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PM Modi hosts UAE President: Massive USD 200 bn trade target, LNG deal signed

- Leaders discuss defence, nuclear cooperation
- Sign long-term LNG supply agreement
- Focus on AI, space, energy sectors

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 19: India and the United Arab Emirates on Monday set a target of USD 200 billion in annual trade by 2032 and agreed to seal a strategic defence pact while boosting cooperation in energy, space and civil nuclear sectors with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan laying out a broad agenda to shore up ties.

Modi welcomed Al Nahyan at the Delhi airport with a hug and then they travelled together in the same vehicle to the prime



minister's residence, where they held talks in the restricted as well as delegation-level formats.

"This has been a short, but extremely substantive visit," Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said at a media briefing after the UAE leader concluded his nearly three-and-a-half-hour visit that came amid increasing

tensions in the Middle East and trade disruptions caused by Washington's policy on tariffs.

The two sides decided to explore a partnership in advanced nuclear technologies, including development of large nuclear reactors and small modular reactors, as well as cooperation in advanced reactor systems and nuclear power plant operations,

he said.

A long-term agreement for the supply of 0.5 million metric tonnes of LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) annually was concluded by the two sides.

The UAE is India's second-largest supplier of LNG to India after Qatar.

Artificial Intelligence was identified as a priority area of cooperation and it was decided to collaborate on setting up a supercomputing cluster in India with the UAE partnership, Misri said, adding the Gulf nation will also look at investments for expanding data centre capacities in India.

The foreign secretary said the two sides also set a target of USD 200 billion in annual trade by 2032. The volume of two-way trade between the two sides was USD 84 billion in 2023-24.

The two sides also resolved to significantly expand their defence ties.

"A letter of intent was signed between the | [More on P6](#)



CM Omar meets Amit Shah in Delhi

Discusses matters concerning J&K

KNO Desk

Srinagar, Jan 19: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah to discuss various matters concerning the Union Territory.

In a post on X, the office

of the Chief Minister, per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that Omar Abdullah met the Home Minister in New Delhi today.

It said the Chief Minister discussed several issues and matters related to Jammu and Kashmir with Amit Shah. (KNO)

REPUBLIC DAY

DGP calls for tighter security vigil



Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 19: Director General of Police Jammu and Kashmir, Nalin Prabhakar Monday instructed officers to intensify surveillance of anti-national elements and enhance area domination in preparation for Republic Day-2026 celebrations.

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the DGP chaired a general security review meeting at the Conference Hall of PCR Kashmir, which was attended by senior officers of J&K Police, Intelligence agencies, Army, Central Armed Police Forces, and other key security officials.

It also said that the participants included Special DG Coordination, | [More on P6](#)

Cold eases as mercury rises across J&K, higher reaches receive fresh snowfall

Two western disturbances to affect region from Jan 22 to 28

MeT says widespread rain, snowfall likely

Advises travellers to exercise caution

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 19: Minimum temperatures across most parts of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh rose on Monday compared to the previous day, bringing partial relief from the intense cold conditions that prevailed on Sunday, even as higher reaches received fresh snowfall.

According to the details obtained by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO),

several higher reaches of the Valley, including Gulmarg and Razdan Pass, received fresh snowfall, while snow was continuing in many hilly areas of north Kashmir at the time of filing this report.

Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 1.2 degrees Celsius, a sharp rise from Sunday's minus 4.7 degrees Celsius.

Similar trends were observed across several districts. Qazigund settled at minus 2.4 degrees Celsius, up from minus 4.8 degrees, while Pahalgam recorded minus 1.8 degrees Celsius compared to minus 6.0 degrees a day earlier.

Pulwama, which had recorded minus 6.1 degrees Celsius on Sunday, saw a significant increase to minus 5.1 degrees Celsius, while Shopian rose from | [More on P6](#)

Healthcare industry must build world-class infrastructure for resilient society: LG Sinha

Says pvt investment in healthcare is cornerstone of national progress

Lays foundation stone of Meerz Health Care Hospital in Srinagar

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jan 19: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday laid the foundation stone for Meerz Health Care Hospital in Srinagar.

This will be 180-bedded super speciality hospital and boost medical infrastructure and enhance healthcare services for Srinagar city and nearby districts.

The Lieutenant Governor congratulated and extended his best wishes to the Meerz Group and everyone associated with the hospital. He highlighted that the private investment in healthcare infrastructure is the cornerstone of sustainable national progress and lifeline for the society.

"Healthcare is the bedrock



for building stable, vibrant and prosperous society. Industry leaders in healthcare sector must focus on world-class infrastructure to create a resilient society," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Farooq Mir, Managing Director Meerz Group; Dr Darakhshan Andrabi,

Chairperson, J&K Waqf Board; Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Dr GV Sundeeep Chakravathy, SSP Srinagar; Akshay Labroo, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, senior Officials, medical professionals and prominent citizens from different walks of life | [More on P6](#)

Soldier killed, 7 injured as fierce encounter continues in Kishtwar woods

Helicopters, drones, sniffer dogs deployed to flush out hiding terrorists

Major hideout busted; senior officers monitoring ops at ground zero

Sajid Raina/ Yogesh

Kishtwar, Jan 19: An Army soldier, who was injured during the ongoing encounter with terrorists in Singpora area area Kishtwar district, succumbed

to his injuries on Monday even as sniffer dogs, drones and helicopters have been roped in to flush out the hiding terrorists, officials said.

Army's White Knight Corps, in a post on X, per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that the General Officer Commanding and all ranks pay tribute to Havildar Gajendra Singh of the Special Forces, who made the supreme sacrifice while gallantly executing a counter terrorism operation in the | [More on P6](#)

LG pays homage to Havildar Gajendra Singh

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha paid homage to Havildar Gajendra Singh of the Indian Army's Special Forces, who attained martyrdom during the ongoing anti-terror operation in Kishtwar. "I salute the supreme | [More on P6](#)

Three ancient fossil sites in Anantnag to be preserved for research, geo-tourism growth

Authorities collaborate with GSI to protect 260-million-year-old fossils in south Kashmir

Umaisar Gull Ganie

Anantnag, Jan 19: Hidden traces of ancient life in Anantnag's forests are being brought under protection, as authorities begin preservation of three fossil sites to support scientific research and promote geo-tourism in south Kashmir, officials said on Monday.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that to conserve geological heritage,



the J&K Forest Department, Anantnag Division, in collaboration with the Geological Survey of India (GSI), is developing and

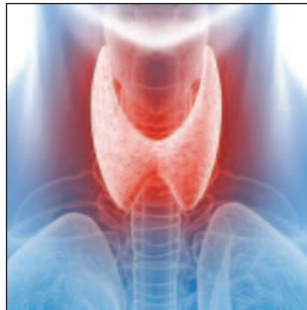
preserving three fossil sites in south Kashmir's Anantnag district for research and tourism purposes. | [More on P6](#)

Thyroid disorders rising in Kashmir, doctors call for regular screening

Experts urge health authorities to intensify public education campaigns, advise people not to ignore symptoms

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jan 19: Thyroid disorders are emerging as one of the most commonly diagnosed endocrine problems in Kashmir, with doctors attributing the rising numbers to a combination of lifestyle changes, stress, autoimmune conditions and increased awareness leading to



better detection.

According to doctors, thyroid disease is often a lifelong condition. They have called for sustained public awareness, regular screening and adoption of a healthy lifestyle to prevent

complications.

The thyroid gland is a small, butterfly-shaped organ located at the base of the neck. It produces thyroid hormones that regulate the body's metabolism, influencing how the heart beats, how fast calories are burned, body temperature, digestion, brain function and even reproductive health.

"Thyroid hormones are essential for the normal functioning of almost all organs, including the heart, blood vessels, brain, liver and reproductive system. Even minor imbalances can affect overall health significantly," Dr Raouf Ahmad, an endocrinologist, explained.

Speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Dr Raouf said that hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) is the most common thyroid disorder in Kashmir and is seen more frequently in women.

"Thyroid disorders can broadly be divided into structural and functional problems. Structurally, the gland may enlarge or develop nodules (goitre), sometimes with malignant transformation. Functionally, the gland may become underactive (hypothyroidism) or overactive (hyperthyroidism), producing too little or too much hormone," he said.

He said | [More on P6](#)

Transport Secretary reviews progress of driving training institute in Kot Bhalwal

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, JANUARY 19: Secretary, Transport Department, Avny Lavasa, Monday conducted a detailed review of the ongoing works at the Institute of Driving Training and Research (IDTR) located at Kot Bhalwal, Jammu.

The visit, as per an official statement, was part of the department's focused efforts to expedite the development of critical transport infrastructure in the Union Territory.

The Secretary was accompanied by a team of officers comprising Additional Transport Commissioner, Anju Gupta; Superintendent Engineer, PW (R&B) Jammu; Regional Transport Officer (RTO), Jammu, S. Jasmeet Singh; Joint Transport Commissioner; Executive Engineers PWD and Mechanical besides Assistant Engineers PWD and Mechanical Departments.

The Secretary was briefed about the key components of the institute, including the Administrative Block, Hostel Block,



various driving test track and other associated infrastructure being developed to facilitate professional driver training.

During the inspection, the Secretary assessed the progress of civil works and examined key training facilities such as driving simulators, classrooms, laboratories and other equipment essential for modern driver education.

Expressing concern over

delay in completion of the critical infrastructure, the Secretary issued firm instructions to the Executive Engineers PWD, Mechanical and Electrical to ensure timely execution of all pending works. She emphasized the importance of adhering to the stipulated timelines and directed that the balance works including the Administrative Block, Hostel Block and all tracks must be completed within next 15 days.

Avny Lavasa also reiterated the Transport Department's commitment towards developing state-of-the-art training and testing facilities in J&K to enhance road safety, reduce accidents and professionalize driver training standards.

The visit concluded with on-site deliberations among the officials regarding coordination, quality control and future operational planning of the IDTR.

Arrangements finalised for Republic Day Celebrations in Kupwara

KT NEWS DESK

KUPWARA, JANUARY 19: In order to ensure seamless Republic Day celebrations, Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, chaired a comprehensive meeting on Monday at DPL Kupwara with officers from all concerned departments.

Attendees included SSP Kupwara Syed Tahir Al Geelani, ADDC Kupwara, ADC Kupwara, SE R&B, CPO, CEO, DIO DIPR Kupwara, and senior officials from line departments.

Discussions covered critical areas such as security, parade coordination, seating, traffic management, sanitation, power supply, medical facilities, and logistics.

The DC, as per an official statement, underscored the need for robust inter-departmental coordination to complete all preparations in time. He directed departments to uphold discipline, punctuality, and readiness, emphasizing dedicated execution of duties for a safe, dignified event.

SSP Kupwara outlined security protocols, assuring full coordination with agencies for smooth proceedings.

Later, the DC along with SSP inspected the DPL ground, the main venue, to review on ground arrangements.

DC Baramulla reviews status of KCC Cases

Directs mega awareness drive across 402 Panchayats to achieve 100% saturation

KT NEWS DESK

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 19: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa Monday chaired a review meeting at the DC Office Meeting Hall to assess the status of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) cases in the district.

The meeting focused on evaluating progress, identifying gaps, and finalising strategies for achieving 100 percent saturation under the scheme.

During the meeting, the chair, as per an official statement, was apprised of comprehensive details regarding the total number of KCC accounts in the district, including active accounts as well as zero-balance, inactive accounts and targeted interventions towards success of the scheme.

The meeting held an in-depth discussion on strategies to ensure complete coverage of eligible beneficiaries under the KCC scheme. Emphasis was laid on strengthening outreach mechanisms, improving coordination



among stakeholders, and addressing issues leading to inactive and zero-balance accounts.

During the meeting, the DC directed the concerned officers to organise a mega awareness drive across all 402 Panchayats of District Baramulla to reach out to eligible farmers, zero balance and left-out beneficiaries to ensure their enrollment under the KCC scheme.

The DC further instructed the departments to maintain a consolidated and updated branch wise database related to KCC applications received, processed, approved,

and pending which will serve as a key monitoring tool to track progress.

Meanwhile, Minga Sherpa directed the concerned authorities to personally reach out to zero-balance and inactive KCC account holders and take necessary steps to activate their accounts with an objective to enable these beneficiaries to fully avail the benefits of the KCC scheme.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Planning Officer, Nisar Ahmad; Lead District Manager, Manzoor Ahmad and other district and bank officers.

DC Budgam stresses smooth conduct of Republic Day celebrations

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, JANUARY 19: Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, Monday chaired a meeting of district officers and various security agencies for foreseeing final preparedness for Republic Day-2026 celebrations.

