



Driving MSME Excellence: Innovation, Inclusion & Integration

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Volume 47 No. 4 April 2025

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To advance digital and financial empowerment for micro and small enterprises across India, the CII MSME Leadership Summit was organized in New Delhi with the theme 'Driving MSME Excellence: Innovation, Inclusion, and Integration'. The summit focused on how finance and technology can act as key enablers in accelerating the growth and competitiveness of MSMEs. The event brought together policymakers and Industry experts in the space of finance and technology to deliberate on the sector's most pressing challenges and emerging opportunities.

This year's summit marked the culmination of Project Digital Saksham, which was a three-year collaboration between CII and the Mastercard Centre for Inclusive Growth. The project has played a pivotal role in equipping micro-enterprises with an impressive outreach of over 3,02,000 micro and own-account enterprises, training more than 87,000 individuals, and facilitating digital tool adoption among 51,405 entrepreneurs.

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We welcome your feedback and suggestions. Do write to us at sharmila.kantha@cii.in

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Strengthening India-LAC Development Agenda

The conclave highlighted that this growth is not just quantitative, but qualitative as well. From commodity trade to knowledge partnerships and from aid to co-development, the narrative is evolving. LAC countries now see India as a partner in their national development agendas, and India recognises LAC as a key region in its diversification strategy.

In a world marked by shifting geopolitical alliances and a growing need for diversified economic partners, both India and Latin America & Caribbean (LAC) nations are seeking reliable, growth-driven, and values-aligned collaborations. With complementary economic profiles, India as a technology and services powerhouse, and LAC as a resource-rich, food-secure, and increasingly innovation-oriented region, the potential for mutual gains is substantial.

The 10th CII India–LAC Conclave, held on 19-20 March in New Delhi, marked a pivotal moment in the evolving partnership between the two regions. Organized by CII, in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, the conclave gathered over 600 delegates from India and the LAC region. Representatives from 23 LAC countries, including 15 ministers, and Indian stakeholders from the Government, Industry, and think tanks



Back Row: (L-R) Sanchia Marie Bennett Templar, Permanent Secretary and Head of Administration, Ministry of Industry, Investment & Commerce, Jamaica; Narayan Sethuramon, Co-Chairman, CII Trade Policy Council, Managing Director, Sanmar Matrix Metals Limited; Dr Jorge Morales Paulino, Vice Minister for the Promotion of MSMEs, Dominican Republic; R Mukundan, Vice President, CII, Managing Director & CEO, Tata Chemicals Limited; Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII; Carlos Antonio Garcia Carranza, Vice Minister for Consular and Migratory Affairs, Honduras; Philip Telesford, Minister of Health, Grenada

Front Row: (L-R) Julio Eduardo Orozco Pérez, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guatemala; Coromoto Godoy Calderon, Minister of Foreign Trade, Venezuela; Ursula Desilú Leon Chempén, Minister for Foreign Trade and Tourism, Peru; Dr S Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, India; Carolina Maldonado, Vice Minister and Executive President, ProEcuador; Celinda Sosa Lunda, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bolivia; Maria Luisa Hayem Brevé, Minister of Economy, El Salvador; Claudia Sanhueza Riveros, Vice Minister of International Economic Affairs, Chile at the CII India–LAC Conclave in New Delhi

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Given the growing vulnerabilities in global supply chains and economic dependencies, there is an urgent need to de-risk the global economy from excessive concentration. In this regard, India's expanding engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean stands out as a strategic effort to foster balanced, diversified, and resilient partnerships for the future.

Dr S Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, Government of India



We are actively engaging with the LAC region. With Chile, we are working to expand the PTA into a full-fledged FTA, building on agreements from 2006 and 2017. Our institutional mechanisms with Costa Rica, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Argentina, and Brazil are set to resolve trade barriers and ease business operations. We're also keen to collaborate on flex-fuel technology, exploring 100 per cent ethanol-powered vehicles for India's roads. I am sure these efforts will not only boost trade but also drive innovation and sustainability, shaping a stronger economic partnership between India and LAC

Piyush Goyal, Minister for Commerce & Industry, Government of India

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deliberated on ways to strengthen business relations. This edition of the India-LAC Conclave reflected a shared vision to reimagine the economic architecture of the Global South through deeper South-South cooperation. The conclave framed this relationship not merely in terms of trade figures but as a long-term, people-centric, and development-driven partnership. As global supply chains reorganise and the world looks towards emerging

markets for leadership in sustainability, health, food security, and digital inclusion, the India-LAC equation is steadily becoming more strategic.

India-LAC bilateral trade has steadily grown, nearing USD 50 billion in 2023–24, with the potential to double in the coming years. Indian investment in LAC spans across sectors – pharmaceuticals, IT, automobiles, energy, and mining – while LAC countries are increasingly seeking



(L-R): Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII; Julio Eduardo Orozco Pérez, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guatemala; Claudia Sanhueza Riveros, Vice Minister of Commerce, Chile; Coromoto Godoy Calderon, Minister of Foreign Trade, Venezuela; Sanjiv Puri, President, CII, Chairman & Managing Director, ITC Ltd; Piyush Goyal, Minister for Commerce & Industry, India; Ursula Desilú Leon Chempén, Minister for Foreign Trade and Tourism, Peru; Celinda Sosa Lunda, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bolivia; Everly Paul Chet Greene, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade & Barbuda Affairs, Antigua and Barbuda; Maria Luisa Hayem Brevé, Minister of Economy, El Salvador



(L-R): Narayan Sethuramon, Co-Chairman, CII Trade Policy Council, CII, Managing Director, Sanmar Matrix Metals Limited; Chandrajit Banerjee; Sunil Barthwal, Commerce Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, India; Dr Eduardo Martinez Diaz, Deputy Prime Minister, Cuba; R Mukundan, Vice President, CII, Managing Director & CEO, Tata Chemicals Limited; Hiroshi Wago Rojas, Director – Global Partnerships, CAF - Development Bank of Latin America, Colombia; Jai Shroff, Chairman, National Committee on LAC, CII, Chairman & Group CEO, UPL

Indian partnerships for technology transfer, digital infrastructure, healthcare solutions, and clean energy.

The conclave highlighted that this growth is not just quantitative, but qualitative. From commodity trade to knowledge partnerships and from aid to co-development, the narrative is evolving. LAC countries now see India as a partner in their national development agendas, and India recognises LAC as a key region in its diversification strategy.

The presence of senior ministers from both sides reinforced the political will to elevate this engagement. Discussions revolved around easing trade bottlenecks, building resilient supply chains, and encouraging business-to-business and government-to-business collaboration. Indian Ministries, state governments, and Industry leaders voiced a unified call to institutionalise partnerships through free trade agreements, regional frameworks, and targeted bilateral agreements.

Notably, the active participation of Indian states in the conclave reflected a whole-of-India approach to external engagement. This decentralised model, encouraging state-level partnerships in agri-tech, renewable energy, tourism, and MSME development, was appreciated by LAC countries, who are eager to partner beyond the capital.

Several cross-cutting themes emerged as future pillars of India-LAC cooperation:

- With both regions committing to climate goals, there is clear synergy in solar, wind, green hydrogen, and

biofuels. India's low-cost renewables and LAC's rich natural endowments are a perfect fit for co-developing clean energy value chains

- India's leadership in digital governance (through tools like UPI, Aadhaar, CoWIN, and ONDC) attracted strong interest from LAC nations looking to modernise service delivery, financial inclusion, and public health systems
- India's status as the 'pharmacy of the world' and its track record in vaccine diplomacy position it as a key partner for LAC's health sector transformation
- As the global economy transitions to green technologies, lithium, copper, and rare earths – abundant in LAC – are of strategic importance. India's processing capabilities, combined with LAC's resources, open new doors for secure and sustainable supply chains
- Shared interests in nutrition security, climate-resilient agriculture, and food processing are fostering joint ventures and knowledge exchange
- Growing people-to-people linkages, diaspora presence, and shared values around wellness, music, and cinema point to new frontiers in soft power diplomacy.

The conclave also reinforced India's growing image in the LAC region as a development partner rather than just a market. India's support through ITEC scholarships, concessional finance, capacity building, and humanitarian

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Developmental cooperation is important. We must synchronise our strengths to build a partnership that stands as a global model of South-South Cooperation. Let us seize this moment to forge a new economic destiny, one defined by collaboration, resilience and shared prosperity

Pabitra Margherita, Minister of State for External Affairs,
Government of India



There are huge complementarities between India and the LAC region, especially as we move forward on our journey towards 2047, our 100th year of independence. Trade and investment today thrive in global value chains, and I see immense potential for deeper economic integration

Sunil Barthwal, Commerce Secretary, Department of Commerce,
Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India



The Republic of India, with its leadership, is a close friend to our region and a committed economic partner with the development priorities of the Latin American and Caribbean countries on the basis of our national conditions

H.E. Dr Eduardo Martinez Diaz, Deputy Prime Minister,
Republic of Cuba



India has been one of the most cost-efficient providers of skilled healthcare services, medical tourism, and telemedicine. India's expertise can play a major role in improving healthcare quality while making it more affordable in the Caribbean. Pharmaceuticals are another key area for partnership, as the high cost of medicines has been a major challenge in our region. We are actively seeking alternative partners to source more affordable medication, medical

supplies, and equipment.

Philip Telesford, Minister for Health, Grenada

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assistance, including its Vaccine Maitri initiative, has left a strong impression across the LAC region. At the same time, India's approach has been marked by mutual respect and partnership, rather than conditionality. This makes its model of cooperation particularly appealing to countries looking to retain policy autonomy while gaining from global integration.

Participants across the board stressed the need for greater institutionalisation of India-LAC relations. This includes updating the India-MERCOSUR Preferential Trade Agreement, exploring new FTAs with the Pacific Alliance and CARICOM, and strengthening working groups under bilateral and regional frameworks. Suggestions also included setting up a dedicated India-

LAC Secretariat, regular business councils, sectoral task forces, and a shared development fund to seed co-innovation.

As LAC increasingly becomes a hub for nearshoring, climate solutions, and food-energy-water security, the conclave encouraged Indian Industry to look beyond traditional partners and tap into LAC's emerging potential.

Key Sessions:

The 10th CII India-LAC Conclave featured a series of high-level plenaries aimed at advancing strategic economic cooperation between India and the LAC region in the context of a rapidly evolving global order.

The opening plenary session on 'Facilitating India-LAC Trade Relations: The Way Forward' underlined the growing complementarity between the two regions. India's strengths in innovation, digital transformation, and scalable public infrastructure align well with LAC's wealth of natural resources, skilled human capital, and advancements in sectors such as agriculture and urban development. Shared priorities in food and energy security, sustainable development, and inclusive healthcare formed the foundation for dialogue. The session drew inspiration from Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's 2024 India-CARICOM engagement, outlining a seven-pillar cooperation framework, including innovation, ocean economy, agriculture, and healthcare, as a strategic blueprint for the India-LAC partnership.

Key areas identified for collaboration included digital banking and financial inclusion through platforms like UPI, clean energy transitions via solar, wind, and biofuels, and expansion of trade in pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and IT-enabled services. Emphasis was placed on improving logistics and transport connectivity, accelerating trade agreements, fostering SME engagement, and initiating talent exchange programs. India's growing diplomatic footprint and over USD 15 billion in investments across LAC countries reaffirmed its commitment to deeper bilateral ties.

The ministerial session titled 'Strengthening India-LAC Partnerships in a Changing Global Environment' reinforced the vast untapped potential between the

two regions, with a shared ambition to elevate bilateral trade to USD 100 billion. Strategic cooperation in critical minerals such as lithium and copper, vital for India's electric vehicle and renewable energy goals, was a focal point. Manufacturing synergies in the automotive and aerospace sectors, agro-processing collaboration, and joint R&D in sustainable farming were highlighted as areas to strengthen regional value chains under the Make in India initiative and LAC's industrial base.

The special plenary on 'Advancing Economic Alliances for Collaborative Growth' addressed the need for resilient South-South cooperation in the face of global disruptions, including geopolitical tensions, debt challenges, and energy instability. The session emphasised joint efforts in healthcare, food security, defence, clean energy, and digital infrastructure. India's progress in building robust infrastructure and a dynamic digital ecosystem was spotlighted as a model for replication in the LAC region. Trust, transparency, and strong people-to-people ties were cited as essential pillars for long-term partnership.

The session also explored emerging opportunities in renewable energy, critical minerals, defence exports, and India's expanding startup ecosystem. Initiatives to foster educational, vocational, and cultural exchange, such as the forthcoming Partner India Portal focused on Trade, Technology, Tourism, Talent, and Tradition (5Ts), were seen as pivotal for deepening India-LAC engagement across both economic and societal dimensions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Institutionalising Strategic Energy Cooperation:** India and LAC countries must formalise structured bilateral partnerships to drive joint investments, policy alignment, and technology exchange in renewable energy. Collaborations should focus on key domains such as solar photovoltaics, energy storage, and ethanol blending, where India's experience provides scalable models for LAC's energy transition and rural electrification goals
- **Strengthening Critical Mineral Security:** Indian firms must deepen long-term partnerships with LAC mining companies for lithium, copper, and other critical minerals. Establishing local processing facilities and joint ventures will secure

India's supply chains for semiconductors, EVs, and electronics while adding value at the source

- **Accelerating Trade through Preferential Agreements:** Fast-tracking the India-Mexico Preferential Trade Agreement and concluding the India-Chile CEPA are vital to reducing tariff barriers and improving market access for pharmaceuticals, renewables, and high-value manufacturing. Diversifying trade with Peru and Colombia will further stabilise bilateral commerce
- **Co-Developing Supply Chains in Renewable Energy:** India and LAC should launch joint manufacturing and procurement initiatives to enhance renewable energy value chains. Grid

integration and cross-border electricity trade must also be prioritised to reduce fossil fuel reliance and enable optimal regional energy distribution

- Industrial and Technology-led Collaboration in SEZs:** Indian firms should establish manufacturing bases in LAC SEZs, especially in the automotive, aerospace, and electronics sectors, to boost co-production, strengthen regional value chains, and access FTA partner markets across America
- Catalysing Digital Public Infrastructure & Fintech Cooperation:** India's success in digital public infrastructure, particularly UPI and e-governance platforms, can serve as a replicable model in LAC. Joint initiatives in fintech, AI, blockchain, and cybersecurity will accelerate financial inclusion and digital transformation across the region
- Boosting Healthcare and Pharma Innovation Pipelines:** Both regions must collaborate on regulatory harmonisation for pharmaceuticals and medical devices. Mutual recognition agreements and alignment with international standards will ensure faster approvals. Building innovation ecosystems for biotechnology, rare diseases, and digital health solutions will drive affordability and research excellence
- Mobilising Investment through Green Financing and PPPs:** Public-private partnerships must be scaled up across clean energy, digital infrastructure, and logistics. Operationalising green bonds and blended finance models with the support of financial institutions will de-risk large-scale sustainable projects and attract long-term capital
- Enhancing Logistics and Multimodal Connectivity:** Direct shipping and air cargo connectivity between India and Caribbean markets should be developed to reduce transit times and enhance trade in time-sensitive goods. Establishing digital logistics platforms with AI and blockchain will drive supply chain efficiency and transparency
- Leveraging LAC's Agri Potential and India's AgriTech Strength:** With LAC poised as a global agri-export powerhouse, India should support the region with drone technologies, nano fertilisers, post-harvest processing, and cold-chain logistics to boost food security and agri-export efficiency
- Advancing Defence and Strategic Manufacturing:** India can support LAC's defence needs through exports of helicopters, radars, and patrol vessels, along with co-development and manufacturing partnerships. This cooperation will diversify LAC's defence sourcing and strengthen bilateral strategic trust
- Driving Start-Up & Innovation Ecosystems:** India and LAC must co-create innovation corridors through start-up exchanges, incubators, and joint accelerators. India's dynamic start-up culture offers a framework for LAC economies to nurture youth entrepreneurship, digital innovation, and job creation
- Empowering MSMEs and Gender-Inclusive Trade:** Promoting women-led MSMEs and integrating them into trade and technology networks, especially in partnership with Mexico's gender-inclusive policies, will ensure more inclusive and equitable growth across regions
- Optimising Resource Logistics with Infrastructure Investments:** Indian investment in LAC's strategic logistics hubs, such as ports, airports, and inland corridors, will unlock trade potential and improve access to North and South American markets. Collaborations in climate-resilient infrastructure and smart urban systems will future-proof regional supply chains
- Promoting Tourism, Pharmaceuticals & Infrastructure in the Caribbean:** India must actively engage with Caribbean nations like the Dominican Republic through the JETCO mechanism to explore new frontiers in tourism development, healthcare exports, and infrastructure collaboration.

QUOTES



We were talking about the impact of sargassum seaweed, which has negatively affected tourism in the Caribbean. Instead of seeing it only as a challenge, we should explore

innovations and scientific approaches to turn this so-called dreaded phenomenon into an opportunity. By collaborating with India, leveraging its expertise in biotechnology and sustainable processing, we can refine these innovations, develop new industries, and transform this challenge into a real economic opportunity for the region.

Everly Paul Chet Greene, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade & Barbuda Affairs, Antigua and Barbuda



Bolivia's history is deeply tied to the control of its natural resources, often at great cost to its people. Today, we see an opportunity to use our lithium and other critical

minerals not just for industrial use but for the development and well-being of our citizens. India, as a key partner in the Global South, can play a transformative role in this journey. By leveraging India's technology and expertise, we can ensure that mineral wealth benefits not just Bolivia and India but also the broader Global South.

Celinda Sosa Lunda, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bolivia



With one of the largest ship registries, deep-water ports, and strategic airspace, the Bahamas is not just a tourism hub – it is a vital logistics partner for America. Our

geography makes us a natural gateway for trade, investment, and multimodal connectivity across the region

Alfred Sears, Minister of Immigration and National Insurance, The Bahamas



In 2024, 87 per cent of Peru's exports went to countries with which we had an FTA, showing their impact. A trade agreement with India would ensure that Indian companies

in Peru are not required to produce or export using Peruvian inputs but can instead leverage Peru's 20+ trade agreements, importing free-trade inputs and expanding their reach.

Ursula Desilú Leon Chempén, Minister for Foreign Trade and Tourism, Peru



Venezuela and India share a history of strong economic and trade relations, positioning ourselves as strategic partners in key sectors. Currently,

Venezuela has 29 commercial and trade agreements in place, which serve as the foundation for expanding our economic relations. Leveraging on this, we recognise the importance of fostering deeper collaboration, improving regulatory frameworks, and enhancing communication between our nations to facilitate trade and investment.

Coromoto Godoy Calderon, Minister of Foreign Trade, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela



Beyond agriculture, we see India as an important partner in the industrial and technological sectors.

There is immense potential in areas like automotive, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, and mining. India's advancements in these fields could greatly benefit our industries through shared investments and knowledge exchange. We must streamline trade regulations and offer Indian companies the same level of incentives and fair treatment as those granted to businesses from other global partners, such as China and the United States. Visa facilitation for business professionals must be one of the key aspects of our collaboration.

Dr Jorge Morales Paulino, Vice Minister for the Promotion of MSMEs, Dominican Republic



To double trade and investment flows in the coming years, we must promote collaboration between media and technology companies, universities, and research centers in our region. I welcome initiatives that encourage the exchange of students and professionals between India and Latin America. Furthermore, a greater Indian presence in our region, including the opening of new embassies, will significantly contribute to deeper ties. It is crucial to streamline and accelerate the process of establishing bilateral agreements for the protection and promotion of investments

Julio Eduardo Orozco Pérez, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guatemala



As a region, Central America is investing over USD 52 billion across 374 infrastructure projects by 2035, connecting roads, ports, airports, and borders to enhance regional competitiveness and make us a more enabling environment for business.

Maria Luisa Hayem Brevé, Minister of Economy, Republic of El Salvador



Chile is rich in copper and other critical minerals, but our focus is shifting beyond extraction to value addition and research-driven mining. We see India as a strategic partner in this transformation. India's strengths in IT and innovation can revolutionise strategic mining in Chile, creating a long-term, trustworthy partnership. Additionally, financial strategies, including support from CAF Bank, can facilitate Indian investments in our mining sector. Strengthening human capital through collaboration with India will ensure sustainable and inclusive growth.

Claudia Sanhueza Riveros, Vice Minister of International Economic Affairs, Chile



Over the past 25 years, we have doubled electricity access from 48 to 88 per cent, demonstrating our Government's strong commitment to inclusive energy infrastructure and improving quality of life, while creating attractive prospects for international investment.

