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DEAL OR NO DEAL!

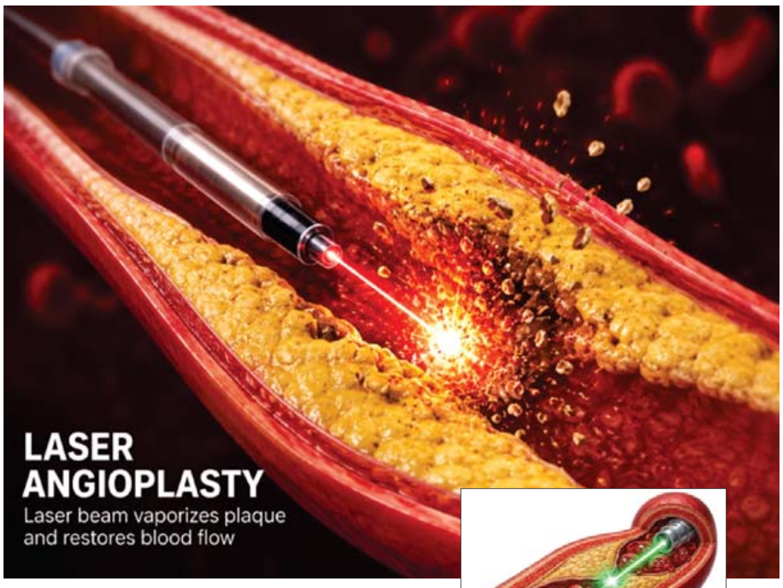
Light as a Lifeline: The Evolution of Laser Angioplasty in Heart Care

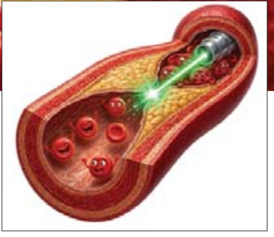
Dr. Vinod Thomas
HOD & Senior Consultant - Cardiology
Rajagiri Hospital, Aluva

At Rajagiri Hospital, Chunangamveli, Aluva, our primary focus is always on patient safety and comfort. Because laser angioplasty is a minimally invasive procedure, it requires no large surgical incisions.

For decades, traditional balloon angioplasty has been a cornerstone of cardiac care. In a standard procedure, we thread a tiny balloon into a clogged blood vessel and inflate it, pushing fatty plaque against the artery walls to restore blood flow.

While this works beautifully for soft blockages, we frequently encounter cases where the plaque has hardened over time due to calcium deposits, becoming as tough as concrete. In other instances, an older, previously placed stent may have become severely re-clogged. When standard balloons cannot cross or expand these stubborn blockages, conventional methods fall short. This is exactly where laser angioplasty becomes a game-changer.





Vaporizing the Blockage, Safely

Unlike traditional techniques that merely push plaque aside, laser angioplasty actively removes it. As interventional cardiologists, we guide a specialized, ultra-thin catheter equipped with a laser tip directly to the site of the obstruction.

Once in position, the laser emits rapid, precise bursts of energy. Instead of burning the tissue, it safely vaporizes the hard plaque, breaking it down into microscopic particles smaller than a red blood cell. These tiny particles then dissolve naturally and harmlessly into the bloodstream. Once a clean pathway is established, we can securely place a permanent stent to keep the artery wide open.

Key Technological Breakthroughs

Medical technology moves fast, and today's advanced lasers have completely transformed how we approach complex heart conditions at Rajagiri Hospital:

"Cool" Photo-Ablation (ELCA): Early medical lasers relied heavily on heat, which carried a risk of damaging delicate blood vessels. Today, we utilize Excimer Laser Coronary Angioplasty (ELCA). ELCA emits cool ultraviolet light that breaks down the molecular bonds of the plaque without generating heat, protecting the surrounding healthy heart tissue.

Overcoming "Un-crossable" Blockages: The latest laser catheters are incredibly flexible. They allow us to navigate through severely twisted vessels and open Chronic Total Occlusions (CTOs)—arteries that have been completely blocked for months or years—giving patients a powerful alternative to open-heart bypass surgery.

Clearing In-Stent Restenosis (ISR):

When scar tissue or new plaque builds up inside a previously implanted stent, standard balloons can struggle. The laser smoothly cleans out the inside of the old stent, restoring proper blood flow.

What This Means for Patients

At Rajagiri Hospital, our primary focus is always on patient safety and comfort. Because laser angioplasty is a minimally invasive procedure, it requires no large surgical incisions. We typically access the artery through a tiny puncture in the wrist or groin while the patient is awake under local anaesthesia.

For you or your loved ones, this advanced precision translates to minimal physical trauma, a very low risk of bleeding complications, and a remarkably fast recovery. Most of our patients are up and walking shortly after the procedure and can return to their normal daily activities within a few days.

Ultimately, laser angioplasty bridges the gap between traditional medicine and advanced engineering. By using the power of light, we are able to provide safer outcomes, shorter hospital stays, and a smoother path back to a healthy, active life.

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EDITORIAL

Trump's bullying no longer effective

Though Donald Trump continues his bullying even after entering into an MoU with Iran, countries are no longer shocked and awed as no one takes it seriously. POTUS has been trying his bullying tactics very often not only against Iran but against many other countries by imposing tariffs on imports which he withdrew later that earned him the reputation of "Trump Chickens Out'.

After nearly four months of bombing, missiles and colossal destruction on Iranian side and most of the other middle east countries which have close ties with the U S, finally an MoU has been signed between the U S and Iran which is expected to pave the way for a lasting peace in the region. While the U S president Trump hails the deal as a total victory for his side, the nuances of the deal clearly point to substantial gain for the Iranian side, besides many favours, there is a provision for unfreezing of assets and special assistance to the tune of $300 billion to help Iran rebuild its infrastructures which is certainly a big gain for the Iranian side. Impartial observers generally point to an unprovoked attack on Iran by the combined forces of U S and Israel with an aim for an easy and early subjugation of Iran which was proved totally wrong and unfounded by the bold and fearless stand of Iran. In fact, Trump burnt his fingers and was in a hurry to somehow leave the middle east which resulted in the MoU.

The U.S.-Iran deal may silence the guns, but it cannot alter the verdict of more than three months of war.The region has emerged from one of its most dangerous crises in decades with the balance of power broadly unchanged, Iran politically emboldened, and Gulf confidence in U.S. protection deeply shaken.

Iran remains a formidable and undefeated force capable of threatening Gulf Arab states and global energy flows, while the United States has revealed the limits of military power against a resilient adversary. When Trump packs up his mission in the middle East, what remains is an emboldened Iran and a bruised U S ego.

"Use less cooking oil, no gold"

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged Indians to cut down the use of vegetable oil. For many, this came as a surprise. He also asked people to use less fuel and avoid buying gold, but that was relatively easy to understand. Both are heavily imported. Both impact India's forex reserves. But cooking oil? That felt too basic. Too routine. Too every day.

Yet, the inclusion was deliberate.

India imported $19.5 billion worth of vegetable oils in 2025-26. That is a massive outflow of foreign exchange for something used daily in millions of kitchens. Reducing this import bill can directly help narrow the current account deficit. And when the deficit narrows, the pressure on the rupee eases.

Notably, this is not the first time the Prime Minister has spoken about oil consumption. In many speeches and even during Mann Ki Baat, he has urged people to use less oil — often linking it to better health.

With the ongoing Iran war disrupting global trade and energy routes, the government is clearly looking at every possible way to reduce avoidable imports. Edible oil is one of them.

But if people cut down on cooking oil, the obvious question is: what is the alternative?

A Health Problem Hiding in Plain Sight Excessive fried food, chips, and processed food consumption has quietly become a lifestyle problem. The body needs only tiny amounts of oil. Excess intake leads to obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and inflammation, experts in the field point out.

Steaming. Grilling. Roasting. Pressure-cooking. Sauteing with minimal oil. Even air-frying. "These methods reduce extra fat intake while keeping both nutrition and flavour intact.

Traditional Indian cooking already had answers. Boiling. Pressure-cooking. Curd-based gravies. Tomato-based preparations. All of these need very little oil.

COVER STORY

N M PRABHAKARAN

US-IRAN DEAL: A PYRRHIC VICTORY FOR IRAN

The region has emerged from one of its most dangerous crises in decades with the balance of power broadly unchanged, Iran politically emboldened, and Gulf confidence in U.S. protection deeply shaken

After nearly four months of bombing, missiles and colossal destruction on Iranian side and most of the other middle east countries which have close ties with the U S, finally an MoU has been signed between the U S and Iran which is expected to pave the way for a lasting peace in the region. While the U S president Trump hails the deal as a total victory for his side, the nuances of the deal clearly point to substantial gain for the Iranian side, besides many favours, there is a provision for unfreezing of assets and special assistance to the tune of $300 billion to help Iran rebuild its infrastructures which is certainly a big gain for the Iranian side. Impartial observers generally point to an unprovoked attack on Iran by the combined forces of U S and Israel with an aim for an easy and early subjugation of Iran which was proved totally wrong and unfounded by the bold and fearless stand of Iran. In fact, Trump burnt his fingers and was in a hurry to somehow leave the middle east which resulted in the MoU.

- War demonstrates limits of US power, Iranian resilience
- Deal halts fighting but leaves core issues unresolved
- Iran survives military campaign, preserving much of its leverage
- Gulf states were left to absorb fallout from war
- They are now shifting towards accommodation with Iran

The U.S.-Iran deal may silence the guns, but it cannot alter the verdict of more than three months of war.The region has emerged from one of its most dangerous crises in decades with the balance of power broadly unchanged, Iran politically emboldened, and Gulf confidence in U.S. protection deeply shaken, Gulf sources, diplomats and analysts say.

Iran remains a formidable and undefeated force capable of threatening Gulf Arab states and global energy flows, they say, while the United States has revealed the limits of military power against a resilient adversary.

