

**CM OPENS CTRLS CHENNAI DATA CENTERS PARK IN AMBATTUR**

Chennai, 26 February 2025: CtrlS Datacenters, a key player in South Asia's data center landscape, has launched a datacenter park in Chennai, the capital city of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The facility was unveiled by Chief Minister Stalin



in the presence of Dr. Palanivel Thiagarajan (Minister of Information Technology and Digital Services, Tamil Nadu) and Sridhar Pinnapureddy (CtrlS Datacenters Chairman). The data center park features two datacenter buildings with a total IT load capacity of 72 MW, and earthquake resistance up to 7.5 on the Richter Scale. The facility is also flood-resistant, situated 14 metres above sea level, with an additional 2.2 metres of campus elevation.

Highlighting the significance of the milestone, Sridhar Pinnapureddy (Chairman, CtrlS Datacenters) said, "The launch of our Chennai Datacenter Park signifies a crucial step in our goal to create a top-tier digital ecosystem that meets global standards. This cutting-edge facility demonstrates our dedication to safeguarding critical digital assets while accelerating the evolution of cloud-

based services and data-driven innovation." Chief Minister Stalin said, "I am delighted to inaugurate CtrlS' Chennai Datacenter Park, a cutting-edge facility that strengthens Tamil Nadu's position as a global tech hub. Our strategic advantages and progressive policies attract industry leaders like CtrlS."

Chennai is India's second largest data center market, and the CtrlS data center park is located in the Ambattur Industrial Estate.

Chennai's rapidly growing status as a hub for technology and connectivity is backed by Tamil Nadu's strong industrial framework, reliable power supply and global connectivity.

**GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO FOSTERING BUSINESS CLIMATE, ENHANCE EASE OF DOING BUSINESS: UNION COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER PIYUSH GOYAL**

Chennai, 26 February 2025: The Centre is committed to creating a favourable investment climate, ensuring regulatory stability, and enhancing the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) in the country. This was stated by Union Minister of Commerce & Industry Shri Piyush Goyal during his virtual address at the Pune International Business Summit 2025, which was organised by Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industries, and Agriculture (MCCIA) on January 24, 2025. The Minister stressed that Prime

Minister Shri Narendra Modi's recent visits to the USA and France have paved the way for greater investment and enhanced collaborations. Emphasising that the 2-day summit will delve into emerging trade trends, build robust alliances and highlight the transformative role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in driving Viksit Bharat, Shri Goyal pointed out that representatives from over 20 countries will participate at the event, reflecting global confidence in India's resilience. Minister Goyal emphasised that

the Union Budget reinforces its commitments with a ₹10k Cr Fund of Funds for Startups and a Deep Tech Fund empowering entrepreneurs. He further stressed that a significant investment committed towards R&D with an initial estimation of Rs 20,000 crore for Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) along with a high-level committee, an investment-friendly index & Jan Vishwas 2.0 further bolster trust-based governance.

Noting that Pune known as the 'Detroit

of the East' is the hub of innovation, the Minister stressed that the city is setting benchmarks across industries, making it the ideal venue to host events that foster collaborations and drive India's growth story.

Shri Goyal praised MCCIA for bringing together an inspiring confluence of industry leaders and visionaries and said that the 90-year old Association has played a transformative role in fueling progress, empowering entrepreneurs and driving growth across Maharashtra and India.

**ASSAM EMERGING AS START-UP HUB, FUTURE MANUFACTURING POWER HOUSE FOR NORTHEAST: MODI**

Chennai, 26 February 2025: Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Tuesday that Assam is rapidly transforming into a prime destination for start-ups and is set to become a manufacturing hub for the northeastern region. Speaking at the inauguration of the Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit, PM Modi described

Assam as a "land of limitless opportunities", highlighting the state's progress in achieving peace through accords and resolving border disputes. "With peace accords in place and border disputes settled, Assam is swiftly advancing on the path of development," the Prime Minister said. He emphasized that the state's rich natural

resources and strategic position as a gateway to Southeast Asia have made it an attractive destination for investors. Modi further stated that Assam is becoming a thriving ground for start-ups and is poised to evolve into a manufacturing hub for the entire northeastern region. Underlining the state's economic achievements, the Prime Minister noted

that Assam's economy has doubled to Rs.6 lakh crore under the BJP-led government, crediting this growth to the "double-engine" governance model. "In times of global uncertainty, India's economic growth remains steady," Modi said, attributing this resilience to the country's skilled youth and an emerging middle class with rising aspirations.

**PRESIDENT OF INDIA GRACES CENTENARY CELEBRATION OF PATNA MEDICAL COLLEGE**

Chennai, 26 February 2025: The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, graced the centenary celebration of Patna Medical College in Patna, Bihar today (February 25, 2025).

