

India-Iran should move forward with long term and win-win strategy: PM Modi

New Delhi, Sept 11 (GNS): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said India and Iran should move forward with a long-term and win-win strategy. PM Modi made the comment following his meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi.

PM Modi also noted that President Pezeshkian's visit is 'more special' as he is visiting India for the first time. "From Bishkek to Delhi, the productive discussions continue. Happy to have met Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, the President of Iran. This visit is more special because it is his first visit to India," PM Modi stated on X. "We talked about the India-Iran friendship. We believe that we should move forward with a long-term and win-win strategy. The



prevailing situation in the region was also discussed. India remains steadfast in its commitment to the pursuit of enduring peace," he added. During their discussions PM Modi also pressed on safeguarding freedom of navigation and

commerce and the safety and well-being of seafarers. This was the second meeting between the two leaders in under two weeks. They had met earlier on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Bishkek on August 31.

As the two leaders discussed various aspects of the bilateral relationship, Prime Minister Modi also thanked Iran for its regular, high-level participation in BRICS-related meetings despite the "challenging circumstances".

He noted the potential for BRICS in building the spirit of resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability among countries in the Global South. According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), PM Modi also

thanked President Pezeshkian for his participation in the Leaders' Session of the BRICS Business Forum. "The two leaders exchanged views on recent developments in West Asia. Prime Minister reiterated India's consistent position that all issues must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy. He also underscored the need for continued efforts to ensure lasting peace and stability in the region, safeguarding freedom of navigation and commerce, and the safety and well-being of seafarers," read a statement issued by the MEA after the meeting. "Prime Minister appreciated the continued cooperation between the two sides on issues of mutual interest in multilateral organisations, including BRICS," it added.

Students are torchbearers of tomorrow's democracy: CEC Gyanesh Kumar

Ahmedabad, Sept 11 (GNS): Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said on Friday that today's students are the torchbearers of tomorrow's democracy and the poll panels' Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) across India will help strengthen the backbone of the world's oldest and largest democracy.

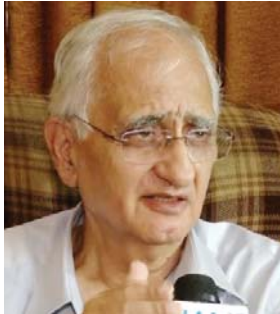


Kumar described students as the future of the nation, saying that ELCs are imperative in carrying forth the understanding of electoral processes and enriching democracy, an official statement said. He emphasised that engaging young citizens and securing their trust and informed participation in the electoral process is an

investment in the future of democracy. CEC Gyanesh Kumar said that elections in India are held strictly as per the Constitution of India, law and instructions issued by ECI and are conducted transparently under the concurrent audit of political parties, candidates or their representatives at all stages. ELC 2.0, with the tagline "Learn Democracy. Lead Democracy", reimagines Electoral Literacy Clubs as structured, visible and digitally-enabled platforms across schools, colleges and universities, encouraging young and first-time voters to understand and meaningfully participate in democracy, the statement said. Leveraging the extensive ECINET digital platform.

India should use BRICS Summit to present globally expected leadership: Salman Khurshid

New Delhi, Sept 11 (GNS): Congress leader and former External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid on Friday stated that the BRICS Summit should be used by India to present the kind of leadership that the world expects from it. "The Summit is happening for the third time under this government. This is because the presidency is transferred from one country to another. What we need to focus on is how to make this significant." Stressing that the world expects a lot from India, the Congress leader asked: "Is India able to live up to those expectations? Or does India have its own problems and concerns because of which we are unable to deliver on the



world stage, what we can and what we should do?" Further, he said that the world has a lot of expectations regarding India's possible contribution in resolving the West Asia conflict. "Today, since we have received a platform which is being presided over by us, it will be very important to present the expected leadership from our side. Now, how far that is achieved by us, will be discussed after the

conclusion of the Summit," he said. Regarding Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to India, Khurshid said: "It is important that he is coming because when a distance develops between two countries, then a direct face-to-face meeting on any issue or occasion, or the possibility of establishing some kind of a relationship between them, becomes difficult." "The issue which we have highlighted in our country is that the kind of relationship that should have existed between India and China is not there, and we are the ones suffering due to this, as the sufferings from China's side have never been revealed by the government," he claimed.

TG to roll out new education policy soon: Revanth Reddy



Hyderabad, Sep 11 (GNS): Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Friday said Telangana government would soon roll out a new education policy on par with the National Education Policy (NEP), with a focus on providing quality education and skills to make students job-ready and promote entrepreneurship.

The policy, he said, would cater not only to Gen Z but also to the emerging Gen Alpha and Gen Beta generations. It will focus on education, language and communication skills from nursery to Class 12, skill development for graduates, and employment, innovation and entrepreneurship for those pursuing higher education. Replying to a debate in the Legislative Assembly on the government's initiatives, Revanth Reddy said a recent caste survey conducted by the state had established that the key reason for social backwardness was lack of access to education rather than possession of assets or property. "If we have to compete with the world, there is a need to discuss what needs to be incorporated into the education system," he said.

He said the government had constituted an Education Commission to formulate a new education policy for Telangana and appointed a committee headed by K. Keshava Rao to examine its report. The government was willing to consider suggestions and advice from legislators and the public, if submitted to Keshava Rao, he said. Increasing the education sector's share in the state budget to 15 per cent was one of the government's goals, he added. Responding to BJP MLA Aleti Maheshwar Reddy's criticism over the absence of a full-time education minister, Revanth Reddy said the fact that the Chief Minister himself was handling the portfolio showed the importance attached to education. "When I review the education department as Chief Minister, the entire system comes under review," he said, adding that he had a passion for the education sector and had retained the portfolio with the objective of transforming it.

Revanth Reddy said the education budget had been substantially increased under the Congress government. Against the `19,093 crore allocated by the previous BRS government in 2023-24, the Congress government allocated `21,292 crore in 2024-25, `23,108 crore in 2025-26 and `26,647 crore in 2026-27.