Maria Luisa Hayem Brevé, Minister of Economy, Republic of El Salvador



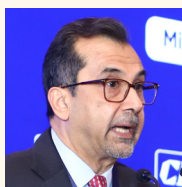
Central America may be small in size, but we unite North and South America, and sit between two oceans. Our location, coupled with special trade agreements with the US and Mexico, gives us unmatched connectivity and economic potential.

Carlos Antonio Garcia Carranza, Vice Minister for Consular and Migratory Affairs, Honduras



In Cuba, health is free, universal, regionalised, and of high expertise. We have a doctor for every 127 inhabitants and one nurse for every 125, reflecting the strength of our human resources in healthcare.

Dr Tania Margarita Cruz Hernández, First Deputy Minister of Public Health, Cuba



Critical mineral lithium presents immense opportunities for collaboration, ensuring supply chain security. Manufacturing, agriculture, and healthcare offer significant potential to boost trade and create jobs. Investments in tourism and public digital infrastructure can drive long-term economic transformation and inclusive growth.

Sanjiv Puri, President, CII and CMD, ITC Ltd

Driving MSME Excellence: Innovation, Inclusion, and Integration

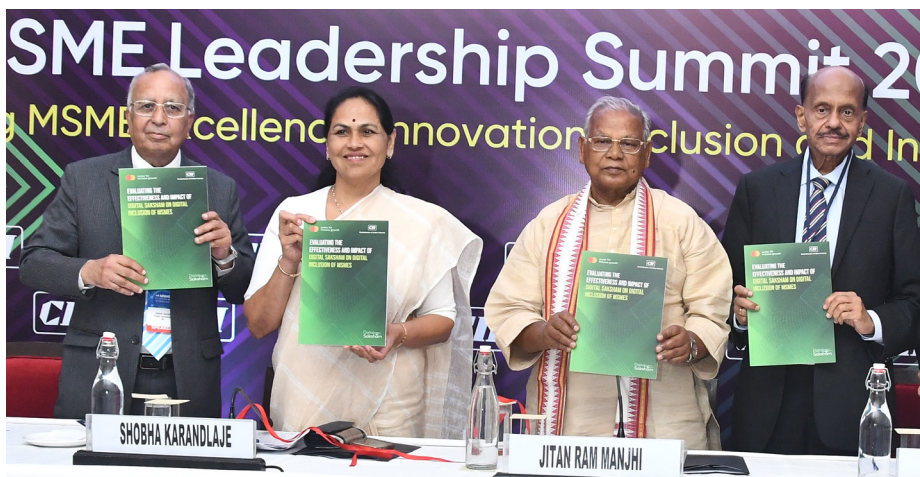
The MSME Leadership Summit focused on how finance and technology can act as key enablers in accelerating the growth and competitiveness of MSMEs. The event brought together policymakers and Industry experts in the space of finance and technology to deliberate on the sector's most pressing challenges and emerging opportunities

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of the Indian economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, innovation, and exports. With over 63 million enterprises, the MSME sector accounts for around 30 per cent of India's GDP and more than 45 per cent of the country's total exports. These businesses operate across diverse sectors, including manufacturing, services, textiles, and food processing, playing a crucial role in driving inclusive growth, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

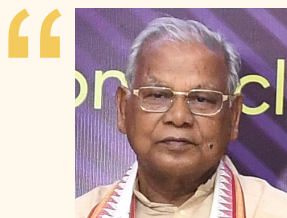
Despite their potential, MSMEs face several challenges, including limited access to finance, outdated technology,

regulatory hurdles, and a lack of skilled labor. However, the push for digital adoption, policy reforms, and increasing support through credit and market linkages have created new opportunities for growth.

The Government of India has launched several initiatives to strengthen the MSME sector, recognizing its critical role in economic development. These measures aim to improve access to finance, simplify regulatory compliance, promote digital adoption, and enhance market linkages. Some of the key initiatives include Udyam Registration Portal, Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme, and MUDRA loans, among others.



(L-R): Ashok Saigal, Co-Chairman, CII National MSME Council and MD, Frontier Technologies Pvt Ltd; Shobha Karandlaje, Minister of State for the Ministry of MSMEs and Labour & Employment, Government of India; Jitan Ram Manjhi, Minister of MSMEs, Government of India and Dr K Nandakumar, Chairman, Core Group on Policy & EoDB, CII National MSME Council and CMD, Chemtrols Industries Pvt Ltd launching the Digital Saksham Impact Assessment Report at the MSME Leadership Summit in New Delhi



Prime Minister's vision for India's economic growth places MSMEs at the heart of development, driving self-reliance and prosperity. As the backbone of rural employment and innovation, MSMEs are vital for India's progress. Government initiatives like ASPIRE, SFURTI, and CGTMSE are providing financial and technical support to enhance productivity, while PM Vishwakarma Yojana aims to uplift 30 lakh MSMEs, artisans, and craftsmen over the next five years, integrating them into the modern economy. With unwavering Government support, MSMEs are set to thrive, ensuring a stronger and more resilient India.

Jitan Ram Manjhi, Minister of MSMEs, Government of India



India is the fastest-growing economy, striving to become the third-largest in the world. With a strong focus on ease of doing business, streamlined regulations, and massive infrastructure development, we have created a land of opportunities, technology, and digital innovation. Initiatives like Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat are driving foreign investment and strengthening domestic manufacturing. MSMEs, contributing 30 per cent to GDP and 45 per cent to exports, remain a key focus as we empower them for even greater impact.

Shobha Karandlaje, Minister of State for the Ministry of MSME, Government of India

To advance digital and financial empowerment for micro and small enterprises across India, the CII MSME Leadership Summit was organized on 27 March in New Delhi with the theme '**Driving MSME Excellence: Innovation, Inclusion, and Integration**'. The summit focused on how finance and technology can act as key enablers in accelerating the growth and competitiveness of MSMEs. The event brought together policymakers and Industry experts in the space of finance and technology to deliberate on the sector's most pressing challenges and emerging opportunities.

Shri Jitan Ram Manjhi, Minister of MSMEs, Government of India, focused on the role of MSMEs in realising the Prime Minister's vision of 'Viksit Bharat'. He emphasised the Government's efforts to promote digitisation and innovation at the grassroots level, helping MSMEs transition into more competitive and self-reliant enterprises. He highlighted flagship schemes like ASPIRE, SFURTI, and CGTMSE that are providing vital financial and technical support to small businesses. These schemes are helping unlock the true potential of MSMEs across rural and urban areas alike.

The Minister underscored the significance of the Prime Minister Vishwakarma Yojana, which aims to empower 30 lakh artisans, craftsmen, and small entrepreneurs over the next five years, integrating them into modern

economic systems and value chains. Reiterating the Government's unwavering support, Shri Manjhi expressed optimism about the future of India's MSME sector and its ability to contribute to building a more resilient and prosperous nation.

Ms Shobha Karandlaje, Minister of State for MSMEs and Labour & Employment, Government of India, stressed the importance of direct engagement with Industry representatives to understand the practical challenges faced by MSMEs. She highlighted India's ongoing economic transformation, noting that the country has evolved into a centre for innovation, digital growth, and global investment. Over the last decade, India has experienced an economic renaissance, with the clear ambition of emerging as the third-largest economy in the world.

Structural reforms and infrastructure development, including improvements in highways, airports, and rural connectivity, have contributed significantly to the ease of doing business and the broader economic landscape. Financial support to the sector has grown exponentially, with commercial bank disbursements to MSMEs increasing from ₹12.66 lakh crore in 2022 to ₹22 lakh crore in 2024. The expansion of the Credit Guarantee Scheme has played a crucial role in this

growth, with the number of supported units rising sharply in the last five years.

This year's summit was particularly significant as it marked the culmination of Project Digital Saksham, which was a three-year collaboration between CII and the Mastercard Centre for Inclusive Growth. The project has played a pivotal role in equipping micro-enterprises with essential digital and financial capabilities. With an impressive outreach of over 3,02,000 micro and own-account enterprises, training more than 87,000 individuals, and facilitating digital tool adoption among 51,405 entrepreneurs, the initiative stands as a testament to the potential of collaborative efforts in accelerating MSME growth.

The Digital Saksham Impact Assessment Report, a comprehensive document capturing the outcomes, insights, and success stories from the three-year initiative, was released during the event. It evaluates the effectiveness of the program in enhancing digital capabilities among MSMEs across 13 states, measuring the extent of digital tool adoption in key operational areas. Highlighting the significant progress in improving digital literacy, fostering financial resilience, and supporting the formalisation of enterprises, the report offers actionable recommendations for both Government and Industry to advance the digital empowerment of MSMEs.

Opening Session

The Opening Session of the MSME Leadership Summit set the tone for the day's deliberations. Dr Rajneesh,

Additional Secretary & Development Commissioner, Ministry of MSME, Government of India, underscored the pivotal role of MSMEs in realising India's vision of becoming a developed economy by 2047. Dr Rajneesh identified formalisation, access to credit, and access to technology as the three central challenges facing the sector. Emphasising the importance of formalisation, he highlighted the gap between operating enterprises and those officially registered, noting that registration on the Udyam Portal opens doors to over 20 flagship Government schemes. He emphasized the sustained awareness efforts and state-level collaborations leading to registered MSMEs' growth from 1.6 crore in April 2023 to 6.1 crore till date.

On the issue of credit, he stressed that both availability and affordability are critical. With MSME credit rising from ₹10 lakh crore in 2014 to ₹30 lakh crore at present and growing at 13 per cent annually compared to 6 per cent for large industries, he debunked the myth that MSME lending is inherently risky, pointing out that MSME NPAs have declined to below 5 per cent. Dr Rajneesh reiterated the Government's commitment to addressing these challenges through enhanced credit guarantee schemes and coordinated efforts with financial institutions to empower MSMEs as engines of inclusive and sustainable growth.

Innovating MSME Finance: The Future of Credit, Risk and Growth

The session convened experts from the banking, fintech, and policy spheres to explore transformative solutions for expanding credit access to India's 63



(L-R): Ashok Saigal, Co-Chairman, CII National MSME Council and MD, Frontier Technologies Pvt Ltd; Dr Rajneesh, Additional Secretary & Development Commissioner, Ministry of MSME, Government of India and IM Ponnuswami, Co-Chairman, CII National MSME Council and CMD, Pon Pure Chemical India Pvt Ltd

million MSMEs. Speakers highlighted a decisive shift from collateral-based to cash flow-based lending, supported by real-time data via GST, UPI, and the account aggregator framework. Credit guarantee schemes like CGTMSE encourage institutions to extend unsecured credit, while platforms like PSB loans in 59 minutes, and API-enabled loan processing have enabled frictionless financing, with some public sector banks disbursing over ₹36,000 crore to MSMEs in a single year. These innovations, however, must be complemented by increased digital and financial literacy to ensure last-mile inclusion.

With India targeting USD 2 trillion in exports by 2030, MSMEs are critical not just as direct exporters but also as drivers within the broader supply chain. EXIM Bank's 'Rising Stars' initiative was introduced as a catalyst for nurturing non-exporting but high-potential MSMEs, especially those emerging from IIT incubators and international science parks, with expert committees assessing technological readiness for global markets. The bank is leading efforts to bridge the information gap on export opportunities through trade assistance programs by partnering with 90 banks in 50 countries, supporting nearly 700 export transactions and facilitating USD 2 billion in incremental exports.

Panellists emphasised the critical role of handholding through tech-enabled 'health clinics', accounting support, and better receivables management to prepare MSMEs for sustainable growth. Successful pilot programs, such as the ₹12 crore MSME funding initiative launched

in partnership with the Government of Telangana, were highlighted as scalable models for replication by larger banks like Punjab National Bank. In closing, the panel welcomed the announcement of a forthcoming special scheme for stressed MSMEs, offering corpus-backed relief for financially distressed enterprises. Together, these interventions point toward a future where technology, policy innovation, and institutional collaboration converge to unlock the full economic potential of India's MSME sector.

The Digital Leap: Transforming Businesses through Technology and Digital Commerce

The session brought together thought leaders from Google, Mastercard, and Accenture to explore how technology is revolutionising the MSME ecosystem. Ms Ankhee Bhakoo, Head of Scaled, Customer Solutions, Google, highlighted the critical role of discoverability, customer engagement, and value showcasing in empowering small businesses. She presented tools like Google My Business and AI-driven merchant features in Google Pay as game-changers for MSMEs navigating digital storefronts. She emphasised that while challenges like infrastructure and digital literacy persist, Google's initiatives, such as 'Grow with Google' and cloud-based solutions, are helping close these gaps.

Mr Abhishek Lahiri, Vice President & Head – Government Affairs – South Asia, Mastercard, addressed the evolving regulatory environment and stressed that compliance is an enabler of market access and formal growth.



(L-R): Ronak Shah, COO & Co-Founder, Online PSB Loans Ltd; Ashok Saigal, Co-Chairman, CII National MSME Council and MD, Frontier Technologies Pvt Ltd; Kalyan Kumar, Executive Director, Punjab National Bank; David Sinate, Chief General Manager, In-Charge of Research and Analysis Group, EXIM Bank



(L-R): Ankhee Bhakoo, Head of Scaled, Google Customer Solutions, Google; Mukund Kulkarni, Chairman-Core Group on Quality, CII National MSME Council and Director, Expert Global Solutions Pvt Ltd; Abhishek Lahiri, Vice President & Head – Government Affairs – South Asia, Mastercard and Vipul Vikram Singh, Senior Principal, Strategy & Growth, Consumer Goods, Accenture

He acknowledged the efforts of the Reserve Bank of India in easing regulatory pressure on smaller players through frameworks like the Payment Aggregator-Cross Border (PA-CB) guidelines. These measures are opening global opportunities for small Indian businesses. He also underscored the critical role of AI in fraud prevention and customer service, citing plug-and-play solutions that help businesses stay secure and competitive.

Mr Vipul Vikram Singh, Senior Principal, Strategy & Growth, Consumer Goods, Accenture, presented a strategic roadmap for MSMEs to scale in a digital-first economy. He highlighted the rise of the Direct-to-Consumer model, which enables startups to bypass traditional distribution channels and grow rapidly. However, he cautioned against overreliance on any single channel and emphasised the importance of multi-platform strategies that preserve brand identity.

Exclusive Session on Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Program

The session featured insightful discussions with Dr Pradeep Rohilla and Mr Amit Kumar, both Joint Commissioners from the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), Ministry of Finance, Government of India. They highlighted the growing significance of the AEO Program as a critical element of India's trade facilitation strategy. Mr Amit Kumar highlighted that the AEO Program represents a trusted partnership between the Government and the trade community, offering expedited customs clearance to certified businesses. Especially valuable during global disruptions, AEO status serves as a 'green passport' for goods, enabling faster processing both in India and with key trade partners such as the US, UAE, Japan, and others through Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs). Dr Rohilla urged the members to leverage the benefits through registering for the AEO program.



(L-R): Amit Kumar, Joint Commissioner, CBIC; Dr K Nandakumar, Chairman, Core Group on Policy & EoDB, CII National MSME Council and CMD, Chemtrols Industries Pvt Ltd; Pradeep Rohilla, Joint Commissioner, CBIC; M Ponnuswami, Co-Chairman, CII National MSME Council and CMD, Pon Pure Chemical India Pvt Ltd

QUOTES



With AEO, Indian enterprises gain a competitive edge – enjoying priority clearance, reduced costs, and unparalleled access to international trade networks. By becoming an AEO, businesses don't just comply with global trade standards; they lead the way in secure, efficient, and high-speed commerce.

Amit Kumar Gupta, Joint Commissioner – DIC, CBIC



The HELP framework supports MSMEs through handholding, expanding benefits, lowering the qualifying period, and process simplification. Many businesses miss out due to low awareness, but focused outreach and Industry collaboration ensure wider participation. Simplified compliance helps MSMEs unlock growth opportunities and strengthen their market position. The AEO program enhances security and efficiency in global trade, offering significant advantages to certified businesses.

Dr Pradeep Rohilla, Joint Commissioner – DIC, CBIC



With data, automation, and technology playing a critical role, MSMEs must start simple, learn how to organize and utilise these tools effectively, and gradually scale their businesses.

Mukund Kulkarni, Chairman-Core Group on Quality, CII National MSME Council and Director, Expert Global Solutions Pvt Ltd



Cloud-powered AI solutions are making digital transformation less daunting by simplifying data analysis, automating processes, and building seamless e-commerce infrastructure.

Ankhee Bhakoo, Head of Scaled, Google Customer Solutions, Google



To succeed in today's digital-first economy, businesses must develop four key literacies: digital literacy to understand evolving technologies, consumer literacy to know who their buyers are, platform literacy to navigate different sales channels effectively, and communication literacy to optimise customer acquisition strategies.

Vipul Vikram Singh, Senior Principal, Strategy & Growth, Consumer Goods, Accenture



Compliance is not just a legal requirement; it can be a competitive advantage. MSMEs should analyse how adhering to regulations can help them access new markets, secure funding, and gain credibility.

Abhishek Lahiri, Vice President & Head - Government Affairs - South Asia, Mastercard

Aatmanirbhar Bharat and MSMEs: The Roadmap for Growth

In recent years, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have exhibited exceptional resilience and adaptability. From integrating digital commerce and managing global supply chain disruptions to aligning with evolving consumer demands, these enterprises have embodied the principles of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, says Sameer Gupta



India's Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) represent a critical pillar of the national economy and also a powerful engine of innovation, resilience, and employment generation. CII has been at the forefront of empowering MSMEs through a wide range of strategic initiatives and policy advocacy. CII is continuously working closely with government, financial institutions, and industry stakeholders to address key challenges faced by MSMEs, including access to finance, technology adoption, skill development, and market linkages. Through dedicated platforms like the CII National MSME Council and programmes like the MSME Leadership Summit, CII facilitates knowledge sharing, promotes innovation, and supports capacity building. Its initiatives are designed to enhance competitiveness, drive digital transformation, and integrate MSMEs into global value chains, thereby enabling them to play a more robust role in India's economic growth.

This year the theme for the summit was, "Driving MSME Excellence: Innovation, Inclusion & Integration." Far from being aspirational rhetoric, the theme reflected the pressing, on-the-ground imperatives faced by the country's 6.3 crore MSMEs. As the nation advances toward the goal of becoming a \$5 trillion economy, it is

these enterprises that will be instrumental in achieving global competitiveness and fostering sustainable, inclusive growth.

In recent years, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have exhibited exceptional resilience and adaptability. From integrating digital commerce and managing global supply chain disruptions to aligning with evolving consumer demands, these enterprises have embodied the principles of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. The Union Budget 2024–25 provided critical impetus to the sector, with revised classification norms that expanded investment and turnover thresholds—a policy direction long advocated by CII through sustained engagement with stakeholders. These reforms are expected to more accurately reflect the evolving scale and complexity of enterprise operations, enabling MSMEs to grow within a more enabling regulatory framework.

Yet, challenges such as limited access to formal finance, shortage of skilled workforce, regulatory complexities, and inadequate global exposure continue to constrain the full potential of these enterprises. To address these gaps and pave the way for MSMEs to strengthen their presence in both domestic and international markets, CII organized the MSME Leadership Summit on 27th





March 2025. Conceived as a transformative platform, the summit brought together key stakeholders from across the ecosystem—including policymakers, industry leaders, and institutional partners—to collaboratively shape a vision for a more competitive, resilient, and future-ready MSME sector.

The summit was graced with presence Shri Jitan Ram Manjhi, Union Minister for MSMEs, Ministry of MSME, Government of India and Sushri Shobha Karandlaje, Minister of State, Ministry of MSME, Government of India. Their presence and guidance underscored the importance of industry-government partnership in creating enabling environments for growth.

A key takeaway from the summit was the unified resolve among all stakeholders to move beyond legacy models of enterprise development. The advancement of the MSME sector must now be viewed not as a series of isolated policy interventions, but as an integrated national imperative. In this context, policy frameworks must be designed to systematically reduce operational frictions and enhance institutional support. Initiatives such as the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programme and Ease of Doing Business reforms, highlighted during the summit, represent significant progress. However, their effectiveness depends on robust awareness-building, targeted capacity development, and the simplification of procedures to ensure meaningful and widespread impact.

Digital maturity has emerged as a defining imperative of the 21st century, transitioning from a strategic aspiration to an operational necessity in today's business landscape. For MSMEs, the adoption of digital tools is no longer optional—it is essential for streamlining operations, accessing wider markets, strengthening supply chain credibility, and enhancing customer engagement. Discussions led by global technology leaders at the summit reinforced the view that affordability and accessibility of digital solutions are no longer insurmountable challenges; rather, they can

be effectively addressed through strategic partnerships and collaborative ecosystems. Initiatives such as Project Digital Saksham have demonstrated that structured platforms aimed at overcoming digital adoption barriers can play a transformative role in enabling entrepreneurs to transition from traditional models to digital-first enterprises.