For Washington, the deal offers an exit from a costly confrontation that failed to deliver its most ambitious objectives — from forcing Tehran's capitulation to dismantling its nuclear and missile capabilities, the sources add. For Iran, it amounts to something equally significant: survival.

After absorbing relentless U.S. and Israeli strikes, the Islamic Republic emerges battered but standing, preserving both its political establishment and much of the leverage that brought the parties to the table.

"'Epic Fury' has been an epic disaster," said Aaron David Miller, a former U.S. official and negotiator, referring to the U.S.-Israeli campaign launched on Iran on February 28 that killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and top officials.

SHOCK TO SUNNI GULF STATES

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), provides for a 60-day cessation of hostilities during which the two sides will negotiate a permanent settlement, including disputes over Iran's enriched uranium stockpile.

The sharpest shock, however, is being felt in the Sunni Arab Gulf states, where the stability behind decades of economic growth has been sharply ' challenged. By this measure, they are the war's main losers: spectators to decisions that reshaped their security landscape, now left to absorb the fallout.

The dealhas already begun to reshape Gulf strategic thinking, eroding confidence in U.S. protection, entrenching Iran as an enduring regional force, and accelerating a shift toward accommodation rather than confrontation.

A senior Gulf government source put it bluntly: any de-escalation is positive, but the situation is unequivocally worse than before the war.

The emerging deal also appears unfavourable to Israel, according to three Israeli officials,

COVER STORY

as it omits its core demands, including dismantling Iran's enrichment capability and curbs on its missile programme.

Officials said Israel was caught off guard when U.S. President Donald Trump signalled on a deal, highlighting its limited influence over the terms. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu raised the issue directly with Trump, according to a statement from his office, which stressed that Israel was not party to the agreement and outlined its conditions for a final deal — ending Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir rejected the deal, saying Israel was not bound by it "in any way."

GULF CAPITALS SHIFT TOWARDS ENGAGEMENT WITH TEHRAN

The agreement may end this phase of the conflict, but it does not resolve the strategic dilemma it has exposed: Iran remains a potent force, the Strait of Hormuz has emerged as a recurring pressure point, and the assumptions underpinning Gulf economies look more fragile than at any point in recent memory.

For Gulf states, the U.S.-Israeli campaign has triggered precisely the consequences they had long feared: Iranian strikes on energy and civilian infrastructure and disruption to Hormuz, dealing a heavy economic blow.

Gulf capitals welcome a ` pause in fighting, but many are drawing a sobering conclusion: neither U.S. nor Israeli force has removed the Iranian challenge, while the costs of confrontation have fallen disproportionately on those caught in between. More and more Gulf states are coming to realise that Iran is here to stay, that it retains the capacity to disrupt the regional order.

"The Gulf states don't trust Iran. They had hoped the United States would bring about regime change. The reverse has happened. Now more and more Gulf rulers realise they cannot depend on the U.S., or Israel to deliver security or stability.

That reassessment marks a deeper shift. Gulf states have long distrusted Iran but relied on U.S. power to contain it. Now, engagement with Tehran has already begun.

Gulf capitals have intensified contacts with Tehran lately, seeking economic and security understandings to reduce the risk of confrontation, regional sources say. Before the war, the central ` regional question was the scope of Arab–Israeli normalisation. In its aftermath, the focus is shifting toward Gulf-Iran accommodation.

While Washington will remain an indispensable partner, regional analysts say the conflict is likely to accelerate a quiet but consequential realignment, with Gulf states diversifying defence ties and hedging against future shocks.

WASHINGTON'S OBJECTIVES MISSED

Washington has failed to deliver its declared objectives from regime change to curbing Iran's nuclear program, while handing Tehran two new points of strategic leverage — the weaponisation of Hormuz and the ability to directly threaten Gulf states.

They (the Americans) switched from unconditional surrender ` to an MOU, they caved in,say some regional experts. They said they would change the Iranian regime — they couldn't. They said they would resolve the missile and nuclear file — that didn't happen.

What is being signed, analysts say, is less a peace accord than a mechanism to halt the fighting.

At its core, fundamental disputes remain unresolved: Iran's enriched uranium, enrichment levels, sanctions relief, security guarantees, and control of key waterways.

The MoU is not a resolution but "a ticket to negotiation" — a first phase that buys time and space for talks whose success is far from guaranteed. Its structure echoes the Gaza ceasefire frameworks: a pause that defers the hardest issues, with no guarantee they will ever be resolved.

What is about to be signed is not peace, but recognition: that the war's ambitions outran its achievements; that the battlefield produced a stalemate, and that Gulf states, which bore the heaviest costs, are recalibrating their security on shakier ground than at any point in time, observers feel.

Having withstood both internal unrest and external military pressure,Iran now faces a different question: whether this war has reinforced, rather than weakened, its sense of resilience, with implications for deterrence in the years ahead.

When Enemies Become Partners: The Real Art of the Deal

Nelson Mandela is known to have said, "To make peace with an enemy, one must work with that enemy, and that enemy becomes one's partner." Mandela's fight in eradicating apartheid from South Africa was very different from the nearly five-decades-long feud between the United States and Iran. Yet the logic of negotiation he championed to bring change and eventually peace underpins the diplomatic breakthrough that has led to the long-awaited Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Iran and the United States.

After several weeks of intense fighting that cost thousands of lives, including the murder of 168 schoolchildren on the first day of the war, President Trump and his advisors appear to have acknowledged the limits of military force in pressuring the Islamic Republic to cave in. This agreement provides some immediate remedies: the cessation of hostilities, the lifting of the naval blockade on Iran, and the safe passage of ships through the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. In addition, the MoU provides $300 billion to assist with Iran's postwar reconstruction, while the Islamic Republic agrees to abandon the pursuit of nuclear weapons. However, the MoU also does not mention Israel by name, indicating a break from initial war objectives and the ultimate settlement of regional differences.

BUSINESS NEWS

Analystor Technologies celebrates 10th anniversary

Analystor Technologies, a leading software solutions company based at the Government Cyberpark, Kozhikode, celebrated its 10th anniversary with a series of special events.

The anniversary function was held at Asma Tower in Kozhikode and attended by prominent personalities from the IT industry along with company employees.

The celebrations were inaugurated by Nazly Muhammed, Executive Director of KRS Logistics. The event was presided over by Analystor Technologies CEO Muhammed Saleem.

Rosy Marcel - Chief Administrative Officer BCMCH, DR. Riju Mathew - Assistant Director BCMCH, Anusree - Manager, HR and Marketing and Bijesh - AGM, Administration and Client Service from Cyberpark, Syed Ibrahim - Chief Technical Officer, Sai Ganesh - Chief Quality Officer, and Sreelal - Technical Head of Analystor participated.

The company highlighted that over the past decade it has achieved significant global growth in the custom software development sector, with expertise in. NET, React, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and cloud technologies. According to the company, its commitment to service excellence and technological innovation has enabled it to establish a strong presence in international markets.

The company also has a strong presence in Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram, and Dubai, enabling it to serve clients across both domestic and international markets.

CIAL Air Cargo registers 10 per cent growth despite West Asia disruptions

CIAL
COCHIN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT LIMITED

Amid operational disruptions and geopolitical tensions in West Asia during February–March 2026, Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) recorded strong growth in its cargo operations as one of South India's leading air freight and logistics gateways. Efforts implemented to streamline exports to the Gulf region have yielded significant results, enabling CIAL to achieve nearly 10 per cent growth during the financial year. In FY 2025–26, CIAL handled 72,178 metric tonnes of cargo, of which nearly 76 per cent comprised international cargo. This marked an increase of around 10 per cent compared to the previous year. Consequently, revenue from the cargo segment rose to Rs. 52.84 crore. The increase in cargo volumes was primarily driven by higher movement of perishables, pharmaceuticals, industrial consignments and e-commerce shipments through CIAL's expanding cargo network.

CIAL also launched a Dedicated Trucking Centre aimed at streamlining landside cargo movement and improving logistics efficiency. The facility includes dedicated parking and movement zones for long-haul and short-haul cargo trucks, along with separate parking facilities and driver amenities to support round-the-clock cargo operations.

Speaking about the growth in cargo operations, CIAL Managing Director **S. Suhas** said the airport's focus remains on strengthening infrastructure, improving operational efficiency and creating a future-ready logistics ecosystem capable of supporting global trade demands. "CIAL is steadily evolving into a future-ready air cargo and logistics gateway for South India. Through infrastructure augmentation, digital cargo management systems and multimodal integration initiatives, we aim to deliver seamless freight connectivity while supporting exporters, industries and emerging e-commerce markets," he said.

CIAL has also initiated steps to further strengthen specialised cargo handling, including efforts to obtain certification for pharmaceutical cargo handling and expand support systems for temperature-sensitive and time-critical shipments.

Integrated conservation framework proposed to tackle illegal marine wildlife trade

CMFRI hosts national capacity building meet to strengthen wildlife enforcement against illegal wildlife trade

In view of the increasing threat from illegal marine species trade, experts have called for an integrated conservation frame-work, including community participation, to strengthen marine enforcement. Speaking at a national capacity building workshop held at ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), they called for a holistic approach combining science, enforcement, policy support and community engagement.

The three-day workshop, jointly organised by CMFRI, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and WWF-India, brought together 27 enforcement officials representing forest department, postal department, railway protection force, police of west coast states and UT Lakshadweep along with scientists, conservationists and policymakers from across the country.

CMFRI Director Dr Grinson George stressed the need for a robust enforcement network to tackle illegal marine wildlife trade and ensure conservation. Emphasising the importance of proper legislation in line with societal needs and ecosystem requirements, he said technology-driven approach would help step up surveillance and enforce ment.

Senior Director of Biodiversity Conservation, WWF-India Dr Dipankar Ghose stated that illegal trade in marine species must be dealt differently from trade in terrestrial species. It needs a deeper understanding of fishers' livelihoods, motivation for IWT and together with stakeholders, finding solutions to curb this trade.

