

## Blackstone and Panchshil Invest ₹20,000 Crore in Navi Mumbai Data Center

In a massive boost to India's digital infrastructure, global investment firm Blackstone, in collaboration with real estate giant Panchshil, has announced a ₹20,000 crore investment to establish a hyperscale data center in Navi Mumbai. The project is expected to be one of the largest data center developments in India, reinforcing the country's status as a rising hub for digital services.s.a



The investment comes at a time when demand for data storage and processing capabilities is at an all-time high. With the rapid expansion of cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and 5G technology, businesses are increasingly relying on data centers to manage their digital operations efficiently.

India has emerged as a key destination for such investments, thanks to its growing internet user base, favorable government policies, and strategic location in the global tech ecosystem. The new data center will not only create thousands of jobs but also support the growth of enterprises that depend on reliable and scalable data infrastructure.

## Government Announces New Initiatives to Strengthen MSME Sector

In a bid to boost India's small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the government has rolled out a series of initiatives aimed at integrating these businesses into global supply chains. The new policies focus on financial assistance, technological upgrades, and export promotion, ensuring that Indian MSMEs remain



competitive in an increasingly digital and automated economy.

### MSME

Key measures include easier access to credit, incentives for adopting AI-driven production processes, and support for businesses looking to expand internationally. Officials believe that by empowering MSMEs, the government can create more jobs, drive innovation, and increase India's presence in global trade.

As the backbone of the Indian economy, MSMEs play a crucial role in employment generation and industrial growth. With the right support, these businesses are expected to contribute significantly to India's long-term economic ambitions.

## Government Boosts Electric Mobility with New Manufacturing Units in Telangana

**Mahabubnagar, Telangana** – In a significant push for India's electric mobility sector, Union Minister for Railways, Electronics, IT, and Information & Broadcasting, Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, laid the foundation stone for four manufacturing units at the Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) in Divitipally, Mahabubnagar District, on March 8, 2025. This initiative aims to strengthen the country's position in battery and electric vehicle (EV) technology while generating large-scale employment opportunities.

A key highlight of the event was the launch of Amara Raja's Giga Factory-1, which will be developed on a 262-acre site. The facility is set to house a 16 GW cell manufacturing plant along with a 5 GW battery pack unit. With an



EMC has attracted three other critical minerals refining and battery recycling. Scell Energy will set up a cellthe government's commitment to promoting electric mobility and sustainable transportation. "Electric mobility remains a focus area for the government, and we are committed to developing the right infrastructure and ecosystem for the promotion and adoption of EVs. We welcome Indian innovation and manufacturing initiatives and look forward to the success of this endeavor," he stated. The Divitipally EMC, which spans 377.65 acres, was approved under the Modified Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC 2.0) Scheme by the Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY). The cluster is now fully occupied, with 307.47 acres allotted to the four companies, reflecting the increasing demand for domestic electronics manufacturing infrastructure. The event also witnessed the participation of Telangana's Minister for IT, Electronics, Industries and Commerce, Legislative Affairs, Shri D. Sridhar Babu, along with other key officials, including Member of Parliament from Mahabubnagar Constituency, Smt. Aruna D K, and Member of Legislative Assembly, Shri Y. Srinivas Reddy. Industry representatives and senior state officials were also present, highlighting the collaborative effort between the government and the private sector to drive India's EV revolution. With these developments, India is taking a decisive step toward establishing itself as a global hub for electric vehicle manufacturing. By fostering technological advancements, job creation, and sustainable growth, the government aims to position the country as a leader in the global shift toward green mobility.



estimated investment of ₹9,500 crore over the next five years, the project is expected to create 4,500 direct jobs and a similar number of indirect employment opportunities, significantly boosting the region's economy. Apart from Amara Rajmajor companies. Lohum will focus on casing manufacturing facility, and Altmin will establish India's first LFP-CAM Giga Factory. These combined investments amount to ₹10,574 crore and are projected to generate 5,864 direct jobs and 13,300 indirect employment opportunities, further cementing the cluster's role in India's electronics manufacturing landscape. Speaking at the event, Minister Vaishnaw reiterated a, the

## Blinkit Secures ₹1,500 Crore from Zomato for Expansion

Quick-commerce giant Blinkit has received a fresh infusion of ₹1,500 crore from its parent company, Zomato, as it looks to expand operations and strengthen its position in the highly competitive instant-delivery market.

