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CONTENTS

Growth in banks' overall credit decreased to 12% in FY25 from 16% in FY24.

As Banks' Credit Growth Slows...

There seems to be a problem of plenty for the banking sector. The banking system is awash with liquidity. After an aggressive battle against inflation, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been easing its policy stance in favour of growth. Yet banks' credit growth remains subdued despite sitting on mounds of money and in spite of lower Repo Rate.

Growth in banks' overall credit decreased to 12 per cent in FY25 from 16 per cent in FY24. The slowdown was more pronounced among private sector banks, with their loan offtake growing at a slower pace of 9.5 per cent in FY25. The downturn has continued, with credit growth decelerating to 8.5 per cent in May and slightly picking up at 9.6 per cent in June.

To make matters worse, banks' deposits have been expanding at a slightly faster rate of around 10 per cent in the past many months. Ordinarily, growth of deposits is a healthy trend when loans too grow at a correspondingly-higher rate. But growing deposits – especially higher-rate term deposits compared with low-cost savings account deposits – amid subdued advances are a double whammy for banks, whose net interest margins have come under severe pressure.

The worry lines for bankers are further increasing, as their blue-chip borrowers are opting for alternative investment funds and external commercial borrowings. They are also tapping the corporate bond market instead of approaching banks for loans. Besides, a large number of banks' low-cost savings account depositors are moving in hordes to mutual funds and equities, further putting pressure on the lenders' profit margins.

A combination of factors is at play for the credit growth to slacken. A slow pick-up in private capital expenditure has left demand for both project finance and working capital to be muted. Demand for corporate credit, in particular, has slowed down because there is little appetite for building fresh capacity. The growth momentum in the economy has been moderating, with the GDP expanding at an average rate of about 6.5 per cent over the last four quarters compared with 8.5 per cent in the previous eight quarters.

The other side of the subdued loan growth story is the banks themselves. The bankers' excessive caution or risk-averseness for lending to not-so-well-rated businesses is detrimental to their balance sheets as well as to the economy. The risk-averse banks have been turning away from surging demand for loans from the informal sector, MSMEs and many other vital sectors of the economy. Incidentally, the government can help the banks by supporting them to fund these small businesses to expand and be a major part of the global supply chains.

If sluggish growth of deposits was the big story of 2024, weak growth of credit is fast becoming the major highlight of 2025. Meanwhile, there is a sliver of optimism about demand for credit picking up in the second half of 2025. The busy season in September and the festive season following thereafter bring with them hopes of a robust demand for credit again. However, the ground realities of subdued economic growth and flagging demand for consumption dash those hopes of a revival in credit.

Meanwhile, liquidity in the system remains at an elevated level. The RBI's recent 50 per cent cut in Repo Rate and a whopping 100 per cent reduction in the Cash Reserve Ratio have freed up Rs 2.3 lakh crore of additional cash in the system. With funds sloshing around, banks are expected to close FY26 on a bleak note, clocking muted growth in credit at around 12 per cent. For now, the problem of plenty will continue to spook the banks. ■

Liquidity in the system remains at an elevated level. The RBI's recent 50 per cent cut in Repo Rate and a whopping 100 per cent reduction in the Cash Reserve Ratio have freed up Rs 2.3 lakh crore of additional cash in the system. With funds sloshing around, banks are expected to close FY26 on a bleak note, clocking muted growth in credit at around 12 per cent.

MISCELLANEOUS

Chemical output can hit $1 trillion by 2040

Targeted reforms encompassing a comprehensive range of fiscal and non-fiscal interventions will enable India to have a $1-trillion chemical sector and achieve a 12 per cent share of the global value chain by 2040 to become an international chemical powerhouse, NITI Aayog has said. NITI Aayog has proposed a range of measures to boost the chemical sector, including an operational expenditure subsidy scheme, expedited environmental clearances, more free trade agreements, development of world-class chemical hubs and improved access to technologies to promote self-sufficiency and innovation. India's chemical sector is worth about $250 billion currently.

With no interim deal, US imposes 25% tariff on Indian imports US President Donald Trump has imposed a 25 per cent tariff on a wide range of goods from India, effective August 1, 2025. While Mr Trump has framed the tariff hike as an assertion of US leverage in global supply chains, the penalties are reportedly tied to India's growing defence and energy ties with Russia. At stake is India's $87 billion export relationship with the US, its largest trading partner. Automobiles, auto components, steel, aluminium, smartphones, solar modules, marine products, gems, jewellery and select processed food and agricultural items are all on the 25 per cent list. Pharmaceuticals, semiconductors and critical minerals, however, have been excluded.

Cabinet's nod for Rs 99,446-cr jobs scheme

The Union Cabinet has given its nod to Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme, aimed at encouraging large-scale job creation and strengthening social security for the country's workforce. The ELI Scheme, which was announced in the Union Budget 2024-25 as a part of the prime minister's package of five schemes for youth employment and skilling, has a total budget outlay of Rs 99,446 crore. It targets creation of over 3.5 crore jobs within two years, with benefits applicable for employment generated between August 1, 2025, and July 31, 2027. The scheme has two components – one incentivising employees and another providing sops to employers to create and retain employees.

India fourth most-equal country globally Inequality in India has come down significantly between 2011-12 and 2022-23, making it the fourth-most equal country globally, according to a World Bank report. This is in addition to a sharp decrease in extreme poverty, which has dropped from 16.2 per cent in 2011-12 to 2.3 per cent in 2022-23. India follows Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Belarus among 167 countries ranked in terms of equality. The government attributed the reduction in inequality to various initiatives and schemes pursued during the past decade.

Nod for Rs 1.05-l cr Indian defence purchase

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has given a go-ahead for ten proposals to buy military hardware worth approximately Rs 1.05 lakh crore through indigenous sourcing. The DAC works under the chairmanship of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The DAC has given its "Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for procurement of defence equipment and vehicles for integrated common inventory management for tri-services and surface-to-air missiles. The AoNs have been approved under the Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured) category to provide further impetus to indigenous design and development, the statement has added.

Green hydrogen demand to rise by 3% by 2032

India's hydrogen demand is expected to rise at a CAGR of 3 per cent to 8.8 mtpa by

OBITUARY

Meghnad Desai (1940-2025)

Eminent economist and House of Lords member Megnadh Desai passed away last month. Born in Vadodara, Gujarat, Mr Desai was emeritus professor of economics at London School of Economics (LSE), where he taught from 1965 to 2003. The Padma Bhushan awardee completed his master's degree from University of Bombay (now Mumbai), after which he was offered an opportunity to study at University of Pennsylvania in 1960, where he completed a PhD three years later. The economist has had a great impact in academic and political realms in Britain as an LSE professor, Labour politician and honorary associate of the National Secular Society.

2032, a report released by India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA) has said. The report adds that despite announcements of green hydrogen projects of over 9 mtpa capacity, few in India have reached the final investment decision or secured long-term offtake agreements from domestic or international markets. In the baseline scenario, with 30 per cent of the announced green hydrogen (GH2) capacity commissioned within ten years, supply of electrolytic bio-H2 (bio-hydrogen) can meet approximately 31 per cent of domestic demand in 2032, the report notes.

Govt eases emission norms for coal power plants The government has reversed a decade-old mandate and eased sulphur emission rules for most coal-fired power plants. The Union Environment Ministry has exempted 79 per cent of coal-fired power plants outside a 10-km radius of populated cities from installing flue-gas desulphurisation (FGD) systems that remove sulphur from the plants' exhaust gases. The mandate to install FGD for another 11 per cent of the plants near populated cities would be taken on a "case-to-case basis", the notification has added. The remaining 10 per cent of the plants closer to cities with a population of over 10 lakhs will be required to install the desulphurisation equipment by December 2027.

India achieves ethanol-blending target of 20% India has successfully achieved 20 per cent ethanol blending in petrol in 2025, five years ahead of its original target set for 2030, Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri has announced. The minister has noted that ethanol blending in petrol has risen from just 1.5 per cent in 2014 to 20 per cent in 2025 – a nearly 13-fold increase over 11 years. Mr Puri emphasises that the shift towards ethanol-blended fuel has not only bolstered energy security but also led to significant economic and environmental benefits. Ethanol production has surged from 38 crore litres in 2014 to 661.1 crore litres by June 2025. ■

Verbatim...

MISCELLANEOUS

"Here is what I would tell China, India and Brazil: If you keep buying cheap Russian oil to allow this war to continue, we are going to tear up the hell out of you, and we are going to crush your economy."

Lindsey Graham
US SENATOR

"An unseen force is wielding a giant kaleidoscope in the current global landscape. Trust is your company's currency, and a deep understanding of AI is its edge."

Anand Mahindra
CHAIRMAN, TECH MAHINDRA

"Research has suggested that expiry day option trading increases market volatility and could lead to noise trading that may potentially undermine confidence in price formation. Unlike longer-term derivatives, short-term derivative products such as expiry day trading in index options may detract from capital formation."

Ananth Narayan G
WHOLETIME MEMBER, SEBI

"So far, the industry mindset is focused on the domestic market, but we want industry to grow by leaps and bounds."

Piyush Goyal
UNION MINISTER FOR COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

FINANCE

RBI scraps prepayment charges on MSMEs The RBI has barred banks and NBFCs from levying foreclosure charges or pre-payment penalties on floating rate loans granted to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The banking regulator has also directed all regulated entities (REs) not to levy pre-payment penalties on floating rate personal loans. The new regulations are applicable for all loans sanctioned or renewed after January 1, 2026. Small finance banks, regional rural banks (RRBs) and local area banks have been excluded from the new norms. In case of cash credit or overdraft facilities, no pre-payment charges will be applicable, if the borrower intimates the RE of their intention not to renew the facility.

RRBs' IT integration to be ready by Sept 15
NABARD Chairman Shaji K V has said that IT integration of recently-amalgamated regional rural banks (RRBs) on the principles of one State, one RRB is expected to be completed by September 15. The amalgamation of RRBs has become effective from May 1. This is aimed at improving efficiency of scale and rationalisation of cost. With this, now, there are 28 RRBs in 26 States and two Union Territories with more than 22,000 branches covering 700 districts, Mr Shaji has added. NABARD is working on building a common digital infrastructure with RRBs. Credit infrastructure and government data systems are being rolled out to reach rural population, he has added.

Indian stock market slips to fourth spot in Asia The Indian equity market is now the fourth-most preferred market in Asia, with Taiwan and Korea benefiting from the resurgent semiconductor cycle, BofA Securities' latest Asia Fund Manager Survey has noted on country allocations. "Japan remains the most favourite market by a distance, followed by Taiwan and Korea, with India slipping to the fourth spot," the survey adds. While Korea gains additional upside from hopes surrounding its new leadership's policy reforms, China allocation has dropped again with only Australia and Thailand behind it in the pecking order, the survey reveals. Among the sectors in India, investors are keen on consumption and infrastructure, while IT is out of favour.

NPCI expands UPI-PayNow with 13 more banks
NPCI International Payments (NIPL), the international arm of National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has enhanced the UPI-PayNow real-time payment linkage by adding 13 more banks on the platform. This extends UPI's reach and simplifies cross-border remittances between India and Singapore. The facility will be available to customers of the added banks from July 17. "With this development, which will go live on July 17, 2025, users in both the countries can remit funds to a wider base, making the service more accessible and convenient," NPCI has said in a statement. UPI-PayNow service is a collaboration between the RBI and the Monetary Authority of Singapore.

Insuretech funding drops by 70% from 2021 peak
India's insurtech sector has entered a phase of consolidation, with funding dropping sharply from a peak of $820 million in 2021 to $239 million in 2024, according to a report by Perfios and The Digital Fifth. The report notes that insurtech funding had hit its highest level in 2021, driven by rapid scale-ups and investors' strong enthusiasm. However, the trend began to shift in 2022, when funding dropped to $546 million, followed by a further decline to $497 million in 2023. This marked the beginning of a transition from rapid growth to a focus on sustainable and quality-driven expansion. Insuretech refers to technology startups involved in the insurance industry.

Jio, Allianz seal reinsurance and insurance JVs
Jio Financial Services has announced that it has entered into a binding agreement to form a 50:50 domestic reinsurance joint venture (JV) with the Allianz Group. The Munich-based group, through its wholly-owned subsidiary Allianz Europe has acted on the deal. The two companies have also entered into a non-binding agreement for setting up equally-owned joint ventures for both general and life insurance businesses in India. Allianz has said that the reinsurance JV will build on its current Allianz Re and Allianz Commercial portfolios and operations within India. It will also draw on Allianz's global infrastructure, particularly its strengths in pricing, risk assessment and portfolio management. ■

APPOINTMENTS

R Doraiswamym, who was earlier managing director of **Life Insurance Corporation of India**, has assumed charge as MD and CEO of the country's largest life insurer.

Nitin Gupta, a retired IRS officer, has taken over as chairman of the **National Financial Reporting Authority** – an independent regulatory body overseeing accounting and auditing standards for certain classes of companies and auditors.

The government has appointed former Finance and Economic Affairs Secretary **Ajay Seth** as chairman of the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India.**

Income Tax refunds surge by 474% in a decade Taxpayers' refunds have grown at nearly double the pace of tax collections in the last 10 years. Refunds issued by the Income Tax (I-T) Department have increased by 474 per cent between 2013-14 and 2024-25, significantly outpacing the 274 per cent growth in gross tax collections. There has also been an 81 per cent decrease in number of days it takes to issue I-T refunds, decreasing from 93 days in 2013 to just 17 days in 2024. The increase in tax refunds and decrease in number of days to issue refunds is due to improvements in tax administration, especially with adoption of digital infrastructure.

ONGC, BP join hands for offshore drilling ONGC has signed an agreement with global energy giant BP to collaborate on drilling multiple wells in offshore sedimentary basins of Andaman, Mahanadi, Saurashtra and Bengal. This partnership will enhance geological understanding and unlock untapped hydrocarbon potential, strengthening India's long-term energy security, ONGC has said. Earlier, ONGC had selected BP as the technical service provider to enhance its Mumbai High oil and gas field production by 60 per cent over the baseline level. Apart from reversing the decline in its matured fields, ONGC is expecting to start production in a clutch of new fields, including the Tapti Daman area, Kutch field and the Mahanadi basin.

C-DoT targets Rs 1,000-cr revenue in FY26 Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT) is likely to generate Rs 1,000 crore in revenue in the current financial year, Minister of State for Telecom Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani has said. Speaking on the launch of the core 5G router by C-DoT, the minister has said that growth in the State-owned telecom research organisation's revenue reflects on its commercial relevance and technology leadership. C-DOT is expected to get a grant of around Rs 400 crore from the Centre, which will be in addition to the Rs 1,000 crore revenue that the organisation will generate from technology agreements. C-DoT has reported revenue of Rs 536 crore in 2024-25.

