



Twin western disturbances to affect J&K with rain, snow

IMD says rain, snowfall likely during Jan 22–24

Spell from Jan 26 (night) to 28 may disrupt air, road traffic

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 21: Minimum temperatures across Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh showed mixed trends on Wednesday compared to the previous day, with several places in the Kashmir Valley recording a slight rise in night temperatures, while parts of the Jammu region and higher reaches witnessed a further dip, even as the weatherman predicted rain and snowfall from Thursday.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in the Kashmir region, Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.4 degrees Celsius on Wednesday, up from minus 3.4 degrees a day earlier.

The temperature at Srinagar Airport also rose by one degree, settling at minus 3.4 degrees



Celsius compared to minus 4.4 degrees on Tuesday.

However, Qazigund saw a drop from minus 2.3 degrees to minus 3.3 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara recorded a sharper fall from minus 1.2 degrees to minus 3.0 degrees.

Pahalgam remained largely unchanged, recording minus 3.8 degrees compared to minus 4.0 degrees the previous day.

Gulmarg marginally improved from minus 5.5 degrees to minus 5.0 degrees, while Sonamarg recorded a rise from

minus 6.2 degrees to minus 5.5 degrees Celsius. Pulwama and Shopian continued to remain among the coldest places in the Valley, with Shopian recording minus 5.5 degrees on Wednesday.

In the Jammu region, Banihal recorded a further dip, with the minimum temperature falling from minus 1.6 degrees to minus 2.3 degrees Celsius. Baderwah also saw a decline from minus 1.2 degrees to minus 1.8 degrees.

Jammu city recorded a marginal fall from 7.4 degrees to 7.2 degrees, while Samba slipped below freezing, recording minus 0.1 degrees compared to 0.4 degrees a day earlier.

In Ladakh, Leh recorded a minimum temperature of minus 9.0 degrees Celsius, while Hanle remained the coldest place at minus | [More on P6](#)

CM Omar chairs pre-budget consultations with key depts

Calls for people-centric policies to shape upcoming fiscal plan

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 21: For the second consecutive day, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday held pre-budget consultations with several key departments to assess priorities, sectoral needs and development imperatives for the upcoming Budget Session of the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly, scheduled to begin on February 2.

The Chief Minister, who also holds the portfolio of Finance Minister, chaired extensive deliberations with the departments of Social Welfare, Health & Medical Education, School Education, Higher Education, Public Works (Roads & Buildings), Mining, Industries & Commerce and Labour.

The meetings were attended by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary and Minister for Health & Medical Education, Social Welfare, School Education and Higher Education, Sakina Itto.

The consultative



meetings were also attended by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary PWD Anil Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary of Finance Santosh D. Vaidya, Administrative Secretaries of Social Welfare, Health & Medical Education, School Education, Higher Education, Public Works (Roads & Buildings), Mining, Industries & Commerce and Labour, besides senior officers of the

Finance Department and other concerned officials.

During the meetings, the Chief Minister reviewed sector-wise progress, ongoing projects, budget utilisation and future requirements. He emphasised the need for realistic and outcome-oriented budgeting, ensuring that public funds are directed towards priority sectors that directly impact the lives of the people.

Directing the departments to adopt a | [More on P6](#)

EAC holds env clearance granted to Ratle project valid till Dec 2030

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Jan 21: The Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Union Ministry of Forests, Environment & Climate Change has held that the environmental clearance (EC) granted to the 850-MW Ratle hydroelectric project is valid until December 11, 2030, and can be extended for up to two more years.

The Ratle Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited (RHPCL), a joint venture of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited and the Jammu & Kashmir State Power Development Corporation Limited, had submitted a proposal for extension of the EC validity for the project.

Documents in possession of news agency—Kashmir News

Observer (KNO) reveal that the proposal came up for discussion before the EAC on January 09, 2026.

As per the record note of the meeting, the EAC observed that the EC for the project was granted on December 12, 2012, and was originally valid until December 11, 2022.

Citing the notification issued by the Union Ministry of Forests, Environment & Climate Change on January 18, 2021, the EAC noted that the period from April 01, 2020 to March 31, 2021 was excluded from EC validity due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Later, through another notification issued on April 12, 2022, the Ministry fixed the validity of EC for river valley projects at 13 years, with a possible extension of up to two years.

The Ministry, | [More on P6](#)

Lok Bhavan J&K celebrates Statehood Day of Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya

Under PM Modi, these regions saw historic development: LG Sinha

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 21: Jammu Kashmir Lok Bhavan on Wednesday celebrated the Statehood Day of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya, at Jammu.

The cultural evening, celebrating the spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', brought together students, security personnel, and the people of Tripura, Meghalaya and Manipur living in the UT of Jammu & Kashmir.

In his address, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha extended his heartiest greetings to be the people of Tripura, Meghalaya and Manipur on



the occasion. He paid tribute to the iconic personalities of the three states and recalled their monumental contribution to nation building.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that the cultural diversity and rich heritage of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya is working as powerful engines

for the region's growth and fostering innovation, economic vitality, and social resilience. "Under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the region has seen historic development, which is not only driving economic growth and ensuring peace but | [More on P6](#)

Air power sent 'clear message' in Op Sindoor: IAF Chief

Says air strikes on Pak delivered results in hours

Urges indigenous defence manufacturing

Sajid Raina

New Delhi, Jan 21: Indian Air Force (IAF) Chief A P Singh on Wednesday said air power played a central role in Operation Sindoor, enabling the force to achieve its objectives within hours, including strikes on targets in Pakistan.

Addressing the 22nd Subroto Mukerjee Seminar, the Air Chief Marshal, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News



Observer (KNO), said recent conflicts show that air power has become the primary instrument for achieving strategic outcomes.

"The IAF demonstrated its capability to plan and execute operations that delivered results in a short timeframe," he said.