It was given out that the main function of the Day shall be held at Sports Stadium Budgam while as similar functions would be held at sub-division and Tehsil levels also.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was informed that contingents of JKP, IRP, CRPF, NCC, students of various government and private schools will participate in the march past parade. Besides, various cultural programmes would also be part of the celebrations and a felicitation ceremony would also be held.

On the occasion, various committees like invitation cards committee, hospitality committee, stage management committee, selection committee which are formed already were directed to complete formalities for the smooth conduct of the celebrations. Different departments viz. Education, Jal Shakti, R&B, Information, Health, Sports, Traffic, Motor Vehicles, Police, Floriculture, PDD, Municipality and Paramilitary Forces were earmarked for looking after

their respective assignments.

The decoration of the main venue, seating arrangements, uninterrupted power supply, drinking water/tanker service, barricading of venue, medical aid camp, availability of ambulance, deployment of fire tenders, transportation facilities, adequate and separate vehicle parking, refreshment, invitations, PAS system, cleanliness and sanitation, illumination of main Buildings etc. measures were discussed threadbare in the meeting while as special emphasis was laid on refreshments, transportation, mobile toilets and change room facilities for participating students.

Security agencies were instructed to ensure security arrangements at all venues where functions in this regard will be held across the district.

The DC budgam stressed on smooth conduct of Function across District.

He also directed for coordination among various departments so as to ensure seamless celebrations.

Among others the meeting was attended by ADC Budgam, Mehraj-ud-din Shah, CPO budgam, PO ICDS, SE R&B circle budgam, CEO, CMO, ACP,SDMs, DySP traffic budgam, DYSP Hq budgam, District officers, all BDOs, all Tehsildar's, representatives of security agencies and other concerned.

150 Years of 'Vande Mataram'

District Admin Kupwara holds patriotic function

KT NEWS DESK

KUPWARA, JANUARY 19: District Administration Kupwara Monday held a Grand function at Town Hall, Kupwara, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the iconic national song "Vande Mataram."

The event, as per an official statement, witnessed active participation from civil administration, police, education department, students, teachers, and members of the general public, reflecting a strong sense of national pride and unity.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Gulzar Ahmad Khan; ASP Kupwara, Javaid Ahmad, besides, district officers and employees were present in the function. The programme commenced with a soul-stirring rendition of "Vande Mataram" by the Police Band, which filled the auditorium with patriotic spirit. The performance received wide appreciation from the audience and set a solemn and inspiring tone for the celebrations.

As part of the commemorative activities, an impressive pictorial presentation and exhibition of posters were displayed, highlighting India's freedom movement, the historical significance of "Vande Mataram," and the theme of national integrity.



These posters were creatively prepared by students and teachers from various educational institutions of the district, showcasing their talent, historical understanding, and commitment to the ideals of the nation.

A special documentary screening on the theme "Vande Mataram" was also organized during the function. The documentary traced the origin, historical relevance, and enduring impact of the song

on India's freedom struggle and nation-building process.

The screening provided valuable insights and served as an educational and inspirational experience for the audience.

On the occasion, the ADC highlighted the relevance of "Vande Mataram" in contemporary times, emphasizing its role in fostering patriotism, unity, and a sense of collective responsibility among citizens, especially the youth.

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Vande Mataram 150 Years Commemoration

Anantnag Admin organises mass singing programmes

KT NEWS DESK

ANANTNAG, JANUARY 19: In accordance with the national-level calendar, Phase-II of the "Vande Mataram" 150 Years Commemoration Campaign commenced Monday across Anantnag with multiple mass singing programmes organised at prominent public venues and institutions throughout the district.

The main function was held at Town Hall, Anantnag, where the Deputy Commissioner, SF Hamid presided over the event.

On the occasion, participants, as per an official statement, recited the National Song "Vande Mataram" in unison, reaffirming the district's collective spirit of unity, pride and devotion



to the Motherland.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the historic and inspirational significance of "Vande Mataram" in our Nation's freedom struggle and its enduring message of

national unity and service. He called upon all stakeholders, especially youth and students, to uphold the values of discipline, dedication and constructive citizenship, and to contribute meaningfully towards

the progress and well-being of society and the nation.

The Deputy Commissioner informed that Phase-II of the campaign will feature a series of patriotic and vibrant activities to be organised in a smooth, dignified and inclusive manner across educational institutions and public spaces of the district, culminating on Republic Day, January 26.

Appreciating Anantnag for its consistent and wholehearted participation in national and nation-building initiatives, the Deputy Commissioner expressed confidence that Phase-II will achieve greater impact through the active involvement of officials, students, youth volunteers, civil society organisations and the general public.

GOVERNMENT OF (U.T) JAMMU & KASHMIR Office Of The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt.Ground Water Division Srinagar Baghi-Ali-Mardan, Nowshara Srinagar.

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Tel./FaxNo:-0194-2411285

Extension Notice 3rd. Of Re-tender Corrigendum 1st.

Subject: 1. Installation of Bore wells at different Spots of Chuntwaliwar District Ganderbal.
Tender ID. 2025_PHE_288027_3.

2. Installation of Bore wells at different Spots of Block Gund District Ganderbal.
Tender ID. 2025_PHE_288027_4.

Reference: 1. This office Re-Tender Corrigendum 1st issued vide endorsement No: JS- PHE GWDS/25-26/Camp./ 15813-23, dated: 11-12-2025. Bearing Tender ID No. 2025_PHE_286817_18.

2. This office e-NIT No. 42-JS-PHE/GWDS/Mech. of 2025-26, issued vide endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/25-26/Camp./ 6630-40, dated: 11-09-2025. Bearing Tender ID No. 2025_PHE_288027_1 & 2.

Due to "NO Response" for the above mentioned works advertised vide e-NIT No. and Tender ID No's under reference. Which was scheduled to be downloaded till 12-01-2026 Up-to 03:00 PM are extended as per the details given below: -

S. No.	Item	Fresh Date
1.	Period of submission of bids	23-01-2026 Up-to 03:00 PM
2.	Date of opening of tenders	24-01-2026 01.00 PM

NOTE:

All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the aforesaid e-NIT issued vide above referred endstt: nos.

No: -JS- PHE/ GWDS/ 25- 26/ Camp./ 17565- 75
Dated: 12-01-2026

DIPK-10177/25 Ground Water Division Srinagar.
DATED: 19-01-2026

CS chairs Mission YUVA meet

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Jan 19: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo Monday chaired a meeting of the Apex Committee of Mission YUVA, during which he reviewed the district-wise and panchayat-level performance of the flagship self-employment initiative across the Union Territory.

The meeting besides Additional Chief Secretary, Planning; Principal Secretary, Finance; Managing Director, J&K Bank; and Director, IIM Jammu was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Education; Secretary, Rural Development Department; Secretary in I&C Department; Managing Director, JKRLM, along with representatives from IIT Jammu, Universities, SKUAST, NABARD, and other key stakeholders.

Deputy Commissioners from all districts participated in the meeting through video conferencing.

Commending the Labour & Employment Department for its meticulous monitoring and data-driven analysis of the Mission's implementation, the Chief Secretary appreciated the innovative approach adopted to generate insightful performance indicators policy down to the Panchayat level across J&K.

He emphasized that such analytical inputs must be effectively utilised for targeted interventions.

The Chief Secretary directed Deputy Commissioners to focus special attention on the weakest performing blocks, as identified in the department's analysis, and ensure corrective measures on priority. He also instructed them



to ensure that the Single Business Development Units (SBDUs) and Block Handholding Desks (BHDs) in each district are fully operational by the end of the month, with adequate infrastructure, manpower, and empanelment of motivators.

Highlighting the potential of 'Lakhpatis Didis' under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), the Chief Secretary advised the department to enhance their capacities, upgrade their enterprises, and empanel them as motivators under Mission YUVA. He suggested adopting successful models from states such as Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Bihar, and called for exposure visits and specialised training at reputed institutions to further empower these Self-Help

Groups.

Stressing sustained outreach, the Chief Secretary underscored the need to continue 'Udyamjagriti' campaigns in both online and offline modes. He called for intensified IEC activities in colleges and emphasized improving the efficiency of Incubation Centres and Innovation Hubs established under the Mission.

Reviewing the performance of banks, particularly with regard to loan sanctions and disbursements, the Chief Secretary asked them to achieve a target of 1,200 disbursements per week. He expressed satisfaction over the commitment shown by banks to accelerate disbursement momentum.

He also stressed the importance

of post-sanction mentoring and handholding, observing that capital infusion alone does not ensure success unless complemented by training and sustained support.

During the presentation, Secretary, Labour & Employment, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan, informed the meeting that Mission YUVA has received responses from nearly 95 percent of over 4,300 panchayats across the UT. He revealed that loans amounting to 14,887 applicants, with around 76 percent disbursed so far. The average loan size stands at 6.64 lakh, with a target of reaching ₹1,500 crore by the end of the current financial year.

Managing Director, Mission

YUVA, Shahzad Alam, highlighted that all established units are being tracked for productivity and outcomes through a dedicated digital dashboard, ensuring that each disbursement translates into a viable and sustainable enterprise.

The meeting was also briefed on detailed performance analytics covering block- and district-wise loan applications, verification and approval timelines, and comparative performance of bank branches across districts. Updates were also shared on the establishment of Innovation Hubs and Incubation Centres, including the proposed signing of MoUs with premier institutions such as T-Hub, IIT Madras, IIM Bangalore, and IIM Jammu.

The committee further discussed the establishment of an Overseas Recruitment Agency and onboarding of local enterprises on the ONDC platform, disclosing that 102 stores have been onboarded and 1,393 SKUs added across districts so far.

Reiterating the bank's commitment, Managing Director, J&K Bank informed that around 2,600 cases are scheduled for disbursement by January 26, while nearly 30,000 cases are targeted to be completed by the end of the financial year.

Other stakeholders, including representatives from IIM Jammu, IIT Jammu, Universities, SKUAST, and NABARD, shared their inputs and reaffirmed their commitment to support Mission YUVA by providing institutional infrastructure, technical expertise, and training support for entrepreneurs as well as the implementation staff.

Major civic upgrade for Srinagar before R-Day: Garg



REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 19 (KNO): Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg Monday said that Srinagar is witnessing a major civic transformation under the Smart City Mission, with several infrastructure and public service projects nearing completion ahead of Republic Day celebrations.

Speaking to reporters in Srinagar, Garg said the historic Amira Kadal Bridge has been redeveloped as a pedestrian bridge under the Smart City project and will soon be dedicated to the public by the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

"Amira Kadal is one among the oldest bridges in Srinagar that has been redeveloped under the Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL). We have prepared it as a pedestrian bridge and the LG will dedicate it to the public soon," Garg told reporters, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

He said that the newly designed bridge will not only ease the public movement around Lal Chowk but will also emerge as a tourist attraction, similar to Zero Bridge and Habba Kadal, adding that it will bring additional tourist footfall that will be beneficial for the local businesses.

"Cyclists can now ride and morning walkers can enjoy a 4.5-km stretch of the riverfront. It's a major addition to Srinagar's urban lifestyle," he added.

Highlighting the city's Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC), Garg said it is now

fully functional with 40 dedicated employees appointed by the divisional administration.

"The ICCC has been operational since February-15 with a 24x7 public helpline. So far, our team has responded to more than 250 citizen calls. Anyone, residents or tourists can reach out for any civic issue," he said.

On solid waste management, Garg said the SMC and the administration are working under the directions of the government and courts to resolve issues at the Achan dumping site.

Regarding smart city electric buses, he said that the service has received very good feedback from commuters.

"We are adding 100 more e-buses soon and developing new charging stations—one near the SuperMarket and another near Hazratbal to enhance route efficiency," he said.

About the Republic Day celebrations, Garg said the main function will be held at Bakshi Stadium, where rehearsals are already underway.

"All arrangements have been completed. Our children are excited to take part in cultural programmes," he said, adding that illumination of government buildings across Srinagar has begun to mark the national event.

Garg congratulated all stakeholders of Srinagar, saying that the Smart City initiatives, from public transport to urban aesthetics are set to redefine civic infrastructure and quality of life in the summer capital—(KNO)

Delhi Airspace closure hits 3 flights in Srinagar

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 19: Three flights have been cancelled at the Srinagar International Airport on Monday following the closure of the airspace in Delhi for Republic Day rehearsals and related security measures, officials said.