Speaking on the occasion, the President said that Patna Medical College is among the Bihar's invaluable heritage. This institution has a glorious history of preserving antiquity and constantly moving towards modernity. The alumni of this institute have brought glory to themselves and PMCH in the country and abroad on the strength of their talent,

service, and dedication. The President said that going to another city or state for treatment affects in many ways such as delays in treatment, problems of food, accommodation and employment. This also overburdens the medical institutions of major cities. Decentralisation of good medical institutions across the country would prove to help solve all these problems. Cities like Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Indore have developed as centres for specialty treatment. Bihar should also develop many such centers. This would not only provide good medical treatment to the



people of Bihar but will also boost the economy of the state. PMCH and its alumni can greatly contribute to this endeavour with their experience.

The President said that this is the era of technology. Technology is playing an important role in the medical field as well. Technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Robotics are making the medical process simpler and more accurate. She urged all stakeholders of PMCH to always be

ready to adopt the latest technologies. She said that it would not only make the treatment easier but would also increase doctors' knowledge and efficiency.

The President said that our doctors are researchers, therapists, teachers and counselors as well. In all these roles, they serve the people and society and contribute to nation building. She urged them to make people aware of the importance of blood and organ donation.

**EDITOR MUTHU KUMAR CALLS FOR JUSTICE BASED PEACE BETWEEN RUSSIA, WEST**

Chennai, 26 February 2025: Makkal Kural and Trinity Mirror Editor and the founder president BRICS Generation R. Muthu Kumar addressed a panel discussion titled 'Russia West: In Search of Peace Based on Justice', organised by the Russian Centre of Science and Culture to mark the third anniversary of Ukraine conflict. In his speech, he emphasized the urgent need for diplomacy, justice, and global cooperation to overcome conflicts and foster long-term stability.

Marking a solemn anniversary, Muthu Kumar reflected on the rising tensions in global peace and security, urging nations to seek common ground. "Peace and justice are

intertwined," he stated, highlighting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 16, which promotes peaceful societies, equal access to justice, and accountable institutions.

He pointed out that the first quarter of this century has seen a 50% increase in conflict-related civilian deaths, with armed violence, insecurity, and human rights violations devastating lives and impeding global progress. The Ukraine conflict, he noted, has underscored the fragility of European and global peace, intensifying divisions and mistrust between Russia and the West.

Despite current hostilities, Muthu Kumar stressed that

Russia and Europe share deep geographical, historical, and economic ties, making prolonged conflict unsustainable. "The greatest threat facing both regions is not each other, but climate change," he asserted, citing the United Nations' warning that climate change is the defining crisis of our time. Erratic weather patterns, rising sea levels, and food security risks demand collective action rather than continued geopolitical strife.

He referenced the 2015 Paris Agreement as proof that global cooperation is possible, highlighting the UN's role in facilitating over 170 peace settlements, including those resolving conflicts in Iran-Iraq, El Salvador,

and Guatemala. He emphasized that entrenched disputes can be overcome when justice and diplomacy take precedence.

Addressing broader 21st-century challenges - ranging from cybersecurity and technological advancements to environmental sustainability, Muthu Kumar warned that ongoing sanctions and geopolitical divisions hinder progress on these pressing issues.

He called on the United Nations and global institutions to take bold steps towards reconciliation, stressing that peace cannot exist without dialogue and justice cannot be upheld without inclusion. "Lifting barriers and fostering collaboration, even between adversaries, is essential to bridging divides and ensuring a stable future," he said.

Concluding his address, Muthu Kumar urged the international community to see peace as more than the absence of war. "It is a prerequisite for social and economic development, human dignity, and the protection of our planet. This anniversary should serve not as a reminder of division but as a call for unity and healing."

The panel discussion drew attention to the need for diplomatic engagement and justice-based resolutions to global conflicts, reinforcing the necessity of collaboration to address shared global challenges.

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## TOYOTA KIRLOSKAR MOTOR HONOURED WITH 'STAR PERFORMER AWARD' AT THE PRESTIGIOUS EEPIC INDIA NATIONAL EXPORT AWARDS

Chennai, 26 February 2025: Recognising its export excellence, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) was recently honoured with the 'Star Performer Award' at the 54th EEPIC India National Export Awards held at New Delhi. The award was presented for the company's exemplary export performance under the engineering products, specifically in the category of Engines & Parts under the Large Enterprise segment for the export year 2021-22.

The prestigious EEPIC India National Export Awards honour exceptional achievements in India's engineering exports sector, celebrating innovation, excellence, and significant contributions to foreign trade.