CMFRI's Finfish Fisheries Division Head Dr Shoba Joe Kizhakudan said marine conservation in India could not be treated merely as a wildlife issue, but must also be viewed as a fisheries and livelihood issue affecting coastal communities dependent on marine resources. "Consultation and dialogue with fishermen are essential for smooth enforcement and long-term conservation success", she added.

Brigade Hotel and Marriott International Open Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Infopark

The 218-room hotel is the upgraded and rebranded Four Points by Sheraton Kochi Infopark in the IT corridor; designed for corporate, MICE and modern leisure travellers.

Brigade Hotel Ventures Limited (BHVL) and Marriott haveannounced the opening of Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Infopark, an upgraded and rebranded hotel formerly operating as Four Points by Sheraton Kochi Infopark. Located at Kakkanad, adjoining Infopark Kochi in the IT corridor, the hotel represents a strategic asset upgrade by BHVL in one of the city's strongest business districts.

The hotel continues to offer a convenient base for business and leisure travellers visiting Infopark, SmartCity and other key commercial hubs, while also providing access to Kochi's cultural landmarks, shopping and leisure destinations.

Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Infopark features 218 rooms and suites with flexible workspaces, smart TVs and high speed WiFi, and is located in Kakkanad, adjoining Infopark Kochi in the IT corridor, around 45 minutes from Cochin International Airport. The hotel offers over 8,000 sq. ft. of meeting and event space across four venues, four dining options including Clove, All Spice, Caper and a lobby-level Deli, and recreational facilities such as a rooftop infinity pool, 24/7 fitness centre and spa, with Fort Kochi, the Dutch Palace and Thrikkakara Temple among nearby attractions.

Nirupa Shankar, Managing Director, Brigade Hotel Ventures Limited, said: "The transition of our hotel to Courtyard by Marriott reflects our focus on upgrading assets in strong business locations with brands that align with evolving guest expectations. This strengthens our portfolio in Kochi and reinforces our long-term commitment to high-quality hospitality assets."

"The opening of Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Infopark reflects our focused approach to expanding in high-growth business corridors across India," said Kiran Andicot, Senior Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International. "As the Infopark area continues to grow as a significant commercial hub, we see strong potential to serve travellers seeking a stay experience that is both efficient and comfortable. Courtyard by Marriott is purpose-built for this environment, with well-designed stays that prioritize comfort, connectivity and efficiency."

Elias George appointed as Part-time Chairman of Federal Bank

The Reserve Bank of India has accorded approval for the appointment of Mr. Elias George as the Part-time Chairman of the Bank for a period of three years

Mr. Elias George had been serving as an independent Director on the Board of the Bank since September 5, 2023.

BSNL Organizes World Telecom Day Conclave

In connection with World Telecom Day, BSNL Ernakulam organized High Tech Business Conclave in Kochi. The event was inaugurated by Sushanth Kurunthil, CEO of Infopark. Dr. K. Francis Jacob, Principal General Manager (PGMT), BSNL Ernakulam, welcomed the gathering. Benny Chinnappan, Additional Director General, Department of Telecommunications (DoT), delivered the keynote address. Nirmal P.G., Principal General Manager (PGM), detailed the various BSNL Enterprise Business Solutions.

The conclave featured multiple insightful panel discussions focused on cutting-edge technologies, including Cyber Security, Artificial Intelligence (AI), 5G CNPN (Captive Non-Public Network), Internet of Things (IoT), and Cloud Telephony.

Eminent officials and domain experts from various prestigious organizations including the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Kerala Police Cyberdome, Federal Bank, Cochin Shipyard, BPCL, Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL), C-DAC, and Lakeshore Hospital actively participated in the technical sessions.

The event also witnessed a huge turnout of representatives from prominent establishments such as South Indian Bank, Muthoot, Rajagiri Hospital, Dhanlaxmi Bank, Apollo Adlux Hospital, Synthite, Medical Trust, Smita Hospital, and Prudent Technologies, alongside BSNL Business area and Vertical heads and senior telecom officials.

Saji Kumar R., Chief General Manager Telecom (CGMT), BSNL Kerala Circle, delivered the concluding address. Rajeev S. K., General Manager, BSNL Ernakulam, proposed the vote of thanks, marking the successful culmination of the conclave.

Aster Medcity Conducts Heart Transplant Surgery

The heart from Kannoor brought via air ambulance being received at Aster Medcity by Dr. Johnson K Varghese and Dr. Bharat Sajith.

BUSINESS NEWS

CSL Signs Investment Agreement with Maritech Integrated Maritime

Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) has signed an agreement to make a 5% share capital investment in Maritech Integrated Maritime Private Limited under its flagship startup initiative, USHUS. CSL's USHUS programme is aligned with the Government of India's vision of promoting innovation, entrepreneurship, indigenisation, and the growth of technology-driven startups. Through strategic investments and collaboration with startups, the programme aims to nurture emerging technologies with the potential to strengthen India's maritime ecosystem. CSL has earmarked a total corpus of ₹ 50 crore under the USHUS programme to support and invest in various startups operating in the maritime sector. CSL has partnered with IIMK LIVE and IIT Madras for the implementation of the programme.

Maritech Integrated Maritime Private Limited is a deep-tech startup based in Dehradun that has developed the Integrated Maritime Exchange (IME), a digital platform that connects maritime stakeholders and facilitates logistics- and port-related services. IME has the potential to serve as a unified digital marketplace for the maritime sector, enhancing operational efficiency, transparency, and collaboration across the maritime value chain. The platform can play a significant role in accelerating the digitalisation of maritime trade and logistics in India.

EPFO, now live on Federal Platforms

Federal Bank has integrated its Digital Platforms with Employees' Provident Fund Organisation. With this new facility, Federal Bank customers can conveniently and securely make EPFO payments through the Bank's Net Banking platform, ensuring a seamless and hassle-free experience.

The facility was launched at a special ceremony held in New Delhi. Amongst the attendees were Brij Mohan Singh - Regional P. F Commissioner – I (Banking), Ajay Krishna Paliwal - Regional P. F Commissioner – II (Banking) and Kapil Anand – EPFO official. Federal Bank was represented by Anoop T, Senior Vice President & Country Head of the Government and Institutional Business Department and his colleagues from the Bank.

"True to our motto, 'Digital at the Fore, Human at the Core,' Federal Bank remains steadfast in its commitment to customers by introducing convenient, need-of-the-hour facilities. These initiatives not only enhance customer experience but also enable seamless engagement with government establishments, thereby supporting the government's collection mechanism," said **Mr. Harsh Dugar,** Executive Director of Federal Bank.

This service is available to all Federal Bank Net Banking customers and is designed to enhance digital convenience while supporting organisations and institutions in efficiently meeting their statutory compliance requirements.

By enabling EPFO payments, Federal Bank continues to strengthen its digital payments ecosystem and reaffirms its commitment to delivering reliable, secure, and customer-centric banking solutions. This feature enables individuals and business organisations to pay EPF dues quickly without visiting offices, saving time, cost, and effort.

Adeem Ahamed Named to Washington Post Intelligence Council on AI & Technology

Washington Post Intelligence, the intelligence and advisory platform of The Washington Post, has named Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, to its Council on AI & Technology. The council is a global leadership forum focused on advancing policy and industry innovation across artificial intelligence, emerging technologies and digital transformation.

Adeeb Ahamed is among the first Middle East-based business leaders to join the council, bringing the perspective of a region that is rapidly emerging as a global centre for AI-driven innovation, digital infrastructure and next-generation financial ecosystems.

His appointment also reflects the growing importance of financial services and cross-border payment infrastructure in global AI conversations, particularly as emerging technologies increasingly shape the future of commerce, compliance, financial accessibility and real-time global connectivity.

Under Adeeb Ahamed's leadership, LuLu Financial Holdings has grown into one of the region's leading financial services groups, operating across the GCC, Indian subcontinent and Asia Pacific, with a strong focus on cross-border payments, fintech innovation and digital financial inclusion.

Commenting on the appointment, Adeeb Ahamed said: "The future of artificial intelligence will be shaped by regions that are able to combine innovation, infrastructure and global connectivity at scale. The GCC and the broader Middle East are increasingly emerging as one of those centres, driven by ambitious technology agendas, forward-looking leadership and rapidly evolving financial ecosystems."

Dr. M. Angamuthu Chairperson of Cochin Port Authority

Dr. M. Angamuthu, IAS, has assumed additional charge as Chairperson of the Cochin Port Authority.

A 2002-batch Indian Administrative Service officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, Dr. Angamuthu is currently serving as Chairperson of the Mumbai Port Authority under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. He had previously served as Chairperson of the Visakhapatnam Port Authority and also headed the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). Since 2023, he has been serving as the Chairperson of Dredging Corporation of India Ltd.

Dr. Angamuthu holds a Ph.D. in Agriculture from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi.

Dr. Angamuthu has extensive experience in project implementation, urban infrastructure development, public policy management, transport and logistics, trade and commerce, and e-governance. During his career, he has served as Commissioner and Secretary to the Government of Assam and as Collector, Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate in several districts of Assam. He has also held positions such as Commissioner of Guwahati Municipal Corporation, Vice-Chairman and CEO of the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority, CEO of Guwahati Smart City Project and Project Director of the Assam Urban Infrastructure Investment Programme.

Dish TV launches VZY Smart TVs in Kerala, Integrating DTH & OTT entertainments

Bringing together VZY Smart TVs, regional-first content and uninterrupted entertainment in one seamless connected experience

A first-of-its-kind bundled offering designed for modern South Indian households seeking smarter, simpler and always-on entertainment

Reinforcing its commitment to delivering smarter and more connected entertainment experiences, Dish TV India Ltd. has launched an integrated entertainment ecosystem tailored for Kerala consumers. The new offering combines VZY Smart TVs, regional language-focused content, and uninterrupted access to entertainment, creating a seamless viewing experience for modern households.