An airport said that three flights scheduled for today were cancelled due to airspace closure in Delhi, while rest of the flight are as per schedule.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Kashmiri pandits can return anytime: Dr Farooq

Says nobody is stopping them from coming home; People of J&K Never desired to go with Pakistan, chose India in 1947

AHMAD TAIMUR

Srinagar, Jan 19: The National Conference president and former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah on Monday said that nobody is stopping Kashmiri Pandits from coming back to home, saying they can come anytime and stay in their homes like those who never left the Valley.

Speaking with reporters, Farooq Abdullah said that he had told them (Kashmiri Pandits) on time to return to their homes and he had made a comprehensive rehabilitation policy when he was at the helm. "Then we were not in power. Now it's the job of New Delhi to rehabilitate them," he said.

He said that it is also up to them (Kashmiri Pandits) who left their homes, they are settled in other parts, have grown old and their children are now studying in schools, colleges and universities. "They can come here as visitors only. I don't think they will come here to stay," he added.

Responding to a question, Farooq



Abdullah said that there is hatred being spread across the country in the name of religion and that Hindus and Muslims are divided to win elections. "This nation belongs to everyone and it's known for unity in diversity. Every religion and caste exists here but some people want to fight in the name of religion who can stop them. It is not a new thing," he said. Referring to Vaishno Devi medical admission row, he said that students were given admission based on NEET score and the majority of them were Muslims, but its approval as medical college was withdrawn.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Separate Jammu demand supports Pakistan's agenda: Dy CM

SAJID RAINA

Jammu, Jan 19: Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Kumar Choudhary Monday said that the demand for separate state for Jammu region is supporting the agenda of Pakistan to divide the Union Territory.

He said that Islamabad has been attempting to divide Jammu and Kashmir since 1947. "They have failed to achieve their agenda."

Choudhary while addressing the media said, "Those who are saying Jammu should be made a separate state are waving the flag of Pakistan."

The Deputy CM also said that Pakistan had been attempting to separate Jammu from Kashmir since its independence and that similar efforts continued during decades of militancy. "They cannot



be Indians and they cannot be patriots," he said, adding that people who believed in the unity of the country wanted Jammu and Kashmir to remain together.

Choudhary added that Jammu and Kashmir was the state of Maharaja Hari Singh, Maharaja Gulab Singh and Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah. "People had made sacrifices to keep it united. "This is the state for

which we have given our blood, sweat and tears. We will never want it to be separated," he said.

He said no patriot, whether from Jammu, Kashmir or Ladakh, would support the division of the region.

"Whoever wants to separate Jammu and Kashmir is waving the flag of Pakistan. He is not waving the flag of India," Choudhary said.

He said the National Conference had always stood for the unity of Jammu and Kashmir.

"From Sher-e-Kashmir to Dr Farooq Abdullah, we are patriots and we are Indians," he said.

Choudhary said the National Conference had made sacrifices for the country and would not allow Jammu and Kashmir to be divided—(KNO)

Jhelum returns last victim of Gandbal boat tragedy

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 19 (KNO): After tireless search operations and silent prayers from an entire community, the body of Showkat Ahmad Sheikh, one of the victims of the 2024 Gandbal boat tragedy, was finally recovered from the Jhelum River on Monday.

The body brings closure to a heart-breaking story that has haunted people for nearly two years.

According to locals, the recovery was made this afternoon from the river stretch near the accident site at Gandbal, where Showkat had gone missing on that tragic April day.

"Maa ki dua ne aaj uske body wapasi layi hai, (mother's prayer brought his lifeless body back...)" said one tearful local, watching as residents gathered along the riverbank. "Every mother had prayed for her son," he said.

The moment was heavy with emotion, as the sound of flowing water mixed with sobs, with family members, neighbours and rescue volunteers standing silently in remembrance.

A tragedy etched in memory The Gandbal boat tragedy occurred on April 16, 2024, when an overcrowded wooden ferry, carrying



schoolchildren and local commuters, capsized midstream in the swollen waters of the Jhelum River.

The accident claimed eight lives, including several young students and left an entire locality in mourning.

In the immediate aftermath, a large-scale rescue and recovery operation was launched, involving MARCOS (Marine Commandos), the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and local volunteers. Despite extensive underwater searches and repeated diving expeditions, Showkat's body had remained

untraced until today.

Residents recalled how day after day, teams scoured the river using sonar and underwater detection gear, while families kept vigil along the banks, hoping for a sign.

"Every time we heard a splash or a ripple, our hearts would race," said Ghulam Rasool, a local who had volunteered in the rescue work. "But months passed, and hope was all we held on to."

Closure after unending grief

On Monday, the locals and sand excavators spotted something near

the river's bend close to the original accident site. When the currents slowed and the object surfaced, they rushed in to recover it, confirming that it was indeed the missing Showkat. Scenes of grief unfolded as news spread through Gandbal. Villagers gathered in silence, reciting verses and consoling Showkat's family, who had waited nearly two years for this moment.

His body was taken for medico-legal formalities and will be handed over to relatives for the last rites, bringing long-awaited closure.

"He will come home, even if in silence," whispered a relative, overcome with emotion.

KNO first to track developments

It may be recalled that Kashmir News Observer (KNO) was the first to report the discovery of suspected human remains during renewed search operations earlier this month, and today confirmed the full recovery of the missing victim's body as well.

The Gandbal boat tragedy remains one of the deadliest river accidents in recent memory in Srinagar, a tragedy that reshaped conversations about river safety and public transport in the city.

'We pulled a rose from the river': Excavators on recovering Showkat's body

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 19: After 22 months of relentless hope, grief and prayers, the last missing victim of the 2024 Gandbal boat tragedy, Showkat Ahmad Sheikh was finally recovered from the Jhelum River. The young man, who had worked along the river for years, recounted the moment with deep emotion. "When we brought the body ashore, it was like a rose lying in the water," said one sand excavator.

Speaking to the media, the rescuers said, "We felt like the body of Showkat was untouched by a storm. We returned the body like a lost child to his parents."

"The river had taken so much from us," another excavator said in his trembled voice. "But today, Allah returned him. For 22 months, the village prayed, hoped and waited. And today, we finally have closure." As the news spread, Gandbal was awash with grief. Villagers, relatives and volunteers gathered along the riverbanks and through the streets. Women wept openly, men bowed their heads in silent sorrow and children clung to their parents. Tears streamed freely as prayers mingled with the cold January air.

"For all these months, I kept assuring myself that he will come back to us," said a Gandbal resident.

Another villager added, "For nearly two years, the river has been silent. Today, it has given us a voice again. We can mourn, we can heal."—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

Investing In Sports Crucial For Inclusive National Growth

The national focus on sports, exemplified by initiatives like the ‘SRIJAN’ conference in Jammu & Kashmir, signifies a crucial and welcome shift in recognising sports as fundamental to nation-building. The assertion that sports serve as a “real-life school” is profoundly accurate. Beyond physical fitness, the arena of sports is where discipline is forged and teamwork is internalised. It is a powerful, neutral platform

where talent is the sole currency, teaching young minds to handle victory with humility and defeat with grace. The emphasis on integrating sports with education is the strategic cornerstone of this vision. Embedding sports into the core curriculum, not as an extracurricular afterthought but as a vital component of holistic development, can transform our educational outcomes. It fosters focus, reduces stress, and instils a spirit of healthy

competition. For regions like Jammu & Kashmir, investing in a robust sports ecosystem carries added significance. It provides a constructive, aspirational outlet for youthful energy, fosters a shared identity beyond divisions, and can position the region as a hub of athletic excellence. The commitment to developing infrastructure in rural and far-flung areas is particularly praiseworthy, ensuring inclusivity and democratising

access. The path forward is clear. We must build on this momentum by ensuring policy translates into practice. This requires sustained funding for grassroots facilities, professional coaching, and transparent athletic federations. Promoting women’s participation and traditional sports alongside mainstream disciplines will create a truly inclusive culture. Most importantly, we must champion sports as a viable and respected

career, with clear pathways in coaching, sports management, and athletic excellence. By treating sports as a serious national priority—an engine for social cohesion, personal development, and international prestige—we invest in building not just stronger athletes, but also more disciplined, confident, and united citizens. This is how a nation truly builds its character and secures its future, one goal, one race, and one fair game at a time.

International Year Of Cooperatives 2025: A Year Of Cooperative Empowerment And Expansion

Over 8.5 lakh cooperatives registered; 6.6 lakh functional, serving 32 crore members across 30 sectors with 10 crore women linked to cooperatives through SHGs

Press Information Bureau

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

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

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

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

Cooperatives in India operate across a wide range of sectors, including agriculture, credit, banking, housing, and women’s welfare, and collectively account for more than one-fourth of the world’s cooperatives. As of December 2025, the National Cooperative Database (NCD) records over 8.5 lakh cooperatives, of which approximately 6.6 lakh are operational, covering nearly 98 percent of rural India and serving around 32 crore members across 30 sectors. These institutions connect milk producers, artisans, fishers, traders, and workers to markets, while connections with women-led SHGs have integrated nearly 10 crore women into the cooperative framework. From nationally recognized entities such as Amul to major institutions like NABARD, KRIBHCO, and IFFCO, alongside thousands of local societies and cooperatives, these entities constitute a foundational pillar of India’s economic architecture.

Holistic Initiatives and Achievements in the Year The Ministry of Cooperation has undertaken a range of initiatives to address the evolving needs of cooperative societies and their members. Guided by the vision of “Sahkar Se Samridhhi”, these efforts aim to strengthen the cooperative movement nationwide and enable cooperatives to realize their full economic and social potential.

Making Primary Cooperatives Economically Vibrant and Transparent

Enhancing Inclusivity and Governance in PACS

In consultation with States, UTs, and major co-operative institutions, the Government has issued Model Bye-laws to enable Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) to undertake more than 25 business activities while strengthening governance, transparency, and accountability. These bye-laws also widen membership by ensuring the participation of women and SC/ST communities. So far, 32 States/UTs have adopted or aligned their bye-laws with these provisions.

Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) are village-level institutions that provide short-term credit and financial services to rural borrowers, and facilitate the collection of repayments.

Modernizing Cooperative Credit through Digital Platforms

The Government of India has approved a Rs.2,925.39 crore project to computerise functional Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) and integrate them onto a common Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)-based national software platform.

Implemented for the period 2022-23 to 2026-27, following approval on June 29, 2022, the initiative digitally links PACS with NABARD through State Cooperative Banks and district central cooperative banks.

Under the scheme, each PACS will be provided with essential hardware support, including a computer, webcam, VPN, printer, and biometric device. This infrastructure will facilitate the effective completion of subsequent implementation steps. The ePACS system comprehensively captures financial and operational transactions, generating financial statements in accordance with the Common Accounting System (CAS)-MIS standards.

As on date: 59,261 PACS are actively using ERP software, compared to 47,155 PACS as on 2 January 2025.

Hardware delivered to 65,151 PACS, covering about 82% of the expanded target of 79,630 PACS (as against 57,578 PACS covered as of January 2025).

Online audits completed in 42,730 PACS

32,119 PACS enabled as e-PACS

34.94 crore transactions processed through 22 ERP modules

Software available in 14 languages

Establishment and Scaling of Multipurpose Cooperatives at the Grassroots

The Government of India has approved the plan to establish new multipurpose PACS, dairy, and fisheries cooperatives with the objective of achieving comprehensive coverage of all panchayats and villages across the country over the next five years.

Top of Form According to the National Cooperative Database, 32,009 new PACS, dairy, and fishery cooperatives have been registered. At present, PACS operates in 2,55,881 Gram Panchayats (GPs), dairy cooperatives cover 87,159 GPs, and fisheries cooperatives are present in 29,964 Gram Panchayats nationwide.

Bottom of Form

Integration of PACS with Central Government Schemes

Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) have been integrated with multiple central government schemes, significantly expanding their role as village-local service delivery hubs. So far, 38,190 PACS have been upgraded into Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhhi Kendras (PMKSKs) to supply agricultural inputs, while 51,836 PACS function as Common Service Centres (CSCs) delivering more than 300 e-services. So far, 4,192 PACS/ cooperative societies from 34 States/ UTs have applied online for PM Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra, out of which 4,177 PACS have been given initial approval by PMBI and 866 have received drug licences from State Drug Controllers, and 812 PACS have been assigned store codes to operate as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs), thereby improving access to affordable medicines. PACS are also eligible to establish retail petrol and diesel outlets under the Combined Category 2 (CC2) framework, with 117 opting for bulk-to-retail conversion and 59 commissioned by Oil Marketing Companies. Till now 394 PACS/ LAMPS from 28 States/ UTs have applied online for retail petrol/ diesel dealership, out of which 10 PACS have been commissioned. Furthermore, PACS can apply for LPG distributorships to diversify their revenue streams, and 962 PACS have been identified as Paani Samitis to undertake the operations and maintenance of rural piped water supply schemes, thereby strengthening their role as multipurpose service centres at the grassroots level.