HCL plans Rs 400-cr copper plant in MP
Hindustan Copper (HCL) is looking to build a new Rs 400-crore concentrator plant with 3 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) of capacity in Malanjkhand in Madhya Pradesh in the next three years. The plant is a part of the company's plans to triple its ore production capacity, HCL Chairman and Managing Director Sanjiv Kumar Singh has said. The State-run company expects to start construction work on the new facility next year. It already has a 2.5-mtpa concentrator plant in Malanjkhand.
Mr Singh has said that State-run consultancy firm Mecon is preparing a tender document and technical design for the plant, which will have a capacity of 3 mtpa.

BEML bags $6.23-mn orders from Uzbekistan State-owned BEML has secured two export orders worth $6.23 million for supply of heavy-duty bulldozers and motor graders to Uzbekistan. The company has secured two distinct orders, including one for supply of 10 units of its heavy-duty bulldozers, specially engineered to perform in extreme cold climates with temperatures plunging as low as -50 degree celsius. The second order from Uzbekistan includes supply of one unit of the high-performance motor grader, essential for infrastructure development and road maintenance. Uzbekistan becomes the 73rd nation to be added to BEML's global exports portfolio, reinforcing its expanding international reach and credibility as a preferred partner for advanced equipment, BEML has added.

ONGC, Mitsui in pact to build ethane carriers
Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has signed an agreement with Japan's second-largest shipping company, Mitsui OSK Lines, to build and operate two very large ethane carriers (VLECs). Under the agreement, the VLECs will ship imported ethane to ONGC Petro additions (OPaL), a unit of ONGC that operates a dual-feed cracker facility. ONGC is planning to source 800,000 tonnes per year of ethane to secure feedstock for OPaL from May 2028, the Reuters had reported earlier this year. The agreement is subject to ONGC board's approval, the oil and gas explorer has said in a statement to the exchanges. ONGC has not given financial details of the partnership.

REC's net profit rises by 29% to Rs 4,45 l cr REC's total income has risen by 13 per cent at Rs 14,734 crore for the June 2025 quarter as against Rs 13,037 crore during the year-ago quarter. The State-owned power sector financier has registered a 29 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 4,451 crore. The company declared has interim dividend of Rs 4.60 per equity share on the face value of Rs 10 each, REC has said in a media release. Net interest income has increased by 17 per cent to Rs 5,247 crore compared to Rs 4,474 crore. Return on net worth has gone up by 312 basis points from 19.51 to 22.63 per cent.

NLC India eyes of Rs 1.25-l cr capex by 2030
NLC India, a public sector enterprise, is planning to invest Rs 1.25 lakh crore by 2030 to expand its capacity from the existing 6.7 to 20 gw, Prasanna Kumar Motupalli, the chairman and managing director of the company has said. He adds that out of Rs 1.25 lakh crore of planned capital expenditure (capex), the company will be spending around Rs 65,000 crore on renewables and other green initiatives. Around Rs 45,000 crore will be earmarked for thermal and around 15,000 crores for mining. Mr Motupalli has elaborated that of the Rs 65,000-crore capex on renewables, around Rs 15,000 crore will be allocated for battery storage system.

GAIL inks pact with Vitol for 1 mt LNG supply
GAIL India has signed a long-term liquefied natural gas (LNG) sales and purchase agreement with Vitol Asia, according to an official statement by the company. This agreement follows the binding term sheet that was signed between the two companies in January 2024. According to the agreement, Vitol will supply approximately 1 mtpa of LNG to GAIL for about 10 years. The supply is scheduled to begin in 2026, and Vitol will deliver LNG to GAIL from its global portfolio. India has emerged as the world's fourth-largest importer of LNG in 2024. The demand for LNG in the country is expected to increase steadily over the next decade.

CORPORATE

Adani's PVC plant by 2028 to rival RIL Gautam Adani's conglomerate will build a 1-million tonne (mt) a year PVC plant in Mundra, Gujarat. This marks the group's foray into petrochemicals sector, where Reliance Industries is the main player. PVC, or polyvinyl chloride, is a synthetic plastic polymer that is widely used to make an array of products – from pipes and fittings to window and door frames and many other materials. The country's annual demand for PVC is about 4 mt, with domestic production capacity at around 1.59 mt. Demand for PVC is projected to grow at a rate of about 10 per cent.

Sattva to invest Rs 800 crore in Goa's realty The Sattva Group is investing about Rs 800 crore in Goa's property market. The realty company sees huge business opportunities in the coastal State's real estate sector. Bengaluru-based Sattva Group, which is one of the leading real estate companies in South India, had entered the Goa market a few years ago. It has already developed the first phase of its maiden housing project, Sattva Water's Edge, and recently launched the second phase comprising villas and apartments. The Sattva Group is planning two more projects in Goa, including a gated community where it will offer residential plots.

Renault in tie-up talks with JSW Group Renault is in early talks with the JSW Group for a potential joint venture in India, the Bloomberg has reported. The report adds that the French carmaker is looking to strengthen its position in India, while restructuring ties with long-time partner Nissan Motor. The discussions are a part of Renault's broader strategy to deepen its independent operations in India. The company is in the final stages of acquiring Nissan's stake in their jointly-owned plant in Chennai. JSW is already active in the automotive space, owning a 35 per cent stake in MG Motor India through a joint venture with China's SAIC Motor Corp.

Lenders reject Jaypee's JAL resolution plan Lenders of Jaiprakash Associates (JAL) have turned down Jaypee Infratech's request to accept its resolution plan to acquire the bankrupt diversified company. Adani Enterprises, Vedanta Group, Dalmia Bharat Cement, Jindal Power and PNC Infratech have submitted their resolution plans to acquire JAL. Lenders of JAL had in June rejected the resolution plan of Suraksha Group-owned Jaypee Infratech as the bid was submitted late and without earnest money. Jaypee Infratech had requested the Committee of Creditors (CoC) of JAL to reconsider the decision to reject its bid. In a recent meeting, the members of the CoC unanimously agreed not to change its earlier decision to reject Jaypee's resolution plan.

Capgemini to snap up WNS for $3.3 billion Capgemini, a French business and technology transformation player, and WNS, a business transformation and services firm, have entered into a definitive transaction agreement. Accordingly, Capgemini will acquire WNS for $3.3 billion. According to a media statement from Capgemini, the total cash consideration would amount to $3.3 billion, excluding WNS' net financial debt. The transaction will be accretive to Capgemini's normalised EPS by 4 per cent before synergies in 2026 and 7 per cent post-synergies in 2027. "Capgemini's acquisition of WNS will provide the group with the scale and vertical sector expertise to capture that rapidly-emerging strategic opportunity of agentic AI-powered intelligent operations," Capgemini CEO Aiman Ezzat has said.

Glenmark's IGI, Abbvie in cancer drug deal Glenmark's innovation arm IGI and AbbVie have signed an exclusive licensing agreement for IGI's cancer treatment. Under the agreement, AbbVie will get exclusive rights to develop, manufacture and commercialise IGI's ISB 2001 in North America, Europe, Japan and Greater China. ISB 2001 is currently in phase-I clinical trial in patients with relapsed or refractory multiple myeloma, a type of cancer that develops in white blood cells. AbbVie has a pipeline of more than 20 investigational assets designed to tackle cancers. IGI will receive an upfront payment of $700 million and could earn up to $1.225 billion in additional milestone payments, according to the agreement.

Adani to exit AWL in a Rs 10,874-crore deal Gautam Adani-led conglomerate Adani Enterprises has announced a complete exit from its FMCG joint venture, Adani Wilmar (now called AWL Agri Business), with

APPOINTMENTS

BMW Group India has appointed **Hardeep Singh Brar** as its president and CEO with effect from September 1, 2025. Before this role, Mr Brar, was a part of Kia India as senior vice-president and national head of sales and marketing.

Ajoy Chawla, who currently heads **Titan's** jewellery division, will take over as its next managing director from January 1, 2026.

The Coca-Cola Company has named **Hemant Rupani** as the CEO of its bottling arm, **Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages**, effective September 8. Mr Rupani is currently Mondelez International's business unit president for South-East Asia, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

Amisha Jain will assume office as managing director and CEO of **Arvind Fashions** with effect from August 13, 2025. She is currently managing director and senior vice-president of South Asia, Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe at Levi Strauss & Co.

Shailesh Jejurikar, the chief operating officer of **Procter & Gamble**, will take over as its chief executive officer from January 1, 2026.

Singapore-based Wilmar International, in a Rs 10,874-crore deal. The transaction will see Adani's subsidiary, Adani Commodities (ACL), selling its 20 per cent stake in AWL Agri Business. Adani Enterprises has said in a statement that it has signed an agreement with Lence, a unit of Wilmar International, to sell 20 per cent of its shares in AWL at Rs 275 per share, amounting to Rs 7,150 crore.

Udaan buys ShopKirana to expand reach B2B e-commerce platform Udaan has acquired ShopKirana in an all-stock deal. The acquisition, the details of which have not been disclosed, is a part of Udaan's broader roadmap toward a public listing, expected within the next two years. ShopKirana, founded in 2015, has built a strong presence in tier-II and -III cities by digitising procurement and streamlining last-mile delivery for kirana (street-corner stores) stores. ShopKirana's integration with Udaan is expected to enhance operational efficiency, expand market reach and deepen category leadership in staples, FMCG and HoReCa (hotel, restaurant and catering).

Pernod to sell Imperial Blue to Tilaknagar Pernod Ricard has agreed to sell its Imperial Blue whisky business to Indian liquor-maker Tilaknagar Industries, as the French spirits group boosts its focus on premium labels in its portfolio. The world's No 2 Western spirits-maker has not disclosed the value of the deal but has said that on completion, it is expected to be "immediately and meaningfully accretive" to Pernod Ricard India's operating margin and net sales growth rate. For Tilaknagar Industries, a dominant player in India's brandy market with Mansion House, the deal marks a strategic shift into whisky, a faster-growing, higher-margin segment. The transaction is expected to close within next few months.

Wockhardt to exit US generics pharma business Wockhardt has decided to exit US generic pharmaceutical segment to unlock capital for high-impact areas. "Wockhardt is undertaking significant strategic realignment of its US business in line with its long-term vision to build a differentiated, innovation-driven pharmaceutical enterprise. As a part of this transition, the company has taken decision to exit the US generic pharmaceutical segment, paving the way for deeper focus and investment in its advanced product portfolio," the company has said in a stock exchange filing.

Titan acquires 67% in Dubai-based Damas Titan Company will buy a 67 per cent stake in Dubai-based luxury brand Damas from Qatar's Mannai Corporation. The Rs 2,438-crore deal is expected to be completed by January 31, 2026. The Tata Group company will have the right to acquire the remaining 33 per cent stake in Damas after December 31, 2029, Titan has said in an exchange filing. Titan has presence in the UAE since October 2020 through its Tanishq jewellery stores. After the deal, Titan, which has about seven stores in the UAE, will gain access to Damas' 146 stores across the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Standard Chartered was Titan's adviser for the deal.

ITC Hotels eyes 220 units, 20,000 keys by 2030 ITC Hotels is aiming at expanding its portfolio to over 220 operating units with more than 20,000 keys by 2030, according to its latest annual report. The company plans to accelerate its growth through management contracts and franchise arrangements. Approximately, 70 per cent of the keys are being operated under management contracts, including franchising, it has added. Spun into a separate entity after the demerger from ITC, the company owns brands like ITC Hotels, Mementos, WelcomHotel, Storii, Fortune and WelcomHeritage. The focus is also on strong partnerships with asset owners, leveraging brand credentials and providing operational expertise, ITC Hotels has said in the report. ■

NTPC to invest Rs 20,000 cr in green energy The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has granted enhanced functional autonomy to NTPC to invest up to Rs 20,000 crore in green energy without any separate government approval. An earlier investment cap was Rs 7,500 crore. The move is expected to put the renewable energy (RE) expansion plans of NTPC Green (NGEL), a listed entity, on the fast track. The investments can also be through step-down subsidiary NTPC RE and various joint ventures, including with State governments. NTPC and its arms are aiming for an RE capacity of a massive 60 gw by 2032, a plan that helps the country in meeting its net-zero emission by 2070.

OBITUARY

Susim Mukul Datta (1936-2025)

Former Hindustan Unilever (HUL) Chairman Susim Mukul Datta, 89, passed away in Mumbai early last month. He had joined the company as a management trainee in the mid-1950s. Mr Datta, known for his work in rural marketing, was the chairman of HUL (then Hindustan Lever or HLL) from 1990 to 1996. He had played a key role in the company's landmark merger of Lipton and Brooke Bond tea, which were then separate businesses under HLL. Mr Datta was also instrumental in HUL's acquisition of Tata Oil Mills Company and scaling up of popular detergent Wheel's operations. His strategies helped cement the company's dominance in India's FMCG sector.

A Done Deal

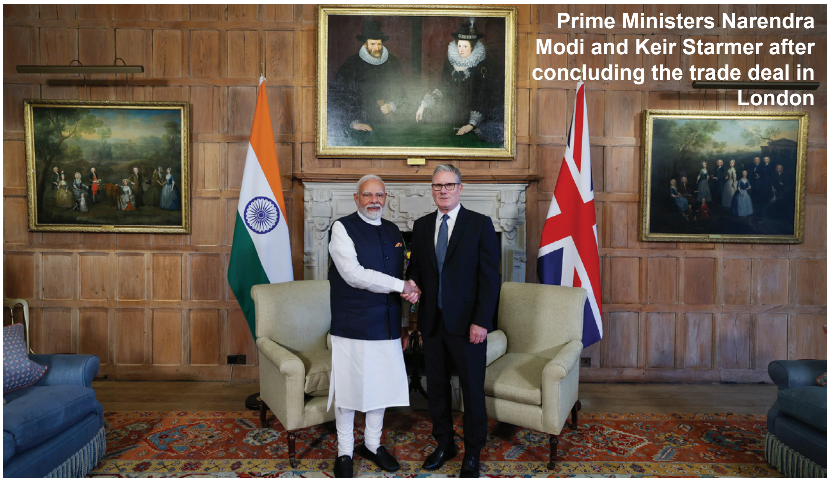
Riding on pragmatism and mutual gains, the Indo-UK CETA can act as a right template to forge many more bilateral trade agreements.

IBJ BUREAU

India and the United Kingdom (UK) have taken a major step in building a stronger economic partnership, with the signing of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) in late July. The agreement was signed by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

The CETA, which is also called the free trade agreement (FTA), marks a significant milestone in India's engagement with major developed economies and reflects a shared commitment to strengthening economic integration. As the world's fourth and sixth largest economies respectively, India and the UK's bilateral engagement holds global economic significance. The CETA follows successful conclusion of negotiations announced on May 6, 2025.

"The CETA unlocks tariff-free access on 99 per cent of Indian exports to the UK, covering nearly 100 per cent of trade value, including labour-intensive sectors, advancing the Make In India initiative and setting the stage for bilateral trade to double by 2030," stresses Mr Goyal.



Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Keir Starmer after concluding the trade deal in London

A win-win pact

The bilateral trade between the two countries is nearly $56 billion –merchandise trade of $23 billion and services trade of $33 billion –and the trade deal seeks to double this figure by 2030. The deal secures unprecedented duty-free access for 99 per cent of India's exports to the UK, covering nearly the entire trade basket. This is expected to open new opportunities for labour-intensive industries such as textiles, marine products, leather, footwear, sports goods, toys and gems and jewellery. Besides, fast-growing sectors like engineering goods, auto components and organic chemicals are also set to benefit a lot.

Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal: The trade agreement is designed to open new avenues for trade and investment, while protecting India's core economic interests.

The services sector, a strong driver of India's economy, will also see wide-ranging gains. The agreement provides greater market access in IT and IT-enabled services (ITeS), financial and legal services, professional and educational services and digital trade. Indian professionals, including those deployed by companies to work in the UK across all services sectors, professionals deployed on contracts such as architects, engineers, chefs, Yoga instructors and musicians will benefit from simplified visa procedures and liberalised entry categories, making it easier for talent to work in the UK.

India has also secured an agreement on the Double Contribution Convention. This will exempt Indian professionals and their employers from social security payments in the UK for up to three years, improving the cost competitiveness of Indian talent.

The agreement has been designed to make trade more inclusive. Women and youth entrepreneurs, farmers, fishermen, startups and MSMEs will gain new access to global value chains, supported by provisions that encourage innovation, promote sustainable practices, and reduce non-tariff barriers. The CETA is expected to boost trade volumes significantly in the coming years, creating jobs, expanding exports and supporting a deeper, more resilient economic relationship between India and the UK.

India has, in the meanwhile, opened 89.5 per cent of its tariff lines, covering 91 per cent of the UK's exports. At the same time, the deal succeeds in safeguarding India's sensitive sectors and strategically-important products where domestic capability is being built. Elimination of duties will make a range of imported products from the UK more affordable for consumers, offering greater variety and quality at competitive prices.

The trade agreement is designed to open new avenues for trade and investment, while protecting India's core economic interests. It combines reduction in tariffs, simpler rules for trade, strong provisions for services and measures that make professional mobility easier.

Only 24.5 per cent of the UK's export will enjoy immediate duty-free market access. India has safeguarded sensitive sectors like dairy, cereal, millets, pulses, certain essential oils, apples, certain vegetables, gold, jewellery and lab-grown diamonds. Strategic exclusions also cover critical energy, fuels, marine vessels, some polymers, worn clothing, smartphones and optic fibres.

For strategically-important products where domestic capacity is being built, for example products under Make In India or Product-Linked Incentives (PLI) Scheme, India will provide gradual tariff reduction over a period of five, seven or 10 years. India has gradually and selectively opened her markets to alcoholic beverages. Bilateral safeguards have been built in to manage any sudden import surges that could harm domestic industries.

The agreement simplifies compliance by allowing exporters to self-certify the origin of products, reducing time and paperwork. The UK's importers can also rely on importers' knowledge for certification, further easing trade. For small consignments under 1,000 pounds, there is no requirement for documentation of origin, which supports e-commerce and small businesses.

Key Takeaways Of Indo-UK Agreement

- Seeks to double the current around $56-billion bilateral trade by 2030
- Secures unprecedented duty-free access for 99% of India's exports to the UK
- Provides greater UK market access to India's services, a major driver of Indian economy
- Indian market access allowed for about 91% of the UK's exports
- Simplifies compliance and quickens deal-making process by allowing exporters to self-certify origin of products

An apt model

The Indo-UK trade deal has been accompanied by the unveiling of the UK-India Vision 2035. The vision document envisages greater engagement in areas such as defence and technology and education, indicating a desire to deepen the relationship between the two countries.

This trade agreement is considered to be one of the most comprehensive deals that New Delhi has entered into with any country. India has indicated its willingness to bring down its tariffs substantially, as it seeks to integrate more closely with developed countries and encourage more investment into the country.

The Indo-UK deal comes at a time when the global trading architecture has been upended by US President Donald Trump's tariff policies. Mr Trump has over the past few days announced new deals with countries such as Japan, the Philippines and Indonesia, after similar agreements with Britain and Vietnam, with the tariffs ranging between 10 and 20 per cent. In the case of India, the US has slapped 25 per cent tariffs on Indian imports and also decided to impose a "Russia penalty" of an unspecified quantum on Indian imports. Mr Trump resorted to these aggressive measures after months of negotiations between the two countries for interim trade deal before August 1 failed to materialise.

India is also negotiating a deal with the EU. According to sources in the know, the two sides have agreed to seven out of 23 chapters in the agreement. The successful deal with the UK could serve as a template for India to forge future bilateral trade deals with many countries, including the US and the EU.

The UPI Paradox

Small businesses refuse to transact through Unified Payments Interface, putting progress in digital payments and tax reforms at risk.

SHIVANAND PANDIT

In early July 2025, Karnataka witnessed a major uproar after thousands of small traders – ranging from vegetable vendors to roadside shopkeepers – began receiving Goods and Services Tax (GST) notices based on their Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions. The controversy came to light when a vegetable vendor in Haveri was issued a notice, demanding Rs 29 lakh in GST dues. The notice cited that over Rs 1.63 crore had been credited to his bank account via UPI over the past four years.

Earlier that month, the Karnataka Department of Commercial Taxes had issued nearly 9,000 such notices across the State. Officials clarified that these were not direct tax demands but rather preliminary inquiries based on UPI transaction data from 2022 to 2025. The focus was on unregistered businesses whose annual digital receipts exceeded Rs 40 lakh for goods or Rs 20 lakh for services – the thresholds that mandate GST registration under the existing laws."If a person deals exclusively in exempt items, such as vegetables or milk, the notice will be withdrawn after verification," said Joint Commissioner of Commercial Taxes Meera Suresh Pandit. However, this assurance failed to allay the fears of many small traders.

Shadow Over Twin Reforms

- Two major pillars of reforms – UPI and GST – corroding against each other detrimental to progress
- Small merchants now seeing UPI more as a trap to extract GST even when many of them are exempt from the levy
- Simplified GST turning out to be complicated, expensive and compliance-heavy for small businesses

Following Karnataka's lead, four other States – Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat – have begun requesting merchant turnover data from UPI platforms and payment aggregators. These State tax departments are identifying individuals and entities that may have crossed the annual turnover limit and need to have GST registration.

Enable, don't impose

Until recently, the Union government projected two major economic reforms – the UPI and the GST – as unshakable pillars of a modern, formalised economy and rightly so. UPI has transformed the payment landscape, enabling over 30 crore Indians to enjoy the speed, ease, and convenience of digital payments. In FY25 alone, UPI transactions had reached staggering value of Rs 260 lakh crore. Simultaneously, GST has significantly broadened the indirect tax base, helping tax collections scale to a record Rs 22 lakh crore during the same financial year.

These milestones reflect strong progress. However, trouble brews when one of these pillars – the UPI – is used as a tool to enforce the other – the GST – without sufficient trust-building or transition planning. This coercive alignment is triggering resistance among India's large population of small and medium physical merchants. Most recently, in cities like Bengaluru, anecdotal evidence of merchant pushback is mounting. A new phenomenon is emerging of signs at small stores declaring: "No UPI, Only Cash." This trend is a red flag for a payments ecosystem that depends on mutual benefit.

The UPI ecosystem functions as a two-sided market. Users adopt it because they find enough places to spend through it, and merchants continue accepting it because they gain growth in revenue and efficiency of operation. The explosive growth of UPI in recent years has largely been due to tireless promotion by private players and elimination of the Merchant Discount Rate (MDR), which removed a key adoption barrier for smaller merchants.

However, despite this support, many merchants – especially those belonging to small and medium enterprises – have not witnessed a proportional increase in business. Their customer base has not grown significantly, and they have not seen higher spending from regular patrons. Most accepted UPI because it was free and solved the problem of a scarcity of small-denomination notes. For many, it was a matter of convenience, not compliance.

The situation has taken an undesirable turn when State governments have begun using UPI transaction data to generate presumptive GST bills. Suddenly, merchants who had never paid such levies – nor were even eligible for them based on turnover – found themselves being presented with significant tax demands. What was once marketed as a "free and enabling" digital tool now seems like a trap. Their perception of the UPI being the bait and the GST the switch appears to be turning true.

This sense of betrayal is real and reminiscent of early tax resistance in other parts of the world. In the early 20th-century America, income tax was initially seen as unconstitutional, and even after the 16th amendment in 1913 legalised it, compliance remained below 1 per cent for many years. It was only after the 1943 'withholding tax' mechanism, where employers began deducting tax at source, that tax collection became systematic and non-intrusive. Even then, the concept of Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) was introduced only in the late 1960s to bring tax defaulters under the net in a more uniform and less burdensome manner.

The government will have to do a serious course correction to ensure that GST and UPI complement each other and foster economic growth.

The situation in India is not too different. Small and medium businesses feel that they are being unfairly cornered. Those who registered under the GST often discover that the so-called simplified regime is still complicated, expensive and compliance-heavy. Monthly consolidated payments, technological integration and working capital pressures have only added to their reluctance. Even merchants below the Rs 40-lakh turnover threshold (Rs 20 lakh in the North-East) are being pressured by local officials to pay taxes they neither understand nor legally owe.

There is also growing belief that some State governments, particularly those not politically aligned with the Centre, are using this data to collect more State GST (SGST) as a revenue-generation tool to fund populist welfare promises. UPI data, therefore, is seen not as a boon but as a surveillance tool designed to trap them into paying what they perceive as unjust dues.

Corrective measures

The rejection of the UPI by merchants is not just a technical hiccup –it is a systemic warning sign. It comes at a time when user growth is plateauing, merchant onboarding is slowing, and digital payment providers have little economic incentive to push further adoption. Meanwhile, the RBI has directed ATMs to carry more small-denomination notes, inadvertently making cash more attractive and convenient once again.

If the UPI is to survive as India's digital backbone, and the GST is to become truly universal, the Union government must consider course correction. This could include rationalising GST rates for small and medium enterprises, especially those operating on thin margins; introducing a low, automatic AMT-like levy, deducted seamlessly based on real-time data, which is predictable, simple and fair; reducing GST threshold limits to expand the base, while keeping the rate low and compliance minimal; and sharing a fraction of collected revenues with the digital payment ecosystem to sustain incentives for adoption and innovation of the UPI.

What India must avoid is a situation where either the UPI growth or the GST coverage begins to look uncertain or unsustainable. Both were envisioned as pillars of formalisation, efficiency and inclusivity. If one begins to erode the other, the consequences could ripple far beyond just retail stores. Policymaking must balance compliance with trust, convenience with fairness and innovation with empathy. ■

(The author is a tax specialist based in Goa.)

A Smart, Green Port

With robust infrastructure, the Deendayal Port is transforming rapidly into a vibrant gateway to the country's economic growth.

IBJ BUREAU

FY25 was a great year for Deendayal Port Authority (DPA). The erstwhile Kandla Port handled a record 150.16 mt in the previous financial year, registering an impressive 13 per cent year-on-year growth. Besides, DPA's cargo feat was all the more significant, with Deendayal handling the highest traffic among the country's 12 major ports.

DPA, located in Kandla in the Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat, is one of the 12 major ports of the country under the administrative control of the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. Formerly governed by the Major Ports Trust Act, 1964, it is now regulated under the Major Port Authorities Act, 2021, reflecting a new era of autonomy, modernisation and corporate governance.

The Deendayal Port, equipped with 16 dry cargo berths and seven oil jetties, boasts of robust infrastructure. The vibrant, port off the country's western shores, has three single-buoy moorings (SBMs) and two offshore product jetties in Vadinar. It also houses a dedicated dry bulk terminal in Tuna-Tekra, apart from state-of-the-art anchorage, custom-bonded area and modern facilities for night-time navigation and fast-tracked allocation of berths. The superior infrastructure enables the port to handle a wide variety of cargo – ranging from petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) to fertilisers, coal, containers, timber, salt, iron ore and other transshipment cargo.

DPA Chairman Sushil Kumar Singh: Steering Deendayal Port's big maritime ambitions

DPA has been nominated as the green hydrogen hub under the National Green Hydrogen Mission. In alignment with India's climate commitments and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat@2047, the Deendayal Port is accelerating its efforts to emerge as a leading facilitator, contributing to the Net-Zero Mission of the Union government by creating an ecosystem for production and supply of green maritime fuels.

The port is augmenting its capacity to be future-ready for handling the projected increase in cargo volumes in the near future. A new, modern, state-of -the-art container terminal with a capacity of 2.19 million TEUs is under construction in Tuna Tekra. Moreover, a new, multi-cargo terminal and new oil jetties are also in the process of development in Tuna Tekra. Many technological initiatives are being taken to develop this port as a green and smart port.

These proactive steps reinforce DPA's commitment to transform into a net-zero, green port, setting a benchmark in maritime sustainability and energy transition. DPA continues to attract large-scale private investments under the PPP model, thereby boosting EXIM trade, job creation and growth of national GDP. The Deendayal Port is shaping up fast as a major catalyst of India's Green Hydrogen Mission and turning out to be a vibrant gateway to the country's economic growth. With robust connectivity, deep-draft facilities and user-friendly business processes, DPA stands tall as a vital enabler in the country's pursuit of becoming a global maritime leader.

Still A Distant Goal

A decade since the launch of big skill-development programmes, the outcomes remain a little disappointing.

IBJ BUREAU

India's growing youth population holds immense potential. But harnessing this demographic dividend requires the right skills. Through focused efforts in skilling, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship and promotion of traditional trades, the government is empowering its citizens to become drivers of economic and social progress. Since 2014, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has empowered more than 6 crore Indians through its various schemes to build a brighter future for themselves and for the country.

At the heart of this transformation is the Skill India Mission (SIM), which is equipping youth with essential industry-relevant skills through various programmes. These initiatives focus on development of skills, re-skilling and up-skilling, empowering millions with the tools needed for sustainable careers. By bridging the skill gap, fostering innovation and creating new job opportunities, SIM is paving the way for a self-reliant and developed India (Atmanirbhar and Viksit Bharat).

Mega schemes

SIM delivers skill, re-skill and up-skill training through an extensive network of skill development centres and institutes under various schemes. In February 2025, the restructured Skill India Programme was approved for the period of 2022-23 to 2025-26, merging the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 (PMKVY 4.0), the Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS) and the Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme into a single Central sector scheme.

The PMKVY scheme was launched on July 15, 2015, to encourage and promote development of skills in the country by providing free, short-duration training in skills and incentivising them by providing monetary rewards to youth for skill certification.

The aim of the scheme is to boost both industry and employability of youths. After the successful implementation of pilot PMKVY (2015-16), PMKVY (2016-20) was launched by scaling up both in terms of sector and geography and by greater alignment with other missions of the Union government like Make In India, Digital India, Swachh Bharat and so on.

The PMKVY has been rolled out in four versions, and the last one, PMKVY 4.0 focuses on empowering trained candidates to choose from among one of the varied career paths, and they are suitably oriented for their respective chosen areas of specialisation. The Skill India Digital Hub platform has been launched to enable many opportunities for employment and integrate skilling, education, employment and entrepreneurship ecosystems.