Referring to Operation Sindoor, Singh said air operations allowed | [More on P6](#)

SMVDU CLOSURE

Affected students say no adjustment order issued despite CM's promise

'We're mentally distressed, govt must act before academic year is lost'

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar Jan 21: Two weeks after the National Medical Commission (NMC) scrapped the MBBS course at the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME), uncertainty continues to haunt the 50 affected students, who allege that no concrete action has been taken on the ground so far despite repeated assurances from Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

The NMC's Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) on January 6, 2026, withdrew the Letter of Permission (LoP) granted to



the college for the 2025–26 academic year, citing "gross and substantial deficiencies" and non-compliance with minimum standards. These included

inadequate infrastructure, lack of essential equipment, insufficient faculty, and non-functional operation theatres.

The decision | [More on P6](#)

Deal firmly with anti-national elements: DGP

PTI

Srinagar, Jan 21: Jammu and Kashmir Police chief Nalin Prabhat on Wednesday directed the force to deal firmly with anti-national elements posing a threat to public safety, peace and tranquility.

Prabhat, the Director General of Police (DGP), was chairing a comprehensive security review meeting at the District Police Office in south Kashmir's Shopian.

The DGP took stock of the prevailing security scenario and operational preparedness of the police ahead of the Republic Day, a spokesperson said.

He conducted a detailed review of law and order management, counter-terrorism



preparedness, crime control measures and security arrangements for the celebrations on January 26.

Prabhat emphasised the need for heightened alertness, foolproof security planning, intensified area domination and robust intelligence-based operations to ensure peaceful and incident-free celebrations across the | [More on P6](#)

'J&K wrote thrice to Punjab on livestock harassment, got no response'

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jan 21: The Jammu and Kashmir government has sent three communications to the Punjab government regarding the harassment of livestock transporters, but has yet to receive any response, a senior official from the office of the Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, J&K, said on Wednesday.

Speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the official said, "We have written thrice to Punjab, but there has been no reply or acknowledgement."

"We had requested a government-level meeting to discuss the issue, but Punjab has



neither responded nor scheduled any talks," he added.

Reacting to the continued silence, a senior member of the Kashmir Mutton Dealers Association said that both governments are indulging in politics while | [More on P6](#)

World must display 'zero tolerance' towards terrorism: Jaishankar

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 21: The first 'Made in India' C-295 military aircraft is expected to roll out of a factory before September, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday as he underlined New Delhi's commitment to build resilient manufacturing capabilities.

In his remarks at a meeting with Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares, Jaishankar asserted that the world must display "zero tolerance" towards terrorism.

"The world order is clearly undergoing a profound change. It is more imperative than ever before for nations to collaborate on shared challenges," he said.

"This is particularly the case



with respect to combating terrorism where both India and Spain have been victims. The world must display zero tolerance towards terrorism," he added.

The external affairs minister also thanked Spain for its support for deeper India-EU ties across different domains and welcomed the European nation for joining India-backed Indo-Pacific

Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

In his comments, the external affairs minister also highlighted growing trade and defence co-operation between India and Spain and mentioned the C-295 aircraft project.

In October 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Spanish President Sanchez inaugurated the C-295 final assembly line in Vadodara.

The IAF is getting 56 C-295 transport aircraft under a deal worth Rs 21,935 crore with Airbus Defence and Space. Forty of these aircraft will be built in India.

In his remarks, Jaishankar said the economic partnership between India and Spain is an important pillar of the overall relationship.

"Spain is | [More on P6](#)

Sharma meets Dr Jitendra, seeks Central support for infra, sports & tech in J&K

KT News Desk

New Delhi, Jan 21: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports, Satish Sharma, on Wednesday met Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Dr. Jitendra Singh and held comprehensive discussion on a wide range of developmental issues pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir.

Satish Sharma apprised the Union Minister of the ongoing development initiatives being



undertaken by the UT administration. He highlighted the requirement for enhanced coordination and central support to further accelerate the pace of

growth across key sectors in the region.

A detailed discussion was held on infrastructure development, wherein | [More on P6](#)

CS seeks time-bound action plan for MSME assessment

Reviews MSME Health Clinic working under RAMP scheme

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, JANUARY 21: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Wednesday reviewed the implementation of the MSME Health Clinic under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) programme during a meeting with senior officers of the Industries & Commerce Department and other stakeholders.

The review, as per an official statement, focused on progress achieved, outreach to enterprises, and mechanisms for early identification and rehabilitation of stressed MSMEs.

Besides Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce Department the meeting was attended by Secretary in I&C; MD, JKTPD; Director, Industries, Jammu/Kashmir and other concerned officers.

While taking assessment of the progress made, the Chief Secretary impressed upon the Industries & Commerce Department to prepare a clear, time-bound action plan for systematic analysis of all MSMEs across Jammu and Kashmir. He emphasized the need for defined timelines, measurable milestones and district-wise coverage to ensure the Health Clinic delivers tangible outcomes on the ground.

The Chief Secretary further stressed that timely diagnosis and intervention are critical for safeguarding employment and sustaining economic growth. He directed that implementation be closely monitored and reviewed periodically so that the MSME Health Clinic emerges as a strong institutional mechanism for



enterprise revival and long-term resilience in the Union Territory.

The Commissioner Secretary, I&C, Vikramjit Singh took this occasion to inform the meeting that the MSME Health Clinic is being implemented by the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Jammu, with an approved outlay of ₹30.64 crore. The initiative aims to provide structured financial and non-financial support to MSMEs through diagnostic studies, counselling, mentoring, handholding and customized turnaround solutions, thereby strengthening enterprise resilience and sustainability.

