

PM TO INAUGURATE FIRST EDITION OF THE SOUL LEADERSHIP CONCLAVE ON 21ST FEBRUARY IN DELHI

Chennai, 20 February 2025: Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate the first edition of the SOUL Leadership Conclave on 21st February, at around 11 AM, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. He will also address the gathering on the occasion. Prime Minister of Bhutan Dasho Tshering Tobgay will deliver the Keynote Address as the Guest of Honor.



February will serve as a premier platform where leaders from diverse domains like politics, sports, arts and media, the spiritual world, public policy, business and the social sector will share their inspiring life journeys and discuss aspects relating to leadership. The conclave will foster an ecosystem of collaboration and thought leadership, facilitating learning from both failures and successes, to inspire young audiences. School of Ultimate Leadership is an

upcoming leadership institution in Gujarat to enable authentic leaders to advance public good. The aim is to broaden the landscape of political leadership in India through formal training and to include those who rise through merit, commitment, and passion for public service and not just from political lineage. SOUL brings in insights, skills and expertise necessary to navigate the complex challenges of leadership in today's world.

The two day SOUL Leadership Conclave from 21st to 22nd

MINISTRY OF COAL ORGANIZES ROADSHOW ON OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COAL SECTOR & COMMERCIAL COAL MINE AUCTIONS IN KOLKATA

Chennai, 20 February 2025: The Ministry of Coal successfully organized a Roadshow on 'Opportunities in the Coal Sector & Commercial Coal Mine Auctions' at Kolkata today. Secretary, Ministry of Coal, Shri Vikram Dev Dutt was the chief guest and graced the occasion accompanied by Ms. Rupinder Brar, Additional Secretary and Nominated Authority Ministry of Coal, reinforcing the Ministry's commitment to supporting stakeholders. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from industry leaders, investors, and stakeholders, showcasing the Government's commitment to transforming the coal sector through progressive reforms and transparent policies.



a seamless investment journey for all stakeholders, backed by a transparent regulatory framework and accelerated project approvals. She also highlighted the Government of India's progressive policies promoting coal gasification and underground mining to diversify coal utilization methods, reduce environmental impact, and enhance mining efficiency. She reiterated the Ministry's unwavering commitment to good governance, maintaining the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and transparency, while being open to dialogue, feedback, and collaboration with stakeholders.

In her welcome addresses Ms. Rupinder Brar, Additional Secretary and Nominated Authority, Ministry of Coal reassured investors of the Ministry's commitment to supporting them throughout the investment process. She emphasized the streamlined clearance processes and continuous enhancements to the ease of doing business in the sector. Ms. Brar stated that the Ministry is dedicated to ensuring

and energy security. Shri Dutt also mentioned the Ministry's active coordination with various State Governments and various Ministries, including the Ministry of Environment and Forests, to expedite early clearances and enhance logistical support through Ministry of Railways. Secretary, emphasized that underground mining will have its place in upcoming auctions, offering a sustainable and efficient approach to coal extraction while minimizing environmental impact. He urged private players to not just invest in mining but also contribute meaningfully to the communities they operate in. He emphasized that the industry owes much to society and should strive to set new benchmarks in afforestation, restoration, and welfare initiatives. "Our growth must be inclusive, and our progress must leave a lasting, positive impact on both people and the planet," he affirmed.

The Roadshow featured

comprehensive presentations on the upcoming commercial coal mine auctions, offering insights into investment prospects and policy frameworks. It also provided a platform for investors to engage with key decision-makers, explore new business avenues, and gain a deeper understanding of India's evolving coal sector landscape.

The event also served as an interactive platform for stakeholders, including industry leaders, potential investors, mining experts, and policymakers, to exchange insights and explore collaborative opportunities. Stakeholders were able to gain clarity on the auction process, better understand regulatory frameworks, and learn about investment incentives. This engagement reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to creating an investor-friendly ecosystem, ensuring stakeholders can capitalize on the growing opportunities within the coal sector and contribute to India's energy security and sustainable growth.

The Roadshow in Kolkata marks a significant milestone in the Ministry of Coal's efforts to unlock new avenues for investment and foster growth in India's coal sector, further reinforcing the country's position as a global leader in coal production.

A CONCLAVE ON RESTRUCTURING OF REAL ESTATE PROJECTS ORGANISED AT IICA

Chennai, 20 February 2025: The Post Graduate Insolvency Programme (PGIP), Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs successfully organized a conclave today at Manesar bringing together insolvency professionals, legal experts, experts from ARCs from across the country. The inaugural ceremony was graced by distinguished industry professionals including Mr. Anuj Jain, Mr. Pallav Mohapatra, Mr. Hari Hara Mishra and Dr. K.L. Dhingra, Head of the Centre of



Insolvency and Bankruptcy at IICA. Dr. Dhingra highlighted the objective behind the existence of PGIP by IBBI the regulator.