Two new centres of excellence have been announced at National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) in Hyderabad and Chennai to create an adaptive and responsive skill development ecosystem. These centres will serve as national reference points for high-quality training of instructors and specialised skilling aligned with emerging domains.

Over the years, more than 1.63 crore candidates have been trained under PMKVY in diverse sectors, such as, manufacturing, construction, healthcare, IT, electronics, retail and more.

The PMKVY has become the foundation of India's short-term skilling ecosystem. It aims to equip youth from all walks of life with practical, job-ready skills through a structured, quality-assured training and certification system. Over the years, candidates have been trained under PMKVY in diverse sectors, such as, manufacturing, construction, health-

Initiatives under the PMKVY focus on skills, re-skilling and up-skilling, with tools needed for sustainable careers.

care, IT, electronics, retail and more.

Through PMKVY, certified skill training has reached even rural and remote areas of the country, democratising access to employability opportunities. Inclusivity has been a key pillar of the scheme, with 45 per cent of the candidates being women and a significant share coming from scheduled castes (SCs), scheduled tribes (STs) and other backward classes (OBCs). Over time, PMKVY has evolved to address demands of the future economy, expanding its scope to include cutting-edge sectors like artificial intelligence (AI), drone technology, robotics, mechatronics and internet of things (IoT).

Many special and innovative initiatives have been introduced by the PMKVY. There are special projects focusing on targeted skilling for marginalised groups, including training 2,500 Bru tribe candidates in Tripura, jail inmates in Assam and Manipur and 13,834 (70 per cent of them are women) under the PANKH project across 18 States.

Under the PMKVY 3.0, 2,243 women have been trained in Jammu and Kashmir's Namda craft. There is also an RPL upskilling project for artisans and weavers in Nagaland and Jammu and Kashmir. Both the projects have been led by the Handicraft and Carpet Sector Skill Council.

The flagship skilling scheme has mainstreamed skilling, and it supports flagship government initiatives, such as PM Surya Ghar, Vibrant Villages Programme, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Jal Jeevan Mission, Green Hydrogen Mission and the like. Development of skills has been embedded into these schemes for broader impact.

Dismal picture

The PMKVY scheme has evolved into much more than a government programme. It embodies India's commitment to empowering its youth through development of skills and lifelong learning. By fostering inclusion, embracing innovation and demonstrating resilience in the face of change, the scheme is equipping millions with the tools and confidence needed to thrive in a rapidly-transforming world.

SIM delivers skill, re-skill and up-skill training through an extensive network of skill development centres and institutes under various schemes.

A Sorry State Of Affairs

- India's share of skilled workforce around 5% of its entire workforce compared with South Korea's 96% and Germany's 75%
- India's share of manufacturing in its GDP hovering around 17% for over a decade now
- Nearly 83% of the country's workforce of over 56 crore relegated to low-paying jobs in the informal sector due to poor skill sets

Despite a big government push and huge investments in skill-development schemes, the outcome is miserably inadequate. Many studies estimate the country's skilled workforce in the range of 4 to 5 per cent of the entire workforce. This is a pale shadow of a mind-boggling 96 per cent of the skilled workforce in South Korea and around 75 per cent in Germany. Even China's proportion of skilled workers in that country's total workforce is about 24 per cent.

India is nowhere near the highly-industrialised economies of South Korea, Germany and China when it comes to skilled workforce. It is hence not surprising that India's aspirations of getting its manufacturing segment to contribute 25 per cent to its GDP remain a distant dream. The sad story is that the share of Indian manufacturing in its GDP has been hovering around 17 per cent for more than a decade now.

A decade since the skilling programme was re-launched with greater vigour, very little seems to have changed on the ground. The skills imparted in India still remain rudimentary and do not match with the requirements of the industry. The government will hence have to return to the drawing board, partner with the industry and rework the skilling programmes to match the needs of the industry. The urgent need of the hour is a new, repackaged, industry-centric skilling programme. A large unskilled workforce will take no time in turning the country's demographic dividend into a demographic disaster. ■

A Wake-Up Call

TCS' plan to lay off over 12,000 employees sets off alarm bells ringing across the IT industry.

SHIVANAND PANDIT

On July 27, 2025, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) made a startling announcement. The company disclosed that it planned to lay off approximately 12,200 employees – about 2 per cent of its global workforce of 6,13,000 – through FY26. These layoffs, to be carried out in phases, are reportedly driven by mismatches in skill and limited scope for redeploying mid- and senior-level employees, particularly in light of evolving delivery models.

TCS has emphasised that the move is not a cost-cutting measure but a part of a broader strategy to build a "future-ready" organisation. Industry body National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) anticipates further rationalisation of workforce shortly, as legacy skill sets are reassessed and clients increasingly demand agility, innovation and speed. While TCS has framed the decision as a part of its long-term transformation journey, industry observers suggest that all is not well within the company or the sector at large.

The market has reacted promptly. On July 28, 2025, TCS shares fell by around 1.6 per cent during trading, with stocks of other IT companies following suit. Although the Tata Group company has positioned the layoffs as a strategic move focused on upskilling and redeployment, it has raised broader concerns about the changing operating environment for technology companies. With mid- and senior-level professionals bearing the brunt, questions are now being asked: Are these layoffs just the beginning of a deeper churn in the Indian information technology (IT) industry?

The Indian IT sector has long been a significant source of employment, with remarkable growth in recent years. Between March 2020 and December 2024, the combined workforce of the top-five IT companies – TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCL Technologies and Tech Mahindra – has expanded from 11.5 lakh to 15.34 lakh, driven by a surge in demand for digital services following the pandemic. However, this period has also been marked by two transformative developments: the rapid rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and the onset of Donald Trump's second term as the US president.

The global acceleration of AI and automation has fundamentally reshaped business environments across sectors, including IT. Simultaneously, the economic volatility triggered by Mr Trump's policy decisions has led to heightened uncertainty, influencing corporate investment and spending strategies. Together, these forces have cast a shadow of doubt over the long-term trajectory of India's IT industry.

Despite TCS CEO K Krithivasan's assertion that the layoffs were due to a "skill-mismatch" and not directly linked to AI, the timing and scale of the decision have sparked widespread anxiety.

A jolting revelation

The global technology sector is currently undergoing a dramatic transformation, driven by rapidly-evolving capabilities of AI. Although the full disruptive potential of AI is yet to be realised, its early impacts are already sending shockwaves through the industry. Tech companies, from global giants to emerging startups, are grappling with a rapidly-shifting landscape as the traditional boundaries of work are being redrawn across sectors.

A recent and striking example of this shift came from TCS, one of India's most respected and stable employers. The company's announcement of job cuts has served as a harsh wake-up call, highlighting the magnitude of change sweeping through the tech sector. TCS, long regarded as a dream employer for millions of Indian youth aspiring for financial progress, contributed approximately 7 per cent to India's GDP, and was responsible for nearly half of the country's services exports.

Despite TCS CEO K Krithivasan's assertion that the layoffs were due to a "skill-mismatch" and not directly linked to AI, the timing and scale of the decision have sparked widespread anxiety. It comes amidst a growing global pattern of companies streamlining operations by integrating AI systems, particularly in software development and IT support. TCS' move follows similar workforce reductions announced by global tech behemoths like Microsoft, Meta and Google, all of which are embracing AI technologies aggressively. The scale of this trend is concerning. Between January and mid-July 2025, 169 tech firms across the globe have laid off over 80,000 employees. These layoffs are not isolated events but a part of a broader recalibration, as companies seek to adapt to an AI-driven world.

One major reason behind this shift is the efficiency of AI tools in handling tasks traditionally assigned to fresh IT graduates. Activities like coding, testing, data management and basic support can now be executed faster and more accurately by AI models. Consequently, the long-standing trend of hiring tens of thousands of engineering graduates annually is likely to decline sharply. Going forward, the hiring landscape in the IT sector will look very different from what it has been over the past two decades.

However, it would be simplistic and misleading to portray AI as a ruthless job destroyer. Many experts suggest that the current wave of layoffs is helping companies redirect resources toward development of AI, ultimately improving competitiveness and operational efficiency. Rather than eliminating jobs, AI is reshaping roles, demanding new skill sets and creating opportunities in emerging areas.

For employees at TCS and across the IT sector, the path forward involves reskilling and upskilling. Roles that combine domain knowledge with AI literacy are becoming highly valuable. Whether in finance, human resources (HR), education, marketing or operations, organisations are actively seeking individuals who can pair human judgment with AI tools to drive innovation and add business value. Since 2022, demand for generative AI skills in non-tech roles has surged by 800 per cent, indicating a seismic shift in what employers now prioritise. Candidates who can understand and deploy AI platforms creatively – not just automate routine tasks, but innovate new solutions – are in high demand.

The global acceleration of AI and automation has fundamentally reshaped business environments across sectors, including IT.

Rising Concerns

- Large-scale hiring-based model gradually being replaced by efficient AI tools
- Widespread concern over broader impact of AI on India’s labour market sparked by TCS’ decision
- Slowing global economy, intensifying competition, shifting trade policies and persistent geopolitical tension brewing more trouble

Handling disruption

For far too long, the Indian IT sector has depended heavily on its cost advantage, primarily achieved by hiring large numbers of fresh engineering graduates. However, insufficient investment in research and development (R&D) has left many companies ill-prepared for the current disruption. This traditional outsourcing-based business model is now being seriously questioned, as the sector faces the challenge of reinventing itself in the age of AI. Navigating this transformation will require bold leadership, strategic rethinking and a renewed focus on innovation. Those willing to adapt will find new opportunities, but the road ahead will demand constant learning, agility and a strong grasp of both technology and its business applications.

TCS’ decision has sparked widespread concern about the broader impact of AI on India’s labour market. It also highlights the mounting challenges faced by TCS and other IT firms, including a slowing global economy, intensifying competition, shifting trade policies and persistent geopolitical tension. Given the substantial role the IT sector now plays in India’s economy, any decline in its employment prospects could trigger far-reaching ripple effects across various industries.

In light of this, there is an urgent need to manage the consequences of rapid adoption of AI proactively, particularly within the IT sector. Policymakers and industry leaders must work together to introduce affordable and accessible reskilling programmes, while also providing targeted incentives to stimulate growth in other high-potential sectors, such as biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and advanced manufacturing. These efforts can help diversify the job market and generate new, well-paying employment opportunities to sustain economic momentum in the face of technological disruption.

(The author is a tax specialist based in Goa.)

SETTING SAIL

Armed with many path-breaking initiatives, India embarks on a long, tortuous voyage to transform into a mega maritime superpower.

SHRIVATSA S JOSHI

There is a distinct hum of heavy machinery, set against a roaring sea, on the pristine beach of Vadhavan. At about a distance of 5 km into the sea, giant cranes, dredgers and other equipment are at work amid splashing waves. The natural beauty of the large expanse of swirling sea and clear, blue sky – barring the giant machinery, of course – can kindle any poet's imagination.

Poetics apart, the charming spot in the sea promises to reshape and recharge India into a robust global maritime hub. The huge dredgers and cranes at work off the Vadhavan coast are reclaiming more than 1,400 hectares of land to build an artificial island. The island will house the Vadhavan Port, which will be India's largest, when completed, surpassing the current largest port – Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) – by over threefold.

The upcoming Vadhavan Port – off the coast of Vadhavan near Dahanu in Palghar district of Maharashtra – is designed to handle 23.2 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) annually with a cumulative cargo-handling capacity of 298 million tonnes per annum (mtpa). Comparatively, JNPA's total cargo capacity of 92 mtpa –handling 10 million TEUs per year – pales before Vadhavan Port's whopping capacity, when it will be fully operational.

The country's first offshore port is being developed by a special purpose vehicle, Vadhavan Port Project (VPPL), at an investment of Rs 76,220 crore. JNPA and the Maharashtra Maritime Board jointly own 74 and 26 per cent of the stakes respectively in joint venture VPPL. Situated 125 km from Mumbai, 22 km from the Mumbai-Vadodara Expressway and a mere 12 km from the dedicated rail freight corridor, Vadhavan will seamlessly connect to industrial centres across Maharashtra, Gujarat and beyond.

Vadhavan is coming up as a key part of a larger port cluster that includes Mumbai Port and JNPA. It is being developed as one of the clusters of the six-port clusters that are planned to be functional by 2047, the centennial year of Indian inde-

With a coastline spanning 7,517 km and an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of more than 2 million sq km, the country has all the potential to be a major global maritime hub.

pendence. The mega plan includes four port clusters with each exceeding a capacity of 300 mtpa – Cochin-Vizhinjam Port cluster; Galathea South Bay Port cluster, located in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands; Chennai-Kamarajar-Cuddalore Port cluster; and Paradip and other non-major ports cluster. The two other port clusters with each exceeding a capacity of 500 mtpa are Deendayal (formerly Kandla Port) and Tuna Tekra Port cluster; and Jawaharlal Nehru-Mumbai-Vadhavan Port.

The concept of port clusters is designed to develop a group of major and minor ports that can spur myriad industrial and economic activities. These clusters essentially integrate port facilities with industrial and logistical activities, fostering synergies and attracting investments. Port clusters can help India reduce logistical costs, attract foreign investment, boost exports and strengthen its position as a major player in the global maritime trade. Developing transshipment hubs within these clusters aims at capturing a larger share of the global shipping traffic and reducing reliance on foreign ports.

With nine container terminals, 18 berths and a 20-metre draft, Vadhavan is set to transform into one such international container transshipment port, allowing the world's biggest vessels to anchor there. It will be the 14th major port in the country and will also figure among the world's top-10 ports. Scheduled to be fully operational by 2034, Vadhavan is expected to recharge the country's maritime sector and steer India closer to the grand goal of a fully-developed economy as envisioned by Viksit Bharat 2047.

"India's maritime sector is undergoing a transformative digital shift. We are building future-ready infrastructure that empowers our ports, streamlines trade and strengthens India's position as a global maritime leader," stresses Sarbananda Sonowal, the Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW).

The significance of the country's blue economy becomes evident, considering that 95 per cent of its international trade by volume is transported by sea.

Holistic visions

Incidentally, big developments around the Vadhavan Port are a result of concerted strategic plans to promote the maritime sector in a holistic manner. India has been a maritime power since time immemorial. With a coastline spanning 7,517 km and an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of more than 2 million sq km, the country has all the potential to be a major global maritime hub. EEZ is a zone extending around 200 nautical miles into the sea, providing coastal countries the right to explore all marine resources within their respective zones.

"India's maritime sector is undergoing a transformative digital shift. We are building future-ready infrastructure that empowers our ports, streamlines trade and strengthens India's position as a global maritime leader."

SARBANANDA SONOWAL
Ports, Shipping & Waterways Minister

Besides, it has about 14,500 km of potentially-navigable waterways, facilitating the country to lower its logistical cost significantly. India's ports benefit from a strategic location in the Indian Ocean. No wonder, 95 per cent of the country's international trade by volume and 70 per cent by value are channelled through its ports.

Yet despite its inherent strengths, India's maritime sector has remained neglected for years. Moreover, various segments of the maritime industry – such as ports, shipping, shipbuilding and inland waterways – have been developed in silos. This lack of comprehensive approach has left the sector in the lurch.