He further added that the MSME Health Clinic portal was launched on July 11, 2025, and a tripartite MoU has been signed between IIM Jammu, JKTPD and the Directorates of Industries & Commerce, Jammu and Kashmir. He reiterated that under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) programme, Jammu and

Kashmir has secured an approved outlay of ₹74.03 crore, including 66.63 crore as RAMP share and 7.40 crore as UT contribution, for implementation of multiple MSME-focused interventions across the Union Territory.

The MD, TPO, Sudershan Kumar elaborated that so far, 417 MSMEs have been onboarded on the portal, including 75 recoverable units, one unit prone to sickness and 340 stable units. Diagnostic study reports of two MSMEs have been completed, while online expert consultations have been conducted for recoverable units, to be followed by field visits.

During the presentation, he highlighted that Jammu and Kashmir has over 8.12 lakh MSMEs, with more than 73 per cent formalized through Udyam registration. Recognizing the need for proactive institutional support, the Health Clinic has been designed to identify early

signs of stress and prevent viable units from slipping into sickness.

It was additionally divulged that a significant progress has also been achieved in data integration, with API linkage established with the Udyam portal and Udyam data of 5.85 lakh MSMEs uploaded on the Health Clinic platform. BISAG-N will shortly initiate mass communication to MSMEs for data updation, targeted for completion by January 2026. Recruitment of professional resources for the Health Clinic is at an advanced stage and is expected to be finalized shortly.

Under the programme, financial rehabilitation support is envisaged for 959 MSMEs, with an average assistance of ₹2.77 lakh per unit, in addition to extensive non-financial interventions such as mentoring, counselling and business process support. Key interventions include formalization of MSMEs through Udyam registration, establishment

of the Jammu and Kashmir MSME Health Clinic, management development and skill upgradation programmes for existing and aspiring entrepreneurs, formation of Producer Companies and associations for GI, ODOP and unique products, penetration of digital financing, organization of Buyer Seller Meets and Reverse Buyer Seller Meets, packaging and publicity of J&K's unique products, and creation of a RAMP Monitoring and Evaluation Dashboard.

The Director, I&C Jammu, Arun Manhas while speaking apprised the meeting that the capacity building initiatives, including Management Development Programmes (MDPs) and Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programmes (ESDPs), are being implemented by JKEDI, while interventions related to GI/ODOP products and handicrafts are being executed by the Directorates of Handicrafts and Handloom.

The Trade Promotion Organization is organising the Buyer Seller meets and digital financing penetration is being facilitated in coordination with financial institutions. The RAMP Monitoring and Evaluation Dashboard is being developed by SICOP to enable data-driven monitoring of outcomes.

Moreover an amount of 3.86 crore has been released so far against the approved interventions, while IEC activities, accounting for five percent of the approved budget, have also been incorporated to enhance awareness and stakeholder outreach under the programme, as was given out in the meeting.

DC Kulgam reviews arrangements for Republic Day 2026



During the meeting, the DC, as per an official statement, directed all concerned departments to put in place elaborate and well-coordinated arrangements to ensure the successful conduct of the national function.

KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, JANUARY 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan Wednesday reviewed preparations for the smooth conduct of Republic Day-2026 celebrations during a meeting of officers held here at new conference hall Mini Secretariat, Kulgam.

Thredbare discussions were held on various arrangements to be made at the venue, including security, seating arrangements, parking, transportation, illumination of buildings, refreshments and accommodation for participants.

During the meeting, the DC, as per an official statement, directed all concerned departments to put in place elaborate and well-coordinated arrangements to ensure the successful conduct of the national function.

During the meeting it was shared that the main function will be held at DPL Kulgam, where the National Flag will be unfurled by the Chief Guest, followed by a parade comprising contingents of J&K Police, CRPF, NCC, Police Band, Women Contingent, NCC and other participating units.

The DC issued strict instructions to all departments to complete arrangements well in

advance to ensure the smooth and dignified conduct of the celebrations.

Keeping in view the prevailing cold weather conditions, departments were asked to ensure adequate heating arrangements for rehearsals as well as on the final day of the event.

Emphasising coordination, the DC directed all concerned officers and agencies to maintain close inter-departmental coordination.

KPDCL was instructed to ensure uninterrupted power supply and to keep standby DG sets in readiness at the venue.

Municipality and Power Department were also directed to ensure proper illumination of important buildings across the town.

The DC further instructed the concerned departments to arrange colourful cultural programmes to mark the occasion.

Executive Engineer, MED was directed to keep men and machinery in a state of readiness to ensure timely snow clearance in case of any snowfall.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner Revenue and officers from Police and other concerned departments.

KASHMIR THUNDER



IS AVAILABLE
AT ALL LEADING
STALLS

DC Baramulla chairs Road Safety Committee Meeting

KT NEWS DESK

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 21: Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, Wednesday chaired a meeting of the District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) at Baramulla to review the status of road safety measures and enforcement across the district.

During the meeting, the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Traffic gave a comprehensive briefing to the chair on various initiatives undertaken to strengthen road safety, including enforcement drives, challans issued, and fines collected to curb traffic violations.

The DC, as per an official statement, held detailed deliberations with the concerned departments

and emphasized the need for a coordinated, proactive approach to reduce road accidents and ensure safer commuting for the public.

Highlighting the importance of preventive infrastructure, the DC directed that proper road signage and reflectors be installed on the Sangrama-Delina stretch of NH-01 to facilitate smooth and safe movement of commuters, especially during night hours and adverse weather conditions.

Minga Sherpa instructed the concerned authorities to submit Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for the installation of crash barriers, road dividers, and reflective stickers carrying emergency contact numbers on vehicles.

Meanwhile, the DC directed for

strict enforcement of Supreme Court guidelines for school buses, including the mandatory availability of safety kits, fire extinguishers, and first-aid boxes, and adherence to other prescribed norms.

Taking a firm stand against drug-related offences, the DC also directed that driving licences be suspended in cases involving NDPS violations, as per rules. He also called for intensified checking and awareness to curb the practice of minor driving two wheelers.