Equally pressing is the need to reimagine finance and move beyond a model based solely on eligibility to one centered on enablement. Rather than focusing exclusively on whether an enterprise meets predefined criteria, the approach must evolve to understand what is genuinely required for sustainable growth—and how that growth can be financed responsibly. Credit frameworks should be designed to support risk-taking, drive expansion, and enhance export readiness. Institutions such as PNB and EXIM Bank have demonstrated a growing willingness to innovate in this direction, and it is imperative to build on this momentum through coordinated action and policy support.

From discussions on financial innovation to digital transformation, and export enablement to compliance simplification, what emerged is that India's MSMEs are ready to scale up, and what they need is trust-based ecosystems, handholding, and simplified processes. At CII, we are redoubling our efforts through focused workstreams on technology adoption, quality enhancement, credit access, policy advocacy, and global market integration. We will continue to work together with the Ministry of MSME and other partners to build trust, scale, and capacity across the sector. The future of India's growth story will be written by our MSMEs.

This article was contributed by Sameer Gupta, Chairman, CII National MSME Council and Chairman, Jakson Group

PMIS: Transforming India's Career Landscape

Since the inception of the scheme, CII has collaborated with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, and the Industry to operationalise the initiative. CII has supported the Ministry in the implementation of the scheme and provided technical assistance to the Industry to navigate the PMIS framework.

The Prime Minister's Internship Scheme (PMIS) is transforming the career landscape of young individuals across India. The scheme was announced by Ms Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance, Government of India, as part of the Union Budget 2024, to provide internship opportunities to one crore youth in leading companies across India in the next five years. CII has been acting as a key facilitator of the scheme, working closely with the Government and the Industry.

The first phase of the scheme was rolled out in October 2024, with registrations open till December 2024. During this period, over 1.27 lakh internship opportunities were posted across approximately 745 districts by top companies spanning 25 key sectors. From this pool, more than 82,600 offers were extended

to candidates. Building on this momentum, the scheme entered its second phase in January 2025. Currently ongoing, the second phase has already seen over 1.18 lakh internships posted by companies, targeting a wide spectrum of qualifications, from graduates, ITI and diploma holders, to those with 10th and 12th-grade qualifications. The scheme aligns with India's long-term vision to maximise youth employability while developing Industry-relevant skills.

Following the overwhelming response to the scheme with over six lakh candidate registrations on the PMIS portal by January 2025, Ms Sitharaman launched the PMIS Mobile App on 17 March to simplify the application process and improve accessibility. Designed with a user-friendly interface, the app features a clean layout and smooth navigation, allowing easy registration via



◀ An intern being awarded a Certificate of Appreciation at the PMIS Mela, Kolkata by Harshavardhan Neotia, Chairman, Ambuja Neotia Group; Deepti Gaur Mukerjee, CEO, NHA; Anuradha Thakur, Additional Secretary, MCA and Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII

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Encouraging to see strong support for the PM Internship Scheme. This is a big step towards empowering our youth and building a future-ready workforce.

Narendra Modi

Prime Minister of India

”

Aadhaar face authentication. It also offers location-based job search, a personalised dashboard and real-time notifications for a seamless user experience.

Since the inception of the scheme, CII has collaborated with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, and the Industry to operationalise the initiative. CII has supported the Ministry in the implementation of the scheme and provided technical assistance to the Industry to navigate the PMIS framework. CII worked with the Industry to map internship openings, upload opportunities on the PMIS Portal and issue offer letters. In an effort to ensure widespread understanding and adoption of the scheme, CII also organized roundtable discussions in New Delhi and Mumbai and conducted virtual workshops for Industry stakeholders.

The first PMIS Mela was organized by CII and MCA at the CII Centre of Excellence for Leadership, Kolkata, on 25 February. Youth from various districts of East India and prominent companies offering internships under PMIS participated in the mela. The mela was organized to enlighten the youth about the plethora of internship opportunities available on the PM Internship Portal, while also serving as a platform for meaningful engagement between Industry representatives and aspiring interns.

Dedicated stations were set up where youth could come and register, complete their profiles and apply for internships on the official PM Internship Portal. Assistance was readily available at every stage of the process to ensure a smooth and supportive experience for all attendees. The PMIS Mela drew over 900 youth, with over 400 eligible candidates completing their

registration after receiving personalised counselling and guidance from Industry representatives.

To broaden awareness and inspire youth to join the scheme, CII and MCA launched the nation's first CII-MCA PMIS Facilitation Centre at Corporate Bhawan in Kolkata, West Bengal. This first-of-its-kind phygital PMIS outreach arm extends through PMIS cells across eight locations in West Bengal, including Kasba, Asansol, Durgapur, Budge Budge, Kalyani, Bardhaman, Behrampur, and Siliguri. The cutting-edge facility

To broaden awareness and inspire youth to join the scheme, CII and MCA launched the nation's first CII-MCA PMIS Facilitation Centre at Corporate Bhawan in Kolkata, West Bengal.

not only strengthens PMIS linkages but also serves as a dynamic space for internship seekers, featuring dedicated zones to discover career paths, connect with Industry experts and track evolving market trends. Through this robust network, CII and MCA aim to widen the scheme's reach, deepen engagement, and maximise its impact on India's skill development and employment ecosystem.

Key highlights of the scheme include 12-month paid internships with leading companies across India.

Each intern receives a monthly stipend of ₹5,000, along with a one-time grant of ₹6,000. Aimed at individuals aged 21 to 24 who are neither engaged in full-time education nor full-time employment, the scheme offers a valuable opportunity to launch their professional journey. This scheme allows individuals

to get training and gain hands-on experience within real-life environments of businesses or organizations. By aligning academic knowledge with Industry needs, the scheme significantly boosts the employability of participants. Eligible candidates can apply for up to five internships under this initiative.

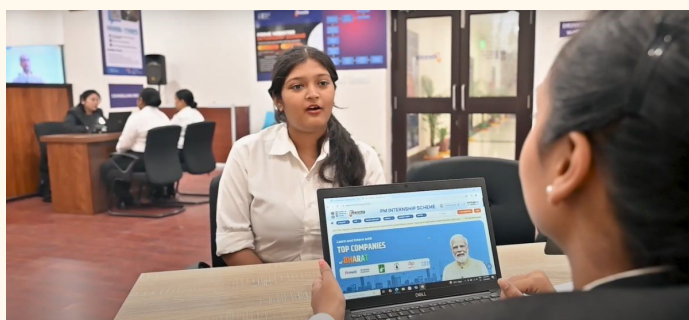
KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Ambitious Goal:** Announced in the Union Budget 2024 by Ms Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance, Government of India, PMIS aims to provide internships to 1 crore youth over a period of five years
- **Paid Internships with Top Companies:** Young people between 21-24 years can apply for 12-month paid internships across top companies in India. Each intern will receive a monthly stipend of ₹5,000 and a one-time grant of ₹6,000
- **CII as a Key Facilitator:** CII is playing a pivotal role in facilitating this scheme, acting as a bridge between the Government and the Industry. In collaboration with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, CII has worked closely with the Industry to map internship openings, upload opportunities on the PMIS Portal and issue offer letters.
- **Industry Engagement:** To promote wider Industry participation, CII held roundtable discussions in New Delhi and Mumbai as well as virtual interactions, bringing together Industry leaders to understand the scheme's structure, benefits, and operational process, ensuring a smooth rollout and higher engagement from different sectors.
- **PMIS Mela in Kolkata:** CII and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs organized the first PMIS Mela at the CII Centre of Excellence for Leadership, Salt Lake City, Kolkata. The event attracted youth from various districts in East India and featured participation from leading companies offering internships under the scheme. Dedicated help desks allowed youth to register, complete their profiles and apply on the spot via the official PMIS portal.
- **First PMIS Facilitation Centre in Kolkata:** CII and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs have launched the nation's first CII-MCA PMIS Facilitation Centre at Corporate Bhawan in Kolkata, West Bengal. This first-of-its-kind phygital PMIS outreach arm features dedicated zones for internship seekers to explore career paths, connect with Industry experts and track evolving market trends.
- **Phase 1 Achievements:** During the first phase of the scheme, between October to December 2024, over 1.27 lakh internship opportunities were posted across approximately 745 districts by top companies spanning 25 key sectors. Over 82,600 offers were extended to candidates.
- **Phase 2 Momentum:** The second phase is ongoing and has already seen over 1.18 lakh internships posted. These roles cater to a diverse set of educational backgrounds, ranging from graduates, ITI and diploma holders to students with 10th and 12th-grade qualifications.
- **PMIS Portal & App:** Interested candidates can register for the scheme through the PMIS portal or app. The PMIS app was launched ahead of the second phase to simplify the registration process.
- **Insurance Coverage:** All interns will receive insurance coverage under two key Government insurance schemes: the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana
- **Key sectors:** Banking, Financial Services & Insurance, Green Energy & Sustainability, Hospitality & Tourism, Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals, Information Technology & Digital Services, Automotive, Aviation & Defence, Cement & Building Materials, Chemical Industry, Consulting Services, Diversified Conglomerates, Fast-Moving Consumer Goods, Gems & Jewellery, Infrastructure & Construction, Manufacturing, Leather Goods, Oil & Gas, Metals & Mining, Media & Entertainment, Sports, Telecom, Textiles, and more.

India's most prestigious companies have come forward to participate in the scheme and offer internship opportunities. The scheme covers major sectors including Banking, Financial Services & Insurance (BFSI), Green Energy & Sustainability, Hospitality & Tourism, Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals, Information Technology & Digital Services, Automotive, Aviation & Defence, Cement & Building Materials, Chemical Industry, Consulting Services, Diversified Conglomerates, Fast-Moving Consumer Goods, Gems & Jewelry, Infrastructure & Construction, Manufacturing,

Leather Goods, Oil & Gas, Metals & Mining, Media & Entertainment, Sports, Telecom, and Textiles, among others.

A referral programme has also been introduced for the scheme, enabling registered youth to refer other eligible candidates and win rewards. With its forward-looking design, strategic collaborations and impactful outreach, the PM Internship Scheme is paving the way for a skilled, confident and future-ready workforce, thus marking a new chapter in India's skilling and employment narrative.



QUOTES



This is a national cause. Nobody is expecting Industry to cut profits or suffer losses. The Government is chipping in with financial assistance. We need to give our youth the confidence to enter these top companies, provided they prepare themselves for the opportunity. If they don't equip themselves with the right skills, Industry will not find them employable.

Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance, Government of India



With internships for 1 crore youth across sectors, including manufacturing and services, the PM Internship Scheme will cultivate a skilled workforce ready to take on future

challenges.

Sanjiv Puri, President, CII and CMD, ITC Ltd



With industries grappling with a growing talent shortage, the PM Internship Scheme provides a crucial bridge. By offering on-the-job training to youth, it will prepare them

to meet the evolving Industry demands, while ensuring that businesses get access to a skilled and agile future workforce, fostering progress and innovation.

Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII



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Societal Interface

Strengthening Responses to Obesity Challenge

The National Obesity Summit reinforced the pressing need for a sustained, multi-sectoral approach to combat India's growing obesity crisis. While Government initiatives like Poshan Abhiyaan, Eat Right India, and the Fit India Movement have laid a strong foundation, the challenge demands collective action from healthcare providers, Industry leaders, corporate India, research institutions, and civil society to build a healthier, more resilient nation.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has noted the escalating global epidemic of overweight and obesity, calling it “globesity” because, despite obesity being one of today’s most evident public health problems, it is yet the most neglected. Once associated with high-income countries, obesity is now also prevalent in low- and middle-income countries, including India. The

prevalence rate of obesity and being overweight among Indians has been increasing over the last decade. National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), which was conducted in 2019-21, shows that obesity among men aged 18-69 years increased to 22.9 per cent from 18.9 per cent in the previous survey, while for women, the rate rose to 24.0 per cent from 20.6 per cent during the same period.



(L-R): Dr Randeep Guleria, Chairman – Internal Medicine, Respiratory and Sleep Medicine, Medanta – The Medicity; Dr Jitendra Singh, MoS (I/C), Ministry of Science & Technology and MoS, PMO, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Department of Atomic Energy and Space, Government of India; Dr Varinder Garg, OSD to Union Health Minister and President, PGIMER, Chandigarh; Vineet Gupta, Associate Vice President and Ex-MD, Eli Lilly and Company; Dr Vivek Virendra Singh, Chief of Health, UNICEF at the inaugural session of the National Obesity Summit in New Delhi

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Obesity is a multifactorial challenge that requires a multifaceted approach to reduce its burden in India. Prevention and care strategies must be tailored to the unique needs of the Indian population, particularly addressing abdominal obesity.

Dr Jitendra Singh, Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences and Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Department of Atomic Energy and Space, Government of India



We need to make our cities walkable, and therefore, urban affairs too becomes an important stakeholder in reducing obesity, indicating that obesity is much more than a mere health issue needing a 'whole-of-nation' approach.

Vijay Nehra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India

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Socio-economic patterns of obesity distribution show linkages between higher education and obesity and being overweight. The rates of obesity have also increased in the poor wealth quintiles over the two recent consecutive NFHS rounds. The economic impact of obesity and being overweight has been highlighted in the Economic Survey of 2023-24, which advocates a healthy diet.

As a notable step towards taking action to address growing obesity rates in India, the National Obesity Summit was organized by CII, in partnership with Eli Lilly and Company, on 4 March in New Delhi with the theme 'Changing Systems, Healthier Lives: Prevention, Care, and Management of Obesity'. The event, which coincided with World Obesity Day, brought together policymakers, Industry leaders, healthcare professionals, and experts to address the growing obesity crisis in India.

Dr Jitendra Singh, Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences and Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Department of Atomic Energy and Space, Government of India, highlighted that obesity is a complex, multi-factorial challenge requiring a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach across policy, healthcare, Industry, and society. A distinguished Professor of Medicine and renowned Diabetologist, Dr Singh, suggested a PPP-based universal screening model for early detection and intervention.

Given its significant economic burden, obesity prevention must include nutrition-focused policies, corporate

wellness programs, research investment, and stronger regulations. Dr Singh also shed light on the growing concern of paediatric obesity, often overlooked as 'chubbiness', but it increases the risk of long-term health issues. "There is no shortcut to address obesity. Quantity, quality and distribution are three key aspects when it comes to nutrition, and self-management is critical to ensure that we are practicing healthy eating to prevent obesity," he added.

Notably, Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, in his 23 February Mann Ki Baat address, had highlighted the escalating obesity crisis in India, noting that cases have doubled in recent years, with one in every eight individuals affected. He expressed particular concern over the increasing childhood obesity. To combat this trend, the Prime Minister urged citizens to reduce their cooking oil consumption by 10 per cent and nominated ten prominent individuals, including industrialists, sportspersons, and artists, to champion this initiative and further spread awareness.

This call to action underscores the Government's commitment to fostering healthier lifestyles and addressing the root causes of obesity through community engagement and dietary mindfulness.

Discussions at the summit emphasized the recognition of obesity as a public health priority, necessitating systemic changes in healthcare policies and urban planning. Experts also shed light on the economic burden of obesity, advocating for early intervention and targeted policy measures. The role of education and

awareness in driving behavioural change was strongly highlighted, along with the potential of digital health solutions and AI-powered interventions for personalised nutrition and obesity management. Additionally, the summit called for strengthening school and community-based programs to instil healthier eating habits, promote physical activity, and encourage family participation in tackling childhood obesity.

The National Obesity Summit reinforced the pressing need for a sustained, multi-sectoral approach to combat India's growing obesity crisis. While Government initiatives like Poshan Abhiyaan, Eat Right India, and the Fit India Movement have laid a strong foundation, the challenge demands collective action from healthcare providers, Industry leaders, corporate India, research institutions, and civil society to build a healthier, more resilient nation.

The summit served as a platform for collaborative dialogue, emphasising a multi-sectoral approach to obesity prevention, care, and management. Discussions revolved around nutrition, physical activity, and healthcare system strengthening, with a focus on integrating obesity care into public health priorities.

The discussions focused on:

- Recognition of obesity as a public health priority requiring systemic changes in healthcare policies and urban planning
- Addressing the economic impact of obesity, highlighting the need for early intervention and targeted policy measures

- Advocating for behavioral change through education and awareness, reinforcing the importance of healthy eating habits and active lifestyles
- Leveraging digital solutions and AI-powered health interventions to provide personalised nutritional guidance, screening for risk factors and obesity management
- Strengthening school and community-based interventions to instil healthy eating habits, promote physical activity, and engage families in tackling childhood obesity.

Obesity: Unravelling India's Rising Public Health Concern

The session underscored that obesity is not just a health issue but also an economic burden, requiring a multipronged approach. Experts called for a broader strategy, including nutrition-focused interventions, corporate wellness programs, research investments, regulatory reforms, and public-private partnerships.

"Behavioral change is key to tackling obesity, and it requires collective societal participation," said Shri Vijay Nehra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India. He emphasised a 'Whole-of-Nation' approach, where non-health sectors, including urban planning, play a role in promoting active lifestyles. Making cities more walkable was highlighted as a crucial first step.

Dr Sameer Malhotra, Director – Mental Health and Behavioural Sciences, Max Healthcare, emphasised the deep connection between mental health and obesity. He explained how chronic stress, elevated cortisol



(L-R): Dr Chandrakant Lahariya, Founder – Director, Foundation for People-Centric Health Systems; Dr Upendra Kaul, Chairman, Batra Heart Centre and Dean – Academics and Research, BHMRC; Vijay Nehra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India; Dr Randeep Guleria, Chairman – Internal Medicine, Respiratory and Sleep Medicine, Medanta, The Medicity; Dr K Madan Gopal, Advisor – Public Health Administration, National Health Systems Resource Centre and Dr Sameer Malhotra, Director and Head – Department of Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences, Max Healthcare

levels, and unhealthy coping mechanisms contribute to weight gain. Conditions like hypothyroidism and PCOD further link obesity and depression, underscoring the need for an integrated approach that addresses food, mind, and body together.

Spotlight Talk: Unfolding the Socio-Economic Impact of Obesity in India

The spotlight conversation with Dr Shamika Ravi, Member, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and Secretary to the Government of India, delved into the economic burden of obesity, analysing its impact through regional, demographic, and economic growth perspectives to drive informed policymaking and strategic interventions. Dr Ravi recommended that obesity should be framed as a socio-economic issue linked to human productivity, healthcare costs, and economic growth.

She further added that district-level estimates and household consumption surveys are essential to understand obesity trends, regional disparities, and gender-based differences. This data-driven approach will help design targeted interventions and strengthen economic policies addressing obesity.

While traditional food habits have remained largely unchanged, lifestyle shifts, increased sedentary behaviour, and urbanisation have fuelled obesity. Addressing these changes requires a multi-stakeholder approach, involving urban planners, policymakers, and economists, to ensure healthier environments and public infrastructure that support physical activity and better nutrition choices.

Eating Right - Role of Nutrition in Combating Obesity

Nutrition has two key aspects: Eating Right (healthy food habits) and Eating Safe (access to quality, affordable nutrition). These aspects are especially relevant considering rising obesity among children and women. NFHS-5 data shows overweight children under five have increased from 2.1 per cent in 2015-16 to 3.4 per cent, while 40 per cent of Indian women face abdominal obesity.

The session was aimed at unfolding the challenge of rising paediatric obesity and its long-term impact on public health in India. The session highlighted that urbanisation is impacting obesity rates because of changing dietary habits. Rural-to-urban migration has shifted dietary habits, while sedentary lifestyles, congested living conditions, and urban pollution further aggravate the issue. Dr Sarath Gopalan, President, Nutrition Society of India (NSI), highlighted the increasing concern of India's Triple Burden of Disease – malnutrition, obesity, and micronutrient deficiency – over the past decade.

The Fitness Factor- Beating Obesity through Active Lifestyle

Experts emphasised the need to remove systemic barriers to active lifestyles, highlighting environmental, economic, and policy-driven factors that shape individual motivation. "Making it easier and more profitable to start gyms and fitness centres will drive investment and bring accessible fitness facilities to every neighbourhood," said Mr Naresh Krishnaswamy, CEO, Cult Fit.



(L-R) Vijay Nehra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Dr Shamika Ravi, Member, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and Secretary to the Government of India



(L-R): Dr Sarath Gopalan, President, Nutrition Society of India; Dr Smriti Pahwa, Director, Scale Up Programs, Arogya World; Tushar Vashisht, CEO, HealthifyMe and Dr Vijendra Prakash, General Manager - Regulatory, Corporate Affairs, Himalaya Wellness Company

The discussion explored incentivising health-conscious behaviours through lower insurance premiums and corporate wellness programs. Experts advocated for democratising fitness by expanding access to sports facilities and integrating physical activity into schools and workplaces. Policy interventions, including subsidies and regulatory support for fitness businesses, were also proposed.