Formation of new Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) by PACS

Under the FPO scheme, 1100 additional FPOs have been allotted to the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) in cooperative sector. Now, PACS will be able to do other economic activities related to agriculture as FPOs. Till now a total of 1863 FPOs have been formed in the co-operative sector by NCDC, out of which 1117 FPOs have been formed through strengthening of PACS. Under the scheme, an amount of Rs.206 crore has been disbursed to FPOs/CBBOs till date.

Formation of Fish Farmer Producer Organization (FFPO)

To provide market linkage and processing facilities to the fishermen, NCDC has registered 70 FFPOs in the initial phase. Department of Fisheries, Government of India has further allocated the conversion of 1000 existing fisheries cooperative societies into FFPOs to NCDC, with an approved outlay of Rs.225.50 crore. NCDC has so far facilitated the formation of 1,070 FFPOs, and the strengthening of 2,348 FFPOs is currently under progress. Under the scheme, an amount of Rs.98 crore has been disbursed to FFPOs/CBBOs.

Strengthening Financial Inclusion through Cooperative Bank Mitras

Dairy and Fisheries cooperative societies can be made as Bank Mitras of District Central Cooperative

Banks (DCCBs) and State Cooperative Banks (StCBs) to expand their business and promote financial inclusion. With support from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Micro-ATMs are also being provided to these Bank Mitra Co-operative Societies to strengthen digital financial inclusion and enable transparent, traceable, “door-step financial services”. A total of 12219 Bank Mitra have been appointed in Gujarat with the issuance of 12624 Micro-ATM, covering all 14330 Gram Panchayats in the state of Gujarat. The scheme added another revenue stream for Dairy cooperative societies and PACS, besides generating employment for over 15,000. Based on learnings of the scheme, national wide rollout is planned as per the SOP of the ministry.

Rupay Kisan Credit Card to Members of Cooperative Societies

A Pilot project has been started in Panchmahal and Banaskantha districts of Gujarat to expand the reach and capacity of Rural Co-operative Banks and to provide necessary liquidity to the members of Rural Co-operative Societies. Under this project, Bank Accounts of all the members of the cooperative societies are being opened in the concerned District Central Cooperative Banks and with the support of NABARD, Rupay-Kisan Credit Cards (KCCs) are being distributed to the account holders. More than 22 lakh kisan credit cards have been issued through which more than 10,000 crores of loans have been disbursed creating entrepreneurship and employment.

World’s Largest Decentralised Grain Storage Plan

The Government approved the world’s largest grain storage plan in the Cooperative Sector on 31st May 2023 and has launched it as a pilot project to address deficits in food grain storage capacity at the grassroots level. The plan focuses on developing agricultural infrastructure at the Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS) level, including storage godowns, custom hiring centres, processing units and Fair Price Shops, through convergence with existing Government of India schemes such as the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure Scheme (AMI), Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM) and Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME).

As on 30 December 2025:

- Godowns completed in 112 PACS (Pilot Phase 1 - 11, Rajasthan - 82, Maharashtra - 15, Gujarat - 4)
- Storage capacity created: 68,702 MT
- Scheme expanded beyond PACS to all cooperative societies

White Revolution 2.0

The Ministry of Cooperation has launched White Revolution 2.0 to strengthen and expand dairy cooperatives, boost milk procurement, and create better livelihood opportunities for women and rural producers. The initiative aims to increase milk procurement by 50 per cent in five years by integrating currently uncovered areas into the cooperative network. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was launched on 19th September 2024, followed by the inauguration of 6,600 new Dairy Cooperative Societies (DCS) on 25th December 2024. So far, 20,070 DCSs have been registered across 31 States and Union Territories.

Atmanirbharta Abhiyan

The Ministry of Cooperation has launched a programme to promote the production of tur, masur, urad, and maize by linking farmers with cooperative networks and ensuring assured procurement at the Minimum Support Price (MSP), while permitting open market sales when prices exceed MSP. To facilitate implementation, the National Cooperative Consumer Federation (NCCF) and National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) have developed digital registration platforms, e-samyukti and e-samridhi, for farmer enrolment through cooperatives. To promote domestic production of pulses and maize, 56,673 PACS/FPOs and 54.74 lakh farmers have registered on e-Samyukti and e-Samridhi portals. Procurement achieved includes 9.08 LMT of pulses and 45,105 MT of maize.

Strengthening the Cooperative Banks

Beyond PACS, digital reforms now cover the wider cooperative ecosystem to create an integrated and transparent structure. “Sahakar Sarathi”, a shared service entity approved by the Reserve Bank of India, supports Rural Cooperative Banks (RCBs) with more than 13 digital, financial and audit services. It has an authorised capital of Rs.1,000 crore, with 33.33 per cent shareholding each by NABARD, NCDC and RCBs. Cooperative banks are also being onboarded to the RBI Integrated Ombudsman Scheme to improve grievance redressal. To encourage stronger institutional performance, a Cooperative Ranking Framework was launched on 24th January 2025, using digital indicators such as

audit quality, operational efficiency and financial strength to promote transparency and competitiveness across cooperatives.

THREE NEW NATIONAL-LEVEL MULTI-STATE SOCIETIES

Strengthening the Cooperative Seed Ecosystem: Establishment of BBSSL

Bhartiya Beej Sahakari Samiti Limited (BBSSL) has been established by the Government as a new apex multi-state cooperative seed society under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002. The institution is mandated to coordinate the production, testing, certification, procurement, processing, storage, branding, labelling, and packaging of foundation and certified seeds through Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS). BBSSL has introduced seeds under the brand “Bharat Beej”, and to date, 31,605 PACS and cooperative societies have enrolled as members.

Apex Framework for Organic Farming and Market Integration: NCOL

National Cooperative Organics Limited (NCOL) has been established as the apex multi-state co-operative to promote and scale organic farming in India. With a membership of 10,035 PACS and co-operative societies, NCOL provides comprehensive end-to-end support encompassing aggregation, certification, testing, processing, branding, and export facilitation. NCOL markets certified organic produce under the “Bharat Organics” brand, offering 28 products that undergo batch-wise testing for more than 245 pesticides. In addition, NCOL has entered into partnerships with several States to support procurement, certification processes, and cluster-based initiatives.

National Apex Cooperative for Export Promotion: NCEL

National Co-operative Exports Limited (NCEL) has been established as a national-level, multi-state cooperative to promote and facilitate exports from India’s cooperative sector. Approved by the Union Government and registered under the Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act, 2002, on 25 January 2023, NCEL functions as an apex umbrella organization, representing cooperatives across sectors in international markets and strengthening their global trade engagement. So far, 13,890 PACS/ co-operative societies have become members of NCEL. In Q3 of FY 2025–26, NCEL exported 13.77 LMT of agri commodities worth Rs.5,556.24 crore. A 20% dividend was distributed to members.

Capacity Building and Training Programs in Cooperatives

Establishment of Cooperative University Tribhuvan Sahkari University: The Ministry of Cooperation has set up Tribhuvan Sahkari University (TSU) as India’s first national university for the cooperative sector by converting IRMA, with the Act taking effect on 6th April 2025. TSU began functioning immediately and launched three post-graduate programmes in 2025-26. The University will build skilled manpower and support the goals of the National Cooperation Policy 2025 through education, research and sector-wide affiliations.

Training Programmes

Capacity-building programmes for members, secretaries, and board members of newly registered PACS are conducted through the National Council for Cooperative Training (NCCT) and NABARD. In 2024-25, NCCT conducted 4,389 training programmes and trained 3.15 lakh participants. CSC-focused training covered 30,210 PACS. Awareness programmes, walkathons and youth initiatives were organised nationwide.

National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)

The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), established in 1963 under the Ministry of Cooperation, serves as a key institution for providing financial and technical support to cooperatives across both farm and non-farm sectors. It helps strengthen the production, storage, and processing of agricultural produce, promoting income-generating activities such as dairy, fisheries, handloom, and women-led cooperatives. Through these efforts, NCDC enhances the economic role of cooperatives and supports livelihoods at the grassroots level.

NCDC operates dedicated schemes such as Nandini Sahakar, Swayam Shakti Sahakar, Ayushman Sahakar, and Yuva Sahakar, which provide concessional finance, interest subvention, and start-up support to women-led, youth-led, SC/ST, and innovative cooperatives.

NCDC disbursed Rs.95,183 crore in FY 2024-25 and Rs.95,000 crore in FY 2025-26 (till date). The Government has also permitted NCDC to issue Rs.2,000 crore in government-guaranteed bonds.

Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited (India’s first cooperative-led Mobility platform)

Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited is India’s first cooperative-led mobility initiative, created to offer fair earnings for drivers and affordable services for passengers. The cooperative is promoted by Amul,

NAFED, NABARD, IFFCO, KRIBHCO, NDDB & NCEL with an authorized Share Capital- Rs.300 crore. Over 1,50,000 drivers and 2,00,000 customers have already registered on app in trial run in NCR and Gujarat. Over 5000 daily rides have been done in trial run before proposed official launch in January. The scheme is expected to have nation-wide presence by 2029.

Inclusion of Cooperative Societies as ‘Buyer’ on the GeM Portal

The registration of Cooperative Societies as buyers has been approved on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) in 2022. Cooperative Societies can procure goods and services from about 67 lakh verified sellers and service providers on the GeM platform. So far, 721 Cooperative Societies have been onboarded as buyers, with efforts also underway to encourage their registration as sellers. To date, these societies have completed 3,285 transactions amounting to Rs.396.77 crore.

Creation of National Cooperative Database (NCD)

A comprehensive National Cooperative Database (NCD) was launched on 8th March 2024 by the Ministry of Cooperation with support from States and Union Territories. It provides single-point access to data on over 8.5 lakh cooperative societies with approximately 32 crore members across 30 sectors, and is regularly updated by State and Union Territory nodal officers. The database is accessible at: <https://cooperatives.gov.in/en>

National Cooperation Policy (NCP)

The National Cooperation Policy (NCP) 2025 was launched by the Ministry of Cooperation on 24th July, 2025. The policy outlines a long-term strategic framework to revitalise and modernise India’s cooperative movement. Anchored in the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and the principle of Sahkar-se-Samridhhi, the policy builds on India’s rich cooperative legacy to strengthen cooperatives, enhance inclusivity, and prepare them for future challenges. It articulates a mission to achieve 16 objectives over the next decade, structured around six strategic mission pillars.

Relief to Cooperative Societies in the Income Tax Act

Recent tax reforms have eased the financial burden on cooperatives while improving their operational capacity to better serve members. The surcharge applicable for cooperatives with taxable income between Rs.1 crore and Rs.10 crore has been reduced from 12 percent to 7 percent, while the Minimum Alternate Tax has been lowered from 18.5 percent to 15 percent. Additionally, new manufacturing cooperatives established on or before 31st March 2024 are eligible for a concessional corporate tax rate of 15 percent. For PACS, Primary Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (RRBs), the permissible limits on cash deposits, payments, loans, and repayments per member have been enhanced from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 2 lakh, thereby providing greater operational flexibility and facilitating improved service delivery.

Revival of Cooperative Sugar Mills

The Government has provided major fiscal support to cooperative sugar mills by exempting payments up to the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) or State Advised Price (SAP) from taxation since April 2016, and allowing past payments as expenditure, delivering tax relief of over Rs.46,000 crore. A Rs.10,000 crore loan scheme through NCDC is supporting ethanol, cogeneration and working capital needs, with Rs.1,000 crore released to NCDC and Rs.10,005 crore disbursed to 56 mills. Cooperative mills now receive the same treatment as private firms in ethanol procurement, and existing ethanol plants are being converted into multi-feed units to use maize. The GST on molasses has been reduced from 28% to 5%, and revival efforts are underway at Kodinar, Talala and Valsad to strengthen operations and farmer incomes.

Conclusion

India’s commitment to strengthening cooperatives as a driver of inclusive and equitable growth is reflected in the comprehensive set of reforms undertaken in alignment with the objectives of the International Year of Cooperatives 2025. Guided by the vision of Sahkar Se Samridhhi, a series of reforms have enhanced the transparency, functionality, and multipurpose role of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS), expanded the cooperative network to the panchayat level, augmented storage and processing infrastructure, and provided targeted support to women and marginalized communities.

Digitalisation, new multi-state cooperatives, capacity-building institutions, and supportive financial and policy measures have further improved governance, efficiency, and market integration. Collectively, these efforts demonstrate the evolving role of India’s cooperative movement in fostering resilient livelihoods, strengthening rural economies, and promoting participatory and sustainable development.