The event, organized by the Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPIC) of India, was graced by esteemed dignitaries, including Shri. Jitin Prasada, Hon'ble Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Electronics and Information &



Technology - Government of India; Mr. Adhip Mitra, Executive Director & Secretary, EEPIC India; Mr. Pankaj Chadha, Chairman, EEPIC India and Mr. Pradeep Kumar Aggarwal, Regional Chairman (NR), EEPIC India.

TKM secured this prestigious award based on the key performance metrics such as Free on Board (FoB) value of exports, net foreign exchange earned, and product range. In 2021-22, TKM recorded a 39% increase in exports of the Engines & Parts, reinforcing its strong position in the global supply chain. This reflects TKM making concentrated efforts in ensuring high-quality manufacturing, global competitiveness, and sustained export growth.

Expressing gratitude on receiving the award, Mr. G. Shankara, Executive Vice President & Director of Finance and Administration - Toyota Kirloskar Motor, stated, "This award is a testament to Toyota Kirloskar Motor's commitment to quality, innovation, and strong contributions to India's growing role in global automotive exports. We are truly honoured to be recognized, at the national level, for our export accomplishments through the engineering excellence and relentless efforts in realising the global competitiveness in this direction. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to EEPIC India for this recognition and reaffirm our dedication to further strengthening the export initiatives, thereby enhance strong presence in

international markets."

international markets."

This accolade follows TKM's previous recognition at the EEPIC India Southern Region Export Award Ceremony, where the company was lauded for its remarkable export performance. Last year, TKM was conferred with two prestigious awards: the 'Engines and Turbines & Parts, thereof - Large Enterprise' award for 2019-20 and the 'Gold Trophy' for Top Exporters under the Merchant Exporter category for 2020-21. TKM remains committed to advancing its export strategy, leveraging world-class manufacturing capabilities aimed at enriching India's engineering prowess on the global stage.

As a strong proponent of the 'Make in India' initiative, the company continues to enhance its localization, strengthen its supply chain ecosystem, and contribute to the nation's economic growth through high-quality engineering products.

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## BLUE STAR LAUNCHES A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF 150 MODELS OF ROOM ACS; PLANS TO FORTIFY ITS POSITION IN SMART WIFI AND HEAVY DUTY AC SEGMENTS

Chennai, 26 February 2025: Blue Star Limited unveiled its new comprehensive range of 150 models of Room Acs today, including a 'flagship premium' range, for the upcoming summer season. The lineup features inverter, fixed speed, and window ACs, addressing the needs of every consumer segment across all price points.

The demand for room ACs is seeing substantial growth, driven by intense summer heat across various parts of the country and the rising disposable incomes of India's expanding middle class. Additionally, this growth is fueled by the increasing demand in Tier 3, 4, and 5 markets, as well as by replacement buyers and those purchasing ACs for additional rooms in their homes. According to estimates, India's AC industry is projected to double by FY30.

To meet this growing demand, Blue Star has launched a slew of products, leveraging its manufacturing, R&D and innovation capabilities to introduce new, differentiated and best-in-class ACs.

New Range of Air Conditioners for 2025 - The Company has launched a comprehensive range of models in the 3-star and 5-star categories, offering high cooling performance under extreme conditions. These models are available in various cooling capacities from 0.8 TR to 4 TR, with attractive prices starting at Rs 28,990.

This includes an elaborate range of nearly 40 models of Smart Wifi ACs which have unique and smart features such as 'Customised Sleep', where one can preset the temperature, fan speed, cool/fan mode and switch on/off the AC every hour for 12



hours, ensuring uninterrupted sleep. With Voice Command Technology, customers can operate their ACs through their smart devices, such as Amazon Alexa or Google Home using English or Hindi voice commands. In addition, the Energy Management feature offers complete control over the AC's energy consumption providing accessibility to track, control and limit the AC usage resulting in the prevention of excessive energy consumption.

The newly launched ACs are equipped with various powerful features. These include an innovative feature called 'AI Pro+', a complex and intuitive algorithm that senses various parameters, adjusts, monitors and delivers maximum comfort. Another standout feature is 'Defrost Clean Technology', a three-step process designed to keep the indoor unit of the AC clean and maintain optimal performance. It begins with the frosting of the coil, followed by melting and drying, which significantly enhances performance and prolongs its lifespan. Additionally, all Blue Star inverter ACs are Smart Ready and can be upgraded to Smart ACs with the addition of a separate smart module.

Furthermore, these comprise features such as 'Turbo Cool' for fast cooling; 'Convertible 6-in-1 cooling', which allows the customer to adjust the cooling capacity upwards or downwards; and Nano BluProtect Technology and Hydrophilic 'Blue Fin' coating for both

IDUs and ODUs, to prevent coil corrosion and leakage and for longer life, respectively. Some other unique features include DigiQ Octa sensors that deliver unparalleled accuracy and reliability; a 4-way swing and wide angle louvre movement for uniform cooling and precision cooling technology for setting temperature at every 0.5°C.