Dr Sherry George, CEO, The India Fitness Connect (TIFC), highlighted the need for biomechanical safety standards in gym equipment, while Dr Mekhala Chandra, Medical Head – Clinical Programs, Tata1mg, advocated for integrating exercise into medical prescriptions.

Strategising for Obesity Care: Strengthening Systems for Healthier Lives

During the session, medical experts emphasised the need to move beyond BMI as the sole measure of obesity, advocating for a more comprehensive screening approach that includes waist circumference and other anthropometric tools, given India's unique obesity patterns. Experts at the session stressed the importance

of shifting perceptions, breaking the misconception that being overweight equates to being healthy.

Discussions also highlighted the critical role of schools and communities in shaping lifelong health habits. Dr Monika Arora, President, NCD Alliance; Executive Director, HRIDAY and Vice President, Public Health Foundation of India, advocated for ensuring nutritious food options in school canteens, implementing farm-to-plate initiatives like kitchen gardens, and promoting family involvement to address sedentary lifestyles from an early age.

The session explored the potential of AI in obesity prevention and management, with experts highlighting its role in precision medicine, dietary tracking, and telemedicine. They underscored the need for standardised protocols to enhance the accuracy and accessibility of AI-driven obesity screening. Panellists echoed Dr Pradeep Chowbey, Chairman, Max Institute of Laparoscopic, Endoscopic, and Bariatric Surgery, in stressing the need for enhanced physician training. They emphasised that general practitioners must be equipped with the necessary skills for effective obesity management and early intervention.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- A scalable PPP-based universal obesity screening protocol is needed for early detection and intervention
- Corporate Wellness Programs should integrate obesity prevention activities with the Fit India and Eat Right India initiatives
- Local Government-private sector collaboration is central to building sustainable fitness infrastructure in underserved areas via PPP models
- CSR funding can be leveraged to support school and youth fitness initiatives, promoting lifelong healthy habits
- Assessment of obesity's multi-sectoral economic impact, including food quality, urban planning, and socio-economic factors, can help develop targeted interventions
- Lessons from the global best practices with appropriate contextualisation can help strengthen India's obesity prevention policies
- Active living infrastructure in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities should be enhanced with safe walking tracks, open gyms, and community sports centres
- Engagement of schools, colleges, and communities in obesity prevention through education and participation programmes is critical
- Boosting Industry participation in fitness by extending 'Ease of Doing Business' benefits to gyms, sports facilities, and wellness centres is vital for ensuring an ecosystem that supports healthy lifestyles
- Raising awareness on correct biomechanics and the role of quality fitness equipment in injury prevention
- Mandating sports and physical education across all schools can instil lifelong fitness habits
- Specialised obesity care strategies should be developed for women and children, considering their unique health needs
- The health system must be strengthened by adopting innovative, holistic, and multi-factorial care practices while enhancing the capacity of healthcare professionals for effective obesity prevention, care, and management.

QUOTES



Technology can be a powerful tool in tackling obesity, but we must first address unawareness, unaffordability, and inaccessibility to ensure effective obesity care in India.

Dr Varinder Garg, OSD to Union Health Minister and President, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh



Early intervention in diet, exercise, and stress management is essential to nip obesity in the bud.

Dr K Madan Gopal, Advisor – Public Health Administration,

National Health Systems Resource Centre



Monitoring children's BMI with waist circumference can be a key preventive measure in tackling childhood obesity.

Dr Pradeep Chowbey, Chairman, Max Institute of

Laparoscopic, Endoscopic, Bariatric Surgery & Allied Surgical Specialities



Obesity, along with associated health issues, must be prioritised for action, as additional symptoms often signal underlying comorbidities.

Dr SK Wangnool, Senior

Consultant – Centre for Obesity, Diabetes & Endocrinology, Apollo Indraprastha



Combining AI, human coaching, and targeted medicine has the potential to make healthy living more accessible and affordable.

Tushar Vashisht, CEO, HealthifyMe



Proper training is not just about movement – it's about safety too.

Sherry George, Founder & CEO, The India Fitness Connect



Obesity must be viewed from a broader perspective, considering its unique drivers across different sections of society and between urban and rural areas in India.

Dr Randeep Guleria, Chairman – Internal Medicine, Respiratory and Sleep Medicine, Medanta–The Medicity



While our food habits remain largely traditional, our lifestyle has changed significantly, leading to obesity.

Prashant Tandon, Member, CII Digital Health Sub-Committee and CEO, Tata 1mg



Poor mental health can lead to obesity through informal dietary responses. Thus, to tackle obesity effectively, we must recognise the deep connection between food, mind, and body.

Dr Sameer Malhotra, Director and Head - Department of Mental Health and Behavioural Sciences, Max Healthcare



Leading an active lifestyle is often viewed as a matter of willpower, but various barriers can hinder motivation. It is crucial for the entire ecosystem to collaborate in making active living more accessible and sustainable.

Naresh Krishnaswamy, CEO, Cult Fit



Specialised training in obesity care for general physicians is crucial to ensuring early intervention in obesity prevention and care.

Dr Monika Arora, President, NCD Alliance; Executive Director, HRIDAY and Vice President, Public Health Foundation of India

The Indian EXPRESS

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21 Mar-25; Indian Express - Delhi; Size : 232 sq.cm.; Circulation:25000;
Page : 8

Amid volatility, developing nations must build reliable supply chains: Jaishankar

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 20

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar Thursday said developing countries need to build reliable supply chains as the world passes through an uncertain and volatile period.

At the CII-LAC (Latin America and Caribbean) Conference in New



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar

of that, the implications of the Ukraine conflict for food, fuel and fertilizer security have been additional stress points."

Business Standard

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Thu, 20 Mar-25; Business Standard - Delhi; Size : 175 sq.cm.; Circulation:114000; Page : 4

Prioritise core trade issues in FTA talks: Commerce secy

SHEENA NANDI
New Delhi, 19 March

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal on Wednesday said to avoid prolonged discussions and enable quicker outcomes, there is a need to prioritise talks on core trade issues such as tariff and non-trade barriers during free trade agreement (FTA) talks.



EVEN IF IT IS THE FIRST PHASE OF THAT COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT, LET THERE BE SOME KIND OF OUTCOME WHICH SHOULD COME OUT OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS

SUNIL BARTHWAL, COMMERCE SECRETARY

Business Standard

Copyright©2022 Business Standard
Fri, 07 Mar-25; Business Standard - Delhi; Size : 223 sq.cm.; Circulation:114000; Page : 4

'India must prepare for greater responsibilities'

NITI Aayog's Suman Bery urges India Inc to invest and calls for MSME growth

DHRUNAKSH SAKHA
New Delhi, 6 March

India must be prepared to shoulder greater responsibilities as it has become a rising global economy, NITI Aayog Vice-Chairperson Suman Bery said on Thursday, amid the Trump administration pushing New Delhi to substantially reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers.

"We are seeing this in our interactions with the US administration—more will be asked of us, and we more will be ready for that. We have been thinking of ourselves as a small, open economy, which economists see as distinct from a systemically important economy, which we have now gradually become. The behaviour and leadership expected from a systemically important economy are different from an open economy,"

the top echelons of the government, he expressed disappointment over India Inc's reluctance to invest substantially in the economy, asserting that the country cannot grow at 7-8 per cent without the corporate sector's full partnership.

"Going back to the reduction in corporate tax, the idea was to give resources back to the sector, and they would deploy them in R&D, investment and R&D. Unfortunately, we have not seen the proof of that till now. As the finance minister said, we can't force private enterprises as they have responsibilities to stakeholders, but there is disappointment in the world, members of CII (industry bodies) are still sitting on their hands, citing threat from

He also said that there needed to be a consistent effort in building an ecosystem that can attract MSMEs from other countries along with strengthening its own MSMEs if India is to create its own Mittelstand—an economic phenomenon that shaped industrial growth in Europe by strengthening SMEs.

"On creating a Mittelstand, we have miles to go to keep up with China. The big boys can negotiate our complex rules and tax codes, which are also a barrier to entry. We will not be fully competitive unless we attract MSMEs from other countries," he said.

The NITI Aayog, according to officials, is working on a policy to provide special incentives for medium-sized enterprises to shed their inhibitions about becoming large firms and be integrated into global value chains more meaningfully. "In the US, as represented by DOGE and in Europe, regulations have become a barrier to entry, particularly about MSMEs. Getting granular about what inhibits MSMEs from investment and expanding employment is a large research and policy agenda," Bery said.

The Aayog is working on a state-level investment friendliness index, and the exercise will shed light on the reforms required. Bery also said that India should "bide its time" when it comes to the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

The Statesman

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Fri, 28 Mar-25; Statesman - Delhi; Size : 314 sq.cm.; Circulation:45000;
Page : 10

MSMEs playing a key role towards 'Viksit Bharat' goal: Union Minister

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

The government is taking several steps to boost micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and promote digitalisation at the grassroots level, Union Minister for MSMEs, Jitan Ram Manjhi, said on Thursday.

He emphasised that MSMEs play a key role towards the 'Viksit Bharat' goal.

programme at the 'MSME Leadership Summit 2025' here, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The minister highlighted government initiatives such as ASPIRE, SFURTI and CGTMSE, which provide financial and technical assistance to MSMEs.

Minister of State for MSMEs, Shobha Karan, underlined the government's commitment to improve the ease of doing business. She said that initiatives like 'Make in India', 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', and driving foreign investment and strengthening domestic manufacturing are key to achieving the goal.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

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Tue, 18 Mar-25; Economic Times - Delhi; Size : 70 sq.cm.; Circulation:86600; Page : 13

India and EU Must Work as Partners, Not as Competitors, says Prasada



New Delhi: India and the European Union (EU) must work together, streamline non-tariff barriers and harmonise standards to remove trade bottlenecks, instead of competing, as the world grapples with economic uncertainty, supply chain disruptions and geopolitical shifts, said Jitin Prasada, minister of state for commerce and industry, and electronics and information technology. He called for Europe to diversify its supply chain and said India has a large talent pool in sectors where Europe needs skilled professionals such as IT, engineering, healthcare and fintech.

"We can work together to ensure a simplified visa process and mutual recognition of qualifications," he said at an event organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry—Our Bureau

Copyright©2022 Daily Guardian

Thu, 06 Mar-25; Daily Guardian; Size : 50 sq.cm.; Circulation:-; Page : 7

Achieving 70% female workforce participation by 2047: Labour Secy

TOD NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Achieving 70 per cent female workforce participation by 2047 is crucial for building a Viksit Bharat, as it can unlock significant economic potential and drive national growth, said Sumita Dawra, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, on Wednesday in New Delhi.

Speaking at an event organised by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Sumita Dawra, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, highlighted the significant strides made by women in India's economic landscape.

She noted that over the past six years, the labour force participation rate for women has risen from 23 per cent in 2017-18 to approximately 42 per cent in 2023-24, adding that the uptick is evident across various sectors, including



joining the workforce. She acknowledged ongoing challenges such as workplace biases, wage disparities, limited leadership opportunities, job security concerns and the balancing act between professional and domestic responsibilities.

Dawra emphasised the importance of mentorship programs to prepare women for leadership roles and the need to create safe, inclusive workplaces. She underscored the potential of sectors like STEM, entrepreneurship and startups for women's further

government's commitment to achieving the goal set in the Union Budget 2025-26, aiming for 70 per cent of women to be engaged in economic activities by 2047, aligned with the vision of a developed India. Tarana Sawhney, Advocacy Task Force on Art and Culture emphasised the pivotal role of women in shaping India's cultural landscape. She highlighted that historically, women have been the unseen architects of cultural fabric—storytellers, artisans, performers, designers and educators—whose contributions are now gaining recognition.

THE ECHO OF INDIA

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Fri, 21 Mar-25; The Echo of India - Kolkata; Size : 168 sq.cm.;
Circulation:21700; Page : 8

India, Mercosur can explore signing bilateral pacts: Piyush Goyal

NEW DELHI, MAR 20 -- Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday proposed that India and the four-nation bloc Mercosur can explore signing bilateral free-trade agreements. His statement assumes the significance as the efforts to expand the scope of the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between India and the Mercosur trade bloc, including Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, have not made headway. Expanding the preferential trade agreement with the Mercosur nations is key for India to increase its trade in the South American region.

"I propose either the MERCOSUR region or decide if it wants to expand a PTA or we can look at doing it bilaterally," Goyal said at a CII event. He mentioned that India was entering into bilateral agreements which will help expand the country's trade. Goyal also said that India is also

with the LAC countries. India went ahead with a bilateral trade deal with UAE when the talks to secure a trade pact with Gulf Cooperation Council nations weren't making much headway.

Goyal pointed out that trade between India and the UAE has doubled in the last three years post the agreement. The minister also pushed for early conclusion of FTA talks. He said that agreements which are long-drawn and negotiated over 10-20 rounds cannot be fructified into solid partnerships. "We have been talking about a free trade agreement with Peru for a very long time. We need to make it our mind on where we

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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Sun, 23 Mar-25; Times Of India - Kolkata; Size : 443 sq.cm.;
Circulation:149202; Page : 20

'Times have changed, but cinema will never die'

Priyanka Dasgupta & Anandita Chakraborty

Kolkata: At a time when the film industry faces immense competition from endless visual content on the web, not limited to reels and shorts, actor-producer Prosenjit Chatterjee said, "Times have changed, but cinema will never die."



He spoke at the CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit, themed "Culturally Rooted, Creatively Global", in Kolkata on Saturday. Several luminaries from Tollywood, like Gautam Ghose, Rituparna Chatterjee, Sengupta, Bickram Ghose, Firdausul Hasan and Samik Roy Chowdhury attended the event.

CV Ananda Bose underscored the immense potential of the growth of the creative economy sector in the country. "From the Mahabharat to the Mahabharat, creativity has defined India's ethos," Bose said. A key highlight of the summit was the launch of the India & Entertainment Report 2025, titled "A New Vision for the Creative Economy". It highlights the challenges and opportunities present in the creative economy. Director Goutam Ghose, co-chair of the CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit, emphasised the importance of nurturing the creative economy.

senjit Chatterjee said, "Times have changed, but cinema will never die. It is going to be tougher. The audience to be choosier. The choice of watching movies in different languages from all over the world. Stars will have their power, but it is not just about stars. Content is becoming very important, and a star has to be a part of that content," he said.

Shashwat Goenka, vice-

anyam was speaking at the event organised by the CII.

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THE ECONOMIC TIMES

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Fri, 07 Mar-25; Economic Times - Delhi; Size : 46 sq.cm.; Circulation:86600;
Page : 11

DISAPPOINTED WITH LOW PVT CAPEX: NITI'S BERY 'Woo Foreign MSMEs to Compete with China'

Our Bureau

New Delhi: India has miles to go to keep up with China and will have to attract micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) from other countries to be fully competitive, Niti Aayog's vice chairman, Suman Bery, said.

Bery also emphasised on the role of the private sector in unleashing India's growth potential and the need of heavy lifting by the corporates to make India an advanced economy by 2047.

"China was successful in attracting the big boys. India can negotiate the big boys, but we will not be fully competitive unless we can attract MSMEs from other countries," he said on Thursday while speaking at an event on manufacturing, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

"Attracting foreign MSMEs also depends on a vibrant relationship between our domestic MSMEs and the large-scale corporates to which they contribute," he added. Citing the example of integration of the automotive sector in Thailand and Japan with the glo-

According to Bery, domestic reforms could get a substantial part of the economic growth needed to be a developed economy by 2047.

"But as the third largest economy, and we're seeing this now in our interactions with the US administration, more will be asked to call us, and we should be ready for that," he added.

Emphasizing the role of the private sector, Bery said, "we're not going to get to 7-8% growth without the corporate sector being a full partner."

According to Bery, the idea of bringing down the corporate tax rates closer to global levels three years ago was to give resources back to the corporate sector so that they could invest in capital expenditure and in research and development.

"Unfortunately up till now, there have not been the proof of that. There is disappointment that you know, in the fastest growing economy in the world, members of CII, etc, are still sort of sitting on their hands, China, as it were, the threat from China now, the US, etc," he added.

Bery said a large country like India must have a vibrant manufacturing sector, in part for national

Not enough medium-sized firms in India, structural problem: Niti CEO

AGAM WALIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 26

INDIA DOES NOT have enough medium-sized firms that can scale into large companies, Niti Aayog CEO B V R Subrahmanyam said Wednesday. At the launch of a new initiative for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), he said the segment is most affected by regulation, while technology upgradation and skill training remain key challenges.



B V R Subrahmanyam

"Sometimes when I think of the Indian economy, I worry. We have a large number of large

companies. The number of medium companies is smaller than the number of large companies. Then, where is the growth going to come from? It's an institutional, structural problem," Subrahmanyam said. India has approximately 6.18 crore MSMEs, comprising 6.09 crore MSMEs, 744 lakh small, and 70,000 medium enterprises, as per the latest Udyam portal data. Udyam is the only government portal for MSME registration. In 2020, micro enterprises

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

DECCAN Chronicle

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Sun, 23 Mar-25; Deccan Chronicle - Chennai; Size : 246 sq.cm.;
Circulation:161000; Page : 10

Bengali films rooted in social consciousness, literature: Gov

Kolkata, March 22: Paying tribute to the director trio of Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak, Governor C V Ananda Bose on Saturday said Bengali films have been rooted in social consciousness and literature.

Addressing the Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit of the Confederation of the Indian Industry (CII), Bose said he hails from Kerala and heard a lot about Ray and other renowned film-makers from Bengal at a very young age.

"I watched Ray, Ghatak and Sen's films; these were great Bengali films," he said. The governor said he watched Ray's Apu trilogy of 'Pather Panchali' (Song of the Road, 1955), 'Aparajito' (Unvanquished, 1956) and 'Anur Sansar' (The World of

Referring to 'Ekdin Pratidin', which narrates the anxiety of a middle-class family after the daughter does not return home, he was struck by the complexity of the human mind comes to the fore in the wake of a return of a missing woman in the morning, as home in the morning, as anxiety gives way to a suspicion," he said.

Noting that Bengali movies "seek truth" more in their narratives rather than going for spectacular effects, Bose said that in works of masters like Sen and Ghatak, "cinema lies in the arena of introspection."

He also dwelt on the rich literary tradition of Bengali cinema and the role of music. Bose referred to the rich literary tradition of Bengali cinema and the role of music. Bose referred to the rich literary tradition of Bengali cinema and the role of music.

not exist," he said. Bose said India boasts of one of the greatest soft powers in culture and heritage, and the world of cinema, and particularly of Bengal, has an important role in this regard.

Underscoring the central government's commitment to human capital development, he called for initiatives aimed at promoting it on the global stage.

The governor also dwelt on the immense potential East India holds for the growth of the creative economy sector in the country.

"Creativity has always been central to India's identity. From the sculptors of Konark and Mahabalipuram to the weavers of Varanasi and Santiniketan, creativity and the Indian ethos, Indian art, literature, and music have found resonance across the world," Bose said.

Govt film director Ace film director Goutam

and Entertainment Industry. Chatterjee addressed various challenges facing the regional film industry. "Given the plethora of entertainment options available to audiences today, the film industry must prioritise content to remain relevant," he said.

The CII Media & Entertainment Sector Report 2025, titled "A New Vision for the Creative Economy", was unveiled on the occasion.

The report offers a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and opportunities facing the creative economy sector, focusing on the effects of digital transformation, the necessity for robust infrastructure and critical policy interventions required to promote growth in the cinema, music, performing arts and digital content sectors.

Speaking on the occasion, Shashwat Goenka, Vice-Chair of RPSC Group and Chair of the CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit 2025, highlighted the sector's growth of 10-12 per

The Statesman

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Thu, 27 Mar-25; Statesman - Delhi; Size : 363 sq.cm.; Circulation:45000;
Page : 11

MSMEs most affected by regulations, cannot exist in isolation: NITI Aayog CEO

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 26MARCH.

BVR Subrahmanyam, CEO, NITI Aayog, said that the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are most affected by regulations and MSMEs cannot exist in isolation and that their challenges must be tackled in clusters and groups.



and Enterprise (Dx-EDGE) a platform to empower MSMEs with the tools, knowledge and ecosystem needed to become future-ready, competitive and resilient.

The NITI Aayog CEO underlined the three main challenges MSMEs face: improving technology, skilled workforce and issues related to quality certifications.