With the rise of on-demand services, quick-commerce platforms have seen explosive growth, catering to urban consumers who prioritize convenience and speed. Blinkit, which competes with Swiggy Instamart and Zepto, plans to use the funding to improve logistics, expand its delivery fleet, and increase its presence in new cities. Industry analysts suggest that this

investment is part of Zomato's broader strategy to dominate the quick-commerce space, ensuring that Blinkit remains ahead of its competitors. With consumer expectations shifting toward faster and more efficient deliveries, the battle for market leadership is set to intensify in the coming months.



face increasing challenges, particularly with restaurants over high commission fees. Rapido's approach may bring fresh competition to the market, focusing on cost-effective delivery models and offering faster services. The company, currently present in

Rapido recently raised substantial funding, including a \$30 million investment from Prosus in February, and a \$200 million funding round led by WestBridge Capital, lifting its valuation to \$1.1 billion. Rapido's entry into the food delivery space comes at a time when Swiggy and Zomato, despite their dominance, over 100 cities, plans to expand to 500 cities by 2025, aiming to capitalize on its growing network and innovative business strategies. With the backing of robust investments and a proven operational model, Rapido is well-positioned to disrupt the food delivery

## Swiggy Expands Food Delivery to 100 Railway Stations Across 20 States



**Enhancing Convenience for Train Passengers with Diverse Dining Options** Bengaluru-based food delivery giant Swiggy has expanded its partnership with the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) to offer food delivery services at 100 railway stations across 20 states. This initiative allows train passengers to order meals from a vast selection of restaurants, bringing greater convenience and variety to their journeys.

### Seamless Ordering and Delivery

Passengers can place food orders through the Swiggy app by entering their PNR number and selecting the station where they wish to receive their meal. The food is delivered directly to their seats, and in the event of a missed delivery before the train departs, Swiggy offers a full refund. The platform provides access to over 7 million menu items from 60,000 restaurant brands, covering a range of 35 different cuisines. The service aims to enhance the overall travel experience by ensuring passengers can enjoy high-quality meals without relying on traditional railway catering.

### Sustainability in Focus

As part of its commitment to sustainability, Swiggy has introduced eco-friendly packaging for its railway food deliveries. Each

meal includes a biodegradable spoon, fork, and tissue, all neatly packed in an environmentally friendly pouch. This initiative aligns with the company's broader goal of reducing plastic waste in food delivery

### Key Milestones and Popular Choices

Since launching the railway delivery service in March 2024, Swiggy has completed over one million orders. Vijayawada Junction has recorded the highest number of deliveries, while Kalyan Junction saw the largest single order—41 burgers and 40 servings of fries. Among the most popular food items, biryani leads the list, with over 100,000 orders, followed by South Indian dishes such as dosa, idli, and vada. Passengers are also exploring international flavors, including Tibetan cheesy momos, Mexican quesadillas, Lebanese shawarma, and cinnamon churros.

### A Strategic Step for Growth

Deepak Maloo, Vice President of Swiggy Food Marketplace, emphasized the cultural importance of food in train travel, stating, "Train journeys are an integral part of India's culture, and food plays a central role in that experience." He highlighted that Swiggy's expansion to 100 railway stations reflects its commitment to improving convenience and dining choices for travelers across the country. Looking ahead, Swiggy plans to further expand its railway food delivery services, adding more stations in the coming months. This move strengthens its position as a key player in the evolving travel-tech and food delivery ecosystem, integrating technology with operations to enhance the passenger experience.

## Govt to Launch India AI Mission Portal: 14,000 GPUs to Boost Nation's AI Capabilities

The Indian government is set to unveil the India AI Mission portal, with contributions from 10 companies providing 14,000 GPUs to drive the nation's artificial intelligence infrastructure. The initiative aims to enhance computing power and foster innovation across sectors including healthcare, education, and agriculture.

**Full Story** New Delhi: In a significant step toward positioning India as a global leader in artificial intelligence, the Union government is preparing to launch the India AI Mission portal. The portal, expected to go live soon, will serve as a centralized platform to support AI-driven research, development, and deployment across various industries. Ten prominent tech companies have pledged to supply a combined 14,000 Graphics Processing Units

(GPUs) to power the portal's high-performance computing infrastructure. GPUs are crucial for advanced data processing and machine learning tasks, offering the computing power necessary for AI applications. Government officials noted that the India AI Mission would play a pivotal role in advancing critical sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, and education by promoting AI-based solutions. The initiative is also expected to create new opportunities for startups and tech firms specializing in AI technologies. Industry experts believe this move could accelerate India's ambition to become a global hub for AI research and innovation, potentially attracting international collaborations and investments. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Ut elit Tellus, luctus nec ullamcorper mattis, pulvinar dapibus leo.



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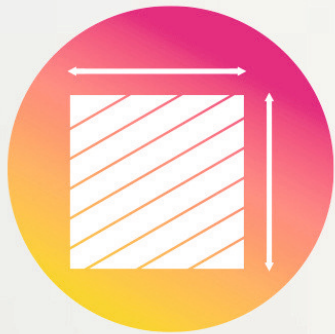
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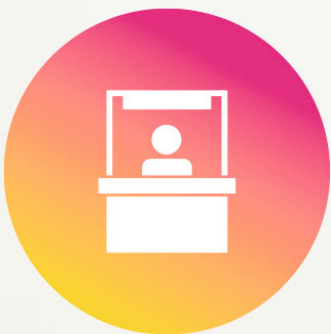
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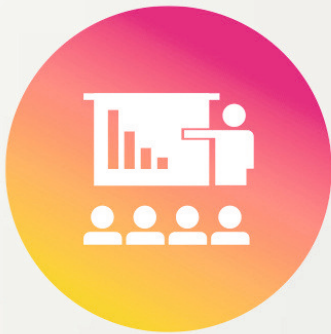
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## Australia to Invest \$16 Million to Boost Trade Ties with India

New Delhi: In a significant push to strengthen bilateral economic ties, Australia has announced an investment of \$16 million in India. This initiative aims to enhance collaboration across key sectors, including clean energy, education and skills development, agribusiness, and tourism.

