More tech-enabled startups tap equity market as concerns ease

INDIAN startup ecosystem is maturing at a rapid pace. This is reflected as increasing number of startups are tapping the public market for raising funds through IPOs (Initial Public Offering). Last year was an exceptionally good year in the startup listing space. A total 18 startups raised a total of Rs 41,248 crore in 2025 from public markets.

Notable listings last year included Groww, PhysicsWallah, Meesho, Lenskart, Ather Energy, Urban Company, and Pine Labs among others. After such successful listings last year, it can be safely assumed that Indian investors' reluctance to invest in startups has been subsided to a great extent. After a strong listing momentum by Indian startups last year, 2026 so far has seen tepid listing.

So far, seven new-age tech companies have already made their market debut. But, barring a few, most of these listings remained lacklustre. Only SEDEMAC and Kissht have been listed with market gains. While listing momentum remained tepid but the pipeline remains strong. Notably, 28 startups have already filed their draft red herring prospectus (DRHPs) with the market regulator, SEBI. Out of these 28, more than 24 are in various stages of finalising their IPO plans.

Established startups in the unicorn league such as Zepto, OYO, InMobi, PhonePe and Zetwerk have already filed their prospectus with SEBI. If they go ahead with their listing plans and market response remains sound, this has the potential of becoming one of the biggest years of fund raising for Indian startup ecosystem. It has to be seen how many of these startups hit the market given the volatile environment.

Whether they go for an IPO this year or not; one thing is becoming clear that Indian startups are increasingly feeling confident to opt for public listing as they reach profitability threshold or are in the vicinity of it. Moreover, many of these startups are now in operations for more than a decade and have successfully scaled their operations with proven revenue model. Therefore, investors see them as companies that will grow rapidly in coming years after their public listing.

Secondly, the nervousness among investors, especially retail investors, is slowly going away as they have already seen several listed startups growing rapidly in recent years. This gives the confidence that startup promoters are not dumping their companies on public through listing. Rather, they see public funding as a way of accelerating growth. Another notable feature of these startup listing is that most of these new age companies can be categorised as tech startups.

This is a resounding change in the listing landscape. One decade back, majority of companies coming for public listing were operating in traditional domains. Now, a significant chunk of new listing is happening in the tech startup space. Definitely, this is good news for the India Inc. Because as global economy becomes more technology-enabled with AI ruling the roost, it is important that Indian market should have public listing of companies that are tech startups.

This way, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) will be keen to invest in Indian market because any company that leverages technology, has the potential of scaling up very fast and in many cases, has the ability to reach a global audience. In this respect, increasing number of startups coming up for listing is a sign of Indian economy that is leveraging technology pretty fast.

While startup listing is definitely a good news, startup founders and investment bankers have to take care of the fact that their price band is reasonable and they are able to deliver of their promises in a time-bound manner.

LETTERS

Using students as part of toolkit

THIS is further to Dr Hyma Moorthy's article "Protest Is A Right ,Violence Is Not ". It is a timely reflection of the recent student protests at Jantar Mantar .The right to protest peacefully to get your voices heard is a democratic right but what Jantar Mantar witnessed ,as protests was unconstitutional . It was sheer hooliganism and carried out by mobs .As rightly pointed out by Dr Moorthy ,the protesters who used filthy and abusive language and involved in mob violence never looked like they were students .The protests came at a time when the NEET re exam was conducted successfully and results were announced just a few days earlier. So ,the students who cleared the re exam were never a part of the protests . One can say ,without a doubt that the mobocracy that we witnessed at Jantar Mantar was not student protests but a politically-motivated agenda by some anti nationalists and anti social elements, who used students as tools and pawns to try and create an atmosphere of tension and unstability .

Parimala G Tadas, Hyderabad

Govt holiday to watch 'Jana Nayagan'?

THE recent release of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay's final film, Jana Nayagan saw numerous TVK ministers and MLAs leave the Secretariat and head to theaters for the first-day screenings, leaving government offices largely deserted and sparking intense political backlash. Is it proper for responsible ministers and elected representatives spending hours in cinema halls during a working day, abandoning core administrative tasks at the secretariat? Elected officials should prioritize public service and State issues over celebrating a political leader's cinematic swan song. For TVK ministers, work at the office is infinitely more important since real governance requires administrative files, not cinematic applause. Treating public office like a box-office collection will only reduce the state to a tragic script.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai

A case of 'economic bunker-buster'

THE proposed US legislation threatening upto 100% tariffs on India and China is officially framed by Washington as a measure to cut revenue to Russia from oil sales to India and China for funding war on Ukraine. But then it is also a likely strategy to defend the Petro-Dollar dominance in oil trade. However, this measure could also be viewed as a powerful tool of economic leverage that intersects with broader monetary and global dominance concerns. The proposed rules include exemptions or lighter scrutiny for certain European nations still buying pipeline gas or alternative Russian energy, fuelling accusations of double standards. But a good number of leading US senators call out Asian importers as the main targets, implying India and China, which are the fastest growing economies in the world today threatening the Petro-Dollar dominance in world trade. The proposal of 100% tariff against India in particular is an aggressive "economic bunker-buster", for this developing country (India) to alter vital energy procurement strategies under threat of losing access to Western consumer markets. As such, safeguarding dominance of US Dollar in commodity trading remains a foundational pillar of American financial hegemony.

