

# Countries should respect sovereignty and territorial integrity: PM at G-7 meet

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**

NEW DELHI

Unrest in any part of the world affects all the countries of the global community, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday at the G-7 meeting in Hiroshima.

Speaking at the 'Working Session 9' of the G-7 summit, Mr. Modi reiterated India's commitment to do "everything" to bring an end to the war in Ukraine and said all countries should "respect" sovereignty and territorial integrity of the member states of the United Nations.

"It is necessary that all sides should respect the UN Charter, international law and nation-states should respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Everyone should raise their voice against one-sided attempts to change status quo. India



**Paying respects:** Narendra Modi visits the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima with other leaders on Sunday. ANI

has always felt that all tension and disputes should be resolved in a peaceful manner, through dialogue, and if a solution is reached through dialogue then that should be respected," Mr. Modi said in his remarks that came shortly after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made his presentation at the G-7 summit.

It is significant that PM Modi spoke about territo-

rial integrity of "all countries" a day after he met President Zelensky.

Speaking ahead of Mr. Modi, the Ukrainian President focused on the ongoing military activities in his country, and called upon the G-7 members and partner countries to support Ukraine in the fight against Russia.

**CONTINUED ON**  
**» PAGE 10**

## **Countries should respect sovereignty: PM**

Indicating at his discussion with Mr. Modi and other neutral countries, Mr. Zelensky said that Kyiv is trying to convince "certain leaders" about the position of Ukraine in the war with Russia. Mr. Modi in his remarks said, "Today we heard President Zelensky. I met him yesterday. I do not consider the current situation (in Ukraine) a political or economic issue. I think it is a pressing humanitarian matter. We have maintained from the beginning that dialogue and diplomacy are the only way out of this and India will do everything that is required to resolve the current conflict."

"Global peace, stability and prosperity are part of the common goals of us all. In today's inter-connected world, unrest in any region affects every country and developing economies that have limited resources are easily affected by such events. The developing countries are paying a heavy price because of the food, fuel and fertiliser crisis," Mr. Modi said. The Indian leader raised the issues relevant to the Global South in his most-detailed statement at the G-7. On Saturday, he met several world leaders, including Mr. Zelensky, French President Emmanuel Macron and others.

### **'Institutions of the past'**

The meeting between Mr. Modi and Mr. Zelensky on Saturday was the first face-to-face discussion the two had since their meeting on November 2, 2021 on the sidelines of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP-26) in Glasgow. A major part of Mr. Zelensky's visit to Hiroshima focused on securing support from countries like India and Brazil, which have maintained a neutral position in the war while deepening economic ties with Russia. Significantly, a meeting between Mr. Zelensky and Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva was cancelled because of "scheduling" issues.

Mr. Modi on Sunday met with Brazil's President Lula Da Silva in which both leaders emphasised the need for reform of the United Nations. Earlier in his speech at the summit, Mr. Modi spoke forcefully about the requirement of reform at the UN Security Council and declared, "We should ask – why are we going to different platforms to talk about peace and stability? Why is the UN that was created to stop conflicts not successful in controlling these events? Why is there no binding language of terrorism in the UN? If we introspect, then we can know that the institutions that were created in the past century are unable to meet the challenges of the 21st century". He quoted the Buddha and said, "Hostility cannot be resolved by hostility."

# Over 14 lakh jobs added in Tamil Nadu's formal sector in FY 2022-23, says EPFO

**Sanjay Vijayakumar**  
CHENNAI

As many as 14,05,171 jobs were created in Tamil Nadu's formal sector in the financial year 2022-23, up by about 9.4% from 12,84,986 jobs in 2021-22.

Job creation is measured by the number of new net enrolments made with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). EPFO released the provisional payroll data for the month of March and the financial year 2022-23 on May 20. In Tamil Nadu, the maximum number of jobs added – 3,76,872 – was in the age group of 18-21 in 2022-23. In the 22-25 age group, 3,68,981 jobs were added, followed by 2,44,891 jobs in the age group of more than 35.

In the age group of 29-35, 2,35,006 jobs were added, followed by 1,63,658 jobs in the 26-28 age group, the data showed. The age group of less than 18 saw an addition of 15,763 jobs.