India and Australia flag together realtions textile cloth fabric texture

The move is part of a broader strategy to deepen economic engagement between the two nations under the Indo-Pacific partnership. Australian officials have outlined a roadmap featuring four "super highways of growth" that will facilitate technology exchange, workforce development, and trade expansion.

Speaking about the investment, Australia's High Commissioner to India emphasized the importance of sustainable partnerships. "This

investment will not only create new business opportunities but also strengthen our shared commitment to a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region," he stated. The clean energy sector is expected to be a major beneficiary, with Australia bringing expertise in renewable energy solutions. Education partnerships will focus on upskilling India's workforce, aligning with the country's vision of becoming a global talent hub. Meanwhile, agribusiness investments will promote advanced farming techniques, ensuring food security and enhancing productivity. Industry leaders in India have welcomed the move, highlighting its potential to generate employment and drive economic growth. With India's rapid expansion in key industries, this investment signals a deeper and more strategic collaboration between the two

## Govt Unveils Major Textile Reforms to Boost Manufacturing, Exports

New Delhi – In a significant push to position India as a global textile powerhouse, the government has introduced a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening the sector's manufacturing capabilities, attracting investments, and generating employment.

**PM MITRA Parks to Drive Industrial Growth**

Growth

The **PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks Scheme** will establish seven modern textile parks across Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra. With an investment of ₹4,445 crore over seven years, these parks will provide world-class infrastructure to promote integrated textile value chains.

**PLI Scheme to Boost MMF & Technical Textiles**

The **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** focuses on **Man-Made**

**Fibre (MMF) apparel and technical textiles**, encouraging large-scale investments in this high-growth segment to enhance global competitiveness.

**R&D and Skill Development Get a Push**

The **National Technical Textiles Mission** aims to drive innovation, research, and market expansion, while the **SAMARTH** scheme will provide skill training tailored to industry needs. The **Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (ATUFS)** will also support modernization efforts with capital subsidies for advanced textile machinery.

**Support for Traditional Sectors**

The **Silk Samagra-2** scheme seeks to boost India's silk production, while handloom and handicraft sectors will benefit from dedicated funding under the **National Handloom and Handicraft Development Programmes**. These schemes will provide artisans with marketing support, technology access, and direct financial benefits. With these strategic interventions, the government aims to **revitalize India's textile industry, create jobs, and enhance global exports**, reinforcing the sector's role as a key driver of economic growth."

## Khadi Artisans Receive 20% Wage Hike Amid Record Sales

New Delhi – In a significant boost to the livelihoods of Khadi artisans, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has announced a 20% wage hike, effective April 1, 2025. This increase, revealed by KVIC Chairman Shri Manoj Kumar at a press conference in Rajghat, marks another milestone in the government's commitment to strengthening the Khadi sector. The timing of the announcement, coinciding with the festival of Holi, brings festive cheer to thousands of artisans across the country.

Over the past decade, the wages of Khadi artisans have seen an unprecedented 275% increase under the Modi government. In April 2023, wages were raised from ₹7.50 to ₹10 per hank, followed by another hike to ₹12.50 per hank in September 2024. Now, from April 2025, artisans will receive ₹15 per hank, reflecting the government's continued focus on improving their financial well-being. This steady rise in earnings is a testament to the government's resolve to uplift the rural workforce and promote self-reliance.

The Khadi sector has also witnessed remarkable success in sales, particularly during the Maha Kumbh 2025 in Prayagraj. The national-level Khadi exhibition, held from January 14 to February 27, recorded historic sales of ₹12.02 crore. Of this, ₹9.76 crore came from Khadi stalls, while village industries contributed ₹2.26 crore. The overwhelming response from consumers highlights the growing demand for Khadi products, reinforcing its status as a preferred choice in the market. To further modernize the Khadi brand and appeal to younger consumers, KVIC has organized a series of high-profile Khadi fashion

shows in cities like Nagpur, Pune, Vadodara, Chennai, Jaipur, and Prayagraj. These events align with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of **Khadi for Fashion**, showcasing the fabric's versatility and contemporary appeal. By integrating Khadi into mainstream fashion, KVIC aims to transform its perception from a traditional fabric to a stylish, sustainable clothing choice. The sector's overall growth has been remarkable, with sales surging from ₹31,000 crore to ₹1,55,000 crore in the financial year 2023-24—a fivefold increase. Khadi apparel alone has seen an exponential rise, with sales growing from ₹1,081 crore to ₹6,496 crore in the same period. Additionally, the industry generated approximately 10.17 lakh new jobs in FY 2023-24, reaffirming its role as a crucial driver of rural employment and economic empowerment. With sustained government support and strategic initiatives, Khadi is no longer just a fabric but a symbol of self-reliance and sustainability. As the sector continues to grow, it is set to play an even more significant role in India's economy, ensuring prosperity for artisans while reinforcing the nation's commitment to indigenous industries