Nigeria VP arrives in New Delhi for BRICS Summit

New Delhi, Sept 11 (GNS): Nigeria's Vice President, Kashim Shettima, arrived in New Delhi on Friday to attend the 18th BRICS Summit. He was warmly received at the airport by Minister of State (MoS) at the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Shantanu Thakur. "Cordially welcome Vice-President Senator Kashim Shettima of Nigeria as he arrives in New Delhi for the 18th BRICS Summit. He was received by MOS Shantanu Thakur at the airport," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated on X. "India and Nigeria share close and longstanding ties, underpinned by strong people-to-people connections. The visit will further strengthen this multifaceted partnership," it added. Ahead of his departure, Vice

President Shettima met Abhishek Singh, High Commissioner of India to Nigeria, on Thursday as they reviewed progress in bilateral cooperation before the 18th BRICS Summit. "Ahead of the 18th BRICS Summit, being held in New Delhi on 12-13 Sept, High Commissioner Abhishek Singh met H.E. Kashim Shettima, GCON, Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria," the High Commissioner of India in Nigeria stated on X. Shettima is heading a delegation which will represent Nigeria in the New Delhi summit, further advancing the shared priorities and cooperation. "The meeting reviewed progress in bilateral cooperation and explored opportunities to further strengthen the India-Nigeria Strategic Partnership.

FM Sitharaman meets Russian dy PM Manturov; discusses 'Bilateral Investment treaty'

New Delhi, Sept 11 (GNS): Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday met with Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister, Denis Manturov to advance negotiations on a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and explore deeper cooperation in financial services as the two countries seek to strengthen economic engagement and achieve ambitious trade and investment targets. Taking to the social media platform X, the Ministry of Finance said both sides agreed to move forward with negotiations on a BIT aimed at creating a mutually beneficial framework to boost investment flows and enhance overall economic engagement between the two countries.



During a meeting here, they reviewed bilateral economic ties and discussed ways to further deepen cooperation across sectors, it added. In addition, the two leaders also deliberated on opportunities to expand cooperation in the financial services sector, a move that could support growing trade and investment activity between India and Russia, according to the

ministry. The discussions come amid renewed efforts by both countries to significantly scale up bilateral economic relations. Earlier this week, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal identified pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, chemicals, textiles and food products as key sectors that could drive growth in India-Russia trade.

Fintech firms key partners in advancing financial inclusion: RBI Governor

Mumbai, Sep 11 (GNS): Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra has said fintech companies have emerged as important partners in India's financial ecosystem and will play an increasingly significant role in expanding financial inclusion across the country. Speaking to IANS on the sidelines of the Global Fintech Fest (GFF) 2026, Malhotra said the central bank is working closely with fintech firms and financial institutions to make financial services more accessible, reduce digital fraud and lower the cost of banking and financial services. "Financial inclusion, customer-centricity and the development of a secure digital financial system remain key priorities for the RBI," he said.



"Technology can help take financial services beyond traditional banking channels and bring them closer to people in villages and households," he added. "Fintech is a very important partner for us," Malhotra said, stressing the need for greater collaboration between fintech companies and financial sector institutions to achieve wider financial inclusion and strengthen customer-

focused services. Addressing the GFF 2026 earlier, the RBI Governor highlighted the substantial progress India has made in financial inclusion in recent years. He said the country currently has around 57 crore Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan accounts, 25 crore micro-insurance policies and 9 crore beneficiaries under the Atal Pension Yojana. The rapid expansion of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions has also made digital payments an integral part of everyday life for millions of Indians. Malhotra said the significance of this transformation lies not merely in the scale of these numbers, but in the extent to which digital financial services have become embedded in the daily lives of ordinary citizens.

Chance for India to bridge the Gulf

KC SINGH

UNITED Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, widely known as MbZ, made a flying visit to New Delhi on Monday. The absence of any prior indication about the visit implies that it concerned the rapidly changing geopolitical scenario in the Gulf and West Asia.

The UAE, a coalition of Trucial States formed after the British exit the region in 1971, traditionally followed a status quo-based non-confrontational foreign policy. In 2002, an Indian delegation visited the UAE, when I was the Ambassador, after the terror attack on the Indian Parliament. Then President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, MbZ's father, received the visitors. When asked about the foreign military presence in the region, the late leader recounted an old Arab tale. A farmer was frequently losing his sheep to wolves. Someone advised him to keep dogs. He did so, only to discover that he had to kill sheep often to feed the dogs. Sheikh Zayed's message was that foreign intervention did not benefit the region.

Now MbZ is an English-speaking former air force pilot and the Supreme Commander of the UAE armed forces. He has controlled foreign policy since his father's death in 2004, even when his brother was President. According to his diplomatic adviser, Anwar Gargash, the UAE's priorities are to counter extrem-



ism and promote regional security. This underscores its opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood, which is seen as an existential threat. The UAE and Saudi Arabia had resented the ouster of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak by the Arab Spring protestors in 2011, to which then US President Barack Obama had seemingly turned a blind eye. Both countries supported the Egyptian military to subsequently overthrow the Muslim Brotherhood government.

The Gulf and West Asia have been unstable since US President Trump's first term. The confrontation between Qatar and its two powerful neighbours, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, began soon after Trump's visit to Riyadh. Qatar was blockaded (2017-21) for supporting Islamist forces. Trump also abandoned the nuclear deal with Iran, approved by

the Permanent-Five plus Germany.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia are the two largest economies in West Asia. MbZ helped Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, widely known as MbS, to consolidate power. When Saudi operatives murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey in 2018 on MbS' alleged instructions, it was MbZ who handled the Americans. However, as the Saudis, the custodians of the Two Holy Mosques, consider themselves the apex of the Arab and Muslim world, Saudi-Emirati differences gradually developed and their geopolitical visions came into conflict. In diplomacy, friendship is transitory while interests are permanent. The UAE broke the regional consensus by signing the Trump-devised Abraham Accords in 2020 and normalising relations

with Israel, while the Palestinian issue remained unresolved. It began backing secessionist forces in Yemen, Somalia and Sudan, ostensibly to counter Islamist forces. These three nations lie along the Red Sea, facing Saudi Arabia and the Bab al-Mandab. The UAE's interests converged with those of Israel and the US.

