

## PM Modi: UPI champion of India's fintech success

Mumbai, Sept 8 (GNS): Praising the remarkable achievement of India's rise in fintech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that the country's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is the "undisputed champion" of this success story. Inaugurating the 'Global Fintech Fest 2026' here, PM Modi said, "This is such a massive transformation that whenever fintech is discussed, it will remain incomplete without UPI." Reflecting on the tenth anniversary of UPI celebrated on August 25, the Prime Minister contrasted early scepticism from financial elites with the current reality where millions of previously unbanked citizens now drive the digital economy.

The Prime Minister pointed out that over 24 billion UPI transactions occurred in August alone, meaning roughly 50 lakh transac-



tions were processed in just the first ten minutes of the event. He cited French President Emmanuel Macron to underscore that this phenomenal adoption rate transcends technology. "It is because of this im-

pact that French President Emmanuel Macron said that UPI is not just a tech story, it is a civilizational story," PM Modi remarked. Highlighting the global expansion of India's flagship digital pay-

ment system, the Prime Minister said that UPI is now live in 11 countries, turning what was once unimaginable into an everyday reality for international payments. "These are astonishing figures that tell us how long a journey we have covered,"

the Prime Minister said. Setting the stage for future ambitions, the Prime Minister challenged the industry to view current achievements as merely a starting point rather than a final destination. Outlining the next stra-

tegic phase for international digital payments, the Prime Minister emphasized the urgent need to integrate UPI with the domestic payment systems of partner countries, mirroring the seamless cross-border connectivity already established with Singapore. He directed stakeholders to actively link financial networks wherever large Indian populations reside or extensive trade occurs.

"Wherever Indians live in large numbers, wherever India trades on a large scale, whichever country in the world is ready to walk with us, we have to work to connect them all," the Prime Minister said.

Emphasizing the economic benefits for the diaspora, PM Modi pointed out that reducing transaction costs for the world's largest remittance-sending population is a critical priority.

## Indian community 'Sethu' between India and Sri Lanka: Rajnath Singh



Colombo, Sept 8 (GNS): Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday interacted with the Indian community in Colombo, highlighting the "crucial role" played by the Indian diaspora in strengthening friendship between both neighbouring countries. "The Indian community is the 'Sethu' between India and Sri Lanka. India will always stand firmly with Sri Lanka whenever the island nation faces a crisis," said Singh during his address at the event.

He emphasised that the relationship between India and Sri Lanka is based on shared history, culture, and faith. "India and Sri Lanka are close friends. We stand with Sri Lanka through thick and thin and are committed to the peace, prosperity, and development of both countries," Singh mentioned.

The Defence Minister also highlighted that, while the world is grappling with the challenges of economic growth, India has recorded 7.8 per cent growth in the first quarter of 2026-27.

The Indian economy, he mentioned, which was \$2

trillion in 2014, has now doubled and India is today contributing more than 16 per cent to Global Growth.

"Electronics manufacturing in India is an industrial revolution. Electronic goods production, which was 1.9 lakh crore in 2014, has now exceeded 11 lakh crore. Electronics exports have also risen from 38,000 crore to more than 3 lakh crore. In mobile manufacturing, India is today the world's second-largest producer," Singh stated during his address to the Indian community in Colombo. Earlier in the day, Singh arrived in Colombo for a three-day official visit to the island nation, aimed at deepening bilateral defence and maritime cooperation.

He was warmly welcomed at Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo by Sri Lankan Deputy Minister of Defence Aruna Jayasekara and Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Santosh Jha.

"Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath arrived in Colombo on an official visit to Sri Lanka from 08-10 September 2026.

## Centre launches portal for data harmonisation across Ministries

New Delhi, Sept 8 (GNS): The Centre on Tuesday launched a Quarterly Progress Report (QPR) portal on Data Harmonisation for use by all Union Ministries, departments and organisations with the aim of fostering greater coordination for data-driven governance and evidence-based policymaking across the government.

The report was launched at a workshop organised by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) with the objective of strengthening the National Data System, promoting effective use and harmonisation of administrative data.

The QPR Portal is a technology-enabled platform for use by all Union Ministries, departments

and organisations to report progress in identification and cataloguing of datasets made ready for dissemination, its metadata preparation, use of national and international standards, classifications and common unique identifiers in machine readable data, and performing quality checks as per Statistical Quality Assurance Framework (SQAF) by respective Ministries, departments and organisations of the Central government.

The QPR portal has automated validation, dashboards, cross-verification with the National Metadata Structure (NMDS) web portal and will provide analytical insights across Ministries, Departments and Organisations.

## India in touch with Russia, Ukraine to see if ideas can contribute to cessation of conflict: MEA

New Delhi, Sept 8 (GNS): Reiterating India's longstanding stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict that a solution will not emerge from the battlefield, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Tuesday that New Delhi remains in touch with Moscow and Kyiv to see if there are ideas and suggestions that can contribute to the cessation of the war.

Addressing a bi-weekly media briefing in New Delhi, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal spoke about External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar's recent visit to Poland and Ukraine, where he maintained that this is not an era of war and expressed India's readiness to help in any way to find an end to the conflict.



When asked about a media report claiming that India is brokering peace between Russia and Ukraine, Jaiswal said, "External Affairs Minister visited Ukraine and Poland recently. In both these countries, during his conversations, he noted that India has consistently maintained that this is not an era of war and solution will not emerge from the battlefield.

**India is in touch with both the Ukrainian and Russian sides and is trying to see if there are ideas and suggestions that can contribute to the cessation of the conflict," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal mentioned.**

"He also underlined Prime Minister Modi's comments that endless war must now give way to the end of war. Noting that it is for the parties involved to find a way, he further added that if India can be of any help in any manner to bring the war to an end, it was ready to do so. India is in touch with both the Ukrainian and Russian sides and is trying to see if there are ideas and suggestions that can contribute to the cessation of the conflict,"

Jaiswal mentioned.