## India Aims for Global Culinary Presence with AAHAR-2025 Inauguration

New Delhi – Union Minister of Food Processing Industries, Shri Chirag Paswan, inaugurated AAHAR-2025 at Bharat Mandapam on March 4, 2025, with a vision to expand India's food processing industry and establish Indian food products in global markets. Emphasizing quality, innovation, and traditional flavors, he stated that the goal is to see Indian food on dining tables across the world. Alongside the inauguration, the minister also announced **World Food India 2025**, scheduled from September 25-28, 2025, further positioning India as a key player in the international food industry. As part of AAHAR-2025, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) and EMK host technical sessions on emerging trends in food processing, including smart packaging, safety, and regulatory frameworks. Industry leaders, government officials, and academic experts came together to discuss advancements that can drive efficiency and global competitiveness in India's food sector. Dr. Subrata Gupta, Secretary of MoFPI, stressed the importance of educating farmers on responsible chemical use to ensure food safety. He highlighted the growing role of advanced technologies such as rapid testing kits and digital traceability in strengthening food safety standards. Echoing this sentiment, Dr. food processing, smart packaging

and sustainable machinery. Representatives from institutions like IIT-Guwahati, Tetra Pak, IHR Bengaluru, FSSAI, Coca-Cola India, Marico, and Sickle Innovations shared insights on regulatory compliance and emerging food technologies. These discussions underscored the importance of aligning India's regulatory standards with global best practices to enhance the competitiveness of Indian food products.

With a strategic focus on sustainable food production and technological innovation, AAHAR2025 reinforced India's commitment to strengthening its food processing sector. As preparations for **World Food India**



2025 gain momentum, the country is set to take significant strides in expanding its global footprint, ensuring that Indian food products gain wider recognition in international markets. Harinder Singh Oberoi, Director of NIFTEM-K, pointed out that leveraging cutting-edge technologies like Blockchain, IoT, and AI could revolutionize compliance monitoring, traceability, and quality assurance across the industry. The event also featured expert panel discussions on innovations in automated

## Wyndham Sees Strong Demand for Its Brands in India

**Hospitality Giant Reports Double-Digit Growth in Revenue Per Room**

New Delhi: Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, one of the world's largest hotel chains, has reported a sharp rise in demand for its properties in India, driven by a post-pandemic revival in the tourism and hospitality industry. The company's latest report indicates a double-digit increase in revenue per room (RevPAR), reflecting strong consumer confidence and growing travel activity.

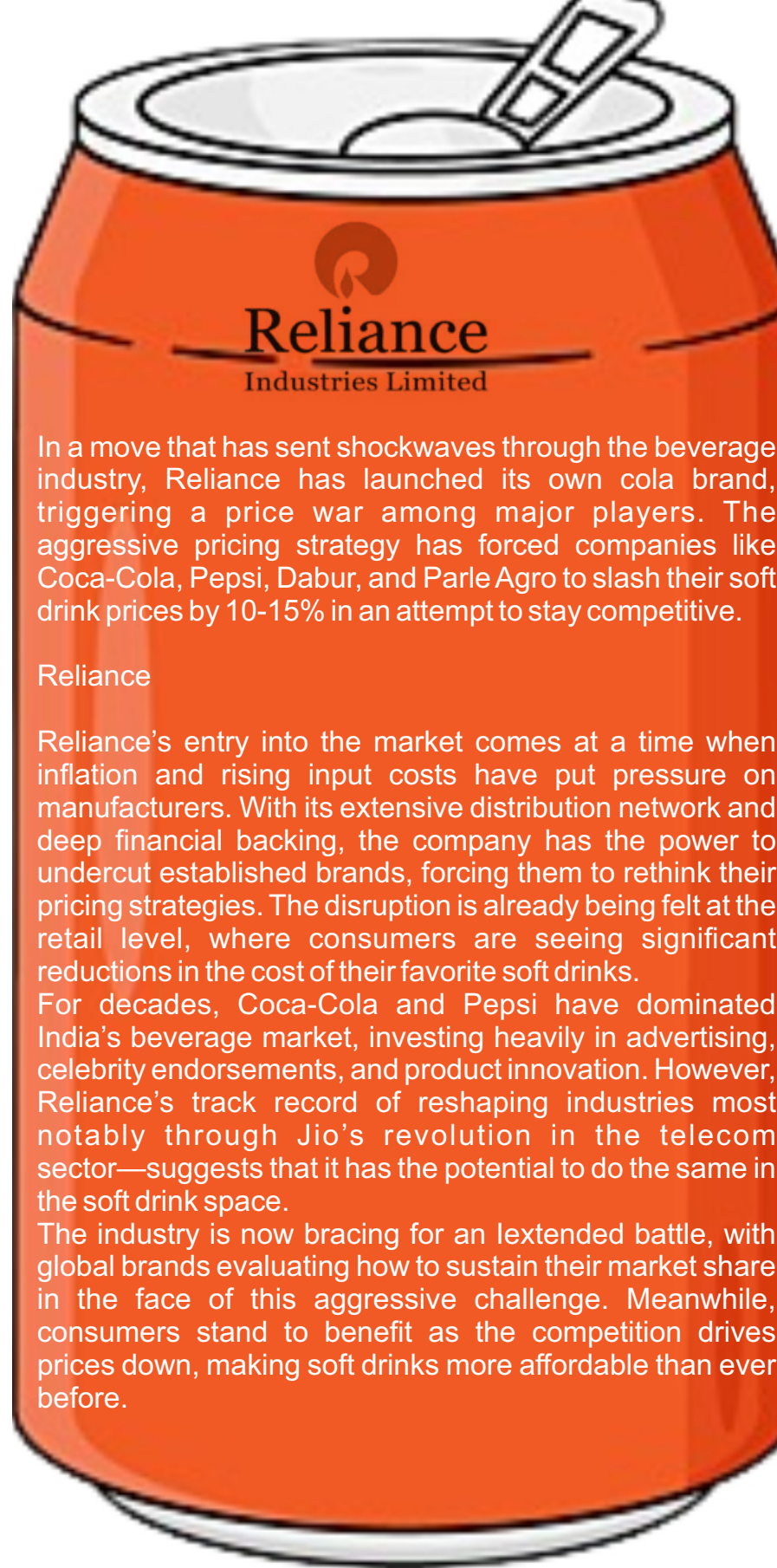
India's hospitality sector has been witnessing a surge in both domestic and international travel, with the government pushing for infrastructure improvements and tourism-friendly policies. Wyndham's expansion strategy aligns with India's increasing focus on developing premium and budget