The views expressed by contributors on this page are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of the newspaper

SDRF marks 14th raising day in Srinagar

810 awareness camps, 103 mock exercises, & 123 rescue operations conducted in 2025

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 19: The 14th Annual Raising Day of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) was celebrated Monday with great enthusiasm at the premises of SDRF 1st Battalion, Srinagar.

The occasion, as per an official statement, was marked by an impressive march past by contingents of SDRF, NDRF, and the Pipe Band.

Imtiyaz Hussain Mir, Director Civil Defence & SDRF Kashmir was Chief Guest on the occasion, who presided over the function and took over the Salute of the March Past. The function was also attended by Masroor Ahmad Mir, Commandant SDRF 1st Bn Srinagar, DySPs and other officers and officials of SDRF 1st Bn. Srinagar.

Addressing the gathering, the Director, Civil Defence & SDRF Kashmir, commended



selfless services of SDRF towards the nation and its citizens and emphasised upon them to continue serving society with greater enthusiasm, zeal, and commitment in the future as well.

On the occasion, Commandant SDRF 1st Battalion Srinagar highlighted the role and achievements of the Battalion during the year 2025. He informed that the unit conducted 810 awareness camps, 103 mock exercises,

and 123 rescue operations, during which 63,640 personnel, including 70 Apda Sakhis, students, and other stakeholders, were trained in disaster preparedness to act as first responders during emergencies.

The Commandant also highlighted the significant role played by SDRF during Shri Amarnathji Yatra-2025, wherein 5,613 pilgrims were provided pre-hospital medical treatment, 7,823 pilgrims received moral and

psychological support, and 1,830 pilgrims were administered on-the-spot oxygen due to altitude-related breathing difficulties.

On the occasion, Masroor Ahmad Mir distributed appreciation certificates and cash rewards among officers and officials for their exemplary services during Operation Sindoor, Shri Amarnathji Yatra-2025, and various rescue operations carried out across the Kashmir Province.

Udhampur Admin launches phase-II of Vande Mataram celebrations



KT NEWS DESK

UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 19: District Administration Udhampur Monday organized the district-level inaugural function of the Vande Mataram Phase-II programme under the overall supervision of Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Saloni Rai.

The programme, as per an official statement, was presided over by Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Dr Umesh Shan and attended by PO Poshan, Subash Dogra, district officers, prominent citizens, staff and students from educational institutions.

Addressing the gathering,

the ACR expressed gratitude to all participants. He informed that the second phase of the week-long celebrations marking 150 years of the National Song Vande Mataram shall feature a series of activities and programmes across the district to create awareness about different government schemes and foster a patriotic spirit.

He urged the stakeholders to actively participate in the celebrations, reflecting the true spirit of India's unity, diversity and nationalism.

The Brahmishi Bawra Shanti Vidya Peeth presented the National Song Vande Mataram to mark the launch of the Phase-II activities.

Phase-II of Vande Mataram celebrations begins in Samba

KT News Desk

SAMBA, JANUARY 19: The Phase-II of Vande Mataram celebrations took off in the district Samba Monday with a grand inaugural programme held in the Conference Hall of Administrative Complex-Nandani Hills.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Jagdish Singh, district heads of Departments and students from different educational institutions of the district participated in the event.

The programme began with the screening of a short documentary highlighting the spirit, history and significance of "Vande Mataram."

Students from different institutions presented cultural items, including a graceful dance performance on "Vande Mataram" besides patriotic songs which were highly appreciated by the guests present.

The ADC lauded the efforts of the students and organisers and emphasised the importance of such programmes in nurturing national values, unity and respect for the nation among the youth.

Arrangements for 16th National Voters' Day finalised in Udhampur



KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 19: To review and finalize arrangements for the celebration of the 16th National Voters' Day 2026- themed "My India, My Vote" with the tagline "Citizen at the Heart of the Indian Democracy," the Additional District Development Commissioner Udhampur, Jugal Kishore Monday convened a meeting of officers from the line departments.

The meeting was attended by Deputy District Election Officer, Babu Pardeep Kumar; District Information Officer, Neeraj Bhargava; EROs, AEROs and other concerned officers. Heads of the educational institutions also participated in the meeting through virtual mode.

While rolling out the schedule of activities, the meeting was informed that a series of awareness activities including rallies, debates, painting competitions, quizzes, slogan writing contests, webinars and the National Voters' Day pledge would be organized, involving college and school students at the District, Sub-Division, Tehsil levels to spread awareness among voters.

Emphasizing the importance of maximum public participation, the ADDC, as per an official statement, pitched for launching an extensive awareness campaign with a special focus on new voters. He urged the officers to work with dedication, coordination and commitment to ensure a vibrant and successful celebration of National Voters' Day.

Kishtwar admin finalises arrangements for Republic Day 2026 celebrations

KT News Desk

KISHTWAR, JANUARY 19: Under the directions of Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Pankaj Kumar Sharma, Additional District Development Commissioner, Vinod Kumar Behnal Monday chaired a meeting to finalise arrangements for the Republic Day 2026 celebrations.

The ADDC, as per an official statement, directed the HODs of the line departments to ensure their attendance along with their staff at Republic Day functions at both the district headquarters and at the Sub-Division, Tehsil and Block levels.

The review covered all aspects of the celebration, including flag hoisting, march-past, cultural programmes, seating arrangements, stage setup, venue preparation and refreshments. The Chowgan Grounds or Mini Secretariat (DC Office Complex) shall be the venue of district level celebration, depending on the weather condition, the meeting decided.



The Police authorities were exhorted to implement stringent security measures to ensure the safety and smooth conduct of the event. The ADDC took feedback from the committees formed to oversee the arrangements for drinking water, power supply, medical facilities, sanitation, traffic management, illumination of government buildings, deployment of fire tenders, seating arrangements and

distribution of invitations.

The meeting was attended by ADC, Pawan Kotwal; CEO KDA, Kaiser Bhawani; ACR, Idrees Lone; ACD, Manoj Kumar; ACP, Neeraj Sharma; DSWO, Tariq Parveez Qazi; DFO, Mahesh Thakur; CHO, Sajid Mustafa; DYSSO, Tehsildars (via virtual mode); Executive Engineers, district officers along with officers from CRPF and representatives of educational institutions and power projects.

ADDC reviews SBM-G, RGSA progress in Udhampur



KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 19: Additional District Development Commissioner Udhampur, Jugal Kishore Monday chaired a meeting of officers and field functionaries of the Rural Development Department to review the progress of Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin and Kashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan in the district.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was convened to assess the implementation status, physical and financial progress and the on-ground impact of works being executed under SBM-G and RGSA across the district.

The ADDC took detailed stock of the progress of Panchayat

Ghar construction works taken up in the current financial year (2025-26). He exhorted officers and field functionaries to ensure close monitoring and timely completion of the SBM-G works to further strengthen rural sanitation.

The BDOs were instructed to identify land for the construction of a Decentralised Wastewater Treatment System (DEWATS) unit in each block by January 29, 2026. He further asked them to identify land for the construction of Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs) in coordination with the concerned Tehsildars.

Reviewing the expenditure status on the assets, the ADDC directed for 100 percent utilization of funds by this month end.

DC Budgam chairs 43rd NCORD meeting

Enforcement, awareness & rehabilitation key for drug-free Budgam

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, JANUARY 19: The 43rd District-Level NCORD (Narco Coordination Committee) meeting was convened on Monday at the DC Office Budgam under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, to review ongoing measures against drug abuse and to formulate fresh strategies for achieving a drug-free Budgam.

The meeting was attended by ADC Budgam, CPO budgam, all SDMs, ACP, CMO, DSWO, Medical Superintendent DH Budgam, Principals of all Government Degree Colleges, Executive Officers of Municipal Committees, and other concerned officers.

At the outset, the action taken on previous NCORD decisions was reviewed. The chair was also apprised that 11 cases have been registered under the NDPS Act and 11 detentions made so far in the district in this month.

Addressing the meeting, the DC said that drug abuse is not merely a law-and-order issue but a grave social challenge impacting families, youth and the overall fabric of society.

He emphasised that the administration will adopt a strict, zero-tolerance approach towards drug peddlers,



traffickers and cultivators, while simultaneously ensuring care, treatment and rehabilitation for victims of addiction.

The DC stressed that a multi-pronged strategy encompassing enforcement, deterrence, treatment, rehabilitation and mass awareness is indispensable to effectively combat the menace. He directed all line departments to intensify coordinated action against narcotics cultivation and peddling, adding that roadsides, embankments, forest fringes and Panchayat areas must be kept completely free of cannabis and poppy cultivation.

While appreciating the progress achieved so far, the DC

remarked that continuous, visible and proactive enforcement is essential to sustain public confidence and deter offenders. He further stated that community participation and timely intelligence sharing are critical pillars in breaking the drug supply chain.

On regulation of drugs, the DC underscored the need for 100 percent CCTV coverage and Computerised Billing Systems (CBS) in all chemist shops. It was informed that Budgam has 630 retail and 225 wholesale chemist outlets, all under strict monitoring. The DC directed that regular inspections must continue and stringent action be taken against any violations.

He further instructed the Drug Inspector to ensure wide publicity of enforcement actions, including cancellation of licences, to promote transparency and deterrence.

It was informed that 113 calls have been received on the Tele-MANAS mental health helpline, reflecting its growing role in providing psychological support. The DC directed that such facilities be widely publicised to enable people to seek confidential and timely assistance.

The DC directed the Excise Department to work in close coordination with Revenue and Police authorities for destruction of illicit crops and prompt registration of FIRs.

SDMs were directed to provide the details of all courier service centres in their respective jurisdictions, so that a committee can be constituted for proper monitoring.

The meeting was informed that the Rural Development Department shall organise special Gram Sabhas focusing on drug abuse awareness, while the DSWO shall conduct large-scale IEC campaigns across villages, towns and educational institutions.

The chair was apprised by ARTO budgam that 6 licenses of the drivers involved in narcotic drug trafficking have been suspended in the district.

The DC directed that the

Addiction Treatment Facility (ATF) at District Hospital Budgam must remain functional round-the-clock, and noted that the Drug De-Addiction Centre is now fully ready for intake of patients requiring treatment and rehabilitation.

CMO and DSWO were instructed for joint visit to drug de-addiction centre budgam and ensure proper linkage of patients from ATF to DDAC.

He also instructed that all Government Degree Colleges in the district ensure installation of CCTV cameras within campuses to strengthen preventive monitoring.

Reiterating the administration's zero-tolerance policy, the DC stated that Budgam must emerge as a model district by dismantling drug networks and safeguarding the future of its youth through collective action. He stressed that this mission requires active involvement of government departments, civil society, parents, teachers, religious scholars and community elders.

He added that a holistic, community-driven and sustained approach is the only way to permanently eradicate the drug menace from the district.

The DC emphasised strong inter-agency coordination and focused rehabilitation and counselling of drug-affected persons at the District Drug De-Addiction Centre.

India Post opens N-Gen post office at Kashmir University

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 19: Jammu & Kashmir Postal Circle today inaugurated its first N-Gen Post Office in Kashmir at the University of Kashmir campus. This is the second N-Gen Post Office in the J&K Circle, after AIMS Vijaypur.

The N-Gen Post Office, as per an official PIB statement, was dedicated by Prof. Nilofer Khan, Vice-Chancellor, University of Kashmir, and Shri D. S. V. R. Murthy, Chief Postmaster General, Jammu & Kashmir Circle, in the presence of Shri Adam Mohi-ud-Din, Senior Superintendent of Post Offices, Srinagar Postal Division. The N-Gen initiative is part of the Department of Posts' programme to modernise campus post offices and provide technology-enabled services.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Nilofer Khan said that the initiative aligns postal services with the requirements of students and reflects the Department of Posts' focus on service delivery in educational institutions.

D. S. V. R. Murthy said that the initiative is in line with the vision of the Union Minister of Communications, Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, to strengthen India Post as a logistics and financial services organisation. He said that the N-Gen Post Office



integrates postal, banking, insurance, and e-commerce services and provides digital payment facilities and simplified service processes.

The Chief Postmaster General said that the N-Gen Post Office will help create awareness about postal savings schemes, India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) services, and other services among students and the university community.

The Post Office has been redesigned as part of the N-Gen initiative. Students of the University of Kashmir participated in the redesign process and were awarded certificates and an honorarium. Wall art at the Post Office was created by students of the School of Fine Arts. Facilities introduced at the Post Office include Aadhaar updation services, Wi-Fi, a coffee machine, and board games. A decorative pen installation has been placed next to the letterbox.

