

GULF TIMES
Special Supplement

26th January

26.01.2025



INDIA

REPUBLIC DAY

DIGITAL DOMINANCE

India's Rise as a Global Digital Leader



Happy Indian Republic Day

On this historic occasion, we proudly celebrate the glory of India and salute its visionary leaders with utmost admiration for guiding us towards greater peace and prosperity.

#LongLiveQatar-IndiaFriendship





Smt. Droupadi Murmu
President



Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Ambassador's message



GULF TIMES

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On the momentous occasion of India's completion of 75 years as a Republic, I extend my warm greetings to all Indians and friends of India in Qatar. I also take this opportunity to convey our profound gratitude to His Highness the Amir of the State of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the esteemed Members of the Royal Family, and the Government of Qatar for their support and patronage of the Indian community in Qatar.

Over the past 75 years, India has made great strides in realizing the vision of our founding fathers while being guided by the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity enshrined in our Constitution. As the world's oldest and the largest democracy, India continues to be a beacon of inspiration, demonstrating the strength of its democratic institutions and dynamic governance. The democratic spirit has historic and deep roots across the length and breadth of the country and the citizens proudly exercise their rights to shape their destiny. In this context, the year 2024 was special as India successfully completed the largest ever democratic exercise in the world. More than 968 million voters exercised their choice and elected the government led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. Elections were also held in several States during the year. Jammu and Kashmir held its first elections post-Article 370 marking a new chapter in its political landscape.

We can be proud that India's economy, despite the global challenges, continues to remain the best performing among the large economies of the world and on course to become the third largest economy by 2030. The nation continues to provide an ecosystem that fuels innovation, promotes investments in infrastructure, manufacturing and technological sectors while ensuring the growth of its people. The total Foreign Direct Investment into India crossing the milestone of USD 1 trillion recently is a testament to the investor confidence in India's polity and economy. Government's flagship programs like Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Mudra Yojana, and the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana continue to transform lives by ensuring healthcare access, affordable housing, financial inclusion, and food security. The success of ISRO's SpaDeX docking experiment again showcased India's prowess in S&T. In sports, India's win in Cricket World Cup and the crowning of Gukesh D. as World Chess Champion provided moments of national pride. The implementation of Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita has reformed the colonial criminal justice system.

Internationally, India continues to be a responsible nation guided by the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, i.e. the world is one family. India's continued championing of climate action, renewable energy, and digital public infrastructure in words and in action have drawn international acclaim. As the voice of the Global South, India remains steadfast in advocating for developing nations in international forums, including the UN, G20, BRICS and G7, with sustainability and equity at the core of its agenda. We will continue to share our journey and experiences with the developing world and have deeper engagement across the world.

I am happy that the historic India-Qatar partnership is moving ahead with high-level engagements and growth in trade, investment, energy and other areas. The visit of Prime Minister Modi and his meeting with His Highness the Amir and other Qatari leadership in February 2024 provided a renewed momentum to the relationship. Our External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Qatar in June 2024 and met Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. The two leaders also met on the sidelines of India-GCC Strategic Dialogue held in Riyadh under the Chairmanship of Qatar in September 2024. In December 2024, Dr Jaishankar attended

the Doha Forum and met with Qatar's PM/FM and Minister of Commerce & Industry. Qatar's MOS for Foreign Trade also visited India in December 2024 and met India's Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal.

Earlier, in October, India's MOS for External Affairs and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh visited Qatar and participated in the ACD Summit and the 2nd ACD Business Forum in Doha. He met Qatar's MOS for Foreign Affairs on the sidelines of the Summit. In September 2024, India's Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman met with Qatar's Minister of Finance on the sideline of the AIIB Annual Meeting in Uzbekistan and discussed advancing partnership particularly in areas of trade, investments, and digital innovation. At official level, the two sides have engaged for the 5th India-Qatar Foreign Office Consultations, Joint Task Force on Investments and Joint Working Group on Trade and Commerce.

India and Qatar share a long-term energy partnership since 1999. This partnership was renewed in February 2024 when QatarEnergy and Petronet signed a contract for the supply of 7.5 million tonnes of LNG from Qatar to India for 20 years starting 2028 when the current contract expires. Another agreement for supply of LNG by QatarEnergy to GAIL for 5 years was concluded a few weeks back. An Indian company Haldia Petrochemicals contracted supply of Naphtha from Qatar. Trade between India and Qatar also remains robust at about USD 14 billion. Both countries have an expanding investment relationship with growing investments of Qatar Investment Authority in India and large presence of Indian companies in SME sector in Qatar. There are significant opportunities for expanding cooperation in new areas like renewable energy, AI, health-tech and fin-tech which can be harnessed by the startups and innovation ecosystem of both countries. India's Minister of Railways, Communications and IT attended the Web Summit in 2024 and explored some of these areas with his Qatari counterparts.

The Indian community in Qatar continues to be a strong bridge between the two countries in various spheres especially for trade, tourism, culture, or people-to-people ties. Their dedication, skills, and cultural values have enriched both India and Qatar. About 180 Indians from Qatar participated in the recently concluded 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention 2025 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Qatar's delegation was among the largest contingents among 75 countries. The event celebrated the achievements of Indian diaspora and was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi who also urged the diaspora to contribute to Viksit Bharat 2047.

It is our constant endeavour to serve the community at our best. We have taken measures to ensure time-bound delivery of passports and other consular services. I would also take this opportunity to thank various Indian community organizations in Qatar who play key role as our partner in strengthening community bonds and providing various services. As we celebrate the 75 years of our Republic let's renew our commitment to India's Constitution and strive for a future defined by peace, prosperity and progress. Let's also continue to build on the enduring friendship between India and Qatar.

Jai Hind. Jai Qatar.



Shri Vipul
Ambassador of India to Qatar

India strengthens economic ties with GCC, explores new areas of cooperation

Growing partnerships span sectors like energy, technology, and trade; new agreements and initiatives are on the horizon

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has grown to contribute 15% to India's total trade, with bilateral trade between India and the region reaching US\$162 billion last year, according to Aseem R Mahajan, Joint Secretary—Gulf, Ministry of External

Affairs. Speaking at the 'India MENA Business Dialogue: Bridging Economics, Fostering Growth' organised by FICCI, Mahajan highlighted the expanding partnership between India and the Gulf, which now spans sectors such as energy, defence, security, and health.

Despite fluctuations in overall trade figures, Mahajan noted that India's exports to the GCC have shown steady growth. India exports a range of products to the region, including food processing, jewellery, synthetic fibres, textiles, pharmaceuticals, and engineering goods, all offering substantial potential. He credited the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed in 2022, with significantly enhancing trade relations with the UAE.

Key initiatives in financial connectivity, such as integrating India's UPI system with the UAE's JAYWAN card and RuPay, were also underscored. The local currency settlement system in Dirham and UPI, currently operational, is being considered as a model by other countries. The dialogue also highlighted emerging opportunities in education and connectivity, especially through the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, which presents significant potential for growth.