The conclave featured keynote addresses from prominent figures, including Mr. Anuj Jain and Mr. Pallav Mohapatra,

discussions were centered around the theme "Resolving Insolvencies in Real Estate Projects" The keynote address mainly focused on the development of real estate insolvency and the role of IBC in shaping the successful resolution of distressed assets in the real estate sector. Mr. Mohapatra also highlighted the

challenges faced by the Insolvency Professionals and the relevant skills required for sector-specific insolvency resolution.

The panelists included various professionals from Insolvency Professional Entities, Law Firms, ARC and Academicians where leading domain experts expressed their views.

The PGIP Conclave 2025 served as a vital platform for professionals to exchange knowledge and stay abreast of developments in the insolvency domain.

INDIAN NAVY'S FIRST TRAINING SQUADRON DEPARTS SIHANOUKVILLE PORT, CAMBODIA

Chennai, 20 February 2025: Indian Navy's First Training Squadron (1TS) comprising - INS Sujata, and ICGS Veera departed from Sihanoukville, Cambodia on 17 Feb 25 marking the conclusion of a successful visit. During the three-day visit, the Indian Navy engaged with the Royal Cambodian Navy on various fronts, forging deeper bonds and strengthening Bridges of Friendship.

maritime cooperation and the role of First Training Squadron in furthering this mission. During the port call, Capt Anshul Kishore, Senior Officer, ITS called on Admiral Tea Vinh, Commander, Royal Cambodian Navy (RCN) at Naval Headquarters, Phnom Penh. The meeting was also attended by VCNS, DCNS, COL, and Chief of Operations of the RCN. Discussions were held on issues of bilateral cross training, interoperability, joint exercises, regional security, and goodwill activities. The Senior Officer, ITS also called on Governor of Sihanoukville province and Rear Admiral Mey Dina, Commander, Ream Naval Base.



A media interaction was organised, which was attended by Senior Officer, ITS along with Commanding Officers of INS Sujata and ICGS Veera. The interaction highlighted the engagement of Indian Navy with regional Navies towards wider

A Small Arms Simulator was handed

over to the Royal Cambodian Army as a part of ongoing exchanges and defence engagement. Strengthening people-to-people ties, trainees of First Training Squadron and Royal Cambodian Navy participated in friendly sports fixtures enhancing camaraderie and mutual understanding. A guided walk-around of the ships was organised for the Indian community at Sihanoukville. A reception was hosted

onboard, which was attended by Ambassadors and Diplomats of various countries, senior leadership of Royal Cambodian Navy and Army, alongwith other distinguished members of the Indian Diaspora.

The goodwill visit of ITS reaffirms bilateral engagement and enduring maritime partnership between India and Cambodia aligned with the vision of SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region).

CLARIFICATION ON NEW FASTAG RULE

Chennai, 20 February 2025: In reference to the news items carried by some publications regarding change of FASTag Rule declining transactions on FASTags which are not active for more than 60 minutes prior to read time and up to 10 minutes after read time, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) clarifies that the Circular No NPCI/2024-25/NETC/004A, dated 28.01.2025

issued by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has no impact on FASTag customer experience.

The Circular has been issued by NPCI to facilitate resolution of disputes between Acquirer Bank and Issuer Bank on FASTag status while vehicle crosses Toll Plaza. The Circular also aims to ensure that the FASTag transactions are created within reasonable time of vehicle passing a Toll

Plaza so that customers are not harassed by late transactions.

All National Highway Toll Plazas operate on ICD 2.5 protocol which gives real-time tag status, hence the FASTag customers can recharge any time before crossing the Toll Plaza. Some Toll plazas on State Highways are still on ICD 2.4 protocol which needs regular updates of Tag status. It is being planned to shift all such Toll

plazas to ICD 2.5 protocol, shortly.

The FASTag customers are encouraged to link their FASTag wallet to UPI/Current/Saving Accounts under auto-recharge setting to eliminate the need for manual recharges. Customers can continue to recharge their FASTag any time before reaching the toll, using a variety of payment channels such as UPI, net banking, and more.

YAMAHA OPENS TWO NEW BLUE SQUARE SHOWROOMS IN CHENNAI

Chennai, 20 February 2025: India Yamaha Motor (IYM) inaugurated two new Blue Square dealerships in Chennai and its vicinity, further expanding its footprint in Tamil Nadu. This move is part of Yamaha's broader nationwide growth strategy aimed at solidifying its market position and delivering a superior, customer-centric experience across India. The newly launched Blue Square dealerships — Walters Moto Hub in Kolathur with 4,400sqft. area and Samukh Motors in Sholinganallur with 9,970 sqft. area — ensure maximum reach and convenience for customers, also catering to the rising demand for Yamaha two-wheelers.