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RAISE YOUR VOICE

Do you have any civic issues? Are any roads in your locality damaged? Do you have any complaints against govt departments? Are any private companies taking you for a ride regarding sales and service? *The Hans India* will publish your complaints, concerns and grievances in these columns on every Wednesday. Mail the details along with relevant photographs if any, to hanspeoplesvoice@gmail.com -Editor

DIGITAL REVOLUTION

New generational job opportunities for Gen Z

DR KARNATI KIRAN KUMAR

INDIA is heading towards "Viksit Bharat@2047," but achieving this ambitious goal in a short timeframe depends on persistent reforms, the correction of macro-economic imbalances, and the management of geopolitical challenges. The implementation of digital reforms in 2015 resulted in significant changes to the Indian economy, as India's work culture underwent structural restructuring, producing new types of jobs across many sectors.

Moreover, youth thought process is changing in line with structural transformation from waiting for government notifications to technical driven startups establishment, from playing video games to sharing knowledge, skills and talent through reels and shorts, promoting a product local to national and international recognized and there are many other. Especially, Gen Z now finding opportunities in emerging fields, partly driven by the digital revolution and contributing significantly to the nation's economy.

Digital Revolution

India's current growth story began with the 2015 Digital India scheme, which paved the way for new-generation earnings and a significant contribution to the economy. Until 2014, the telecom sector was in turmoil, and the price of 1 GB of data was between Rs. 250 and 300, with an unreliable network. **Accessibility:** the breakthrough India achieved in upgrading internet speeds from 2G/3G to 4G and 5 G. Since 2016, 4G network service has reached every corner of the country. Since 2022, 5G networks covered 99.6 per cent of the districts by establishing 4.74 lakh towers.

Affordability: Along with the high-speed network, the Government of India has made network services available at an affordable price for all sections of society. According to information from bestbroadbandsdeals.co.uk, in 2023, India was among the top 10 countries out of 237 offering the cheapest 1 GB of mobile data at $0.16 (Rs. 13.32). As we compare the average price of 1 GB data with the world's top 10 largest economies (Based on nominal GDP).

Among these, except Italy (0.09$), all other countries have an average price of 1 GB more than India, for example, in France (0.20$), in Russia (0.25$), in China (0.38 $), in Brazil (0.40$), in the UK (0.62$), Germany (2.14$), Japan (3.48$), and the USA (6 $). The average price of 1 GB further declined in India as of 2026 July.

Simply, anyone who has a smartphone can observe that while recharging their mobile phone with Paytm/G Pay and other recharge apps, various recharge data plans will appear. As per that information, at the (Dollar to rupee exchange rate, such as 1$ = 95.68), Airtel is providing 1 GB per day at 0.06$ (Rs. 6.31), BSNL at 0.03$ (Rs. 3.8) and Jio at 0.06$

(Rs. 6.28). Further, Broadband Fibernet services are available at the lowest price (between Rs. 1 and 3) for 1 GB.

Utilisation: The people of the country are efficiently utilizing the low-price network facility for their daily activities. According to the PIB 2025 data, internet connections in the country rose from 25.15 crore in March 2014 to 96.96 crore in June 2024. At the same time, indispensable high-speed network connections are being penetrated in the 2.18 lakh gram panchayat through Bharat Net.

According to the NSS 80th round (CMS 2025) data, smartphone usage in the country has increased significantly. In the 15-29 age group across India, 93.8 per cent of persons own a smartphone. In rural areas, 93.0 per cent, and in urban areas, 95.3 per cent of people own smartphones. The digital economy's contribution to the national GDP has risen from 5.8% in 2014 to 8.58% in 2019 and 11.74% in 2022-23, with projections to reach 20% by 2030.

Spillover effects

The digital revolution in India paved the way for lakhs of jobs and business opportunities for the country's youth. Especially during the lockdown, people continued their services online without losing income due to uninterrupted internet access. It has opened the door to new kinds of jobs in the private sector for the younger generation living in rural and urban areas, such as gig economy work, freelance jobs, and intraday trading, making the shorts, reels, and travelers within and outside the country. The digital revolution amplified gig-platform-based work, including delivery services, logistics, ridesharing, and professional work.