The DC stressed accountability and instructed all concerned officers to submit an Action Taken Report (ATR) by 27th of this month, reflecting compliance with the directions issued during the meeting.

DC Bandipora reviews Change of Land Use cases

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, JANUARY 21: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, Wednesday chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee (DLC) to review cases related to Change of Land Use (CLU) in the district.

During the meeting, a total of seven CLU cases were taken up for discussion. Concerned officers briefed the chair about the parameters and criteria being followed for issuance of No Objection Certificates (NOCs). After detailed deliberations, four cases were approved, while three cases were kept under review for further examination and clarification.

The Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, stressed that unchecked and increasing construction activities could lead to a decline in agricultural production and environmental



degradation. She emphasized that NOCs must be issued strictly after due scrutiny and verification, keeping environmental concerns in view.

On the occasion, the DC further directed all line departments to ensure that NOCs are issued only after proper examination of each case. Emphasising inter-departmental coordination, the Deputy Commissioner

called for responsible decision-making to balance development needs with environmental and agricultural sustainability.

The meeting was attended by Superintending Engineer, PWD Circle Bandipora; Sub Divisional Magistrate Sumbal; Assistant Commissioner Development Bandipora; Chief Agriculture Officer Bandipora; Chief Horticulture Officer Bandipora;

Executive Engineers from REW/RDD Bandipora, R&B/Jal Shakti Sumbal and I&FC/PDD Sumbal/Gurez; Pollution Control Board Bandipora; Tehsildars; Chief Town Planner Bandipora and other concerned officers. While, SDM Gurez, Executive Engineer SSD Gurez, Tehsildar Gurez and other concerned officers attended the meeting virtually.

MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT DISTRICT HOSPITAL KULGAM

E-Tender Notice No: 17 of 2025-26

DATED: 20/01/2026

Subject: Annual rate Contract for Local Empanelment of diagnostic Services under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY SEHAT Scheme for District Hospital Kulgam

For and on behalf of Govt of UT Jammu & Kashmir, e-tenders on rate basis are invited under "TWO BID SYSTEM" from approved and eligible registered Agencies registered in India under relevant Act for selection of a registered agency for the purpose of Local Empanelment of diagnostic Services under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY SEHAT Scheme for District Hospital Kulgam. The detailed tender document containing quantity and other terms and conditions, is available on www.jktenders.gov.in and complete bidding process will be online on said e-tender portal, as per following schedule

Important Dates, EMD & Cost of Tender Fee:

| S. No. | Event | Date |
|--------|--|---|
| 01. | Date of Issue of Tender Notice | 22-01-2026 From 22-01-2026 (10 :00 AM) |
| 02. | Period of downloading of bidding documents | to 31-01-2026 (06.00 PM) |
| 03. | Bid Submission Start date | 22-01-2026 (11 :00 AM) |
| 04. | Bid Submission End date | 31-01-2026 (06.00 PM) |
| 05. | Clarification date | 22-01-2026 to 24-01-2026 |
| 06. | Date and Time of Opening of Bids (Online) | 01-02-2026 (11:00 AM) |
| 07. | Earnest Money Deposit | EMD @ Rs.10000/= in the form of CDR |
| 08. | Cost of Tender Document | Rs.500/= (Rupees Five Hundred Only) |

The cost of tender document shall be furnished in the shape of Demand Draft in favour of Medical Superintendent District Hospital Kulgam Payable at JK Bank Main Branch Kulgam and Earnest Money should be deposited in the shape of CDR pledged to the Medical Superintendent District Hospital Kulgam.

The empanelment shall be governed by the general principles of public procurement as laid down in Rule 144 of GFR 2017, i.e., efficiency, economy, accountability, transparency and fair competition.

The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on the website www.jktenders.gov.in. The bids of responsive bidders shall be opened online on same website in the office of Medical Superintendent, District Hospital Kulgam (tender receiving authority). The bids of the successful bidder shall remain valid for one year from the date of opening of financial bid.

NIT No: MS/DHK/Est/3796-3800
Dated: 20-1-2026

DIPK-10244/25
DATED: 21-01-2026

Medical Superintendent
District Hospital Kulgam

Kashmir saffron output hits record low, prices jump 50%

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Jan 21: Kashmir's world-famous saffron, often hailed as "red gold", is witnessing an unprecedented surge in prices this season as production has plunged to an all-time low, triggering serious concerns among growers, traders, and consumers alike.

According to farmers and market traders, saffron production during the last season declined drastically to merely 5-10 per cent of an average year's yield, resulting in a sharp rise in market prices. They said the steep fall in output has pushed saffron rates up by 40 to 50 per cent compared to last year, with fears that prices may escalate further in the coming months.

In local markets across the Valley, one gram of saffron that was sold at around Rs 200 last year is now fetching Rs 250 to Rs 350, depending on quality and grade, according to traders. They attribute the surge to extremely low availability, saying that the supply crunch has affected both domestic and outside markets.

"The supply is very limited this year.



Whatever little produce came to the market has been quickly absorbed, and prices are likely to rise further if the situation remains unchanged," a trader said.

Growers have blamed the sharp decline in production on a combination of prolonged

dry spells, erratic weather patterns, and the continuous shrinking of traditional saffron land due to urbanisation and land conversion.

They said the ongoing dry winter has further compounded their worries, as saffron cultivation is heavily dependent on

timely moisture for healthy corm development. "This winter has remained largely dry so far. Without adequate rainfall or irrigation facilities, the impact will be felt in the next season as well," growers said, warning of another poor harvest if conditions persist.

Mohammad Ayoub, a saffron grower from Pampore—Kashmir's saffron hub—said the previous season was among the worst he has witnessed in decades.

"We have never seen production fall to this extent. Most farmers harvested only a few grams last year. The continued dry conditions are damaging the corms, which directly affects future production. If this trend continues, many growers will be forced to abandon saffron cultivation altogether," he said.