Since the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022, India has called for pursuing dialogue and diplomacy to resolve the war. During his recent visit to Poland, EAM Jaishankar said that India has been maintaining continuous engagement with both Ukraine and Russia, while exploring ideas and suggestions that could help de-escalate the ongoing conflict between the two countries and pave the way for its cessation.

## India's indigenous bullet train trials to start by May-June next year: Vaishnaw

New Delhi, Sept 8 (GNS): India's first indigenously developed bullet train is expected to commence trial runs by May or June next year with commercial inauguration likely within two to four months after testing, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Tuesday.

Addressing the 'NaMo for Viksit Bharat' event in Vadodra, the minister said the first body frame of the high-speed train had recently been completed and sent for squeeze testing. "By May or June of next year, India's own bullet train will be on the tracks for testing. After a testing period of 2-4 months, the bullet train will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Vaishnaw said.

The minister said project was being developed in line with the vision of an At-



manirbhar Bharat and would significantly reduce travel time between Vadodra and Mumbai. "When you ride the bullet train from Vadodra, you will reach Mumbai in just an hour and a half," he said. Vaishnaw said construction work on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train corridor was progressing rapidly with the Surat-Vapi section expected to be completed by December this year.

Highlighting broader reforms in the railway sector, he

said the govt was modernising railway operating systems, reservation platforms and construction protocols. "We are reforming and modernising everything, from operating systems and reservation systems to old construction protocols," he said. Vaishnaw said several long-pending railway projects had been completed in recent years, citing the Chenab Bridge and the rail connectivity project linking Mizoram to the national railway network.

## SC grants Rajpal Yadav relief from surrender

New Delhi, Sept 8 (GNS): The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear a plea filed by actor and comedian Rajpal Yadav and his wife challenging the Delhi High Court judgment upholding their conviction in multiple cheque dishonour cases, and granted them exemption from surrendering, subject to a deposit of Rs 5 crore.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana took the special leave petitions (SLPs) on board after they were mentioned before the apex court and issued notice conditionally, returnable on September 15.

"On the oral mentioning, the special leave petitions are taken on Board," the CJI Kant-led Bench said in its

order. The Supreme Court further directed that the petitioners would be exempted from surrendering, subject to depositing Rs 5 crore with the registry of the top court by Wednesday.

"Subject to deposit of Rs 5 crore by the petitioners with the Registry of this Court by tomorrow, they are granted exemption from surrendering," the SC ordered. The SLPs have been filed by Rajpal Yadav and his wife challenging the Delhi High Court's judgment, which upheld their conviction in seven cheque dishonour cases under the Negotiable Instruments Act. The Delhi High Court had on July 10 upheld Rajpal Yadav's conviction while reducing his sentence from six months to three months' simple imprisonment in each of the seven cases.

## Bombay High Court refuses to quash defamation case against Rahul Gandhi

Mumbai/New Delhi, Sept 8 (GNS): The Bombay High Court on Tuesday dismissed a plea filed by Congress MP and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (LoP), Rahul Gandhi, seeking quashing of criminal defamation proceedings against him over his alleged remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

A single-judge Bench of Justice Nitin Borkar refused to interfere with the order passed by the magistrate, issuing summons to LoP Gandhi, holding that there was no manifest illegality or perversity warranting interference under Section 482 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

"In the absence of any manifest illegality, perversity in the impugned order, it is not a fit case for interfer-



ence in exercise of inherent jurisdiction under Section 482 of the CrPC. Considering the overall facts and circumstances, this Court finds no infirmity in the impugned order," the Bombay High Court observed.

The High Court also rejected the leader's contention that the complaint filed by a BJP member was not maintainable, holding that the BJP, being a registered national political party, is an identifiable body.

Justice Borkar observed

that, at the stage of considering the challenge to the summons, it could not be said that LoP Gandhi's alleged remarks were restricted only to the senior leadership of the BJP.

"On a prima facie reading of the statement describing the PM, who is member of the BJP as a 'commander-in-thief', therefore at this stage, it cannot be said that the impugned comment is limited only to the senior leadership of the party," the judge observed.

# Aryabhata to NISAR—India’s space journey has always been political

SHOUNAK SET

Fifty years after the launch of India's first satellite, Aryabhata, aboard a Soviet rocket, India's space programme is reaching its pinnacle. In 2025, ISRO placed NISAR, the world's most advanced and costly Earth-observation satellite, into orbit through a landmark partnership with NASA; a collaboration unthinkable during the US-led sanctions of the 1990s.

The successful space docking exercise in early 2025 and the launch of ultra-heavy BlueBird-6 satellite aboard the IVM3-M6 'Bahubali' rocket last week further underscore how far India has come as a global player in outer space. India's rise as a major space power has been forged through constraint as well as cooperation, and it is now being accelerated by ambitious deep-space plans and an expanding private sector. Although outer space is often seen through the lens of scientific endeavour, this trajectory has been shaped by prevailing geopolitics, resilience, and shifting global power.

Five decades back, in April 1975, when the experimental satellite Aryabhata (named after the ancient Indian mathematician and astronomer) rose into orbit on the back of a Soviet Kosmos rocket, a threshold was crossed. Coming shortly after India's first nuclear test, codenamed



“Smiling Buddha” in 1974, this signalled India's intention to be an active stakeholder in the frontiers of advanced science despite modest means, and in the face of exclusive global groupings like the then-evolving Non-Proliferation Treaty regime.

Entirely designed and fabricated in India, Aryabhata's limited 360-kilogram mass and five days in outer space heralded a new era. Since then, India transformed from a fledgling participant into one of the most consequential space-faring nations. Behind Aryabhata's success lay Cold War geopolitics; Moscow's growing rivalry with Beijing in the 1970s warranted an Asian counterweight. This cooperation brought the two countries closer, and the Soviet Union was instrumental in ensuring that

Aryabhata was heavier than China's first satellite, Dong Fang Hong 1. While Indian and Soviet collaboration expanded, American support for the Indian space programme waned, but France emerged as a key partner simultaneously. This was reflective of the broader direction of Indian foreign policy as it balanced non-alignment despite a distinct tilt toward the USSR in the 1970s and 1980s.