Investment opportunities from Sovereign Wealth Funds in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait are being closely observed. Mahajan pointed out a strong interest in sectors like infrastructure, hydrocarbons, renewable energy, and technology, where joint ventures and partnerships could be developed.

Indian Ambassador to the UAE, Sunjay Sudhir, emphasised the growing importance of technology and innovation within the GCC, particularly in sectors like AI, healthcare, and space technology. He noted that the GCC is India's largest trading regional bloc, accounting for about one-sixth of India's total trade, and sees immense potential for future cooperation in these areas.

Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to Oman, mentioned the significant growth in bilateral trade between India and Oman and the potential for direct shipping routes to further enhance trade. He also stated that negotiations for a bilateral CEPA with Oman are advanced, which could further strengthen trade and investment ties.

Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dr Suhel Ajaz Khan, highlighted the energy-driven trade relationship between India and the GCC and noted the economic transformation underway in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030. This transformation will open up construction, mining, technology, and renewable energy opportunities.

Adeeb Ahamed, Chairman of the FICCI Middle East Council, reiterated the need for a Free Trade Agreement between India and the GCC to enhance economic ties. He also emphasised the strategic importance of initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor to boost regional connectivity and cooperation.



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Warm felicitations and best wishes on the occasion of
76th REPUBLIC DAY OF INDIA

The poster features a large Indian tricolor flag on the left, a large Ashoka Chakra in the center, and a group of school children in uniform holding small Indian flags. At the bottom, there is a photograph of the Ideal Indian School building and a circular inset showing a group of students in a field.



76th
Republic Day



"Happy Republic Day, India

Let us celebrate the spirit of unity, diversity,
and the strength of our democratic values.

Wishing You a Proud Republic Day!

As we celebrate 76 glorious years of the Republic of India, let us come together to honor the ideals of justice, liberty, and equality enshrined in our Constitution. Today, we commemorate the courage of our leaders and the resilience of our people who have shaped India into the powerful, diverse, and united nation we are today.

This Republic Day, let's remember that our strength lies in our diversity, and our future is built on the values that define us as a democratic republic. Together, we stand stronger, united by the dream of a prosperous, peaceful, and progressive India.

Let's celebrate the heart of India—our Constitution, our people, and our unwavering spirit!



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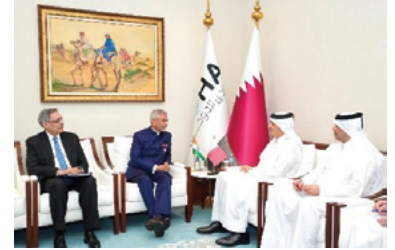
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Bilateral Engagements

Hon'ble External Affairs Minister's Participation in the Doha Forum



Dr. S Jaishankar met with Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar H. E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani on the sidelines of the Doha Forum.



Dr. S Jaishankar met with Qatar's Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal Al-Thani, and Minister of State Dr. Ahmad bin Mohammed Al Sayed on the sidelines of the Doha Forum.



Hon'ble External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar met with HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, in Riyadh, on the sidelines of the joint ministerial meeting for the strategic dialogue between the GCC and India.



India's Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal held a fruitful meeting with Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs HE Dr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Sayed. They explored opportunities to expand trade, investment, and economic collaboration to further strengthen India-Qatar bilateral relationship.



India's Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman met with Qatar's Minister of Finance HE Ali bin Ahmed Al Kuwari, on the sidelines of the Annual Meeting of Board of Governors of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The discussions involved bilateral trade, investments, digital public infrastructure, and other areas of cooperation.



India's Minister of State for External Affairs and Environment, Forest & Climate Change Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh had a productive meeting with Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Cabinet Member, HE Sultan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi.



India's Minister of State for External Affairs and Environment, Forest & Climate Change Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh addressed the 2nd Business Forum held at the sidelines of the 3rd ACD Summit in Doha, Qatar. He highlighted India's Digital Public Infrastructure, impressive economic growth, and its attractiveness for foreign investments. He also shared India's perspectives on advancing trade and commerce partnerships among the ACD member countries.

3rd Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)



India's Minister of State for External Affairs and Environment, Forest & Climate Change Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh participated in the 3rd ACD Summit in Doha. He shared India's perspectives on advancing cooperation among Asian countries, including in youth affairs and sports. He highlighted India's achievements in the field of the digital economy and emphasized that cooperation in the digital world should be fostered in a trusted environment.



The 'Rising Rajasthan' Qatar Investors' Meet, held in Doha, was led by the Hon'ble Minister of Industry and Commerce, Government of Rajasthan, Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore. The event highlighted a wide array of investment opportunities in Rajasthan and attracted a distinguished audience of prominent industrialists and entrepreneurs from across Qatar.



Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore met with Mohamed bin Hassan Al-Malki, Undersecretary at Qatar's Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in Doha. The meeting focused on the vast investment potential Rajasthan offers, with both sides discussing how Qatar's investor community could capitalize on these opportunities.

India and Qatar held 5th Foreign Office Consultations (FOC)



Qatar and India convened the 5th round of political consultations in Doha. The Indian delegation was led by Arun Kumar Chatterjee, Secretary for Consular Affairs, Passports, Visas, and Overseas Indian Affairs at the Ministry of External Affairs, while the Qatari delegation was headed by Dr. Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The discussions focused on enhancing co-operation across various sectors and reviewed regional and international issues of mutual interest.





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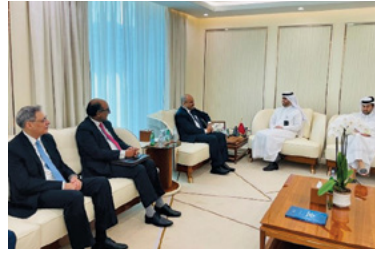
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Arun Kumar Chatterjee, Secretary for Consular Affairs, Passports, Visas, and Overseas Indian Affairs at the Ministry of External Affairs, met with HE Mohamed bin Hassan Al-Malki, Undersecretary at Qatar's Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI). The meeting focused on reviewing the trade and investment relationship between India and Qatar and exploring avenues to further strengthen bilateral economic ties.



Arun Kumar Chatterjee met with HE Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour Sheikhha Najwa bint Abdulrahman Al-Thani. The discussions focused on enhancing cooperation in the areas of manpower, employment, and skill development.



The Indian Business and Professionals Council (IBPC Qatar), in collaboration with the Embassy of India, organized a Buyer-Seller Meet in Doha between members of the Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO), an apex trade promotion body established by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, and Qatari buyers. H.E. Vipul, Ambassador of India to Qatar, highlighted FIEO's pivotal role in promoting trade, investments, and global collaborations during the inauguration. The delegation, led by Prashant Seth, Deputy Director General of FIEO, included 30 exporters from India's food and agriculture sector, who expressed strong interest in exploring business opportunities and building robust partnerships with Qatari companies.