accommodations to cater to a wide range of travelers. "We are seeing an unprecedented growth trajectory in India," said a senior executive at Wyndham Hotels & Resorts.

"The rising middle class, improving business environment, and growing travel aspirations are fueling demand for quality accommodation." The company is now looking to expand its footprint in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, recognizing the untapped potential in these markets. Experts believe that with India's sustained economic growth and increasing global tourism appeal, international hotel brands like Wyndham will continue to thrive in the country.

## Reliance Shakes Up the Soft Drink Industry with Price War



In a move that has sent shockwaves through the beverage industry, Reliance has launched its own cola brand, triggering a price war among major players. The aggressive pricing strategy has forced companies like Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Dabur, and Parle Agro to slash their soft drink prices by 10-15% in an attempt to stay competitive.

Reliance

Reliance's entry into the market comes at a time when inflation and rising input costs have put pressure on manufacturers. With its extensive distribution network and deep financial backing, the company has the power to undercut established brands, forcing them to rethink their pricing strategies. The disruption is already being felt at the retail level, where consumers are seeing significant reductions in the cost of their favorite soft drinks.

For decades, Coca-Cola and Pepsi have dominated India's beverage market, investing heavily in advertising, celebrity endorsements, and product innovation. However, Reliance's track record of reshaping industries most notably through Jio's revolution in the telecom sector—suggests that it has the potential to do the same in the soft drink space.

The industry is now bracing for an extended battle, with global brands evaluating how to sustain their market share in the face of this aggressive challenge. Meanwhile, consumers stand to benefit as the competition drives prices down, making soft drinks more affordable than ever before.

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## Biden's Focus on Critical Minerals Amid U.S.-China Tensions



March 3, 2025

In a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, the United States has intensified its focus on securing critical minerals, particularly from Ukraine, in a move that underscores the growing rivalry with China. As the world's largest producer of rare earth minerals, China holds a dominant position in the global supply chain, leaving many Western nations vulnerable to supply disruptions.

According to geopolitical expert Carolyn Kissane, the Biden administration is making strategic efforts to reduce its dependence on China by strengthening partnerships with Ukraine, a nation rich in rare earth elements and uranium reserves. These minerals are crucial for advanced technologies, including defense systems, electric vehicles, and renewable energy storage. Washington's push to secure alternative sources is not just about economic self-sufficiency—it is also a matter of national security.

At the same time, former U.S. President Donald Trump has seized the opportunity to turn this issue into a key talking point in his political campaign. Trump has long criticized China's control over critical resources, arguing that the U.S. must take aggressive steps to reclaim its dominance in global trade. His campaign rhetoric suggests that if elected, he would impose stricter policies on mineral imports, prioritize domestic mining, and negotiate new international agreements to ensure the country's resource security. The battle over rare earth elements is more than just an economic or political issue—it is a defining factor in the next chapter of global power dynamics. As both Washington and Beijing maneuver to protect their interests, smaller nations rich in these resources, like Ukraine, are finding themselves at the center of a high-stakes competition that could reshape international alliances!



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## Hyundai Heavy Industries Eyes India for Shipyard Expansion

**South Korean Shipbuilding Giant Scouting for Locations in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh**



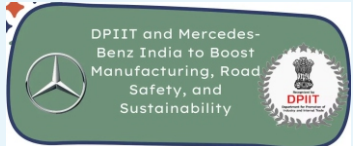
**Chennai:** South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI), one of the world's largest shipbuilders, is exploring opportunities to establish a shipyard in India, marking a significant boost to the country's shipbuilding ambitions.