At the centre of the ecosystem is the new VZY Smart TV range, including a premium 65-inch model designed to elevate home entertainment with immersive visuals, superior sound quality and advanced smart connectivity. Built for today's connected families, the TVs offer effortless access to live television, OTT platforms, regional entertainment, sports and on-demand content through a single unified interface.

Powered by premium display and audio technologies, the VZY Smart TVs are designed to deliver a cinematic viewing experience at homewhether consumers are watching blockbuster movies, live sports, or everyday family entertainment.

As part of the launch, Dish TV is also introducing its "FIFA to FIFA" entertainment proposition, enabling consumers to enjoy uninterrupted access to television services through the entire FIFA World Cup cycle. The offering has been designed to simplify entertainment for consumers by combining smart television technology with integrated connected TV services under one ecosystem.

Further strengthening the proposition is Dish TV's "Sports Always-On" feature, which ensures viewers stay connected to key sporting events, including the

FIFA World Cup, even during temporary recharge gaps or service interruptions.

Commenting on the launch, Mr. Manoj Dobhal, Chief Executive Officer & Executive Director, Dish TV India Ltd., said: "Consumers today are looking for a smarter and more seamless entertainment experience that brings together television, streaming and regional content in one connected ecosystem. With the launch of our next-generation entertainment offering, we are simplifying content access while delivering greater convenience, flexibility and uninterrupted viewing for households across Kerala."

LG Introduces Premium Range of French Door Refrigerators, AI DD Washing Machines, and All-New 'Essential Series'

LG Electronics India Ltd. (LGE India) has launched its 2026 Home Appliances Range. The new range, launched across both, affordable-premium and premium segments reinforces the commitment to making trusted LG's technology accessible to a wider range of Indian households. The new range is meticulously engineered to address the full spectrum of Indian consumer needs - bridging the gap between premium, design-led experiences and reliable, accessible technology for Indian households.

As part of its 2026 range expansion, LGE India has expanded its affordable-premium Essential Series, launched in Oct 2025. The range expansion introduces more designs, capacities and price points across home appliances, catering to the needs of a larger consumer segment, aimed at fulfilling LG India's mission of "Har Ghar Appliances, Har Ghar Happiness,"

LGE India also introduced new products in the Premium category, to address evolving lifestyle needs across higher price segments. Complementing the Essential Series launch, the expanded premium portfolio also introduces new, advanced, design-led innovations, ensuring that Indian consumers can access reliable, meaningful technology tailored for everyday use across multiple price points.

Highlighting its growing focus on 'Make-India-Global', LGE India has also begun exports of Essential Series from Q1-2026. Exports of the Essential Series are expected to touch 22 countries across Asia, the Middle East and Africa in 2026. The products being exported include Refrigerators, Washing machines and Residential air conditioners.

Commenting on the launch, **Mr. Hong Ju Jeon, Managing Director, LG Electronics India Limited**, said, "India is a strategic growth market for LG Electronics, and our commitment goes beyond scale — it is about delivering technology and features that are meaningful to Indian lifestyles. This portfolio expansion reflects that philosophy across every category. With the Expansion of both, our recently launched Essential Series and premium appliances range, we are raising the bar across multiple price points and aspiration segments to cater to the needs of every Indian household."

Govt Cyberpark organizes eye screening camp

As part of its commitment to employee well-being, the Government Cyberpark, in association with Trinity Super Speciality Eye Hospital, organized an eye screening camp for IT professionals at the Cyberpark campus. A large number of employees participated in the camp.

The initiative aimed to create awareness about the increasing incidence of eye strain, vision-related issues, and other eye disorders among IT professionals, who spend long hours on computer screens. The screenings were conducted by a team of expert doctors from Trinity Eye Hospital using advanced medical equipment.

Participants were also provided with medical guidance on follow-up treatment, preventive eye care measures and maintaining healthy vision habits in the workplace.

Federal Bank introduces special FCNR deposits

Federal Bank has launched a special FCNR deposit in US Dollars named/ 'FCNR/ Max Deposit Scheme', aimed at meeting the rising demand among NRI customers for high-yield, secure investment options. The deposit scheme offers an interest rate of 6.25% for tenures ranging from 3 to 5 years, ensuring stable and competitive returns.

The bank remains committed to offer customer-centric financial solutions, especially for its NRI clientele and that the/ FCNR Max Deposit Scheme reflects Federal Bank's focus on delivering both value and reliability in foreign currency investments said/ Mr. Joy P. V., Country Head – Retail Liabilities.

FCNR/ Max Deposit Scheme/ comes with a lock-in period of 1 year from the date of opening. In the event of premature closure after the lock-in period, interest will be payable at a rate/ 1% lower than the applicable rate for the actual period the deposit was maintained with the bank.

BUSINESS NEWS

KFON: How Kerala Built a Public-Sector Telecom Model for the Digital Age

At a time when the telecommunications sector is largely dominated by private operators, Kerala has charted a different course. By developing a state-owned digital infrastructure network that reaches cities, villages, tribal settlements, and island communities alike, the state has created a unique model for inclusive connectivity and digital development.

The Kerala government's flagship broadband initiative has emerged as a significant milestone in the state's digital transformation journey. Designed to ensure reliable and affordable internet access across Kerala, the project reflects a broader vision of treating connectivity as a public utility that should be accessible to all citizens, regardless of geography or economic status.

While private telecom companies have traditionally concentrated their expansion efforts on commercially viable urban markets, the state's fibre-optic network was conceived with a wider social objective. Its mission extends beyond connectivity to bridging the digital divide and ensuring that rural communities, tribal populations, and residents of remote regions have access to the same digital opportunities available in urban centres.

This commitment to digital inclusion has enabled the network to expand services to areas that have historically remained underserved. From remote tribal settlements and coastal regions to island communities and interior villages, high-speed internet is now reaching places where connectivity was once considered a challenge. In doing so, the initiative has become a powerful example of how public infrastructure can be leveraged to promote social equity and economic participation.

As digital infrastructure increasingly shapes economic growth, education, healthcare, governance, and entrepreneurship, Kerala has recognised the need for a robust and future-ready telecommunications backbone. The statewide fibre network has consequently evolved into a critical pillar of the state's development strategy, supporting both citizens and institutions in an increasingly digital world.

The broadband service offers international-standard connectivity at affordable rates while maintaining a network reliability of 99.9 percent. Supported by modern infrastructure, redundancy systems, and a dedicated technical workforce, the network ensures stable and uninterrupted service for consumers across the state. Efficient technical support mechanisms further enable quick resolution of service-related issues whenever they arise.

A distinguishing feature of the initiative is its open-access model. The infrastructure can be utilised by both government agencies and private service providers, creating a shared digital ecosystem that strengthens the telecommunications sector as a whole. By encouraging competition and expanding access to high-quality infrastructure, the model ultimately benefits consumers through improved service delivery and wider availability of broadband services.

The project's journey, however, has not been without challenges. Since its inception, questions were raised about its financial viability, operational sustainability, and ability to coexist with established private telecom operators. Yet the state remained committed to its vision of universal connectivity, viewing digital inclusion as a critical component of social and economic development. Through admini-strative, technical, and policy challenges, the initiative continued to move forward with a clear long-term objective.

Today, the scale of the network's impact is evident. More than 176,265 connections have been completed across the state, including over 130,513 household connections. This growing subscriber base reflects both the demand for reliable broadband services and public confidence in the network. The service has also expanded beyond homes to include educational institutions, healthcare facilities, commercial establishments, and government offices.

The backbone of this infrastructure is a high-capacity optical fibre core ring connecting all 14 districts of Kerala. Government offices and other beneficiaries are linked through an extensive access network that ensures statewide connectivity. Telecommunications equipment has been installed across hundreds of substations, while Core Points of Presence have been established in every district to support network operations and service delivery.

More importantly, the initiative has demonstrated how strategic public-sector intervention can play a transformative role in building critical infrastructure. What began as an ambitious effort to bridge the digital divide has evolved into a model of inclusive development and technological progress. As the network expands to reach more households, institutions, and underserved communities, it is not only shaping the future of Digital Kerala but also offering a blueprint for other regions seeking to build a more equitable and connected digital future.

KSUM Startup EyeROV proposes India–Norway Marine Tech Innovation Corridor

In a major recognition for an Indian startup, EyeROV, an underwater robotics company supported by Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM), was selected to join the official business delegation accompanying Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's historic visit to Norway, the first such standalone visit by an Indian Premier to the Nordic nation in over four decades.

Recognised under KSUM's Unique ID initiative, EyeROV participated in the India–Norway CEOs Roundtable and High-Level Business and Research Summit held in Oslo under the leadership of the Prime Minister. EyeROV was represented by its co-founder and CTO, Kannappa Palaniappan P.

At the CEOs Roundtable, EyeROV submitted a strategic roadmap aimed at strengthening India–Norway collaboration in ocean technologies, underwater robotics, and the blue economy.

The Kochi-based company proposed the establishment of an "India–Norway Marine Tech Innovation Corridor" to accelerate bilateral deep-tech partnerships through joint research and development, market access, and collaborative innovation initiatives.

The proposal highlighted opportunities for cooperation in subsea engineering, green shipping, autonomous underwater systems, aquaculture technologies and port infrastructure modernisation.

EyeROV also stressed the scope for collaboration in sensor integration, predictive maintenance and AI-powered monitoring systems for marine infrastructure.

Indian Oil Launches Servo Hyper Series

BUSINESS NEWS

IndianOilhas launched the SERVO HYPER SERIES, its most advanced premium lubricant portfolio, designed to meet the evolving requirements of modern engines and high-performance industrial equipment.

Developed using advanced synthetic base oils and next-generation additive technologies, the SERVO HYPER SERIES delivers superior engine performance, improved fuel efficiency and extended drain intervals under demanding operating conditions.

The new range is aimed at addressing the growing demand for premium lubrication solutions across automotive and industrial segments.