As of 2025 August, 3.37 lakh platform gig workers are registered in the e-Shram portal, and NITI Aayog projected that the sector will provide employment opportunities from 1 crore to 2.35 crore between 2024-25 and 2029–30. Furthermore, youth are actively involved directly in stock market investment and intraday trading as a profession. As of January 2026, data from the National Stock Exchange (NSE) show there were 12.7 crore unique registered investors. The SEBI investor survey 2025 indicates that 9.5% of Indian families invest in the stock market.

Social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram have enabled youth and women from various fields to showcase talents and gain steady incomes, notably through reels and shorts. Creating digital content is now a widespread profession. Many have turned travel into work, earning money by sharing their videos of various places on social media platforms. Social media further globalizes local products (handicrafts, handlooms, ayurvedic medicine, fisheries, and organic goods) and supports exports.

Moreover, Sunil Patil (Dolly Tea Stall) from Nagpur gained major attention including a visit from Bill Gates and other celebrities to his tea shop. Now Dolly Tea stalls have become a brand, on that name many tea shops are opening across the country. Overall, these shifts in employment trends and economic sectors reflect how India is leveraging new opportunities to achieve the Viksit Bharat@2047 vision.

Reduction of unemployment

The data on unemployment provided by the World Bank's development indicators, estimated using the ILO model, show that over the past few years, India has reduced its unemployment at a reasonable rate. The unemployment trends from 2014 to 2025 among the countries are as follows: the reduction in unemployment is paramount in India, from 7.65% to 4.22%, and was lower than in China, the United Kingdom (UK), and Brazil.

Financial inclusion and seamless transactions

The uninterrupted internet connectivity and network speed led to the financial inclusion of all sections of society. People with smartphones are conducting UPI-based financial transactions regardless of their education level. Digital literacy enhanced seamless transactions and saved people valuable time. Until 2015, every bank was crowded and had long queues; people used to wait hours for a small deposit or a withdrawal.

However, now people can send and receive a maximum of 1 lakh per day without any strain or bank officials' involvement via UPI platforms such as PhonePe, GPay, Paytm, and BHIM, and others via banks' offered apps such as ICICI iMobile Pay, Canara a1i, SBI YONO, HDFC Bank app, Axis Mobile, etc. In 2025, approximately 65 million merchants and 460 million people used UPI for transactions.

According to the Minister of Finance, over the ten years of the UPI digital revolution, the annual transaction volume increased from just 2 crores in FY 2016–17 to over 24,162 crores in FY 2025–26. Between FY 2016–17 and FY 2025–26, the transaction value increased significantly from ₹0.07 lakh crore to around ₹314 lakh crore.

There are some negative repercussions of digitalization that need to be addressed and raise awareness, in addition to the beneficial spillover benefits. People are now using digital payments for all transactions, which is causing problems like financial loss and psychological stress due to cybercrime and digital arrests by fraudulences.

Some social media influencers promote contentious information, fake news, etc. to boost views on their channels and earn money. Additionally, young people who lack financial literacy are engaging in online trading, which is causing them to lose money and mental equilibrium.

(The writer is Assistant Professor, School of Economics, University of Hyderabad)

Congress stands by the aspirations of India's youth

RACHAMALLA SIDDESHWAR

THE twelve years of BJP rule at the Centre have pushed India's education system into deep crisis. Students patiently waited for years in the hope that the government would introduce meaningful reforms, but the NEET examination paper leak proved to be a devastating blow to those expectations. Instead of acting firmly against those responsible for the leak, the Union Government allegedly attempted to suppress student protests through police action, including baton charges and the use of tear gas

When we speak of a nation's future and development, the first thing that should come to mind is its youth. The greatest asset of any country is its young population. Providing quality education, equal opportunities, and secure employment to young people is the foremost responsibility of any government. However, the growing controversies surrounding India's education system, repeated examination paper leaks, delays in recruitment, and rising unemployment have severely shaken the confidence and aspirations of the country's youth.

As the protests intensified across the country, the Narendra Modi government eventually bowed to mounting public pressure, leading to the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. With the Centre accepting the key demands of protesting students, the Congress describes the outcome as a moral victory for India's youth. It also credits Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi for playing a significant role in supporting the student movement.

Under the authoritarian rule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's education sector has been pushed into an unprecedented crisis. The BJP government's policies have encouraged excessive corporate influence in education, transforming learning into a commercial enterprise. The increasing corporatization of education, coupled with repeated leaks of entrance and recruitment examination papers, has seriously eroded students' faith in the system. As education becomes increasingly expensive, quality learning is no longer seen as a fundamental right but as a commodity that only those with financial resources can afford.