Additionally, this range offers an enhanced spectrum of filtration options such as a HEPA filter, PM2.5 filter and Anti-Microbial with activated carbon, ensuring that the air is not only cool but also pure and clean. Another key aspect of Blue Star's inverter ACs is their wide operating voltage range, eliminating the need for an external voltage stabiliser.

Flagship Range - The Company has launched a formidable range of flagship models, including 'Super Energy-Efficient ACs', 'Heavy-Duty ACs', 'Hot & Cold ACs' and 'ACs with Anti-Virus Technology'. Blue Star's 'Super Energy-Efficient ACs' feature a unique Dynamic Drive Technology to achieve enhanced energy efficiency with optimised cooling by delivering high airflow volumes. As a result, the 1 TR Inverter Split ACs achieves a 6.25 ISEER, making it 64% more energy efficient than a 3-Star Inverter AC.

As temperatures across India continue to rise each year during the peak summer season, the Company offers its high-performance range of & Heavy-Duty ACs' Built with superior specifications, these ACs deliver exceptional cooling power and comfort, even in scorching heat of up to 56°C. Featuring a robust air throw of up to 55 feet, they maintain full cooling capacity even at 43°C, ensuring optimal performance in extreme conditions.

'Hot & Cold ACs' are designed to provide comfort year-round. Blue Star has developed one model that can operate at ambient temperatures down to -10°C, specifically designed for markets like Srinagar. Another range is designed to operate at ambient temperatures down to -2°C, catering to locations across the rest of the country that face harsh winter.

Finally, the Company's range that integrates comfort and health, 'ACs with Anti-Virus Technology', effectively filters out harmful microbes and particulate matter. Customers can also operate these ACs as air purifiers, especially in the winter. Blue Star's air conditioners, besides providing consumers with exceptional cooling even at affordable prices, are well-known for their quality, reliability and durability. The Company offers a lifetime warranty on the inverter compressor, a 5-year warranty on the PCBs and easy financing options for its products.

Since the Company's foray into the residential AC segment in 2011, Blue Star has consistently grown in this segment, outperforming the industry year after year. The Company aims to achieve a market share of 14.3% by FY26 in the Room ACs segment.

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## BRITISH COUNCIL'S NEW DIRECTIONS TO TACKLE ENGLISH ASSESSMENT CHALLENGES

Chennai, 26 February 2025: New Directions South Asia 2025, British Council's flagship conference on language testing and assessment, made its South Asian debut in New Delhi, India on 21 February. The two-day conference commenced with a ceremony featuring senior representatives from the British Council.

Professor Barry O'Sullivan OBE, Director of English Language Research at the British Council, delivered the keynote address on the conference theme "Technology and tradition: The changing face of assessment in English language learning systems."

English remains a vital global language,

driving both functional needs and aspirational goals in education and career advancement worldwide. In India, where 129 million people speak English, representing roughly 10.6% of the population, English proficiency and assessment play a crucial role in enabling access to international higher education and employment opportunities.

Duncan Wilson, Managing Director, BC Education India said, "By hosting New Directions South Asia in India, we're convening the region's thought leaders to shape the future of English language assessment, empowering India and the wider South



Asian region to compete, collaborate and thrive on the world stage. With this, we continue to strengthen our mission of empowering learners, educators and institutions to thrive in an increasingly multilingual and technology-driven world."

Professor Barry O'Sullivan OBE, Director, English Language Research, British Council said, "The launch of New Directions in South Asia marks a significant milestone in our journey of driving innovation in English language assessment worldwide. The rich discussions unfolding here demonstrate how bringing together thought-leaders, educators and policymakers under one roof creates meaningful dialogue on the intersection of technology and tradition. This collaborative platform ensures that our assessment practices continue to evolve in step with learners' needs in today's rapidly changing world."

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## EXPERIENCE NEXT-LEVEL CINEMA WITH THE ARRIVAL OF 'MURMUR' TRAILER OUT NOW. "I HAVE MADE A FILM ON A SUBJECT THAT I DON'T BELIEVE IN, BUT WILL SCARE THE AUDIENCE TO CORE" - DIRECTOR HEMNATH NARAYANAN

Chennai, 26 February 2025: Murmur that is awaiting its worldwide theatrical release on March 7, has captured the attention of film enthusiasts for being the first-ever found footage horror film in the Tamil film industry. The film is written and directed by Hemnath Narayanan and is produced by Prabhakaran of S.P.K. Pictures in association with Stand Alone Pictures International. While the film's first look and promotional posters garnered phenomenal response, the makers are delighted the film's theatrical trailer, which has furthermore intensified the expectations over the film.



realized how special and unique this film is going to be after watching the trailer. So far, the horror genre has always encapsulated the aspects of spookiness, chills and thrills based on revenge. But this found footage based horror thriller is something new for all. I am confident that the film's director will be the favourite of everyone, from kids to grown ups after the film's release."