The opening of these new dealerships highlights not just Chennai but its nearby area as a growing market for the company. Yamaha's extensive dealer network and commitment to product innovation play a significant role in



driving regional sales and customer loyalty. The addition of these brand-new showrooms brings the total number to 79 exclusive Blue Square showrooms in the state of Tamil Nadu.

The Blue Square showrooms represent more than just retail spaces. Designed as hubs for Yamaha's premium motorcycling experience, these showrooms embody Yamaha's racing legacy through the 'Blue' symbol and offer an immersive environment for customers to explore the brand's product range.

The showrooms feature a premium display of Yamaha's motorcycles and scooters, along with a

wide range of genuine accessories, apparel, and spare parts. Designed to offer an immersive experience, the Blue Square outlets allow customers to connect with Yamaha's racing heritage at every touch point. Additionally, these showrooms serve as hubs for Yamaha's Blue Streaks rider community, offering customers the opportunity to connect with fellow enthusiasts and experience their Yamaha machines through exciting rides and community events. This expansion aligns with Yamaha's ongoing 'The Call of The Blue' brand campaign, further cementing its presence in India and building stronger ties with

customers in every region.

Yamaha's diverse product portfolio includes premium motorcycles such as YZF-R3 (321cc), MT-03 (321cc), YZF-R15M (155cc), YZF-R15 V4 (155cc), YZF-R15S V3 (155cc), MT-15 V2 (155cc), and FZ series bikes like FZ-S Fi Ver 4.0 (149cc), FZ-S Fi Ver 3.0 (149cc), FZ Fi (149cc), and FZ-X (149cc).

Additionally, Yamaha offers a range of scooters including Aerox 155 version S (155cc), Aerox 155 (155cc), Fascino S 125 Fi Hybrid (125cc), Fascino 125 Fi Hybrid (125cc), RayZR 125 Fi Hybrid (125cc), and RayZR Street Rally 125 Fi Hybrid (125cc).

PURE EV PARTNERS WITH JIOTHINGS TO REVOLUTIONISE THE SMART RIDING EXPERIENCE

Hyderabad, 20 February 2025: PURE EV, one of India's leading two-wheeler manufacturers, has signed an MOU with Jio Things Limited, a subsidiary of Jio Platforms Limited, to integrate smart digital clusters and telematics into its electric vehicles. This partnership aims to redefine user experience by leveraging advanced IoT solutions, seamless connectivity, and holistic digital integration.

PURE EV will explore JioThings smart digital clusters, which include end-to-end IoT solutions, into its E2Ws to enhance their functionality and interactivity. The incorporation of telematics enabled by 4G connectivity will allow customers to monitor vehicle performance in real time and gain useful insights for more efficient operations.

The JioThings 4G Smart Digital Cluster



uses AvniOS, based on Android Open Source Project (AOSP). It offers real-time data analytics, two-wheeler interface customisation, and full HD+ touchscreen display compatibility. This revolutionary digital cluster allows OEMs to speed up the integration of IoT solutions into their products.

Another solution integrated is the Jio Automotive App Suite (JAAS). This offers a range of products and solutions designed specifically for two-wheeler users, including JioStore,

music streaming, web browsing, hands-free voice assistance, navigation, gaming and more..

"Exploring JioThings" superior IoT capabilities within our vehicles represents a significant opportunity to elevate PURE EV's products to the highest industry standards," said Dr. Nishanth Dongari, founder and MD of PURE EV.

"We aim to redefine electric mobility by enhancing the efficiency and interactivity of our vehicles. This

exploration marks a pivotal step forward in evaluating the potential for redefining the EV ecosystem, ensuring that our customers benefit from enhanced connectivity, functionality, and convenience"

Speaking on the collaboration, Ashish Lodha, President of Jio Platforms Limited added, "We are pleased to collaborate with PURE EV, a company that shares our vision of innovation and excellence in the electric mobility space.

By integrating our advanced IoT solutions, we aim to support PURE EV in delivering the best electric two-wheeler experience to customers, setting new benchmarks for efficiency and connectivity. This partnership is a step forward in shaping the future of the electric two-wheeler sector and driving widespread adoption of sustainable transportation solutions."

RENOWNED CHOREOGRAPHER KALAIMAMANI SRIDHAR MASTER INAUGURATES FOURTH BRANCH OF ARS DANCE SCHOOL IN OTTERI, PERAMBUR

Chennai, 20 February 2025: *Chennai Mayor Priya Rajan, Sen Hospital Chairman Dr. M. Venkatesh, IPS Officer Rajeswari, Actor Jiiva and other distinguished guests grace the occasion*

* Director Vetrimaaran inaugurates ARS Dance School, Director Rajkumar Periyasamy delivers keynote address*

Celebrated film choreographer and Kalaimamani awardee Sridhar Master has successfully been running ARS Dance School across three locations in Chennai—Nandanam, Ashok Nagar, and Mylapore. Adding to its growing presence, he inaugurated the fourth branch of ARS Dance School in Otteri, Perambur, on Monday (February 17).