Echoing similar concerns, Gh Rasool, another grower from Lethpora, said the poor yield has pushed many saffron-dependent families into financial distress.

"Saffron is our primary source of livelihood. With production limited to just 5-10 per cent, managing household expenses has become extremely difficult. If the government does not intervene immediately, this crop may disappear from Kashmir," he

warned.

Traders said the impact of low production is being felt not only in Kashmir but also in markets outside the Valley.

Ali Mohammad Ganaie, a saffron trader from south Kashmir's Anantnag district, said prices have surged sharply within a short period.

"Prices have increased by nearly 50 per cent compared to last year and may go up further due to limited supply. Both local buyers and traders from outside Kashmir are bearing the brunt of low production," he said.

Another trader, Ashiq Rather, cautioned that the continued decline in local output could have long-term consequences for Kashmir's dominance in the global saffron market.

"Demand for Kashmiri saffron remains strong, but supply is critically low. This imbalance is driving prices up. If production continues to fall, saffron from other countries may replace Kashmiri saffron in markets we traditionally dominated," he said.

Meanwhile, saffron growers across Kashmir have appealed to the government for urgent intervention to save the sector from collapse.

Sakeena Itoo lays WSS foundation at Banimullah



KT NEWS DESK

Kulgam, Jan 21: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education Sakeena Itoo, Wednesday visited Kulgam district and laid the foundation stone of Water Supply Scheme (WSS) at Herpora Banimullah here with an aim to ensure availability of safe and reliable potable drinking water to the local population.

The project being executed at an estimated cost of Rs. 2.74 crore under the UT Capex budget, once

completed, is expected to provide safe and adequate potable water to a large number of households, addressing a long-standing demand of the local population.

After the foundation stone laying ceremony, the Minister addressed a public gathering, where she reiterated the government's commitment to inclusive and balanced development. She emphasized that developmental projects are being implemented with a focus on transparency, quality, and

timely completion to ensure maximum public benefit. "Access to clean drinking water is a basic necessity and a top priority of the government, especially in rural and far-flung areas", Minister Sakeena stated.

On the occasion, the Minister also took stock of various developmental issues affecting the area, including water supply, healthcare facilities, education, road connectivity, and social welfare schemes. She assured the people that their genuine concerns would be

addressed on priority and conveyed that the government is working tirelessly to improve basic amenities and living standards. During the interaction with the public delegations and individuals of the area, they raised several grievances and demands, ranging from infrastructure development to welfare-related issues. The Minister listened patiently to the issues highlighted by the residents and directed the concerned officers present on the spot to take immediate steps for redressal wherever feasible, while ensuring follow-up action on other matters.

Highlighting the importance of public participation, the Minister said that community involvement and feedback play a crucial role in effective governance. She underlined that the government is committed to strengthening basic infrastructure, particularly drinking water supply, to improve the quality of life of people in rural and remote areas.

Senior officers of the district administration, officials from Jal Shakti Department, local representatives, and a large number of locals were present on the occasion.

DC Srinagar reviews land records digitization, modernization progress



KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Jan 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo Wednesday chaired a meeting of senior Revenue Officers here at Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex aimed to review the progress of digitization and modernization of revenue record in district. The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz; SDM West, Irfan Bahadur; SDM East, Zubair Ahmad; Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar and all Tehsildars of Srinagar District.

At the outset, the DC conducted Tehsil wise progress achieved in the digitization of revenue records of the district aimed to enhance transparency and efficiency in land records management. The DC

assessed the status of digitization of land records, including data entry, verification, and updation processes and emphasized the need for timely completion of the digitization process.

The DC emphasized digitization of revenue record in efficient and professional manner to improve land records management and streamline revenue-related services. He stressed ensuring quality checks and maintain coordination among field functionaries to expedite the process.

The DC underlined that the digitization of revenue records is pivotal to ensure ease of access to land-related information for citizens.

The DC stressed the Revenue Officers to work with added zeal and dedication to ensure quality and timely services to citizens.

Aspirants cry foul over JKPSC Judicial results

REHAN QAYOUM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 21: The results of Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission's (JKPSC) Civil Services (Judicial) Mains Examination 2025 results, declared on Tuesday have sparked controversy, with aspirants alleging irregularities and demanding a transparent probe into the evaluation process.

As per the JKPSC notification, a total of 124 candidates have been declared qualified for the viva interview for the posts of Civil Judge (Junior Division).

The examination was conducted earlier in 2025 and the results were published on the JKPSC website yesterday.

However, soon after the results were declared, several aspirants from Kashmir on Wednesday gathered outside the JKPSC office in Solina, Srinagar, alleging that the evaluation was completed in an unusually short span of about six weeks, casting doubt on the process.

Muneeb Ahamd, an aspirant said that it was nearly impossible to evaluate around 10,000 papers in such a short time.

He said, "There were over 1,000 candidates, each writing nine papers. We are not against merit, but we want transparency. Only 13 candidates from Kashmir have made it to the interview list, which is shocking."

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Helicopter service resumes for snow-hit border areas

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Jan 21: The Jammu and Kashmir administration Wednesday restored subsidized helicopter services to Gurez valley and other remote border areas of north Kashmir—re-establishing a crucial winter lifeline for snowbound communities.

In view of disrupted road connectivity during winters, the services operated by M/s Global Vectra Helicorp Limited aim to ensure smooth travel for residents, students and patients.

The subsidized fares range from Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,000 per passenger depending on the route.

Routes include Srinagar–Gurez (Rs 3,000), Bandipora–Gurez (Rs 2,000), Bandipora–Kanzalwan (Rs 2,000), Bandipora–Badugam (Rs 3,000) and Kupwara–Tangdar with Rs 3,000 per passenger.

Officials said boarding priority will be given to the patients, pregnant women, and students based on proper documents.