He said that India cannot become a developed nation until it raises its standards and manufacturing systems across the country. The CEO also added that education & skills and MSMEs are the two most important areas in India's journey to become a Viksit

Bharat. SCL Das, Secretary, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, also spoke at the event saying that frontier tech, digitalisation and technology have become a necessity to survive the global headwinds and emerging challenges and grow to become a developed nation.

He said that the Government has been consistently providing enablers aligned with the national vision of Visi Bharat, and that MSMEs have to be at the centre of the journey towards domestic growth, growth of export adaptability for climate change for having the required resilience and technological growth.

Dx-EDGE is a national initiative spearheaded by the support of NITI Aayog, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, and All India Council Technical Education (AICTE) to drive digital transformation across India's MSMEs.

Engaging with the World

EUROPE

India-Sweden Business Roundtable

CII, in partnership with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, and the India-Sweden Business Council, organized the India-Sweden Business Roundtable in New Delhi on 17 March.

The roundtable was attended by Shri Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce & Industry, Government of India and Ms Maria Malmer Stenegard, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Government of Sweden. The roundtable was co-chaired by Mr Sanjiv Puri, Co-Chair, Indian Side; President, CII and CMD, ITC Ltd and Mr Leif Johansson, Acting Co-Chair, Swedish Side and Board Member, Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation and Former Chairman, AstraZeneca.

Shri Jitin Prasada, Minister of State, Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India, noted that green energy and healthcare sectors are the emerging areas of cooperation between India and Sweden. The roundtable included four key sessions on digitalization, green transition, infrastructure & connectivity and India-EU FTA opportunities ahead.

An MoU was signed between Mr Nitin Bansal, President – South Asia, Ericsson, Mr Kamal Bali,

President, Volvo Group and Mr Sharat Sinha, CEO, Airtel Research Partnership on XR, Digital Twin and AI in the Manufacturing Arena.

India-Europe Business Exchange Program

CII organized the India-Europe Business Exchange Program on 17 March in New Delhi. The event was attended by six ministers from Europe, more than 100 international delegates, and over 60 Indian delegates. Shri Jitin Prasada, Minister of State, Commerce and Industry and Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, noted that India, as an emerging and trusted partner for Europe, offers a transparent policy framework, a vibrant democracy, and strong economic ties with most EU nations. A dedicated B2B session and two country sessions were held during the program.

The inaugural session was attended by H.E. Mr Bettel Xavier, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs & Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation & Humanitarian Affairs, Luxembourg; H.E. Baiba Braže, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Latvia; H.E. Juraj Blinar, Minister of Foreign & European Affairs, Slovakia; H.E. Mr Ladislav Kamenicky, Minister of Finance, Slovakia; H.E. Mr Ratislav Chovanec, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Slovakia and H.E. Mr Wladyslaw Teofil Bartoszewski, Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Poland.



(L-R): Renè Branders, President, VBO FEB (Federation of Enterprises in Belgium), Sanjiv Puri, President, CII and CMD, ITC Ltd, H.R.H. Princess Astrid, Jitin Prasada, Hon'ble Minister of State for Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India, Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, and H.E. Didier Vanderhasselt, Ambassador of Belgium



CII organised the India Europe Business Exchange Programme in New Delhi

The Slovak Republic Country Session focused on enhancing bilateral trade, investment, and cultural ties between India and Slovakia. Mr Nishant Arya, Co-Chairman, CII Europe Council and Vice Chairman, JBM Group, chaired the session, which was attended by H.E. Mr Róbert Maxián, Ambassador of Slovak Republic to India; H.E. Mr Juraj Blunar, Minister of Foreign & European Affairs, Slovakia, along with representatives from Slovakia's trade and investment development agencies and the Export-Import Bank of Slovak. The event concluded with the exchange of an MoU between CII and SARIO.

The Latvia Country Session focused on enhancing trade, investment, and economic cooperation between India and Latvia. Leading the discussions, Mr Amresh Ohri, Member, CII Europe Council and Vice President, GMR Group, emphasised the significance of strengthening bilateral economic ties. The session featured insights from Mr Gints Zadraks, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Latvia; Ms Inese Širava, Deputy Director, Investment and Development Agency, Latvia; H.E. Mr Juris Bone, Ambassador of Latvia to India, and H.E. Ms Baiba Braže, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Latvia. Representatives from Latvia's trade and investment agencies, along with business leaders from various sectors, highlighted the vast opportunities for collaboration in emerging industries.

Belgian Economic Mission to India

The Belgian Economic Mission to India, presided over by H.R.H. Princess Astrid, representative of His Majesty the King of the Belgians, led a large Belgian Economic Mission, comprising close to 350 officials and business delegates to India from 1 to 8 March.

During this visit, H.E. Mr Didier Vanderhasselt, Ambassador of Belgium, supported by CII and the Federation of Enterprises from Belgium (FEB), organized an exclusive Power Lunch with H.R.H. Princess Astrid on 4 March in New Delhi.



CII in partnership with DPIIT, Government of India, and the Sweden-India Business Council, organised the India-Sweden Business Roundtable in New Delhi.

Shri Jitin Prasada, Minister of State for the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India, underscored the importance of international partnerships in strengthening India's trade ecosystem. "India and Belgium have shared strong trade ties for decades. The MoU between IIFT (India) and APEC – Antwerp/Flanders Port Training Center (Belgium) will further build on our cooperation, ensuring that our future business leaders are equipped with world-class training and insights into global trade practices," he added.

The event was attended by H.E. Maxime Prévot, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation; H.E. Matthias Diependaele, Minister-President of the Government of Flanders and Flemish Minister for Economy, Innovation & Industry, Foreign Affairs, Digitisation and Facility Management, and H.E. Theo Francken, Minister of Defence, in charge of Foreign Trade, along with a select group of CEOs from both sides, who discussed actions and priorities for furthering bilateral economic ties.

Mr Sanjiv Puri, President, CII and CMD, ITC Ltd, highlighted the resilience of the Indian economy amidst the global volatility and urged Belgian businesses to work closely with Indian counterparts to take part in India's growth story of becoming 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047. Mr Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, highlighted the importance of cooperation in connectivity for furthering the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and advancing cooperation of CII's reputed Centres of Excellence with the public and private Belgian entities.

Business Delegation to Greece

CII organized a business delegation to Greece, led by Mr Nishant Arya, Co-Chairman, CII Europe Council and Vice Chairman, JBM India, from 25 to 26 March. The delegation interacted with the Athens Chamber of

Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and signed an MoU to collaborate on various projects, most notably the creation of the India-Greece Chamber.

During the visit, the delegation also engaged with Mr Tasos Chatzivasileiou, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Economic Diplomacy and Extroversion, the Hellenic Republic; Mr Rudrendra Tandon, Ambassador of India to the Hellenic Republic; Mr Ioannis Bratakos, President, ACCI and Mr Fokian Karavias, CEO, Eurobank. Ambassador Tandon highlighted that the idea of the India-Greece Chamber is to have a chamber dedicated to economic relations with India, which helps to connect to the right people in the system to resolve issues and smoothen processes.

The delegation also engaged with Mr Elias Eliades, MA, Director-Investment Promotion, Enterprise Greece, to understand the investment opportunities in Greece.

ASIA

CEOs' Delegation to the Republic of Korea

India and Korea enjoy a robust and dynamic trade relationship, with bilateral trade reaching nearly USD 28 billion. To expand, diversify, and deepen the trade and economic ties between the two countries, CII organized a CEOs' Delegation to the Republic of Korea on 5-6 March. The delegation was led by Mr Shiv Siddhant Kaul, Chair, CII Korea Council and MD, Nicco Engineering Services.

During the two-day visit, the delegation engaged with key stakeholders including Mr Kim Hee-sang, Deputy Minister for Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea; H.E. Mr Amit Kumar, Ambassador of India to the Republic of Korea; Mr Jae-bok Chang, Former Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to India



CII led a business delegation to Athens, Greece and met with Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)



Dr Jin Sik Yoon, Chairman, KITA; Oh Suk Song, Vice-Chairman of KITA; Shiv Sidhant Kaul, Chairman of the CII Korea Council; and Amit Kumar, Ambassador of India to the Republic of Korea renewing the MoU between CII and KITA in Seoul, South Korea

and senior leaders from various sectors of Korean Industry.

During the interaction with H.E. Mr Amit Kumar, Ambassador of India to the Republic of Korea, the delegation explored numerous opportunities for strengthening trade and investment ties between India and Korea. The members then participated in a luncheon hosted by Mr Kaul, where they interacted with senior Industry representatives. The delegation

convened with leadership and senior members of the Korea International Trade Association (KITA), including Dr Jin Sik Yoon, Chairman, KITA. During this meeting, CII renewed its Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with KITA to further enhance the economic collaboration between India and Korea.

The delegation engaged with senior representatives from the Federation of Korean Industries, followed by an India-Korea Business Networking Luncheon, where they met with CEOs of several Korean companies. The delegation had a productive discussion with Mr Jihyung Lee, Executive Vice President, KOTRA and Executive Board Member, Head of International Trade & Economic Collaboration Division, Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency.

The delegation also met with senior leaders from the Green Climate Fund, POSCO Holdings and GS Caltex to explore further opportunities for cooperation across various sectors between India and the Republic of Korea. The meetings focused on strengthening economic and strategic ties by capitalising on existing business opportunities in key sectors such as consumer goods, green energy, engineering, electronics, technology, advanced IT, digital transformation, manufacturing, and automotive industries, among others. ■

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For more details, please contact: Ms Sharmila Kantha, **Confederation of Indian Industry**
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Space

Adoption of Space Applications Across Businesses

In today's tech-driven world, space technologies have the potential to transform industries and contribute to the Prime Minister's vision of 'Viksit Bharat'. To promote awareness of space applications across various sectors, CII and IN-SPACE organised a Conclave on 'Adoption of Space Applications Across Businesses' on 20 March in New Delhi with the theme 'Leveraging Space Applications for a Prosperous and Viksit Bharat'.

Dr Pawan Goenka, Chairman, IN-SPACE, Department of Space, Government of India, highlighted the vast potential of space applications in driving business growth, particularly in non-space industries. He noted that while India's space economy currently stands at USD 8 billion, it aims to reach USD 44 billion by 2033, contributing to the trillion-dollar global space Industry. However, he emphasised that achieving this growth depends on scaling demand for space applications, especially in sectors like agriculture, logistics, energy, and manufacturing. He stressed that while space technology has advanced significantly, its true commercial impact will come from integration into various industries, urging businesses to leverage space data for innovation, efficiency, and new business models.

Dr S Somanath, Former Chairman, Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), highlighted the untapped potential of space applications in driving India's business growth. He pointed to sectors like fisheries, logistics, traffic management, and agriculture, where satellite data could create significant economic value, such as helping fishermen locate fish, monitoring railway tracks, and optimizing supply chains. He emphasised the need for Government support in ensuring continuous space data availability and advancing technologies like AI and edge computing. Strengthening the downstream sector, he noted, would not only unlock new opportunities but also drive growth in satellite manufacturing and launches.

The key dignitaries at the event included Dr Prakash Chauhan, Director, NRSC, ISRO; Mr Jayant Patil, Member, Executive Committee of Management & Advisor to CMD - L&T Ltd; Mr Apparao Mallavarapu, Chairman, CII National Committee on Space and CMD, Centum Electronics and Mr Rohan M Ganapathy, Co-Chairman, CII National Committee on Space and Founder & CEO, Bellatrix Aerospace. The conclave brought together Industry leaders and experts from various sectors, including agriculture, food processing, logistics, BFSI, infrastructure, and energy, to explore the transformative potential of space technology applications. The event featured two highly engaging keynote presentations and three insightful technical sessions, addressing crucial themes such as climate resilience, business growth, financial assurance, and industrial efficiency through space applications.

Speakers from user sides presented key challenges and specific Industry needs that they would like to address through space technologies, while speakers from space



(L-R): Rohan M Ganapathy, Co-Chairman, CII National Committee on Space and Founder & CEO, Bellatrix Aerospace; Jayant Patil, Member, Executive Committee of Management & Advisor to CMD - L&T Ltd; Dr Prakash Chauhan, Director - NRSC, ISRO; Dr S Somanath, Former Chairman, ISRO and Apparao Mallavarapu, Chairman, CII National Committee on Space and CMD, Centum Electronics

tech side presented the real-world business use cases to demonstrate how space technology can enhance efficiency, optimise supply chain, ensure financial assurance by tackling key challenges and meeting specific Industry needs in each sector.



Entertainment

CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit

CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit, held on 22 March in Kolkata, marked a significant milestone in recognising and revitalising the soft power of the Eastern and Northeastern Indian Creative Content Industry. Organised by the CII Media and Entertainment Department, this platform set the stage for thought leadership, Industry collaboration, and policy advocacy, ensuring that the rich cinematic heritage of the region receives the recognition and support it deserves.

Themed 'Culturally Rooted, Creatively Global', the summit brought together the brightest minds in cinema, television, streaming, and digital media to chart the next phase of the creative economy in East and North-East India. This summit will serve as a catalyst for the media and entertainment Industry's growth, foster cross-sector collaboration, and promote innovative strategies designed to reshape the region's creative landscape.

The summit also celebrated the cinematic brilliance of five legendary pioneers whose work shaped the landscape of Indian cinema: Ritwik Ghatak, Salil Chowdhury, Tapan Sinha, Guru Dutt, and Raj Kapoor. CII paid a momentous tribute to honour their legacy in Indian and global cinema with commemorative mementos handed over to their family members.

A CII Media & Entertainment Sector Report 2025, titled 'A New Vision for the Creative Economy', was launched during the event. The report offers a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities and challenges present in the creative economy, focusing on the effects of digital transformation, the necessity for robust infrastructure, and critical policy interventions required to promote growth in the cinema, music, performing arts, and digital content sectors.

Chief Guest Dr CV Ananda Bose, Governor of West Bengal, underscored the Indian Government's commitment to human capital development. He emphasised the importance of India's rich cultural heritage and called for initiatives aimed at promoting it on the global stage. Mr Shashwat Goenka, Chairman, CII Eastern Region; Chair, CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit and Vice Chairman, RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group, highlighted the sector's recent growth of 10-12 per cent CAGR, asserting that the creative economy is a crucial pillar of economic growth, facilitating employment generation and attracting investment.

Mr Goutam Ghose, Filmmaker and Co-Chair of the CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit 2025, stated that measuring the creative economy is highly challenging and emphasised the importance of nurturing the cultural



(L-R): Prosenjit Chatterjee, Actor & Producer; Shashwat Goenka, Chairman, CII Eastern Region and Vice Chairman, RP Sanjiv Goenka Group; Dr CV Ananda Bose, Governor of West Bengal; Goutam Ghose, Film maker and Co-Chair, CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit; Rituparna Sengupta, Actor & Producer and Co-Chair, CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit; Gaurav Banerjee, MD & CEO, Sony Pictures Networks India at release of CII M&E Sector Report 2025 'A New Vision for Creative Economy' at the CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit in Kolkata



(L-R): Firdausul Hassan, Producer and President, Film Federation of India; Hirachand Dand, Co-Founder & Chief Operating Officer, Madhu Entertainment & Media Pvt Ltd; Arijit Dutta, Managing Director, Priya Cinema; Spandan Bhattacharya, Author & Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, BITS Pilani; Vishnu Mohta, Co-Founder, Hoichoi; Samrat Ghosh, Chief Cluster Officer East, North and Premium Cluster Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd.; Saugata Mukherjee, Head of Content, Sony LIV; Vikramjit Roy, Producer & Co-production Expert

ecology in the region. Rituparna Sengupta, Actor, Producer and Co-Chair, CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit, highlighted her journey of transitioning into an entrepreneur and producer, particularly in the realm of storytelling that brings lesser-known narratives to light.

Mr Gaurav Banerjee, MD & CEO, Sony Pictures Networks India; Mr Prosenjit Chatterjee, Actor and Producer; Mr Samrat Ghosh, Chief Cluster Officer - East, North and Premium Cluster, Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd; Mr Firdausul Hassan, Producer and President, Film Federation of India and Mr Arijit Dutta, MD, Priya Cinema, were among the other key speakers at the event.

Key Takeaways:

- The media and entertainment sector is a major contributor to India's growth, offering job creation and cultural influence. Expanding regional cinema through dubbing can boost audience engagement, though infrastructure gaps, such as the lack of theatres in some states, remain a challenge.
- The CII Purbo Bharat Big Picture Summit aims to harness the soft power of Eastern and Northeastern

cinema by integrating global best practices and addressing past constraints.

- To revive cinema culture, innovative strategies are needed as audience numbers decline. Alternative screening spaces like schools and clubs can help, alongside sustainable models for single-screen theatres. AI should be leveraged to enhance storytelling, breaking traditional molds and mainstreaming diverse genres.
- India's creative economy, growing at 10-12 per cent CAGR, presents strong investment potential. The CII report titled 'CII Vision for a Creative Economy' calls for decisive action. The Industry should also receive MSME benefits.
- Co-productions and bilateral treaties with 16 countries offer alternative revenue streams. Live entertainment infrastructure needs improvement, with larger venues and better facilities. Finally, Assamese cinema is attracting investment, while Bengali cinema must expand beyond its niche appeal.



(L-R): Sony Virdi Chairman CII Sikkim and Owner, Mount Zion School, Sikkim; Dominique Sangma Filmmaker; Ravi Kottarakara, Producer & MD, OR Ventures and President, South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce; Ratnottama Sengupta; Author and Film Journalist; Bobbeeta Sharma, Filmmaker & Managing Partner; Anuradha Cineplex and Simanta Shekhar, Chairman, Assam Film Finance and Development Corporation Ltd



Digital

Financial & Digital Services: The New Architecture of Inclusion

A session on 'Future Forward: Financial & Digital Services – The New Architecture of Inclusion', held on 19 March in New Delhi, explored India's pioneering advancements in financial and digital services as architects of inclusion. The deliberations explored how India's digital payment revolution has bridged economic divides, with UPI processing over USD 1 trillion in transactions annually.

The session highlighted the transformative roles of AI, blockchain, and open banking in expanding financial inclusion and securing digital transactions. It also discussed the global scalability of India's digital public goods and the lessons from India's fintech leadership regarding the balance of regulation, innovation, and financial security.

It was noted that the UPI system has become the backbone of India's digital payment infrastructure and demonstrates not only the scale of adoption but also the deep penetration of digital payments into everyday life across urban and rural India. Despite India's significant strides in digital financial services, insurance penetration remains a critical challenge and out of India's approximately 1.4 billion population, only around 1 crore individuals are insured. This striking statistic underscores the vast potential and need for growth in this sector.

Speakers noted that India's approach to fintech regulation has evolved significantly, with policies like the

regulatory sandbox facilitating controlled experimentation with new financial products and services. This approach allows innovators to test ideas while containing potential risks, creating a pathway for responsible innovation. The session highlighted India's remarkable progress in developing digital and financial services that drive inclusion while acknowledging the remaining challenges.

Enhance Business Operations for Growth

The CII-HP Centre for AI's practical AI Immersion Program, designed to empower businesses by harnessing the power of Artificial Intelligence, concluded sessions in Chennai (3-7 March), Visakhapatnam (17-21 March), Vijayawada (24-28 March), Tirupati (26-27 March), and Jaipur (24-28 March). This intensive programme provided participants with actionable insights and hands-on training to effectively integrate AI across critical business functions, including marketing, financial management, cybersecurity, and strategic business planning.

The AI Immersion Week witnessed significant participation across the cities, with hundreds of professionals, entrepreneurs, and Industry experts participating in each session to explore the transformative power of AI. Building upon this success, the programme is now set to continue its nationwide journey with upcoming sessions in Goa, Chandigarh, and other key cities, ensuring Indian businesses remain at the forefront of AI adoption.

B2B Networking Meetings

IETF 2025

The 26th edition of IETF 2025 showcased innovations through focused and concurrent shows in select industry sectors. Exclusive B2B Meetings were one of the key highlights of IETF 2025. It fostered business



(L-R): Amit Chabra, Chief Business Officer, Policy Bazar; Abhay Sharma, Chief Business Officer, Paytm; Pranjal Sharma, Author & Economic Advisor; Shekar Sivasubramanian, CEO, Wadhvani AI and Kunal Singh, MD, Eazy ERP Technologies Pvt Ltd, during the session in New Delhi



partnerships and facilitated meaningful exchanges between entrepreneurs. B2B Division of CII managed the B2B meetings at the venue and created a B2B Portal to schedule meetings.

B2B Meetings provided participants with an opportunity to network with many CEOs, Industry leaders, entrepreneurs, exhibitors, business visitors, startups, international delegates, diplomats, and senior Government officials. 371 B2B meetings were held during the event, with participation from 134 CEOs.