**HYUNDAI:** The company has sent delegations to Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh to assess potential sites for its expansion. In Tamil Nadu, HHI has been in talks with L&T, which has an existing shipyard in Kattupalli, making it a strong candidate for partnership. "India holds immense potential in shipbuilding, and we see an opportunity to collaborate and bring our expertise to the region," said an official from Hyundai Heavy Industries. The company,

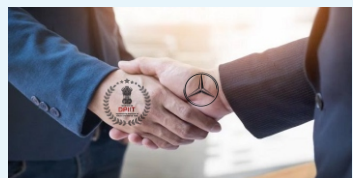
which currently holds a 10% market share in the global shipbuilding industry, aims to leverage India's growing maritime trade and government initiatives to promote ship manufacturing. India's shipbuilding sector is currently underdeveloped, holding less than 1% of the global market. However, the government has set ambitious targets to break into the top 10 by 2030 and the top 5 by 2047. Industry experts believe Hyundai's entry could accelerate this growth, bringing advanced technology, infrastructure investment, and employment opportunities. With India's focus on increasing its shipping fleet and reducing dependency on foreign-built vessels, Hyundai's expansion could play a crucial role in shaping the country's maritime future. Talks are expected to progress in the coming months, with a formal announcement anticipated later this year.

## DPIIT and Mercedes-Benz India Collaborate to Enhance Innovation, Sustainability, and Road Safety

**New Delhi** – On March 7, 2025, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and Mercedes-Benz India Private Limited signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at advancing India's manufacturing ecosystem, promoting road safety, and ensuring environmental sustainability. The partnership focuses on



creating structured programs to



support startups, innovators, and entrepreneurs by providing infrastructure, mentorship, funding opportunities, and market linkages. Additionally, the collaboration seeks to facilitate international partnerships and knowledge exchange to drive long-term impact in technological excellence and societal development.

Joint Secretary of DPIIT, Shri Sanjiv, highlighted that this collaboration is a strategic step towards enhancing India's manufacturing capabilities while promoting responsible and sustainable innovations. He emphasized that the partnership would strengthen industry-academia linkages and create an ecosystem that drives impactful technological advancements. Managing Director of Mercedes-Benz India, Shri Santosh Iyer, expressed enthusiasm for the collaboration, stating that it aligns with the company's focus areas of road safety, environmental sustainability, and advanced manufacturing. He noted that through corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding, Mercedes-Benz India will work closely with incubators and institutes to drive meaningful societal impact. The MoU was signed by Director of DPIIT, Dr. Sumeet Kumar Jarangal, and Managing Director of Mercedes-Benz India, Shri Santosh Iyer, in the presence of senior officials from both organizations. This collaboration underscores a significant move towards fostering innovation, sustainability, and road safety in India's industrial landscape.

## Government Boosts Domestic Steel Sector with Policy Measures and Import Monitoring

The Government of India is taking robust steps to strengthen the domestic steel industry while addressing the challenges posed by increasing imports. Recent data reveals that India imported 5.77 million tonnes of finished steel between April and October of the financial year 2024–25, with China and South Korea emerging as the largest contributors.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries, Shri H.D. Kumaraswamy, outlined key initiatives aimed at achieving the target of 300 million tonnes (MT) of crude steel capacity and bolstering domestic production.

**Key Policy Measures to Enhance Domestic Production**  
**Domestically Manufactured Iron & Steel Products (DMI&SP) Policy:** The government continues to promote the use of 'Made in India' steel for public procurement, enhancing local industry opportunities.

**Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Specialty Steel:** The scheme aims to attract investments of ₹29,500 crores and create an additional 25 MT of specialty steel capacity. This initiative reduces import

dependency and strengthens India's position in high-value steel production.

**Customs Duty Relief:** The Union Budget 2024–25 reduced the Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on key raw materials like Ferro-Nickel and Molybdenum ores to zero. Exemptions for ferrous scrap and specific raw materials for CRGO steel have also been extended until March 2026, making raw materials more affordable.

**Steel Import Monitoring System (SIMS) 2.0:** This revamped system enhances monitoring and oversight of imports, addressing concerns from domestic manufacturers about unfair trade practices.



### Quality Control and Recycling Initiatives

To ensure high standards, the government has notified a Steel Quality Control Order mandating that only BIS-compliant steel is available for use. Additionally, the Steel Scrap Recycling Policy encourages the use of domestically sourced scrap, reducing environmental impact and import reliance.

**Strategic Coordination and Global Collaboration**  
The government is also engaging with states, ministries, and international stakeholders to secure favorable terms for raw material availability, ensuring the competitiveness of Indian steelmakers.

### Industry Outlook

These measures come at a time when India's steel industry faces intensifying competition from imports, particularly from East Asian countries. By focusing on policy reforms, technological innovation, and capacity building, the government aims to establish India as a global leader in steel production while safeguarding the interests of domestic players. India's commitment to quality, sustainability, and innovation positions it well to meet future demand and contribute to the global steel industry.