The dance school was inaugurated by director Vetrimaaran, while 'Amaran' fame director Rajkumar Periyasamy delivered keynote address. The grand opening ceremony saw the presence of several esteemed guests, including Chennai



Mayor Priya Rajan, Sen Hospital Chairman Dr. M. Venkatesh, IPS Officer Rajeswari, directors Vetrimaaran and Rajkumar Periyasamy, and actors Jiiva, Shaam, Nakul, music composer Amaresh Ganesh, choreographer Ashok, Suja, Siva, and TV personalities Thangadurai and 'Bigg Boss' winner Muthukumaran. All the distinguished guests extended their heartfelt congratulations to Sridhar Master and his team on this new milestone.

Speaking about ARS Dance School, Sridhar Master shared, "I have partnered with Sivam Groups' Mukilan and his wife Soundarya to establish this dance academy. The name ARS is derived from the first letters of the names of my daughter Akshadha, my wife

Rajalakshmi, and myself. My daughter Akshadha, who is currently in her third year of medical studies, has been a great support in this endeavour, ensuring that her academics remain unaffected while contributing to this initiative."

Highlighting the importance of dance, Sridhar Master stated, "Some people ask what benefits dance offers. The primary advantage is physical fitness. Many dancers remain in good health even in their later years. Furthermore, one can learn and teach dance alongside academics or a professional career, as my daughter exemplifies."

ARS Dance School offers comprehensive training in various dance forms, from international styles to traditional folk dances. Sridhar Master also

revealed his ambition to gain global recognition for 'Kuthu' dance, an integral part of Tamil cinema's choreography, by promoting it on an international platform.

"For the first time in Tamil Nadu, an entire three-storey building has been dedicated to the dance school. One entire floor has been designed with all the necessary facilities for creating film promo songs. Producers and directors can create an entire promo song here at a very reasonable cost that they would not expect," said Sridhar Master.

He assured that his film choreography work would continue without disruption and expressed confidence that the film industry and fans would extend their unwavering support to ARS Dance School as they always have.

SRM IST TABLE TENNIS PLAYERS WON GOLD MEDAL IN THE ALL INDIA INTER UNIVERSITY

Chennai, 20 February 2025: Our SRM IST Table Tennis Women Players Won Gold Medal in the All India Inter University Table Tennis Women Tournament 2024-25 Organised by University of Delhi, New Delhi from 17th Feb to 19th Feb 2025.

Results: League 1. SRMIST beat Punjab University, Chandigarh. Score:3-0.

Chandigarh. Score:3-0.

League 2. SRMIST beat Adamas University. Score:3-0.

League 3. SRMIST beat Savitribhai Phule Univ, pune. Score :3-0.

Quarter Finals: SRMIST beat LN Mithela Univ, Dharbhanga. Score :3-0.

Semi Finals: SRMIST beat



Chandigarh Univ, Mohali. Score:3-0.

Runners: Chitkara Univ, Punjab.

Finals: SRMIST beat Chitkara Univ, punjab. Score :3-1.

Third: Chandigarh Univ, Mohali.

Final Standings: Winner: SRMIST, Fourth: Jain Univ, Bangalore.

JAISHANKAR TO ATTEND G20 FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEET IN SOUTH AFRICA

Chennai, 20 February 2025: External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar will visit South Africa to participate in the Group of 20 (G20) Foreign Ministers' Meeting from February 20-21, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Wednesday.

The Ministry of External Affairs announced on Wednesday that External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar will go to South Africa from February 20 21 to attend the Group of 20 (G20) Foreign Ministers' Meeting.(PTI)



Wednesday that External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar will go to South Africa from February 20 21 to attend the Group of 20 (G20) Foreign Ministers' Meeting.(PTI)

As per the Ministry of External Affairs, the EAM will visit Johannesburg at the invitation of South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ronald Lamola. The

EAM's participation in the G20 meet will further strengthen India's engagement with the G20 countries and bolster the voice of the Global South in this important forum, the MEAnoted.

The External Affairs Minister is also expected to hold a few bilateral meetings on the margins of the Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Notably, South Africa assumed the G20 Presidency from December 1,

2024, through to November 2025.

The G20 comprises 19 countries including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkiye, United Kingdom, and United States, in addition to two blocs; European Union and the African Union.

The G20 Presidency rotates annually among the members and is selected from a different regional grouping of countries. The 19 member countries are therefore divided into five groups comprising a maximum of four countries each.