Space cooperation offered a unique domain where superpower support aligned with Indian aspirations to be a leader of the Global South. It also precluded India from being forced into a military bloc. The situation changed in the post-Cold War era of the 1990s, when the US, determined to enforce sanctions through the Missile Technology

Control Regime (MTCR), successfully pressured Russia to halt the transfer of cryogenic engine technology to India.

The resulting sanctions on ISRO and several Indian entities were a brusque reminder that space was as much about realpolitik as research. The US feared that India's emerging launch capabilities could help its missile programmes. Many Indian scientists felt this was driven more by the emergence of ISRO as a commercial challenger to NASA, since cryogenic engines are not optimal for missile launches.

For India, this marked a turning point: it reinforced the need for technological self-reliance, strengthened political resolve, and led to the development of indigenous cryogenic technologies. Notably, during Gulf

War 1 (1990-1991), dubbed as “the first space war”, the US extensively harnessed satellite-enabled communications, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting but denied GPS data to India during the Kargil War (1999). This was the impetus for the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) that became operational in 2018. As the bilateral relations between the US and India thawed in the 2000s, outer space emerged as an arena of cooperation, while the India-US Civil Nuclear Deal (2008) set the stage for removing Cold War-era restrictions on India. The launch of the world's most expensive satellite NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) in 2025 represent the most advanced Earth-observation mission ever undertaken.

# 10-minute delivery not worth the risk. India’s quick-commerce sector must look at global models

NIVEDITA MOOKERJI

New Year resolutions are mostly as short-lived as the impact of any chief executive's New Year address to employees. Whatever the longevity of such inspirational activities, some of them do strike a note for their timeliness. One such New Year resolution came from a journalist colleague who has been tracking developments in the quick-commerce space with interest, especially when a section of gig workers (mostly delivery partners) went on strike to protest their inadequate compensation and demanding an end to the 10-minute delivery model while asking for social security.

He announced on the first day of the year, after an editorial meeting, that he would not order through quick commerce anymore. The unique resolution drew some attention before others attending the meeting got into a debate on the merits and demerits of the gig workers' strike.

The debate on quick-commerce and the labour practices in this segment of retail reached new levels ever since gig workers' unions knocked on the doors of ministers and bureaucrats recently, calling out some of the top companies in this space for “unfair practices”. But why has this strike triggered so much reaction even though deliveries ordered through online platforms were not as badly disrupted as anticipated on peak-demand days



such as New Year's Eve? Perhaps, the numbers explain why anything to do with gig work is now core to our lives.

Consider the latest New Year's Eve estimates for Eternal (Zomato). Together, Zomato and Blinkit (its quick-commerce unit) delivered more than 7.5 million orders to more than 6.5 million customers on December 31 — all in a single day. These orders were delivered by more than 450,000 delivery partners. Coming to the overall gig universe, including food delivery, quick-commerce, and app-based cab and bike drivers, the numbers would be in the vicinity of 20 million workers — far more than what the top 10 employers in the country cumulatively have on their rolls. The number could reach 90 million by 2030, according to some estimates. As for growth, quick-

commerce is described by companies and industry associations to be on an “explosive” trajectory. Valued at up to \$7 billion as of 2024, the annual compound annual growth rate of quick-commerce is projected at 40 to 70 per cent over the next three to four years.

While the numbers are staggering, it helps to look beyond them. Although the frontrunners and advocacy groups have been busy pointing at the job creation potential in the gig universe, the gaps in the system need to be plugged so that it can drive several services effectively and add to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). In a recent podcast with Youtuber Raj Shamani, Eternal founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal admitted that Zomato terminates nearly 5,000 gig workers a month due to fraud cases,

while around 150,000 to 200,000 workers leave the platform voluntarily as they may see their jobs as “transient”. The transient nature of the gig business, where such a large-scale churn takes place on a regular basis, is probably indicative of a systemic weakness that critics of the gig platforms as well as political parties have highlighted. That could imply anything from poor wages to unsatisfactory working conditions to the lack of social security. It is another matter that the 4.5-hour podcast, in which Mr Goyal held forth on his own platforms, Zomato and Blinkit, as well as on rival Swiggy, was recorded some weeks ago and streamed soon after the gig workers' strike.

As the gig debate goes on, even after the moment of the strike has passed, it may be the right time to think about

how to do the online gig and app-based business better. It is in nobody's interest to kill an ecosystem that can employ millions. On quick-commerce, looking at the global models may offer perspective. A few things stand out across key markets such as the United States, China, the United Kingdom, and Japan. For instance, the regulatory framework in online businesses ensures a certain level of product and service quality in many markets. Also, quick-commerce is not synonymous with 10-minute delivery; typically, there's a band of 10 to 30 minutes, even stretching to a couple of hours. Then, there's a price, a hefty one in many markets, for superfast delivery. In China, where quick-commerce is called instant retail, incentives and freebies rule, triggering sustainability issues.

# Rot and Stain

## Pan-India Apathy

“Complain to Administration. What Administration? They are corrupt, we pay them. We, are the Administration.” The chilling harsh reality of Mera Bharat Mahan!

Be it Capital Delhi, Indore, Gandhinagar, Bengaluru or Goa, the story is the same: human carelessness. A tell-tale of total apathy, insensitive Administrations under various State Governments. Of rulers who ignore experts who in turn, blame it on lessons not learnt by successive Governments. Big deal, if these “mistakes” extract a heavy toll of human life. After all, aam aadmi is just a statistic in Government records. In Delhi's Laxmi Nagar a man is thrashed, his wife pulled by her hair, hit in the face, kicked and molested, their son stripped naked and beaten with iron rods by four men outside their house as policemen watched. Their crime? Asking their gym caretaker to vacate the premises, yesterday.

In Noida, a woman kills her live-in partner. In Bhiwani a social media influencer confesses to choking her husband to death with her dupatta along-with her boyfriend. In Hampi two women are raped and three men thrown into a canal. An 80-year-old grandpa rapes a five-year-old. So, what's the issue?

