




Current Affairs

10 & 11 May, 2025

Shri Romon Sebastian Louis appointed as
Director of Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd.



बामर लॉरी एण्ड कं. लिमिटेड
Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd.

1. Shri Romon Sebastian Louis appointed as Director of Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd.

Shri Romon Sebastian Louis has been appointed as the Director of Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd., a Government of India enterprise under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. He brings with him a wealth of experience in public sector management and corporate governance. His appointment is expected to strengthen the leadership team of the company and drive strategic initiatives forward.



Balmer Lawrie, known for its diversified presence in logistics, manufacturing, and services, stands to benefit from his expertise. This leadership move aligns with the company's ongoing efforts to enhance operational efficiency and expand its market footprint.

Foot notes:

- **Current Role:** He is currently serving as Executive Director (Logistics Infrastructure and Cold Chain) at Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd.
- **Company Overview:** Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd. is a diversified Public Sector Enterprise with interests in industrial packaging, logistics services, and more, led by a Board of Directors supported by Business and Function Heads.
- **Market Leadership:** The company is a market leader in manufacturing 210-liter Mild Steel (MS) drums, holding over 32% market share in the rigid industrial packaging segment.

- **Selection Process:** The PESB recommended his name after interviewing several candidates, solidifying his position as Director (Services Business) at Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd.

2. UP Partners with World Bank to Launch UP AGREES & AI Pragma Initiatives

The Uttar Pradesh government has partnered with the World Bank to launch two major initiatives: UP AGREES and AI Pragma. UP AGREES (Uttar Pradesh Agriculture Resilience and Enhancement Scheme) aims to improve agricultural productivity and sustainability in the state. The initiative focuses on climate-resilient farming practices and better resource management to support farmers. AI Pragma is designed to enhance digital learning and promote the use of artificial intelligence in education and governance. Together, these initiatives mark a significant step toward technological advancement and rural development in Uttar Pradesh.

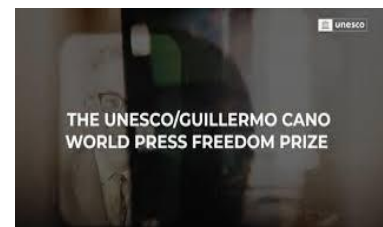


Foot notes:

- **World Bank Funding:** The World Bank has approved a loan of 2,737 crore over six years for the UP AGREES program, with the state government contributing 1,166 crore. The loan has a repayment period of 35 years at an interest rate of 1.23%.
- **AI Pragma Initiative:** The AI Pragma initiative aims to upskill 10 lakh youth in Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, data analytics, and cybersecurity, in collaboration with tech giants like Microsoft, Intel, Amazon, and Google, to boost employment and support digital transformation.
- **Economic Goal:** These initiatives align with Uttar Pradesh's goal of becoming a \$1 trillion economy by driving agricultural innovation, digital skill development, and entrepreneurship.
- **Implementation:** The programs will be implemented in multiple districts, including Basti, Maharajganj, Ballia, Ghazipur, Varanasi, and Jhansi, with a focus on promoting climate-resilient practices, digital technologies, and market linkages for farmers.

3. La Prensa honoured with UNESCO World Press Freedom Prize 2025

La Prensa, Nicaragua's oldest newspaper, has been awarded the 2025 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize for its unwavering commitment to independent journalism despite severe government repression. Since 2021, the newspaper has operated in exile after its offices were raided, assets seized, and its general



manager, Juan Lorenzo Holmann, imprisoned by the Ortega regime. UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay expressed regret over Nicaragua's decision, reaffirming the agency's commitment to press freedom and the importance of supporting courageous journalism worldwide.

Foot notes:

- **Award Recipient:** La Prensa, a Nicaraguan newspaper founded in 1926, has been awarded the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 2025 for its courageous efforts to report the truth despite severe repression.
- **Reason for Award:** The prize recognizes La Prensa's commitment to independent journalism and freedom of expression in the face of authoritarian suppression in Nicaragua, including arrests, exiles, and confiscation of assets.
- **Current Status:** Despite the imprisonment and expulsion of its leaders, La Prensa continues to inform the Nicaraguan public online, with most of its team operating in exile from countries like Costa Rica, Spain, Mexico, Germany, and the US.

4. Public Sector Banks post record 1.78 Lakh Crore Profit in FY25

Public sector banks (PSBs) in India have reported a record cumulative net profit of 1.78 lakh crore for the fiscal year 2024–25, marking a 26% increase from 1.41 lakh crore in FY24. This growth reflects the sector's continued recovery from previous financial challenges, attributed to comprehensive reforms and strategic government support.