India-Qatar Business Forum

The India-Qatar Business Forum, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry in collaboration with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), convened in New Delhi coinciding with

the visit of H.H. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Amir of Qatar. The forum aimed to bolster economic ties between the two nations, focusing on key sectors. 120 meetings B2B were held during the event, with participation from 40 CEOs.

India-Israel Business Forum

The India-Israel Business Forum, organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry was held recently in New Delhi. The event aimed to strengthen economic and trade relations between the two nations, focusing on sectors such as technology, manufacturing, healthcare, agriculture, and defense, among others. 150 B2B meetings were held during the event, with participation from 50 CEOs.



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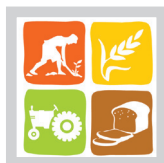
The key growth areas of this sector include:

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For participation, connect at neelam.bhagat@cii.in
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Portfolio for Excellence



Food and Agriculture

Smart & Sustainable Cold Chain:

CII FACE organized the CII Post Harvest & Logistics Summit on 21 March in New Delhi with the theme 'Smart & Sustainable Cold Chain: Transforming Agrifood Systems'. The summit brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, from policymakers and Industry leaders to financial experts, innovators, and startups, each playing a crucial role in shaping the future of India's agrifood sector.

The summit focused on catalysing the transformation of India's cold chain sector towards a more sustainable, efficient, and resilient future. Industry leaders and innovators explored how advanced technologies, such as AI, blockchain, and real-time monitoring, along with sustainable practices, can reduce post-harvest losses, enhance supply chain transparency, and align the sector with global climate goals.

Shri Minhaj Alam, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India; Dr Srikant Nagulapalli, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Power and Director General, Bureau of Energy Efficiency; H.E. Mr Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, Ambassador Royal Danish Embassy; Mr P Ravichandran, Chairman, CII, National Committee on Cold Chain and President, Danfoss Industries Pvt Ltd and Mr B Thiagarajan, MD, Blue Star Ltd were among the key speakers.

The discussions focused on key pillars of sustainability, digitalisation, resilience, and collaboration to shape a future-ready cold chain ecosystem. Speakers explored how integrating technologies like AI and blockchain, coupled with forward-thinking labelling programs, can drive efficiency and sustainability.

The 'CII Decarbonization Playbook for Cold Storage' was released during the summit, which will serve as a comprehensive guide for decarbonising cold chain operations, offering a strategic framework that emphasises energy efficiency, supply chain optimisation, and sustainable transportation. Developed by the Cold Chain Logistics Resource Centre, it brings together targeted initiatives and best practices designed to help businesses reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resource efficiency.

The award ceremony for the CII Cold Chain Award 2024 was held during the summit, recognising role models and felicitating the best in class in post-harvest supply chain solutions. The awards were categorised into four areas: Integrated Supply Chain Solutions, Cold Storage, Cold Chain Innovations and Third-Party Logistics.

Two insightful technical sessions on 'Sustainable Last-Mile Innovations in Cold Chain for E-Commerce & Quick Commerce' and Moving Towards Carbon-Neutral Cold Chain: Strategies for Transitioning to Net Zero Emissions' explored the rising need for agile, collaborative systems that align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and business objectives and stressed the importance of tech-driven cold chain solutions, emphasising innovation as the cornerstone of sustainability.



(L-R): Pankaj Mehta, Co-Chairman, CII National Committee on Cold Chain and MD, Carrier Transicold, India & South Asia; Minhaj Alam, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India; P Ravichandran, Chairman, CII National Committee on Cold Chain and President, Danfoss Industries Pvt Ltd; H.E. Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, Ambassador, Royal Danish Embassy; Dr Srikant Nagulapalli, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Power, Government of India and Director General, BEE and B Thiagarajan, MD, Blue Star Ltd

AMR Mitigation and Biosecurity Interventions

CII Food and Agriculture Centre of Excellence (FACE) organized two pivotal stakeholder consultations in Hyderabad on 3 March. The consultations focused on mitigating Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) in animal agriculture and enhancing biosecurity in poultry farms, bringing together policymakers and experts from Industry, academia, and startups.

The consultation on 'Addressing AMR in Animal Agriculture' addressed critical challenges and explored actionable solutions in India's dairy, poultry, and fisheries sectors. Discussions underscored the urgency of responsible antimicrobial use, given that AMR's escalating public health concerns, trade implications, and its emerging impact on the domestic market. Key issues identified were the prevalent non-therapeutic use of antibiotics, inadequate adherence to withdrawal periods, easy over-the-counter availability of antibiotics, limited awareness and lack of structured training programs for veterinarians, farmers, and Industry stakeholders, shortage of veterinarians and experts, leading to limited guidance and weak enforcement.

Proposed solutions encompass adopting alternative measures and technologies, including good animal husbandry and aquaculture practices, strengthening biosecurity measures to prevent infections, promoting early diagnostic tools to differentiate bacterial from viral infections, encouraging voluntary self-regulation and antibiotic stewardship programs, implementing traceability systems to monitor antibiotic use across the supply chain, etc. These initiatives align with India's National Action Plan on AMR and aim to ensure high-quality products, reduce environmental antibiotic residues, and mitigate the climate impact associated with livestock farming.

Recognising that biosecurity is often considered the 'silver bullet' for mitigating infections, reducing mortality rates, combating AMR, promoting environmental sustainability, and improving farm profitability, a dedicated consultation on 'Biosecurity Interventions in Poultry Farms' was also held. Participants stressed that robust measures such as maintaining strict farm hygiene, reducing bird stress, controlling access, avoiding multi-species cohabitation, and ensuring meticulous record-keeping are essential to prevent disease outbreaks and curb AMR.

Key challenges identified include a lack of farmer awareness, proximity of

poultry farms to urban areas, inadequate infrastructure, ineffective information dissemination, and weak disease monitoring systems. Proposed solutions emphasised strengthening biosecurity protocols, enhancing surveillance and diagnostic capabilities, developing incentive-based programs, and implementing capacity building and farmer training initiatives, along with ensuring quality, contaminant-free feed.



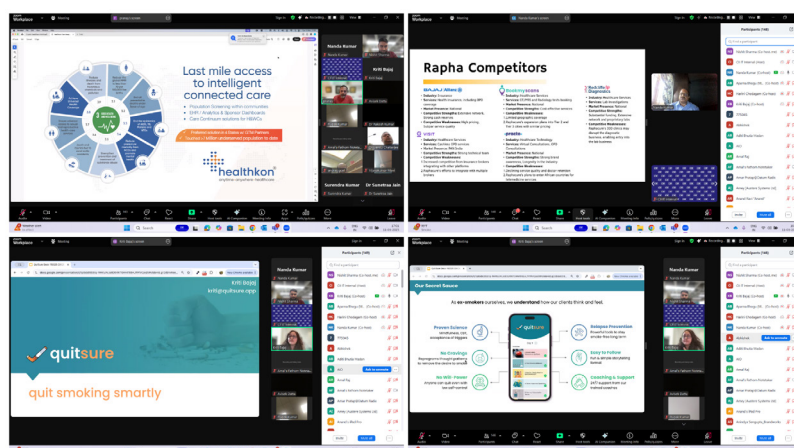
CIES

CIES Pitch 360

The Startup Affiliation Program is designed to certify growth-stage startups, providing them with a powerful platform to connect with corporates, investors, and other key ecosystem enablers. The affiliated startups are provided opportunities to participate in market access programs, international delegations, roundtable policy discussions, and network with CII's corporate members.

The CII CIES Pitch 360, Episode 2 of the monthly startup pitching initiative by the CII Centre of Excellence for Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Startups (CII CIES), was organized on 11 March via a virtual platform. This edition focused on HealthTech startups, providing them an exclusive platform to showcase their innovative solutions to a distinguished panel of investors, corporates, and ecosystem enablers.

Several startups, including Monitra Health, Palasah, Cure and Care Primary Care, Quitsure, and Healthkon, pitched their business to Industry leaders. The event was



A glimpse of the startups pitched at the CII CIES Pitch 360 session

attended by more than 150 participants, including over 100 leading investors and corporate representatives.

Policy Roundtable on Fintech

The fintech sector is growing at an impressive rate of 31 per cent CAGR, making it one of the fastest-growing industries. Initially focused on payments (2016-2021), the sector has now expanded into lending, insure-tech, and wealth tech. As it continues to evolve, addressing regulatory challenges and fostering innovation through strategic policy interventions will be crucial to unlocking its full potential. In this context, under the leadership of Mr Bipin Preet Singh, CEO, MobiKwik, the CII Unicorn Forum conducted its first virtual roundtable on the fintech sector on 6 March.

Deliberations focused on the impact of pricing caps and transparency requirements on digital lending apps, hindering growth and investor confidence. The lack of centralised data for offering tailored financial solutions to farmers and the importance of AI in predicting defaults and managing credit risk were discussed. Speakers took note of the shift toward lending models and reduced MDR incentives. Issues related to UPI's market dominance and challenges in CBDC adoption were also discussed. Over 20 members from 13 leading fintech companies, including unicorns and soonicorns, participated in the roundtable. This roundtable is the first in a series of four discussions focused on key policy recommendations impacting the growth and innovation of the Unicorn and Startup ecosystem. Grant Thornton Bharat is the policy research partner for the roundtable series.

Interaction with Karnataka Minister

The CII Unicorn Forum held an interaction with Shri Priyank Kharge, Minister for Electronics, IT/BT, and Rural Development & Panchayat Raj, Government of Karnataka. The forum, under the leadership of Mr Abhiraj Singh Bhal, Co-Founder, Urban Company, had submitted inputs on the Draft Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers Bill. During the interaction, the

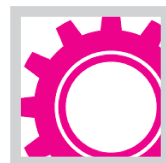
forum members reiterated key recommendations for a balanced and future-ready policy.

It was noted that while the Industry fully supports social security for gig workers, members emphasised the importance of a framework that ensures both worker welfare and Industry growth. By refining key provisions, such as the definition of gig workers and the calculation of the welfare fee structure, the bill has the potential to create a progressive model that safeguards workers while enabling platforms to innovate, invest, and generate more opportunities.

Startup Pitch Session

CII CIES Affiliated Startups were given an exclusive opportunity to pitch their businesses at a special session during the CII Eastern Region Annual Day, held on 18-19 March in Kolkata. This platform enabled the startups to showcase their innovative solutions to leading corporations, investors, and Industry experts, receiving valuable feedback and engagement from key stakeholders.

Several startups, including ANSCER Robotics, Bariflo Cybernetics, Bharat Plus AI, Bio Green Projects, Blu Cocoon Digital, EROEV, Jarsh Innovations, Royal Bengal Greentech, Vixplor Analytics, and Zodhya Tech, pitched their businesses at the event.



CME

8D Problem-Solving Methodology

CII Centre of Manufacturing Excellence (CME) conducted a two-day virtual training program on '8D Problem Solving Methodology' on 25-26 March. The session witnessed active participation from 90 professionals across diverse industries, including automotive, engineering, manufacturing, and services. The programme focused



CII CIES-affiliated startups at the pitch session held during the CII Eastern Region Annual Regional Meet 2025

on equipping participants with structured techniques to identify root causes, implement effective containment actions, and drive sustainable corrective measures using the globally recognized 8D approach developed by FORD.

During the training, participants gained hands-on understanding of the PDCA-based 8D structure. Practical insights were shared on applying the Seven QC Tools, Is/Is Not Analysis, Process Mapping, and tools like Criteria Matrix, Payoff Matrix, and IOTV Matrix. Real-life case examples and interactive exercises helped deepen the learning experience. The session encouraged participants to adopt structured thinking and enhance their problem-solving capabilities on the shop floor and beyond.

Safety in Material Handling

In today's competitive industrial environment, productivity, quality, and timely delivery are essential to delivering value to the customer. However, these goals must be met without compromising on worker safety or risking property damage. Material handling, a critical part of every organization's operations, is central to achieving this balance. These tasks may be performed manually or with the help of mechanical equipment. Despite having access to advanced machines and trained personnel, organizations often experience accidents during these activities. Such incidents not only cause injuries but also delay production timelines and negatively impact workforce morale.

In view of this, CII CME conducted a focused training program on 'Safe Material Handling Practices' on 20-21 March, addressing a fundamental aspect of workplace safety and operational efficiency. The program was designed to enhance the knowledge and awareness of participants regarding safe handling practices.

The programme emphasised the importance of understanding both manual and mechanical handling methods and the need for hazard identification before commencing any operation. Through structured learning, the session aimed to equip the workforce with the necessary skills to avoid injuries and improve overall workplace safety. One of the key themes of the session was the importance of preparedness.

Participants were guided on what information must be collected before handling materials, the risks associated with different handling activities, and how to mitigate these risks effectively. Practical safety guidelines for manual lifting, mechanical operations, and slinging were discussed in depth. The programme encouraged the reporting of near misses and incidents to enable analysis and prevent recurrence, thereby promoting a culture of continuous safety improvement.

The session focused not only on technical skills but also on changing the mindset toward safety. By strengthening awareness and fostering a proactive attitude, the program sought to reduce the likelihood of accidents and ensure the uninterrupted functioning of industrial operations. The training provided participants with a clearer understanding of how to manage risks, implement safer practices, and contribute to a more efficient and injury-free workplace.

Proactive Maintenance Practices towards Zero Breakdown

With a fast-evolving industrial environment, maintenance plays a pivotal role not only in ensuring uninterrupted production but also in enhancing workplace safety and overall productivity. To help practicing engineers and maintenance professionals develop the necessary technical and soft skills to meet the strategic and future needs of their organizations, CII CME organized a virtual program on 'World-Class Proactive Maintenance Practices towards Zero Breakdown' on 26 March.

The programme was designed to shift participants' perspectives from reactive to proactive maintenance practices. It provided a platform to assess existing maintenance strategies, identify skill gaps, and explore opportunities for continuous learning and professional development. The session began with a critical review of current maintenance practices and their impact on both production efficiency and safety standards. This laid the foundation for exploring a range of emerging trends in proactive maintenance.

The participants were introduced to advanced tools and methodologies such as predictive maintenance, augmented maintenance, and AI-based maintenance systems. These concepts were discussed in depth, supported by real-life case studies from Indian industries that demonstrated how companies have reduced plant downtime and improved reliability through the adoption of such practices.

A key takeaway from the programme was the emphasis on structured and intelligent maintenance strategies that go beyond routine repairs. The session highlighted the importance of minimising day-to-day firefighting by adopting best-in-class maintenance practices that ensure sustained, safe, and efficient operation of critical equipment. By doing so, organizations can significantly cut down on costly downtime and optimise asset performance. The programme provided valuable insights into modern maintenance approaches. It empowered participants with the knowledge and tools required to drive improvements in reliability, safety, and productivity. ■



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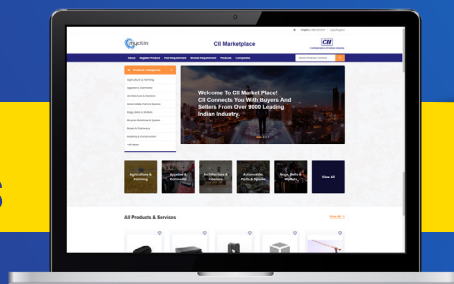


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Regional Review



EASTERN REGION

Catalyzing Growth: Focusing on Sustainability, Technology, and Innovation

A conference on Catalyzing Growth for the Western Region was organized on 18-19 March in Kolkata with the theme 'Focusing on Sustainability, Technology and Innovation'. The two-day initiative was part of the CII Eastern Region Annual Meeting 2025 and provided insights on integrating sustainability, technology, and innovations into businesses to navigate the evolving global trade landscape.

Mr Sanjiv Puri, President, CII and CMD, ITC Ltd, said that India's projected growth rate of 6.5 per cent is a reasonable expectation, considering the complex geopolitical landscape. He stressed that achieving an 8 per cent national growth rate necessitates the activation of all sectors of the economy, including agriculture, services, manufacturing, private investments, and the facilitation of the ease of doing business.

Mr Rajiv Memani, President Designate, CII and Chairman and CEO - EY India and Chair – EY Growth Markets

Council, emphasised that to achieve the goal of 'Viksit Bharat', the country's economy must grow at an annual rate of 10-12 per cent. For this, the manufacturing sector should account for 22-25 per cent of the national GDP. He advocated for the introduction of the mineral value chain in the Eastern Region, threading it with the critical mineral mission announced by the Government of India in the last Union Budget.

Mr Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, advocated for the joint development of a task force between CII and the Central and State Governments. Additionally, he proposed the formation of a high-level committee for regulatory reforms. He discussed the implementation of agritech solutions, skill development, and next-generation reforms. Mr Suvendra Kumar Behera, Chairman, CII Eastern Region and Vice Chairman & MD, RSB Transmissions (I) Ltd, said that digitization is crucial for informed decision-making, and embracing green processes and renewable energy is vital for sustainability.



(On the screen) Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII and Sanjiv Puri, President, CII and CMD, ITC Ltd; (L-R) Shashwat Goenka, Deputy Chairman, CII Eastern Regional Council (2024-25) and Vice Chairman, RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group; Suvendra Behera, Chairman, CII ER (2024-25) and Vice Chairman & MD, RSB Transmissions (I) Ltd and John Kuruvilla, Regional Director, CII ER

An Industry-Startup Connect initiative was also organized, which included participation from 14 startups spanning sectors such as deep technology, artificial intelligence, agritech, safety, electric vehicles, clean technology, and energy efficiency. Furthermore, leading institutions like IIT Bhubaneswar, IIM Calcutta – Innovation Park, NIT Raipur, NIT Jamshedpur, IIST Shibpur, Jadavpur University, and CSIR – CGCRI, exhibited their pioneering research and innovations to the delegates.

Conference on West Bengal: Poised to Lead

A Conference on 'West Bengal: Poised to Lead' was organized by CII West Bengal on 11 March in Kolkata, during the CII West Bengal Annual Meeting



(L-R) Madhabi Guha, Director – Consultivo; Sandeep Kumar, Chairman, CII West Bengal State Council (2024-25) and MD, Tata Steel Downstream Products Ltd; Suvendra Kumar Behera, Chairman, CII ER (2024-25) and Vice Chairman, RSB Transmissions (I) Ltd; Dr Andrew Fleming, British Deputy High Commissioner to Kolkata; Dr Shashi Panja, Minister-in-Charge, Department of Industry, Commerce & Enterprises and Women & Child Development and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal; Dr Saumitra Mohan, Secretary, Department of Transport, Government of West Bengal; Hemant Mallya, Lead – Industrial Sustainability, Council on Energy, Environment and Water and Debashis Dutta, Vice Chairman, CII West Bengal State Council (2024-25) and Director, BGS Group

2025. CII West Bengal took the initiative to emphasise sustainability from the perspectives of environmental and economic point of view under the theme ‘Maximizing Purpose, Optimizing Profit: West Bengal’s Vision for Sustainable Growth’.

Dr Shashi Panja, Minister-in-Charge, Department of Industry, Commerce & Enterprises and Women & Child Development and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal, said that the State’s New and Renewable Energy Manufacturing Promotion Policy and Net Metering Policy are a holistic approach in embracing sustainability. She highlighted various State initiatives, including green farming and green power plants.

Speaking about the green transportation initiative taken by the State Government, Dr Saumitra Mohan, Secretary, Department of Transport, Government of West Bengal, noted that West Bengal is the first State in the country to introduce electric ferries and is expecting an investment of INR 200 crore in the sector. Building up infrastructure for battery swapping stations and promoting more electric buses has been a focal point for the State Government. During the event, CII, in collaboration with Consultivo, released a report on ‘ESG Readiness: A Study of CII Member Companies in West Bengal’.

Biniyog Mantra

CII North Bengal organized ‘Biniyog Mantra 2025 – The Financial Markets Conclave’ in Siliguri on 5 March with the theme ‘Wealth & Wisdom: Investing Smart, Taxing Right’. The event brought together financial experts, investors, and business leaders for a profound insight to empower investors and enhance financial literacy.

The highlight of the evening was the session on ‘The Investment Playbook – Strategies for 2025 & Beyond’,

led by Mr Sidhartha Bhattacharyya, Associate Director & Country Head, Business Development & Internal Sales, Franklin Templeton India. He delved into emerging market trends, risk management strategies, and wealth creation techniques, offering valuable guidance to seasoned investors and newcomers alike.