## Stress in major sectors

At the national level, around 1.39 crore net members have been added by the EPFO in 2022-23, an increase of 13.22% from 1.22 crore in 2021-22. Seg-

## Employment push

Job creation is measured by the number of new net enrolments made with the EPFO. A total of 14,05,171 jobs have been added to Tamil Nadu's formal sector in the Financial Year 2022-23



- In the less than 18 years age group, a total of 15,763 jobs were added
- The age group of 18-21 saw the maximum addition of jobs (3,76,872) in the State
- While 3,68,981 jobs were added in the age group of 22-25, the 26-28 age group saw the addition of 1,63,658 jobs
- As many as 2,35,006 jobs were added in the age group of 29-35, and 2,44,891 jobs were added in the over 35 age group

ments such as manufacturing, electronics and real estate had done well in the State. However, there was stress in major employment-generating sectors like textile and leather because of global factors, said M. Ponnuswami, chairman and managing director, Pon Pure Chemicals, and chairman, Confederation of Indian Industry Subcommittee on MSME and Ease of Doing Business (Southern Region).

In March, the top five States for net member addition were Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Haryana and Gujarat. They together constituted 58.68% of the net member

addition, the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment said in the released data.

Among all States, Maharashtra topped the table by adding 20.63% of the net members during March, followed by Tamil Nadu with 10.83%, it added.

## A small fraction

The EPFO data only form a small fraction of the formal employment, said K.R. Shanmugam, director, Madras School of Economics. The payroll data are provisional since the generation is a continuous exercise. The data are updated every month, the Labour Ministry said.



## Judging jallikattu

Verdict upholds cultural sentiment, but animal rights, human safety matter too

A rural sport seen by courts for years as one inflicting cruelty on animals has now received judicial imprimatur. An upsurge in popular support for jallikattu led to legislative changes in early 2017, exempting it from the rigours of the law against animal cruelty. Six years after the amendments ended a Court-ordered ban, the Supreme Court has upheld the changes made by the Tamil Nadu Assembly, as well as the cultural sentiment behind jallikattu, a traditional sport in which men try to control raging bulls. There has been an endless conflict between activists and proponents of the game, which culminated in a 2014 Court judgment banning the sport. The activists argue that any sport involving a physical contest between man and bull violates animal rights, while the other camp contends that none should stop something that is part of the State's tradition and culture. The State government responded to the ban by amending the central Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, in its application to the State, and obtained the President's assent. A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court has now settled the issue, ruling in favour of jallikattu as a cultural event.

The verdict of the five-judge Bench is anchored to two key findings. That the fresh regulations minimise the game's potential for cruelty and pain formed the basis for the 2014 judgment. Those conditions were no more prevalent. Second, the Court has accepted the legislature's view that jallikattu is a sport conducted every year to follow tradition and culture. It has accepted the legislature's wisdom on what constitutes cultural heritage, holding that the Court cannot embark on such an inquiry. However, it does not mean the Court has in any way diluted the part of the earlier Bench's verdict reading into Indian law the full import of international rules in favour of animal rights. Rather, it has deferred to the cultural sentiment underlying the legislative scheme by which sports such as jallikattu, kambala, a buffalo race in Karnataka, and bullock-cart racing in Maharashtra are not interdicted by the law preventing animal cruelty. This means organisers as well as the respective governments, still bear the burden to prevent infliction of pain and cruelty on animals. These sports also pose an undeniable hazard to humans too; to the participants mainly, but sometimes spectators too. It may be time for organisers to mandate protective gear for the participants and strictly enforce rules for proper barricades to keep spectators safe. Cultural assertion, and kindness to animals and adherence to safety norms need not be mutually exclusive.

CM

## Return of ₹2,000 currency notes to bolster bank coffers, money market liquidity: report

**Vikas Dhoot**  
NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) decision to withdraw ₹2,000 notes could boost banks' deposit base and liquidity in the money markets by anywhere between ₹40,000 crore to ₹1.1 lakh crore, even if just about a third of these heavily hoarded high currency notes are flushed out by the exercise, according to a research report.