Finally, over the past five years, the situation has fortunately changed for the better. The Narendra Modi government's port-based development model has infused a breath of fresh air across maritime policies and plans. Many path-breaking initiatives like Maritime India Vision 2030 (MIV 2030), Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 (MAKV 2047) and Sagarmala, among others, have been integrated with the broader vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 to build a new, vibrant India.

In fact, MIV 2030 – announced at the Maritime India Summit in 2020 – outlines some 150 initiatives, aimed at propelling India to global


The long coastline of the country is served by 231 ports, including 12 major ports.

Building A Maritime Powerhouse

PARTICULARS	CURRENT 2025	TARGET 2047
CARGO CAPACITY	2,624	10,000
CARGO TRAFFIC	1,000+	7,000
COASTAL TONNAGE	324	1,300
INLAND WATERWAYS TONNAGE	133	500
SHIPBUILDING CAPACITY	0.72 LGT	40 LGT

All figures are in mtpa, unless specified otherwise.
Mtpa - Million tonnes per annum   LGT - Lakh Gross Tonnage

- Upgrading infrastructure within ports, like storage facilities, terminals, etc
- Complete digitalisation of data and standardised procedures
- Increasing depth of ports to accommodate larger vessels
- Multi-modal, last-mile connectivity between ports and hinterlands
- Further improving turnaround time for ports
- Simplifying regulatory norms and approvals for quick decision-making
- Securing adequate financing for port development projects
- Upgrading skills of port workers and other top executives
- Adopting green technologies and promoting sustainable practices
- Rolling out financial and tax incentives to help shipping companies to increase their fleet
- Huge government funding and other favourable policies to enhance India's shipbuilding share in the world
- Providing formal financing mechanism and proper certification of steel for ship-recycling industries
- Nurturing private investment to boost inland waterway transport

maritime leadership. The vision plan touches upon interconnected themes such as development of port infrastructure, enhancing efficiency of logistics, improving tonnage of Indian shipbuilding, increasing coastal and inland waterway traffic, fostering innovation in technology, promoting sustainability and global collaboration and almost every other facet of the maritime ecosystem.

Meanwhile, MAKV 2047 – put out at the Maritime India Summit in 2023 – builds on MIV 2030 and formulates more than 300 strategic initiatives to develop world-class ports, expand coastal and inland waterways and promote a sustainable blue economy. The 2047 vision document estimates an investment of over Rs 80 lakh crore materialising over the next two decades and putting India prominently on the maritime map of the world.

Big plans

The bustling ports sector tells an amazing story. The long coastline of the country is served by 231 ports today – 12 major ports, owned by the Union government, such as JNPA, Mumbai, Kandla (Deendayal), Cochin, Paradip, Visakhapatnam and six others. Besides, there are 218 non-major ports, mostly owned by State governments and private entities. Mundra, Hazira, Dahej and Krishnapatnam are all important ports in the private sector, owned and operated by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ). There are 10 State maritime boards that develop, operate and regulate ports in their respective States.

The existing overall cargo-handling capacity of the country's ports is 2,604 mtpa – 1,630 mtpa of the 12 major ports, while non-major ports have clocked a capacity of 974 mtpa. These major ports handled total cargo traffic of around 855 mtpa in FY25. JNPA and Mundra have featured among the top-30 global ports.

Indian ports' operational efficiency has improved substantially in the past few years. The ports have bettered their average turnaround time, improving by 48 per cent from 96 hours in FY15 to 49.50 hours in FY25. India's ranking in the World Bank's International Shipment Logistics Performance Index (LPI) has surged from 44 in 2018 to 22 in 2024. Moreover, coastal tonnage has expanded from 260 mtpa in FY22 to 324 mtpa in FY24. Coastal tonnage or coastal shipping refers to cargo traffic along coastlines between ports within a country.

The Sagarmala programme, launched in 2015, has facilitated ports to better their performance metrics substantially over a decade. The programme is specifically designed to address infrastructural gaps in ports and streamline logistics, reduce costs and enhance competitiveness in international trade. The programme has so far identified 839 projects worth Rs 5.79 lakh crore related to modernisation of ports and upgrading their infrastructure to achieve operational efficiency. Some 272 projects valued at Rs 1.41 lakh crore have been completed as of March 2025.

Meanwhile, lofty projections and targets of the vision documents continue to draw attention to the unfinished business in the ports segment. The MIV 2030 projects total cargo traffic of Indian ports to reach 2,570 mtpa by 2030, while the MAKV 2047 pegs the cargo traffic to grow further to about 7,000 mtpa by 2047 from the current traffic of around 1,000 mtpa. The MAKV 2047 sets ambitious targets of 10,000 mtpa capacity for ports from the present 2,604 mtpa and 1,300 mtpa for coastal cargo traffic by 2047 from the current 324 mtpa.

These numbers suggest that the journey ahead is long and challenging. "Our ports' capacity needs to quadruple to around 10 billion tonnes (10,000 mtpa) by 2047 to cater to the cargo traffic at Indian ports that is expected to reach 7 billion tonnes (7,000 mtpa)," points out Manish R Sharma, the infrastructure sector leader of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

Despite significant improvement in their performance in recent years, Indian ports continue to be plagued by many hurdles. Many ports lack the necessary depth to accommodate larger vessels, requiring them to anchor further out and use feeder vessels for transfer of cargo. Limited berthing facilities also contribute to congestion and delays. Besides, outdated cargo-handling equipment and machinery at many ports reduce efficiency and increase turnaround times. Road and rail networks connecting ports to hinterland are often inadequate, leading to bottlenecks in evacuation of cargo and increased logistical costs.

Navigating the regulatory landscape for development of a port and its operation can be complex and time-consuming, leading to delay in

Shoring Up Indian Shipyards

The 2047 vision document estimates an investment of over Rs 80 lakh crore materialising over the next two decades.

- Sagarmala 2.0 focusing on shipbuilding, ship repair and ship recycling to enhance India's maritime competitiveness
- Vision documents targeting India to be among world's top-10 shipbuilding nations by 2030 and within top-five by 2047
- Government mulling setting up mega shipbuilding parks and financial incentives for green ships
- Maritime Development Fund to provide equity support to Indian shipping lines to increase fleet and also fund shipbuilding
- Shipbuilding and ship repair policy on the cards soon
- PSUs directed to hire Indian-flagged vessels for shipping requirements to promote shipbuilding industry
- Steel, oil and fertilizers ministries jointly funding Rs 1.3 lakh crore to get 8.6 million GT of ships built in Indian shipyards
- Government exploring collaborative agreements with South Korean shipyards to enhance India's shipbuilding capabilities
- Deendayal Port looking to lease 2,000 acres in Kutch to develop a shipbuilding cluster

approval of projects and their implementation. Moreover, securing adequate financing for development of port projects can be a significant challenge, particularly for smaller ports. Besides, a shortage of skilled manpower in areas like port management, operations and maintenance can impact efficiency and productivity.

"There are infrastructure limitations when it comes to storage at ports and terminals, first- and last-mile connectivity, water channel depth, technology adoption in port operations and so on," notes Ketan Kulkarni, the deputy managing director of Gati Express and Supply Chain.

Choppy waters

The shipping segment – comprising shipping companies, shipbuilding and repair and ship recycling or ship-breaking – is the weaker link in the Indian maritime sector. Like most domestic industries, shipping also is largely dominated by many small shipping lines and a few large private companies – like Great Eastern Shipping Company, Essar Shipping, Allcargo Logistics and Shreyas Shipping and Logistics, among others. State-owned Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) is the largest shipping line in the country. Many foreign shipping companies and some of their Indian subsidiaries – like MSC, CMA CGM and Maersk Line India, the Indian arm of global shipping company AP Moller-Maersk – too operate in the country.

Over the years, the share of the cargo carried by Indian-owned or -flagged vessels has consistently been dropping. According to the MoPSW, the share of Indian-flagged vessels in the country's overseas trade has significantly decreased from 40.70 per cent in 1987-88 to about 5.40 per cent in 2024-25. The share of Indian-flagged ships in the country's domestic cargo has remained stagnant at around 8 per cent.

The figures clearly show that growth of Indian-flagged shipping tonnage has not kept up with the pace of India's domestic and foreign trade. Experts caution that if corrective action is not taken, the current share may fall further, resulting in Indian-flagged or -built ships having no play even in the domestic shipping market.

"If we want to carry 20 per cent of our cargo, we have to grow at a CAGR of not less than 18 per cent. This is 10 or 20 times our current production levels in the next five years."

T K RAMACHANDRAN
Union Shipping Secretary

India A Global Recycling Centre

- About 33% of global gross tonnage of ships dismantled in India, the world's second-largest ship-breaking hub, next only to Bangladesh
- India's ship-breaking capacity estimated at about 3 million GT
- Alang in Gujarat India's largest ship-recycling centre
- 112 of total 131 yards in Alang compliant with eco-friendly Hong Kong International Convention

Alang has undergone significant regulatory transformation since 2000 and is today compliant with many global green norms.

In fact, both foreign and Indian shipping lines face some common challenges in the country. They range from infrastructural bottlenecks in and around ports, inadequate connectivity across hinterlands, many regulatory hurdles and environmental issues, leading to high costs and delays. These factors particularly hinder growth and competitiveness of Indian shippers in the global market.

Moreover, Indian shipping lines are dented by some peculiar problems, making it difficult for Indian vessels to compete with their foreign counterparts. Indian ship owners often face high interest rates and short loan tenures, making it difficult to finance new vessels or upgrades. Indian shipping lines have to pay Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) when they import ships and GST when their ships provide services between two Indian ports. "We have given the government a table showing that among the top-10 ship-owning nations in the world, none imposes this kind of GST or VAT," reveals Anil Devli, the former CEO of Indian National Shipowners' Association (INSA).

Unfavourable terms of debt and high taxes increase Indian shipping companies' operating costs manifold. On the other hand, foreign shipping lines operating in India are exempt from GST, and they also have access to cheaper credit facilities, thus giving them a head start over their Indian peers. It is not at all surprising then that the share of Indian-flagged ships in overseas cargo is rapidly declining year after year.

High operating costs are holding back Indian shipping lines from expanding their fleet. They have been cutting down their imports of ships drastically. But Indian shipyards or shipbuilders are unable to replace the

Shipping: An Area Of Concern

Share of overseas cargo carried by Indian-flagged vessels has slipped consistently from 40.70% in FY88 to 5.40% in FY25.

- Share of Indian-flagged ships in domestic cargo stagnant at around 8%
- Share of Indian fleet in the world's fleet a paltry lower than 1% against China's 5% and Singapore's 6.5%
- Shipping companies overburdened by debt issues such as high interest rates and short loan tenures
- Shipping lines hampered by IGST on import of ships, GST on providing shipping services and other taxes
- No such taxes or constraints in loans for foreign shipping companies, giving them an edge over their Indian counterparts

shortfall of imported ships for various other reasons. So, the share of Indian fleet (ships built in India) as a percentage of the world's fleet remains a paltry lower than 1 per cent. In contrast, leading maritime nations such as China and Singapore have a share of 5 and 6.5 per cent respectively in the world's tonnage.

This puts the spotlight on Indian shipyards, shipbuilding and their own peculiar shortcomings. There are about 53 shipyards in the country, largely dominated by public sector companies like Cochin Shipyard, Hindustan Shipyard, Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders, Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers and others. And as other industries, the domestic shipbuilding industry too has a majority of small shipyards. The shipbuilding industry is dominated by China, which makes over 60 per cent of the world's vessels of all kinds. It is followed by Japan and South Korea, and these three Asian countries together build 85 per cent of the world's fleet.

The sliding share of Indian-flagged vessels in overseas cargo and made-in-India ships in global fleet has set off alarm bells in the corridors of power. The Union government has expanded the Sagarmala Programme with Sagarmala 2.0, focusing on shipbuilding, ship repair and ship recycling to enhance India's maritime competitiveness.

Besides, the vision documents have set forth very ambitious shipbuilding targets. MIV 2030 targets India to be among the world's top-10 shipbuilding nations by 2030. MAKV 2047, on the other hand, wants the country's shipyards to churn out 4 million gross tonnes (GT) of shipbuilding capacity by 2047 to position India among the top-five shipbuilding nations by 2047. The 2047 goal is rather too ambitious, given that India's current shipbuilding capacity is a minuscule 72,000 GT. "If we want to carry 20 per cent of our cargo (Indian ships' current overseas cargo share is about 5 per cent), we have to grow at a CAGR of not less than 18 per cent. This is 10 or 20 times our current production levels in the next five years," stresses Shipping Secretary T K Ramachandran.

"Our ports' capacity needs to quadruple to around 10 billion tonnes by 2047 to cater to the cargo traffic at Indian ports that is expected to reach 7 billion tonnes."

MANISH SHARMA
Infrastructure Leader, PwC

The government has outlined a comprehensive strategy to transform the country into a major shipbuilding centre. The strategy includes establishment of mega shipbuilding parks, financial incentives for green ships and a Maritime Development Fund (MDF) in the recent Union Budget of 2025-26 with an initial provision of Rs 25,000 crore. In the short term, the MDF will provide equity support to Indian shipping lines to increase their fleet. In the long term, the fund will be used for boosting shipbuilding in the country, adds Mr Ramachandran.

The government is planning to launch a shipbuilding and ship repair policy. It has directed public sector undertakings (PSUs) to hire Indian-flagged vessels for their shipping requirements to promote the Indian shipbuilding industry. According to the MoPSW, the Shipping Ministry is collaborating with the Ministries of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Steel and Chemicals and Fertilizers to boost Indian-flagged and India-built ships. Accordingly, the ministries have jointly estimated the requirement of about 200 ships of 8.6 million GT worth around Rs 1.3 lakh crore to import their respective goods. The three ministries have decided to fund Rs 1.3 lakh crore and get the required 8.6 million tonnage of vessels built in Indian shipyards and own them jointly.

Besides, the government is mulling collaborative agreements with South Korean shipyards like Samsung Heavy Industries, Hanwha Ocean and HD Hyundai Heavy Industries to enhance India's shipbuilding capabilities. In fact, Deendayal Port Authority is looking to lease 2,000 acres in Kutch district to develop a shipbuilding cluster. The port is targeting to build 50 very large crude carriers (VLCCs) or a similar class of seagoing vessels annually through the cluster.

The government will have to double up its efforts and resources to realise the goals, which are indeed quite enormous. In fact, the annual output of Indian shipyards must increase manifold from the current 72,000 GT to 330,000 GT by 2030 and further to 4 million GT (or 40 lakh GT) by 2047 to figure among the top-five shipbuilding countries in the world.

"There are infrastructure limitations when it comes to storage at ports and terminals, first- and last-mile connectivity, water channel depth, technology adoption in port operations and so on."

