SIDBI & Bank of Baroda sign MoU to Strengthen Credit Delivery for MSMEs and Startups

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), the principal financial institution for promoting, financing and development of MSMEs and startups, and Bank of Baroda (BOB), one of India's leading public sector banks, today signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly enhance credit flow, expand working capital access, and strengthen financial support for MSMEs and startups across India in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

The MoU for the partnership was signed in the presence of Shri M. Nagaraju, IAS, Secretary, Department of Financial Services (DFS), who graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Shri Manoj Ayyappan, JS, DFS, Shri Manoj Mittal, CMD SIDBI, Shri Lalit Tyagi and Shri Lal Singh, Executive Directors, Bank of Baroda and other senior leadership from Banks and FIs participated in the ceremony.

*Joint Financing for MSMEs: Credit delivery support through combined strengths of SIDBI's MSME focus and Bank of Baroda's wide branch network.

*Working Capital Enablement: Operationalisation of BOB's Working Capital Platform for SIDBI-sanctioned borrowers to ensure seamless, tech-enabled Working Capital support.

*Startup Financing: Structured support for startups through coordinated interventions-SIDBI's Venture Debt Programme, and Bank of Baroda's Startup Banking solutions, including financial products, advisory, and customised offerings.

*Export Promotion: Enabling MSMEs and high-growth startups to benefit from Bank of Baroda's global network, offering export-related banking support, market access insights, and international banking solutions.

*Cluster and Innovation Support: Joint programs for MSME clusters, incubators, accelerators, and startup ecosystems across the country.

Manoj Mittal, CMD, SIDBI, said "For 35 years, SIDBI has shaped the MSME and startup financing landscape through direct, indirect and digital interventions. This MoU deepens our ability to jointly support MSMEs as well as high-potential startups through venture debt, digital credit, and coordinated working capital solutions. We see this as a powerful opportunity to accelerate India's enterprise growth narrative."

Lalit Tyagi, Executive Director, Bank of Baroda, said: "Bank of Baroda is committed to supporting MSMEs and the emerging startup ecosystem. Through this partnership, we will strengthen joint financing, enhance digital credit enablement, and expand specialised banking solutions for startups. Our global presence will further help MSMEs, and startups tap export opportunities."

Lal Singh, Executive Director, Bank of Baroda delivering the vote of thanks, appreciated the efforts put in by both the teams and congratulated all stakeholders for the anticipated value creation for all parties involved, especially the customers.

BIA launches School of Performing Arts with industry-focused training & exclusive acting workshop

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/ BIA launched its School of Performing Arts, an institute designed to provide comprehensive professional training in acting, modelling, filmmaking, photography, and cinematography. Located in Chinar Park, the academy featured an expansive 11,000 sq. ft. campus equipped with ultra-modern facilities and advanced technical infrastructure essential for grooming future industry professionals.

The first academic session began in January, and to initiate the admission process, BIA organised a special workshop on Film Acting conducted by National Award-winning director Atanu Ghosh. Aspiring actors had the rare opportunity to learn the craft and nuances of screen performance directly from one of India's most distinguished filmmakers. Maker of acclaimed films such as Mayurakshi, Angshumaner Chhobi, Abby Sen, Bini Sutoy and SeshPata, Ghosh's guidance offered participants unparalleled direction and insight into the world of cinema.

The academy was led by Director Iban Banerjea, an international model, along with Chief Mentor Tuhinaa Pandey, former Mrs. India title holder and seasoned administrator. Together, they aimed to build an institution that nurtured talent and prepared students for real-world careers.

ITC Hotels unveils Fortune Select Siliguri

EOI CORRESPONDENT

SILIGURI, NOV 19/--/ITC Hotels Limited (ITCHL) announces the opening of Fortune Select Siliguri, a 70-key premium hotel set in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas.

Anil Chadha, Managing Director, ITC Hotels Limited, said, "The unveiling of Fortune Select Siliguri is an important milestone in ITC Hotels' planned expansion in the East, a region rich in its traditions, ethos, commerce and natural beauty. As part of our growth strategy and commitment, we continue widening the ITCHL footprint in emerging urban centres, cultural hubs and high-potential markets reflecting our thoughtful vision of delivering responsible and rewarding hospitality across the lengths & breadth of India, and its proximal markets."

Roshan Agarwal, Managing Director, CKIM Promoters LLP, added, "We have envisioned Fortune Select Siliguri as more than just a hotel; it is a celebration of the way people come together in this part of the country. In Fortune Hotels that carries the trusted legacy of ITC Hotels, we have found a partner who shares our belief in creating warm and authentic experiences for guests visiting Siliguri."