Stray incidents? No. Graze a car? You can be shot dead. Nobody sees red at the sight of blood. Even if some is spilled in an over-populated nation, what difference does it make? In Delhi gang wars are passé. The dichotomy? Gangs are operating from jails? Are jail authorities hand-in-glove? Why is no action being taken?

New Year started on a somber note in India's cleanest city Indore where 15 people died and over 200 are hospitalized after drinking contaminated water. Thanks, to mixing of sewage with drinking water. Residents' complaints of dirty water over two months fell on deaf ears, as always, till calamity struck.

Worse, the Administration ignored a Jal Jeevan Mission recent assessment that 36.7% of drinking water specially in rural areas was not potable. As it had 2019 CAG report highlighting water contamination in Bhopal and Indore wherein between 2013-18 4,481 water samples were found unfit for drinking and 5.45 lakh cases of water-borne diseases were reported, but as always, it was dumped in raddi.

The story is par on course in Gandhinagar and Bengaluru as they too grapple with sewage-contaminated drinking water. Over 76 typhoid cases are reported from the former while latter's residents report widespread diarrhea, foul-smelling frothy water with thick layers of dark sewage silt.

In Delhi 18% of 15,600 kms water supply network is over three decades old avers Delhi Jal Board. A tragedy waiting to happen. Just like the recent fire in a Goa nightclub. Or the brutal killing of a sarpanch in Punjab's village.

Questionably, why does Government react only when tragedy strikes? Isn't it the Administrators job to ensure clean water and hygienic environment to live? What do we pay taxes for? Certainly, not for advertisements, statues of our narcissist leaders. Who will be held accountable and which head will roll? None.

After all, politicians, bureaucracy and police are three sides of a triangle. All viewed as venal and incompetent. Criminals in khadi hustling and muscling to fulfil people's aspirations. Who now have taken recourse to “out of court settlements” and extortions. But invariably, a businessman is arrested. Why not the bureaucrat or Administration which gives permission for irregularities by taking bribes? Are they not more answerable? And should they too be not put behind bars? Alas, they go scot free. Simply because, Babus clan up together. A classic case of pot calling the kettle black.

Bluntly, everything is kaam chalao! Exacerbated by infrastructure neglect, unregulated construction and free-for-all development with authorities failing to implement crucial preventive measures, resulting in essential tasks like lack of preventive maintenance leading to clogged drainage systems and obstructed natural water flow channels. The way indiscriminate urbanisation is happening, no politician, Party or Administration is willing to stop it. Forgetting, indiscriminate urbanisation will bring similar incidents in new forms. Whereby, we are creating a cocoon around ourselves that one day we will die like silkworms.

Predictably, politicians cursorily go through the ritual political circus: lament crisis, visit places to assess damage, set-up crisis management teams, suspend official till the story 'dies' and vouch help to people. Patting themselves satisfied that they have done their bit. Focus is more on emergency response than preventing disasters and short-term development goals over long-term public safety. There is no routine maintenance and infrastructure investment. This reactive approach eventually leads to higher loss of lives and property due to lack of institutional preparedness and inefficiencies.

Consequently, we stare at rot and stain of pan-India apathy and a public health crisis: disease outbreaks, existing environmental degradation, urban decay and proliferating of slums. The administrative system has practically collapsed. A life-style of Nano Yuppiesim has brought forth macro consequences of socio-political environment neglect. Where, another crisis threatens.

The truth? Even as we have achieved political and economic freedom we still remain hostage to errant elements of society. Which speaks volumes about growing societal acceptability of the idea of instant justice.

One could argue this is because of our failed criminal justice system and police high-handedness whereby methods being used to terrorise people have been perfected. Whereby, judicial procedures to check legitimacy and validity of Government functioning and officials has become a victim of prejudices against citizens.

While courts revel in non-deliverance of speedy justice. Instead, they appear keener to protect the rights of authorities who subvert the law than perform their job of legal oversight. As a consequence, hapless citizens are crushed by procedural injustice.

Perhaps, one of the main reasons for people taking law into their own hands is because courts only act as meek protesters at best and mute spectators at worst. Resulting in lawlessness being exacerbated manifold wherein legal falsehoods and subversion of due procedure are considered par on course.

Where does India go from here? In an environment wherein adoption of strong-arm tactics to extract one's pound of flesh has become second nature, it's time to cry halt to increasing degradation and realise good governance and accountability is hallmark of a Government. Our polity needs to pull up their bootstraps and focus on long-term not short-term planning. We need to break free from this trance of dark carnival through collective resistance. Non-governance, lackadaisical approach alongside a ki pharak paida hai attitude is unacceptable. Stringent and timely action is vital. Life is not colating numbers, but flesh and blood with beating hearts. Can we just let them bleed?

Remember Aldous Huxley words: Men do not learn from lessons of history which is the most important of lessons of history. Else history will repeat as farce!

# Aravalli green wall project gets boost as Yadav unveils eco-restoration framework

New Delhi, Sept 8 (GNS): Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav on Wednesday inaugurated the National Conference on Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape: Strengthening the Aravalli Green Wall in New Delhi. The Minister also released a report titled “Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape”, prepared by the Sankala Foundation, during the inaugural session.

In his address, Shri Yadav said the government launched the Aravalli Green Wall Project as part of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision and India's commitment under the UNCCD to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land.



Under this initiative, 6.45 million hectares of degraded land in the Aravalli region has been identified, with greening work initiated over 2.7 million hectares across Gujarat, Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan. Divisional Forest Officers from 29 Aravalli districts are implementing the project, focusing on plantations of native species suited to arid and semi-arid conditions, the Minister informed.

Recalling a landmark conservation decision, Shri Yadav said that around 97 square kilometres of Aravalli revenue land, stretching from Naurangpur to Nuh in Haryana and heavily degraded, has been identified for afforestation and has also been declared a Protected Forest by the State of Haryana for better protection and management..