The State Bank of India (SBI), as the largest lender, contributed over 40% of the total profit, with a standalone net profit of 70,901 crore, up 16% from the previous year. Among other notable performers, Punjab National Bank reported a 102% rise in net profit to 16,630 crore, while Punjab & Sind Bank saw a 71% increase to 1,016 crore. All 12 PSBs posted profits, underscoring the sector's robust performance and the effectiveness of ongoing financial reforms.

Foot notes:

- **Record Profit:** Public Sector Banks achieved a cumulative net profit of 1.78 lakh crore in FY25, marking a 26% increase from 1.41 lakh crore in FY24.
- **SBI's Contribution:** State Bank of India dominated the sector, contributing over 40% of the total earnings with a net profit of 70,901 crore, up 16% from 61,077 crore in FY24.
- **Top Performers:** Punjab National Bank reported the highest net profit growth of 102% to 16,630 crore, followed by Punjab & Sind Bank with a 71% rise to 1,016 crore.

- **Growth Across Banks:** All 12 public sector banks reported a rise in profit, with Central Bank of India, UCO Bank, and Bank of India posting growth rates of 48.4%, 47.8%, and 45.9%, respectively.
- **Turnaround Story:** This record profit marks a significant turnaround from FY18 when PSBs collectively reported losses of 85,390 crore, attributed to the government's 4R strategy of recognizing NPAs, resolution and recovery, recapitalization, and reforms.

5. C-DOT, CSIR-NPL partner to boost quantum, classical communication tech

The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT) and the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) have achieved a significant milestone by integrating C-DOT's indigenous fiber-based Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) system with PRL's Free Space QKD system. This collaboration has resulted in the establishment of an end-to-end quantum communication link that utilizes both fiber and free space as transport mediums. The demonstration of this integrated system was presented to Prof. Ajay Sood, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, and Dr. Neeraj Mittal, Secretary of the Department of Telecommunications, during the 2nd International Quantum Communication Conclave held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.



Foot notes:

- **Key Areas:** The partnership will focus on joint R&D in areas like Quantum Key Distribution (QKD), single-photon sources and detectors, Electromagnetically Induced Transparency (EIT)-based quantum systems, and FPGA-based control electronics.
- **Research Collaboration:** Both institutions will share access to their facilities, scientific expertise, and technical support to fast-track the development of high-impact technologies, aligning with national priorities like "Atmanirbhar Bharat" and "Make in India".
- **Capacity Building:** The collaboration emphasizes academic exchange and capacity building through guest lectures, workshops, collaborative teaching programs, and skill development initiatives in quantum and classical communication technologies.
- **National Ecosystem:** The partnership aims to strengthen India's quantum research ecosystem through collaborative efforts in standardization, performance validation, and defining benchmarks for quantum systems, essential for commercial deployment and global competitiveness.

6. Deepika, Parth Win Bronze as India Bags 7 Medals at Archery World Cup

At the 2025 Archery World Cup Stage 2 in Shanghai, Indian archers Deepika Kumari and Parth Salunkhe each secured bronze medals in the individual recurve events. Deepika triumphed over South Korea's Kang Chae-young with a 7-3 victory, marking her 12th individual World Cup medal and India's first in women's recurve this year. Parth clinched his maiden World Cup medal by defeating France's Baptiste Addis 6-4, showcasing composure in a tightly contested match. These achievements contributed to India's impressive total of seven medals at the event, comprising two golds, one silver, and four bronzes. The medal haul highlights the strength and depth of India's archery talent on the global stage.



Foot notes:

- **Deepika Kumari's Bronze Medal:** Deepika won her 12th Individual World Cup medal by defeating Korea's Kang Chaeyoung 7-3 in the bronze medal match of the women's recurve category.
- **Parth Salunkhe's Maiden Medal:** Parth Salunkhe claimed his first World Cup medal, a bronze, by beating France's Baptiste Addis 6-4 in the men's recurve category.
- **India's Medal Tally:** India concluded the 2025 Shanghai World Cup with 7 medals - 2 gold, 1 silver, and 4 bronze medals.
- **Other Indian Medalists:** The gold medals were won by Madhura Dhamangaonkar in women's individual compound and the men's compound team comprising Ojas Deotale, Abhishek Verma, and Rishabh Yadav.

7. Nidhi Chhibber appointed as Director General of Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office

Nidhi Chhibber, a 1994-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from the Chhattisgarh cadre, has been appointed as the Director General of the Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO) under NITI Aayog. This appointment, approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), elevates her to the rank and pay of a Secretary to the Government of India, with the post temporarily upgraded as a personal measure. Prior to this, Ms. Chhibber served as Additional Secretary at NITI Aayog, and her earlier assignment as Officer on Special Duty in the Ministry of Food Processing Industries has been canceled. She holds a Master's degree in History, an LLB, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Intellectual Property Rights.