SERVO HYPER SERIES has been designed for a wide range of automotive and industrial applications and incorporates QR-enabled digital authentication and traceability features that enable customers to verify product authenticity and access product information instantly. The range also features premium packaging with increased use of recyclable and recycled materials, reflecting IndianOil's focus on sustainability and customer-centric innovation.

Speaking at the launch event at Kolkata, Saumitra P. Srivastava, Director (Marketing), IndianOil, said:

"The future of the lubricant industry will be shaped by technology, performance and trust. The SERVOHYPERSERIES embodies all three.This launch reaffirms IndianOil's position as a technology-driven, future-ready energy company. We are not simply launching a new lubricant range—we are defining the next chapter of lubrication excellence in India and setting new bench-marks for the industry." Arvind Kumar, Director (Refineries), IndianOil, while presiding over the launch event at Bengaluru said:

"The development of SERVO HYPER SERIES highlights Indian Oil's ability to transform advanced refining and lubricant technologies into high-perfor-mance solutions for modern mobility and industry. Formulated with premium synthetic base oils and advanced additive systems, the range offers enhanced protect-ion, improved fuel efficiency, superior stability, and extended equipment life. Backed by IndianOil's strong R&D capabili-ties and world-class manufactur-ing infrastructure, SERVO HYPER SERIES reinforces our commit-ment to delivering globally compe-titive, high-performance lubricants."

GAIL reports PAT of ₹ 6,968 crore for FY2025-26

GAIL India has announced that it has earned a Profit Before Tax of ₹ 8,964 crore during the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026. During the previous year it had reported a profit before tax of ₹ 14,825 crore. Profit After Tax (PAT) stood at ₹ 6,968 crore, as compared to ₹ 11,312 crore in the previous year.

GAIL has reported Revenue from Operations of ₹ 1,38,697 crore in FY26, as against ₹ 1,37,288 crore in FY25. EBITDA stood at ₹ 13,119 crore, compared to ₹ 19,168 crore in the previous year. Profit Before Tax (PBT) for FY26 was ₹ 8,964 crore, against ₹ 14,825 crore in FY25. Profit After Tax (PAT) stood at ₹ 6,968 crore, as compared to ₹ 11,312 crore in the previous year.

The Board of Directors has recommended a final dividend of ₹ 0.50 per equity share (face value ₹ 10 per share) for FY 2025–26, subject to shareholder approval at the forthcoming AGM. This is in addition to the interim dividend of ₹ 5.00 per share, taking the total dividend payout ratio for the year to 51.90%.

Shri **Deepak Gupta**, Chairman & Managing Director, GAIL (India) Limited, said:The year was marked by a challenging & complex global backdrop, beginning with the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and evolving geopolitical developments including the onset of the West Asian crisis towards the later part of the year. Despite these headwinds, supported by timely policy interventions by the Government, GAIL delivered a resilient operational and financial performance.

Our teams remained focused on ensuring operational continuity, cost discipline, and supply reliability, enabling the Company to effectively navigate a volatile market environment. During the year, we added approximately 2,000 km of pipeline network and achieved the highest-ever LPG transmission of 4.6 MMTPA. Further, GAIL is doubling the capacity of Jamnagar-Loni LPG pipeline to 6.5 MMTPA.

Adani to acquire Jaypee fertilizer arm for Rs.1.5k Cr.

Adani ports and Special Economic Zone has said that it will acquire 100% stake in Jaypee Fertilisers and Industries from Jaiprakash Associates for Rs.1500 crore. The acquisition aligns with the company's ambitions to expand its MMLP network and warehousing capacity by 4X by 2030.

Federal Bank Hormis Memorial Scholarships announced

Federal Bank Hormis Memorial Foundation Scholarships for the academic year 2025–2026 have been announced. A total of 500 students from across seven states have been selected for the scholarship this year.

The list of selected candidates has been published and can be accessed on the Bank's website at: results-federal-bank-hormis-memorial-foundation-scholar-ships-2025-26

Launched in 2005, the Federal Bank Hormis Memorial Foundation Scholarship is a flagship CSR initiative by Federal Bank in memory of its visionary founder, Late Shri K.P. Hormis. The programme aims to support meritorious and financially disadvantaged students pursuing full- time professional courses in: MBBS, BE/BTech/BArch, BSc. Nursing, BSc. Agriculture, BDS, BVSc and MBA/PGDM.

Over the years, the initiative has benefitted 2,460 students, helping them build careers in critical and high-impact sectors. For the academic year 2025–26, the Bank received an overwhelming 3610 applications from selected states — Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

KSUM launches national-level Virology Innovation Cohort programme

Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM), in partnership with Institute of Advanced Virology (IAV), has launched the national-level Virology Innovation Cohort, a six-month innovation programme aimed at supporting startups and innovators developing solutions in virology and emerging infections and antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

The programme combines scientific mentorship, product development support, sector-specific incubation facilities, and startup ecosystem exposure, while also opening opportunities to adopt validated technologies developed by IAV through technology transfer for venture creation.

The cohort will focus on translating promising ideas into market-ready products across diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccine & immunology platforms, genomics and bioinformatic innovations, viral technologies and phage-based interventions against AMR.

Startups and innovators can apply till June 10, 2026 at https://virology.startupmission.in/

BUSINESS NEWS

Livlong 365 Highlights the Role of NBFCs in Driving Customer Protection at FinX Gold Loan Conclave

Livlong 365 participated in FinX Gold Loan Conclave, bringing together leaders from the NBFC, fintech, and insurance ecosystem to discuss the future of customer wellbeing, protection, and digital innovation. The company showcased how technology-enabled solutions can help NBFCs strengthen customer engagement while moving towards more advisory-led and value-driven protection models.

Speaking at the conclave, Dibyendu Nandi, CBO, Livlong 365 said:"FinX Gold Loan Conclave is a great platform to connect with industry leaders and exchange ideas on how NBFCs can best contribute towards their customers' overall wellbeing and protection through the right protection products like insurance and OPD. Moreover, in the changing regulatory landscape, the focus has shifted from product attachment to advisory-led solutions for such offerings. We are excited to be part of conversations around innovation, accessibility, and evolving consumer needs. As we continue strengthening our presence across India, our focus remains on enabling NBFCs with better products and channel support for driving cross-sell of relevant protection products."

Manappuram Finance Holds Conclave

The Manappuram Unique Times Business Conclave 2026 and FICF She Waxes for Cause Conference, featuring business luminaries and women entrepreneurs, were held at Kochi. Prominent businessmen, women entrepreneurs, professionals and beauty pageant winners came together on the same platform.

The event, jointly organized by Pegasus Global Private Limited and Federal International Chamber Forum (FICEF), is sponsored by Manappuram Finance Limited, Lexus, Alcazar Watches, DQ T-shirts, and Clamy New York. The event was conceived by Dr. Ajit Ravi.

INMECC Chairman Dr. N.M. Sharafudheen welcomed the guests and explained the role of AI technology in determining the future of business and industries. The panel discussion led by Dr. Rajesh Nair, Partner, Ernst & Young LLP, on how AI is impacting daily business decisions was very interesting.

Prominent industrialists and entrepreneurs such as Gokulam Gopalan, Chairman and Managing Director of Sree Gokulam Group, AVA Group Managing Director A V Anoop, TCS Kerala Vice President Dinesh P Thampi, Aswani Lakshmandas Group MD Deepak L Aswani, Chairman of Vibe Munnar Resort and Spa and MD of The Fog Resort and Spa in Munnar, Dr Jolly Antony, Chairman of Al Safina Travel Group and Grow Via Biz, which operates in the UAE and India, and CA Vivek Krishna Govind, Senior Partner of Varma & Varma, participated in the panel discussion.

The growing impact of artificial intelligence in business operations, customer communication, planning, and decision-making were discussed at the conclave. Women who have achieved success in their ventures and won prizes in competitions participated in the FICF She Walks for a Cause event.

Ashwini Laxman Das Group Managing Partner Jyothi Ashwini, V Star Creations Founder and CMD Sheela Kochousep, Prakkat Jewels PR MD Preeti Prakkat, Nandilatha G Mart Director Aishwarya Nandilat, Dream Flower Builders Founder and MD Priya Fazil, Resitec Electricals Managing Partner Lekha Balachandran, Malayala Manorama Marketing Manager Divyas Prashanut, Aishwarya Advertising MD Deepthi Vijayakumar, Little Britain Preschool Founder and Wellmond Hospital Chairperson Euphy K Paul, Varma Ayurvedics Managing Partner Dr NR Mini Verma, Care For You Facility Management Services Managing Partner Laila Sudheesh, Benheims Group Executive Director & Chairperson Jayani Benheim and MD of Anaswara Jewellers and Ritu Diamonds Preena Anuraj attended the event.

Along with them, Miss Queen Kerala 2024 and Miss South India 2024 titleholder Cinta Padamadan, Miss South India 2018 and Miss Queen of India 2018 titleholder Lakshmi Menon, Miss India Glam World 2026 Pournami Murali, Miss Southinthia 2019 Nikita Thomas, Miss Queen Kerala 2025, and Soumya S Thomas, who won the titles of first runner-up and second runner-up of Miss India Glam World 2026, also attended the event.

Govt Revives Bid to sell IDBI

The Centre has revived the strategic sale of its stake in IDBI Bank, along with LIC's stake a month after the two bids were rejected as they were way below the reserve price.Persons familiar with the discussions said a fresh valuation exercise is being undertaken, given that the bank has a small free float, making price discovery through that route difficult. At the same time, officials will examine whether the sale process should be limited to the existing set of bidders or the process should be undertaken afresh, although the idea is to expedite the exercise to ensure that global investors retain trust and govt also raises resources to meet its ambitious funding requirements for investment and schemes.

Retaining the pool to players, who had bid, may open up the possibility of litigation, an official cautioned. At the same time, there is recognition in govt that the abandoned sale process was too long — lasting five years. And, keeping a shorter timeline is critical in whatever shape the process is revived. Besides, feedback from bidders is seen to be key as some of the interested players, such as Kotak Mahindra, dropped out due to high pension burden that was coming with the bank.