The film's trailer launch was held recently in Chennai, which was graced by the film's cast and crew including Director Hemnath Narayanan, Cinematography Jason Williams, Sound Designer Kevin Fredrick, Editor Rohit and other technicians.

Here are some excerpts from the occasion.

Editor Rohit Quote: "I would like to take this opportunity to thank director Hemnath for making me a part of his ambitious project. The reason we are on stage at this festival is because of producer Prabhakaran. I also thank him. I am very happy and proud to have worked on this film. Watch this film in theaters. We are sure that this film will satisfy you. The director has been very careful and clear about what he wants. He has worked hard for this. We hope that this film will give us a good future and give you a great experience."

Sound Designer Kevin Quote: "When I met the film's director for the first time, he told me that the film will have no music, and this turned into a bigger challenge for me. I had a greatest doubt and perplexities that how well I am going to create the horror impact without using music. I am glad that it has happened now, and audiences will have experience a new cinematic moment in the theaters."

Art Director Hasini quote; "I hope that everyone would have

is installed in the cabin of the car driven by actor Ajith Kumar. It shows us where the car is going. In fact, the speed of the car is 320 kilometres per hour. Such a camera gives 100 percent of the experience of racing. Another example is the experience of walking on glass on the top floor of a 1260-foot-tall building. Similarly, in a building in Dubai, you can walk on glass at a height of 760 feet. When you walk there, you get motion sickness. All those kinds of experiences are in this film. I am glad that I have collaborated with a talented team to deliver a first-of-its-kind cinematic experience. I wish best of luck to entire team, and request you all to watch the film and support."

Director Hemnath Narayanan said, "I thank press and media for supporting all the good and laborious efforts of the industry. Getting on with Murmur, this is a found-footage horror movie, and is something new in Tamil industry. The film is about a bunch of YouTubers embarking on a paranormal investigation journey to Jawath Hills to get capture the visuals of 7 hermits and a witch sorcerer spirit. After few days, police department goes on to investigate about their disappearance, and release the footages from the broken cameras as a documentary film. We have presented those incidents in this film. I thank Guhan sir, Prabhakaran sir and all for supporting us."

"The film's technicians have faced considerable challenges due to my demands. I will begin with the cinematographer, who was tasked with executing a 12-minute single-shot scene. We engaged in extensive practice while filming this segment. Typically, actors rehearse their scenes prior to shooting, but in this

instance, the cinematographer also participated in the practice sessions. You may have noticed in the trailer that the actors appeared to be holding the camera themselves; however, it was actually the cinematographer who captured those moments. He had to manoeuvre the camera in sync with the actors' hand movements. We dedicated an entire night to filming this single-shot scene, which proved to be quite taxing for the cinematographer's team. During my time in physiotherapy college, events were organized, yet the short film competition saw little participation from the medical community. Determined not to follow that trend, I rented a camera and began creating short films. After graduating, I spent two years directing short films and writing stories, discarding those that did not meet my standards. I sought out producers to bring some of my stories to life and quickly realized that the respect afforded to a doctor is not similarly granted to a director.

Subsequently, I pursued further studies. Upon completing my advanced education, my family inquired about which hospital I would be joining, to which I replied that I intended to work in film. You have just seen the trailer for that film. I initially thought that if I were dissatisfied with the final product, I could simply set it aside, much like a short film. From the outset, I believed this project had great potential.

Every individual involved in the film dedicated significant effort to its creation, with many investing a substantial portion of their salaries into the project. We filmed numerous scenes utilizing natural light, and in some instances, we created fire to illuminate our shots. During these moments, background actors were required to run and hide as per the scene's demands. Despite the challenges, the cinematographer managed to capture these moments seamlessly. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Jason for his exceptional work.

## INDIAN RAILWAYS GEARS UP FOR MAHA SHIVARATRI WITH SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Chennai, 26 February 2025: The final Amrit Snan of the Mahakumbh 2025 is scheduled for February 26. A large number of pilgrims from various states, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bengal, and others, have gathered in Prayagraj to bathe at the Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers. On Sunday and Monday, there was a high number of passengers at stations such as Patna, Danapur, Muzaffarpur, Gaya, Sasaram, Katihar, Khagaria, Saharsa, Jaynagar, and Darbhanga in Bihar. Similarly, there was an increased number of pilgrims at stations in Uttar Pradesh, such as Gorakhpur, Lucknow, Ayodhya, Varanasi, Kanpur, Gonda, Deen Dayal Upadhyay, and Jhansi, among others. Stations in Madhya Pradesh, like Chitrakoot, Jabalpur, Satna, and Khajuraho, also saw high footfall, while a significant number of passengers also traveled from Jharkhand's Dhanbad, Bokaro, Ranchi, Garhwa, and Medininagar stations to Prayagraj.