HE. Dr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Sayed, Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, held a meeting with Sanjiv Puri, President of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), and Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General of CII, during the CII Partnership Summit. HE. Mohammed Hassan Jabir Al-Jabir, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to India, was also in attendance at the meeting.



Hardeep Singh Puri, India's Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, extended heartfelt congratulations on behalf of the Government and people of India to HE Mohammed Hassan Jabir Al-Jabir, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to India, during a special event celebrating Qatar's National Day. The occasion was attended by ambassadors and diplomats from GCC nations and several other countries, adding to the festive atmosphere of the celebration.



President of India Smt. Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi extended warm greetings to His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, as well as to the Government and people of Qatar, on the occasion of Qatar's National Day. They expressed optimism about the strengthening of India-Qatar relations in the future and conveyed their gratitude to Qatar's leadership for hosting a large Indian community.

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar also sent his greetings in a message to HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani. He highlighted the deep historical ties and close cooperation between India and Qatar, emphasizing their shared commitment to furthering bilateral relations.



Key Events



The Embassy of India, in collaboration with the Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF), organised an online seminar on September 10, 2024 to raise awareness about Qatar's regulations on banned narcotics and the import of restricted psychoactive and psychotropic drugs. The event saw participation from Indian community members, leaders, media personnel, and other stakeholders.



Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh held interaction with Indian Business and Professionals Council (IBPC) in Doha.



Onam Celebrations in the Embassy



Indian Embassy organised a vibrant Cultural Fest & Interaction with Indian university students at the Indian Cultural Centre in Qatar on 28 September, 2024. The event celebrated India's rich cultural heritage through captivating performances by students.

Bharat Utsav 2024



Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) hosted a grand event, Bharat Utsav, at the Qatar National Convention Centre, showcasing India's cultural richness. The event was attended by numerous Qatari dignitaries, ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps from 18 countries, Indian embassy officials, Indian community leaders, and a large number of community members. HE Vipul, Indian Ambassador to Qatar, was the Chief Guest of the evening. He commended the hard work and dedication of the Indian community in organizing the event, highlighting the celebration of India's cultural diversity and tourism across various states. HE Vipul also unveiled a souvenir to commemorate the occasion.



Ambassador Vipul attended the 2nd Mabrook Gulf Toppers Awards Ceremony organized by MediaOne TV, where outstanding students from Grades 10 and 12 were felicitated. In his remarks, the Ambassador praised the hard work and dedication of the students, recognizing their academic achievements and contributions to their communities.



Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs and Environment, Forest & Climate Change Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh offered floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhiji on the occasion of his 155th birth anniversary at Indian Embassy in Doha and interacted with the members of Indian community.



Embassy of India, in collaboration with the Indian Cultural Centre, hosted a felicitation ceremony on the eve of Teachers' Day to honour 46 long-serving teachers nominated by 17 CBSE schools.

Ek Ped Maa ke Naam' campaign



Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh planted a sapling at the Indian Embassy in Doha as part of the Hon'ble Prime Minister's initiative, 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam.'



Indian schools in Qatar participated in the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign by planting saplings, symbolizing their commitment to environmental conservation.



Ambassador Vipul administered the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas pledge to Embassy officials, commemorating the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and celebrating National Unity Day.



Ambassador Vipul attended the Closing Ceremony of the ISC India Open Cup Badminton Tournament 2024. With Padma Shri Prakash Padukone serving as the Guest of Honor, the event celebrated the spirit of sportsmanship and athletic excellence, highlighting the achievements of participants and promoting the growth of badminton in the region.



On Constitution Day of India, officials of the Embassy reaffirmed their commitment to the ideals and aspirations enshrined in the Indian Constitution.



The Embassy of India and Rajasthan Tourism participated in Qatar Travel Mart 2024, where they showcased India's rich cultural heritage and diverse tourist destinations.



Former Vice President of India Hon'ble Shri M Venkaiah Naidu addressed the 9th World Telugu Literary Conference in Doha. Ambassador of India to Qatar Shri Vipul was also present on the occasion.

Launch of Career Connect



ICBF, in association with the Centre for Information and Guidance India (CIGI), launched Career Connect, a fortnightly free career and employability clinic.

Ambassador of India to Qatar HE Vipul highlighted that Career Connect will provide essential support to the labour community in Qatar by offering valuable updates and guidance on choosing the right career paths for their children back home in India. A 19-member expert panel was introduced. These experts will provide one-on-one career guidance to both students and job seekers, helping them make informed choices about their futures.



The Embassy of India, in collaboration with the Indian Pharmacists Association Qatar and IBPC Qatar, participated in Qatar Medicare from December 3-5. The event highlighted India's advancements in artificial intelligence in healthcare and showcased its role as the "Pharmacy of the World."



Consular and community related issues were addressed during Ambassador's monthly meeting with Indian nationals on 2 January 2025. Embassy officials and office bearers of ICBF Qatar provided guidance and support.

ICC Festival Bazaar





India's digital leap towards a US\$ 1 trillion economy

Government initiatives and growing internet penetration are driving a digital revolution across sectors, with real-time payments and e-commerce leading the charge

India's financial ecosystem has undergone a paradigm shift driven by the government's digital initiatives and the widespread adoption of efficient and affordable 4G and 5G services. According to a report by Ask Capital, the country is on course to becoming a US\$1 trillion digital economy by 2028, with increased internet penetration and homegrown technological innovations such as UPI playing pivotal roles.

The adoption of cashless transactions has surged, supported by the rapid digitalisation of the Indian economy and the growing number of smartphone users. A report from the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) indicates that India's digital prowess has surpassed that of developed nations like Japan, the UK, and Germany, reflecting the impact of robust digital policies.

Government initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) have expanded financial inclusion, with more individuals accessing banking and payment services. In March 2024, data from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) showed that internet subscribers reached 95.4 crore, with significant growth in rural areas. The number of broadband subscribers increased by



7.7 crore, further deepening digital access across the country.

India's digital payments landscape has also evolved rapidly. Between 2017 and 2023, retail digital payments grew by 50.8%. By 2027, UPI is expected to account for 90% of total retail digital payments. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also plans to introduce the Unified Lending Interface (ULI) to simplify credit

processes, especially for rural borrowers, by enabling seamless data transfer between lenders and data providers.

Sectors such as healthcare and education have seen substantial digital advancements under initiatives like the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) and e-Sanjeevani, India's national telemedicine service. The COVID-19 pandemic also accelerated the

digitalisation of education, shifting school lectures from traditional classrooms to digital platforms.



The e-commerce sector is expected to be crucial in driving India's digital economy forward, particularly in rural areas where digital payment transactions are growing. According to the report, digital payments in India are nearing an inflexion point, projected to reach US\$10 trillion in value by 2026. With continued government support, increased internet access, and a wealth of digital talent, India is poised to become a global digital leader.