President Trump's second term has exacerbated the regional churn, especially since the June 2025 Israel-US air attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities. On September 9, Israel attacked Hamas leaders' facilities in Qatar. MbZ rushed to meet the Saudi Crown Prince after a noticeable gap marked by the absence of communication. On September 15, the GCC met to review the situation. Two days later, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement, with a clause mirroring NATO's

Article 5, about an attack on one nation being considered as an attack on both.

Soon enough, Yemen became a flashpoint. Early on till 2019, the UAE had joined Saudi Arabia in military operations in Yemen, but later preferred to support Yemeni rebel factions; the Saudis continued to back government forces. Reportedly, Israeli intelligence was positioned on UAE-controlled Yemeni island Socotra. While in Africa, Israel recognised Somaliland, a breakaway part of Somalia — the Emiratis are developing a port there.

The Saudis retaliated strongly, telling the UAE to withdraw its forces from Yemen and bombing the military equipment sent by UAE. Egypt, the other big Arab power, began to speak in favour of the Saudis — both clearly wanted to restrict Israeli strategic expansion in the Red Sea region. Essentially, the Saudi and Emirati visions are at odds. The Saudis favour state-to-state engagement to stabilise domestic or regional conflicts. The UAE likes to cultivate dissident and breakaway factions, like in Yemen, if it promotes stability and controls supply routes, minerals and energy. So as the Saudis attempted to limit Emirati geopolitical play in the Arab world, MbZ made his first visit to Pakistan as President last month. The UAE Sheikhs and Pakistan have been close for decades, but Pakistan had meanwhile signed a defence deal with the Saudis.

The meaning of Mumbai's vote for BJP

MUMBAI's municipal elections were held four years late. That delay, amounting to constitutional breach, says much about Indian democracy. India's richest municipality was kept in administrative suspension, without elected representatives and without consequences, indicating a deeper comfort with democratic deferral. Remember that constitutional self-government at the third tier is not optional. The BJP has improved its seat tally compared to 2017 and emerged as the largest party, aided by the split in the Shiv Sena that had once anchored the alliance. Across Maharashtra, the BJP-led alliance has dominated civic bodies, winning most municipal corporations where elections were held.

Yet Mumbai's result refuses to yield a single neat political interpretation. That is because Mumbai is not merely a city, but more like a city state. Its budget dwarfs those of many Indian states, and its economic weight is large enough to become a meaningful share of national output and taxes. It is India's financial capital, Bollywood's stage, the country's biggest labour magnet, a playground for creative artistes and hence a cultural engine whose pluralism and a cosmopolitan nature are as valuable as its money.

And yet this Maximum City is embarrassed by minimum accountability. Its governance is famously complex, a "spaghetti bowl" of agencies like the BMC (civic body), MMRDA (regional planning), BEST (transport), MHADA (housing), SRA (slum rehab), MSRDC, railways and more, each with partial responsibility, overlapping jurisdiction and carefully designed escape routes from blame. Planning is separated from execution, transport from land use, housing from connectivity, and accountability from everything. When the city fails, no single institution can be held answerable. The electoral contest for the BMC was about control over patronage, planning, land, permissions, contracts and the right to shape India's most valuable urban geography.

There is a striking paradox. Mumbai generates extraordinary wealth, and yet its residents experience extraordinary fragility. Mumbai's real estate is as valuable as gold, and a gateway to power. Yet an enormous share of the population lives in slums with minimal civic promises fulfilled. In the same city that hosts the country's richest households and its most expensive square foot, ordinary life is spent navigating broken footpaths, overcrowded trains, unreliable drainage and the annual monsoon lottery of whether water will enter your home.

This is why Mumbai's ambitions have often collapsed. Consider the great promise made in 2006 when the then Prime Minister announced an ambitious plan to turn Mumbai into an international financial centre (IFC). Mumbai had the financial institutions, the human capital, the depth of markets and the global visibility.

If any Indian city could compete with Singapore, Dubai, Hong Kong or London in financial services, it had to be Mumbai. Plans were drafted, committees were formed, reports were published, and the story was told with conviction. Two decades later, Mumbai is still not an international financial centre. It remains India's financial capital — a domestic title — but the global destination status never arrived. The IFC plan did not fail because of lack of bankers, entrepreneurs, lawyers or capital. Mumbai failed because it lacked what global cities require: coherent governance and high-quality infrastructure delivered at scale. This is where Gujarat's GIFT City managed to steal a march — not because it possessed Mumbai's cultural or market depth, but because it offered policy alignment, friendly regulation, fiscal incentives and administrative push from the top. Mumbai remained trapped in the politics of discretion. Mumbai's financial autonomy is limited since even the property tax rates are determined by the state government. The impressive coastal road project needed funding from the Centre or other sources. The metro network depends much on an external purse. Mumbaikars, apart from their financial orphanhood, also pay a hidden tax, which is in terms of numerous permissions, for building, redevelopment or utilities.

The compliance cost is unpredictable, and consumes time. The delays impose a cost and become translated as higher real estate prices and eventually worsen inequality. There is a strange and perpetually large mismatch between excess stock of luxury supply and unmet demand for affordable housing. A few years ago, it was reported that Mumbai had an inventory of more than two lakh unsold flats.