After the Amrit Snan, a large number of people are expected to return to their hometowns, likely leading to heavy crowds at railway stations. Keeping this

in mind, North Central Railway, North Eastern Railway, and Northern Railway have made extensive preparations, directing all officials and staff to remain vigilant at their workstations.

On the occasion of Mouni Amavasya, over 360 trains were operated, successfully transporting more than 20 lakh people to their destinations. Similarly, special arrangements have been made to run additional trains after the Maha Shivaratri Snan, with extra rakes stationed near Prayagraj for use as needed. Initially, the railway had planned for the operation of approximately 13,500 trains during the Maha Kumbh. However, as of the 42nd day, more than 15,000 trains, including a large number of special trains, have already been run.

Union Railway Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw is closely monitoring the entire railway operation. Chairman and CEO of the Railway Board, Shri Satish Kumar, is actively overseeing train operations. General Managers of the three zonal railways, along with their teams, are working to strengthen railway arrangements.

The railway minister has directed the Chairman of the Railway Board and General Managers of

all zonal railways to ensure the utmost care for Maha Kumbh passengers and operate additional special trains if needed.

In light of the large number of pilgrims expected on Maha Shivaratri, the railway administration has made arrangements for the convenience of passengers, including security, shelters, and easy ticketing, in addition to running a large number of trains. Over 1,500 commercial department staff and 3,000 Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel have been deployed at all stations in the Prayagraj region. Additionally, 29 squads of the Railway Protection Special Force, 2 squads of the Women Railway Protection Special Force, 22 dog squads, and 2 bomb disposal squads have been stationed in Prayagraj. Teams from Scouts & Guides, Civil Defense, and other departments are working to provide better travel facilities for the pilgrims.

To ensure a smooth journey for pilgrims, internal movement plans have been implemented at all stations in the Prayagraj region, and pilgrims have been transported to their destinations via special trains. At Prayagraj Junction, passengers were directed to specific

shelters based on their destinations and then taken by special trains to their respective locations.

When the number of passengers increased, the railway implemented its emergency plan by holding passengers at Khushro Bagh. Passengers were then directed to enter the station safely through designated shelters before boarding the trains. All activities were monitored by senior officials of the Prayagraj Division from the control tower at Prayagraj Junction, and timely decisions were made to prevent disruptions in train operations and ensure the safe departure of pilgrims on special trains. Medical facilities were also available at various stations, where serious cases of pilgrims were treated in observation rooms.

During the Maha Kumbh 2025, many pilgrims made use of the digital services offered by the railway. Millions of passengers accessed the website and the Kumbh app for their travel needs. During the final weekend of the Maha Kumbh, the railway efficiently managed both regular and special trains.

On Sunday, it successfully operated 335 trains, transporting over 16 lakh people to their destinations.

## TRIFED SIGNS MOU WITH ROOFTOP TO FACILITATE SKILL ENHANCEMENTS OF TRIBAL ARTISANS AND FACILITATING THEIR BUSINESSES

Chennai, 26 February 2025: In a significant move to transcend from B2C to B2B approach for tribal marketing, Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd (TRIFED), under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, has entered into a strategic partnership with Rooftop to facilitate tribal businesses. To take it forward, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 24th February in New Delhi, marking a pivotal step in facilitating the implementation of the B2B approach and augmentation of the tribal product market.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Managing Director of



TRIFED Shri Ashish Chatterjee during the ongoing flagship event 'Aadi Mahotsav', held at Major Dhyana Chand National Stadium in the National Capital from 16 to 24 February 2025. Rooftop MoU was signed and exchanged between TRIFED Deputy General Manager Ms Preeti Tolia and Rooftop Founder & CEO Shri Kartik Gaggar. The principal objective of the MoU is to aid the skill enhancements of the tribal artisans.

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 Uikey, MoS Tribal Affairs and Ms Bansuri Swaraj, Member of Parliament.

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.

About Rooftop: Rooftop is an innovative platform that offers art workshops and events, both virtually and in-person, to foster creativity and learning. It connects art enthusiasts with expert artists and teachers, making art accessible to everyone. Rooftop provides engaging, high-quality content that inspires creativity and personal growth, catering to individuals of all skill levels and backgrounds.

## GOVERNMENT BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT AND FUTURE-READY INFRA: UNION COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER PIYUSH GOYAL

Chennai 26, February 2025: With smart cities and green highways, the Government is building an infrastructure ecosystem that is sustainable, resilient and future-ready. This was stated by Union Minister of Commerce & Industry Shri Piyush Goyal during his virtual address at the second edition of Build India Infra Awards 2025 on January 24. He elaborated that the

Budget 2025-26 allocates Rs 11.21 trillion for the infrastructure sector to not only help build roads and railways but also create jobs and businesses enabling citizens to experience better mobility and convenience.