To ensure orderly operations, the Office of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Gurez, has appointed liaison officers at each helipad. ASI Mohammad Shafi will oversee Baduaab and Gujran, while Feroz Ahmad



Lone will handle Kanzalwan/Izmarg, and Naveed Anjum and Reyaz Ahmad Lone will manage Badugam and Neeru respectively.

Dawar and PTL helipads will be supervised by Bashir Ahmad Lone and Mohd Yaseen, with assistance from NYCs Shanawaz Ahmad Mapnoo and Lateef Ahmad Sheikh at Dawar.

The SDM Gurez, Mukhtar Ahmad, said liaison officers will coordinate

passenger manifesting, verify documents, and remain in constant touch with the SDM office. "No patient referrals will be entertained unless properly endorsed."

"Technical glitches or weather-related cancellations will be reported immediately," the circular said, adding that bookings and inquiries can be made through the SDM Gurez office or designated officers in Kupwara and Bandipora.

Northern Railway extends special train services to SMVD

SAJID RAINA

Jammu, Jan 21: The Northern Railway of Jammu Division Wednesday announced an extension of its special reserved train services between New Delhi and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi (SMVD) Katra to meet growing passenger demand.

"Train No 04081 from New Delhi to Katra will operate for four additional trips from January 23 to 26, while Train No. 04082 from Katra to New Delhi will run from January 24 to 27," officials said, adding that the extension follows several earlier extensions, reflecting the train's popularity among pilgrims and travelers.

Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Uchit Singhal, said the previous operations of the train recorded nearly 100 percent occupancy, making it an economical option for passengers.

"The train benefits not only residents of Jammu and Kashmir but also travelers from other stations along the route, including Jalandhar Cantt, Ludhiana, and Ambala Cantt," he added. Passengers are advised to verify the train schedule via NTES or by calling Dial 139 before starting their journey.

The special reserved train has been a preferred choice for devotees visiting the Vaishno Devi shrine, providing convenience and cost-effective travel during the peak pilgrimage season—(KNO)

KCCI delegation meets divisional commissioner

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 21: A delegation of the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) led by its President Javid Ahmad Tenga on Tuesday met Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, to raise concerns over notices and closure actions initiated by the Jammu and Kashmir Pollution Control Committee (PCC) against hotels in Srinagar.

According to a statement, the delegation included Mushtaq Ahmad Wani, Past President of KCCI, and Ghowhar Magbool, President of the Kashmir Hotel and Restaurant Owners Association and an Executive Committee member of KCCI.

During the meeting, the delegation apprised the Divisional Commissioner of what it described as unwarranted closures and notices issued by the PCC to several hotels in the Lal Chowk area and adjoining localities. They informed him that the action had caused anxiety among hoteliers and was adversely impacting business operations, especially at a time when the tourism sector is

gradually stabilising.

The KCCI representatives urged the administration to intervene and ensure that regulatory measures are implemented in a fair and consultative manner.

The Divisional Commissioner assured the delegation that no undue harassment would be allowed and that genuine concerns of hoteliers would be addressed.



He said the issue would be taken up with the Pollution Control Committee to ensure that actions are taken strictly as per rules and that compliant establishments are not subjected to arbitrary closures.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

EDITORIAL

It's Time To Look Beyond The Marksheet

Every year, when the results of board exams are announced, many students feel upset or stressed. This makes us ask an important question: Do marks really show a student's intelligence or potential? People often celebrate students who get perfect scores. While working hard is good, this focus on marks hides a bigger problem. Our exam system mainly tests how well students memorise things. It doesn't check if they

can think deeply, be creative, or solve real-life problems. For example, a student might score 95% but still find basic reasoning difficult. The problem isn't the student; it's the way we test them. This way of grading has serious negative effects. It ignores talents in arts, sports, innovation, and leadership. It makes many children feel they are less smart just because they don't score high. It also causes unhealthy competition and pressure.

Kids are often told their worth depends only on their marks, which can sometimes lead to sadness or even tragedy. Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, who is now an IAS officer but once scored low in exams, reminds us that success in life depends on qualities like resilience, curiosity, and skills. These are the things that exams can't measure. Because of this, we need to change our education system urgently. First, we should include different

ways of testing. For example, practical projects, speaking exams, and problem-solving tasks can show how well a student applies what they learn. Second, schools should teach students about managing emotions, resilience, and life skills to help them handle pressure better. Third, parents and society should stop comparing children based on marks and instead appreciate their efforts and unique talents. We should rethink what "excel-

lence" means. It's not just about rankings but about developing the ability to think, adapt, and contribute to society. We can celebrate those who score highest, but we must also create a system that doesn't make anyone feel like a "winner" or a "loser". Our education system should focus on nurturing different kinds of talents. The real success is not just in the ranks, but in making confident, capable, and emotionally strong citizens.

New Year, New Momentum:
Modi's 2025 Reforms Power India's Next Leap
India is not just preparing for the future; it is shaping it

Piyush Goyal

The New Year brings renewed confidence and optimism to India's commerce and industry landscape. Decisive steps taken in 2025 are poised to accelerate trade and investment, expand global market access for small businesses and startups, create employment, and further Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mission of promoting ease of living for every citizen.

A major initiative of the Modi government has been to promote startups. Today, India has over 2 lakh government-recognized startups. As the PM said on the 10th anniversary of Startup India, our startups are providing solutions to various problems and helping Indian economy become resilient and self-reliant.

Support for startups is a part of the Modi government's wider strategy of accelerating economic growth to create jobs and improve the lives of every citizen, particularly the poor.

2025 was a landmark year in the transformative journey that India has been on since 2014 under the decisive leadership of Prime Minister Modi. Through bold decisions and game-changing reforms, our government has reshaped the business environment while ensuring that every policy contributes to improving the lives of citizens, especially the poorest of the poor.