The issue of affordable housing was hardly headlined in the manifestos. Nor was flood control, solid waste management or road repair. The BMC elections brought freebie theatre to civic polls. Manifestos promised rebates, concessions, free bus rides and cash transfers, with no mention of from where the finances would come. In this competitive welfarism, the voters are treated as beneficiaries rather than citizens who have rights. Civic accountability cannot be replaced by a relationship of gratitude from beneficiaries. The government closest to people's lives is the civic administration, but civic politics is behaving like state politics.

The mandate for a triple engine again, like in 2017, signals that voters have chosen stability in a fragmented field, and remain committed to cosmopolitanism. The Opposition failed to offer a credible civic vision beyond anti-incumbency. The bogey of a threat to Marathi Asmita did not work. But the deeper message is that Mumbai has started voting with low expectations. The city has become habituated to dysfunction, not outraged by it. This is a dangerous normalisation.

Mumbai's central problem is not only who rules; it is what powers the city-government actually has. Indian public finance and governance still treat cities as administrative appendages of state governments, not as economic engines that require autonomy, capacity and long-horizon planning. The Chief Minister holding the urban development portfolio has become predictable precisely because that department controls the golden goose: land, permissions, development control, and the levers through which politics can monetise urban growth.

If Mumbai is serious about being a world-class city, it needs structural change. It needs single-point accountability for metropolitan outcomes; de-fragmentation of agencies; fiscal autonomy that does not reduce the municipality to an accountant at someone else's mercy; a predictable rule-of-law permissions regime; and a civic compact that treats public goods as non-negotiable. Most importantly, it needs citizens who do not outsource disappointment.

Mumbai has always been a city that contains multitudes: dreams and despair, wealth and vulnerability, glamour and grime, cosmopolitanism and cruelty. But it cannot remain, indefinitely, a city that funds the nation while failing itself. Mumbai voted for stability. But now it must demand fulfilment of its aspiration. The city of dreams can no longer afford the governance of drift.

Strengthening India-Germany, Eu Ties

DR. D.K. GIRI

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's two-day visit to India marked a significant milestone in the bilateral relations. Accompanied by 23 CEOs of German companies from various sectors, Merz landed in Ahmedabad on 12 January. Having spent a full day in multiple events, in the company of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Chancellor flew to Bengaluru. The intent and composition of the delegation was reflected in signing number of MoUs and Joint Declaration of Intent which aimed at strengthening economic, technological and security cooperation between the two countries.

For Chancellor Merz, it was his first trip to India and Asia as the Head of the German Government. Merz chose India for his first Asian trip as Chancellor, indicating a shift in strategy among European leaders, who previously focused on China. Prime Minister Modi, however, pointed out that Chancellor Merz's visit coincided with India and Germany acknowledging 25 years of strategic partnership and 75 years of diplomatic relations between two countries. New Delhi is also preparing to receive the EU leaders as the guests in the ensuing Republic Day parade. Their visit should coincide with the India-EU summit later this month. Soon after, the French President Emmanuel Ma-



cron is visiting India.

The new year seems to be starting with bonhomie between Indian and the European leadership. German Chancellor suggested that India and the EU could be concluding the FTA by the end of January. Germany being the largest economy in the Union, German Chancellor's voice carries considerable weight. The strategic shift in German foreign and trade policy could be detected in Chancellor's poignant remarks that the world is experiencing "a renaissance of unfortunate protectionism" that harms Germany and India. He did not name any country, but the reference was obvious.

While the United States has imposed heavy tariff on trading partners, China introduced export controls on minerals used in auto manufacturing causing months of supply chain

disruption last year due to the US-China trade war. This has badly affected German car makers. Germany has signalled diversification of its trade and search for alternatives to Chinese exports and market. More than once, the German leadership have revealed their preference for India as a democratic alternative to Chinese authoritarian state. Germany has also expressed interest in building trade relations with India, treating latter as a new source of supply chain.

That said, Germany has not been able to divert its trade away from China with its bilateral trade pegged at 287b USD in 2024-25, compared to 50b USD with India in the same year. Germany remains the largest trading partner of China, whereas Germany is the largest trading partner of India in Europe. The delay in German disinvestment from China and in

deepening trade and economic ties with India may be attributed to the strategic divergence between India and Europe that includes Germany on the war in Ukraine.

While Europe treats Russia as the main security threat, New Delhi puts China on the table as an aggressive and aggrandising neighbour. Germany is yet to take a concrete call on its attitude towards China, if Bonn wants to have strategic partnership with New Delhi. The geo-political approach has to be matched with trade and economic strategy. Admittedly, Germany has pursued a China plus strategy to reduce the excessive dependence on a single partner. Its trade with China is declining reflecting both emerging challenges in political engagement and Germany's diversification efforts.

Chancellor Merz may

have overstepped as he decided to characterise the growing India-German defence relationship as a means to reduce New Delhi's dependence on Russian defence hardware. At the same time, the MoUs and JDIs included strengthening bilateral defence industrial cooperation, a semi-conductor eco system partnership, cooperation on critical minerals and the bio-economy, a roadmap for higher education, easier visa access for health professionals, India-Pacific and scaling up triangular development cooperation in third countries.

The key highlights of the visit include defence cooperation: both countries signed a Joint Declaration of Intent to develop a defence industrial cooperation roadmap, focusing on long-term technology partnerships, co-development and co-production of defence equipment. In trade and economy, the two countries aim to conclude the India-EU Free Trade Agreement by the end of January which should also boost bilateral trade. On critical technologies, agreements were signed on semi-conductor, eco-system development, critical minerals and telecommunications, underscoring the growing cooperation in critical and emerging technologies. Germany will contribute technology, funding for equipment manufacturing, precision engineering and work force training.

Taking Technology to the Sea, Government Taps India’s Maritime Wealth, Equal to the Himalayas and Mainland, to Boost Livelihoods: Dr Jitendra Singh

New Delhi, Sept 11 (GNS): Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, and MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh, today launched India's first-ever open-sea Marine Fish Farming project from the Andaman Sea.

