



Editor's Note

January 2025 saw a whirlwind of activity with the Economic Survey 2025 and the Union Budget for the year. There was not much to cheer for infrastructure enthusiasts with no significant increase or emphasis on infra spending by the government. The Infravision Foundation (TIF) worked towards its goal of identifying high speed railway corridors and presenting the results of its report on the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority Act (2016). TIF is also now 'CSR-registered' and is eligible to receive CSR funds to implement projects that qualify the criteria laid out in Schedule VII of the Companies Act. And the good news is that the first project has been bagged. More on this in the next issue.

CAIRA Roundtable on Agri Exports is a Success >>

[Roundtable@Media](#)

[TIF@Union Budget](#)

[TIF Takes the Lead on Issues that Matter](#)

[TIF@ Poll Impact](#)

[TIF IMPACT](#)

[TIF@Books](#)

[QUIZ](#)

Bolder steps needed to achieve agri exports target of \$100 bn by 2030

'USD 100 billion in agricultural exports by 2030' is an ambition that India can still achieve if it takes bolder steps. Agriculture contributes 18.2 per cent to India's GDP and provides livelihoods for over 42 per cent of the population, making it a cornerstone of the nation's economy. Despite being the world's 8th largest exporter of agri commodities, the Indian farmer faces several challenges due to gaps and shortages in infrastructure and market access. While India is a market leader in certain categories of exports, its productivity is far lower than global standards. Closing the policy gaps and providing vital linkages for agricultural commodities can deliver better incomes to India's farmers.

Creating conducive ecosystems for agri and marine exports to flourish requires a unified vision across ministries, a stable export policy environment, upgrading of cold chain, storage and logistics infrastructure, and a balance between cultivating large clusters of land for specific commodities as well as the individual needs of numerous small farmers.

These were the main findings of a roundtable on Boosting India's Agri Exports by Transforming Infrastructure organized in New Delhi on January 18, 2025, by the newly launched Centre for Agri Infrastructure Research and Action (CAIRA),

an initiative of The Infravision Foundation. A centrepiece of the event was the presentation of CAIRA's first Background Paper, which highlighted the urgent need for infrastructure transformation to support global supply chains originating in India. The paper provided actionable recommendations to modernize ports, enhance cold chain networks, and adopt cutting-edge technologies such as blockchain and IoT to reduce post-harvest losses and improve supply chain transparency.

Several key public sector leaders addressed the roundtable, among them Subrata Gupta, Secretary of Food Processing; Santosh Sarangi, DG, Directorate General of Foreign Trade; Siraj Chaudhry, Country Chairman, SATS India; Abhishek Dev, Chairman, APEDA; and Siraj Hussain, former Union Agriculture Secretary. The private sector perspective was provided by several business leaders including S. Sivakumar, Group Head, Agri and IT Businesses at ITC; Thomas Jose, Director of the Choice Group; Amit Pant, Senior Vice President at Tata Consumer Products; Azhar Tambuwala, Head of International Business at Sahyadri Farms; Atul Chhura, Chief Business Officer, Agribazaar; and Aneesh Jain, CEO and MD of Gram Unnati.



TIF Founder and Managing Trustee Vinayak Chatterjee; former Union Agriculture Secretary and Chairman, Governing Council, CAIRA, Siraj Hussain; DG, DGFT, Santosh Kumar Sarangi; Secretary, Food Processing, Dr Subrata Gupta; Chairman, APEDA, Abhishek Dev; Chairman, SATS India, Siraj Chaudhry; and Group Head, Agro and IT Businesses, ITC Limited, S. Sivakumar



Head, International Business, Sahyadri Farms. Azhar Tambuwala; Chief Business Officer, Agribazaar, Atul Chhura; CEO and MD, Gram Unnati, Aneesh Jain; Editor in Chief, Rural Voice, Harvir Singh; Lead Agriculture Specialist, The World Bank, Andrew Goodland; and Public Policy Expert and Distinguished Fellow, TIF, Akhilesh Tilotia



Director, Choice Group, Thomas Jose; Secretary General, AIMLEA, RK Boyal; Director, Millets for Health, Rajeev Pandey; and Professor, JNU, and Member, Governing Council, CAIRA, Dr Seema Bathla



Senior Vice President and Head, Soluble Business, Tata Consumer Products, Amit Pant; and TIF CEO Jagan Shah

Roundtable@Media

CAIRA's first roundtable was covered extensively on DD Kisan Channel

(<https://youtu.be/F8JHhv5iUc4?si=aLW0Yeu--f02rFyf>)