Healthcare sector to reach US\$ 320 billion by 2028

India's healthcare sector is projected to reach US\$ 320 billion (Rs. 27,28,320 crore) by 2028, according to the latest report by Great Place to Work on the pharmaceuticals, healthcare, and biotechnology industries.

The pharmaceutical sector targets US\$ 130 billion (Rs. 11,08,380 crore) by 2030, while biotechnology aims for US\$ 300 billion (Rs. 25,57,800 crore) by the same year. Over the past year, these sectors have undergone significant transformation, driven by international expansion, industry consolidation through mergers and acquisitions, and increased investment in talent. Companies leverage India's

skilled workforce to drive innovation and align workforce goals with technological advancements like artificial intelligence (AI).



The report also highlights the growing emphasis on employee development. Executive Director & CEO of Great Place to Work, India, Balbir Singh, noted that with healthcare AI investments expected to reach US\$ 1.6 billion (Rs. 13,642 crore) by 2025, India is advancing science and creating dynamic workplaces. 85% of India's Best Workplaces employees believe their organisations are great, with 89% at top-ranked companies.



Additionally, 85% of these companies invested in employee development this year, compared to 73% in the previous year. Specific challenges in the pharmaceuticals, healthcare, and biotechnology sectors include enhancing productivity through AI tools, transparent decision-making, inclusive hiring, and leadership development programmes.

While the pharmaceutical sector focuses on skill enhancement and performance-based progression, healthcare companies leverage technology and flexible work models. Biotech firms are emphasising rotational training, upskilling, and personalised onboarding to foster long-term growth.



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India to become a top 10 global shipbuilder by 2030, says Sarbananda Sonowal

India is the third-largest global leader in ship recycling by tonnage, reflecting its robust maritime infrastructure

Union Ports, Shipping, and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal announced India's ambitious maritime aspirations at the 'Sagarmanthan – The Great Oceans Dialogue'. Addressing the event, he revealed that India is poised to become one of the top 10 shipbuilding nations by 2030 and to ascend to the top 5 by 2047.

Sonowal stressed the significance of the global South in redefining ocean trade in the 21st century. "With its abundant talent pool and resources, India is well-equipped to emerge as a leading shipbuilding nation," he remarked.

India's maritime industry handles approximately 95% of the nation's trade by volume and 70% by value. The infrastructure includes 12 major ports and over 200 notified minor and intermediate ports, pivotal in sustaining the country's economic growth.



Sarbananda Sonowal

As the sixteenth-largest maritime nation globally, India's strategic location on key shipping routes between East Asia, Europe, America, and Africa enhances its importance in global trade. The country's maritime contributions go beyond shipping, with India ranking as the third-largest ship recycler by tonnage.

At the event, the minister engaged with technical experts on creating a circular blue economy. The discussions centred on achieving



sustainability at sea while navigating the challenges involved.

In FY24 alone, Indian ports managed 819.22 million tonnes of cargo, reflecting a 4.45% year-on-year growth. This increase aligns with India's expanding export capabilities, which saw merchandise exports rise to US\$451 billion in FY23 from US\$417 billion in the previous year.

India's maritime aspirations and strategic initiatives position it as a key player in global shipping and ocean trade. These efforts are expected to bolster the nation's economic trajectory and maritime standing on the world stage.

Congratulations
to the Government and the People of India on the Joyous Occasion of

76TH REPUBLIC DAY of India

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Consumer durables market poised to rank 4th globally by 2030



The report highlights a shift in consumer habits, with more people investing in premium and value-added products. This is driven by technological innovations, such as smart appliances, which shorten product replacement cycles. Consumers, especially from the growing middle class, are increasingly seeking products that offer connectivity, convenience, and sustainability. The rising demand for these smart and energy-efficient products presents a substantial opportunity for the sector to boost production and output.

While India lags behind other markets in online sales, with only about 14% of sales happening online, the sector is expected to witness growth in this area. Online sales will likely expand as the supply infrastructure develops, particularly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities and rural regions, bolstered by government initiatives such as the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).

India is on track to become the fourth-largest market for consumer durables by 2030, potentially creating 500,000 new jobs, according to a recent report by EY-Parthenon and CII. The report, titled Vision 2030: India's Rise as a Global Force in Consumer Electronics and Durables, projects the sector will grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11%, reaching a market size of INR 3 lakh crore by 2029. Currently contributing 0.6% to India's GDP, the consumer durables sector could increase its economic contribution by 1.5 times in the coming years, primarily driven by rising domestic demand, a focus on sustainability, and increasing indigenisation.



The report also emphasised the importance of integrating emerging opportunities and overcoming existing challenges to make the sector a cornerstone of India's economic growth and job creation. It recommended that tax incentives and on-bill financing be used to encourage the ownership of energy-efficient products, contributing to sustainability goals. Moreover, refining the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to focus more on components like controllers, compressors, and motors would aid in boosting indigenisation efforts.

Lastly, the report called for the harmonisation of GST slabs to improve affordability and encourage more inclusive ownership across various income groups, further accelerating the growth of the consumer durables sector in India.



Aiming to produce 5 million tonnes of Green Hydrogen by 2030: PM

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently announced the establishment of one of the world's largest green hydrogen production facilities in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Under India's National Green Hydrogen Mission, this initiative aims to produce five million metric tons of green hydrogen annually by 2030.



The facility will be developed through a partnership between National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Green Energy Ltd and the New & Renewable Energy Development Corporation of Andhra Pradesh (NREDCAP), which will significantly contribute to job creation and strengthen the manufacturing ecosystem in the region.

He also laid the foundation for projects worth over Rs. 2,00,000 crore (US\$ 23.27 billion), including a new railway zone and an integrated green hydrogen hub at Pudimadaka in Anakapalli district. He emphasized that Andhra Pradesh has the



potential to become an Rs. 21,47,75,00 crore (US\$ 2.5 trillion) economy by 2047 under the 'Swarna Andhra-2047' initiative and praised the leadership of Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N. Chandrababu Naidu for the state's progress, reaffirming the Centre's commitment to its development.





Aviation industry's growth journey to scale newer heights in 2025

The Indian aviation sector is set for dynamic growth in 2025, marked by mega-mergers, fleet expansions, and infrastructure advancements.

Notably, Air India finalised its merger with Vistara on November 12, creating a unified airline partly owned by Singapore Airlines, which now connects 90+ destinations and serves over 1,20,000 passengers daily.

The Tata Group also integrated Air India Express and AIX Connect, forming distinct full-service and low-cost carriers. Fleet expansion remained a priority, with Air India ordering 100 additional Airbus aircraft in December, complementing its previous 470-plane order.