A part of those notes which are being hoarded to avoid taxes on unaccounted-for incomes could be funnelled into assets such as real estate and jewellery, the report reckoned. The central bank has said that the notes will remain legal tender, but has asked people holding such

notes to deposit or exchange them by September 30.

With no clarity yet on what the status of these notes will be after that deadline, a flurry of exchanges is expected over next four months, which could "rekindle memories of demonetisation" from 2016, QuantEco Research said in a note. Estimating the stock of ₹2,000 denomination banknotes to be around ₹3.7 lakh crore or 1.3% of GDP – equivalent to 10.8% of the cash in circulation at the end of March – the note said that banks' deposit base would be bolstered if all of those notes came back by the stipulated deadline.

"However, since ₹2,000 denomination notes were not commonly used for



transactions, it implies that they were either hoarded for precautionary reasons or for bypassing the formal taxation channel. In either case, the increase in banks' deposit base on account of its withdrawal from circulation could prove to be temporary as precautionary demand would eventually settle for lower denominations," QuantEco's team of economists, led by

founder Shubhada Rao, pointed out.

"Unaccounted-for income might fuel demand for high value consumption items like real estate and precious metals, like the experience post the Demonetisation episode in 2016," they added.

"However, if we assume a scenario where 10%-30% of erstwhile hoarded cash gets back to circulation, then this could have a durable impact on banks' deposit base and money market liquidity to the extent of ₹400-1,100 billion," they concluded.

### Dividend income

Another decision taken last Friday by the central bank – to transfer a hefty ₹87,416 crore to the government as dividend, com-

pared to around ₹30,300 crore in 2022-23 – would also boost liquidity, the report noted. The government had only provided for about ₹48,000 crore as dividend income from financial institutions, including the RBI, in its 2023-24 Budget.

The move provides a fiscal buffer of about 0.13%-0.15% of GDP to the Centre and will help mitigate some of the expenditure spillovers that could potentially take place through the year, it said.

"More importantly, this strong dividend transfer would provide a bonanza for core money market liquidity with the central government eventually using this for its expenditure in the coming months," the report underlined.

## Guardians of the Ganga: task force keeps a watchful eye on the river

Over 4,000 volunteers under the Namami Gange initiative have been keeping a check on littering and poaching in the river to make sure that its flora, fauna are intact; in return, the Wildlife Institute of India has helped them with livelihood training

Ishita Mishra  
NARORA/BULANDSHAHR

**O**mveer Kumar, 41, picks up plastic bottles, pouches and food packets as he walks on the wet sand on the banks of the Ganga. As he nears a heap of garbage, Mr. Kumar sees an overturned turtle, its neck wounded. He rushes it to a nearby rescue centre for treatment.

Mr. Kumar, a resident of Narora town in Bulandshahr district of Uttar Pradesh, is a Ganga *Prahar* (guardian). This is a task force of volunteers constituted by the National Mission for Clean Ganga and the Wildlife Institute of India (NMCG-WII) under the Namami Gange programme to cover 8.61 billion sq.km of the river basin.

Since 2014, Namami Gange has aimed to clean the river, ecosystem, and the villages around, home to 40% of India's population at 520 million and 2,500 species of flora and



**On a mission:** The United Nations in 2022 had recognised the Namami Gange initiative as one of the top 10 World Restoration Flagships involved in reviving the natural world. R.V. MOORTHY

fauna. The United Nations in December 2022 recognised the initiative as one of the top 10 World Restoration Flagships involved in reviving the natural world – a project that has seen the Central government invest \$5 billion.

Since 2016, when the Ganga *Prahar* project began, Mr. Kumar, who has studied till high school, has learnt to identify aquatic species that survive in the

river by their scientific name. He can spot over 300 birds, both Indian and migratory, that arrive on the riverbank in different seasons.

His two children are also part of the project and are known as *Bal* (child) Ganga *Praharis*.

### The job at hand

The task force, which now has over 4,000 volunteers in 100 districts across Uttara-

ranch, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, and West Bengal, keeps a check on river protection, preventing people from littering, and reports poaching.