The Minister described this as one of the first major steps in the direction of realizing the Blue Economy through India's vast ocean resources, as envisaged and repeatedly emphasised by PM Shri Narendra Modi. The project was launched on-site at North Bay, Sri Vijaya Puram, during the Minister's field visit to the open waters of the Andaman Sea.

Addressing the occasion, Dr. Jitendra Singh said that this initiative represents one of the earliest and most significant steps taken to unlock the economic potential of India's oceans. He noted that India's oceans, much like its Himalayan and mainland resources, possess immense and diverse economic potential that had not received due attention for decades.

The Minister stated that for nearly seventy years after Independence, India's ocean resources remained largely under-explored. He underlined that since 2014, there has been a fundamental shift in national thinking, recognising that India's maritime domain holds equal wealth and opportunity for economic growth. He further highlighted the exclusive and heterogeneous nature of India's oceans, noting that the western, southern, and eastern seaboard each have distinct characteristics and unique contributions to make to the country's development. The project is being implemented through collaboration between the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India, its technical arm the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), and the UT Administration of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The pilot initiative focuses on open-sea cultivation of marine finfish and seaweed in natural ocean conditions, integrating scientific innovation with livelihood generation. During the field visit, two major livelihood-oriented interventions were initiated. Under the marine flora component, seaweed seeds were handed over by the Minister to local fishing communities to promote deep-water seaweed cultivation in the open sea. Under the marine fauna component, finfish seeds were provided for cage-based cultivation, supported by NIOT-developed open-sea cages designed to function in natural oceanic environments. Dr Jitendra Singh said that while the current projects are being undertaken through government-led collaboration, the experience gained and feasibility assessments could enable scaling up of such initiatives through public-private participation models in the future. This approach, he noted, would help accelerate deployment, expand livelihoods, and strengthen India's Blue Economy ecosystem.

Later, as part of his visit to the Andaman Islands, Dr Jitendra Singh also visited the Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park (MGMNP) near Wandoor, one of the first marine parks of its kind in the country, established in 1983. Spread across 15 islands and accessed via the Wandoor Jetty, the park is renowned for its protected islands such as Jolly Buoy and Red Skin.

The Minister observed the park's rich and self-sustaining marine ecosystem, including vibrant coral reefs, mangroves, and diverse marine life such as turtles and a wide variety of fish species.

The launch from North Bay reflects the Government of India's commitment to taking science and technology directly to the field, ensuring that coastal and island communities become active partners in India's ocean-led economic growth.

Dr Jitendra Singh said the initiative would help integrate modern marine technology with the traditional livelihoods of coastal communities. The open-sea farming model is expected to create new income opportunities for fishermen while promoting sustainable utilisation of marine resources.

The project will also provide valuable scientific data on the feasibility of cultivating finfish and seaweed under natural ocean conditions. Officials said the experience from the pilot would help refine technologies, assess environmental and economic viability, and support wider adoption of marine farming across India's coastal regions.

The Minister emphasised that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands could play a key role in India's emerging Blue Economy. He said strengthening marine research, technology and community participation would not only generate livelihoods but also contribute to food security, sustainable development and greater economic use of the country's vast ocean resources.

PM Vishwakarma Haat 2026 Inaugurated at Dilli Haat, Showcasing Pan-India Craftsmanship and Empowering Artisans

New Delhi, Sept 11 (GNS): Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Shri Jitan Ram Manjhi inaugurated the PM Vishwakarma Haat 2026 organised by the Ministry of MSME at Dilli Haat, INA, New Delhi in the august presence of the Minister of State for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises and Labour & Employment, Sushri Shobha Karandlaje today. Ambassadors of Iraq and Rwanda, senior officials of the Ministry of MSME, representatives from States and Union Territories, artisans and other stakeholders also graced the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, the Union Minister for MSME, Shri Jitan Ram Manjhi highlighted the achievements of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme and congratulated the team for organising the exhibition. He stated that “PM Vishwakarma provides a valuable platform to artisans from village-level backgrounds to sell their products and it is a commendable effort.” The Union Minister for MSME also explained the significance of Vishwakarma and appreciated the vision behind the scheme, stating that under the successful and dynamic leadership of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the scheme is providing a platform for every Vishwakarma in the country to access markets and contribute to the nation's development. Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for MSME, Sushri Shobha Karandlaje stated that, “Under the visionary leadership of the Prime Minister, the PM Vishwakarma initiative has achieved significant milestones. It is truly encouraging to witness the participation of over 117 artisans from various States and Union Territories on the platform of PM Vishwakarma Haat.”

She added that PM Vishwakarma connects village artisans by providing them with an enabling platform, thereby opening pathways to global markets. These achievements, she said, are the result of sustained efforts by the Government of India and the dedicated work of the Ministry of MSME.

Shri S.C.L. Das, Secretary, Ministry of MSME highlighted PM Vishwakarma as a significant initiative and stated that the rich and diverse potential of Vishwakarmas truly reflects the vision of “Virasat se Vikas.” He emphasized how beautifully and skillfully Vishwakarmas are carrying forward their traditional expertise, empowered by the leadership of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, which has provided them with a strong and enabling platform.

Dr. Rajneesh, Additional Secretary and Development Commissioner, Ministry of MSME, highlighted the achievements of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme and stated that Vishwakarmas are the engines of growth of the Indian economy. He elaborated on the benefits of the scheme and explained how it is creating enhanced marketing opportunities for artisans.

Cultural programmes and folk dance performances based on the themes of Bihar and Rajasthan were also presented during the Haat, adding vibrancy and showcasing India's rich cultural diversity.

IndiaSkills 2025–26: North East Regional Competition to be held at Gauhati University, Assam from 19–22 January

New Delhi, Sept 11 (GNS): The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is organising the North East Regional Competition of IndiaSkills 2025–26 from 19 to 22 January 2026 at Gauhati University, marking a significant milestone in India's national skilling ecosystem. This is the first time a dedicated IndiaSkills Regional Competition is being conducted exclusively for the North Eastern Region, with participation from all eight North Eastern States. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is serving as the knowledge partner and implementing agency for IndiaSkills Competition 2025–26. The competition will bring together skilled youth from all eight North-Eastern states to compete across 26 skill categories on a national platform celebrating regional talent and excellence. The competition will be inaugurated on 19 January 2026 by Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education, Government of India, reaffirming the Government's commitment to strengthening skill development, regional inclusion and competitive excellence across emerging regions of the country.