India is now the focus of global attention and recognized as a reliable and trusted partner. India's total exports rose by 6 per cent to a record USD 825.25 billion in 2024-25, maintaining growth

momentum despite global uncertainty. To further support exporters, the government announced a 25,060 crore Export Promotion Mission. Jan Vishwas and Ease of Doing Business

The Repealing and Amendment Act, 2025 eliminated 71 obsolete statutes, some dating back to 1886. Under the Jan Vishwas initiative, the Modi government has removed criminal provisions for numerous minor offences. These reforms enhance governance, promote ease of doing business, and ensure India's legal framework keeps pace with a modern economy. This process will continue with hundreds of such provisions under review for more reforms this year.

During last year's Monsoon Session of Parliament, five landmark bills related to shipping and ports were passed. These laws simplify documentation, ease dispute resolution, and significantly reduce logistics costs. On the commerce front, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade has proactively supported exporters through transparent, facilitative policies that enhance ease of doing business.

These initiatives are unshackling the entrepreneurial spirit of our traders, small businessmen and startups, who can now focus on their work instead of worrying about tedious compliance requirements and fear of imprisonment for some small violation.

FTAs and 'Local for Global'
A guiding principle of India's trade and investment strategy has been to champion local entrepreneurs, particularly small businesses, start-ups,

farmers, and artisans; and empower them to succeed globally. In pursuit of this vision, India concluded three Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) last year, providing Indian goods duty-free access to the developed markets of the UK, New Zealand, and Oman.

The FTAs are also part of the reform process. Earlier, the UPA government had recklessly signed deals with countries that competed with India globally, ignoring national interest. The Modi government has correctly prioritised FTAs with developed countries and signed win-win deals.

These FTAs will accelerate job creation, boost investment, and unlock transformative opportunities for small businesses, students, women, farmers, and youth across India. Each agreement was negotiated after extensive stakeholder consultations, ensuring balanced outcomes and genuine win-win engagement with the developed world.

Safeguarding India's Interests
In addition to these agreements, the FTA with the European Free Trade Association comprising Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein, which was signed in 2024, has been operationalised. A common theme across all FTAs is protection of India's agriculture and dairy sectors, including in agreements with major global dairy exporters such as New Zealand and Australia.

Through these trade agreements, Indian exports benefit from immediate or rapid tariff elimination, while India's own market opening remains calibrated and gradual. New Zealand has

committed \$USD 20 billion in foreign direct investment over the next 15 years, reflecting the innovative investment-linked provisions pioneered in India's FTA with the EFTA countries. This investment will support agriculture, dairy, MSMEs, education, sports, and youth development, ensuring broad-based and inclusive growth.

India: A Global Investment Destination
Over the past 11 financial years up to 2024-25, India attracted USD 748 billion in foreign direct investment—around two-and-a-half times the USD 308 billion received during the preceding 11 years.

This is significant given that the Modi government inherited a mismanaged economy once labelled as one of the world's "Fragile Five." During the UPA era, repeated economic setbacks had led developed countries to disengage from trade talks with India. Through focused, corruption-free governance, bold reforms and fiscal discipline, PM Modi restored confidence in the Indian economy, elevating India's stature as a preferred destination for trade and investment.

Reforms to help the poor. India closed 2025 on a high note, becoming the world's fourth-largest economy by overtaking Japan, and is firmly on track to surpass Germany. Importantly, unlike the UPA era, economic gains have reached the poorest, particularly in rural India.

To increase the benefits for workers, The Modi government has undertaken historic labour reforms, merging 29 fragmented laws into four modern codes. The focus is on fair wages, timely

payments, social security and safety. They will also ensure greater female participation in the workforce.

Every Indian citizen has gained from the GST reforms that have created a clean two-slab structure. This will ease the burden on households, MSMEs, farmers and labour-intensive sectors.

The Road Ahead
The year 2025 was one of bridge-building: between domestic enterprise and global demand; between policy reform and digital empowerment; and between emerging small businesses and international markets.

There is much more excitement ahead. A panel led by Niti Aayog member Rajiv Gauba is studying a wide spectrum of reforms. This will further accelerate PM Modi's Reform Express. As India moves forward, it has a clear vision to build a Viksit Bharat through competitive trade, innovative industry, and a resilient economy that is confident and self-reliant. The success of India's exporters, manufacturers, farmers, and service providers is the success of the nation itself.

India is not just preparing for the future. It is shaping it. With decisive leadership, bold reforms, and a clear global strategy, the country's ambition is backed by action. As India trades, builds, innovates and engages with the world, it does so on its own terms as strong, self-reliant, and trusted country.

The writer is the Union Minister for Commerce and Industry

28th Commonwealth Speakers' Conference:
Strengthening Parliamentary Dialogue

Established in 1969, the 28th CSPOC held in New Delhi brought together 61 Speakers and Presiding Officers of Commonwealth – a historic participation

Press Information Bureau

The Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) is a high-level parliamentary forum of the Commonwealth of Nations, bringing together Speakers and Presiding Officers of national legislatures from 53 national parliaments of sovereign states of the Commonwealth, as well as 14 semi-autonomous parliaments. It provides a structured platform for dialogue among presiding officers representing diverse constitutional, legal, and parliamentary traditions.

The Conference functions as an independent parliamentary body and has no formal affiliation with either the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) or the Commonwealth Secretariat, though its membership overlaps with Commonwealth parliamentary institutions and its proceedings align with the broader parliamentary ecosystem.

CSPOC is convened biennially, with a Standing Committee meeting held in the intervening year to review institutional matters, finalise the agenda, and take organisational decisions for the subsequent Conference, ensuring continuity and sustained engagement among member parliaments. India has been an active participant in this process and has hosted the Conference on four occasions, 1970-71, 1986, 2010, and 2026, reflecting its sustained engagement and leadership within the Commonwealth parliamentary framework. The 29th Conference will be held in London in 2028.