Similarly, govt's continuation as a stakeholder is another concern flagged by some of the bankers, who argued that many feared that the Centre may drive the operations in a way that it served its interest and the new owner may not get a completely free hand. "If the govt is really serious about privatisation it should not have any remaining shares," said an executive with one of the entities that was interested in acquiring the bank.

India's seafood exports net $ 8.46 billion in 2025-26

- Volume and value rise to all-time high mark
- USA, China top importers, frozen shrimp tops the list

India has exported 19,72,018 metric tons (MT) of seafood valued at ₹ 73,890.46 crore ($ 8.46 billion) during the fiscal year 2025-26, which is an all-time high mark by volume and value despite global odds, said Shri P Jawahar, IAS, Chairman of the Marine Products Export Development Authority at a presser. The USA and China remained the primary importers of Indian seafood.

Frozen shrimp remained the leading product in seafood exports, generating ₹ 49,037.93 crore ($ 5,624.48 million). It accounts for 40.19% of the total quantity and 66.52% of total US dollar earnings from seafood exports. During this period, shrimp exports increased by 13.16% in ₹ value and 8.64% in $ value. During the 2025-26 period, the total export of frozen shrimp was 7,92,647 MT.

The United States, being the largest market, imported 2,56,128 MT of frozen shrimp. This was followed by China with 1,69,505 MT, the European Union with 1,35,599 MT, Southeast Asia with 83,810 MT, Japan with 40,776 MT, the Middle East with 30,478 MT, and all other countries combined, which accounted for 76,351MT. The exports of L. vannamei and Black Tiger shrimp have shown an increase in both volume and value.

Frozen fish, the second largest exported item, generated ₹ 5,658.37 crore ($ 643.70 million). Dried items, the third largest exported group, earned ₹ 5,079.09 crore ($ 577.44 million) and has shown a positive export trend of 78.05 % in terms of value rupees.

The export of frozen squid reached 1,02,060 MT, earning ₹ 4,493.80 crore ($ 513.84 million). Meanwhile, frozen cuttlefish experienced growth in both volume and value, by 13.32% in quantity and 16.25% in $ value, with exports totalling to 67,157 MT worth $ 331.96 million, respectively.

The export of chilled items earned ₹ 622.31 crore ($ 71.27 million). Export of live items showed a growth of 11.46 % in value $ terms ($ 62.43 million).

In terms of overseas markets, the United States remained the leading importer of Indian seafood, with imports valued at ₹ 20263.27 Crore ($ 2,328.74 million) and a total volume of 279,193 MT. Exports to the U.S. decreased by 10.82% in rupee value, 14.22% in dollar value, and 19.51% in volume. Within the USA's seafood import basket from India, frozen shrimp had the lion's share of 93.55 % in $ value.

China emerged as the largest seafood export destination from India in terms of quantity with 4,90,369 MT worth $ 1,611.32 million. European Union continued to be the third largest destination in $ terms, with an import of 2,97,518 MT worth $ 1,592.09 million. This was followed by South-East Asia in value with an import of 4,51,756 MT worth $ 1,348.97 million. Japan continued to be the fifth largest importer in value with an import of 1,05,228 MT worth $ 452.91 million. Middle East is the sixth largest destination in value with an import of 76,743 MT worth $ 283 million.

The top 3 ports handling seafood cargo were Vizag and JNPT, and Kochi.

BUSINESS NEWS

Medical Trust Hospital Opens 'REVIVA' Physiotherapy Centre

Kochi Mayor V K Minimol inaugurates REVIVA, the physiotherapy rehabilitation centre at Medical Trust Hospital, Kochi. This centre provides complete physiotherapy services to patients suffering from Orthopaedic, neurological problems, sports injuries, post-operative rehabilitation etc.

Workez Expands Portfolio to 1.7 Million Sq. Ft. with Strategic Growth Across Chennai, Kochi and Coimbatore

Strengthens expansion across high-growth Tier I and Tier II South Indian markets

Work Easy Space Solutions Private Limited (WorkEZ), one of South India's leading managed office space solutions providers, has announced expansion of its managed workspace portfolio to approximately 1.7 million sq. ft. across 12 active buildings and 2 upcoming developments, marking another milestone in the company's South India growth journey. The milestone is driven by strategic additions in Chennai and Kochi, along with a significant new development commitment in Coimbatore, reflecting WorkEZ's continued focus on scaling across high-growth commercial markets in South India.

As part of this expansion, WorkEZ has added 65,000 sq. ft. at Phoenix One National Park in Chennai, strengthening its presence in one of the city's key commercial hubs and further expanding its premium managed workspace footprint in one of Chennai's most strategic commercial corridors. The company has also marked its entry into Kochi through a strategic partnership with Lulu Developers, adding 70,000 sq. ft. to its portfolio. The move reflects WorkEZ's focus on Kerala's growing enterprise ecosystem and rising demand for high-quality managed workspace solutions from Global Capability Centres (GCCs) and large enterprises.

Speaking on the milestone, Mr. Sunil Reddy, MD and Founder, WorkEZ, said:

"Our growth to 1.7 million square feet reflects the trust our clients, partners and landlords have placed in WorkEZ over the years. What began as a vision to redefine managed workspaces in South India has evolved into a scalable platform built on operational excellence and a strong understanding of evolving enterprise needs. We have consistently expanded our portfolio while maintaining strong occupancies and strengthening long-term client relationships. The recent additions in Chennai, Kochi and Coimbatore mark an important step in our continued growth, and we remain focused on building high-quality managed workspaces in markets where demand continues to evolve."

BUSINESS NEWS

Milma Targets ₹ 10,000 Crore Turnover by 2030-31, Eyes Global Expansion

Kerala Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (Milma) has set an ambitious target of achieving a turnover of ₹ 10,000 crore by 2030-31, leveraging Kerala's strong dairy ecosystem and expanding its domestic and international market presence. Speaking at the inaugural session of the Kerala Retail Conclave, organised by the Cochin Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) in association with Altacit Global in Kochi, Milma Chairman K.S. Mani highlighted the significant investment opportunities available in Kerala's dairy sector.

Kerala ranks third in the country in milk productivity, yet nearly 50 per cent of the state's milk requirement is met through imports from other states. This presents tremendous opportunities for investment and expansion in the dairy sector," Mani said.Milma recorded a turnover of ₹ 4,344 crore in 2025-26 and continues to maintain a farmer-centric business model, with nearly 83 per cent of its selling price being passed on directly to dairy farmers, he noted.

Outlining the federation's growth strategy, Mani said Milma has entered into a strategic partnership with the Lulu Group to strengthen access to international markets. The federation is also expanding its reach through collaborations with leading e-commerce platforms across the country.

The inaugural session was also addressed by Sudhir Raja Ravindran, Founder and CEO of Altacit Global; Manju Ammanath, Advocate and Associate Partner, Altacit Global; Vinodini Sukumar, President, Cochin Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and Bibu B. Punnooran, Vice President, CCCI.

A high-profile panel discussion on "Digital Evolution of India's Consumer Economy", held as part of the conclave, highlighted the rapid transformation of Kerala's retail landscape. Speakers estimated the state's retail market size at between ₹ 3.5 lakh crore and ₹ 4.5 lakh crore annually.

Key trends driving growth in the sector include the expansion of organised retail, the widespread adoption of digital payments, the increasing demand for frozen and convenience foods, experience-led retail formats, growth in Tier-II and Tier-III markets, a rising preference for sustainable products, a greater focus on health and wellness, and the emergence of private-label brands.

The panel featured Swaroop Krishnan, CEO and Co-Founder, MyDesignation; Jose Alex, Co-Founder and CEO, Kappo Food India Pvt. Ltd.; Sreenath Vishnu, Managing Director, VNG Foods India Pvt. Ltd.; and Michael Dominic, Managing Director and CEO, CGH Earth.

The Kerala Retail Conclave event also witnessed the presentation of the Spice Cost Excellence Award.

MITS partners with 100x School to launch 'MITS Elevate @ 100x' programme

The Muthoot Institute of Technology and Science (MITS Kochi) has launched 'MITS Elevate @ 100x', a specialised add-on programme aimed at equipping engineering students with advanced industry-oriented skills alongside academic learning. The initiative is being introduced in collaboration with 100x School, a Noida-based learning institution. An MoU was signed between the two institutions to roll out the programme for students pursuing Computer Science and allied disciplines.

The programme will function under the mentorship of Harkirat Singh, founder of 100x School and an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee. A total of 120 students from Computer Science, Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security, and AI and Data Science streams will be selected for the programme. The initiative is designed to prepare students for the global job market by combining academic instruction with hands-on industry exposure.

As part of the programme, students will undergo a two-month residential training programme at the 100x School campus in Noida during summer vacations each year. Experts from 100x School will also visit the MITS Kochi campus every semester to provide direct mentoring and technical guidance.

Students will receive training in emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Web 3.0, and Full Stack Development. The programme will also include specialised coaching for international coding competitions and initiatives, including Google Summer of Code and coding Olympiads. The programme will also enhance students' employability and help them secure placements with competitive salary packages.

Dr. Neelakantan P.C., Principal, MITS Kochi, said that the fourth year of the engineering course would be fully dedicated to internships and placement preparation. He added that the initiative would help reduce the need for students to depend on institutions outside Kerala for advanced technical education and would set a new benchmark in technical education in the State.

Cochin Port Day Celebrated

Cochin Port Day celebrations were held on 26-05-2026 at Samudrika Hall, Willingdon Island, in commemoration of the arrival of the first ship to Cochin Port.

Shri B. Kasiviswanathan, IRSME, Chairperson, Cochin Port Authority, presided over the function. Former Chief Secretary to the Government of Kerala and former Chairperson of Cochin Port Authority, Shri Paul Antony, was the Chief guest of the function. Shri Satish Honnakkatte, Dy. Chairperson, Cochin Port Authority, delivered the keynote address.