The minister described it as a major policy intervention to protect and afforest the Aravallis after Independence, made possible under the vision of Hon'ble Prime

Minister Shri Narendra Modi and with active support from the then Haryana Chief Minister Shri Manohar Lal Khattar. Highlighting the ecological and historical importance of the region, the minister said the Aravallis are the country's oldest

mountain range and have sheltered human civilization for thousands of years.

He said the Aravalli ecosystem is protected by four tiger reserves and 18 protected areas, while additional green interventions are being undertaken wherever required.

The Minister said India has taken global leadership in wildlife conservation, noting that the country is home to five of the world's seven big cat species and nearly 70 per cent of the global tiger population, which continues to grow. Shri Yadav said

thousands of hectares in the Aravalli region have been restored in the last two to three years and the govt remains committed to continuing this work with ecology at the centre of development.

Shri Yadav said India today has a strong and well-balanced approach to striking a balance between ecological stability and economic aspirations. He further emphasised that the government is committed to the restoration and conservation of the Aravallis and similar ecosystems across the country.

The inaugural session was addressed by Shri Rao Narbir Singh, Environment Minister of Haryana; Shri Tanmay Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and

Climate Change; Shri Sushil Kumar Awasthi, Director General of Forests; Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, Ambassador of Denmark to India; and representatives of the Sankala Foundation.

The conference brought together policymakers, forest officials, experts, practitioners and civil society representatives to deliberate on the ecological significance of the Aravalli range and pathways for its restoration. The report released at the conference provides a scientific, community-driven and scalable framework to strengthen the 'Aravalli Green Wall Project' of the ministry under the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation.

## C.R. Paatil Launches Major Aquatic Biodiversity Initiatives under Namami Gange at WII

New Delhi, Sept 8 (GNS): Union Minister for Jal Shakti, Shri C. R. Paatil, reaffirmed the Government of India's commitment to protecting rivers not merely as channels of water, but as life-supporting ecosystems. Emphasising that the true indicator of river health lies in the thriving of aquatic biodiversity, the Minister inaugurated several significant and far-reaching initiatives under the Namami Gange Mission at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun. A special programme was organised on the occasion, during which Shri Paatil launched new and advanced projects focused on river rejuvenation and aquatic life conservation.

The event was graced by Dr. Vinay Kumar Ruhella, Vice Chairman, State Disaster Management Authority, Uttarakhand; Dr. Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj, Director, Wildlife Institute of India; and Shri Rajeev Kumar Mital, Director General, National Mission for Clean Ganga, along with senior officials, researchers, conservation experts and students.

Namami Gange program has partnered with Wildlife Institute of India to develop a dedicated centre for study, research and policy support for aquatic biodiversity

conservation. The centre was inaugurated and dedicated to nation by Minister Jal Shakti, Sh. C.R. Paatil. The 'Aqua Life Conservation Monitoring Centre for Ganga and Other Rivers' has been established as an organised and advanced institutional framework to monitor and conserve aquatic life in the Ganga and other rivers.

Through modern technology, scientific research and data-driven decision-making, the Centre will provide a strong foundation for monitoring, conservation and long-term protection of aquatic species. In the future, it will play a guiding

role in policy formulation, research and conservation strategies. The centre has got an ecotoxicology, aquatic ecology and a spatial ecology lab for taking samples from water and species and identifying hotspots. The centre also has got a micro plastic lab for identification of micro plastics in the ecosystem.

During the programme, the Dolphin Rescue Ambulance of TSAFI was inaugurated, further strengthening ongoing efforts for dolphin conservation. This ambulance will provide a rapid, sensitive and scientifically equipped life-saving response for Ganga dolphins

in distress. The Minister stated that the Ganga dolphin is a sensitive indicator of river health, and this initiative reflects the government's seriousness and responsiveness towards the protection of aquatic life. The van is a major effort of NMCG in dolphin conservation and rescue and would go a long way in conserving India's national aquatic animal.

In the same sequence, Sh. C.R. Paatil interacted with researchers and MSc. Students of World Life Institute of India. Under the aegis of Namami Gange, WII has launched a two-year Master's program.

## Unified Salary Account: One-Stop Financial Solution for Central Staff

New Delhi, Sept 8 (GNS): The Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance, has taken a significant step towards enhancing the financial well-being and social security of Central Government employees by advising Public Sector Banks to introduce a composite 'Salary Account Package for Central Government Employees'.

The Salary Account Package has been formally launched today, by Sh. M. Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance. The launch event was attended by Chairman SBI, MD & CEOs of all Nationalized Banks, CEO, NPCI through VC and all senior officers of DFS. This initiative is aligned with the Government's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and the national commitment towards Insurance for All by 2047. It seeks to provide Central Government employees with a comprehensive suite of banking and insurance benefits under a single, seamless account structure. The packages have been carefully designed in consultations with banks to ensure maximum coverage, uniformity and convenience for employees across all cadres (Group A, B and C).

The product has three core segments – Banking, Insurance and Cards – making it

a one-stop financial solution for employees. The key features of the Composite Salary Account Package are:

This initiative ensures that Central Government employees, who form the backbone of public administration, gain access to modern banking services and comprehensive financial protection through a single window solution. By integrating insurance, medical cover and enhanced banking facilities into one composite Salary Account Package, the scheme provides employees with ease of access, financial security and peace of mind.

This reform reflects the Government's continued commitment to employee's welfare and financial security, while also strengthening the employee-bank relationship. DFS has advised Public Sector Banks to widely publicize these products through their official websites, organize special awareness camps in Government Departments, proactively reach out to Central Govt employees with detailed product information and facilitate the migration of existing salary accounts to this new package with employees' consent. All Central Government employees are encouraged to avail the benefits of this comprehensive scheme through their salary accounts with the Public Sector Banks.

The package is expected to offer employees greater convenience by bringing multiple financial services under a unified salary account framework. It will cover employees across Group A, B and C categories, ensuring that the benefits are accessible to a wide section of the Central Government workforce. The banking segment is designed to provide enhanced account-related facilities, while the insurance component will strengthen financial protection for employees and their families. The card-related benefits will further add convenience for day-to-day transactions and access to financial services.