Smt. Hena Usman, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India addressed the pre-event press conference. The North East Regional Competition represents a decisive step in deepening India's skilling architecture across emerging regions. IndiaSkills is the country's premier national skill competition framework, designed to identify, nurture and benchmark India's best vocational talent against global standards, while creating a structured progression pathway for skilled youth from the grassroots to national and international platforms, including the WorldSkills Competition. The ongoing IndiaSkills Competition 2025–26 cycle has witnessed one of the widest participation footprints to date, with 3.65 lakh candidates registering from 35 States and Union Territories across 63 skill categories, through the Skill India Digital Hub.

The competition will commence with the Opening Ceremony at the B.K.B Auditorium, Gauhati University followed by a familiarisation programme on January 19.

The regional competition has been conceptualised to reduce geographic and logistical barriers for participation, strengthen skill ecosystems in the North Eastern Region, and identify region-specific strengths and high-potential candidates aligned with industry demand and national priorities.

This integrated approach ensures strong industry alignment, high-quality competition standards and adherence to national and international benchmarks. Winners from the North East Regional Competition will advance to the national stage of IndiaSkills Competition 2025–26, contributing to India's growing pipeline of skilled talent for global opportunities.

The regional competition is expected to provide a major platform for young talent from the North Eastern states, enabling participants to showcase their vocational skills and compete against peers at higher levels. It will also help highlight the region's emerging skill strengths and connect talented youth with industry opportunities.

Some of the transformative initiatives in the distribution sector include:

- Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS): Enhancing financial viability through infrastructure modernization and accelerated smart metering. Additional Prudential Norms: Linking access to finance for Power sector Utilities to achievement against performance benchmarks to promote fiscal and operational discipline.
- Amendments to Electricity Rules: Enforcing timely cost adjustments, prudent tariff structures, and transparent subsidy accounting to ensure full cost recovery.
- Electricity Distribution (Accounts and Additional Disclosure) Rules, 2025: Introducing uniform accounting and enhanced transparency across Distribution utilities for improved financial governance.
- Late Payment Surcharge Rules: Enforcing legal contracts through timely payments in the power sector thereby supporting investment in new RE projects.
- Incentivizing states to implement critical power sector reforms, with borrowing limits tied to performance metrics as part of Additional Borrowing Scheme. The result of these reforms is evident not just in the positive PAT posted by the Distribution Utilities after so many years, but also in other performance indicators. The Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses have reduced over the years, signalling a transformation. The AT&C losses have reduced from 22.62% in FY 2013-14 to 15.04% in FY 2024-25.
- Further, signalling much improved cost recovery, the Average Cost of Supply–Average Revenue Realized (ACS–ARR) gap has narrowed from 0.78/kWh in FY 2013-14 to 0.06/kWh in FY 2024-25. Reforms such as the Electricity (Late Payment Surcharge) Rules have led to a 96% reduction in outstanding dues to generating companies—from 1,39,947 crore in 2022 to just 4,927 crore by January 2026—while bringing down Distribution utility payment cycles from 178 days in FY 2020-21 to 113 days in FY 2024-25.
- The Ministry of Power has put in concerted efforts over the past decade to improve the performance of distribution utilities across the country. In addition to the different policy initiatives, extensive engagements with States and UTs have emphasized reforms in the distribution sector. These include discussions led by Shri Manohar Lal, Union Power Minister during the Regional Conferences of Energy Ministers of States/UTs in 2025 - Gangtok (North-eastern Region), Mumbai (Western Region), Bengaluru (Southern Region), Chandigarh (Northern Region) and Patna (Eastern Region). Regular interactions and review have played an important role in DISCOMs accomplishing this remarkable turnaround.

India’s Cooperative Movement: Rooted in “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,” Driving Inclusive Growth and Global Solidarity

New Delhi, Sept 11 (GNS): The cooperative movement in India draws philosophical grounding from the ancient concept of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”, which views “the world as one family,” and embodies principles of mutual respect, shared responsibility, and universal solidarity. This enduring ethos of collective well-being continues to shape the evolution of cooperative institutions in India, which prioritize community-centric development. India's commitment to promoting and strengthening the cooperative model, guided by the vision of “Sahkar Se Samridhi,” remains a key aspect of its development strategy. The government continues to focus on strengthening and expanding the cooperative movement by deepening its outreach to the grassroots and by creating an enabling policy, legal, and institutional framework.

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) defines cooperatives as member-owned and member-governed enterprises, guided by shared economic, social, and cultural objectives in their decision-making.

The global significance of cooperatives was formally recognised by the United Nations, which declared 2025 as the “International Year of Cooperatives” (IYC), announced on 19th June 2024, under the theme “Cooperatives Build a Better World”. The theme highlighted the contribution of cooperatives in addressing contemporary global challenges and advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Through IYC 2025, the United Nations sought to mobilise action at national, regional, and global levels, encouraging governments, institutions, and individuals to strengthen cooperative enterprises in pursuit of a more sustainable and equitable future.

During the pre-Independence period, cooperatives gained legal recognition with the enactment of the Cooperative Credit Societies Act, 1904. Following Independence, cooperatives emerged as a key instrument of decentralized development and participatory governance. The establishment of institutions such as the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) (1963) and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) (1982) further strengthened rural credit systems and cooperative growth, while the creation of a dedicated Ministry of Cooperation on 6th July 2021, marked a significant milestone by providing focused national attention to the sector.