BUSINESS NEWS

Kaziah crowned Beena Kannan Couture Miss Universe Kerala 2026

Mavelikkara native Kaziah Liz Mejo has been crowned Beena Kannan Couture Miss Universe Kerala 2026. She will now represent Kerala at the national-level Miss Universe India pageant, organised by Glamanand Entertainment Private Limited.

Nineteen-year-old Kaziah is the daughter of Mejo Abraham and Suja Mejo of Mavelikkara. Currently pursuing law studies in Bengaluru, she is now based in Kochi. Kaziah had earlier won the Miss Teen India title and went on to represent India at one of the world's biggest teen beauty pageants. Her ambition is to become the first-ever Miss Universe winner from Kerala.

Malavika Rajendran Dev from Thrissur emerged as the first runner-up. She is the daughter of Rajendran KS and Priya PK. Liz Jaymon Jacob from Kottayam secured the second runner-up position.

The pageant, organised by Queen Frame Studios, was title-sponsored by Beena Kannan Couture and powered by partner Francis Alukkas. The grand finale was held at Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty.

The winners were selected by an eminent jury panel comprising Miss Universe India Chairman Nikhil Anand, Franchise Operations Director Amjad Khan, Miss Universe India 2025 winner Manika Vishwakarma, former Miss Universe Kerala Aishwarya Srinivasan, Miss Universe India 2024 winner Rhea Singha and National Award-winning actor Aparna Balamurali.

The event was directed by Archana Ravi, while Kajha Rawther served as the official stylist. Renowned choreographer Sham Khan was the show director and choreographer for the event.

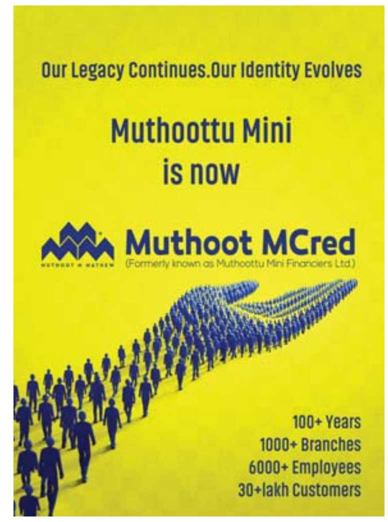
Muthoot Mcred posts 88% rise in PAT in FY26

Muthoot MCred Limited (formerly known as Muthoottu Mini Financiers Limited), one of India's trusted gold loan NBFCs, announced its audited financial results for the year ended March 31, 2026, reporting strong growth across profitability, Assets Under Management (AUM), and operational performance.

The Company delivered exceptional growth during FY26, with Profit After Tax (PAT) rising by 88% year-on-year to ₹ 176.90 crore, compared to ₹ 94.18 crore in FY25. Assets Under Management (AUM) also witnessed a strong surge of nearly 60%, reaching ₹ 6,625.07 crore as of March 31, 2026, reflecting sustained portfolio expansion, strong customer demand, and the Company's continued focus on scalable and responsible growth. The strong financial performance further reinforces Muthoot MCred's growing market presence and operational strength in the gold loan NBFC sector.

Total income for the year stood at ₹ 1,113.21 crore, compared to ₹ 815.15 crore in the previous financial year, reflecting sustained business momentum, portfolio expansion, continued branch-level business growth and operational efficiency.

Assets Under Management (AUM) stood at ₹ 6,625.07 crore as of March 31, 2026, reflecting continued expansion of the Company's secured lending



portfolio and disciplined scale-up across markets.

Mathew Muthoottu, Managing Director, Muthoot MCred Limited, said "The strong growth in profitability and AUM reflects the resilience of our business model, disciplined portfolio management, and the trust placed in us by our customers and stakeholders. As we continue to scale, our focus remains on sustainable growth, governance excellence, and responsible lending."

P. E. Mathai, Chief Executive Officer, said "We remain committed to enhancing customer experience through technology-led processes while maintaining strong asset quality and prudent capital management. With a strengthened balance sheet and expanding market presence, we are well-positioned for the next phase of growth."

The Future of Colour is Here: Sony Introduces True RGB TVs

Sony debuts its first True RGB BRAVIA TV, featuring independently driven RGB LEDs, a new unique anti-glare and reflection screen and Google TV with Gemini for a truly immersive cinematic experienceat home

Sony India has launched **BRAVIA 7II**, introducing True RGB technology to redefine home entertainment with richer colour, greater depth and more immersive viewing experiences. Pre-booking for select BRAVIA 7II models starts today. Bringing together Sony's advanced display innovation and intelligent processing technologies, BRAVIA 7II delivers cinema-grade picture quality designed to transform everyday viewing into an extraordinary entertainment experience.

At the heart of BRAVIA 7II is True RGB, powered by RGB Backlight Master Drive Pro™,

BRAVIA 7 II: A new dimension of colour with True RGB

Sony's proprietary backlight control technology that independently controls red, green and blue light to achieve exceptional colour precision, deeper contrast and remarkable realism. Combined with Cognitive Processor XR™, BRAVIA 7II reproduces content the way humans naturally see and hear-creating visuals with enhanced depth, vibrant colours and lifelike detail.

Starting with a 55 (140 cm) model, the series extends across 65 (165 cm), 75 (190 cm) and 85 (215 cm) variants,and will further culminate in a stunning 98 (248 cm) model expected soon, bringing Sony's vision of "Cinema is Coming Home" to more consumers across India.

BUSINESS NEWS

Sunrise Hospital Performs World's First Fetal-Preserving Surgical Management of Recurrent Caesarean Scar Pregnancy

In a groundbreaking achievement for maternal-fetal medicine, Sunrise Hospital, Kakkanad, has successfully performed world's first fertility-preserving surgical management of a recurrent caesarean scar pregnancy (CSP), while safely maintaining the ongoing pregnancy and preserving the uterus. The highly complex, multidisciplinary intervention was led by renowned Chief Gynaecologist & Laparoscopic Surgeon (Gynaecology, Obstetrics and Infertility) Dr. Hafeez Rahman and his team at Sunrise Hospital, Kochi.

Caesarean scar pregnancy is a rare and potentially life-threatening condition in which the embryo implants within the scar tissue of a previous caesarean section. Traditionally, such pregnancies are managed through termination because of the high risk of uterine rupture, catastrophic haemorrhage, placenta accreta spectrum (PAS), and loss of fertility.

The patient, a 30-year-old Malayali woman who was working in Dubai at the time, had experienced a series of devastating pregnancy outcomes. Her first pregnancy ended in miscarriage in 2022. A subsequent pregnancy resulted in a caesarean delivery in 2023, but the newborn could not be saved. In 2024, she experienced a caesarean scar pregnancy that required termination.

When she conceived again in 2025 while in Dubai, she was diagnosed with recurrent caesarean scar pregnancy at eight weeks of gestation. As fetal cardiac activity was already present, legal restrictions complicated termination options in Dubai. Following the recommendation of her treating doctors there, she sought expert care at Sunrise Hospital. The medical team had informed that there was a possibility that a hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) might become necessary.

Following comprehensive evaluation, Dr. Hafeez Rahman informed the patient and her family that continuation of the pregnancy was feasible with specialized surgical management and intensive monitoring. Encouraged by this possibility, the family chose to proceed with the pregnancy.

At eight weeks' gestation, Dr. Hafeez Rahman and his team performed an advanced laparoscopic procedure known as Pregnant Uterine Metroplasty, repairing the caesarean scar defect, while the fetus was left undisturbed inside the uterus during the surgical procedure.

The pregnancy remained healthy and viable following surgery. At 12 weeks' gestation, anticipating cervical incompetence due to cervical involvement, the team successfully performed a laparoscopic cervical encirclage to reinforce the cervix and support the ongoing pregnancy.

Later in the pregnancy, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) identified another serious complication: Placenta Accreta Spectrum (PAS), a condition in which the placenta invades deeply into the uterine wall. To minimize the risk of life-threatening haemorrhage during delivery, the multidisciplinary team meticulously planned the birth.

During an emergency repeat caesarean section, the surgical team performed segmental myometrial excision, bilateral internal iliac artery ligation, bladder dome repair, and uterine reconstruction. The procedures were completed successfully, resulting in the safe delivery of a healthy baby girl while preserving the patient's uterus and future fertility.

The treatment was led by Dr. Hafeez Rahman, supported by a multidisciplinary team that included Dr. Shemini Saleem and Dr. Sonia Farhan, Consultant Gynaecologists, and Dr. Shaji P.G., Senior Consultant Anaesthesiologist.

V-Guard Invested ₹ 7.13 Cr in CSR Initiatives During FY 2025-26

V-Guard Industries Ltd. has reaffirmed its dedication to inclusive and sustainable community development, announcing the successful completion of 56 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects across India during the 2025-26 financial year. With a total investment of ₹ 7.13 crore, the company's initiatives reached nearly 78,000 beneficiaries across 11 states, with a strong foundational focus on its home state of Kerala.

Spanning education, healthcare, environmental sustainability, and women's empowerment, V-Guard's community outreach was designed to address immediate local needs while fostering long-term resilience.

"Kerala has always been central to V-Guard's journey, and our CSR efforts here are shaped by a deep understanding of local needs and aspirations," said Dr. Reenaa Mithun Chittilappilly, Director of V-Guard Industries Limited and the V-Guard Foundation. "We believe that real impact comes from consistent engagement. Whether it was strengthening public healthcare systems, supporting education at the grassroots, or enabling women to build independent livelihoods, these initiatives did not just address immediate gaps but contributed to long-term, community-led progress."

A major milestone during the year was the launch of Edam, a free counselling centre for women in Kochi. The facility was established to address the growing need for accessible mental health support and to encourage early intervention through dedicated awareness and counselling services.

V-Guard also made significant investments in public healthcare infrastructure. Through the Swastha project, the company provided 1,000 free dialysis sessions to underprivileged patients battling chronic kidney disease. Additionally, the donation of a hemodialysis machine to the Government General Hospital in Thiruvananthapuram improved treatment access and reduced wait times for over 350 patients.