PULLMAN HOTELS & RESORTS DEBUTS IN SOUTH INDIA WITH THE OPENING OF PULLMAN CHENNAI ANNA SALAI

Chennai, 20 February 2025: Pullman Hotels & Resorts, the pioneering hospitality brand established in 1859, proudly announces the opening of Pullman Chennai Anna Salai, a transformative destination redefining the boundaries between work, leisure, and culture in India.



Strategically located in Chennai's bustling Anna Salai district, the hotel is well connected to major government offices, consulates, corporate hubs, and business districts, making it an ideal base for global visionaries and city residents alike. The hotel's seamless integration of business and lifestyle offerings reflects the Pullman brand's legacy of innovation.

Spanning 5,000 square metres, Pullman Chennai Anna Salai features 232 rooms, integrating modern amenities and cutting-edge technology. The hotel also offers extensive event facilities, boasting over 1,700 square metres of versatile meeting and banquet spaces, making it an ideal choice for corporate events, conferences, and grand social gatherings. Guests will benefit from state-of-the-art meeting technology and seamless connectivity, ensuring productive and inspiring experiences.

The hotel's dynamic culinary landscape

brings together bold flavours and cultural narratives. Mercato draws inspiration from Mediterranean bazaars and Asian street markets, offering a lively dining experience.

Mercato Bar redefines the bar scene with curated wine selections and signature cocktails. For an elevated dining experience, Up North, the hotel's rooftop restaurant, showcases authentic North Indian cuisine with a contemporary touch, set against breathtaking views of the Chennai skyline.

A comprehensive well-being offering ensures that guests can recharge amid their dynamic lifestyles. From a rejuvenating spa, and state-of-the-art fitness centre, to an inviting outdoor pool, the hotel fosters a holistic approach to wellness, seamlessly integrating relaxation into the guest journey.

Pullman Hotels & Resorts - Garth Simmons, Chief Operating Officer, Premium, Midscale & Economy

Division, Accor Asia, stated, "India remains a key market for Accor, and the launch of Pullman Chennai Anna Salai underscores our commitment to pioneering premium hospitality experiences. Pullman's dynamic design, immersive social spaces, and forward-thinking approach make it the ideal destination for modern travellers seeking both purpose and connection. This opening marks a significant step in shaping the future of hospitality in the region."

C Subba Reddy, Managing Director of Ceebros Group, the owner and developer of the new hotel, said, "We are proud to launch the first Pullman in South India and thrilled that Pullman Chennai Anna Salai stands as a landmark for the Ceebros Group, epitomising our commitment to innovation and excellence in hospitality. Our vision was to craft a space where modern sophistication meets

the vibrant spirit of Chennai, seamlessly blending business, leisure, and culture. Every detail of the hotel has been thoughtfully curated, creating a design narrative that celebrates nature, art, and modern design."

Pullman Chennai Anna Salai has been awarded the prestigious Gold-level sustainability certification under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program in the Building Design and Construction category. This recognition reflects the hotel's eco-conscious design, energy-efficient operations, and dedication to reducing its environmental impact while delivering exceptional guest experiences.

As a member of ALL, Accor's all-in-one booking platform and award-winning loyalty program, guests can enjoy exclusive benefits and earn reward points during their stay at Pullman Chennai Anna Salai. These points can be redeemed for future stays, dining, and unique experiences across Accor's global network. For more information or to make a reservation at Pullman Chennai Anna Salai, please visit <https://all.accor.com/hotel/C460/index.en.shtml> or contact the hotel at telephone +91 44 4393 9999 or email hc460-re@accor.com.

STALIN URGES TIMELY RELEASE OF CENTRAL FUNDS

Chennai 20, February 2025: Chief Minister MK Stalin has called on the Union government to ensure timely disbursement of funds for centrally sponsored schemes, highlighting delays that hinder their implementation.

In a letter to Union Minister for Women & Child Development Annapurna Devi on Tuesday, Stalin referred to a Centre's communication dated January 31, which noted that Rs.716.05 crore remained unspent in the State Non-Lapsable Account

(SNA) as of January 29, 2025. These funds were allocated under Mission Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0, Mission Shakti, and Mission Vatsalya.

Stalin emphasized that Tamil Nadu efficiently implements welfare schemes and consistently contributes its share on time. However, he pointed out that the Centre's share is often delayed, arriving at the end of the financial year or even in subsequent quarters, disrupting fund utilization.

Additionally, Stalin raised concerns over the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), under which Rs.184 crore in central funds has remained unreleased

for two years, impacting aid distribution to beneficiaries. He also highlighted that Rs.30.65 crore in the SNA remains unutilized due to technical issues.