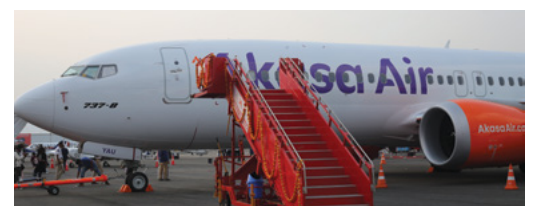
IndiGo, which turned 18, expanded its fleet with wide-body A350-900 planes and introduced business-class seats. As domestic air traffic is projected to rise to 164-170 million passengers by March 2025, the sector focuses on increasing wide-body aircraft and strengthening direct international routes to establish India as a global aviation hub.



Despite these advancements, challenges persist. Supply chain disruptions and engine issues have impacted aircraft deliveries, and the liquidation of Jet Airways marked a sombre chapter. Safety concerns were highlighted by a roof collapse at Delhi's Terminal one and 999 hoax bomb threats received by airlines till November 14. On December 5, the passage of The Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak 2024 replaced the 90-year-old Aircraft Act, aiming to boost manufacturing and ease of doing business in aviation.

Two new airports, Noida and Navi Mumbai, are set to commence operations in 2025 to ease congestion at Delhi and Mumbai

airports. Meanwhile, SpiceJet secured US\$ 352.6 million (Rs. 3,000 crore) to address financial challenges. Akasa Air ordered 150 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, denying recent safety allegations. With transformative changes underway, the sector is on a long-term trajectory toward becoming a global aviation powerhouse.



Microsoft announces US\$3 billion AI and cloud investment in India

The expansion will boost AI infrastructure, regional cloud capacities, and skilling opportunities for 10 million Indians by 2030



Microsoft has announced a US\$3 billion investment to expand its artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing capabilities in India, marking the tech giant's largest single expansion. This move reflects India's growing importance in the global AI landscape, with its rapidly evolving developer community and robust technology services sector.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella announced the investment during a conference attended by startup founders and tech executives. Nadella emphasised AI's transformative potential in India, noting the diffusion

rate of AI across the country as "exciting." However, the timeline for the investment remains unspecified.

This expansion will include enhanced regional cloud infrastructure. Microsoft's Azure platform already operates across Central, South, West, and South-Central India. Partnerships like those with Jio will play a key role in this regional growth.

During his visit, Nadella also announced plans to train 10 million Indians in AI skills by 2030. This builds on previous commitments, including a 2024 programme to provide 2 million people in India with AI training by 2025, particularly in smaller cities and rural areas.

Nadella met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi to discuss AI initiatives, the India Stack, and the country's entrepreneurial vision. The Prime Minister praised Microsoft's ambitious investment plans, aligning with India's tech-driven aspirations.

India's prominence in AI innovation was further highlighted by recent visits from global tech leaders, including Nvidia's Jensen Huang, AMD's Lisa Su, and Meta's Yann LeCun. Nadella noted that India's developer community is creating solutions for local and global challenges, cementing its position as a key player in the AI ecosystem.

Microsoft's \$3 billion investment aligns with its broader global strategy. Earlier this year, the company committed \$80 billion towards developing AI data centres worldwide. In India, this expansion will ensure people and organisations benefit from AI advancements, unlocking opportunities for innovation and economic growth.

HAPPY Republic Day

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Organic food exports to reach US\$450 million in November 2025

India records robust organic food exports in 2023, backed by sustained global demand and APEDA's certification framework

According to data shared in Parliament, India's organic food exports are anticipated to reach US\$447.73 million by November 2025, representing a shipment volume of 2,63,050 tonnes. These figures highlight a steady contribution of organic products to India's export economy, even amidst global market challenges.

Export trends over the past five years reveal significant fluctuations, with the highest value of US\$1,040.95 million achieved in 2020-21. However, subsequent years have declined, with US\$494.80 million recorded in 2023-24, before the current fiscal year.

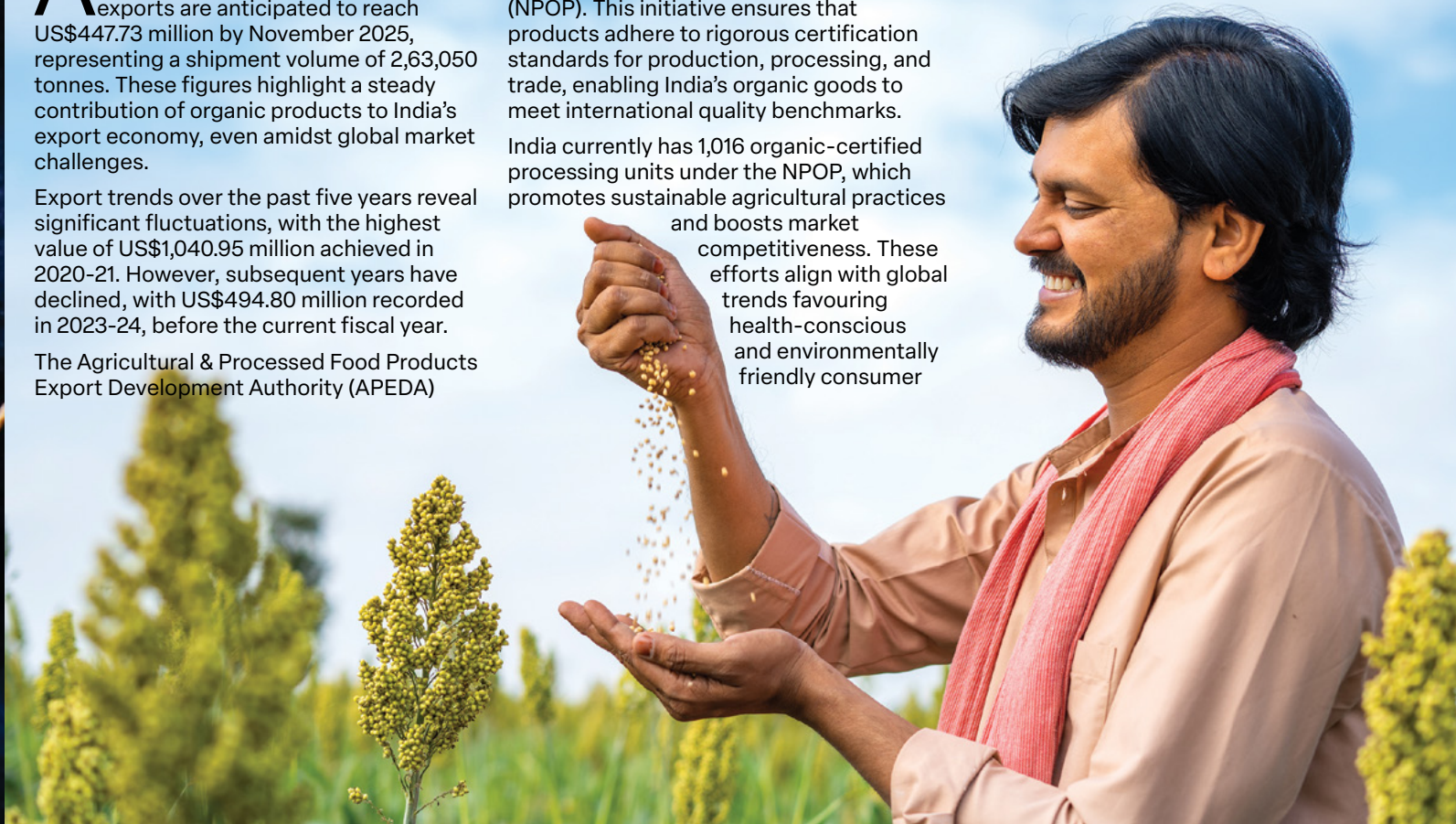
The Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

oversees organic exports through the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP). This initiative ensures that products adhere to rigorous certification standards for production, processing, and trade, enabling India's organic goods to meet international quality benchmarks.