The Minister noted that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, PM Gati Shakti initiative is ensuring integrated and

multimodal infra development - making transport seamless, reducing logistical costs & boosting our economic potential.

Shri Goyal stated that the Build India Infra Awards recognise excellence, celebrate innovation and inspire the next generation to dream bigger and build better.

He further noted that these awards honour not just projects, but

perseverance that is transforming India's infra and shaping our nation's future. From highways that redefine connectivity to railways driving economic growth; world-class ports boosting trade efficiency to modern airports strengthening regional and global connectivity - every milestone reflects India's bold vision and commitment to progress, the Minister pointed out.

## DGMO VISITS MANIPUR FOR AN OVERVIEW OF SECURITY AND BORDER MANAGEMENT

Chennai 26, February 2025: The Director General Military Operations (DGMO) of Indian Army Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai, visited Manipur on 24 and 25 February 2025 to gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation along the Indo-Myanmar Border (IMB) and insights into the status of ongoing border infrastructure developments in the state.

During his visit, Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai called on the Honourable

Governor of Manipur Shri Ajay Kumar Bhalla, the State Security Advisor, the Chief Secretary of Manipur and the Director General of Police Manipur. The DGMO focused on the operational preparedness of the Indian Army, carried out an assessment of the security situation along the Indo-Myanmar Border (IMB), and the current security dynamics in the state, including fringe areas. He also emphasised on a 'whole of Government approach' during



interactions with key stakeholders. The discussions centred around the normalisation of prevailing security situation in the state, particularly the need to enhance border management and strengthen security infrastructure along the

IMB. Lieutenant General Ghai's visit highlighted the collaborative approach between the military and state officials to implement strategic initiatives aimed at promoting stability and the welfare of the people of Manipur.

## ALL-PARTY MEET TO DISCUSS CONSTITUENCY DELIMITATION ISSUE: CM

Chennai 26, February 2025: Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has announced that an all-party meeting will be convened on March 5 to discuss the issue of constituency delimitation.

Tamil Nadu Cabinet meeting was held under the leadership of CM Stalin. Following the meeting, the Chief Minister addressed the

media. During the press conference, he said, "Tamil Nadu has been pushed into a situation where it must now fight a major battle for its rights. Therefore, we are announcing an all-party meeting on March 5. All 40 parties registered with the Election Commission will be invited, and formal invitations will

be sent starting today." The main agenda of the meeting will be to deliberate on the constituency delimitation issue. Stalin expressed concerns, saying, "The concept of delimitation is currently hanging over South India like a sword. Despite Tamil Nadu being a leading state in every development index, it

stands to suffer significant setbacks." He pointed out that Tamil Nadu currently has 39 Lok Sabha constituencies, but there is a growing risk of this number being reduced. "The central government is making attempts that could result in the loss of up to eight constituencies, bringing the total down to just 31."

## INDIA, UK RESUME FTA NEGOTIATIONS: MINISTER GOYAL

Chennai 26, February 2025: India and the United Kingdom on Monday resumed negotiations towards a trade deal between the two countries, Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said.

India and the United Kingdom have a close partnership, built through collaboration on security and defence, new and emerging technologies, climate, health, education, research and innovation, green

finance and people-to-people contacts. At the centre of this relationship is the collective aspiration to deliver economic growth and sustainable development, an official statement of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer had met on the sidelines of the -20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in November 2024 to underline the importance of resuming

trade negotiations at an early date.

Today India and the UK have resumed negotiations towards a trade deal between our two countries, Goyal said in presence of Secretary of State for the Department for Business and Trade of the United Kingdom Jonathan Reynolds who is in Delhi. Both sides have agreed to resume negotiations towards a balanced, mutually beneficial and a forward-looking deal that delivers mutual growth and builds on

the strengths of the two complementary economies. The strengthening of the trading relationship between our two countries has the potential to unlock opportunities for business and consumers across both our nations and build further on our already deep ties. The two leaders directed the negotiators to work together to resolve the outstanding issues in the agreement to ensure a fair and equitable trade deal for shared success.

## DIRECTOR GENERAL, ILO, MR. GILBERT F. HOUNGBO VISITS ONE OF LARGEST GLOBAL CAPABILITY CENTRES (GCC) IN GURUGRAM

Chennai 26, February 2025: During his ongoing visit to New Delhi, a delegation of ILO, headed by Director General, ILO, Mr. Gilbert F. Hougbo, visited the HSBC Global Capability Centre (GCC) today in Gurugram. The visit was organized by Ministry of Labour & Employment and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Ms. Sumita Dawra, Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Ms. Michiko Miyamoto, Country Director, ILO Mr. Arindam Bagchi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations in Geneva and other senior officials also participated.