As per PMMVY guidelines, the state share should be deposited only after receiving the Centre's contribution. However, Stalin alleged that no funds had been released by the Union government in the last two years, further complicating the scheme's implementation.

TRIFED SIGNS MOU WITH MEESHO, IFCA & MAHATMA GANDHI INSTITUTE OF RURAL INDUSTRIALISATION

Chennai 20, February 2025: In a significant move to transcend from B2C to B2B approach for tribal communities, Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd (TRIFED) has entered into a strategic partnership with Meesho, Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (IFCA) and Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Rural Industrialization (MGIRI) to facilitate tribal businesses. Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) were signed on 18th February during the ongoing flagship event 'Aadi Mahotsav', held at Major Dhyana Chand National Stadium in the National Capital being from 16 to 24 February 2025, marking a pivotal step in ensuring the implementation of the B2B approach and augmentation of the tribal product market.



President of India Smt Droupadi Murmu had inaugurated the festival on February 16, 2025 in the august presence of Shri Jual Oram, Union Minister for Tribal Affairs; Shri Durga Das Uiquey, MoS Tribal Affairs; Ms. Bansuri Swaraj, Member of Parliament, New Delhi.

About TRIFED: TRIFED is an organization under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, dedicated to the socio-economic development of tribal communities through the marketing development of tribal products. TRIFED has been organising "Aadi Mahotsav - National Tribal Festival" to provide direct market access to the tribal master-craftsmen and women in large metros and State capitals. The theme of the festival is "A Celebration of the Spirit of Entrepreneurship, Tribal Craft, Culture, Cuisine and Commerce", which represents the basic

The principal objective of the MoU with Meesho is to facilitate the onboarding of tribal products onto their social commerce platform, accompanied by training and capacity-building initiatives for tribal suppliers. Whereas the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations

ethos of tribal life. About Meesho: Meesho is an Indian e-commerce platform that primarily focuses on social commerce. It allows individuals and small businesses to sell products online through their portal and often through social media channels like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. The platform provides a wide range of products including clothing, accessories, home goods, and more.

About IFCA: The Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (IFCA) is a professional organization dedicated to the development and promotion of the culinary arts in India. It serves as a national body that represents the interests of chefs and culinary professionals across the country. The IFCA works to advance the culinary profession through education, networking, and collaboration among chefs, culinary educators, and the hospitality industry.

FLOOD RELIEF: RS. 1,555 CR CENTRAL AID TO 5 STATES

Chennai, 20 February 2025: A high-level committee, under the chairmanship of Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday approved Rs. 1554.99 crore of additional central assistance under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) to five states, affected by flood, flash flood, landslides, cyclonic storm during the year 2024.

The HLC approved central assistance of Rs. 1554.99 crore to five States from NDRF, subject to an adjustment of 50 percent of the opening balance for the year

available in the SDRF, a Home Ministry statement said.

Out of the total amount of Rs. 1554.99 crore, Rs 608.08 crore has been approved for Andhra Pradesh; Rs. 170.99 crore for Nagaland; Rs. 255.24 crore for Odisha; Rs. 231.75 crore for Telangana and Rs.288.93 crore for Tripura.

This additional assistance is over and above the funds released by the centre to the states in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), already placed at the disposal of the states. During

the financial year 2024-25, the central government has released Rs. 18,322.80 crore to 27 states in SDRF and Rs. 4,808.30 crore from NDRF to 18 states, Rs. 2208.55 crore from the State Disaster Mitigation Fund (SDMF) to 14 states and Rs 719.72 crore from National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF) to eight states.

The central government had deputed Inter-Ministerial Central Teams (IMCTs) to these states, immediately after the calamities, without

waiting for the receipt of a formal memorandum.

Meanwhile, Amit Shah on his social media handle said that the Modi government always stood like a rock in support of the disaster-affected people. "Today, the MHA approved additional central assistance of Rs. 1554.99 crore to Andhra Pradesh, Nagaland, Odisha, Telangana, and Tripura under the NDR fund. This is in addition to the Rs. 18,322.80 crore released by the centre to 27 states under the SDR fund," he said.

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DEFENCE SECRETARY CO-CHAIRS 13TH MALAYSIA-INDIA DEFENCE COOPERATION COMMITTEE MEETING IN KUALA LUMPUR

Chennai 20, February 2025: The 13th meeting of Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Committee (MIDCOM) took place in Kuala Lumpur on February 19, 2025. The meeting was co-chaired by Defence Secretary Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh and Secretary General of Ministry of Defence, Malaysia Mr Lokman Hakim Bin Ali. Both sides expressed happiness at the growing bilateral defence cooperation with regular engagements between the two Armed Forces in recent years.