(L-R) Siddhartha Bhattacharyya, Associate Director & Head, Business Development & Internal Sales, Franklin Templeton India and Prabin Agarwal, Member, CII North Bengal Zonal Council and Founder & CEO, Prabin Agarwal Empowering Investors

Boosting Image, Investment, Innovation, and Inclusiveness in Bihar

Following the CII Bihar Annual Meeting 2025, a session on ‘Advantage Bihar’ was organized on 5 March in Patna, focusing on Bihar’s emerging industrial landscape, investment opportunities, and Industry-friendly policies. Shri Samrat Chowdhury, Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Nitish Mishra, Minister of Industries, Government of Bihar, and Ms Vandana Preyasi, Secretary, Department of Industries, Government of Bihar shared their views on infrastructure development and opportunities in sectors, including food processing, textiles, logistics, IT,



(L-R) Prince Ranjan, Director, Anuj Nutritech Pvt Ltd; Gaurav Sah, Vice Chairman, CII Bihar State Council (2024-25) and Director, LV Best Pvt Ltd; Rear Admiral A K Verma (Retd), Chairman CII Defence Subcommittee; Bandana Preyashi, Secretary, Department of Industries, Government of Bihar; Samrat Chowdhury, Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar; Nitish Mishra, Minister of Industries, Government of Bihar; Satyajit Kumar Singh, Chairman, CII Bihar State Council (2024-25) and MD, Ruban Patliputra Hospital and Pramod Sharma, Past Chairman, CII Bihar State Council

and manufacturing. They also highlighted key initiatives undertaken by the State Government.

The Deputy Chief Minister stressed the importance of connecting all sectors to increase farmers' income and improving transportation through road, rail, and waterways. The Industry Minister highlighted the creation of a new industrial environment, stating that the State's Budget is aligned with the needs of industries.

Viksit Odisha@2036

Coinciding with the CII Odisha Annual Meeting 2025, CII Odisha organized a session on 'Viksit Odisha@2036: Towards setting the Agenda for Nation Building' on 12 March in Bhubaneswar. The deliberations revolved around enhancing credit accessibility and strengthening supply chains, crucial factors for accelerating industrial growth. The experts at the discussion stressed the adoption of technology and a collective effort to make financing faster and supply chains operate efficiently.

Mr Suvendra Behera, CII Eastern Region (2024-25) and Vice Chairman & MD, RSB Transmissions (I) Ltd, apprised that investors of Odisha's unparalleled 30 per cent subsidy with no upper limit is a significant incentive unmatched by neighbouring states, except for similar schemes in the Southern Region. Dr Pradipta Mohanty, Chairman, CII Odisha State Council (2024-25) and Chairman, Surendra Mining Industries Pvt Ltd, emphasised Odisha's robust economic growth and said that Odisha has been growing at an average rate of 11.5-12 per cent per annum, with the recent GSDP estimate at 7.5 per cent. The aspiration to become a USD 1 trillion economy requires strong contributions from the agriculture, manufacturing, and services sectors.

Mr Devendra Thakar, CEO, Dhamra Port, stressed the importance of multimodal logistics and the need for Odisha to develop a state-specific logistics model that could serve as a benchmark for others. He called for greater collaboration between the State and Central ministries to enhance logistics infrastructure. During the event, the CII Industry Carnival Awards recognised outstanding industries across sectors for their exemplary contributions to industrial development and economic progress in Odisha.

Partnerships for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth in Jharkhand

A session on 'Competitive Jharkhand: Partnerships for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth' was organized on 10 March in Jamshedpur, during the CII Jharkhand Annual Meeting 2025, which served as a crucial platform for fostering strategic partnerships that drive innovation, economic resilience, and social equity. The initiative brought together key Industry leaders, policymakers, and experts to explore how strategic collaborations can enhance the State's competitiveness. By emphasizing sustainable growth, inclusive development, and policy-driven infrastructure advancements, the discussions aimed to position Jharkhand as a key player in India's economic transformation.

Shri J K Singh, Secretary, Department of Labour, Employment, Training & Skill Development, Government of Jharkhand, emphasised the Government's commitment to creating a user-friendly ecosystem for MSMEs, enabling their growth and sustainability. He pointed out that 'Access to Market', a key focus of the Industry Carnival, remains a major challenge for MSMEs, directly impacting their long-term viability.



(L-R) Ranjot Singh, Chairman, CII Jharkhand State Council (2024-25) & MD, Emdet Jamshedpur Pvt Ltd; J K Singh, Secretary, Department of Labour, Employment, Training & Skill Development, Government of Jharkhand; Suvendra Behera, Chairman, CII Eastern Region (2024-25) and Vice Chairman & MD, RSB Transmissions (I) Ltd and Ritu Raj Sinha, MD, Tata Steel Utilities & Infrastructure Services Ltd

Shri Ananya Mittal, Deputy Commissioner, East Singhbhum, highlighted the importance of strengthening logistics, adopting green solutions for sustainability, and leveraging public-private partnerships to drive progress. He stressed the role of digitalization in transforming the district's economy and the need to support 3.5 lakh MSMEs in Jharkhand through skill development and global integration.

Soil to Industrial Wealth

During the CII Chhattisgarh Annual Meeting 2025, a session on 'Soil to Industrial Wealth' was organized on 7 March in Raipur, where experts deliberated on the promising future of Chhattisgarh in the areas of forestry, food, and agricultural development, as well as potential strategies for enhancing these sectors. The overall discussions also addressed industrialization and promoting competitive growth in Chhattisgarh.

Shri Amitabh Jain, Chief Secretary, Government of Chhattisgarh, acknowledged CII's foresight in working towards making Chhattisgarh's industries ready for the future. He also suggested that CII form groups within Chhattisgarh to focus on new ideas for growing industrialisation in Chhattisgarh.

Shri Prabhat Malik, Director - Directorate of Industries, Government of Chhattisgarh, chaired a panel discussion on 'Road Map for Developing Industry Through Local Resources of Chhattisgarh for Attaining Sustainable Development Goals'. Shri Mudit Kumar Singh, Expert Advisor, NMC, Department of Land Resources, Government of India, and Former PCCF & HoFF, Government of Chhattisgarh, emphasized sustainable agricultural practices and industrial growth.



NORTH EASTERN REGION

CII Rubber Component Expo



(L-R) Rajiv Budhreja, DG, ATMA; Anil S Kotmire, General Manager, NABARD; Dr K Rajkumar, Director, IRMRI, Nabadul Banik, Chairman, TIDC; Dr A M Kanfode, MD, TFDPC and Rabin Bose, Co-Chair, CII Tripura State Council and Vice President, Mutha Industries Pvt Ltd at the lamp lighting ceremony of the CII Rubber Component Expo

CII, with support from the Government of Tripura, organized the first-ever CII Rubber Component Expo 2025 in Agartala on 28-29 March. The event served as a dynamic platform for knowledge exchange and networking. Discussions emphasized the need for future technologies like eco-friendly approaches in rubber manufacturing, including biodegradable materials and waste management. Attended by around 250 participants, the event provided a platform for MSMEs to engage with Industry leaders, facilitating potential investments and partnerships.

Discussions were also held on the need to upgrade the skills of the manpower engaged in the rubber Industry. Local rubber producers gained insights into market trends and pricing, with workshops aimed at enhancing production quality and yield. Stalls at the venue highlight the potential of the rubber Industry in

the State. A workshop was also held on 'Future Trends in Rubber Technologies' in collaboration with the Indian Rubber Materials Research Institute.

Shri Nabadul Banik, Chairman, Tripura Industrial Development Corporation Ltd (TIDC), highlighted the potential for investments in the rubber sector in Tripura, which he said has emerged as the second rubber capital in the country. He noted that the State has a conducive climate for investment in the rubber sector. Dr Avinash Kanfode, MD, Tripura Forest Development and Plantation Corporation Limited (TFDPC), stressed the need for technological intervention in the sector and added that there is a need for technology to increase the yield and improve the quality of sheet for rubber products in the State.

Dr K Rajkumar, Director, Indian Rubber Materials Research Institute, highlighted the importance of self-reliance and technological advancement in the sector. Mr Rajiv Budhreja, Director General, Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA), mentioned the achievements of the Indian Natural Rubber Operation for Assisted Development (INROADS Project). He expressed satisfaction that ATMA has exceeded the target set by ATMA under INROADS and complimented the State Government and rubber growers for assisting ATMA in achieving the targets. Mr Rabin Bose, Co-Chair, CII Tripura State Council and Vice President, Mutha Industries Private Limited, highlighted CII's commitment to developing the rubber sector in Tripura.

To explore the evolving dynamics of human resources in today's fast-changing business landscape, the CII Northern Region Committee on Human Relations & Industrial Relations organized the CII HR Conclave 2025 on 4 March in Gurugram. Industry leaders, HR professionals, and policymakers deliberated on the human-technology divide and stressed the need for balanced adoption of AI and digital tools with empathy and human judgment.

High-powered dialogue between CEOs and CHROs emphasised the need for shared accountability in driving business impact through people-centric strategies. Workshops like the Inner Game of Leadership at the event highlighted the significance of inner clarity, resilience, and emotional well-being in effective leadership.

The conclave concluded on a reflective and forward-looking note, reaffirming the critical role of human capital in shaping resilient, future-ready organisations and driving sustainable business impact in a dynamic global environment.

Annual Regional Meeting and the Growth Summit

The CII Northern Region Annual Regional Meeting and Growth Summit 2024-25, held in New Delhi on 8 March, brought together an influential gathering of Industry leaders, policymakers, and thought leaders to reflect on the year gone by and chart a vision for the future. A key highlight of the meeting was the change in guard, as Mr Madhav Singhania, Chairman, CII Northern Region (2024-25) and CEO and Joint MD, JK Cement Ltd ceremoniously passed on the baton to Mr Sunjay Kapur, Chairman & CEO, Sona Comstar, as the Chairman for the region. Mr Puneet Kaura, MD & CEO, Samtel Avionics, took over as the Deputy Chairman of the Region for the year 2025-26.



NORTHERN REGION

HR Conclave



(L-R) Sanjay Behl, Chairman, CII National Committee on HR & IR and COO, Adani Cement; KS Bakshi, Chairman, CII Regional Committee on HR & IR and Group Head – HR, InterGlobe Enterprises; S Y Siddiqui, Past Chairman, CII Regional Committee on HR & IR and Chief Mentor, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd; Sushil Baveja, Co-Chairman, CII Regional Committee on HR & IR and Sabih Kidwai, Director – Learning Solutions, Schneider Electric at the CII HR Conclave in New Delhi



(L-R) Madhav Singhania, Immediate Past Chairman, CII NR and CEO and Joint MD, JK Cement; Sanjiv Puri, President, CII and MD, ITC Ltd; Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII and Sunjay Kapur, Chairman, CII Northern Region and Chairman & CEO, Sona Comstar releasing the Annual Report of CII Northern Region

The Growth Summit featured robust discussions on India's positioning in the global value chain, emerging regional opportunities, and the role of Northern states in driving industrial transformation.

During the discussions, speakers noted that the states must localise and operationalise policy reforms to enable last-mile impact. Participants called for deeper stakeholder engagement, from MSMEs to community-level investments, to foster inclusive development. Sustainability was recognized not just as a goal but as a strategic business imperative. The need for industries to be agile, tech-enabled, and globally competitive was reiterated. CII's role as an enabler and bridge between Industry and Government was reaffirmed. The key theme was the importance of ethical business practices, digital adoption, and stakeholder trust, emphasising that future-ready businesses must balance performance with purpose to stay resilient and relevant in a changing world.

Delhi HR Conclave

CII Delhi organized its HR Conclave on the theme 'Shaping the Future of Work – Innovation, Resilience



(L-R) Praveen Purohit, Deputy CHRO, Vedanta Ltd; GC Ramamurthy, Director, DGT, MSDE, Government of India; Salil Lal, Chairman, CII Delhi State Panel on HR & IR and Rikant Pitti, Chairman, CII Delhi and Co-Founder, EaseMyTrip at the CII Delhi HR Conclave

& Sustainability in HR' on 11 March in New Delhi. The inaugural session set the stage for a dynamic discussion on innovation, resilience, and sustainability in HR.

Mr Rikant Pitti, Chairman, CII Delhi, emphasised the evolving role of HR in today's transforming business landscape. Shri GC Ramamurthy, Director, DGT, MSDE, Government of India, underscored the importance of skill development under the Skill India Mission, focusing on AI, IoT, and Industry-led accreditation to create a future-ready workforce. The discussions underscored the path to building a future-ready workforce, with a strong focus on skill development, AI & IoT integration and Industry-led accreditation.

Sustainable Agriculture Summit

The CII Northern Region Sustainable Agriculture Summit 2024 brought together a dynamic mix of policymakers, agri-tech innovators, Industry leaders, and sustainability experts to deliberate on the future of agriculture in India. The summit, held on 21 March in Gurugram, focused on building a climate-resilient, tech-driven, and economically viable agricultural ecosystem.

During the deliberations, emphasis was placed on water-efficient irrigation, organic farming, and crop diversification to ensure long-term soil and environmental health. Speakers discussed ways to empower farmers through digital literacy, market linkages, and direct benefit schemes to enhance income and resilience.

Encouragement for greater corporate involvement in R&D, capacity building, and value chain development to scale sustainable practices was highlighted. Stress was placed on adaptive measures to mitigate the climate change impact on agriculture, especially in Northern India's vulnerable zones.

Quantum Technology Conclave

CII hosted the Quantum Technology Conclave under the theme 'Decoding Quantum: Insights for Tomorrow's World' on 28 March in New Delhi to chart India's roadmap in the quantum revolution. The event saw a congregation of experts from the Government as well as private players in the field.



Gaurav Joshi, Deputy Secretary – Manufacturing Sector, Ministry of Heavy Industries, Government of India at the Quantum Technology Conclave



Nigar Shaji, Associate Director, UR Rao Satellite Centre, ISRO at the Quantum Technology Conclave

Shri Gaurav Joshi, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Heavy Industries, Government of India, noted that by leveraging quantum-driven process optimisation, India's smart factories can achieve real-time decision-making, enhanced productivity, and reduced operational costs. This innovation will drive industrial transformation, making manufacturing more agile and future-ready, he added.

Ms Nigar Shaji, Associate Director, UR Rao Satellite Centre, ISRO, said that quantum technology is set to revolutionise space exploration, from ultra-secure satellite communications to next-generation navigation and sensing. ISRO is committed to harnessing its potential to enhance India's space capabilities.

Delhi Education Summit

The CII Delhi Education Summit, held on 28 March in New Delhi, set the stage for a transformative dialogue,



(L-R) Yash Prakash, Founder, AcadAllly; Dr Joseph Emmanuel, Chief Executive & Secretary, CISCE; Dr Indrani Bhaduri, CEO – PARAKH, NCERT and Amrita Bahl, Chief Education Officer, GD Goenka Group

bringing together educators, policymakers, and Industry leaders to redefine India's education landscape.

Dr Indrani Bhaduri, CEO – PARAKH, NCERT, emphasised the critical role of foundational literacy and numeracy in shaping India's education system. She highlighted four key focus areas to achieve global standards: holistic development for well-rounded student growth, regulatory reforms to foster innovation and inclusivity, digital infrastructure to enhance access and quality, and teacher training to bridge learning gaps.

Dr Joseph Emmanuel, Chief Executive and Secretary, CISCE, underscored the need to prepare students for a rapidly changing world through skilling, entrepreneurship, research-oriented learning, and value-driven education.



SOUTHERN REGION

South India Annual Convention

CII Southern Region hosted the CII South India Annual Convention alongside the Annual Regional Meeting of Southern Region on 28 March in Chennai with the theme 'Crafting Liveable Environments in Indian Cities'. Shri M K Stalin, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, inaugurated the convention, urging industries to invest in Tamil Nadu's green economy, emphasising the State's commitment to sustainable habitats under the Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission.

The Chief Minister highlighted the economic opportunities in green initiatives, including electric transportation and smart city solutions, and called for public-private partnerships to bolster infrastructure. The Phase 2 of Project Puthiya Payanam, Valarchiyai Noki of CII Centre of Excellence for Employability and Livelihoods (CII CEL), which aims to empower 1,000 micro-entrepreneurs across Tamil Nadu within a year, was launched by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. He also released the CII Green Business Centre (CII GBC) report on 'Green & Liveable Cities in Tamil Nadu'.

The report outlines a roadmap to transform cities like Chennai, Coimbatore, and Madurai into sustainable urban centres. The report mandates 15 – 20 per cent green space allocation for new residential, commercial, and infrastructure projects, advocating for city-wide plantation drives, smart meter implementation, and wastewater reuse to enhance urban resilience.



(L-R): Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII; R Dinesh, Immediate Past President, CII and Executive Chairman, TVS Supply Chain Solution Ltd; Dr R Nandini, Chairperson, CII Southern Region and MD, Chandra Textiles Pvt Ltd; MK Stalin, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu; Dr TRB Rajaa, Minister for Industries, Government of Tamil Nadu; R Mukundan, Vice President, CII and CEO, Tata Chemicals Ltd and Thomas John Muthoot, Deputy Chairman, CII Southern Region and Chairman, Muthoot Pappachan Group

Sessions at the convention delved into critical themes, including sustainable growth, regional economic strategies, and urban transformation, while panel discussions on policy interventions, sustainable infrastructure, and social infrastructure reimagination addressed challenges and solutions for building liveable, future-ready cities.

Swarna Andhra Pradesh Conference

A Conference on 'Swarna Andhra Pradesh: Vision 2047' was held on 20 March in Visakhapatnam, featuring Shri Kondapalli Srinivas, Minister for MSME, NRI Relations, Government of Andhra Pradesh, who appreciated CII and Industry partners for their role in shaping the Swarna Andhra vision.

Shri PS Gangadhar, Joint Secretary – Economic Diplomacy, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, highlighted Andhra Pradesh's strategic trade potential along the eastern corridor and India's growing global influence through platforms like BRICS, G7, and

G20. Mr Rajan Navani, Chairman, CII India @ 100 Council and Vice Chairman & MD, Jetline Group, emphasised the role of youth-driven entrepreneurship and soft power in advancing national interests, while identifying health, education, and infrastructure as key focus areas.

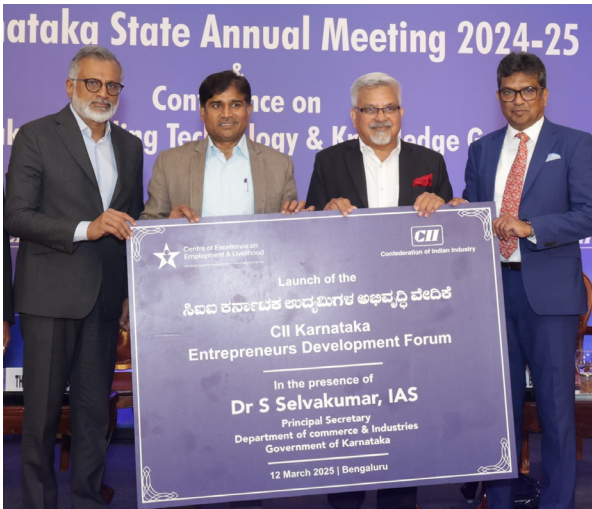
Ms Praveena Yagnambhat, Chief of Staff & CSR Head, Boeing India & South Asia, stressed the need for upskilling to bridge the education-skills gap, spotlighting opportunities in aviation. Rear Admiral RS Dhaliwal, NM, HQ, Eastern Naval Command, underscored the Defence Industry's potential, projecting its growth from INR 90,000 crores to INR 27 lakh crores by 2047 through indigenisation.

Conference on Karnataka: Leading Technology & Knowledge Growth

CII Karnataka hosted a Conference on 'Karnataka: Leading Technology & Knowledge Growth', coinciding with the State Annual Session on 12 March in Bengaluru. Key discussions focused on AI-led advancements,



(L-R): B Srinivas Satish, Head, CII Andhra Pradesh State Office; V Murali Krishna, Chairman, CII Andhra Pradesh and MD, Vizag Hospital & Cancer Research Centre Pvt Ltd; Dr R Nandini, Chairperson, CII Southern Region and MD, Chandra Textiles Pvt Ltd and G Murali Krishna, Vice chairman, CII Andhra Pradesh and Founder & CEO, Fluentgrid Ltd



Launch of CII Karnataka Entrepreneurs Development Forum in the presence of Dr S Selva Kumar, Principal Secretary, Commerce & Industries Department, Government of Karnataka

innovation-driven MSMEs, high-tech manufacturing, and sustainability, reinforcing Karnataka's position as a global hub for knowledge, technology, and inclusive growth, were held during the conference.