The Department of Financial Services said the initiative is aimed at improving the overall financial resilience of employees by combining banking services with insurance and medical protection. The package is also expected to simplify access to benefits and reduce the need for employees to manage multiple financial products separately. Public Sector Banks have been asked to conduct awareness programmes and special camps in government offices to explain the features of the package. Employees can also approach their respective banks for details and migrate their existing salary accounts.

## Regional Conference on Labour Codes, ESIC and EPFO Begins in Jaipur

New Delhi, Sept 8 (GNS): Union Minister of State for Labour & Employment, Sh. Shobha Karandlaje, inaugurated a two-day Regional Level Conference of Labour & Employment and Industry Secretaries of States/UTs in Jaipur on 14th January 2026. Shri Gautam Kumar Dak, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Department of Cooperation and Civil Aviation, Government of Rajasthan addressed the Conference. Ms. Vandana Gurnani, Union Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, senior officers of States Governments, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and V.V. Giri National Labour Institute (VVGNI) were also present on the occasion. The conference marked the second in a series of five regional conferences planned by the Ministry at different locations across the country, covering States/UTs and key stakeholders, with the objective to facilitate smooth implementation of the four Labour Codes and deliberating on issues concerning ESIC, EPFO and the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PMVBRY).

In her address, the Union Minister of State highlighted the crucial role of States in the effective implementation of the Labour Codes, noting that the codification of 29 labour laws into four Codes marks a historic reform undertaken for the first time in 78 years. She stated that

the Codes were framed after extensive stakeholder consultations, including around 100 meetings at various levels, and that dedicated Joint Secretary-level officers have been assigned Codes for implementation. The Minister underscored key progressive features of the Codes, such as work-from-home provisions and the extension of social security to gig and platform workers and unorganized workers, positioning India as a global model in this area. She further observed that the rationalization of provisions has reduced complexity for both workers and employers. Emphasizing cooperative federalism, she called for stronger Centre-State coordination, last-mile dissemination of information, expansion of ESIC coverage,

formulation of schemes to address international labour mobility, and promotion of employment generation through Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana in line with the Viksit Bharat initiative.

Gautam Kumar Dak, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Department of Cooperation and Civil Aviation, Government of Rajasthan, stated that the implementation of the Labour Codes is a landmark reform aligned with the Viksit Bharat initiative, with positive impacts now visible at the grassroots level. He highlighted strengthened worker health and safety through provisions such as free medical check-ups, and stressed the need for better coordination between

employers and workers to resolve disputes constructively. He also emphasized last-mile dissemination of information on workers' rights under the Codes and called for expanding ESIC outreach, including through the establishment of new hospitals, to enhance access to social security and healthcare benefits.

Ms. Vandana Gurnani, Union Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, stated that the implementation of the Labour Codes is a historic step towards promoting welfare and formalization of workers as well as for promoting employment and economic growth. She highlighted that rationalization of earlier labour laws has reduced complexities while balancing workers.

## Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal welcomes INSV Kaundinya Crew at Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat

New Delhi, Sept 8 (GNS): The Indian Naval Sailing Vessel INSV Kaundinya arrived in Muscat, capital of Oman after successfully completing its maiden voyage from Porbandar, marking a significant moment in the shared maritime heritage of India and Oman. The ship along with the crew were received by the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), Sarbananda Sonowal at Port Sultan Qaboos here today.

The voyage of the traditionally built stitched sail vessel highlights the deep-rooted maritime, cultural and civilizational ties between the two nations that span more than 5,000 years.

It also underscores the role of oceans as connective corridors that have enabled sustained interaction between India and Oman over centuries. The expedition holds added significance as both countries commemorate 70 years of diplomatic relations. Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said, “This event is not only a celebration of a voyage, but of a deep-rooted civilizational bond. The arrival of this stitched ship in Muscat is symbolic of the enduring India-Oman friendship that has stood the test of time and that is anchored in history, enriched by trade, and strengthened by mutual respect. INSV Kaundinya is a shining example of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji's visionary leadership. It was his resolve to revive India's ancient shipbuilding genius and present it proudly before the world.”

Named after the legendary Indian mariner Kaundinya, the vessel showcases India's indigenous maritime knowledge, craftsmanship and sustainable shipbuilding practices. The project was envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and executed by the Indian Navy with the support of naval architects, archaeologists, traditional shipbuilding designers and master shipwrights. Inspired by a fifth-century CE vessel depicted in the Ajanta

Cave paintings, INSV Kaundinya was constructed using ancient Indian shipbuilding techniques, including stitched-plank construction without modern nails or metal fastenings.

At the welcome ceremony organized at the port, His Excellency Azzan Al Busaidi, Undersecretary, Tourism, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of Oman, along with senior dignitaries from the Indian Navy, Royal Navy of Oman, Royal Oman Police Coast Guard and other ministries were present. A large Indian community from all walks of life, including students, enthusiastically welcomed the ship. Traditional Indian and Omani cultural performances were held

during the official welcome ceremony. During his visit, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal also held a bilateral meeting with H.E. Eng. Said bin Hamood bin Said Al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology of Oman, where both leaders discussed expanding maritime cooperation between the two nations.

Sarbananda Sonowal highlighted significant opportunities for Omani companies to participate in India's rapidly expanding port and maritime sector. He said India's flagship port-led infrastructure projects offer attractive avenues for investment under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework.

New Delhi, Sept 8 (GNS): Tunnels in India represent more than infrastructure development; they reflect the nation's determination to overcome geographical challenges. By cutting through mountains and terrain that once limited connectivity, tunnels have enabled year-round transportation. They have also improved access to remote regions and strengthened links between communities. From strategic Himalayan tunnels to urban metro networks, these projects are transforming how India moves people, goods, and resources. Built using modern engineering and innovative planning, tunnels play a vital role in economic growth, national security, and regional development. They are shaping a more connected and resilient country. India's tunnelling boom is

being propelled by national highway expansion, alongside strategic border infrastructure, metro rail growth, bullet-train corridors, and all-weather connectivity initiatives in remote regions. As infrastructure scales up, tunnelling has become one of the fastest-growing construction domains.