Cooperatives in India operate across a wide range of sectors, including agriculture, credit, banking, housing, and women's welfare, and collectively account for more than one-fourth of the world's cooperatives. As of December 2025, the National Cooperative Database (NCD) records over 8.5 lakh cooperatives, of which approximately 6.6 lakh are operational, covering nearly 98 percent of rural India and serving around 32 crore members across 30 sectors. These institutions connect milk producers, artisans, fishers, traders, and workers to markets, while connections with women-led SHGs have integrated nearly 10 crore women into the cooperative framework. From nationally recognized entities such as Amul to major institutions like NABARD, KRIBHCO, and IFFCO, alongside thousands of local societies and cooperatives, these entities constitute a foundational pillar of India's economic architecture. The Ministry of Cooperation has undertaken a range of initiatives to address the evolving needs of cooperative societies and their members. Guided by the vision of “Sahkar Se Samridhi”, these efforts aim to strengthen the cooperative movement nationwide and enable cooperatives to realize their full economic and social potential.

India's cooperative sector has expanded significantly in recent years, with the government focusing on improving transparency, governance and financial sustainability. Measures are being taken to strengthen cooperative societies through digitalisation, professional management and better access to markets and financial services.

The Ministry of Cooperation is promoting the formation of new cooperative societies in underserved areas, particularly in rural and agricultural regions. These initiatives are aimed at ensuring that farmers, small producers and other grassroots communities can benefit from collective procurement, processing, marketing and value addition.

Efforts are also being made to strengthen Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) and diversify their activities beyond traditional credit functions. By enabling PACS to undertake multiple economic activities, the government seeks to create sustainable income opportunities and make cooperatives more relevant to local communities. Technology and digital platforms are increasingly being integrated into the cooperative ecosystem to improve efficiency, accountability and service delivery. Digitisation of cooperative records and modernisation of systems are expected to facilitate better access to information, financial services and markets.

The government has emphasised that a strong cooperative movement can contribute to inclusive growth, rural employment and economic empowerment. By strengthening member participation and linking cooperatives with national markets, the cooperative sector is expected to play a greater role in achieving the vision of a self-reliant and prosperous India.

Telangana passes bill to co-opt trans persons in civic bodies

Hyderabad, Sept 11 (GNS): The Telangana Legislative Assembly on Friday, September 11, passed a bill to enable the co-option of transgender persons in municipal corporations.

State Legislative Affairs Minister D Sridhar Babu, who moved the bill on behalf of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, said the Telangana Municipalities (Fourth Amendment) Bill, 2026 would provide representation to transgender persons in municipal administration and the decision-making process.



The bill proposes the co-option of transgender persons in nine municipal corporations outside the Core Urban Region (CURE) of Hyderabad, he said.

He said one transgender person would be nominated as a co-opted member in each corporation.

To facilitate this, the minister introduced the Bill proposing an amendment to the Telangana Municipalities Act, 2019.

Sridhar Babu said Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has undertaken several initiatives to bring transgender persons, who face social discrimination and marginalisation, into the mainstream and ensure their greater participation in public life.

Members of the BJP, CPI and others supported the bill, following which it was passed.

HYDRAA launches portal offering FTL check, other services

Hyderabad, Sept 11 (GNS): The Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) on Friday, September 11, launched a portal enabling home buyers to check full tank levels and buffer zones in case they purchase properties near lakes in Hyderabad.

HYDRAA Commissioner, AV Ranganath, launched the agency's official website on Friday, bringing information on its services, activities, emergency assistance, lakes, land and disaster management together on a single platform.

The portal provides direct access to the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) Lakes Portal, allowing users to check FTL details of lakes and other water bodies. Information on FTL and buffer-zone regulations is also available, helping residents understand the restrictions applicable around lakes before purchasing property or undertaking construction and development activities.



The website also allows residents to view maps of waterlogging and flood-prone areas. Separate maps are available for areas under the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, Cyberabad Municipal Corporation and Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation. Residents would be able to identify vulnerable locations, particularly during heavy rains and flooding.

BRS women MLAs complain to NHRC

Hyderabad, Sep 10 (GNS): Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) women MLAs on Friday, September 11, approached the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the National Commission for Women (NCW) in the national capital, alleging that Telangana Police assaulted and humiliated them while preventing them from entering the State Assembly. The state legislators have sought the intervention of the NHRC and NCW over alleged violations of their rights as elected representatives and the conduct of police personnel in the Congress-led state.

A delegation of the party's MLAs, MLCs and MPs and senior leaders separately met NHRC Member Vijaya Bharathi and NCW

NCW over 'assault' by Telangana Police



Chairperson Vijaya Kishore Rahatkar and submitted representations detailing the incident. In an official release, the party stated that former ministers and BRS MLAs P. Sabitha Indra Reddy and V. Sunitha Lak-

shma Reddy apprised the commissions of the alleged police action at the Assembly entrance. They claimed that they were manhandled despite being women legislators and even accused the police of preventing elected

representatives from entering the House.

Sabitha Indra Reddy told the commissions that she was physically restrained and that police personnel pulled her by the hair and pressed her throat during the incident. Meanwhile, Sunitha Lakshma Reddy alleged that her saree was pulled, causing her severe humiliation. They even questioned the authority of the police to prevent elected legislators from entering the Assembly premises.

Further, they claimed that despite lodging a complaint with Telangana Police, no action had been taken so far. They said that over 100 hours had passed since the incident, yet no FIR had been registered against those allegedly responsible for assaulting the women MLAs, adding that cases were instead registered against BRS legislators. Also, they slammed the Telangana government for remaining silent over the alleged police excesses and demanded accountability.

Police foil attempt by BRS student wing to lay siege to Telangana Assembly

Hyderabad, Sep 10 (GNS): Hyderabad Police on Friday foiled an attempt by the students' wing of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) to lay siege to the Assembly, demanding the release of fee reimbursement funds and the cancellation of a Government Order merging polytechnic colleges with Young Indian Skills University. BRSV activists and students led by BRSV State President Gellu Srinivas Yadav tried to march from LB Stadium to the Assembly.