## Tesla Begins Hiring in India Following Elon Musk - Pm Modi Meeting

**Tesla has commenced hiring in India.**

Tesla has commenced hiring in India, marking a strategic step toward establishing operations in the country. The recruitment drive follows a high-profile meeting between Tesla CEO Elon Musk and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, signaling a strong



likelihood of Tesla's market entry.  
**Full Story**

**The country's rapidly growing electric vehicle (EV) market**  
Bengaluru: Tesla has started recruiting for key positions in India, indicating concrete plans to establish a foothold in the country's rapidly growing electric vehicle (EV) market. This move comes on the heels of a crucial meeting between Tesla CEO Elon Musk and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, where discussions reportedly centered around investment

opportunities and EV infrastructure development.

The hiring drive aligns with Tesla's strategy to build a robust team. Job listings on Tesla's official website and professional networking platforms suggest the company is looking to fill roles in sales, engineering, and operational support. The hiring drive aligns with Tesla's strategy to build a robust team ahead of its market launch.

**Tesla's EVs more competitive in the Indian market.**

Market analysts believe that Tesla's local hiring could pave the way for broader initiatives, including potential manufacturing operations in India. Such a development could significantly reduce vehicle costs and make Tesla's EVs more competitive in the Indian market. The recruitment push also signals Tesla's commitment to aligning with India's 'Make in India' initiative, promoting local employment and technological advancement. Tesla Inc. is gearing up to enter the Indian market, evidenced by its hiring for 13 roles, including customer and back-end jobs in Mumbai and Delhi.

## Tesla Inches Closer to India Launch: Secures Showroom Spaces in Delhi and Mumbai

Tesla, the global electric vehicle giant, has taken a concrete step toward entering the Indian market by securing showroom spaces in New Delhi and Mumbai. The move indicates Tesla's readiness to launch its EV lineup in India, contributing to the nation's green mobility goals.

**Mumbai / New Delhi:** Elon Musk's Tesla is inching closer to its much-anticipated entry into the Indian market, with reports confirming the acquisition of showroom spaces in two of India's major metropolitan cities—New Delhi and Mumbai.

The secured locations are expected to serve as flagship showrooms, providing a physical footprint for Tesla in India and showcasing its range of electric vehicles (EVs) to prospective buyers. This development comes after prolonged discussions between Tesla and the Indian government over import duties and local manufacturing possibilities. With competition in the EV segment heating up, Tesla's entry could challenge established players like Tata Motors and new entrants such as BYD and MG Motors.



## Tesla Secures Lease for First Indian Showroom in Mumbai's BKC



**Major Milestone in EV Giant's Entry into India**  
**Mumbai, March 6, 2025** – Tesla Inc., the American electric vehicle giant led by Elon Musk, has finalized a lease agreement to open its first showroom in India,

located in Mumbai's Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC). The showroom will be housed in the Maker Maxity building, occupying 4,003 square feet on the ground floor.

**Record-Breaking Lease Deal**  
The lease agreement, effective from February 16, 2025, spans five years with an initial annual rent of approximately ₹4.2 crore, increasing by 5% annually. By the final year, the rent will reach around ₹5.1 crore per year. The deal sets a new national record for commercial lease rates at ₹881 per square foot per month,

making it one of the most expensive retail spaces in the country.

**Strategic Expansion Plans**  
The decision to establish Tesla's first showroom in BKC, a prime business and retail hub, underscores the company's strategy to make a strong impact in India's fast-growing electric vehicle market. Tesla is also reportedly exploring a second showroom location in New Delhi's Aerocity, reinforcing its commitment to expanding its presence in the country. **Boosting India's EV Ecosystem** Tesla's entry into India marks a "significant

milestone" in the country's electric mobility revolution. The launch of its showroom is expected to accelerate consumer interest in EV adoption while pushing local manufacturers to enhance their EV offerings. The move also aligns with the Indian government's vision to "promote clean energy and reduce carbon emissions." With Tesla making its first official footprint in India, the company is setting the stage for a "major transformation in the Indian EV landscape", signaling a long-term commitment to one of the world's most promising auto markets.

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## PACT 2025 International Seminar Explores Innovations in Paint and Coating Technology



**Kanpur:** The 10th PACT International Seminar, organized by the Department of Paint Technology, HBTU Kanpur, successfully commenced on March 1, 2025, at the Radhakrishnan Auditorium. The two-day event brought together industry experts, academicians, and students to discuss emerging trends and advancements in paint and coating technologies. The inaugural session, marked by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp, featured key addresses from prominent figures, including Dr. Pramod Kumar, Co-Chairman and Vice President of PACT, and Dr. P.K. Kamani, the Organizing Secretary. Dr. Arun Maithani, Head of the Department of Paint Technology, HBTU-K, detailed the department's contributions to the industry. The session also saw a motivational talk by Mr. Amit Pandey, CEO of Orient Cables, and a keynote address by Dr. S.C. Srivastava, MD of K-Tech India Pvt. Ltd.

A significant highlight was the release of a book authored by Prof. Pramod Kumar and Prof. Arun Maithani, followed by the PACT Pinnacle Awards, celebrating veteran contributors to the paint fraternity. The inauguration of the Center of

Technical Excellence at HBTU-K was another milestone of the day.