KETAN KULKARNI
Deputy MD, Gati Express

Indian shipyards are overstretched from a lack of skilled manpower, design and vital resources. "A major challenge for Indian shipbuilders is severe shortage of good ship designs. Enhancing capacity of shipyards will be challenging, as it takes about five years to develop a superior capacity of designs. Indian shipyards may not achieve substantial expansion of capacity in spite of infrastructure build-up, unless they plan and implement to train ship designers, shipbuilding managers and skilled workforce," cautions GTR Campbell Marine Consultants President & CEO Antony Prince.

Out of 111 notified national waterways, 23 have been made operational and are connecting India's hinerland with neighbouring countries.

Mr Prince, however, adds that India's shipbuilding dreams can be realised, if former bankrupt shipyards – Bharati Defence and Infrastructure (formerly Bharati Shipyard), Swan Defence and Heavy Industries (earlier called Pipavav Shipyard), both of which have just been revived after going bankrupt, and ABG Shipyard, which is undergoing bankruptcy proceedings and is inoperative – are restored to their earlier capacities. He also emphasises that small shipyards must upgrade and expand their docking capacities to accommodate larger and more sophisticated vessels.

Meanwhile, Alang instantly comes to mind when referring to ship-breaking or ship recycling. The coastal town of Gujarat in Bhavnagar district houses India's largest ship-breaking yard, and it is also among the world's largest ship-recycling hubs. The other ship-breaking hubs in the country are Kidderpore Docks in Kolkata, Mumbai Port and Steel Industrials Kerala.

India – which accounts for 33 per cent of the global gross tonnage of ships dismantled, next only to Bangladesh – has about 3 million GT of ship-breaking capacity. Alang has undergone significant regulatory transformation since 2000. It is today compliant with the Indian Ship Recycling Act, 2019. Besides, 112 of the total 131 yards in Alang are formally recognised as compliant with the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally-Sound Recycling of Ships, which came into force on June 26, 2025.

Alang and other ship-breaking yards in India suffer from formal or structured financing mechanism and a lack of proper certification of steel, among others. If these issues are properly addressed, India's ship recycling industry, which is a major livelihood for lakhs of people, can flourish further and reinvigorate the maritime sector.

Teething troubles

Over a decade now, India has been making concerted efforts to harness the potential of its inland waterways. The country has been making the best use of its diverse waterways, ranging from rivers, canals and backwaters to creeks and tidal inlets. Apart from its eco-friendly advantage, waterway is estimated to be the cheapest mode of transport, costing Rs 1.19 per tonne km compared with Rs 1.50 via railway and Rs 2.28 by road.

The government has notified 111 national waterways, of which 23 have been made operational. National Waterway-1 (NW-1) or the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly system and NW-2 or the Brahmaputra system are the country's busiest waterways and hold immense significance, as they connect India's hinterland with neighbouring countries.

The government is looking to spur inland waterway transport with an investment of Rs 35,000 crore by 2047. The MIV 2030 is targeting to expand India's cargo traffic on the inland waterways from the current 133 mtpa to 200 mtpa by 2030 and push it up further to 500 mtpa by 2047, as envisioned by MAKV 2047.

Inland water transport is however bogged down by a few challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, especially related to terminals and multimodal connectivity, seasonal variations in water levels and environmental concerns related to likely destruction of marine resources. Additionally, issues like a lack of standardisation in governance frameworks and insufficient private sector investment pose further hurdles. A quick redressal of these obstacles can have potential knock-on effects like boosting trade and connectivity and driving economic growth in inland areas.

Blue economy

As India works on multiple fronts to boost its maritime sector, the MAKV 2047 dwells in great detail about harnessing India's blue economy for long-term sustainable growth. Simply put, the blue economy involves all economic activities related to oceans, seas, coasts and other water bodies like rivers and lakes, spanning sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, marine renewable energy, marine biotechnology and coastal tourism, among others.

Indian ports' operational efficiency has improved substantially in the past few years from 96 hours in FY15 to 49.50 hours in FY25.

India's blue economy contributes around 4 per cent to its national GDP.

India's blue economy contributes around 4 per cent to its national GDP. The significance of the country's blue economy becomes evident, considering that 95 per cent of its international trade by volume is transported by sea. Around 2.8 crore people are involved in fishing, aquaculture and related activities. Coastal and sea-based tourism, including scuba diving and water-based activities, are also expanding.

Sustainability of the blue economy is very crucial, especially as climate change, rising pollution and overfishing, threaten the health of marine ecosystems. Besides, other factors such as widespread and unplanned development of infrastructure, poor enforcement of environmental laws and regulations and an ever-increasing demand for resources risk jeopardising long-term growth and well-being.

"Integrating green infrastructure to reduce environmental impact, improving waste management systems to tackle marine pollution and promoting sustainable fishing practices would be a pragmatic approach to ensuring a truly-sustainable blue economy," points out Aaron Lobo, the head of marine programme of Wildlife Conservation Society-India.

The need of the hour is to promote the blue economy quite earnestly in letter and spirit. Besides, India's maritime aspirations have begun to take concrete shape in the past few years. There is an urgent need to clear financial, regulatory, infrastructural and other bottlenecks that hinder the growth of the country's ports, shiping, shipbuilding and inland waterways. India has just embarked on a long, tortuous voyage. It is well prepared to sail through rough seas, harsh winds and high tides to transforming itself into a global maritime superpower.

Need Focused Approach

Policies centred on skills, digitalisation and energy efficiency can help MSMEs to integrate themselves with global value chains.

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are credited with generating the highest level of employment in India, next only to agriculture. They contribute more than a third (36 per cent) of our total industrial production and almost 46 per cent to the country's exports (up to May 2024).

This means that almost half of all goods and services currently exported from India originate from its MSME sector. MSMEs have large and intricate forward and backward linkages associated with them and thus contribute substantially to the overall dynamism of the economy. The recent economic reforms are helping to assist MSMEs further in enhancing their contribution to nation-building activities.

MSMEs in India have consistently generated a higher growth rate than that of the rest of our industrial sector. But although the opening up of our economy has generated concrete economic opportunities for them, they still face some uphill issues in integrating smoothly with global value chains (GVCs). And despite their participation in the GVC rising over the years, it remains below that of other major economies and regional competitors. That does not bode well for their future growth and development prospects. Policymakers can help out by facilitating process innovation, cost reduction and improving product management within MSME clusters by prioritising digitalisation. Doing so will also help in realising our aim of achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Dhananjay A Samant
The author is Chief Economic Adviser, Maharashtra Economic Development Council

Overcoming roadblocks

Given our ambitious economic plans, we cannot afford to remain a fringe player in the GVC space. To begin with, we need to have a skilled workforce in place along with quality infrastructure development. Our economic contribution has to be at the higher end (rather than the lower end) of the value chain. And energy efficiency considerations will have to drive our manufacturing and industrial growth strategies. But for many MSMEs, energy efficiency remains just a dream, either because they cannot afford it or due to sheer ignorance about it. However, unless our industrial sector realises the importance of energy efficiency, it will not be able to integrate itself effectively with GVCs.

Availability of credit is another major issue. Credit is a critical input for promotion and development of the MSME sector. But access to it continues to remain inadequate, especially for the smaller players. Even though the credit share of micro and small enterprises has consistently increased from 14 per cent in September 2020 to 20 per cent in September 2024, it is not enough. Efforts by financial institutions to enhance credit flow to the MSME sector need to be stepped up. The perception of MSMEs as high-risk and commercially-unviable entities has resulted in only limited numbers of them receiving official financial assistance. That often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, hindering their subsequent growth.

Dynamic ecosystem

Government policy should serve as a catalyst for innovation in the small-scale sector and facilitate future growth in productivity of the MSME sector. MSMEs are the growth engine of our economy, and given the right incentives, they will prove to be a game-changer. A dynamic industrial environment needs to be created that emphasises value addition and enhancement of competitiveness.

And even though the Central government has implemented numerous policies to support the sector, effective State-level policies are equally important, as they can be tailored to the unique requirements of industrial units within a particular region. Some good work is now being done in this area, and it should continue.

Credit is a critical input for promotion and development of the MSME sector.

SAGARMALA
PORT-LED PROSPERITY

COCHIN PORT
कोचिन पत्तन प्राधिकरण
Cochin Port Authority

Advantage Cochin

- An all-weather natural port, in strategic proximity of maritime highway, serving an economically vibrant hinterland.
- A Multi-Commodity Port – handles all types of **Break Bulk, Dry Bulk** & **Liquid Bulk** | **Container**, **LPG** & **LNG Terminals** | **Fertilizer Berth** | **Two Cruise Terminals** | **Single Point Mooring** & more
- Round-the-clock pilotage.
- Handles vessels up to **14.5m** draft.
- Regular Mainline container vessel services connecting Middle East, South East Asia and China.
- India's only port with two state-of-the-art cruise terminals. Preferred port of call for the international cruise liners.
- Regular passenger ferries connecting Lakshadweep Islands.
- Crew change.
- Bunkering services.
- Railway, National Highway, National Waterway and Water Metro connectivity.

Cochin Port - The Maritime Gateway to Peninsular India

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“Observe More Than You Speak”

Blending seems to come naturally for Harshit Gohil. The dynamic co-founder of 365veda – an Ayurceutical company that blends ancient Ayurveda with modern innovations in nutraceuticals and artificial intelligence (AI) – stresses that 365veda is empowering people to take control of their health every single day.

An alumnus of XLRI Jamshedpur, Mr Gohil has a PGDM in business management with a focus on data science and marketing. It was here that he began exploring the intersection of Ayurveda and AI, which finally led to 365veda.

Mr Gohil began his career with his family venture, Gohil Ayurved. Scaling up the family venture, he turned his company’s medicines and healthcare products into a household name across the eastern part of India. He also founded goHop (formerly Hoppr), India’s first AI-enabled shuttle service app which was incubated by Google for entrepreneurs, in 2015.

Regulatory hurdles forced goHop to shut down early. Yet, the experience there gave him hands-on insight into building from scratch, scaling up technology and startup resilience lessons that, he says, still guide him even today.

Beyond business, Mr Gohil actively mentors fellow founders on financial modelling, branding and digital transformation. When he is not building wellness brands, he is likely to be on a basketball court or cheering fellow entrepreneurs through the ups and downs of startup life. **Sharmila Chand** meets up with Mr Gohil and is fascinated to know about his management principles and practices that have aided him through thick and thin of life.

Your five management *mantras*

- Plan thoroughly, but execute with urgency. The real magic happens when you move fast on a well-thought-out plan.
- Empathy is powerful. Understanding people and what drives them goes a long way in building trust and performance.
- Business is all about relationships. If you nurture the right ones, everything else tends to align.
- Your energy shapes the environment around you. I make it a point to show up with positivity and enthusiasm.
- Money is not always the fix. Sometimes, thinking creatively brings better results than throwing resources at a problem.

A game that helps your career

Basketball has always been my sport. The game is fast-paced, and you are constantly moving, thinking and reacting. It sharpens your instincts and decision-making. It also teaches teamwork like nothing else.

A turning point in your career

Quitting CA just a month before my finals was a big call. But I knew deep down that I was not meant for that path. That moment pushed me into the world of entrepreneurship and laid the foundation for everything that came after.

A person you admire

My father – he has been showing up to work daily for more than 33 years. He has retained 80 per cent of his team since day one. He started with a Rs 60,000 loan and quietly built assets worth several crores. More importantly, his values are rock solid. He pays everyone on time, never cut corners and never breaks trust. That is the kind of business legacy I want to build.

Best advice you have received

Business is not a three- to five-year project. If you are in it, be ready to give 15 to 20 years with compromises, setbacks and sacrifices. That advice has really shaped my mindset.

“I have made my share of expensive mistakes, but the learning that came from them has been invaluable. You learn faster and deeper when the stakes are high.”

> *"I would not call myself successful just yet, as there is a long way to go. But I do have a clear vision, a committed team and the will to keep building. I think staying consistent over the years is what really moves the needle."*

Your philosophy of work

Keep your head down, and do the work. I do not believe in making noise about it. Let your work speak. And eventually, it does.

How has the journey been so far?

It has been tough and no sugarcoating it. I have made my share of expensive mistakes, but the learning that came from them has been invaluable. You learn faster and deeper when the stakes are high.

Your favourite books

The Circle of Reason by Amitav Ghosh is a long-time favourite. I had read it in my late teens, and it has stayed with me ever since. It is a story of resilience, and the writing is powerful. Among business books, *Zero to One* by Peter Thiel still stands out. It has shifted the way I think about building something original.

Your fitness routine

My day starts between 5 and 6 am, and that has been the case for almost two decades. That one habit gives me time to focus on fitness before the day gets crazy. I stick to simple basics like no smoking, no alcohol, mostly home food and very limited junk. I rotate between swimming, cricket, basketball and badminton. I have always been into endurance sports, but now I am working more on strength and muscle fitness for long-term health.

How do you handle stress?

Meditation helps. I have been a part of Heartfulness since 2016, and it has changed how I react to situations. I used to be short-tempered and very reactive. But now I pause, breathe and respond.

Your five business *mantras*

- Do not give up too early: There is a lot of hype around "fail fast". But I believe in giving your idea a real shot. If something is not working, pause, rework, ask for help, and come back stronger.
- Choose your circle carefully: Surround yourself with people who are driven, ethical and long-term in their approach. It makes all the difference.
- Observe more than you speak: People reveal a lot through small cues. I have found observation to be a powerful decision-making tool.
- Give without expecting: Whether it is time, effort or help, give first. It creates real, lasting goodwill.
- Keep working hard: Success may come easily to some, but if it does not, hard work is your biggest ally. Patience + hustle = progress.

HARSHIT GOHIL, *Co-Founder, 365veda*

The secret of your success

I would not call myself successful just yet, as there is a long way to go. But I do have a clear vision, a committed team and the will to keep building. I think staying consistent over the years is what really moves the needle.

What message on management would you like to give young people?

Start building your network early. Do not wait till college or jobs. Learn how to express your thoughts through writing, speaking or videos. And take initiative, be the one to raise your hand, ask a question, or take the lead. It will build your confidence and your leadership muscle. ■

Chand.sharmila@gmail.com

Ferrero to acquire Kellogg for $3.1 bn

WK Kellogg has agreed to be bought by the owner of Ferrero Rocher in a deal worth around $3.1 billion. The deal unites two of the world's most recognisable consumer brands to weather a tough spending backdrop marked by persistent inflation. The acquisition, Ferrero's biggest since 2018, will bring legacy brands such as Nutella, Kinder, Tic Tac, Frosted Flakes, Froot Loops and Special K under one roof when the transaction closes, expectedly in the second half of 2025. Ferrero has turned into a global group, boosted by aggressive acquisition campaign launched by its executive chairman Giovanni Ferrero. In 2018, Ferrero had bought Nestle's US confectionery business for $2.8 billion.

Nissan closes Oppama plant in Japan

Nissan Motor Co will stop producing vehicles at its Oppama plant in Japan by March 2028 and transfer operations to its factory in Fukuoka. The closure is a part of a global restructuring plan to cut capacity. Japan's third-largest automaker will also cease production at Nissan Shatai's Shonan factory, which builds light commercial vehicles, by March 2027, CEO Ivan Espinosa has said. Mr Espinosa has announced sweeping plans, aimed at turning around the embattled automaker, including slashing global production capacity to 2.5 million vehicles from 3.5 million and manufacturing sites to 10 from 17. Nissan faces large debts and losses amid battered sales in the US and China.

