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Bharat Taxi: India's First Cooperative Driver-Owned Ride-Hailing Platform

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WHY IN NEWS

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah launched “Bharat Taxi”, India’s first cooperative, driver-owned ride-hailing platform, on June 27, 2026, at the Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Bharat Taxi positions the cooperative model as a “third way” between the state and corporate aggregator platforms, aiming to put the earnings and ownership of mobility services back in the hands of drivers.

THE MODEL: “SAARTHI HI MAALIK”

The platform is built on the guiding principle “**Saarthi Hi Maalik**”, meaning “the driver is the owner”. Unlike commission-charging aggregators such as Ola and Uber, Bharat Taxi runs on a **zero-commission, surge-free** model. Drivers (called Saarthis) retain their full fare earnings, with profits distributed directly to them, and they are stakeholders and owners of the platform rather than mere service providers.

Welfare for Gig Workers

A distinguishing feature is the bundling of social security for drivers. The platform extends **insurance, pension and social-security benefits** to its Saarthis, directly addressing the precarity and lack of benefits that characterise gig work under conventional aggregators.

Who Built It

Bharat Taxi has been developed by **Sahkar Taxi Cooperative Limited** with the backing of eight major cooperative institutions.

INSTITUTION	FULL FORM / DOMAIN
NCDC	National Cooperative Development Corporation
GCMMF (Amul)	Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation
NDDB	National Dairy Development Board
NAFED	National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation
IFFCO	Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative
KRIBHCO	Krishak Bharati Cooperative
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NCEL	National Cooperative Exports Limited

SCALE AND REACH

At launch, more than 7 lakh Saarthis were associated with the platform across India, of which over 1.5 lakh are from Gujarat. Bharat Taxi began operations in 14 cities, with a strong base in Gujarat including Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Dwarka, Somnath and others.

THE MINISTRY OF COOPERATION CONTEXT

The launch advances the agenda of the **Ministry of Cooperation**, carved out as a separate ministry in **2021** under the slogan “**Sahkar se Samridhi**” (**Prosperity through Cooperation**). By extending the cooperative principle from agriculture and dairy into the digital platform economy, Bharat Taxi signals an attempt to replicate the success of models like Amul in a new, technology-driven sector.

ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

Bharat Taxi attempts to resolve two persistent problems of the platform economy: the high commissions that erode driver incomes and the absence of social security for gig workers. By making drivers owners, it aligns incentives and seeks to keep value within the workforce.

The challenges, however, are real. Technology platforms demand continuous investment in software, customer support, fraud control and demand generation, areas where private aggregators have deep pockets and network effects. Sustaining service quality, ensuring rider safety, and achieving the scale needed to compete will determine whether the cooperative model can hold its own. **Interoperability** (<https://ujijari.com/terms/interoperability/>) with the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) and disciplined professional management will be key to long-term viability.

UPSC RELEVANCE

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GS Paper 3 (Economy): Cooperatives and the platform economy; inclusive growth and employment; mobilisation of resources.

GS Paper 2 (Governance): Role of the Ministry of Cooperation; welfare of vulnerable sections (gig and platform workers).

Prelims pointers:

- Ministry of Cooperation created in 2021; slogan “Sahkar se Samridhhi”.
- Bharat Taxi developed by Sahkar Taxi Cooperative Ltd; principle “Saarthi Hi Maalik”.
- Backed by 8 cooperatives: NCDC, GCMMF (Amul), NDDB, NAFED, IFFCO, KRIBHCO, NABARD, NCEL.
- Zero-commission, surge-free model with insurance, pension and social-security benefits.

Mains question: “The cooperative model is being projected as a third way between state-led and corporate-led platforms in the digital economy. Critically examine the prospects and challenges of cooperative ride-hailing platforms like Bharat Taxi.” (15 marks, 250 words)

FACTS CORNER

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Bharat Taxi: India’s first cooperative, driver-owned ride-hailing platform; launched June 27, 2026, at Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Principle: “Saarthi Hi Maalik” (the driver is the owner); zero-commission, surge-free model.

Developer: Sahkar Taxi Cooperative Limited.

Backing institutions (8): NCDC, GCMMF (Amul), NDDB, NAFED, IFFCO, KRIBHCO, NABARD, NCEL.

Driver benefits: Full earnings plus insurance, pension and social security.

Ministry of Cooperation: Created in 2021; slogan “Sahkar se Samridhhi”; first Cooperation Minister, Amit Shah.

Launch scale: Over 7 lakh Saarthis nationwide, 1.5 lakh+ in Gujarat, operating in 14 cities at launch.

Sources: *PIB* (<https://www.pib.gov.in/>), *DD News* (<https://www.newsonair.gov.in/>), *Ministry of Cooperation* (<https://www.cooperation.gov.in/>)

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