

Build Connect 2026 puts spotlight on next-gen dealer-distribution network in steel industry

New Delhi (UNI)

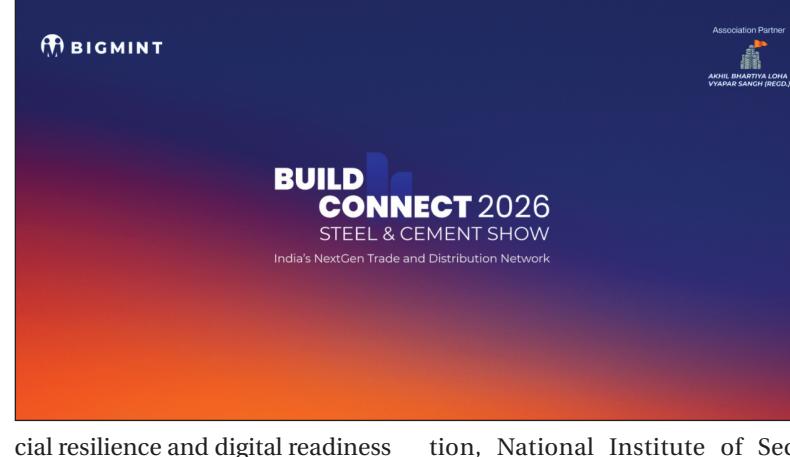
With India's steel production crossing 160 million tonnes and installed capacity expected to approach 300 million tonnes by 2030, industry leaders have signalled a decisive shift in focus — from pure capacity expansion to strengthening the dealer-distributor backbone that drives market reach.

This transition took centre stage at Build Connect 2026, which started here on Thursday.

The event was organised by BigMint in association with Akhil Bhartiya Loha Vyapar Sangh (ABLVS) as the Supporting Association.

As nearly 50 million tonnes of finished steel in FY26 flows through trade-led channels, dealers and distributors now account for a significant share of market movement.

With demand projected to rise steadily in the coming years, discussions at the event highlighted that distribution capability, financial



cial resilience and digital readiness will determine how effectively growth translates into on-ground market expansion.

The platform saw participation from Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) as Strategic PSU Partner, alongside institutional and industry support from the AIIFA Sustainable Steel Manufacturers Association.

National Institute of Secondary Steel Technology (NISST), Bureau Veritas, and prominent trade and construction organisations including BAI, GISE, CFI, RISTA and BIMA.

The broad participation reflected alignment across manufacturers, trade bodies, certification agencies and technical institutions

on the need to strengthen the distribution ecosystem.

The inaugural ceremony featured senior industry leaders.

Across 12 focused sessions and more than 40 expert addresses, discussions covered infrastructure demand, GST compliance, green steel adoption, supply chain finance, digital transformation, e-commerce integration, quality standards, branding impact and payment recovery mechanisms.

As India moves toward higher steel consumption levels in line with infrastructure expansion and economic growth, stakeholders at Build Connect 2026 reinforced that long-term sectoral strength will depend not only on manufacturing scale but on building a stronger, next-generation dealer-distributor backbone.

The message from the two-day summit was clear: the future of India's steel industry lies not just in producing more, but in distributing smarter.

DFS holds facilitation camp under salary account package for Central govt staff

New Delhi (UNI)

The Department of Financial Services (DFS) on Thursday organised a facilitation camp under the 'Salary Account Package for Central Government Employees' at the DFS headquarters here.

The camp was organised by Punjab National Bank in coordination with all 12 Public Sector Banks (PSBs).

The event was inaugurated by M Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, and Managing Director & CEO of Punjab National Bank.

Senior officials of DFS and representatives of participating banks were present on the occasion.

The facilitation camp aimed to create awareness and encourage enrolment under the Salary Account Package, which was launched on 14 January 2026 for Central Government employees.

The package offers a comprehensive suite of benefits covering bank-

ing, insurance and card-related services.

Under the package, employees are offered zero-balance salary accounts with enhanced features, free remittances through RTGS, NEFT, UPI and free cheque book facilities.

It also provides concessional interest rates on housing, education, vehicle and personal loans.