India currently has 1,016 organic-certified processing units under the NPOP, which promotes sustainable agricultural practices and boosts market

competitiveness. These efforts align with global trends favouring health-conscious and environmentally friendly consumer

preferences, reinforcing India's position in the organic food sector.



Five decades of nurturing education and shaping futures

MES has been a cornerstone of the Indian expatriate community in Qatar, shaping generations of students. As the school marks its 50th anniversary of service, Principal Hameeda Kader reflects on its legacy and shares her vision for the future

By Amjad Vanimal

As MES Indian School celebrates its golden jubilee, it reflects on a remarkable journey of excellence and growth since its establishment in 1974. From its humble beginnings to becoming one of Qatar's largest and most respected educational institutions, MES has been a cornerstone for the Indian expatriate community, nurturing generations of students.

At the helm of this legacy is Principal Hameeda Kader, whose unwavering commitment and visionary leadership have played a pivotal role in the school's success. With over three decades of service at MES, she has witnessed and contributed to its evolution into one of the most recognized institutions that blend academic excellence with holistic development.

In an exclusive interview, Hameeda reflected on the school's growth, achievements, and aspirations, offering a glimpse into the legacy of MES and the vision for its future.

Q: How has MES evolved over the years, and what makes its legacy so unique?

A: I joined MES in 1991. It's been a long, rewarding journey. When I arrived, Qatar was still developing, and there were fewer schools. Before moving to Qatar, I was teaching at Kendriya Vidyalaya in India when my principal came across an ad for English teachers in the Gulf. The ad required 10 years of experience and an age over 30, but I was under 30 with just two years of experience. My principal encouraged me to give it a shot, so I attended the interview without the required call letter. Although the interview went well, I was told Qatar had an age restriction for women candidates at that time. I left disappointed, however, the school management took a copy of my passport, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Today, MES has grown into a diverse ecosystem with students representing various nationalities. We've embraced



cutting-edge technology, introduced sustainable practices, and maintained academic rigor, making MES a brand synonymous with excellence. What makes our legacy unique is our focus on both academics and values, ensuring our students are well-rounded individuals ready to face global challenges.

Q: What challenges did you face in your journey from teacher to principal?

A: My journey has been nothing short of extraordinary. When I began as a senior secondary teacher, I was confident in my teaching abilities and passionate about making a difference. Over time, I took on various roles, including vice-principal, before becoming principal eight years ago. The challenges were many—keeping up with evolving educational standards, integrating modern teaching methods, and navigating societal changes—but with a strong support system of colleagues and the management, we've turned every challenge into an opportunity for growth.

Q: What distinguishes MES from other schools in Qatar?

A: What truly sets MES apart is our holistic approach to education which promotes inclusivity where students receive education on par with others. We don't just focus on academics; we nurture our students' talents across various domains. Our Guidance and Counselling Cell is instrumental in supporting students' mental and emotional well-being, and initiatives like the Campus Care Force and various

sustainability programs reflect our commitment to building environmentally conscious global citizens. Projects like 'My Values Define My Identity,' which won accolades from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, underscore our dedication to character-building. M.E.S Indian School has won the prestigious 'Best Sports Organization of the Year Award' (2018) for its topnotch and phenomenal sports accomplishments. M.E.S School was awarded with "My White Flag - Certificate of Appreciation Level" award by the Department of Private Schools and Kindergartens at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education for maintaining zero-violation and no penalty for the academic year 2023-2024. Whether it's arts, sports, or innovation, MES ensures every student has the opportunity to excel.

Q: Can you share highlights of the golden jubilee celebrations?

A: The golden jubilee was a celebration of everything MES stands for—community, creativity, and excellence. We organized several unique events, such as 'Golden Musical Tunes,' which awarded an 8-gram gold prize to the winner, and 'MES Moms Got Talent,' which showcased the creativity of our parent community. The 'Golden Run' brought together students, parents, and staff in a spirit of camaraderie and fitness. The captivating 'Memory Train,' a photo exhibition reminiscing a nostalgic journey coupled with a kaleidoscopic account of MES down the memory lane since its inception. Cultural and sports activities throughout the year highlighted the talents of our students and reflected the vibrant spirit of MES.

Q: How does MES embrace modern technology in education?

A: We've always been ahead of the curve when it comes to integrating technology into education. MES was the first school in Qatar to introduce e-learning for all classes, and today, we're exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence to enhance the learning experience. These

tools not only make education more engaging but also help tailor learning to individual student needs, preparing them for a competitive and technology-driven world.

I should mention that when COVID-19 hit in 2019, we didn't fear. After discussing with the ministry how to take the school home, we were ready. MES had already introduced e-learning in 2011, making us the first school to do so. When COVID arrived, we quickly reached out to our IT department and teachers, asking how to bring the classroom to students' homes. With Zoom emerging, we bought portable cameras, set them up on tripods, and started the very next day. Our school was among the first to adapt in such a way.

Q: What is your vision for MES in the coming years?

A: My vision for MES is ambitious yet deeply rooted in our core values. I dream of seeing MES evolve into a university, offering world-class higher education in various disciplines. This vision is not just about physical expansion but about maintaining and keeping up of our standards of excellence. I want MES to be recognized globally as an institution that nurtures leaders, innovators, and compassionate individuals who make a positive impact on the world.

Q: What message would you like to share with the MES community?

A: Our success over the past 50 years is a testament to the collective effort of everyone involved—our dedicated staff, supportive management, committed parents, and, most importantly, our students. I am deeply grateful to Qatar's leadership, the Ministry of Education, and the Indian Embassy for their continued support. Together, we've built a home away from home for thousands of children. As we look to the future, I encourage everyone in the MES community to keep up our shared vision of excellence in the years to come.



PLI scheme generates 5.84 lakh jobs, hitting 36% of five-year target

With its multi-sector focus, the PLI scheme is positioned as a cornerstone of India's economic growth strategy in the coming years

India's production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme has created 5.84 lakh direct jobs as of June 2024, accounting for 36% of the total employment target of 16.2 lakh jobs over five years, according to an Indian Express report based on RTI responses from various ministries. The initiative, spanning 14 sectors, aims to strengthen India's domestic manufacturing capabilities and reduce import dependency.