Senior postal officers, faculty members, staff, and students of the University of Kashmir were present on the occasion.

PM Modi gifts ornate wooden swing Pashmina shawl to UAE Prez Al Nahyan

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday gifted an ornate wooden swing from his home state of Gujarat and a Pashmina shawl to visiting UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, officials said.

Modi welcomed Al Nahyan and his mother Sheikhha Fatima bint Mubarak Al Ketbi at his Lok Kalyan Marg residence here.

The prime minister and Al Nahyan sat on the hand-carved wooden swing with traditional designs, showing skilled craftsmanship, placed against the backdrop of a wall adorned with marigold flowers at his residence.

A carved wooden swing is a quintessential part of many Gujarati family homes.

"In Gujarati culture, the swing symbolises togetherness, conversation and bonding



across generations. The gift also resonates deeply with the UAE's declaration of 2026 as the Year of Family," the officials said.

Modi also gifted Al Nahyan a Pashmina shawl from Kashmir in an ornate silver box made in Telangana, representing India's rich tradition of handloom and

handicraft. Modi also gifted a Pashmina shawl in a silver box to Al Nahyan's mother.

"She was also gifted Kashmiri saffron in an ornate silver box. Grown in the Kashmir Valley, saffron is revered for its deep crimson strands and intense aroma," the officials said.

Republic Day: IGP Jammu Zone chairs security coordination meeting

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 19: In connection with the security and coordination arrangements for Republic Day-2026, Inspector General of Police (IGP), Jammu Zone, Bhim Sen Tuti chaired a high-level Security Coordination Meeting today at the Conference Hall, Police Control Room (PCR) Jammu.

The meeting was attended by senior officers of the Police, Army, CAPFs and Intelligence Agencies based in Jammu.

"The primary agenda of the meeting was to ensure the smooth, peaceful and secure conduct of Republic Day events in Jammu. Detailed discussions were held on law and order management, security protocols, traffic regulation, inter-agency coordination and measures to ensure the safety of participants as well as spectators during the celebrations," a police spokesperson said in a statement issued here.

Senior officers from various central and state agencies



participated in the meeting, including representatives from the CAPFs, Indian Army formations, Intelligence agencies and senior officers of the Jammu & Kashmir Police, comprising DIGs, SSPs and Commandants of IRP battalions stationed in Jammu.

During the meeting, a detailed presentation was also played giving briefing on the proposed Republic Day-2026 deployment plan, covering security

arrangements, manpower deployment, traffic management, venue security, access control and contingency planning.

While addressing the officers, the IGP emphasised the importance of meticulous planning, close coordination and seamless information sharing among all stakeholder agencies to ensure the smooth and safe conduct of Republic Day celebrations. He stressed maintaining

a high level of alertness, robust security posture and readiness of all law-enforcement and emergency response units.

The IGP further directed SSP Jammu, SSP Traffic City and all supervisory officers to identify and create adequate parking arrangements, ensure effective traffic regulation and maintain a heightened state of vigilance in their respective jurisdictions.

Trump's Board of Peace has several invited leaders trying to figure out how it'll work

AP

Jerusalem, Jan 19: The European Union's executive arm, Russia, Belarus and Thailand on Monday were the latest to be asked to join US President Donald Trump's new Board of Peace that will supervise the next phase of the Gaza peace plan, as a top Israeli official said the initiative is "bad for Israel" and should be scrapped.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russian President Vladimir Putin received the invitation and that the Kremlin is now "studying the details" and would seek clarity of "all the nuances" in contacts with the US. The Thai Foreign Ministry said it was also invited and that it was reviewing the details.

Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko has been invited and is ready to take part, according to the country's Foreign Ministry.

European Commission

spokesperson Olof Gill confirmed that Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the commission, received an invitation and would be speaking to other EU leaders about Gaza.

Gill didn't say whether the invitation had been accepted, but that the commission wants "to contribute to a comprehensive plan to end the Gaza conflict."

It's unclear how many leaders have been invited to join the board. But a Trump reference in the invitation letters that the body would "embark on a bold new approach to resolving global conflict" suggested it could act as a rival to the UN Security Council, the most powerful body of the global organisation created in the wake of World War II.

According to the World Bank's Gaza and West Bank Interim Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (IRDNA) report released last year, it'll take USD 53 billion to rebuild the strip.

Israel's objections to the board

Israeli far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich on Monday dismissed the Board of Peace as a raw deal for Israel and called for its dissolution.

"It is time to explain to the president that his plan is bad for the State of Israel and to cancel it," Smotrich said at a ceremony inaugurating the new Yatziv settlement in the occupied West Bank.

"Gaza is ours, its future will affect our future more than anyone else's. We will take responsibility for what happens there, impose military administration, and complete the mission."

Smotrich, a hardliner who opposed the Gaza ceasefire, even suggested that Israel renew a full-scale offensive on the territory to destroy Hamas if it doesn't abide by a "short ultimatum for real disarmament and exile."

On Saturday, the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the formation

of the committee wasn't coordinated with the Israeli government and "is contrary to its policy" without clarifying what its objections were. Israel hasn't been invited to join the committee, unlike Turkiye, a key regional rival.

The final list The US is expected to announce its official list of members in the coming days, likely during the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

Board members will oversee an executive committee that will be in charge of implementing the tough second phase of the Gaza peace plan that includes the deployment of an international security force, disarmament of Hamas and reconstruction of the war-devastated territory.

A USD 1 billion contribution secures permanent membership on the board, with the money going to rebuild Gaza, according

to a US official who spoke on condition of anonymity about the charter as he wasn't permitted to speak publicly about details of the board, which hasn't been made public.

A three-year appointment has no contribution requirement.

But details of how this will also work remain murky. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Monday the United Kingdom is talking to allies about the Board of Peace. Although the UK hasn't said whether Starmer has been formally invited to join, he said it's necessary to proceed with the Gaza peace plan's second phase and that his country has "indicated willingness to play our part, and we will."

Running Gaza

Egypt's top diplomat on Monday met with the leader of the newly appointed committee of Palestinian technocrats who will be running Gaza's day-to-day affairs during the second phase of the peace plan.

Foreign Minister Bader Abdelatty met with Ali Shaath, a Palestinian engineer and former official with the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, who was named last week as chief commissioner of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza.

Abdelatty expressed the Egyptian government's "complete support" to the committee and affirmed its role in running Gaza's daily affairs until the Palestinian Authority takes over the territory, a statement from the Egyptian ministry said following the meeting.

He also underscored "the importance of preserving the unity of the Palestinian territories, ensuring geographical and administrative continuity between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank."

Gaza humanitarian situation still fragile

The UN World Food Programme on Monday said it has "significantly expanded

its operations across Gaza 100 days into the ceasefire, reaching more than a million people each month with hot meals, bread bundles and food parcels.

But it warned the situation remains "extremely fragile" even as critical progress has been made in pushing back famine.

It noted that malnutrition has been prevented for 200,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as children under 5, while school snacks are reaching 235,000 children in 250 temporary schools. Still, the most recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis in December indicates that 77 per cent the population is facing crisis-level food insecurity, with over 100,000 people experiencing catastrophic levels of hunger.

The WFP said access to nutritious food such as fresh fruit, vegetables and dairy is limited, with most families still can't afford more commercial goods entering Gaza.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

PM Modi hosts UAE

two sides to work towards concluding a framework agreement for a strategic defence partnership between India and the UAE," Misri said.

Another letter of intent was also signed for joint work in developing space infrastructure. Under this initiative, both sides will look to set up new launch complexes, satellite fabrication facilities, joint missions, space academy and training centres, the foreign secretary said.

A separate document was signed to facilitate the UAE's participation in the development of a special investment region in Gujarat's Dholera.

This initiative will look at the establishment of an international airport, a pilot training school, an MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) facility, a greenfield port, a smart urban township, as well as projects related to railway connectivity and energy infrastructure, Misri added.

The discussions between Modi and Al Nahyan focused on cooperation in several new and emerging areas, including new opportunities for civil nuclear cooperation in the light of the passage of the Shanti Act in India.

An agreement on food safety was also signed. It will provide for cooperation in the food sector and encourage food products and other agricultural exports from India to the UAE.

It will benefit the farmers of India and contribute to food security in the UAE, the foreign secretary said.

Both sides will also explore the possibility of setting up a "data embassy", Misri said.

This is a relatively new concept, but there will be work done to see how these can be set up under mutually recognised sovereignty agreements, he noted.

The foreign secretary said the situation in Yemen, Gaza and Iran was discussed at the talks but declined to elaborate.

"All of these issues were discussed between the leaders. I cannot get into the details at this stage, but yes, both leaders had the opportunity to share their views and opinions in detail on these issues," he said.

Misri said Modi and Al Nahyan unequivocally condemned cross-border terrorism and held that the perpetrators, supporters and financiers of all acts of terrorism must be brought to justice.

The UAE president expressed his support for the success of India's chairmanship of the BRICS grouping this year.

There has been a significant upswing in bilateral trade and people-to-people ties after New Delhi and Abu Dhabi inked an ambitious comprehensive economic partnership agreement in 2022.

The UAE president was seen off at the airport by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

PTI

DGP calls

JD IB J&K/L, IG BSF Ftr. Hqrs, IGP Kashmir Zone, IG CRPF Srinagar, Additional Commissioner SB Srinagar, DIG SSB Srinagar, DIG Armed Kashmir, range DIGs of Kashmir Zone, DIG RPF Kashmir, district SSPs of Kashmir Zone, and representatives of traffic and railway security units.

"During the meeting, officers briefed the DGP on intelligence inputs, security measures, and preparedness plans for the Republic Day events across the Valley," the officials said, adding that key areas discussed included crowd management, traffic regulation, strategic deployment of forces, and protection of vulnerable targets.

DGP Prabhat assigned specific responsibilities to officers with strict instructions for precise execution of security protocols.

He emphasized the need for foolproof arrangements at all designated venues and directed district heads to closely monitor social media to prevent misinformation that could impact public safety.

The Traffic Wing was tasked with formulating an effective plan to ensure smooth movement of the public and protected persons.

Security arrangements along highways, railway tracks, stations, and other critical locations were reviewed. SSP Security Kashmir was instructed to implement comprehensive measures at the main venue. (KNO)

Soldier killed,

Singapura area.

"We honour his indomitable courage, valour and selfless devotion to duty and stand firmly with the bereaved family in this hour of profound grief," it said.

Earlier on Sunday, a fierce gunfight broke out between security forces and terrorists in the Singapura area following inputs about the presence of Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorists.

Officials said that during the encounter, terrorists lobbed a grenade and resorted to heavy firing towards the security forces, leaving eight soldiers injured. "Of the eight injured soldiers, three were airlifted to an Army hospital for specialised treatment. Havaldar Gajendra Singh succumbed to his injuries during the treatment," they said.

Meanwhile, security forces also busted a terrorist hideout in the Chatroo forest area. "A significant quantity of food and daily-use supplies was recovered, indicating the terrorists' prolonged presence in the region," officials said.

A high-alert has also been sounded in the Kishtwar and adjoining areas following the fierce encounter, with cordon and search

operation extended to nearby areas.

They said that the security forces have also deployed drones, sniffer dogs and helicopters to track and flush out the hiding terrorists in the forested area. "Senior officials of the Army, Police and CRPF are also present at the site to monitor the ongoing operation, while security forces have been maintaining a strict surveillance in the area to ensure terrorists don't escape or regroup," they said. (KNO)

LG pays homage

sacrifice of our Braveheart Havildar Gajendra Singh. His supreme sacrifice will remain etched in our hearts. The entire nation stands in solidarity with the bereaved family of our martyr in this difficult hour," the Lieutenant Governor said. (KNO)

Healthcare industry

attended the foundation laying ceremony.

Cold eases as

minus 6.7 degrees to minus 4.7 degrees. Gulmarg registered a minimum of minus 3.5 degrees Celsius, up from minus 5.6 degrees, while Sonamarg remained the coldest place in the Valley at minus 8.3 degrees Celsius, slightly higher than Sunday's minus 8.9 degrees.

Srinagar Airport recorded a minimum of minus 3.8 degrees Celsius against minus 5.4 degrees the previous day. Pampore, Awantipora and Anantnag also witnessed a rise of around 1 to 2 degrees Celsius compared to Sunday.

In the Jammu region, minimum temperatures also showed an upward trend in most areas. Jammu city recorded 7.3 degrees Celsius, up from 5.5 degrees, while Jammu Airport settled at 8.2 degrees Celsius compared to 5.7 degrees on Sunday.