They were demanding that the government release the pending fee reimbursement dues and also cancel the Government Order (GO) 97 to merge government polytechnic colleges with the skills university.

Holding placards and banners, the protestors were raising slogans in support of their demands. The police stopped the protestors, who tried to defy the prohibitory orders by advancing towards the Assembly building. This led to a scuffle between the protestors and police. Police personnel detained the protestors, including Gellu Srinivas Yadav

and physically lifted them into the police vehicles after which they were shifted to different police stations.

Opposition parties have been protesting for release of fee reimbursement dues. They say that the future of nearly 40 lakh students, particularly those belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes.

TG govt bans sale of analogue paneer for one year

Hyderabad, Sept 11 (GNS): The Telangana government has imposed a one-year ban on the manufacturing and sale of analogue paneer with immediate effect due to public health concerns.

Analogue paneer refers to non-dairy, artificial paneer. It is a product prepared like paneer by completely or partially replacing milk fat or milk solids with vegetable oil, vegetable fat or other non-dairy ingredients and is considered analogue or non-dairy paneer. This kind of product shall not be labelled, marketed, sold or represented to consumers as 'paneer'. The Telangana Commissioner of Food Safety issued the order under Section 30(2)(a) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. The prohibition came into effect on Thursday, September 10, and will remain in force for one year. The order has been notified in the Official Gazette as Gazette Notification number 807, issued on September 10. According to the order, the ban applies to non-dairy and artificial or analogue paneer being manufactured, stored, distributed or sold as 'paneer' or otherwise.

The Telangana government has also banned the transportation of such products, effectively covering the supply chain from manufacture to sale. The Commissioner of Food Safety issued the ban by exercising powers under the Food Safety and Standards Act, stating that the measure was being taken "in the interest of public health".

Shma Reddy apprised the commissions of the alleged police action at the Assembly entrance. They claimed that they were manhandled despite being women legislators and even accused the police of preventing elected

TGHRC asks DGP to report casteist slurs against women cops

Hyderabad, Sept 11 (GNS): Telangana Human Rights Commission (TGHRC) on Friday, September 11, asked Director General of Police CV Anand to report casteist slurs made against women police personnel during a protest on September 7. The complaints are based on alleged abusive remarks against Dalits and an incident involving Bharat Rashtra Samithi MLAs removing their T-shirts in front of female police personnel.

In their complaint, Pili Sudhakar, the Telangana president of the National Mala Mahanadu, and others alleged that BRS MLC Tata Madhusudhan used abusive language against the Assembly Speaker, Gaddam Prasad Kumar, who belongs

to the Dalit community. Sudhakar also alleged that at a protest by Dalits outside the farmhouse of BRS president K Chandrashekar Rao in Erravalli, BRS leader Pavani Goud and others "purified" the area by sprinkling turmeric water and milk, while also hurling abusive and derogatory language at the protestors. The complainants sought legal action against those responsible.

In another complaint, Indira Shobhan alleged that during a protest held on the Assembly premises, a few BRS MLAs removed their black T-shirts and stood semi-naked in the presence of female police personnel who were on duty maintaining law and order.

Harish Rao seeks Ponguleti's resignation over 22A land issue

Hyderabad, Sept 11 (GNS): Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLA T Harish Rao on Friday, September 11, sought the resignation of Telangana Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy over issues concerning the 22A land list.

At a BRS presentation on the 22A land list at Telangana Bhavan here, Rao said the state government issued an order on September 11, 2025, seeking a new prohibited land list. The Siddipet MLA accused Reddy of pressuring Collectors to prepare prohibited land lists.

He said the Jangaon Collector prepared a list on November 20, 2025, and sent it to the IG Stamps and Registration.



Ahead of the presentation, those who are affected by the 22A land issues headed to the Telangana Bhavan to seek help from Rao and BRS Working President KT Rama Rao.

For years, Section 22A of the Registration Act was something only government clerks and property lawyers thought about. Since early August this year, it has become the most feared phrase in Hyderabad's property market.

Thousands of owners in Hyderabad, Rangareddy, Medchal-Malkajgiri and Sangareddy have gone to sell a flat or a plot, only to be turned away. Their property, they were told, is on a government list of places that cannot be registered. Sales have stopped, while banks have refused loans against these properties.

Registration is the step where a sale is officially recorded at the sub-registrar's office. Without it, a buyer cannot get the property in their name.

Section 22A allows the government to keep a list of properties that cannot be registered. If your land is on that list, the officer must refuse.

Resentment over early retirement behind arms theft in Bollaram

Hyderabad, Sept 11 (GNS): A retired Indian Army havildar has been arrested for stealing a cache of assault rifles, pistols and over 1,900 rounds of ammunition from the armoury of the 20 Battalion, Madras Regiment, at Bollaram in Secunderabad Cantonment, nearly a fortnight after the theft came to light, police said on Friday, September 11.

The accused, Upputholla Mallesh, 37, a resident of Jangam Reddy Pally in Amrabad of Nagarkurnool district, served in the Indian Army for 16 years after joining in 2010 and retired on June 30 this year, according to a statement from the Director General of Police's (DGP) office.

The theft appears preliminarily to have been driven by resentment over his early retirement from service, the police said. Mallesh allegedly entered the battalion premises around 11 pm on the intervening night of August 30 and 31 and took the arms from the Kote room and Magazine room. The stolen cache comprised four AK-203 7.62x39 mm rifles with five magazines, one 5.56 mm INSAS 1B1 rifle with three magazines, six 9 mm Auto 1A pistols with 12 magazines, a civilian 6.35 bore pistol with magazine and a passive night-vision binocular. Also taken were 1,156 rounds of 9 mm pistol ammunition, 720 rounds of AK-203 ammunition and 36 rounds of INSAS ammunition comprising 11 ball, five tracer and 20 blank rounds.



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