Secretary, MoL&E, Ms. Sumita Dawra, underscored the contribution of GCCs and growing prominence of India as a key pillar of global digital economy. She highlighted that India is home to over 1,700

GCCs, employing 1.9 million professionals and generating \$64.6 billion in revenue as of 2024. Key GCC hubs are located in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai, Mumbai, and the National Capital Region (NCR). The sector is projected to expand to \$105 billion by 2030, with around 2,400 GCCs employing over 2.8 million people, solidifying India's role as a global hub for enterprise operations and innovation.

DG, ILO, Mr. Gilbert F. Hougbo, mentioned that India is becoming more competitive owing to its large and diverse talent pool that it can tap into for innovation and business development. He observed that growing proliferation of GCCs across upcoming sectors like AI, cybersecurity, cloud computing, semiconductors, etc., is a new trend. With 40% of digital transformation



projects in GCCs, India is now a center for high-value technology-driven solutions. GCCs emerging from different geographies viz, Germany, UK, Japan, Nordic countries, is another significant development observed in recent years, it was further informed.

A significant shift towards diversification of operations, with evolution towards higher value services, is seen, as GCCs in India transition from data processing to knowledge processing over the years.

With availability of talented pool of young professionals, India is emerging as an innovation hub. Hybrid work models,

diversity, and upskilling in AI, cybersecurity, and blockchain and industry-academia partnerships are creating future-ready professionals. Emergence of GCCs in India has contributed positively to economic growth, job creation, technology transfer and skill development, among others benefits for local economy.

It was also discussed that a case study on India's growth story as a GCC hub, while promoting business growth along with ensuring social protection and regulatory compliances, would be developed in partnership with ILO and showcased at various international forums.

## EPFO ADDS 16.05 LAKH NET MEMBERS DURING DECEMBER 2024

Chennai 26, February 2025: The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) has released provisional payroll data for December 2024, revealing a net addition of 16.05 lakh members. An increase of 9.69% has been registered in net payroll addition during the current month as compared to the previous month of November 2024.

Further, the year-on-year analysis reveals a growth of 2.74% in net payroll additions compared to December 2023, signifying increased employment opportunities and heightened awareness of employee benefits, bolstered by EPFO's effective outreach initiatives.

Key highlights of the EPFO Payroll Data (December 2024) are as follows:

**New Subscribers:**

EPFO enrolled around 8.47 lakh new subscribers in December 2024. The new subscribers' addition shows year on year growth of 0.73% from the previous year in

December 2023. This surge in new subscribers can be attributed to growing employment opportunities, increased awareness of employee benefits, and EPFO's successful outreach programs.

**Age Group 18-25 Leads Payroll Addition:** A noticeable aspect of the data is the dominance of the 18-25 age group, 4.85 lakh new subscribers added in the 18-25 age group, constituting a significant 57.29% of the total new subscribers added in December 2024.

New subscribers in the 18-25 age group added in the month shows an increase of 0.91% compared with the previous month of November 2024 and a growth of 0.92% from the previous year in December 2023.

Further, the net payroll addition for the age group 18-25 for December 2024 is approximately 6.85 lakh reflecting an increase of 16.91% compared to the previous month of November 2024.

his is in consonance with the

earlier trend which indicates that most individuals joining the organized workforce are youth, primarily first-time job seekers.

**Rejoined Members:** The payroll data highlights that approximately 15.12 lakh members exited and subsequently rejoined EPFO. This figure represents a 5.10% increase compared to the previous month of November 2024. It also depicts a significant year-over-year growth of 25.76% compared to December 2023. These members switched their jobs and re-joined the establishments covered under the ambit of EPFO and opted to transfer their accumulations instead of applying for final settlement thus safeguarding long-term financial well-being and extending their social security protection.

**Growth in Female Membership:** Gender-wise analysis of payroll data unveils that out of the total new subscribers added during the month, around 2.22 lakhs are

new female subscribers. This figure exhibits significant year-over-year growth of 6.34% compared to December 2023.

Also, the net female payroll addition during the month stood at around 3.03 lakh reflecting a year over year growth of 4.77% compared to December 2023. The increase in female member additions is indicative of a broader shift towards a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

**State-wise Contribution:** State-wise analysis of payroll data denotes that the top five states/UTs constitute around 59.84% of net payroll addition, adding a total around 9.60 lakh net payroll during the month. Of all the states, Maharashtra is leading by adding 21.71% of net payroll during the month. The states/UTs of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Haryana, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana individually added more than 5% of the total net payroll during the month.