Strong performers under the scheme include the mobile phone, food processing, and pharmaceutical sectors, collectively accounting for over 75% of the jobs generated. The food processing sector, in particular, has nearly achieved its goal, creating 2.45 lakh jobs against a target of 2.5 lakh by 2026-27.

The PLI scheme, introduced in April 2020, provides financial incentives of 4-6% of incremental sales to eligible companies that meet defined production and investment

Government has approved Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Textiles

Scheme generates employment of over 5.84 lakh people directly, hitting 36% of five-year target

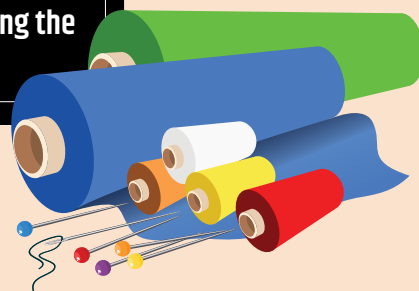
Scheme will also pave the way for participation of Women in large numbers

Scheme will positively impact especially states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, UP, AP, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Odisha etc.

With this, India is poised to regain its dominance in Global Textiles Trade

PLI Scheme will create 50-60 world class champions in the textile sector leveraging the economies of scale.

The PLI scheme, introduced in April 2020, provides financial incentives of 4-6% of incremental sales to eligible companies that meet defined production and investment benchmarks.



benchmarks. Originally launched to bolster the electronics sector, it has since expanded to cover textiles, automotive, renewable energy, and pharmaceutical industries.

Designed to attract investment, the scheme also aims to boost exports and generate employment, aligning with India's broader strategy to establish itself as a global manufacturing powerhouse. The initiative has created jobs and facilitated technology adoption and capacity building in critical industries.



Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Automotive and Drone Industry



The scheme's expansion across sectors highlights its role in addressing India's trade deficit by reducing reliance on imports and fostering self-reliance. With its multi-sector focus, the PLI scheme is positioned as a cornerstone of India's economic growth strategy in the coming years.

As India progresses towards its employment and manufacturing goals, the PLI scheme plays a vital role in positioning the country as a competitive player in the global market.



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ISRO's SpaDeX Mission: A quantum leap in space docking technology



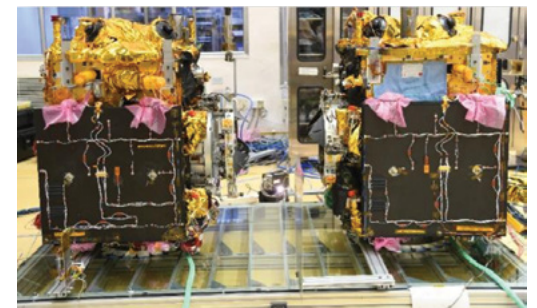
In a landmark achievement for India's space program, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully executed the docking of the SpaDeX satellites, SpaDeX 01 and SpaDeX 02. This accomplishment positions India as the fourth nation globally to master the technology of autonomous docking in space, after the United States, Russia, and China.

Launched on December 30, 2024, the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) was designed to demonstrate autonomous docking capabilities.

The satellites were placed into a precise 475-km circular orbit, exceeding the projected altitude of 470 km. ISRO confirmed the mission's success, noting its significance in demonstrating critical docking technology for satellite servicing, space station construction, and deep space missions.

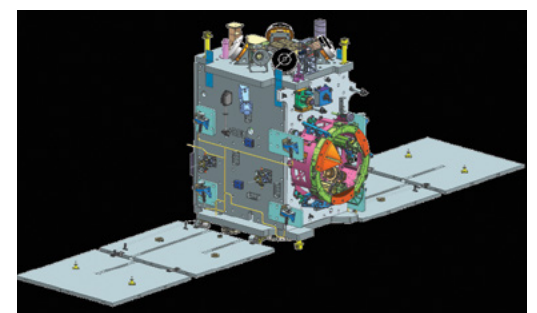
undocking will also be assessed to validate the spacecraft's functionality and performance.

The mission features a host of indigenous innovations, including an advanced docking



mechanism, rendezvous sensors, and inter-satellite communication links for real-time monitoring. A GNSS-based processor for relative orbit determination enhances precision during the docking process, making it a precursor to autonomous technologies for future lunar missions like Chandrayaan-4.

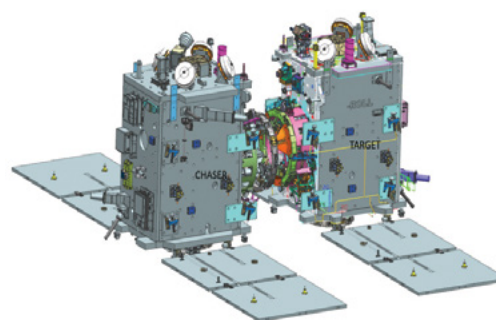
The spacecraft was designed and developed by ISRO's U R Rao Satellite Centre, with support from various other centres. The mission's orbital operations will be managed by ISRO's Telemetry, Tracking, and Command Network in collaboration with external ground stations.



The PSLV-C60 launch also carried POEM-4 (PSLV Orbital Experimental Module), which hosts 24 payloads for research and development. ISRO Chief S Somanath highlighted the success of the SpaDeX mission, emphasising its importance for future Indian space endeavours. He announced plans for upcoming missions in 2025, including the GSLV launch of NVS-02 in January.

This achievement bolsters India's plans to establish its own space station by 2035 and furthers its ambitions for interplanetary exploration and human spaceflight missions.

The PSLV-C60 mission represents a leap forward in India's space technology development, solidifying ISRO's status as a major player in the global space arena.



The SpaDeX mission's primary objective is to test docking capabilities in low-Earth orbit. The Chaser spacecraft (SDX01) and the Target spacecraft (SDX02) will execute intricate manoeuvres to rendezvous, dock, and undock autonomously. The mission also integrates a differential GNSS-based Satellite Positioning System to ensure precise control and coordination during these operations.

In addition to docking, SpaDeX will demonstrate advanced capabilities, such as electric power transfer between docked spacecraft and composite spacecraft control, which are crucial for multi-satellite coordination. Payload operations post-

Tourism sector to double in next decade: WTTC chief

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) projects that India's tourism sector will grow significantly, reaching a value of US\$ 523 billion in the next decade, doubling its current size of US\$ 256 billion.

This growth is expected to create approximately 18 million new jobs, increasing total employment in the sector to 63 million. WTTC President and CEO, Julia Simpson, emphasized India's rich cultural heritage and hospitality as key tourist attractions. Currently, tourism contributes about 7% to India's economy. It is vital in employing various skill levels, from high-end professionals to those entering the formal workforce.