On IANS

(https://ianslive.in/100-bn-target-of-agri-exports-by-2030-achievable-needs-clear-bold-policies-experts--20250120184804#google_vignette)

and in Rural Voice

(<https://eng.ruralvoice.in/national/100-billion-agri-export-target-by-2030-achievable-but-needs-clear-and-bold-policies-say-experts.html>)

TIF@Union Budget

TIF Founder and Managing Trustee Vinayak Chatterjee raised concerns about the near-zero per cent increase in allocation in the Union Budget while Chairman, Governing Council, CAIRA, Siraj Hussain, wrote two articles, one of which expressed surprise that there was no mention of doubling farmers' incomes, a dominant theme in discussions since it was first announced at an election rally in 2015.

(<https://www.magzter.com/stories/newspaper/Financial-Express-Pune/PRIVATE-CAPEX-REVIVAL-EXPECTED?srsId=AfmBOorkv8NXhoGh9FFQkM8OIW5wxexJxmslvEtIsA8DtIJCmRMTcNI>)



TIF Takes the Lead on Issues that Matter

The Infravision Foundation CEO Jagan Shah wrote in The Print on the importance of a national policy for the Indian coastline, spanning 1,200 islands and 7,500 kilometres. "It is the bedrock of a vibrant economy built on centuries-old relationships between the region's cities and surrounding civilisations, communities and natural elements," he wrote, adding that a network of coastal districts could help identify coherent policies.

(<https://theprint.in/opinion/indias-coastal-future-needs-safeguarding-district-networks-can-help-build-resilience/1930255/>)

Member, Council of Advisors, Prof G Raghuram, wrote in Hindustan Times on Indian Railways' move towards

'greening' through a variety of initiatives. Among these, 100 per cent electrification of the railway network is one. As of October 2024, about 97 per cent of the route network is electrified. While there are detractors, his view is that the policy of 100 per cent electrification is visionary.

(<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/power-to-indian-railways-in-its-journey-towards-100-electrification-101738223511358.html>)

TIF Distinguished Fellow and Chief Economic Adviser, State Bank of India, Soumya Kanti Ghosh, wrote on lessons from post-pandemic investment.

(<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/toi-edit-page/some-capital-ideas-for-the-economy/>)

TIF@ Poll Impact

After 40 years, it's time for a holistic approach to the NCR. TIF CEO Jagan Shah said the results of the Delhi Assembly elections mean that it is now possible to have integrated planning, governance, and infrastructure. He was quoted in Soumya Chatterjee's article on Delhi Elections 2025, which can be read here.

(<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/for-the-first-time-in-4-decades-all-ncr-states-ruled-by-a-single-party-101739041261124.html>)



TIF IMPACT

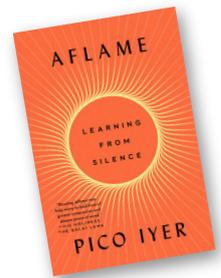
It was a proud moment for all Indians and The Infravision Foundation team when the Vande Bharat crossed the world's highest rail bridge on its first run from Katra to Kashmir. Sudhanshu Mani, who led the creation of Vande Bharat, and AFCONS, who built the iconic bridge, were winners of the InfraShakti award 2024, in the categories of InfraVisionary and Transport Trailblazer respectively.



TIF@Books

Aflame: Learning From Silence

Sometimes a natural disaster can have a deep spiritual impact. Much before the California fires of January 2025, a cataclysmic blaze in 1990 destroyed, among other things, author Pico Iyer's home and belongings. It led him to discover the art of stillness at a Benedictine monastery in California to which he has made over 100 visits. Thirty five years on, he has written about the experience in *Aflame: Learning from Silence* (Riverhead Books).



QUIZ: Test Your Infra Power

1. What is the HAM model for awarding projects by the National Highways Authority of India?
2. Where exactly will the Bangalore Chennai expressway run from and to?
3. What is India's largest agri export?
4. What is the name of the Delhi-Dimapur train? Viewers of Paatal Lok Season Two should know this answer.
5. Who is the Ladakh airport, the highest airport in India, named after?

1. The hybrid annuity model.
2. Hoskote in Bangalore to Srirambudur near Chennai.
3. Rice.
4. There are several trains between the two cities, including DBRT Rajdhani, Avadh Assam Express, and Tripura Sundari.
5. The pre-eminent scholar and saint Kushok Bakula Rinpoche who passed on in 2003.



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