The two sides held wide-ranging discussions on effective & practical initiatives to further expand bilateral defence engagements and regional & global issues. Both chairs identified steps to further enhance cooperation in emerging areas such as

cyber security and AI. They identified ways to deepen existing collaboration, particularly in the defence industry, maritime security, and multilateral engagements. They agreed to form a joint focus group to address non-traditional maritime security threats.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to fully implement the new initiatives under the defence pillar of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, as envisioned by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and his Malaysian counterpart Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim during the latter's visit to India in August 2024.

India and Malaysia also exchanged the finalised Terms of Reference (ToR) on the establishment of Strategic Affairs Working Group. This forum will act as a

consultative mechanism intermediate between the MIDCOM and the two sub-committees to progress all aspects of bilateral defence cooperation.

Both sides also exchanged the finalised ToR on the establishment of Su-30 forum as an outcome of MIDCOM. Su-30 Forum will enable closer cooperation between the two Air Forces in exchanging expertise and best practices in Su-30 maintenance.

The Defence Secretary highlighted the capability of the Indian defence industry, particularly its potential to collaborate with the Malaysian companies and the Armed Forces in their capability enhancement and modernisation.

He congratulated Malaysia on assuming the chairmanship of ASEAN and ASEAN

Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus and wished MoD, Malaysia the best for conduct of ADMM Plus and ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meeting meetings this year.

India supports ASEAN centrality and unity, which is a crucial element of India's Indo-Pacific Vision. The Defence Secretary reiterated India's support to Malaysia's endeavours as ASEAN chair in promoting a stronger, unified, and prosperous ASEAN that plays a central role in shaping the evolving dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region.

India considers Malaysia as an important partner in the Indo-Pacific as Malaysia lies at the confluence of three key foreign policy visions i.e. Act East Policy, SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.

THE CONFERENCE WAS NOT JUST LIMITED TO DISCUSSING CHALLENGES, BUT ALSO FOCUSED ON COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TO FIND SOLUTIONS: UNION MINISTER SHRI C R PATIL

Chennai 20, February 2025: The second All-India State Water Ministers' Conference successfully concluded in Udaipur, Rajasthan, bringing together key stakeholders to deliberate on critical water management issues. The final day of the conference focused on three thematic sessions: Water Delivery Services; Irrigation and Other Uses, Demand Management and Water Use Efficiency, and Integrated River and Coastal Management. These discussions led to significant recommendations aimed at enhancing India's water governance and ensuring sustainable water resource management. The two day conference on February 18-19, 2025 was inaugurated by Union Minister of Jal Shakti Shri C R Patil in the presence of Chief Minister of Rajasthan Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma.

In the closing ceremony of the two day conference, Union Minister of Jal Shakti Shri C R Patil emphasized that the conference was not just limited to discussing challenges, but also focused on collective efforts to find solutions. The Minister also



highlighted the importance of such forums in sharing knowledge and finding practical solutions to issues.

The final day of the conference emphasized the importance of achieving the mission 'Har Khet Ko Pani' through strategic interventions. To this end, adopting Evapotranspiration (ET) based irrigation performance assessment and improving on-farm application efficiency through micro-irrigation were recommended. Accelerating Command Area Development for last mile connectivity and promoting conjunctive use of surface water, groundwater, and treated water through guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were also suggested.

Furthermore, the conference recommended enhancing the reach of

the Pressurized Irrigation Network (PIN) and Underground Pipe Line (UGPL). A bureau of water use efficiency to promote Water Use Efficiency (WUE) across all sectors was also proposed in the conference. Holistic Demand Management for reducing water stress, adopting water-efficient cropping patterns, and applying state-of-the-art technology, including AI/ML, for sustainable water management practices in agriculture was also emphasized.

In addition, the conference recommended promoting volumetric measurement of water uses in all sectors. River Rejuvenation through wastewater treatment, recycle and reuse, e-flow, flood plain zoning, riverfront development, and community participation were also suggested. Expanding the coastal monitoring network, promoting ecological restoration and biodiversity

conservation in river and coastal regions, rejuvenating springs and other natural sources for augmenting river flows, and promoting circular economy and water tourism as self-sustaining economic models were also recommended. These recommendations aim to strengthen India's water management and conservation efforts ensuring a sustainable and secure water future for the country.

A key focus area of the first day of the conference was the development and maintenance of water storage infrastructure, not only through new projects but also by prioritizing Extension, Renovation, and Modernization (ERM) of existing systems. Discussions underscored the importance of accelerating river interlinking projects through consensus-building, alongside the repair, renovation, and restoration of smaller water bodies to enhance water availability. Delegates also stressed the need for automated reservoir operations for better storage management, as well as comprehensive interventions to promote water conservation at every level.