The package also includes insurance benefits such as Personal Accident Insurance cover up to Rs 150 lakh, Air Accident Insurance cover up to Rs 200 lakh, Life Insurance cover up to Rs 20 lakh with optional top-ups, and comprehensive medical insurance coverage for employees and their families.

Speaking on the occasion, M Nagaraju appreciated the coordinated efforts of Public Sector Banks in developing integrated financial solutions for government employees and urged employees to take full advantage of the benefits available under the Salary Account Package.

From Bareilly to America's AI Frontlines: A talent's journey



New Delhi: The journey from the quiet lanes of Bareilly to the neon lights of Las Vegas is more than a success story—it is a blueprint for the future of technology. When Nitin Kumar, Director of Data Science (GenAI) at Marriott International, addressed the AI4 Conference in Las Vegas, he was

n't just representing a global brand; he was representing a vision where "talent has no geography."

Nitin's trajectory from a B.Tech student in Greater Noida to a Silicon Valley leader underscores a shift from writing code to solving human problems. Today, his

leadership impacts millions, yet his focus remains on "Responsible AI." He has pioneered groundbreaking frameworks like TRACE (Transparent Risk Assessment and Cost Evaluation), which helps companies balance AI performance with data privacy, and Faithful by Design, ensuring AI systems provide logically consistent, truthful reasoning.

At the recent ICDMAI 2026 at St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, Nitin brought his global expertise back to India, emphasizing that AI should say "I don't know" when uncertain. Beyond his corporate role, he mentors youth through AI4ALL and is authoring Agents Everywhere to demystify technology. His message to small-town dreamers is clear: "Code learned in Bareilly is as powerful as code learned in Boston." In Nitin's world, the future isn't humans versus machines—it's about scaling humanity through responsible innovation.

VIT Vice President Mr. Sankar Viswanathan Honoured with Honorary Doctorate by Thai University



Vellore: VIT Vice President, Mr. Sankar Viswanathan, has been conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering and Technology Management by the Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep (RMUTK), Thailand.

The prestigious degree awarded following the unanimous approval of the University Council. This honour recognises Mr. Sankar's exceptional leadership, professional achieve-

ments, and his significant contributions to the advancement of engineering and technology management from

Mr. Palakorn Suwanrath, Privy Council of Thailand and Dr. Pichai Jammanee, President Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep (RMUTK),

The honorary degree symbolises the highest level of academic recognition bestowed by the institution for

distinguished service and professional excellence. In his acceptance address Dr. Sankar acknowledged the shared culture and knowledge systems of India and Thailand and urged for more active academic collaboration between the two countries.

The ceremony was attended by VIT Chancellor G Viswanathan, Ramani Balasundaram, Assistant Vice President Kadhambari S. Viswanathan, Dr. Sravan Krishna.

ITC to extend AI solutions for FPOs, organic farmers and communities



stack for agriculture, led by ITC MAARS, aims to reach 10 million farmers, enabling rural development and progress," it added.

Launched in 2022, ITCMAARS has evolved into a full-stack "Farming as a Service" (FaaS) platform, combining a digital super app with on-ground human engagement through FPOs. The ecosystem has already benefited over 2.2 million farmers and 2,100 FPOs across 11 states.

According to pilot estimates, integrated interventions have led to a 10-15 per cent reduction in fertiliser usage, 15-20 per cent improvement in crop yields, and nearly 25 per cent increase in overall farm incomes.

ITCMAARS combines the benefits of digital technologies delivered through a superapp, specially designed to provide tailor-made solutions for small farmers, along with on-ground human engagement by leveraging FPOs as the anchor.

ITCMAARS also offers a separate app, customized for the needs of FPOs present in its ecosystem. Extending the benefits of this FPO app, the model now plans to introduce AI solutions to improve the efficiency of FPO operations, helping them scale up.

PNB organized Salary Account Facilitation Camp at DFS Premises



New Delhi: Punjab National Bank (PNB), one of India's leading public sector banks organised a Salary Account Facilitation Camp at Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance, Delhi. This activity aligns with DFS initiatives and aims to bring seamless banking services directly to Central Government employees at their workplace.