Tunnels are rapidly reshaping India's developmental map, offering smarter, safer, and more sustainable alternatives to traditional transport routes. Their impact goes far beyond engineering. They catalyse regional development, enhance strategic preparedness, and improve the daily lives of millions.

Over the past decade, India's tunnelling capability has transformed. It has progressed from traditional drill-and-blast methods to sophisticated technologies. This enables faster, safer,

and more complex underground construction. Modern projects now rely on advanced geological mapping and real-time monitoring systems, allowing the engineers to construct longer and deeper tunnels even in harsh conditions.

Contemporary Indian tunnels are designed as high-tech, safety-integrated corridors equipped with engineered ventilation systems, emergency escape routes, fire-suppression units, LED lighting, CCTV surveillance, and centralised tunnel control rooms. This modernisation has significantly improved both operational reliability and disaster readiness. Tucked beneath the snow-laden peaks of the Pir Panjal ranges, the Atal Tunnel stretches 9.02 km, providing a high-altitude passage that bypasses Rohtang Pass.

# Telangana Assembly adjourned amid BRS-Congress row over speaker remarks

Hyderabad, Sept 8 (GNS): The Legislative Assembly on Tuesday, the second day of the Monsoon Session, began amidst acrimonious scenes and the morning session ended with an adjournment with the Congress and the BRS sides hurling charges at and demanding apologies at each other over the alleged derogatory remarks on the Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar by BRS MLC Tata Madhusudhan.

The day also saw the Speaker, in an unusual departure in the way he handles the House, display anger and tick off BRS deputy floor leader T. Harish Rao.

During the back and forth, when Harish Rao was vociferously insisting that the Congress government apologise to BRS women MLAs for the way the police behaved with them, the Speaker, pointedly speaking with Harish Rao, said “Why are you getting worked up? I can also get angry. My mother was named. Listen to me. I have respect for women members. I have eight sisters, I have asked for a report on the incident involving Sabitha Indra Reddy, Sunitha Laxma Reddy and Kova Lakshmi and as soon as the report comes, action will be taken.”

He then added in an angry tone: “What about me Har-



ish? Your mother was not named, it was my mother.”

This outburst from the Speaker came as the ruling and Ipposition sides indulged in angry exchanges with the Congress demanding that BRS president and Leader of Opposition K. Chandrashekar Rao come to the Assembly and apologise to the Speaker for Madhusudhan's remarks on the Speaker. The BRS side, led by Harish Rao, on its part, insisted that the government apologise to the three BRS women MLAs who Harish Rao said, were manhandled roughly with the sari of one of them being pulled at by the police as the BRS MLAs were trying to enter the Assembly on Monday.

Amidst the heated exchanges, legislative affairs minister D Sridhar Babu said Chief Minister

A. Revanth Reddy and the Speaker sought reports from the police on BRS allegations and that action can be taken once the report is submitted by the police. As some Congress members, including ministers Adluri Laxman and Danasari ‘Seethakka’ Anasuya, questioned the BRS demands and insisted on an apology from the opposition, Harish Rao explained that Madhusudhan had withdrawn his comments and expressed regret in the event of what he said causing any hurt to the Speaker. However, this was not taken to kindly by Congress members who continued to attack the BRS and as Harish Rao entered the well of the House demanding that Sabitha Indra Reddy be allowed to speak, the Speaker adjourned the house for a break.

## Make the most of the Bathukamma young filmmakers challenge: Minister Komatireddy



Hyderabad, Sept 8 (GNS): State Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has urged young filmmakers to make the most of the ‘Bathukamma Young Filmmakers Challenge-2026.’ This initiative aims to showcase the creative talent of the youth while promoting the Bathukamma festival—a symbol of Telangana's culture and traditions—on a global scale. He unveiled the challenge poster alongside MLC Shankar Naik, FDC MD G. Mukunda Reddy, State Government

Creative Director Raj Konda, and former SETWIN Chairman Giridhar Reddy.

He noted that this challenge serves as an excellent platform for the youth to demonstrate their talent through short films, songs, and videos. He stated that it would help creatively convey the uniqueness of Bathukamma, Telangana's culture, folk arts, and traditions, as well as the government's development and welfare programs, to the public. The Minister appealed to

young filmmakers, students, and aspiring artists to participate in large numbers and make the challenge a success.

The challenge is expected to encourage innovative storytelling and provide a wider platform for emerging filmmakers to present Telangana's rich cultural heritage. The initiative also seeks to connect young creative talent with the state's efforts to promote Bathukamma as a globally recognised cultural celebration.

# Telangana eyes higher rice exports to Philippines

Hyderabad, Sept 8 (GNS): Civil supplies minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Tuesday met Francisco P. Tu Laurel Jr., secretary of agriculture of the Republic of the Philippines, in New Delhi to discuss prospects of increasing rice exports to the south-eastern nation.

The two leaders held detailed discussions on expanding rice exports and trade between Telangana and the Philippines. Uttam Kumar Reddy said Telangana had emerged as one of India's leading paddy-producing states, with modern milling infrastructure and the capacity to supply high-quality rice in substantial



quantities. Secretary Laurel responded positively, indicating that the Philippines would examine sourcing larger quantities of rice from Telangana. Both sides discussed taking the proposal forward through govern-

ment agencies, recognised importers, exporters and rice millers. Earlier, Uttam Kumar Reddy told the Assembly in March 2026 that exports had realised 81.90 crore at 3,600 per quintal, amounting to about 22.75

per cent of the proposed one lakh million tonnes quantity shipped, leaving about 77,250 million metric tonnes (MMT) against the original target.