G. Ashok Kumar, Director-General of Namami Gange, said they were planning to issue ID cards to all the Ganga *Praharis*.

And while Mr. Kumar said that the first target of the project was to ensure that no untreated water –

sewage or industrial effluents – flowed into the river, Lakshman Sharma, *pati pradhan* (husband of the village *pradhan* Renu Sharma), points to sewage flowing directly into the river.

"I had complained to the panchayat officer, District Magistrate, even the Chief Minister, but this *nul-lah* is still flowing into the river," said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker.

Whether or not there has been an impact on the ecosystem, there has been some change in the lives of the people. To recruit volunteers, WII sets meetings with villagers through the *pradhan* and education institutions.

"An obvious question that comes out of the discussion is what they will get if they help. Then we mooted the idea of livelihood training," said Vineeta Sagar, a field researcher with WII.

From beautician to electrician, different kinds of skilling opportunities are offered to them.



# What is the 'Open Network for Digital Commerce'?

How does the ONDC intend to achieve a level-playing field for online sellers? Why are major e-commerce players such as Amazon and Flipkart reluctant to join the ONDC?

**Prashanth Perumal**

**The story so far:**

The Union government is looking to formally launch the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) this year to "democratise e-commerce" and "to provide alternatives to proprietary e-commerce sites". While it has urged companies to join the ONDC platform, major e-commerce players such as Amazon and Flipkart have been reluctant to get on board.

**What is the ONDC?**

The government wants to change the fundamental structure of the e-commerce market from the current "platform-centric model to an open-network model". The ONDC is modelled after the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) project that is seen as a success by many. The UPI project allows people to send or receive money

irrespective of the payments platforms on which they are registered. Similarly, the government wants to ensure that buyers and sellers of goods in the e-commerce market can transact regardless of the platforms on which they are registered. So under ONDC, a buyer registered on Amazon, for example, may directly purchase goods from a seller who sells on Flipkart. To make such transactions a reality, the government has ordered companies to list themselves on the ONDC. The pilot version of ONDC was launched last year in a few major cities and thousands of sellers have already been on-boarded onto the platform. Amazon and Flipkart, however, have not on-boarded their main shopping platforms onto the ONDC network yet.

**Why is the Centre pushing for it?**

The government believes that the ONDC will put an end to the domination of the e-commerce market by a few large platforms. It says that the e-commerce

market is currently broken into "silos" operated and dominated by private platforms. Amazon and Flipkart, for instance, have been accused of promoting certain seller entities in which they hold indirect stakes. Food delivery apps such as Swiggy and Zomato have also been accused of charging high commissions from sellers. With an open network like ONDC that connects buyers and sellers across platforms, the government hopes to level the playing field and make private platforms redundant.

**What do critics say?**

Critics argue that the purported benefits of an open network for digital commerce are far from certain at the moment. For one, sellers are already free to list their products across various e-commerce platforms even in today's platform-centric e-commerce model. Buyers also routinely shop across platforms. Then there are also services such as price-comparison that are offered by various private

websites that bridge the information gap and help buyers make better decisions. So, critics argue, the domination of the e-commerce market by platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart may not be due to any captive hold that these platforms have over buyers and sellers. Further, the supposed monopoly that platforms are said to enjoy may be no different from the limited monopoly that any business today has over its property.

**What lies ahead?**

The capacity of the government's technocrats to come up with an efficient alternative to e-commerce platforms that can work seamlessly will be tested as the government rolls out the ONDC. It remains to be seen if and how the government's open network will list products offered by various sellers. Competition generally pushes e-commerce platforms to prominently list products that are most likely to catch the fancy of buyers. Their on-boarding and listing of sellers is also heavily influenced by the ability of sellers to fulfil customer orders. In fact, platforms may invest money to build exclusive on-boarding and listing processes. If the open network's rules prevent platforms from benefiting from such investments, they may cease to make them anymore. This will eventually affect the quality of services available to consumers. Building an efficient marketplace for the sale of goods and services may turn out to be the key challenge for ONDC.

## THE GIST

▼ The government wants to change the fundamental structure of the e-commerce market from the current "platform-centric model to an open-network model".

▼ The government believes that the ONDC will put an end to the domination of the e-commerce market by a few large platforms.

▼ Building an efficient marketplace for the sale of goods and services may turn out to be the key challenge for ONDC.