TVS Marks World Motorcycle Day With Nationwide Movement for Safe Driving

Over 1,000 riders across 17 cities came together to celebrate the spirit of motorcycling and champion road safety.

TVS Motor Company, a reputed two and three-wheeler manufacturer globally, celebrated World Motorcycle Dayby uniting over 1,000 riders across 17 cities in India for a one-of-its-kind nationwide ride, celebrating the spirit of motorcycling while championing safe and responsible riding.

The initiative saw enthusiastic participation from the vibrant TVS Apache Owners Group (AOG) and TVS Ronin communities, bringing riders together through a shared passion for the open road and a collective commitment to safer riding practices. Through this celebration, TVS Motor Company reaffirmed its commitment to building a strong, responsible, safe and passionate riding culture across India.

As part of the celebrations, TVS Motor Company also highlighted its continued commitment to rider safety - encouraging riders to prioritise protective gear, ride responsibly and champion safer roads for everyone. The initiative reflects the belief that the true spirit of motorcycling lies not only in the thrill of the ride, but in making every ride a safe one.

Commenting on the occasion, Vimal Sumbly, Head – Premium Business, TVS Motor Company said, "Motorcycling today is about far more than travelling from one destination to another - it is a way of life shaped by freedom, discipline, responsibility and camaraderie. It was inspiring to see riders across India come together to celebrate the spirit of riding while demonstrating that true motorcycling begins with respect for the road, for fellow riders and for the communities we ride through."

Oben Electric Eyes Aggressive Kerala Expansion

Oben Electric currently operates seven showrooms across Kerala and, as per VAHAN CY25 data, ranks as Kerala's No.1 electric motorcycle brand by registrations

Oben Electric, India's fastest-growing R&D-driven electric motorcycle manufacturer, has announced plans to significantly strengthen its presence across Kerala with the addition of 10 new showrooms across the State by the end of FY27. The expansion will establish Oben Electric's presence across all 14 districts in Kerala, further strengthening accessibility to electric motorcycles, after-sales support and customer engagement across one of India's fastest-growing EV markets.

The announcement comes amid strong nationwide demand for the newly launched Oben Rorr Evo, which recorded over 25,000 bookings within just 15 days of

launch following its debut on April 30, 2026, marking one of the fastest demand accumulations seen for an electric motorcycle in India. Deliveries are scheduled to begin from June 2026, while the online payment portal remains live for customers to avail the introductory price of ₹ 99,999 (ex-showroom).

As part of its Kerala market expansion, Oben Electric also showcased the Oben Rorr Evo in Kochi, further strengthening its focus on the state as a key growth market for the company. Oben Electric currently operates seven showrooms across Kerala, including Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur, Malappuram, Palakkad, Kondotty and Alappuzha. Kerala continues to remain one of Oben Electric's strongest-performing markets, driven by rising demand for high-performance electric motorcycles and increasing EV adoption across the state. Speaking on the expansion, Madhumita Agrawal, Founder & CEO, Oben Electric said, "Kerala has emerged as one of our strongest growth markets, with customers showing strong preference for high-performance electric motorcycles that are practical, reliable and built for everyday riding."

Offered at an introductory price of ₹ 99,999 (ex-showroom) for the first 10,000 customers and ₹ 1,24,999 (ex-showroom) thereafter, the newly launched Rorr Evo delivers a feature-rich performance package positioned well above its segment. Supporting its rapid growth, Oben Electric currently operates through 150+ showrooms and dedicated service centres across 100+ cities in 18+ states, with plans to add 200 additional exclusive showrooms across India by the end of FY27.

BUSINESS NEWS

Honda plans over 10 new models for India, to launch EV and compact SUVs

Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) launched the new version of its popular hybrid sedan City with introductory prices starting at Rs 11.99 lakh while also unveiling its premium SUV ZR-V in India

Japanese automaker Honda plans to drive in over 10 new models, including electric vehicle and compact SUV by 2030 in India, one of the three key markets it has identified for its future growth plans.

Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL)launched the new version of its popular hybrid sedan City with introductory prices starting at Rs 11.99 lakh while also unveiling its premium SUV ZR-V in India.It will launch its first full electric vehicle in the second half of the ongoing fiscal in the country, HCIL President and CEO Takashi Nakajima told reporters in Mumbai.

"Recently we announced that we will be launching new models under two categories, that is, under 4 metres and the midsize category. Last time, in Japan, we mentioned ten (models) but currently, we are counting more than ten (models)," Nakajima said when asked how many new models Honda planned to launch in India going forward by 2030.

From 2028, the company will begin introducing strategic models tailored to the Indian market in two vehicle categories — category for vehicles under 4 meters in length and the mid-size category.

When asked how much of the new models will be India-specific models, Nakajima said it will be a mix of both India-specific along with fully imported global models, like the ZR-V SUV.

He said Honda is looking to participate in the two fastest growing segments, sub 4 metres and the midsize, in India with a variety of powertrains ranging from internal combustion engine (ICE), hybrids to battery electric vehicles.Nakajima said with a clearer direction of a multi technology pathway policy seen in India, the company has decided to focus on the two segments.

This year the company is looking at "double digit" growth in India, Nakajima said.HCIL officials said the company is not looking to enter the hatchback segment and its sub-4 metre vehicles would be primarily compact SUVs.

In the ongoing fiscal, HCIL plans a total of six launches, including the City hybrid and the ZR-V hybrid, he said adding the launch of new City and unveiling of ZR-V mark the beginning of HCIL's new phase of accelerated growth in the market.

"India is among the top three focus markets to realise Honda's future growth, which will be driven by a strong pipeline of new products and our efforts to achieve cost competitiveness," Nakajima said.

He further said,"This year is a landmark year for us with six strategic launches that will sharpen our competitive edge and reinforce our brand position in the market." Honda Motor Co had last week announced that it would start introducing models tailored to the Indian market from 2028 and leverage on its two-wheeler business to upgrade customers to passenger vehicles as part of rebuilding of its automobile business and the future direction.

The company has positioned India along with North America and Japan as priority markets for its future growth strategy and decided to strategically allocate its resources to these markets.

He said Honda is looking to participate in the two fastest growing segments, sub 4 metres and the midsize, in India with a variety of powertrains ranging from internal combustion engine (ICE), hybrids to battery electric vehicles. Nakajima said with a clearer direction of a multi technology pathway policy seen in India, the company has decided to focus on the two segments.

Wholesale inflation jumps to 9.6% in May

The wholesale price index-based inflation in fuel and power jumped to 30.3% as compared to 24.8% in April

The wholesale price inflation in India jumped to 9.6% in May from 8.2% in April amid a spike in global fuel prices.The wholesale price index-based inflation in fuel and power jumped to 30.3% in May as compared to 24.8% in the previous month. The inflation in crude petroleum and natural gas was 61.5% in May, up from 56.3% in April.

The wholesale price index tracks the average changes in prices of a basket of goods sold in bulk before reaching retail consumers.

Global energy prices have been elevated since March after the conflict broke out in West Asia and the Strait of Hormuz was effectively blocked for most international commercial vessels. India imports 88% of its crude oil needs and about half of its natural gas requirement. This mostly comes through the strait.

The global price of benchmark Brent crude had reached as high as $114 per barrel on May 4. It was $78 per barrel on February 27, a day before the conflict started. The price fell to $83 per barrel after the US and Iran announced that they had reached a peace deal and that the strait will be reopened.

The wholesale inflation data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry was the first set from the revised wholesale price index series with 2022-'23 as the base year. The revised series also expanded the commodity basket to 957 from 697 items. The base year in the earlier series was 2011-'12.

Inflation in food articles was 3.6% in May as against 2.4% in April. The inflation in manufactured products had risen to 7.4% in May. It was 6.6% in April.

The wholesale inflation was significantly higher than retail inflation as it has a higher weightage of fuel products. Retail inflation in May was 3.9%.

BUSINESS NEWS

'Insurance For All': Shri Ajay Seth, Chairman, IRDAI, unveils Consumer Awareness Book Series

Life insurance leaders unite to advance the vision of Insurance for All by driving greater awareness, understanding and adoption of life insurance among consumers

In a significant step towards advancing the vision of 'Insurance for All', Shri Ajay Seth, Chairman, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), unveiled a Consumer Awareness Comic Book Series aimed at simplifying life insurance concepts and enhancing awareness among consumers. The initiative brought together leaders from the life insurance sector to strengthen the focus on making life insurance more accessible, understandable and relevant for individuals and families across India.

The educative comic book seriesaims to simplify and democratize understanding of life insurance. Rooted in the insight that both prospective buyers and those who avoid the category often perceive it as complex; the initiative aims to address the key concepts, includingMWP (Married Women's Property Act), Waiver of Premium (WoP), and Critical Illness riders. The concepts unique are explained through relatable storytelling rather than technical explanation. The idea of using comics as a medium reflects a shift towards narrative-led learning that resonates across age groups and geographies. Centred around the journey of a young Life insurance advisor, Supriya, the series translates real-life situations into "story memories," helping individuals understand how decisions taken earlier can shape financial security in the future.

While unveiling the comic book series, Shri.Kamlesh Rao, Chairperson, IAC-Life, said, "India's growth story is being shaped by the aspirations, progress and resilience of its people. As the nation advances towards a more inclusive and sustainable economy, strengthening the financial preparedness of households will be a key pillar in building long-term economic resilience. The vision of 'Insurance for All' represents a transformative journey — one that goes beyond expanding insurance penetration to embedding protection as an integral part of financial planning for every Indian family."

Shri. Aditya Gupta, Secretary General, Life Insurance Council, added, "Life insurance is a promise that helps individuals and families stay prepared for life's uncertainties and continue pursuing their aspirations with confidence. While the industry has expanded its reach significantly, the next phase of growth aims at making insurance conversations simpler, more relatable and accessible to consumers across the country."

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