### Diving Deep into Technical Insights

The seminar's technical sessions began with discussions on "Recent Advances in Resins for Paints and Coatings" and "Testing of Powder Coating" by experts from Arkema Chemicals India Pvt. Ltd. and Sai Consultancy. Another session focused on "Thermochromic Inks," led by Pramod Kumar Gangiyan, Managing Director of Sweet Om Inks. Day 2 emphasized the contribution of students through technical presentations on topics like self-healing coatings, phosphate-free coatings, and sustainable powder coatings. Distinguished speakers from Allnex Resins India Pvt. Ltd. and IIT Roorkee further enriched the sessions with their insights into sustainable technology and advanced electrospinning processes.

### Cultural Engagement and Networking

The PACT 2025 Cultural Night provided a platform for networking, with engaging performances by students, faculty, and alumni. The event concluded with a valedictory session and certificate distribution, reinforcing the strong connection between academia and industry.

### A Step Towards Innovation

PACT 2025 not only fostered knowledge exchange but also set a precedent for future innovations in the paint and coating industry. With a focus on sustainability, technology, and practical applications, the seminar solidified its reputation as a key event for professionals and researchers in the field.

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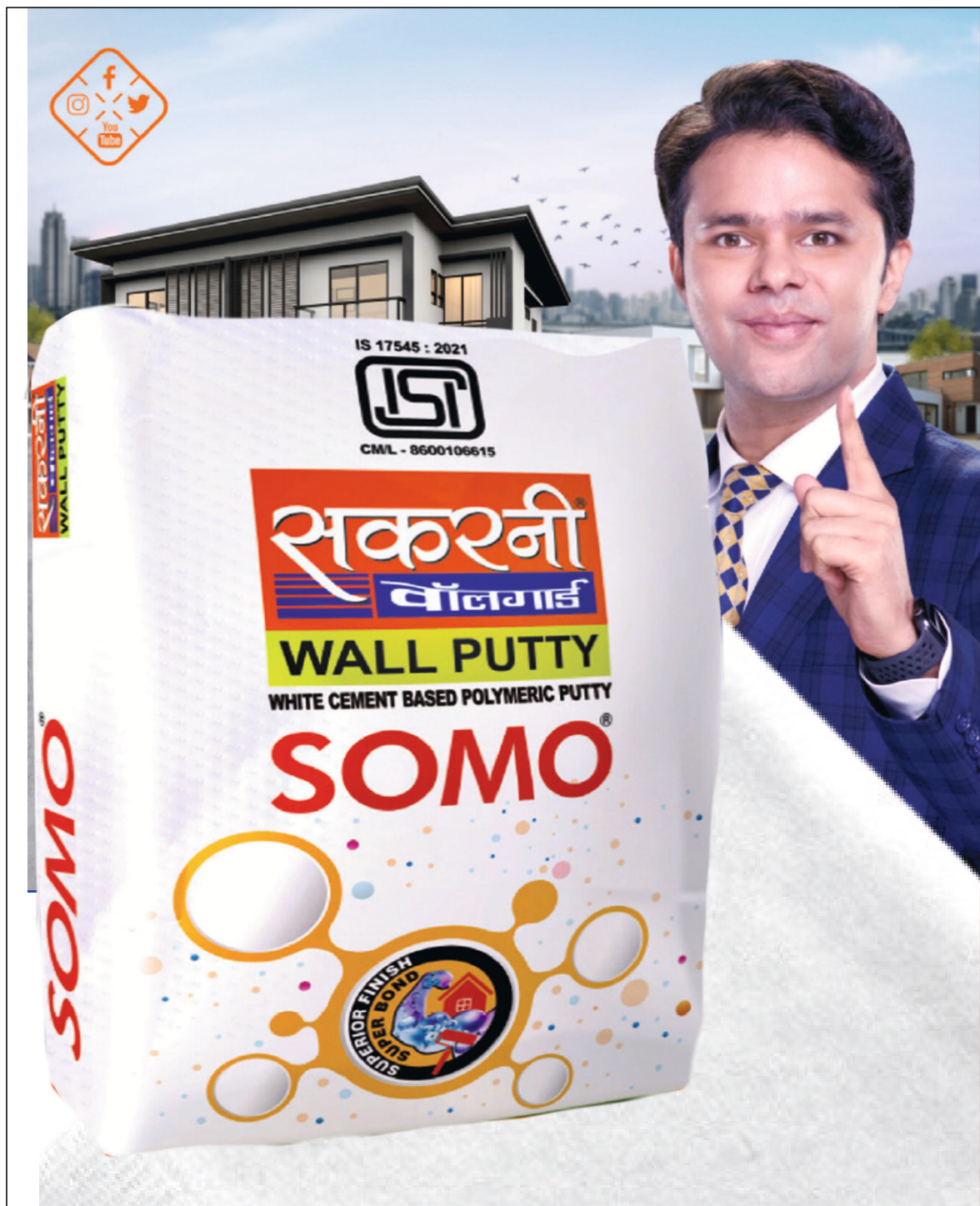
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