Simpson also highlighted the environmental impact of tourism, noting that it accounts for about 5% of India's greenhouse gas emissions, primarily carbon dioxide. While the sector is growing, emissions have not increased at the same rate, indicating improved efficiency. She called for collaboration with the Indian government to promote sustainable practices, particularly in aviation, by incentivizing the production of sustainable aviation fuel.



Additionally, Simpson stressed the importance of protecting coastal areas from climate change and enhancing natural landscapes, which are crucial for attracting tourists. She commended India's

commitment to renewable energy under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, suggesting that these efforts will position India as a leading developing economy.

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Tech sector to reach 14.9% women workforce by 2027

India's technology sector is set for a transformative shift, with a growing focus on diversity and inclusion, driving increased female participation in the workforce. According to recruitment firm TeamLease Digital, women are expected to make up 14.9% of India's tech workforce by 2027, up from 10.8% in 2022.

This 5.5% annual growth reflects a significant opportunity to narrow the gender gap in one of the world's fastest-growing industries. Currently, 1.92 million women contribute to the tech workforce, with rapid growth anticipated over the next three years. The rise of global capability centres (GCCs) is a key factor, with projections indicating that women will represent 35% of the workforce in these hubs by 2027.

The demand for skilled professionals in emerging tech fields is accelerating, with women making strides in high-growth domains. Data science, analytics, cybersecurity, cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and user experience (UX) design offer promising career paths for women.

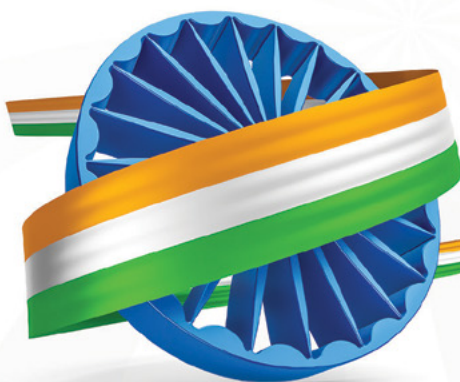


In data science, roles such as data scientists and machine learning engineers are in high demand as businesses focus on data-driven strategies. Similarly, the increasing complexity of cyber threats has spurred demand for female cybersecurity specialists, while cloud adoption is driving opportunities for women in roles like cloud architects and

DevOps engineers.

Women also take leadership positions in AI, ML, and UX/UI design, creating innovative solutions and enhancing digital experiences across industries. With such opportunities, women are poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of India's tech landscape.

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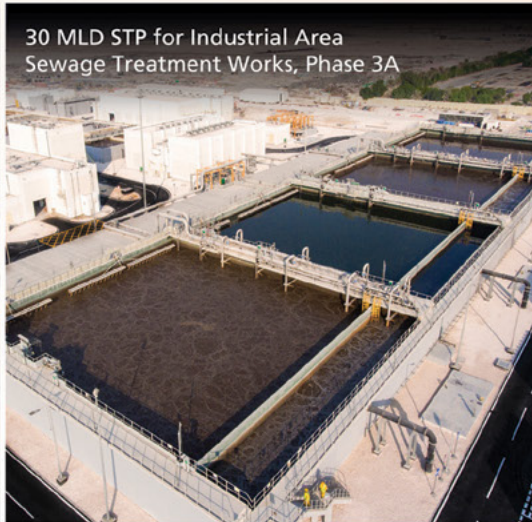
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Republic Day greetings to the people of India!



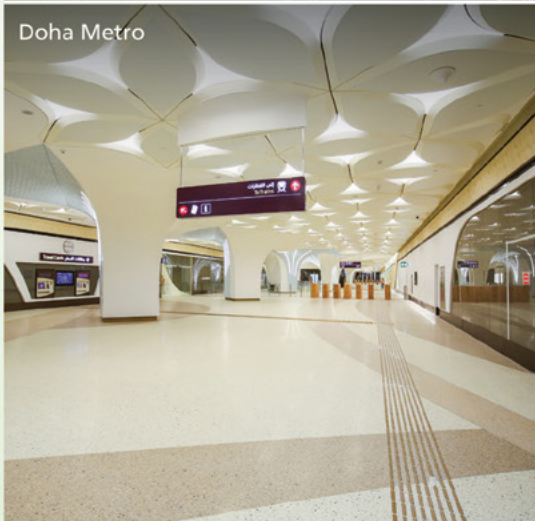
220/66/11 kV Mehairja Super Substation



30 MLD STP for Industrial Area
Sewage Treatment Works, Phase 3A



Ahmad bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan



Doha Metro



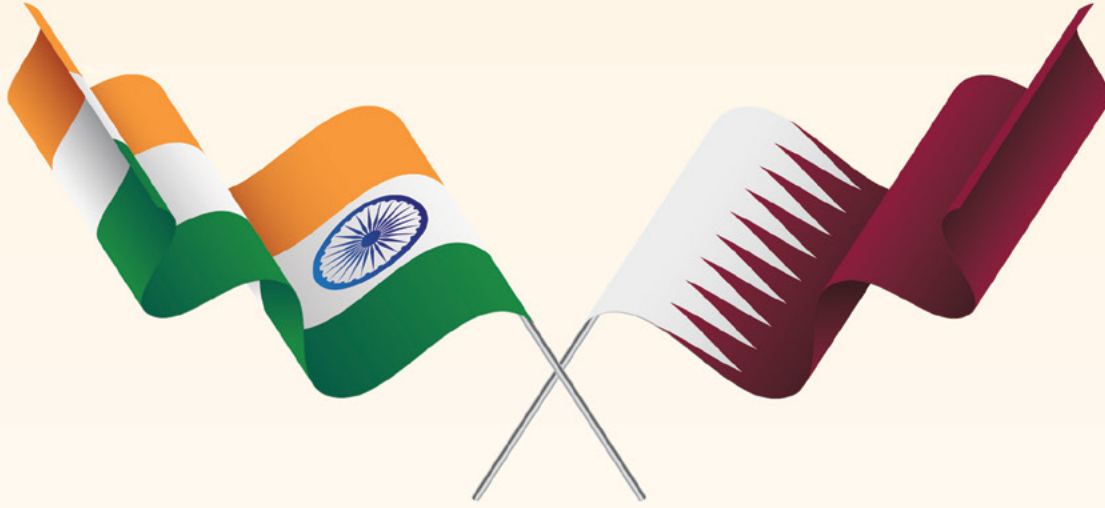
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On the occasion of India's 76th Republic Day, Larsen & Toubro Qatar takes the opportunity to wish the Indian nation a bright and prosperous future!





On this momentous occasion, we celebrate the spirit of unity, democracy, and freedom that defines India. As we honor the values of justice and equality, may the strong bond of friendship between India and Qatar continue to grow, fostering peace and prosperity.

Wishing everyone a Happy Republic Day, India



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