INDIA AND ARGENTINA STRENGTHEN COOPERATION IN LITHIUM EXPLORATION AND MINING WITH A MOU

Chennai 20, February 2025: Union Minister for Coal and Mines, Shri G. Kishan Reddy, along with Secretary, Ministry of Mines, and senior officials of the Ministry of Mines, held a meeting with H. E. Raúl Alejandro Jalil, Governor of Catamarca, Argentina, in New Delhi today. The discussions focused on expanding cooperation in the mining sector, particularly in lithium exploration and investment opportunities. A key highlight of the meeting was the signing of a Memorandum of

Understanding (MoU) between Mineral Exploration and Consultancy Limited (MECL), a PSU under the Ministry of Mines, and the Provincial Government of Catamarca, Argentina, which will pave the way for deeper collaboration in exploration and resource development of critical minerals.

Argentina, known for its vast lithium reserves as part of the 'Lithium Triangle,' is a crucial partner for India in securing essential minerals required for electric vehicle batteries and renewable energy storage. The discussions

covered ongoing lithium exploration efforts by Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL) & Greenko in Catamarca and the possibilities of increasing participation of Indian companies in mining projects of Argentina. Both sides explored avenues for investment, long-term supply agreements, and joint ventures that would help strengthen India's access to this critical mineral.

Senior officials from both sides engaged in discussions on policy frameworks, regulatory aspects, and sustainable mining practices to ensure a mutually

beneficial partnership. Additionally, there was a strong emphasis on knowledge exchange and infrastructure support to enhance India's engagement in Argentina's mining sector. With the signing of the MoU, India and Argentina have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening ties in the critical minerals domain. This collaboration is expected to accelerate lithium exploration projects, enhance resource security, and create new opportunities for Indian companies in the Latin American mining landscape.

FIFTEENTH FINANCE COMMISSION GRANTS RELEASED FOR THE RURAL LOCAL BODIES OF BIHAR, HARYANA AND SIKKIM

Chennai 20, February 2025: The Union Government has released Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV FC) Grants during Financial Year 2024-25, for the Rural Local Bodies of Bihar, Haryana and Sikkim. Bihar gets the 2nd installment of Untied Grants amounting to Rs.821.8021 crores and withheld portion of 1st installment of Untied Grants amounting to Rs.47.9339 crores. These funds are for the all 38 District Panchayats, 530 eligible Block

Panchayats and 8052 eligible Gram Panchayats which fulfilled the mandatory conditions for the release.

While Rural Local Bodies in Haryana will get, 2nd installment of Untied Grants amounting to Rs.202.4663 crores and withheld portion of 1st installment of Untied Grants amounting to Rs.7.5993 crores. These funds are for the 18 eligible District Panchayats, 142 eligible Block Panchayats and 6195

eligible Gram Panchayats. Sikkim receives the 2nd installment of Untied Grants amounting to Rs.6.2613 crores during Financial Year 2024-25. These funds are for the 4 eligible District Panchayats and 186 eligible Gram Panchayats which fulfilled the mandatory conditions for release. The Untied Grants will be utilized by Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)/ Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) for location-specific felt needs, under the Twenty-Nine

(29) Subjects enshrined in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, except for salaries and other establishment costs. The Tied Grants can be used for the basic services of (a) sanitation and maintenance of ODF status, and this should include management and treatment of household waste, and human excreta and fecal sludge management in particular and (b) supply of drinking water, rainwater harvesting and water recycling.

INDIA AND NEPAL DEEPEN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIP WITH NEW AGREEMENT

Chennai 20, February 2025: Marking a significant milestone in Science and Technology (S&T) cooperation between India and Nepal, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), India, and the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) formalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 18th February 2025 at CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL), New Delhi. The agreement, signed and exchanged by Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, Director General, CSIR, and Secretary, DSIR, and Prof. Dr. Dilip Subba, Vice-Chancellor, NAST, establishes a broad framework to promote bilateral scientific and technological collaboration. CSIR and NAST share a long history of cooperation,

information, research materials, and scientists, the organization of joint S&T seminars, workshops, and training programs, the execution of joint research projects, access to each other's major research facilities, technology partnerships, and the twinning of institutions for capacity development.

The cooperation will focus on mutually agreed areas, including biological sciences, food science and technology, water and environmental technologies, fuel and mining sciences, metallurgy, material sciences such as glass, ceramics, biomaterials, and nanotechnology, alternative energy, leather and footwear technologies, polymer sciences, and drug

discovery.

The apex-level meeting held during the signing was attended by senior leadership from CSIR, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India, and NAST. Discussions centred on the most effective modes of collaboration and key focus areas for joint research and development efforts. Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, DG, CSIR, emphasized CSIR's keen interest in strengthening its technology and capacity-building partnerships with Nepal through NAST. She underscored the enormous untapped potential for collaboration in multiple sectors and stressed the importance of swiftly putting the MoU into action with a targeted implementation plan.