Foot notes:

- **Background:** She has been serving on central deputation since 2017 and previously worked as Chairperson of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).
- **Previous Role:** Before her current appointment, Chhibber was Additional Secretary at NITI Aayog and was recently empaneled for holding Secretary-rank posts in the Government of India.
- **Cancellation of Previous Appointment:** Her appointment as Officer on Special Duty in the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) has been cancelled, paving the way for another IAS officer to potentially become Secretary, MoFPI.
- **Responsibilities:** As Director General of DMEO, Chhibber will oversee development monitoring and evaluation initiatives, and DMEO has recently signed an MoU with the Capacity Building Commission for collaboration on capacity-building initiatives in data governance, monitoring, and evaluation.

8. Actor Sonu Sood Honoured for Philanthropic Work During COVID-19

Actor and philanthropist Sonu Sood is set to receive the prestigious Humanitarian Award at the 72nd Miss World Festival, scheduled for May 31, 2025, at the HITEX Arena in Hyderabad, Telangana. This honor acknowledges his exceptional contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic, where he provided critical support to migrant workers, students, and families in need. Through his Sood Charity Foundation, he facilitated transportation for stranded individuals, distributed medical aid, and launched initiatives like free education and employment training programs. In addition to receiving the award, Sood will serve as one of the official judges for the grand finale, joining a distinguished panel to crown the next Miss World.



Foot notes:

- **Migrant Workers' Messiah:** He helped send over 7.26 lakh migrant workers back to their homes and provided employment opportunities to 2 lakh people, earning him the title of "messiah of migrants".
- **Student Evacuation:** Sood also facilitated the return of 14,500 students stranded abroad in countries like Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Russia, and the Philippines.
- **Medical Assistance:** He connected people with doctors, hospitals, and medical facilities, facilitating around 20-22 surgeries daily for months during the pandemic.
- **Recognition:** This award puts Sood in the company of notable personalities like Angelina Jolie, David Beckham, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Priyanka Chopra, who have also been honored by UN bodies for their humanitarian work.

9. Padma Shri Mohan Reddy appointed as NITW BoG chairperson

Dr. B.V.R. Mohan Reddy, a distinguished technocrat and founder of Cyient Ltd., has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (BoG) at the National Institute of Technology Warangal (NITW). This appointment, confirmed by the Ministry of Education, is effective for six months or until further orders. Dr. Reddy is recognized for his significant contributions to India's technology sector and education. He currently serves as the Chairperson of IIT Hyderabad and IIT Roorkee, and has previously held the position of Chairman at NASSCOM. His leadership is expected to enhance NIT Warangal's academic and research initiatives, fostering stronger industry collaborations.



Foot notes:

- **Padma Shri Awardee:** BVR Mohan Reddy was conferred with the Padma Shri award in 2017 for his contribution to trade and industry.
- **Founder and Chairman of Cyient:** He founded Cyient (formerly Infotech Enterprises) in 1991 and served as its Executive Chairman, promoting the "Engineered in India" brand.
- **Leadership Roles:** Reddy has held various leadership positions, including Chairman of NASSCOM (2015-16) and Chairman of the Board of Governors of IIT Hyderabad and IIT Roorkee.
- **Education and Honorary Degrees:** He holds postgraduate degrees from IIT Kanpur and the University of Michigan, and has received honorary doctorates from several universities, including JNTU Hyderabad and Andhra University.
- **Philanthropy and Social Impact:** Through the Cyient Foundation, Reddy has set up 54 community development centers across Serilingampally Mandal, Telangana, promoting IT literacy and digital empowerment.

10. World Lupus Day observed on 10 May

World Lupus Day is observed annually on May 10 to raise awareness about lupus, a chronic autoimmune disease that affects millions globally. In 2025, the theme is "Let's Make Lupus Visible Together," emphasizing the need to highlight symptoms, patient experiences, and scientific progress. Individuals and organizations worldwide participate by wearing purple, sharing information on social media, and hosting events to educate the public and support those affected. The observance aims to reduce stigma, promote



research, and advocate for better healthcare services for lupus patients. For more information and resources, visit the official World Lupus Day website:

Foot notes:

- **Awareness:** World Lupus Day aims to raise awareness about this chronic autoimmune disease that affects over 5 million people worldwide, causing pain, inflammation, and damage to various body parts.
- **History:** The day was established in 2004 by Lupus Canada to promote awareness, improve patient services, collect incidence rates, and raise research funding.
- **Symptoms:** Common symptoms of lupus include fever, fatigue, joint pain, stiffness, and a characteristic butterfly-shaped rash on the face.
- **Impact:** Lupus can affect people of all ages, races, and nationalities, and can cause irreversible damage to vital organs like the kidneys, heart, and brain if left untreated or poorly managed.
- **Objective:** The day emphasizes the need for enhanced healthcare services, increased research, and better global epidemiological data on lupus to improve the lives of those affected.

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