Rescheduling of trains

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/Due to Track maintenance work between Plassey-Rejinagar stations in Sealdah Division, 240 minutes (from 23:45 hrs. to 03:45 hrs.) Traffic Block has been planned on 20/21.11.2025 and 22/23.11.2025. Consequently, 53181 Sealdah - Lalgola passenger will be rescheduled by 60 minutes and will leave Sealdah at 00:30 hrs. on 21.11.2025 & 23.11.2025 and will be short terminated at Krishnapur. (EOIC)

Sealdah Division urges passengers to refrain from unauthorised level crossing or trespassing

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/ Sealdah Railway Division is committed to ensuring the highest standards of safety across the division. However, division was gravely concerned about the persistent and dangerous practice of unauthorized railway line crossing by public.

It has been observed that some individuals are using unauthorized level crossings, which directly creates a threat to life and property.

Trespassing on railway lines exposes you to the direct threat of fast-moving trains. This practice is the number one cause of preventable fatalities and grievous injuries. Illegally crossing the tracks is not just a high-risk activity; it is a serious violation of the law. Unauthorized entry or crossing of railway lines is a strictly punishable offense under the Indian Railways Act.

In this context, DRM/Sealdah Rajeev Saxena urged passengers to use only safe and designated routes while crossing railway tracks, emphasizing that a few extra minutes could save lives. Follow the proper path can save lives.

AU Small Finance Bank enables Mobile Tap & Pay functionality on Samsung Wallet

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/AU Small Finance Bank (AUSFB), India's largest Small Finance Bank and the first in over a decade to receive in-principal approval for transitioning into a Universal Bank, has announced the enablement of Mobile Tap & Pay functionality for AU Visa Credit Cards on Samsung Wallet. Unveiled during the Global Fintech Fest (GFF), this feature allows AU Credit Card holders to make secure, convenient contactless payments using (Near-Field Communication) NFC-enabled Samsung Galaxy smartphones, enhancing speed and ease in everyday transactions.

With this launch, AU SFB customers can add their AU Visa Credit Cards to the Samsung Wallet and perform Tap & Pay transactions at any NFC-enabled POS terminal, without the need to carry their physical cards. The process works exactly like a regular contactless credit card transaction, offering the same speed and additional security.

Uttam Tibrewal, Executive Director and Deputy CEO, AU Small Finance Bank, said: "AU Small Finance Bank, has always been at the forefront of digital innovations. The integration of AU Visa Credit Cards with Samsung Wallet is yet another step towards providing seamless digital payment experiences that will enhance the evolving lifestyle of our customers. This partnership underscores our commitment to building a future-ready banking ecosystem that is intuitive, mobile, and customer-first."

"With Mobile Tap & Pay, we are enabling AU SFB customers to make seamless and secure payments directly from their Galaxy smartphones - anytime, anywhere," said Madhur Chaturvedi, Senior Director, Services & Apps Business, Samsung India.

UCO Bank, Salt Lake Zone Hosts Exporters' Meet at Hotel Sonnet

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/UCO Bank, Salt Lake Zone successfully organized an Exporters' Meet on Tuesday, 18 November 2025 at Hotel Sonnet, Salt Lake, bringing together exporters, business partners, and senior bank officials for a productive interactive session.

The event was graced by eminent dignitaries from the Bank, including Avinash Shukla, General Manager, DIT, Alok Kumar, Deputy General Manager, International Department, Pradeep Anand Keshari, Deputy General Manager & Zonal Head, Salt Lake Zone.

The participants took part with great enthusiasm, actively engaging in discussions aimed at strengthening export-related banking services. A wide range of queries, observations, and suggestions were raised by the exporters, all of which were duly noted and addressed by the bank's dignitaries.

The Bank assured the participants that such interactive meets will continue to be organized in the future to support, promote, and nurture export business, reaffirming UCO Bank's commitment to customer-centric service and the growth of India's international trade ecosystem.

ER's RPF rescues 10 children under "Operation Nanhey Faristey"

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/In a significant display of alertness and compassion, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Eastern Railway has once again demonstrated its strong commitment to child safety and protection. As part of the nationwide initiative "Operation NanheyFaristey", RPF teams continue to safeguard vulnerable children found in railway premises and trains, ensuring they receive timely care and support.

On 17.11.2025, RPF officials of Sealdah and Asansol Divisions successfully rescued 10 minor boys from trains and station premises at Kolkata and Jasidih Railway Stations. All rescued children were immediately handed over to the concerned Child Help Line for counselling and further necessary action.