The gathering was addressed by Shri M. Nagaraju, Secretary, DFS and Shri Ashok Chandra, MD&CEO, PNB. The event was graced by the esteemed presence of Smt. Shalini Pandit, Joint Secretary, DFS; Shri Manoj Muttathil Ayyappan, Joint Secretary, DFS; Shri Chandradeep Kumar Jha, DDG, DFS and Shri Bibhu Prasad Mahapatra, Executive Director, PNB, along with other senior officials from the Department of Financial Services, Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and New India Assurance Company Ltd.

All Public Sector Banks have introduced customized salary packages for central government employees under the initiative of DFS, offering both financial convenience and family security to Central Government employees.

Speaking on the occasion, M. Nagaraju, Secretary, Department

of Financial Services, stated that the initiative reflects the Government's commitment to ensuring effective outreach of financial services to Central Government employees. He appreciated the coordinated efforts of Public Sector Banks in developing integrated banking solutions and urged Central Government employees to actively participate in the camp and avail the benefits of the Salary Account Packages.

Addressing the gathering,

Ashok Chandra, MD&CEO, PNB stated, "It is our privilege that all Public Sector Banks have been given an opportunity to offer comprehensive salary account packages designed to provide convenience, financial security, insurance protection, and value-added services to central government employees. This camp reflects PSB's commitment to delivering accessible, employee-centric banking solutions in partnership with key government stakeholders."

Germany's Homa, India's Ekki pumps launch Clog-Defense Sewage Pump range for India, emerging markets

Coimbatore: Ekki Water Technologies and Germany's Homa Pumpenfabrik GmbH, on Thursday announced a step forward in their Indo-German collaboration with the launch of the LINUS Clog-Defense Sewage Pump Range, and the next phase of expansion of Ekki-Homa, their joint venture focused on sewage pumping solutions for India and emerging markets.

The LINUS Clog-Defense system is specifically engineered to eliminate and prevent clogging before it occurs, addressing one of the most critical challenges in sewage pumping systems.

As part of its global growth strategy, the Homa group has invested over USD 30 million in expansion initiatives, with a portion allocated to strengthening the Indian joint venture with Ekki.

Ekki Homa is positioned to develop, manufacture, and scale purpose-built sewage pumping solutions for India and emerging markets, engineered to global benchmarks and supported locally at speed.

IndiGo, Axis Bank launch Co-Branded Credit Cards to enhance travel, lifestyle rewards



Thiruvananthapuram (UNI)

IndiGo, India's preferred airline, has partnered with Axis Bank to introduce two co-branded credit cards aimed at redefining travel and lifestyle experiences for Indian consumers.

The collaboration brings together the strengths of aviation and banking to offer enhanced rewards and privileges aligned with customers' spending and travel preferences.

The newly launched cards — IndiGo Axis Bank Credit Card and IndiGo Axis Bank Premium Credit Card — are designed to reward customers through IndiGo's loyalty programme, IndiGo BluChip. Cardholders can earn IndiGo BluChips on eligible transactions, with higher reward rates on direct bookings made through IndiGo's official channels.

The cards also provide welcome and renewal benefits, milestone rewards, and a range of lifestyle

privileges including domestic and international lounge access, entertainment offers, dining discounts, and reduced forex markup, de-

pending on the chosen variant.

The IndiGo Axis Bank Credit Card, priced at Rs 799 plus GST, is targeted at retail customers and of-

fers a balanced mix of travel and lifestyle benefits along with accelerated rewards across key spending categories. Meanwhile, the In-

diGo Axis Bank Premium Credit Card, priced at Rs 5,000 plus GST, is tailored for affluent customers seeking enhanced travel privileges and premium lifestyle benefits.

The co-branded cards will be available on the RuPay and Visa networks, expanding consumer choice and accessibility. Neetan Chopra, Chief Digital and Information Officer, IndiGo, said the airline remains committed to enhancing value for its loyal customers and frequent flyers.

He noted that the partnership with Axis Bank enables everyday spending to be converted into IndiGo BluChips while combining IndiGo's reliable service with the bank's extensive network. Arnika Dixit, President & Head – Cards, Payments and Wealth Management at Axis Bank, described the collaboration as a strategic move to deliver unmatched value to both casual travellers and frequent flyers.