Microsoft to slash 9,000 jobs

Microsoft has confirmed that it will lay off 9,000 workers in the technology company's latest wave of job cuts this year. The company has said that several divisions will be affected, without specifying which ones, but reports suggest that its Xbox video gaming unit will be hit. Microsoft has set out plans to invest heavily in artificial intelligence (AI) and is spending $80 billion in huge data centres to train AI models. The cuts will be equal to 4 per cent of Microsoft's 228,000-strong global workforce. Some video game projects have reportedly been affected by them. Job cuts have affected staff across studios owned by Microsoft.

BlackRock to buy realty firm ElmTree

BlackRock has announced its agreement to acquire ElmTree Funds, a real estate firm which leases custom-built commercial properties to single-tenant renters. The acquisition will add an investor with $7.3 billion in total assets under management to BlackRock's portfolio. ElmTree will be integrated into Private Financing Solutions, BlackRock's newly-established platform created through the firm's $12-billion purchase of HPS Investment Partners last year. The payment for ElmTree will primarily be settled in stock, with additional consideration based on ElmTree's future performance. The purchase price and other financial details are not yet disclosed. The transaction is expected to be completed in the third quarter of this year.

IBM unveils Power11 chips, AI servers

IBM has announced a new line of data centre chips and servers that it says will be more power-efficient than those of rivals and will simplify the process of rolling out AI in business operations. IBM's new Power11 chips mark its first major update to its Power line of chips since 2020. These chips have traditionally competed with chips from Intel and AMD in data centres, particularly in specialised sectors such as financial services, manufacturing and healthcare. Like Nvidia's AI servers, IBM's Power systems are an integrated package of chips and software. The Power11 systems will not need any planned downtime for software updates.

Chevron closes $55-billion Hess deal

Chevron has closed its $55-billion acquisition of Hess after winning a landmark legal battle against larger rival Exxon Mobil. Chevron CEO Mike Wirth's strategy to turn around his company's lagging performance has hinged on the acquisition, one of the largest energy deals in the past decade. The prize is a stake in the prolific Stabroek Block off the coast of Guyana that holds more than 11 billion barrels of oil and is one of the fastest growing oil provinces in the world. Exxon and China's CNOOC, Hess' partners in Guyana, had filed arbitration disputes that claimed that they held a pre-emptive right to purchase Hess' stake.

Rishi Sunak rejoins Goldman Sachs

Former British Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak** will return to Goldman Sachs in an advisory role, the Wall Street bank has said. Mr Sunak will take a new post a year after he had led the Conservatives to a crushing electoral defeat. Mr Sunak, who remains a Conservative member of parliament from a seat in northern England, had previously worked at Goldman as an analyst in the early 2000s. He has remained largely out of the spotlight since resigning as leader of the Conservatives after the party's worst defeat in over a century last July. Mr Sunak had earlier also served as Britain's finance minister.

Albert Manifold to steer BP as chairman

BP has named outsider Albert Manifold, the former boss of building materials producer CRH, as its new chairman. The appointment comes amid a major strategy reversal by global oil company, as it grapples to turn around a weak share performance. Mr Manifold, who has not previously held a

Couch-Tard scraps bid for Seven & i

Canada's Alimentation Couche-Tard has withdrawn its $46-billion bid to buy Seven & i Holdings. The Canadian company has added that Seven & i had refused to engage constructively on the deal, which would have been Japan's largest-ever foreign buyout. Couche-Tard, which operates Circle K, spent a year trying to create a global convenience store giant by acquiring the company behind 7-Eleven. "There has been no sincere or constructive engagement from Seven & i that would facilitate the advancement of any proposal, contrary to comments made publicly by its &i representatives," Couche-Tard said in a letter to the Japanese company's board of directors. The Japanese company, however, refuted Couch-Tard's charge.

AstraZeneca to put $50 bn in US facilities

AstraZeneca plans to spend $50 billion to expand manufacturing and research capabilities in the US by 2030. This is the latest big investment by a pharmaceutical company reacting to US President Donald Trump's tariff policy. The investment will fund a new drug manufacturing facility in Virginia and expand research and development (R&D) and manufacturing in cell therapy in Maryland, Massachusetts, California, Indiana and Texas, the company has said in a statement. It will also upgrade the Anglo-Swedish drugmaker's US clinical trial supply network and support ongoing investment in novel medicines. AstraZeneca has added that the expansion supports its ambition to reach $80 billion in annual revenue by 2030.

senior position in the energy sector, will succeed Helge Lund from October, as BP slashes planned spending on renewables under persistent speculation of takeover and break-up. During his 11-year tenure at CRH, the Irish company's shares had soared nearly fivefold as it reshaped its portfolio and moved its primary listing to New York in 2023.

$1-bn Nvidia's AI chips smuggled into China

Nvidia's advanced AI chips worth at least $1 billion were smuggled to China in the three months after Washington tightened chip export controls, the Financial Times has reported. The AI chip designer's high-end B200 processors, banned for sale in China, are widely available on a thriving Chinese black market for US chips, the report adds, citing sales contracts and company filings. Nvidia has said that building data centres with smuggled products is inefficient both technically and financially, as the company only offers service and support for authorised products. In May, multiple Chinese distributors had started selling B200s to suppliers of data centres that serve Chinese AI groups.

China's Q2 GDP rises by 5.2% despite tariffs

China's economy grew by 5.2 per cent year-on-year in the second quarter of 2025 amid ongoing trade tensions with the US. The Q2 growth is slightly below the 5.4 per cent pace in the first, but keeping on track to meet the government's full-year target of around 5 per cent. The first-half performance is supported by State stimulus and a pause in US-China trade war escalations that allowed exporters to rush out shipments ahead of potential tariff hikes. "China achieved growth above the official target of 5 per cent in Q2 partly because of front-loading of exports," Zhiwei Zhang, the chief economist of Pinpoint Asset Management has said.

Trump slaps 35% tariff on Canadian imports

US President **Donald Trump** has ramped up his tariff

assault on Canada, saying that the US would impose a 35 per cent tariff on imports in August. He has also planned to impose blanket tariffs of 15 or 20 per cent on most other trading partners. In a letter released on his social media platform, Mr Trump told Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney that the new rate would go into effect on August 1 and would go up, if Canada retaliated. Mr Carney has said that his government would continue to defend Canadian workers and businesses in their negotiations with the US, as they work towards that deadline.

China's Neta, Zeekr inflate high sales figures

Chinese EV brands Neta and Zeekr inflated sales in recent years to hit aggressive targets, with Neta doing so for more than 60,000 cars. The companies arranged for cars to be insured before they were sold to buyers, the documents show, enabling them under Chinese industry car registration practices to book sales early so they could hit the monthly and quarterly targets, the dealers and buyers have said. Neta booked early sales of at least 64,719 cars through this method from January 2023 to March 2024. Zeekr, a premium EV brand owned by Geely, used the same method to book early sales in late 2024.

US-EU reach trade deal, 15% tariff on EU

The US struck a framework trade agreement with the European Union (EU), imposing a 15 per cent import tariff on most EU goods. The new tariff rate is half of the threatened rate and averts a bigger trade war between the two allies that account for almost a third of global trade. US President Donald Trump and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the deal at Mr Trump's luxury golf course in western Scotland late last month after an hour-long meeting that pushed the hard-fought deal over the line following months of negotiations. "I think this is the biggest deal ever made," Mr Trump said. ■

Planet Of The Apps

Vandana Vasudevan’s book exposes hidden human stories behind South Asia’s booming e-commerce-driven economy.

A great shift is underway in how we buy, eat, move, work and sell, owing to technological intervention. Tech platforms – be they Swiggy, Amazon or Uber in India, a Foodpanda in Pakistan or a Pathao in Bangladesh or Nepal – have eased the pressures of modern life. They have freed up our time, provided jobs to grateful millions and delivered guilty pleasures and last-minute necessities to online buyers.

But behind the dazzle of the digital, much is opaque. Gig workers live a precarious life, while internet retailers cope with the oppressive rules of global behemoths. Consumers wonder if there are consequences to instant gratification and the extreme ease of living.

This book delves into the wondrous new world of electronic commerce (e-commerce) by connecting diverse stories and perspectives gathered across South Asia – from Peshawar to Patna and Colombo to Kathmandu. It explores the emotional dynamics between the different actors on this stage, the workings of tech companies and the implications for policy.

Author Vandana Vasudevan’s revelatory book asks what no grocery app, cab provider or food delivery service dares to: Who is paying the real convenience fee? In a world where everything is promised fast, fresh and effortless, Ms Vasudevan exposes the hidden human stories behind South Asia’s booming app economy: from the gig workers who race against time to the small sellers struggling against the algorithm and the restless customer who cannot stop tapping ‘Order Now’.

Ms Vasudevan, a development researcher, columnist and author, maps this invisible ecosystem with rare depth and honesty. This seems to be the first book to reveal what really powers digital ease and what it quietly takes away. Ms Vasudevan writes that online consumers have become app-native: scrolling, swiping, rating and returning. Convenience feels free, but every order or careless review triggers a chain reaction, one that the customer will never be aware of.

Exposing Facebook

Sarah Wynn-Williams, a young diplomat from New Zealand, pitched for her dream job. She saw Facebook’s (renamed Meta) potential and knew it could change the world for the better. But when she got there and rose to its top ranks, things turned out a little different.

From wild schemes cooked up on private jets to risking prison abroad, the book exposes both the personal and political fallout when boundless power and a rotten culture take hold. In a gripping and often absurd narrative, Ms Wynn-Williams rubs shoulders with Mark Zuckerberg, Sheryl Sandberg and world leaders, revealing what really goes on among the global elite – and the consequences this has for all of us.

Ms Wynn-Williams’ early years at Facebook are sometimes comical, sometimes scary and are characteristic of a company that is growing quickly and unevenly. She is dispatched to Myanmar amid a nationwide block of Facebook ordered by the ruling military junta and at one point, it seems like she is about to get kidnapped and imprisoned by people hired by the Myanmar government. She arranges for a State visit by New Zealand Prime Minister John Key, who wants a photo-op with Mr Zuckerberg, who, oblivious to the prime minister standing right there in front of him, berates Ms Wynn-Williams for demanding that he meet with some jackass politician.

One thing is clear from Ms Wynn-Williams’ book: Facebook does not really care about countries other than America. Candid and entertaining, this is an intimate memoir set amid powerful forces. As all our lives are upended by technology and those who control it, this book will change how you see the world.

CARELESS PEOPLE

Author: Sarah Wynn-Williams
Publisher: Pan Macmillan India
Pages: 390
Price: Rs 499

About the author

Sarah Wynn-Williams *is a former New Zealand diplomat and international lawyer. She joined Facebook after pitching a job and worked there for many years, ultimately becoming director of global public policy. After leaving the company, she has continued to work on tech policy, including artificial intelligence.*

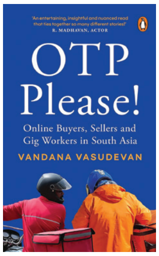
Besides, gig workers are not as free as they seem. Inside 'dark stores' and warehouses, gruelling shifts play out under algorithmic eyes. What starts as a side hustle becomes a permanent gig work, a contradiction and a common reality. Many sellers, like small shop owners and homegrown brands, join online platforms hoping for reach and growth. But once inside, they face sudden suspensions, hidden fees and cut-throat competition. What happens when an Amazon account is blocked without warning, and somebody's future is always uncertain?

At the top of this system sit the platforms – powerful, automated and answerable to no one. Without employing workers directly, they control everything: ratings, payouts, assignments and suspensions. The app has become both the workplace and the boss.

Welcome to what Ms Vasudevan calls the Planet of the Apps, where every tap promises ease but hides an entire economy of invisible labour. In this hyper-digital world, tech has simply repackaged the oldest job of human history, that of the dalal or the middleman. The new dalal is data-driven, automated and everywhere. Deeply researched, yet breezily narrated, this book is essential reading to understand the extraordinary digital age we inhabit.

OTP PLEASE!

Author: Vandana Vasudevan
Publisher: Penguin Random House India
Pages: 384
Price: Rs 499



About the author

Vandana Vasudevan *is an IIM Ahmedabad alumna, PhD scholar in urban development and author of* Urban Villager *and* Tough Customer. *She has written extensively for mainstream newspapers and has been a columnist for several years for the* Mint *and the* DNA. *Her journalistic work has made her a trusted voice on urban and economic change in India. She has worked in the corporate sector for many years. She shifted career tracks and became a development sector professional, consulting for various national and international organisations after obtaining a PhD in urban development from University of Grenoble, France.*

Manipulating Via Music

Since Spotify launched in 2008, music streaming services have steadily encroached on our lives. Streaming was sold as a legal alternative to piracy. But in reality, it was an untenable model that enriched a small number of executives while pillaging music communities and exploiting listeners.

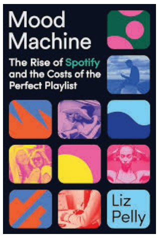
Liz Pelly's book tells the story of the so-called streaming revolution by reckoning with both sides of what Spotify refers to as its two-sided marketplace: the listeners who pay with their dollars and data and the musicians who provide the material powering it all.

The book is a devastating indictment of Spotify's dominant digital platform and an urgent call to action for music lovers. Written crisply, the book reveals just how much of our culture has been handed over to one company, and what that means. Ms Pelly is concerned not only about Spotify's parsimonious compensation for performers, but about the way in which it has already distorted the very concept of what music is, and what it is for.

With testimony from industry insiders and artists alike, Ms Pelly gives voice to the new discontent and sketches out how the ecstasy and diversity and connection of music can be preserved for future generations.

MOOD MACHINE

Author: Liz Pelly
Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton
Pages: 384
Price: Rs 699



About the author

Liz Pelly *is a journalist living in New York. Her essays and reporting have appeared across many reputed publications. She frequently speaks about music streaming on radio shows and podcasts. She teaches in the recorded music programme at New York University and has spent over a decade involved in all-ages show booking.*

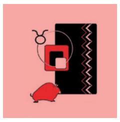
Aries

Mar 21-Apr 20

The month may begin on an uncertain note, but planetary positions seem supportive for increasing earnings gradually. The positive impact of planets will give an upward push to your finances. However, remain careful about financial transactions. You may get some encouraging opportunities to increase your earnings, as the month advances. You will come across new avenues to enhance your income. Investments that you make around the mid-month are likely to get you handsome returns in future.

Taurus

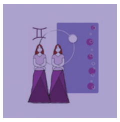
Apr 21-May 20



The beginning of this month may bring some good financial gains. Buying a home or investment in land can be favourable. There will be some good monetary gains, provided you remain disciplined. You may start getting better returns for your hard work, but this may happen gradually. Movement of planets around the mid-month is going to bring good news on the monetary front. The latter half of this month is likely to help your financial vision.