Lenskart launches Barcelona-born Meller in India

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/Lenskart announced the launch of Meller in India and revealed a new creative eyewear partnership with global pop-culture brand Popmart, strengthening its ambition to build a modern House of Eyewear Brands and positioning Lenskart as a centre for contemporary eyewear design.

"Our customers inspire every decision we make. They're seeking global design, individuality, and brands that feel authentic," said Peyush Bansal, Co-founder & CEO, Lenskart. "Meller's bold aesthetic and strong community make it a wonderful addition to our House of Brands. And through creative partnerships like Pop Mart, we hope to bring moments of play, imagination and collectability into eyewear in ways that delight our customers."

Headded, "By bringing together brands like John Jacobs, Owndays and now Meller, alongside collaborations such as Pop Mart, our goal is to offer customers more choice and better experiences. We see ourselves as an enabler for the next generation of eyewear brands - providing the platform and capabilities for them to reach more people and unlock their potential."

Websol signs MoU with APEDB

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/Websol Energy System Limited (Websol), manufacturer of high-efficiency solar cells and modules, announced that it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board (APEDB).

The MoU, executed through Websol Renewables Private Limited marks the initial phase of evaluating the establishment of a 4 GW integrated solar cell and module manufacturing facility in Andhra Pradesh. This proposed expansion forms a key component of Websol's long-term strategy to significantly enhance its renewable manufacturing footprint in India.

Sohan Lal Agarwal signed the MoU on behalf of Websol, while Sanjana Khaitan represented the Company at the event and received the signed document from Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N. Chandrababu Naidu.

Mr Agarwal, Managing Director, said: "We are pleased to formalise this MoU with APEDB, which represents an important milestone in Websol's growth roadmap. Earlier in September 2025, we announced our intention to develop a 4 GW solar cell and module facility in two phases, taking our total planned capacity to 5.2 GW."

IAC-Life applauds Bima Gram API

EOI CORRESPONDENT

ASANSOL, NOV 19/--/The Insurance Awareness Committee (IAC-Life) is bankingon Bima GramAPI to change the face of rural insurance penetration. Launched recently by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), Bima GramAPI is a pioneering digital initiative designed to streamline and authenticate insurance coverage data in rural India.

To accelerate insurance penetration in India's rural geographies, the IRDAI has issued Rural and Social (RuSo) mandates to India's insurers. Under the same, insurers have to cover a minimum percentage of lives, dwellings, shops, and vehicles in identified GPs and the social sector. However, over the years, insurers were finding it challenging to accurately map insurance coverage to rural areas. Most identification documents do not mention the GP name, making it difficult for insurers to accurately measure the level of insurance penetration in rural communities.

Member, Insurance Awareness Committee (IAC-Life),said, "The launch of Bima GramAPI marks a pivotal step in advancing rural insurance inclusion, and deepeningand measuring insurance penetration in rural areas."

BAI welcomes restructuring of tax on alcohol in West Bengal

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA/NEW DELHI, NOV 19/--/Brewers Association of India (BAI) has welcomed the move by the West Bengal Government to generate more tax revenues by way of restructuring of taxes on alcoholic beverages. Its impact on consumer prices of spirits will be marginal and will not distort the market, and yet allow Government to earn more revenues, BAI said in a statement.

The recent decision by the Government of West Bengal to increase excise duties on spirits by 2-4% w.e.f. 1st December this year but keeping taxes on beer unchanged reflects a practical and balanced approach to increasing state revenues. This may help the West Bengal Government collect an estimated Rs.600-700 crore, thus filling up the expected shortfall in GST to the tune of Rs.500 crore due to recent reduction in rates, it added.

"The World Health Organization also recommends linking alcohol taxation to alcohol content. It's a framework that encourages moderation while protecting state revenues," said BAI Director General, Vinod Giri.

Excise revenue from alcohol contributes between 10% and 25% of total state own tax receipts, making it one of the most dependable levers of state finance. With limited revenue autonomy in other areas, State Governments often turn to alcoholic beverages industry for revenues.

Some other states such as Maharashtra, Assam and Meghalaya have also implemented similar policies to great success. Maharashtra increased taxes on spirits by 50% leaving beer intact, and its total tax revenues have gone up by 16%. Tax revenues in Assam have also seen a surge after it reduced taxes on beer to reduce the gap in consumer prices of beer compared to IMFL. The BAI anticipates that, as the policy-making cycle commences across other States, more may recognize the efficacy of this holistic strategy.