The 2026 NEET controversy has become the defining symbol of this crisis. Following the alleged paper leak, more than two million students were thrown into uncertainty. The decision to reconduct the examination imposed enormous emotional, financial, and psychological burdens on thousands of families. Students, the Congress, and several opposition parties demanded that the Union Government accept moral responsibility and sought the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Instead of addressing these concerns constructively, the government, prioritized suppressing the protests.

The NEET paper leak triggered widespread anxiety among students, with reports suggesting that some candidates took the extreme step of ending their lives. As nationwide protests gathered momentum, Delhi's Jantar Mantar emerged as the focal point of the student movement. Protesters demanded transparency in examinations, stringent action against paper leak networks, and fairness in recruitment processes.

Rather than engaging in dialogue, the Centre allegedly responded with police action, including baton charges and tear gas, provoking further public anger. Ultimately, however, the resilience and determination of the students compelled the government to respond to their demands.

Rahul Gandhi, as Leader of the Opposition, actively supported the student movement. Even before the NEET controversy reached its peak, he had launched the nationwide "Chhatron Ki Goonj" campaign in June to amplify the voices of students and expose what he described as the failures of the Union Government. His effort sought to transform student grievances into a national conversation and push for structural reforms rather than political gains.

Educational standards have steadily deteriorated during the BJP's twelve years in power. It claims that more than 150 major examination papers have been leaked across the country during this period, affecting nearly 75 million students. Central Government of reducing allocations for school education and higher education while allowing corporate interests to dominate the education sector.

More than 100,000 government schools have shut down while over 43,000 private schools have been established. The ideological considerations have influenced curriculum revisions and appointments in educational institutions. Rahul Gandhi's campaign for educational reforms has awakened young people across the country, causing discomfort within the government. Rahul Gandhi and several Congress Members of Parliament were detained while attempting to question the Prime Minister over these issues.

Employment remains another area where, the Union Government has failed India's youth. The BJP's 2014 election promise of creating two crore jobs annually has, it argues, remained unfulfilled. Millions of educated young people continue to struggle with unemployment, while many others are forced to accept jobs unrelated to their qualifications because of the widening gap between education, skills, and employment opportunities.

Young people are central to India's nation-building process. Their confidence can only be restored through transparent examination systems, quality public education, timely recruitment, and equal opportunities for all. To ensure that students' dreams are not destroyed by paper leaks, unemployment, and corruption, comprehensive reforms in the education system have become imperative. The Congress maintains that it will continue its struggle until fairness in examinations, credibility in recruitment, and accessible quality education become a reality for every student.

The Congress also believes that young people should not merely participate in politics but should have the opportunity to shape it. In this context, Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has proposed that the minimum age for contesting elections to legislative bodies be reduced to 21 years and announced his intention to move a resolution in the Telangana Legislative Assembly to that effect. The proposal has generated considerable enthusiasm among young people.

Safeguarding the aspirations of India's youth is not the responsibility of any one political party alone; it is a national obligation essential to securing the country's future. Congress will continue to champion the cause of students and young people. The resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan as a political victory for the Congress, but rather as a victory earned by the students themselves.

(The writer is Chairman, Rajiv Gandhi Panchayati Raj Sangathan, Telangana)

BENGALURU ONLINE

HIV cases rise in capital; Health Department steps up awareness campaigns

BENGALURU: A rise in HIV infections in Bengaluru, particularly among young adults, has prompted the Health Department to strengthen awareness campaigns in colleges, universities and workplaces. Health officials say changing social behaviour and increased use of online dating platforms have contributed to the growing number of infections in certain high-risk groups.

According to official data, 4,795 people tested HIV-positive in the last five months across the state. Health authorities said a significant proportion of the newly detected infections were reported among men who have sex with men (MSM), a recognised high-risk group for HIV transmission.

Officials also noted that a sizeable number of new cases involve unmarried individuals, accounting for nearly 20-25 per cent of infections. The Health Department has expressed concern over the increasing number of infections among students residing in college hostels and paying guest (PG) accommodations in Bengaluru. As a preventive measure, awareness programmes are being planned in educational institutions to educate young people about safe sexual practices, HIV prevention and the importance of early testing. Responding to the trend, Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society Project Director Padma Basavanthappa said awareness remains the most effective tool in preventing the spread of HIV.

She said outreach programmes are being intensified among college students, IT employees, migrant workers, drivers and truckers, who are considered vulnerable groups because of mobility and behavioural risk factors. She also pointed out that men who have sex with men and commercial sex workers continue to be among the identified high-risk categories, making focused intervention programmes essential.

Read more at https://epaper.thehansindia.com

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