Banihal recorded a minimum of 0.7 degrees Celsius, rising from minus 2.4 degrees a day earlier. Rajouri and Samba, which had dipped below freezing on Sunday, recorded minimum temperatures of 1.8 degrees Celsius and 1.2 degrees Celsius, respectively. Baderwah, however, continued to remain below freezing at minus 0.5 degrees Celsius.

In Ladakh, Leh recorded a minimum of minus 8.0 degrees Celsius, marginally higher than Sunday's minus 8.2 degrees, while Hanle witnessed a sharp drop, recording minus 14.5 degrees Celsius compared to minus 10.9 degrees a day earlier.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Centre Srinagar has issued a weather advisory warning that two Western Disturbances are likely to affect Jammu and Kashmir and adjoining areas between January 22 and 28, bringing widespread light to moderate rain and snowfall, with heavy precipitation at isolated places.

According to the advisory, the first system is expected to impact the region from January 22 to 24, with peak activity on January 23, while the second system is likely from the night of January 26 till the forenoon of January 28, with peak activity on January 27.

The Met office said heavy rain or snowfall is likely over the Pir Panjal range, including the Chenab valley in Jammu division and middle and higher reaches of south Kashmir, which may lead to disruption of surface and air transport, including the Jammu-Srinagar national highway.

It also warned of the possibility of landslides, mudslides and gusty winds at vulnerable locations and advised travellers to plan accordingly, people in snow-bound areas to avoid avalanche-prone slopes, and farmers to suspend irrigation and spraying activities during the period. (KNO)

Three ancient fossil

He said that two of the identified fossil sites—Halsidar and Sashkudhan Kapran—fall under the Forest Range Verinag. "These sites have been scientifically identified by the Geological Survey of India and hold immense importance for geological research," he said.

The official further said that the Geological Survey of India has also identified a 260-million-year-old fossil geo-site at Maswati Narsanger in the Laroo area of the Kokernag forest range.

The development and conservation of these fossil sites are being undertaken by the J&K Forest Department, Anantnag Division, with technical support from the Geological Survey of India.

The initiative, the official said, is aimed at protecting rare fossil wealth, promoting scientific research, and boosting geo-tourism, while creating awareness about Kashmir's rich geological past.

Speaking to KNO, Yasir Amin, Range Officer Verinag, said the two fossil sites located in the Verinag range have already been preserved as they lie within forest areas. "Fencing, signboards, and Dos and Don'ts have been installed at these sites," he said.

He said the preservation efforts will facilitate research activities. "Students and researchers can visit these sites, as fossil specimens are available there," he added. (KNO)

Thyroid disorders

thyroid disease is often asymptomatic or presents with subtle and non-specific symptoms, making it easy to overlook.

Doctors said symptoms vary depending on whether the thyroid is underactive or overactive. They said that common symptoms of hypothyroidism include fatigue and lethargy, weight gain, constipation, cold intolerance,

hair fall, dry skin, depression and memory issues, and menstrual irregularities and infertility in women.

Common symptoms of hyperthyroidism, according to doctors, include anxiety and irritability, weight loss despite good appetite, heat intolerance, excessive sweating, hand tremors, palpitations, frequent bowel movements, and goitre or thyroid nodules.

"If your body makes too much thyroid hormone, it leads to hyperthyroidism. If it makes too little, it results in hypothyroidism. Both conditions are serious and require medical supervision," said Dr Javid Ahmad Reshie.

He said several causes behind the growing burden of thyroid disease in Kashmir include autoimmune disorders, chronic stress, iodine imbalance, genetic predisposition and hormonal changes.

According to Dr Reshie, diet plays an important role in thyroid health. He advised adequate intake of iodine through iodised salt, but avoiding excessive consumption, including selenium, zinc and iron-rich foods like nuts, seeds, eggs and green vegetables.

He warned against excessive intake of processed foods and junk food and called for avoiding unnecessary supplements without medical advice.

Doctors further said that thyroid disease during pregnancy requires special attention. If a mother has untreated or poorly controlled thyroid disease, especially hypothyroidism, it can increase the risk of miscarriage, preterm birth, low birth weight and impaired brain development of the baby, they said. However, with proper diagnosis and treatment, most women with thyroid disease can have a healthy pregnancy and baby.

Doctors explained that Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH) test is the most commonly used screening tool. They said high TSH usually indicates an underactive thyroid, while low TSH suggests an overactive gland, though there are exceptions. Self-interpretation should be avoided, they warned.

According to doctors, every adult should get thyroid tests once every three years, and those with a family history or symptoms should get tested annually.

Thyroid disease is usually a lifelong condition requiring continuous monitoring and often daily medication. Early diagnosis, adherence to medication, stress management, regular exercise and a healthy diet can help patients live a normal life.

Doctors urged the health authorities to intensify public education campaigns. They encouraged people not to ignore symptoms, especially women, who are disproportionately affected by thyroid disorders. (KNO)

SC flags concern over exorbitant rise in airfares during festivals

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 19: The Supreme Court on Monday said it would interfere with the "unpredictable fluctuations" in airfares and flagged the exorbitant rise during festivals.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta termed the exorbitant rise of airfares by airlines as "exploitation" and asked the Centre and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to file their replies to a PIL seeking binding regulatory guidelines to control the unpredictable fluctuations in airfare and ancillary charges imposed by private airlines in India.

"We will definitely interfere. Just see the exploitation of passengers done during the 'Kumbh' and other festivals. Just look at the fares to Prayagraj and Jodhpur from Delhi," the bench told Additional Solicitor General Anil Kaushik appearing for the Centre.

Justice Mehta, in a lighter vein, told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who was in the courtroom, that maybe airfares for Ahmedabad may not have increased but they have shot up for other destinations like Jodhpur.

The top court listed the matter for further hearing



on February 23 after Kaushik sought time to file a reply on behalf of the Centre.

On November 17, last year, the top court sought responses from the Centre and others on a plea by social activist S Laxminarayanan, who has sought to establish a robust and independent regulator that ensures transparency and passenger protection across the civil aviation sector.

It has issued notices to the Centre, the DGCA and the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India seeking their responses on the plea.

The plea claimed that all private airlines have, without any credible justification, reduced the free check-in baggage allowance for economy class passengers from 25 kg to 15 kg, "thereby converting what was earlier part of the ticketed service into a new revenue stream".

It has said the "new policy of permitting only a single piece for check-in and the absence of any rebate, compensation or benefit to passengers who do not avail themselves of check-in baggage demonstrates the arbitrary and discriminatory

nature of the measure".

It claimed that currently, no authority has the power to review or cap airfares or ancillary fees, allowing airlines to exploit consumers through hidden charges and unpredictable pricing.

The plea said the "unregulated, opaque and exploitative conduct of airlines manifesting in arbitrary fare hikes, unilateral reduction of services, absence of on-ground grievance redressal and unjustified dynamic pricing algorithms directly infringes upon citizens' fundamental rights to equality,

freedom of movement and life with dignity".

It said the absence of regulatory safeguards results in arbitrary fare hikes, especially during festivals or weather disruptions, which disproportionately harm poor and last-minute travellers.

The plea said the wealthier few can plan and book in advance, while economically weaker citizens are forced to buy tickets at the peak of surge pricing.

It said inaction by the State in regulating fare algorithms, cancellation policies, service continuity and grievance mechanisms constitutes a dereliction of its constitutional duty and calls for urgent judicial intervention.

It said there is no rule to stop the airlines from increasing prices based on demand and allowing them such freedom under essential services is unjustifiable.

It also said the right to dignity includes access to essential services such as emergency transport on fair and non-exploitative terms.

"Arbitrary fare hikes during emergencies deny vulnerable citizens this right, especially when they are compelled to choose air travel out of necessity rather than luxury," the plea said.

India, US exchange productive views on bilateral relationship: Piyush Goyal

IANS

New Delhi, Jan 19: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday met US Senator Steve Daines and US Envoy to India, Sergio Gor, saying they had productive exchange of views on the bilateral relationship.

The meeting comes at a time when New Delhi and Washington are engaged in advanced stages of their much-anticipated trade deal.

"Delighted to again meet my good friends US Senator @SteveDaines and the US Ambassador to India @SergiOGor. Had a productive exchange of views on our bilateral relationship," the minister posted on X.

Gor said earlier that India and the US continue to be actively engaged in trade talks. He also stated that while trade is very important for India-US ties, the two countries will continue to work closely together on other very important areas, such as security, counter-terrorism, energy, technology, education, and health.

The first tranche of the India-US trade deal is close to being finalised, though no timeline can be committed, according to Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal. There was a virtual meeting between India's commerce minister Piyush Goyal and the US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer in the last week of December and negotiating teams on both sides are in continuous talks to arrive at a consensus, Agrawal said recently. India hopes that exports to the US will remain in positive territory. Electronics shipments, which are currently tariff-free, have been a key driver so far, even as higher duties continue to impact other sectors, the Commerce Secretary explained.

Gor also announced that India will be invited to join PaxSilica as a full member next month.

India set to transition to upper-middle income country by 2030, says SBI report

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 19: India is set to transition to 'upper-middle income' country in next four years in 2030, joining the ranks of China and Indonesia, and become the third largest economy even earlier in 2028, an SBI Research report said on Monday.

The World Bank classifies nations as low income, lower-middle income, upper-middle income and high-income countries based on their per capita GNI (Gross National Income) in US dollar.

In 1990, of the total 218 countries classified by the World Bank, 51 belonged to low income, 56 to lower-middle income, 29 to upper-middle income and 39 to high-income categories.

The latest data in 2024 shows only 26 countries as low income, 50 as lower-middle income, 54 as upper-middle income and 87 as high income. The transition clearly shows countries have moved up the income ladder over the years.

India took 60 years to transition to lower-middle income in 2007 from low-income country. Its per capita GNI increased from USD 90 in 1962 to USD 910 in 2007, an annual growth rate of 5.3 per cent, said the report.

It further said India took 60 years since Independence to reach USD 1 trillion, USD 2 trillion in another 7 years in 2014, USD 3 trillion in 2021, and USD 4 trillion in another 4 years in 2025.

India is likely to be USD 5 trillion in another about 2 years, it said.

The report further said India achieved USD 1,000 per capita income in 62 years since Independence in 2009, USD 2,000 per capita in next 10 years in 2019, and took another 7 years to achieve USD 3,000 per capita mark.

"India is set to touch USD 4,000 per capita in another 4 years in 2030 to transition to an upper-middle



income country and join China and Indonesia at current classification," the report said.

According to the report, India's growth journey in the last decade shows that its percentile rank in the cross-country distribution of average real GDP growth has increased from the 92nd percentile over a 25-year horizon to the 95th percentile implying a rightward shift in its relative position that places the country deeper into the upper tail of the global growth distribution.

"If we consider the current per capita GNI threshold for high income country of USD 13,936 to be reached by 2047 (as per Viksit Bharat vision), India's per capita GNI has to grow by a CAGR of 7.5 per cent. This seems achievable as India's per capita GNI has grown by a CAGR of 8.3 per cent during the last 23 years (2001-2024)," the report said.

However, it added that the threshold level for high income country will also get changed by then.

If the threshold for high income country gets changed to USD 18,000 then India's per capita GNI needs to grow by a higher rate, CAGR of around 8.9 per cent in the next 23 years for it to become the high-income country by 2047.

Assuming 0.6 per cent average

population growth and average deflator of China, Japan, the UK, the US and Euro area of around 2 per cent (average between 1992-2024), this translates into growth of nominal GDP in dollar terms of around 11.5 per cent for the next 23 years.

"India should continue its reform agenda so that we can get higher incremental growth required to reach the high-income bracket," the report added.

Clearly, it said India can and will transition to the upper-middle income country, which has the threshold per capita GNI of around USD 4,500.

Growth of nominal GDP in dollar terms required to achieve this is around 11.5 per cent which is achievable as this growth has been around 11 per cent before the pandemic (FY04-FY20) and around 10 per cent during FY04-FY25, it said.

SBI Research said that the US remains the biggest economy followed by China, with India transitioning to become the third largest economy beating Germany by 2028.

India transitioned from 14th rank in 1990 to fourth in 2025.

The report said India is likely to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2027/FY28 and USD 10 trillion by 2035/FY36.

Chouhan accuses Congress of spreading 'lies' about VB-G RAM G

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 19: Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan accused Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi on Monday of spreading misinformation about the VB-G RAM G Act, while asserting that the new law will strengthen the right to work.

Addressing a press conference here, Chouhan referred to the Congress's nationwide campaign against the VB-G RAM G Act that has replaced the MGNREGA and accused the opposition party of spreading "lies" that employment would be provided only in certain panchayats under the new scheme.