Gemini

May 22-Jun 21



Impact of planets may remain favourable for your financial matters for the most part of the month. The beginning of the month may bring good financial gains. But there may be more expenses, as the month progresses. List your priorities, and spend money wisely. You will be able to manage your resources more efficiently during the latter part of the month. You are likely to get many opportunities for gain. This will be a period of happiness and comfort.

Cancer

Jun 22-Jul 21

Impact of planets may cause some disruptions in your financial planning in the beginning of the month. You need to cut down on all unnecessary expenses to maintain your budget. As the month advances, you will be able to fulfil your previous commitments. You would also recover all your pending dues. Some good earning opportunities would further enhance your financial strength. While it is good to grab the opportunities and earn money, overdoing it can disrupt your planning.

Leo

Jul 23-Aug 23

There may be some pressure on your financial status. Hence, you need to be a bit more cautious in your approach. As the month advances, you will be in a better position financially. But it would be better to proceed only with a definite strategy. Some unexpected issues may disturb your financial planning around the mid-month. It is possible that some old issues may resurface and could also affect your financial planning. Your financial position would mostly stay satisfying during the latter half of the month. It may bring some good financial gains from your past investments.

Virgo

Aug 24-Sep 23

Exercise patience for big opportunities, and enjoy routine gains. Reap financial rewards from old investments and assets, but avoid hasty decisions and seek expert advice. In the latter half of the month, planetary support will favour financial matters, making it a good time for investments. But deliberate and calculate before making major decisions. The period during the latter part of the month may bring initial challenges. But conditions will improve, presenting profitable deals and opportunities.

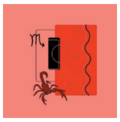
Libra

Sep 24-Oct 23

This month, impact of planets may bring challenges and delays, but also gradual improvements, significant boosts and promising results. The first week requires extra effort and caution due to unfavourable planetary alignment. The middle of the month brings mental clarity, financial gains and wise investment decisions. The latter half of the month starts with financial challenges and mediocre prospects, but improves with planetary support, bringing clarity and relief. The month ends with promising results, confidence and a clear vision of financial future.

Scorpio

Oct 24-Nov 23



The month begins on a strong note with numerous opportunities and increase in earnings, ideal for investing in new ventures and sufficient for long-term financial growth. In the middle of the month, potential financial challenges require strict discipline and caution, avoiding risky stock market trades and indecisiveness. But the latter part of the month brings a positive shift, offering opportunities to increase earnings. As the month progresses, there will be confusion in some financial matters. But gradually, there will be a positive shift, with planetary support offering relief and momentum.

Colgate: Quiet Strength Amid Cyclical Realignment

Colgate-Palmolive India, a market leader in the oral care space, is entering a critical juncture, marked by subtle transitions, subdued volatility and possibility of selective gains. Over coming months, Colgate's market behaviour is expected to reflect a period of measured recovery followed by cautious consolidation.

Astrologically, the company seems to be stepping out of a bearish shadow. Technical indicators, much like shifting celestial alignments, point to the beginning of a reversal – though not one that is steep or speculative. Instead, this reversal is marked by modest optimism, allowing room for tactical entries and short-term positioning. Long-term investors, however, would be wise to stay grounded, as the cycle favours discipline over exuberance.

Astrologically, the company seems to be stepping out of a bearish shadow.

Following this phase of light upward mobility, the stock may enter a range-bound zone. This is expected to be marked by periodic profit-booking, consolidation near key moving averages and a general lack of strong triggers. The nature of this phase is not one of dramatic change, but rather stability amid limited upward mobility.

For portfolio managers and institutional players, this is an ideal time to rebalance holdings, avoid high-beta moves and stay focused on consumer staple resilience. Colgate, with its deep penetration and brand loyalty, remains a fundamentally-sound pick. Yet, its short-term outlook will likely be shaped more by global cues, commodity pricing and internal restructuring rather than explosive domestic demand or trend reversals.

In summary, the astrological reading of Colgate suggests a period of quiet consolidation, mild recovery and technical balance. Not a time for bold leaps but for quiet conviction. For those who respect timing –both celestial and financial – Colgate may still shine, albeit gently.

Sagittarius

Nov 24-Dec 21

This month will bring a steady financial status, but with delays and constraints to navigate. Gradually, good earning opportunities will emerge, but planetary influences may impact financial decisions, making it essential to avoid impulsive judgments that could lead to problems. Mid-month, challenging issues may arise, testing decision-making abilities. It is crucial to sidestep risky investments or speculations seeking quick gains. However, the latter half of the month will witness a steady improvement in earning and saving potential.

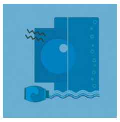
Capricorn

Dec 22-Jan 20

The month begins with challenges, feeling overwhelmed and struggling to achieve usual success. Patience and wise advice are essential amid uncertainty. As the month progresses, hard work yields material rewards, enhancing prestige and power. Mid-month financial disruptions require calmness, even in difficult situations, as this attitude will prove beneficial. The latter half of the month brings favourable outcomes, including unexpected gifts, financial gains or sudden windfalls. Past investments and efforts pay off, realising profits and monetary gains.

Aquarius

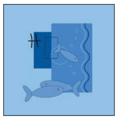
Jan 21-Feb 18



As the month begins, outstanding issues will be resolved, boosting your financial strength with additional resources. Keep proper information and planning to meet your financial goals. As the month advances, planetary impact will force you to think openly about your finances. Calculative investments in the share market can be beneficial, and property-related issues will be resolved around the mid-month. Without a budget, constraints will be felt later. So, avoid impulse buying that may lead to debt.

Pisces

Feb 19-Mar 20



In the beginning of this month, exercise caution in financial matters to avoid hasty decisions, confusions and illusions. Thoroughly vet any deals before proceeding, and refrain from making decisions about buying or selling property or investing in risky instruments. After mid-month, focus on adding monetary sources and increasing cash inflow, as your diligence and hard work will yield rewards. Support from friends and associates will help navigate any challenges that arise. Be prepared to act swiftly to seize opportunities, lest you miss out.

It is a pleasant homecoming for Sanjay Kaul, as he took over as managing director and CEO of GIFT City last month. The 2001-batch IAS officer of the Kerala cadre is a native of Vadodara. His latest posting at GIFT City – India's first and partially-operational smart city and the country's first international financial services centre (IFSC) – provides him a great opportunity to serve his native State, Gujarat.

Incidentally, Gujarat is not new to Mr Kaul in terms of administration either. The top officer had quite a long stint in the western State between 2011 and 2016 with numerous responsibilities across key departments, such as finance, industries, home, tourism and science and technology, among others. Besides, he was managing director of Gujarat Informatics and Tourism Corporation of Gujarat.

Mr Kaul has brilliant academic credentials. A degree in electronics and communication engineering from NIT Surat and another one in public policy from Syracuse University, New York, would certainly have come in handy during his two-decade-long, extensive public career.

AT THE HELM

SANJAY KAUL

His recent appointment at GIFT City was immediately preceded by his stint as joint secretary in the Union Ministry of Culture. Beginning his public career in Kerala, Mr Kaul held several key positions across the State administration as district collector of Thiruvananthapuram to secretary in multiple departments including ports, industry and commerce and home and vigilance. Mr Kaul had also served as chairman and managing director of Kerala Financial Corporation, Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation and many others.

Mr Kaul's new responsibility at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City or GIFT City promises to be engaging and quite challenging too. Located between Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad, GIFT City is designed to serve as a global financial and IT services hub and match major global business districts.

Developed as a smart city, including a special economic zone (SEZ), 261 acres of the total 886 acres of GIFT City houses the SEZ and offers numerous benefits like favourable tax policies, low operational costs and a thriving business ecosystem. The remaining 625 acres, designated as domestic tariff area (DTA), are planned for residences, schools, hospitals, hotels and other public amenities.

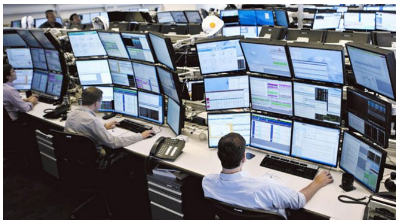
FACTS FOR YOU

MARKET INFRASTRUCTURE INSTITUTIONS

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has urged market infrastructure institutions (MIIs) to ensure transparency in their functioning. Accordingly, the capital markets regulator has tightened norms for MIIs related to conducting internal audits in mid-May.

The new norms are slated to come into effect from mid-August. MIIs are governed by the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013, and are required to conduct internal audits mandatorily.

The SEBI has added that appointment of internal auditors has to be done through a policy, which has been approved by the audit committee governing the board of an MII. Once appointed, the internal auditor has to report to the audit committee of the MII. The markets regulator has stressed that the key management personnel of MIIs must not be members of an audit committee, and they have been barred from voting in the internal audit meetings.



The SEBI's new norms reinforce the MIIs and ensure transparent and efficient operation of markets.

MIIs are essentially financial entities like stock exchanges, commodity exchanges, depositories and clearing corporations that provide essential infrastructure for running the daily operations of trading and settlement of trades. MIIs help in efficient trading of financial securities and other instruments, which, in turn, helps in capital formation and provide the necessary fuel for economic growth.

A preferred destination for the financial services sector, GIFT City is today home to more than 700 companies, including banks, insurance companies, fintech companies, brokerages and financial services providers. It also houses many IT and ITeS companies, law and consulting firms and two foreign universities. India INX – a subsidiary of Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) – and NSE IFSC – an arm of National Stock Exchange (NSE) – operate from GIFT City and provide trading in global equities, stock derivatives, debt securities currency and commodities derivatives.

Despite providing a thriving ecosystem for financial services, the upcoming GIFT City suffers from some unique problems.

Just a month in office and Mr Kaul seems to be well aware of GIFT City's strengths and weaknesses. The veteran civil servant's rich administrative experience and leadership across multiple sectors are expected to drive GIFT City's next level of growth. ■

Any disruption in the operations of these institutions can adversely impact the functioning of the entire financial system.

No doubt, MIIs are separate corporate entities that are in the business to earn a profit for their services. But these are also the first-line regulators in the market and have to follow strong corporate governance standards.

As the stock market indices scale new highs, investors, traders and other entities would be enticed to cut corners to make quick bucks. The SEBI's new tough norms are especially reinforce the MIIs – the first line of regulators – safeguard the interests of all the stakeholders of the market and ensure its transparent and efficient operation. ■

SPIRITUAL CORNER

Eternal Bliss When The Ego Melts

Dadashri: *However far one has walked in the wrong direction, the ego increases by that much. And by however much the ego decreases, that much happiness prevails. My ego is completely gone, and that is why I experience eternal happiness. True happiness is that which prevails even amidst suffering. Even when someone insults you, you still experience that happiness, and think to yourself: 'Wow, what happiness!'*

There is nothing but supreme bliss in the Atma *(Self), but because of passion-laden intent (*kalushit bhaav*), this bliss becomes covered. Where does this bliss come from? Does it come from* vishays *(objects of sensual pleasures)? Does it come from fame (respect;* maan*)? Does it come from anger (*krodh*)? Does it come from greed (*lobh*)? When it does not come from any of these, then you should realise that it is* samkit *(the right understanding). The* Atma *(Self) exists where there is no pain or sorrow.*

The Lord says that if you want moksha, you should go to a Gnani Purush, and if you want happiness in your worldly life (sansar), then you should serve your parents and your guru. It is possible to receive lasting happiness through caring for one's parents.

Misery Only Comes From The Mithya Darshan (Deluded Vision)

Dadashri: *Misery (*dukh*) exists in the worldly life (*sansar*) only because one creates the misery (*dukh*); otherwise, there is no such thing as misery. There is everything in this world, but why do we have miseries? It is because of wrong vision. Right understanding (*samyak samjan*) is to look for happiness even in the midst of pain and misery. Any suffering (*dukh*; unhappiness) that you do not fear, you will not have to face. Neither a robber nor even God will come to you. The Lord says that if you want* moksha*, you should go to a* Gnani Purush*, and if you want happiness in your worldly life (*sansar*), then you should serve your parents and your* guru*. It is possible to receive lasting happiness through caring for one's parents.*

It is loksangnya *(societal influence and association) to believe that happiness is where other people believe that it is. And to believe that happiness lies only in the* Atma *(the Self) is considered* Gnani's sangnya *(association with the* Gnani*). A man prays to God every day, 'Oh Lord! Make me happy, make me happy.' And another man, when he prays he says: 'Oh Lord! Let everyone in my family be happy.' When he says "my family", it also includes him. The second man will be the happier of the two, while the first man's plea goes to waste. You have the inner intent (*bhaav*) for the world's salvation, and therefore, you are also included in that salvation.*

To be Continued…

For more information on Dadashri's spiritual science, visit dadabhagwan.org

A Passionate Restaurateur

Aashita Relan Marwah believes in following her passion persistently. Highly-passionate about food, Ms Marwah has turned her passion into a successful profession. After graduating in business management from University of Warwick and earning a master's degree in hotel management from Les Roches, Switzerland, New-Delhi based Ms Marwah turned to her passion and entered the food industry. She launched Royal China to redefine the Chinese dining experience in India, focusing on authenticity, quality and refined service. Under her leadership, Royal China has become a benchmark for genuine Chinese flavours in the capital. In a lively conversation with ***Sharmila Chand****, Ms Marwah talks about work, life and a healthy balance between life and work.*

AASHITA RELAN MARWAH
Entrepreneur

What is your philosophy of work?
My work philosophy is rooted in consistency, passion and the power of collaboration.

How do you set out your priorities to keep your work and personal life balanced?
I make it a point to plan my schedule mindfully, ensuring that I carve out time for family, self-care and moments of rest. Wellness is non-negotiable, as is nurturing the incredible team that supports me every day.

A game that helps your work…
While I do not actively play any games related to work, I believe life itself often feels like a strategic game, full of challenges, decisions and lessons.

Secret *mantra* for your success…
A blend of passion, perseverance, trust, consistency and authenticity

Your philosophy of life…
Stay grounded, lead with kindness, and aim to leave every space better than you found it.

Your passion in life…
Exploring the richness of world cuisines and translating those inspirations into unforgettable dining experiences

Your source of inspiration…
My sources of inspiration are the people around me and my dedicated team. My biggest source of inspiration, above all, is my mother – my strongest supporter and my most honest critic.

What do you enjoy the most in life, generally?
A balance of meaningful experiences, savouring good food, discovering new places and cultures through travel, immersing myself in work and, most importantly, spending quality time with my family

Where do we see you 10 years from now?
Ten years from now, I see myself leading multiple F&B ventures across varied cuisines, supported by a dynamic and diverse team.

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दीनदयाल पत्तन प्राधिकरण, कंडला
DEENDAYAL PORT AUTHORITY, KANDLA

व्यापार का सशक्तीकरण, विकास को गति

अभिनवता के लिए सहयोग

प्रक्रियाओं का सरलीकरण

कार्य कुशलता में सुधार

व्यापार करने में सुगमता

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