Official sources said Philippine rice consumption

was about 17.6 MMT in 2025–26, while domestic paddy production was estimated at 19.52 MMT, translating to lower milled-rice availability. The country remains heavily dependent on imports, with 2.38 MMT imported between January and May 2026, 16.5 per cent higher than the same period in 2025. “The future prospects for Telangana are promising, particularly for competitively priced non-basmati varieties. Telangana has the advantage of large paddy surpluses, established milling capacity and India's strong position in the global rice export market,” sources said.

## Government working sincerely to resolve auto workers' issues



Hyderabad, Sept 8 (GNS): Transport Minister Ponnabhai Prabhakar and Labour Minister Vivek Venkatswamy stated that the Telangana government is working with sincerity to resolve the issues faced by auto drivers and workers in the state. The ministers held a key meeting with representatives of auto workers' unions at the Secretariat.

Auto drivers and union representatives brought their grievances to the ministers' attention, leading to detailed discussions between the ministers and senior officials regarding these issues. They also reviewed the actions taken on matters discussed during the previous meeting held on August 23. Key Decisions

and Issues from the Meeting Minister Ponnabhai Prabhakar clarified that there is no truth to the rumors suggesting that TGSRTC plans to introduce EV autos as part of a "last-mile connectivity" policy. He stated that no such policy is currently under discussion.

The Minister announced that steps to establish a welfare board for auto workers would be taken on a priority basis in coordination with the Labour Department. He mentioned that the matter would be discussed in the Cabinet and subsequently introduced in the Legislative Assembly.

Minister Ponnabhai Prabhakar noted that auto fares had not been revised since

2012. He stated that the government is prepared to increase fares in line with current conditions. A committee comprising Transport Department officials and representatives of auto workers' unions will be formed to draft comprehensive proposals and submit a report to the government. The Minister explained that the committee would determine the extent of the fare hike and make recommendations, based on which the increase would be implemented soon.

The Minister stated that he had already written to the IT Minister regarding the development of a government-run app—similar to Ola, Uber, and Rapido.

## CS Sanjay Jaju to invite global investors, industrialists

Hyderabad, Sept 8 (GNS): State Chief Secretary Mr. Sanjay Jaju held a meeting with senior officials at the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Telangana State Secretariat on Monday to review preparations for the upcoming ‘Invest Telangana – Telangana Rising’ Global Summit 2026.

The Chief Secretary directed officials to take measures to invite a large number of dignitaries, international investors, industrialists, representatives from various sectors, CEOs, CXOs, diplomats, and others from both within the country and abroad to the global summit.

He instructed that the process of sending official invitations via email to prominent figures should begin immediately. He ordered the concerned departments to work in coordination to finalize the list of invitees and expedite the invitation distribution process. The Chief Secretary stated that through this global summit—branded as ‘Invest Telangana’—efforts should be made to showcase the



state's investment opportunities to the world and further establish Telangana as a premier global investment destination. It was suggested that an action plan be formulated to effectively showcase to global investors the opportunities available in Telangana across sectors such as the 'Future City,' IT, AI, pharmaceuticals, defense and aerospace, electronics, semiconductors, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, infrastructure, and innovation. The Chief Secretary emphasized that all departments must implement a time-bound action plan with mutual coordination to ensure the global summit is organized effectively and on a prestigious scale.

## SATG clarifies sports fee revision, free coaching to continue

Hyderabad, Sept 8 (GNS): The Sports Authority of Telangana (SATG) has clarified that the narrative circulating regarding the revision of sports training fees does not reflect the full facts. It stated that the government's goal is to make sports training more accessible to the public and confirmed that free training will continue for students studying in government and aided educational institutions, as well as for talented athletes who have represented the state at the district level or higher.

It noted that under the new government orders, over 42 percent of trainees will have access to free coaching and sports facilities. The Authority explained that sports training fees were revised after a gap of 14 years. This decision was taken in light of significantly increased costs related to the maintenance of sports infrastructure, stadiums, and grounds, the procurement of sports equipment, coaches' remuneration, electricity, and security services. Furthermore, it revealed that the new policy introduces a provision

for free training based on students' financial circumstances—a feature that was absent in previous orders.

The Sports Authority announced an in-principle decision to constitute a committee. This committee will comprehensively review the revised fee structure—taking into account suggestions and feedback from athletes and parents—and make recommendations for necessary rationalization. This decision was taken during a review meeting held on Monday at LB Stadium, presided over by Sports Authority Chairman Mr. K. Shivasena Reddy and Vice-Chairperson & Managing Director Dr. A. Sonibala Devi, and attended by stadium managers, coaches, and deputy directors from across Hyderabad. Chairman Mr. K. Shivasena Reddy emphasized that financial constraints should not become a barrier to sporting talent.

He stated that the welfare of athletes is the Sports Authority's top priority and that their primary goal is to ensure sports training is accessible to all sections of society.



**CLASSIC**  
PROPERTY DEVELOPERS  
*We Build Your Dreams*



**BUILDING BETTER TOMORROW FOR YOU**

**YOUR TRUST OUR COMMITMENT**  
Classic Property Developers is committed to delivering quality construction, transparent deals and customer satisfaction.

**BUY**  
Find the perfect property for you

**SELL**  
Quick & reliable property deals

**INVEST**  
Secure your future with smart investment

**DEVELOP**  
Quality construction you can trust

**WHY CHOOSE US?**

- Trusted & Transparent Deals
- Prime Locations
- Modern Infrastructure
- Legal & Documentation Support
- 100% Customer Satisfaction

**We Don't Just Build We Create Landmarks**

**OPEN PLOTS**

**VILLAS**

**APARTMENTS**

**COMMERCIAL SPACES**



**LET'S BUILD YOUR DREAM PROPERTY TOGETHER**

**YOUR DREAM PROPERTY IS JUST ONE STEP AWAY**

**CONTACT US**  
 +91 9000217944  
 +91 7207817944

**VISIT US**  
 18-10/2 Shaheen nagar  
Airport Road, Balapur, Hyd  
Pin 500005

**QUALITY CONSTRUCTION • ON TIME DELIVERY • BEST VALUE**