Dr S Selva Kumar, Principal Secretary, Commerce & Industries Department, Government of Karnataka, launched the CII CEL Microentrepreneurs Project - Karnataka Abhivruddigagi Belavanigeya Poshane (Nurturing Growth through Progress), aimed at strengthening the micro-entrepreneurial ecosystem in Karnataka. Through these sessions across Bengaluru, Mysuru, Mangaluru, and Belagavi, the program has impacted around 200+ driving leadership excellence and industry growth.

Mysuru MSME Summit

CII Mysuru organized the MSME Summit was inaugurated by Shri Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja

Wadiyar, Member of Parliament, on 1 March. He highlighted the role of MSMEs in India's economic growth and addressed taxation reforms, emphasising the shift from a punitive tax framework to a taxpayer-friendly system.

Mr Venu Nuguri, Chairman, CII Karnataka, highlighted Mysuru's immense potential as a global sourcing hub. He emphasised that Karnataka has long been at the forefront of industrial growth, and Mysuru, with its strong industrial base, skilled workforce, and excellent connectivity, is emerging as a preferred destination for sourcing, manufacturing, and innovation.

Other key speakers at the summit included Shri PVN Suresh Babu, Principal Commissioner, Goods & Services Tax; Mr Sam Cherian, Immediate Past Chairman, CII Mysuru Zone & Convenor, CII Karnataka MSME Panel; Mr Pavan Ranga, Past Chairman, CII Mysuru Zone and CEO, Rangsons Technologies; Mr Sandip Mishra, Vice President, HSBC India; Mr Eswara Rao, Chairman, CII Mysuru Zone and Mr Santosh Gundapi, Vice Chairman, CII Mysuru Zone.

India – Latvia Business Roundtable

CII Karnataka organized the India – Latvia Business Roundtable on 19 March in Bengaluru with H.E. Ms Baiba Braze, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, who was accompanied by a business delegation. The roundtable focused on key business opportunities and potential collaborations between India and Latvia, with insights into policies supporting business growth in Latvia.

Mr Sharath Kumar Bache Gowda, Member of Karnataka Legislative Assembly, represented the Karnataka Government and highlighted Karnataka's potential for industrial growth and trade partnerships.



(L-R) Santosh Gundapi, Vice Chairman, CII Mysuru Zone; Sandip Mishra, Vice President, HSBC India; Pavan Ranga, Past Chairman, CII Mysuru Zone; Venu, Chairman, CII Karnataka; Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, MP; PVN Suresh Babu, Principal Commissioner, GST; Eswara Rao, Chairman, CII Mysuru Zone and Sam Cherian, Immediate Past Chairman, CII Mysuru Zone & Convenor, CII Karnataka MSME Panel



(L-R): Shalini Warriar, Vice Chairperson, CII Kerala and Executive Director & Business Head – Retail, The Federal Bank Ltd; Pallavi Joshi Bakhru, Partner, Grant Thornton Bharat; Dr R Nandini, Chairperson, CII Southern Region and MD, Chandra Textiles Pvt Ltd; R Dinesh, Past President, CII and Executive Chairman, TVS Supply Chain Solutions and Vinod Manjila, Chairman, CII Kerala and Chairman, Manjilas Food Tech Pvt Ltd

Kerala Family Business Conclave

CII Kerala Family Business Conclave was held on 4 March 2025 in Kochi, coinciding with the CII Kerala Annual Meeting. The Family Business Conclave served as a platform for the family business leaders to explore and navigate the complexities of sustaining and evolving their enterprises across generations.

The Conclave covered topics, including the power of family legacy, succession planning and leadership transition, innovation and growth strategies for the new gen and balancing tradition with modern leadership.

Prominent speakers including Mr R Dinesh, Past President, CII and Executive Chairman, TVS Supply Chain Solutions; Mr Farhad Forbes, Past President, Family Business Network International and Co-Chairman, Forbes Marshall; Dr R Nandini, Chairperson, CII Southern Region and MD, Chandra Textiles Pvt Ltd, Mr Muthiah Murugappan, CEO, EID Parry (India) Ltd; Dr Dominique Otten-Pappas, Family Council Chair, Otten-Family Group GMBH; Mr Vinod Manjila, Chairman, CII Kerala and Chairman, Manjilas Food Tech Pvt Ltd; Ms Shalini Warriar, Vice Chairperson, CII Kerala and Executive Director & Business Head – Retail, The Federal Bank Ltd; Mr M S A Kumar, Past Chairman, CII Kerala and Mr George Muthoot George, Deputy MD, Muthoot Finance Ltd shared insights during the discussions.

Puducherry State Annual Meeting

The CII Puducherry State Annual Meeting 2024-25, held on 14 March, convened Industry leaders, policymakers, and experts to chart Puducherry's path toward becoming a thriving hub for Industry, education, and tourism. The event fostered strategic discussions and high-level engagements, focusing on sustainable growth and innovation.

A key highlight was the panel discussion on 'Dream Puducherry 2047: Journey Towards Developed

Puducherry', where speakers outlined a vision for economic expansion, industrial advancement, and robust infrastructure.

Shri A Namassivayam, Minister for Industries and Commerce, Government of Puducherry, reaffirmed the Government's dedication to boosting investments through initiatives, including the Karasur Industrial Estate, the forthcoming Textile Park, and the IT Park. Shei K Lakshminarayanan, Minister for PWD, Tourism, and IT, Government of Puducherry, highlighted tourism's pivotal role in the economy, emphasising efforts to improve infrastructure and elevate Puducherry's liveability.

Dr R Nandini, Chairperson, CII Southern Region, stressed the importance of skill development and pledged CII's collaboration with the Government to drive progress. Shri Sharat Chauhan, Chief Secretary, Government of Puducherry, underscored sustainability, social resilience, and governance as foundational to Puducherry's Vision 2047, detailing initiatives in education, Industry, and social welfare to ensure long-term prosperity.

Tamil Nadu Annual Session and CEO Confluence



AR Unnikrishnan, Vice Chairman, CII Tamil Nadu and MD, Saint Gobain India Pvt Ltd, in conversation with Mr Viswanathan Anand, Indian Chess Grandmaster

As part of the CII Tamil Nadu State Annual Session 2024-25, a CEO Confluence with the theme 'The Power of You' was held on 13 March in Chennai. The

session on 'The Power of Trust' featured Mr S G Anil Kumar, Founder & Group CEO, Samunnati and Mr Murugavel J, Chair, CII TN CEO Forum & Founder & CEO, Matrimony.com.

Another session on 'Family & Business' included Mr CK Ranganathan, CMD, Cavinkare; Ms Amudhavalli Ranganathan, Director - New Initiatives & E-commerce, CK Group, and Mr Srivats Ram, Chairman, CII Tamil Nadu and MD, Wheels India Ltd. The session on 'Mind Master: Winning Lessons from a Champion's Life' was a highlight of the event and featured key speakers, including Mr Viswanathan Anand, Indian Chess Grandmaster, alongside Mr A R Unnikrishnan, Vice Chairman, CII Tamil Nadu and MD, Saint Gobain India Pvt Ltd.

Mr Anand emphasised Tamil Nadu's potential to excel in competitive chess while harnessing its benefits to nurture strategic thinking and empower young minds. The confluence, which was attended by 150 delegates, fostered engaging interactions between CEOs and speakers. The sessions underscored the importance of trust, family-business synergy, and mental agility in driving leadership and innovation.

Conference on Modern Taxation



Dr Palanivel Thiaga Rajan,
Minister of Information
Technology & Digital
Services, Government of
Tamil Nadu

The CII Tamil Nadu Technology Development & Promotion Centre hosted the Conference on Modern Taxation on 21 March in Chennai. The event convened experts to explore pivotal shifts in taxation, financial frameworks, governance, and the future of tax administration, emphasising technological advancements,

legislative updates, and fiscal reforms. Discussions highlighted how modern tax systems are adapting to global economic pressures, stressing the need for robust policies that ensure both global competitiveness and equitable resource distribution.

Justice K R Shriram, Hon'ble Chief Justice of Madras High Court, inaugurated the event, which also featured a keynote address by Justice Anita Sumanth, Judge, High Court of Madras. The conference featured insights from Dr Palanivel Thiaga Rajan, Minister of Information Technology & Digital Services, Government of Tamil Nadu, who underscored the importance of ongoing reforms to enhance the GST framework. He advocated

for a more user-friendly and fair system that benefits businesses and consumers alike.

Bringing together thought leaders from diverse sectors, the event fostered dialogue on integrating technology into taxation and addressing contemporary challenges, reinforcing Tamil Nadu's commitment to pioneering progressive tax policies aligned with economic growth and social equity.

TN MEDex

The seventh edition of CII TN MEDex, held on 1 March in Madurai, was themed 'Shaping the Future of Healthcare through Technovation'. The conference and exhibition highlighted transformative innovations reshaping the sector. Cutting-edge technologies such as telemedicine, electronic medical records, nanotechnology, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) took centre stage at the event, showcasing their potential to revolutionise care delivery, enhance diagnostics, enable remote care, personalise treatments, and elevate patient engagement.

Dr L Arul Sundaresh Kumar, Dean of Madurai Medical College, delivered an inspiring inaugural address, setting a forward-looking tone. The event convened healthcare experts, Industry leaders, and professionals to exchange insights, explore pioneering advancements, and showcase the latest medical technologies. Discussions delved into emerging trends like value-based care, healthcare cybersecurity, new public management practices, and the evidence-based movement, highlighting their role in redefining healthcare's future in India and beyond.

Interaction with Consul General of the Netherlands



H.E. Ewout de Wit, Consul General for the Netherlands, addressing the gathering

CII Thoothukudi hosted an exclusive networking session with H.E. Mr Ewout de Wit, Consul General for the Netherlands, on 20 March, bringing together Industry leaders and stakeholders to explore bilateral collaboration between India and the Netherlands.

The session provided insights into emerging business trends, trade opportunities, and potential partnerships.

H.E. Ewout de Wit highlighted economic and trade relations between both nations and deliberated on key sectors for mutual growth, including maritime trade, logistics, sustainable energy, agriculture, and port infrastructure.

He emphasised the Netherlands' expertise in technology-driven industries, water management, and renewable energy, which could benefit businesses in Thoothukudi. The discussions opened new avenues for enhanced Indo-Dutch business engagement, positioning Thoothukudi as a key hub for international collaboration.

CII Telangana Annual Meeting

The CII Telangana Annual Session was held in Hyderabad on 9 March alongside a Conference on 'Building a Competitive and Sustainable USD 1 Trillion Economy'. Mr BVR Mohan Reddy, Past Chairman, CII Southern Region, highlighted the need for Industry-Academia linkages to strengthen research & development.

Dr R Nandini, Chairperson, CII Southern Region, stressed collaborative efforts for sustainable progress. Mr Rohan Sachdev, Managing Partner, EY India, emphasised Telangana's emergence as an innovation hub, citing its 7,000 startups, 51 incubation centres, and 300 investors, urging entrepreneurs to leverage its infrastructure.

The event featured the launch of the CII-EY report on 'Manufacturing 5.0: Accelerating Telangana's Industrial Transition from Industry 4.0 to 5.0', which outlines a roadmap for the State to lead industrial innovation through generative AI, cybersecurity, and green manufacturing. The report highlights Telangana's strengths in technology ecosystems, policy support like TG-iPASS, and infrastructure projects such as Hyderabad Pharma City, positioning it as a frontrunner in sustainable industrial growth.



WESTERN REGION

Manufacturing Summit

The 20th CII Manufacturing Summit, held in Mumbai on 25 March, convened top Industry leaders, policymakers, and global experts to redefine India's manufacturing roadmap. With the sector contributing 17 per cent to GDP, CII reaffirmed its commitment to help achieve the long-standing 25 per cent GDP target, a crucial step toward India's goal of becoming a global manufacturing powerhouse.

Mr Jamshyd N Godrej, Past President, CII & Chairman, CII Manufacturing Summit 2025 and CMD, Godrej & Boyce Mfg Co Ltd, underscored the urgency of India's manufacturing evolution. Beyond competitiveness, Mr Godrej emphasized the need for inclusivity, particularly women's leadership in manufacturing. "True transformation will come when more women step into decision-making roles, shaping the future of this Industry," he added.

Mr Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, said that India stands at the crossroads of an industrial revolution, one that will define our economic destiny for generations to come. While we celebrate our progress, we must also confront the challenges ahead with unwavering resolve.

Ms Geetanjali Kirloskar, CMD, Kirloskar Systems Ltd, said manufacturing is the backbone of any great economy and added that India's journey toward becoming a USD 35 trillion powerhouse by 2047 hinges on our ability to scale this sector. Ms Swati Salgaocar, Chairperson, CII WR and President, VM Salgaocar and Brother Pvt Ltd, highlighted India's strategic shift. She said that India is not an emerging player in manufacturing; it is



(L-R): Shaik Samiuddin, Head, CII Telangana State Office; Sai D Prasad, Chairman, CII Telangana and Executive Director, Bharat Biotech International Ltd; Dr R Nandini, Chairperson, CII Southern Region and MD, Chandra Textiles Pvt Ltd and Sivaprasad Reddy Rachamallu, Vice Chairman, CII Telangana and MD, Rachamallu Forgings Pvt Ltd



(L-R) Sunil Chordia, Past Chairman, CII WR & Chairman, CII WR Sub-Committee on Manufacturing and CMD, Rajratan Global Wire Ltd; Swati Salgaocar, Chairperson, CII WR & President, VM Salgaocar and Brother Pvt Ltd; Jamshyd N Godrej, Past President, CII & Chairman, CII Manufacturing Summit 2025 and CMD, Godrej & Boyce Mfg Co Ltd; Geetanjali Kirloskar, CMD, Kirloskar Systems Ltd and Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII

an evolving powerhouse. Our success will be defined by our ability to embrace intelligent, sustainable, and technologically advanced production models, she added.

Datacenter Blueprint Summit

The sixth edition of the CII Datacenter Blueprint Summit convened Industry leaders, policymakers, and investors in Mumbai on 20 March to deliberate on ways to shape the future of India's rapidly expanding datacenter sector. Experts emphasised Maharashtra's leadership in the sector, highlighting that it is commanding 40 per cent market share and its projected capacity growth is expected to reach 800 MW by 2028 from the current 500 MW.

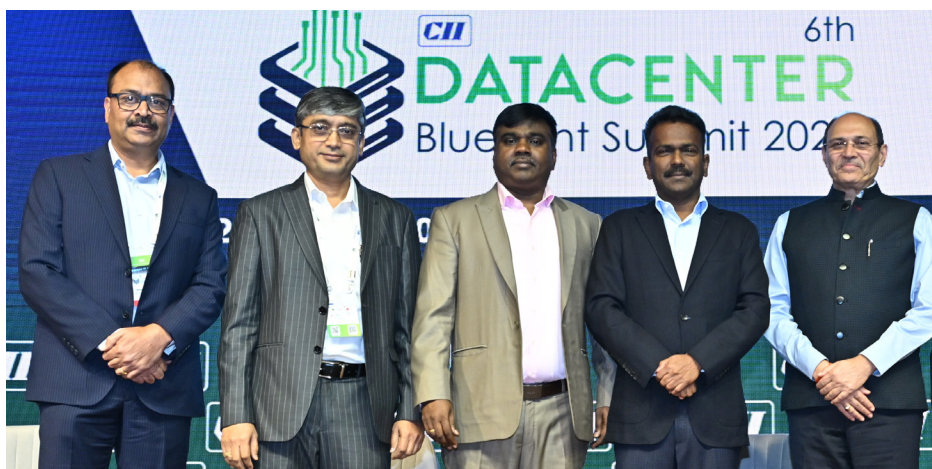
With India's current operational datacenter capacity at approximately 2,337 MW, the sector is set for exponential growth, with an additional 1.5 GW playing a crucial role in this transition. Dr P Anbalagan, Secretary, Industries, Government of Maharashtra, highlighted the importance of policy stability, urging stakeholders to

collaborate with the Energy Ministry to maintain the status quo for at least five years. He noted that the 2023 policy introduced a deemed license provision, streamlining operations for standalone data centres and unit holders.

Shri P Velrasu, CEO, Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC), underscored how 5G, Starlink, and decentralised data centres are reshaping the Industry. Experts emphasised the need for smart energy solutions and modular infrastructure to drive sustainable growth. As infrastructure evolves to meet increasing demands, emerging technologies such as modular nuclear energy and innovative land-use policies must be explored to sustain long-term growth and cost optimisation.

WR Annual Meeting and Conference on India@100

The Conference on India@100, held as part of the CII Western Region Annual Meeting 2025 in Mumbai on 26



(L-R): Sharad Agarwal, CEO, Sify Infinit Spaces Ltd; Manoj Paul, Chairman, CII WR Taskforce on Data Centre 2024-25 and MD, India, Equinix Inc; P Velrasu, CEO, MIDC; Dr P Anbalagan, Secretary Industries, Government of Maharashtra and Rishi Kumar Bagla, Deputy Chairman, CII Western Region 2024-25 and CMD, BG Electricals & Electronics India Ltd



(L-R): Rishi Kumar Bagla, Deputy Chairman, CII WR (2024-25) and CMD, BG Electricals & Electronics India Ltd; Jamshyd N Godrej, Past President, CII and MD, Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Company Ltd; Sanjiv Puri, President, CII and CMD, ITC Ltd; Swati Salgaocar, Chairperson, CII WR (2024-25) and President, VM Salgaocar & Brother Pvt Ltd; Vir Advani, CMD, Blue Star Ltd

March, centered around the theme 'Unlocking Potential, Transforming Lives'. It provided a pivotal platform dedicated to shaping India's future. The conference brought together thought leaders, policymakers, and visionaries to identify and amplify the key growth drivers and transformational catalysts that will define India's path forward.

The Public Session of CII Western Region Annual Regional Meeting focused on 'India@100 – Unlocking Potential Transforming Lives'. Mr Jamshyd N Godrej, Past President, CII and MD, Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Company Ltd, highlighted the state of Indian cities. He said that transportation plays a significant role in this. Noting that the CII Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) focuses on creating green transport hubs, he suggested that green buildings must provide space for electrical charging, cycling, and walking.

He added that urbanisation can make a significant difference through improved urban planning and better linkages between buildings and transport systems. The average energy efficiency in India lags significantly behind, and there is a need to view Indian cities through the lens of sustainability and efficiency to enhance their overall functionality.

Mr Sanjiv Puri, President, CII and CMD, ITC Ltd said that India's strengths lie in its large market, vibrant democracy, and vast arable land, but challenges like low agricultural productivity and extreme weather threaten growth. While Industry innovation lags, there's potential for progress through better collaboration between Academia and Industry. Additionally, the skilling system needs alignment with Industry needs, requiring localised solutions to bridge gaps.

He added that to drive growth, India must reform agriculture with digitisation and farmer collectives, while transitioning to cleaner energy solutions. A

balanced approach to coal phase-out, carbon capture, and renewable energy is key. By fostering innovation, addressing climate impacts, and investing in technology, India can unlock its full potential and ensure sustainable future growth.

India-Australia Women's Leadership Forum

In view of the launch of the India-Australia Women's Leadership Forum by CII and the Business Council of Australia (BCA), a roundtable interaction was held on 10 March in Mumbai. The forum was launched in New Delhi in May 2024, and since then, both virtual and physical interactions have been organized with women leaders, broadly focused on promoting women leadership in the India-Australia corridor.

To expand the scope of the initiative, an interaction was held in Mumbai in conjunction with International Women's Day. Current forum members, from both India and Australia, including members from the Australian Consulate, along with senior women leaders from the Indian industry, participated in the interaction.

Mr Christian Jack, Deputy Consul General, Australian Consulate – Mumbai, made a presentation about the roadmap for Australia's economic engagement with India, highlighting four major sectors with potential for collaboration and strengthening economic ties – clean energy, education & skills, agri-businesses, and tourism.

He highlighted Australia's expertise in space and robotics, and satellite tracking among others. One of the major highlights of his presentation was the recent establishment of the Australian Consulate in Bangalore. In addition to this, USD 16 million has been committed for a new Australia-India Trade and Investment Accelerator Fund (AI-TIAF) and another USD 4 million for an expansion of the Centre of Australia-India Relations' flagship Maitri grants program. ■



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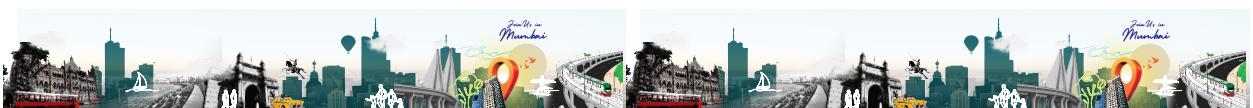


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P.R. No. DL(S) - 17/3494/2022-2023 ; Registration No. 34541/79

Postal date on 20th and 21st

Total pages 58 + Covers