The Congress launched the "MGNREGA Bachao Sangram", a 45-day nationwide campaign against the repeal of the UPA-era Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), on January 10.

The opposition party is demanding the withdrawal of the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act and restoration of the MGNREGA as a rights-based law in its original form, the right to work and the authority of panchayats.

"I would like to tell Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Khargeji that by spreading misinformation about the VB-G RAM G Act, they are not strengthening but rather weakening the Congress," Chouhan said.

"The Congress has abandoned its idea, ideology and ideal.... The idea is nation first, the development of the country... VB-G RAM G is for the development of villages," he said.

While the Congress has alleged that the "soul" of the MGNREGA is being destroyed, the minister claimed that the UPA government had given the right to work only on papers, while the NDA regime has ensured its implementation on the ground. "We tried to make



the MGNREGA better. The proof is that we spent around Rs 9 lakh crore, while the UPA government had spent around Rs 2 lakh crore," he said.

Chouhan claimed that of the nearly 10 crore assets created under the MGNREGA, around 8.5 crore were built during the Narendra Modi government's tenure.

He said the claim that the right to work is being snatched away is a "lie".

"Instead of 100 days, we are now giving 125 days work.... Not just the right to work, we have also made a provision for giving an unemployment allowance within 15 days.... You (Congress) gave the right on papers, we have strengthened it on the ground," the minister said.

"They are spreading misinformation that employment would be provided only in certain panchayats. I want to clarify that the scheme would be implemented in all panchayats," he said.

On the 60:40 Centre-state funding ratio that has been criticised by opposition parties and activists, Chouhan said, "There will be no additional burden on the states. The Centre is already giving more money. The investment that the states would make would be for strengthening infrastructure in villages."

He said a provision for Rs 1,51,282 crore has been proposed for the coming financial year, with more than Rs 95,600 crore to be contributed by the Centre.

Addressing concerns of opposition parties regarding the demand-driven

nature of the scheme being diluted, Chouhan clarified that the model would remain demand-driven, but the focus would now be on productive and useful works identified by gram panchayats, rather than arbitrary projects.

The minister added that the VB-G RAM G Act would be implemented in six months and till then, the MGNREGA would continue.

Activists and opposition parties have criticised the proposed VB G-RAM-G scheme, alleging that it weakens the rights-based framework of the MGNREGA.

Activists and unions have said the new law may dilute the legal guarantee of work and also alleged that the scheme is more centralised than the MGNREGA, which was drafted after widespread consultations.

Opposition parties have also argued that the new law will add to the financial burden of the states due to the 60:40 funding ratio, potentially constraining the states' ability to generate employment.

Congress president Kharge and former party chief Gandhi have claimed that work for the country's rural population will now become a "revdi", to be handed over to them as the government decides, and will no longer be a right.

The Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre has rejected the allegations, maintaining that the VB G-RAM-G Act strengthens rather than weakens rural-employment guarantees.

India's new diamond rule: Only a natural diamond can be called a diamond



PTI

Mumbai, Jan 19: The Indian gem and jewellery industry has long faced challenges due to the use of multiple, inconsistent, and often confusing terms to describe diamonds and their alternatives—particularly across digital and e-commerce platforms. In the absence of a single, formal standard, consumers have often been left uncertain about what they are buying.

The Natural Diamond Council (NDC) welcomes the adoption of IS 19469:2025 by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), a modified adoption of ISO 18323:2015 – Jewellery: Consumer Confidence in the Diamond Industry. The new standard establishes a clear and enforceable framework for diamond terminology, drawing a firm distinction between natural diamonds and laboratory-grown diamonds. This move strengthens consumer protection and supports greater transparency across the Indian diamond jewellery market.

What the new standard means for consumers:

- Defining 'Diamond': The word

'diamond' used alone applies exclusively to natural diamonds. Sellers may use qualifiers like 'natural', 'real', 'genuine', or 'precious'.

• Laboratory-Grown Disclosure: Man-made alternates must be explicitly disclosed at all times using only the full terms 'laboratory-grown diamond' or 'laboratory-created diamond'. Shortened abbreviations such as 'LGD', 'lab-grown,' or 'lab-diamond' are no longer permitted in formal disclosure.

• Banned Misleading Language: The standard forbids using terms like 'nature's,' 'pure,' 'earth-friendly,' or 'cultured' for laboratory-grown products. Furthermore, using brand names alone without the approved 'laboratory-grown' qualifier is deemed insufficient disclosure.

Commenting on the development, Richa Singh, Managing Director, Natural Diamond Council, said: "This standard brings long-awaited clarity for consumers. When someone buys a diamond, they deserve to know exactly what it is—clearly, honestly, and without confusion. Defining what can be called a diamond strengthens trust and protects the value of a truly natural diamond."

Physical activity during adolescence linked to lower breast cancer risk indicators: Study

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 19: Adolescent girls who actively partake in recreational physical activity can have significant protection against risks of breast cancer, according to a study.

Researchers from the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health in the US showed that recreational physical activity may be associated with breast tissue composition and biomarkers of stress in adolescent girls.

In the study, girls who reported



engaging in at least two hours of recreational physical activity in the prior week, compared with none, had lower percent water content in breast tissue -- an indicator of lower breast density

and lower concentrations of urinary biomarkers linked to stress.

The findings, published in the journal Breast Cancer Research, shed new light on how physical activity during adolescence -- a

critical period of breast development -- may influence biological pathways related to future breast cancer risk.

"The importance and urgency of this research are underscored by the rising incidence of breast cancer in young women and the alarmingly low levels of recreational physical activity observed both in this study and among adolescents globally," said Rebecca Kehm, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology at Columbia Mailman School of Public Health.

Bangladesh says most incidents involving minorities in 2025 were non-communal

PTI

Dhaka, Jan 19: The majority of incidents involving members of minority communities in Bangladesh during 2025 were "criminal in nature" and not driven by communal motives, the interim government said on Monday.

The statement came days after India, on January 9, pressed Dhaka to "swiftly and firmly" deal with attacks on minorities in Bangladesh and described as "troubling" the attempts to attribute the incidents to extraneous reasons. New Delhi's reaction had come against the backdrop of the killing of several Hindu individuals in Bangladesh in the last few weeks.

Citing a yearlong review of official police records, the statement issued by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' office said a total of 645 incidents involving minority communities were recorded between January and December 2025 across Bangladesh.

"While every incident is a matter of concern, the data presents a clear and evidence-based picture: the overwhelming majority of cases were criminal in nature rather than communal," it said.

According to the statement, of the 645 incidents, 71 were



identified as having communal elements.

These included 38 cases of temple vandalism, eight of arson, one of theft, one murder and 23 other incidents such as threats to break idols, provocative social media posts and damage to worship pavilions.

Police cases were filed in 50 of these incidents, and arrests were made in an equal number, while other preventive or investigative measures were taken in 21 cases, the statement said.

The remaining 574 incidents were linked to criminal or social disputes unrelated to religion, including neighbourhood disputes (51), land-related conflicts (23), theft (106), prior personal enmity (26), rape (58) and 172 cases of unnatural death.

Police registered 390 cases in this category, filed 154

unnatural death reports and made 498 arrests, with additional measures taken in 30 incidents.

The interim government said the report "does not deny challenges, nor does it claim perfection; rather, it seeks to provide a factual, evidence-based picture of crime trends affecting minority communities within the broader national context".

"While all crimes are serious and demand accountability, the data demonstrates that most incidents involving minority victims were not driven by communal hostility, but by broader criminal and social factors that affect citizens across religious and ethnic lines," it said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBUC) leader Kajal Debnath questioned the

government's classification of incidents involving minorities as "non-communal".

"If the government thinks these are not communal incidents, the question then is whether anyone can take the law into their own hands," Debnath said.

He warned that such statements could embolden criminals and give them a sense of impunity.

According to the 2022 census, the Hindu population in Bangladesh is approximately 13.13 million, which accounts for about 7.95% of the country's total population.

The Buddhist population is approximately 1.01 million (0.61%), Christians number nearly 500,000, and other religions, including Sikh and Animist, comprise approximately 200,000 (0.12%).

Earlier this month, the BHBUC, in a statement, claimed that as the date of the general elections draws nearer, communal violence is increasing at an alarming rate in the country. Parliamentary polls are scheduled on February 12.

The forum alleged that the violence is aimed at preventing minority voters from casting votes for candidates of their choice. The Council reported 51 incidents of communal violence in December

2025 alone.

The interim government in the statement reiterated that ensuring safety and justice for all citizens, including Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and people of other beliefs, remains a constitutional and moral obligation.

On January 9, reacting to the recent spate of violence targeting Hindus in Bangladesh, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We continue to witness a disturbing pattern of recurring attacks on minorities as well as their homes and businesses by extremists."

Such communal incidents need to be dealt with swiftly and firmly, he said.

"We have observed a troubling tendency to attribute such incidents to personal rivalries, political differences, or extraneous reasons. Such disregard only emboldens the perpetrators and deepens the sense of fear and insecurity among minorities," Jaiswal said.

The relations between India and Bangladesh were strained after the interim government headed by Yunus assumed charge following the collapse of the Sheikh Hasina government in August 2024. India has been expressing concerns over attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in Bangladesh.

Decide on participation by Jan 21 or risk removal from T20 WC: ICC to BCB



PTI

New Delhi, Jan 19: The ICC has asked the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to decide on its participation in the T20 World Cup in India by January 21 or "risk being replaced by another team" in the tournament beginning February 7.

Despite the back and forth between ICC and BCB, no solution has been found to the crisis that was triggered by the removal of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the 2026 Indian Premier League on BCCI's instructions for unspecified "developments all around."

"The BCB officials have been told to decide on the participation by January 21. If they refuse to travel to India, then they should be ready to be replaced by another team as per rankings," said an ICC source.

Citing security concerns and national pride, the BCB has announced that its national team won't be travelling to India for its group games in Kolkata and

Mumbai.

However, with the event schedule already finalised, the ICC has shown reluctance to shift Bangladesh's games to co-host Sri Lanka, where the marquee India-Pakistan clash will be held as per the mutually agreed arrangement for ICC events till 2027.

In case Bangladesh continue to be unyielding, the replacement team would most likely be Scotland based on current rankings. Bangladesh are scheduled to play three leagues games in Kolkata and one in Mumbai.

The BCB has remained adamant on either a change of venue or a change of groups to facilitate its games in Sri Lanka.

Bangladesh are currently placed in Group C along with the West Indies, Italy, England and Nepal.

In their last meeting with ICC officials in Dhaka, the BCB proposed that Bangladesh be swapped with Ireland in Group B alongside Sri Lanka, Australia, Oman and Zimbabwe.

UK PM calls for 'calm discussion' to avert trade war with US over Greenland

REUTERS

London, Jan 19: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer called on Monday for calm discussion to avert a possible trade war with the United States over Greenland, appealing to President Donald Trump to respect alliances such as NATO rather than undermine them.

All but ruling out retaliatory levies against the United States if Trump carried out his threat to impose tariffs on imports from Britain and seven other countries unless the US was allowed to buy Greenland, Starmer sought to de-escalate the war of words.

He used an early morning press conference to set out what he described as the values underpinning his approach toward Trump, which has been criticized by opposition politicians for being too weak, by saying "pragmatic does not mean being passive."

Madrid to host Laureus World Sports Awards on April 20

PTI

Madrid, Jan 19: Madrid will host the Laureus World Sports Awards for third year in a row, the organisers announced on Monday.

Like last year, the award ceremony will take place at the Cibeles Palace on April 20.

"Since Madrid first hosted the Laureus Awards in 2024, the city has benefited greatly from the work of Laureus Sport for Good," said the organisers in a statement.

"The 2026 edition will once

again unite the world's sporting community, alongside some of the biggest names in entertainment, culture and fashion. The iconic Laureus statuette will be awarded to one winner in each of seven major categories," the statement added.

Isabel Diaz Ayuso, President of the Community of Madrid, said he is looking forward to a sport filled year in his city.


"In 2026, we are confident that the Spanish Formula 1 Grand Prix will renew the global success we experienced in 2025 with the NFL spectacle held at

the world's best stadium, the Santiago Bernabéu, as we look ahead to upcoming milestones such as the EuroBasket, the UEFA Champions League Final and the FIFA World Cup.

"In Madrid, sport is always welcome because, through the shared values it represents, we all win," said Ayuso.

Mayor of Madrid, José Luis Martínez-Almeida, added: "Madrid is proud that the Laureus World Sports Awards are being held here once again. We are a city that loves sport and athletes.

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With warm regards and best wishes,
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HINDI - 12:00 PM, 06:15 PM



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