NCSC holds review meeting with ER & SER Management on Reservation and Welfare Issues

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) convened a review meeting with the management of Eastern Railway and South Eastern Railway at Eastern Railway Headquarters. The meeting aimed to safeguard the rights and ensure the welfare of Scheduled Caste employees in the organisation. Key issues related to reservation for Scheduled Caste (SC) employees, backlog vacancies, welfare measures, grievance redressal mechanisms, and other employee-related concerns were discussed in detail.

During the session with Eastern Railway, the NCSC delegation-led by Love Kush Kumar, Chairman, National Commission for Scheduled Castes, New Delhi-held discussions with Milind Deouskar, General Manager, Eastern Railway, Zarina Firdausi, Principal Chief Personnel Officer and other senior officers of Eastern Railway. Sonali Dutta, Director, SC/ST Commission, West Bengal, along with other Commission members was also present.

During the meeting Mr Kumar advised the Eastern Railway administration to thoroughly review the concerns outlined in the memorandum submitted by the 'All India Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Railway Employees Association of Eastern Railway.

Mr Deouskar stated that the Eastern Railway administration is strictly adhering to the guidelines of the Railway Board, providing facilities to SC employees diligently and is committed to ensuring that all entitled benefits reach eligible SC candidates.

Redevelopment of Haldia Station under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme

To elevate the travel experience for passengers

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/The Amrit Bharat Station scheme for upgrading the stations, reflects strong commitment of Indian Railways for inclusive and future-ready development. Indian Railways is not just transporting people, it is moving forward with a vision. Detailed plans are made for each station and the work is done in phases, based on what each station needs. Altogether, 72 stations of South Eastern Railway are being developed under this scheme.

Haldia station in East Midnapur District of West Bengal is a terminal station on the Panskura-Haldia branch line of South Eastern Railway. Haldia is also a major industrial hub and port city. The station serves for passenger and freight transportation. It is presently undergoing a massive transformation under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme.

The redevelopment of Haldia Station of Kharagpur Division will provide improved passenger amenities. Upgraded facilities at Haldia Station: Renovation of Station building, New parking area, New Circulating area, Booking Counter, Renovation of Waiting room and toilet, Improved platform shelter and platform surface, New entry/exit gate, New Facade & Extended of Porch, Divyangjan facilities i.e. Water Booth, Ramp, Tactile and Braille Sign, booking counter, parking etc., Painted in local Art & Culture theme Baby Feeding Room and Reserved Lounge.

NCSM wins CIMUSET Award for Science City Kolkata's "On The Edge?" Climate Change Gallery

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/The National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) has been honoured with the prestigious CIMUSET Award for its ground-breaking climate change gallery "On The Edge?" developed at Science City, Kolkata, a unit of NCSM. The award was announced on November 15, 2025 during the CIMUSET award ceremony organised during 27th ICOM General Conference in Dubai, marking a proud moment for India's science museum community.

'On the Edge?' stands out as a powerful demonstration of what science museums can achieve when they take seriously their responsibility toward society. The project addresses the urgency of climate change through an impressive combination of scientific rigour, community engagement, and genuine inclusivity. 'On the Edge?' shows how science museums can act as agents of change, inspiring people to imagine and shape more sustainable futures. This is exactly the kind of ambitious, socially relevant work the CIMUSET Award seeks to recognise," said Jacob Thorek Jensen, Chair of the CIMUSET Award Committee.

"The gallery was inaugurated earlier this year, on January 11, 2025, by Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of India. Since then, more than one million visitors have explored this facility. We are honoured to receive the prestigious CIMUSET Award, which recognizes our commitment to making climate science both accessible and engaging. Our 10,000-sq.-ft. gallery integrates immersive exhibits, AR/VR experiences, and an interactive LED wall to clearly convey climate impacts, said Pramod Grover, Director, Science City, Kolkata.

Bandhan MF enables UPI investments up to Rs 5 lakh

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, NOV 19/--/ Bandhan Mutual Fund has enabled higher-value UPI transactions for mutual fund investments, in line with NPCI's recent enhancement of the UPI limit from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh per transaction. With this upgrade, investors can now make larger investments with the same ease and speed that UPI offers.

At Bandhan Mutual Fund, the higher limit will now cover over 90% of investor transactions across its digital platforms. Investors can invest up to Rs 5 lakh via UPI directly through the Bandhan Mutual Fund website and app, subject to their bank enabling the enhanced limit.

The feature is already live across major banks including HDFC Bank, Punjab National Bank, Axis Bank, Airtel Payments Bank, Federal Bank, Yes Bank, IDFC Bank, AU Small Finance Bank, Jio Payments Bank, and Ujjivan Small Finance Bank, ensuring a seamless and efficient investing experience.