Historical Origin and Legal Framework

The Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) was established in 1969 on the initiative of Lucien Lamoureux, who was then the Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada. The initiative emerged from a recognised need among Commonwealth presiding officers for a structured, non-political forum dedicated exclusively to parliamentary leadership, procedure, and institutional integrity. CSPOC was thus conceived to address this specific institutional gap, fostering collective understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms and supporting the role of presiding officers in maintaining neutrality and procedural integrity.

Standing Rules Framework

CSPOC operates under Standing Rules adopted and periodically reviewed by the Conference,

forming its internal legal framework governing composition, functioning, and decision-making.

Key Provisions

Membership limited to Speakers and Presiding Officers of national parliaments of independent sovereign Commonwealth states.

In case of parliamentary dissolution, the last serving Presiding Officer continues representation until a successor is elected.

Deputy Speakers or equivalent may participate as substitutes with full rights, except eligibility for Standing Committee membership.

Rules prescribe procedures for agenda setting, conduct of proceedings, quorum, voting, and tenure of office bearers.

The Standing Rules are reviewed by the Standing Committee between Conferences and amended by the full Conference, ensuring institutional continuity while responding to emerging parliamentary challenges.

Aims and Functions of CSPOC

CSPOC operates with a focused mandate, reflecting the constitutional responsibility of Presiding Officers to uphold impartiality in parliamentary democracy.

Core Aims: The Conference maintains, fosters, and encourages impartiality and fairness on the part of Speakers and Presiding Officers; promotes knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms across the Commonwealth; and strengthens legislative institutions through the structured exchange of experiences and best practices.

Functional Role: It provides a platform for dialogue on parliamentary procedure, ethics, institutional safeguards, and administration. Although its outcomes are non-binding, they exert significant normative influence on Commonwealth parliaments.

Contemporary Relevance: CSPOC continues to adapt to emerging priorities, including digital transformation (such as the application of AI), public engagement, member wellbeing, and safeguarding institutional autonomy and credibility.

Institutional Structure and Governance

CSPOC's institutional framework is designed to ensure continuity, regional balance, and effective coordination between biennial Conferences. Governance is exercised primarily through a Standing Committee, supported by a permanent secretariat.

Standing Committee: The Standing Committee serves as the principal governing body between Conferences. It determines the venue and timing of future Conferences, proposes agenda themes, reviews the Standing Rules, and oversees the organisational, administrative, and logistical arrangements, thereby ensuring continuity and strategic direction during intersessional periods.

Composition and Representation: The Committee is chaired by the Speaker or Presiding Officer of the lower house of the next host Parliament and includes regional representatives reflecting the geographic diversity of the Commonwealth, along with ex officio members drawn from past, current, and future hosts. The Standing Committee is composed of 15 members. A quorum of five members is required for decision-making.

Secretariat Support: Since its inception, Canada has provided secretariat services, ensuring institutional stability and continuity.

India's Role in CSPOC

India has maintained a sustained and substantive engagement with the CSPOC, reflecting its longstanding parliamentary traditions and active participation in Commonwealth parliamentary forums.

India as Host of the 28th CSPOC (2026)

India hosted the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth in New Delhi from 14 to 16 January 2026. The Conference was organised under the chairmanship of Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla. Speakers, Presiding Officers, and accompanying delegates were accorded a traditional welcome upon arrival in Delhi, reflecting India's ethos of Atithi Devo Bhava. The Conference, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Samvidhan Sadan, underscored the national importance attached to the event and its parliamentary character.

The 28th CSPOC brought together 61 parliamentary leaders from 42 Commonwealth countries and four semi-autonomous parliaments, marking it as one of the largest editions to date and underscoring sustained confidence in CSPOC as a credible and relevant parliamentary forum.

Agenda Priorities for the 28th CSPOC

The agenda for the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC), held in New Delhi from 14-16 January 2026, was framed around contemporary challenges facing legislatures and modern democratic

practices. Key themes addressed during the conference included:

The role of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools in parliamentary functioning.

The impact of social media on parliamentary discourse and institutional authority.

Enhancing public understanding of Parliament and safeguarding democratic institutions.

Security, health, and wellbeing of Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff.

India's Role in the Standing Committee

In the preparatory phase, the Hon'ble Speaker of the Lok Sabha chaired the CSPOC Standing Committee meeting held in Guernsey in January 2025, reaffirming India's leadership role in shaping the Conference agenda and institutional direction.

Trust of the 28th CSPOC (India)

India informed the meet that AI and social media had enhanced the efficiency of democratic institutions but had also led to challenges such as misinformation, cybercrime, and social polarisation.

It emphasised the collective responsibility of legislatures to address these issues through ethical AI and transparent, accountable social media frameworks, while responsibly harnessing technology to protect democratic values.

The 28th CSPOC focused on the application of Artificial Intelligence and social media in parliamentary functioning to enhance efficiency, transparency, inclusivity, and public engagement.

India informed the COSP meet that through collective efforts of Parliament and the Government, obsolete laws had been repealed, welfare-oriented legislations enacted, and people-centric policies framed, accelerating India's progress towards Viksit Bharat and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

India highlighted the crucial role of Parliamentary Standing Committees, or "mini-Parliaments," in scrutinizing the Budget and legislation, urging Presiding Officers to strengthen these Committees to enhance parliamentary functioning.

India highlighted that women were not only participating but leading across sectors, noting that the President of India and the Chief Minister of Delhi were women, and that about 1.5 million women representatives formed nearly 50 percent of elected leaders in rural and local bodies, an achievement unmatched globally.

India's Contemporary Standing and Its Relevance to CSPOC, Global South

India shared with the global leaders that it has

used its democratic strength, and institutional capacity to bring benefit to its own people and the global community. It is largest producer of vaccines, supplying medicines and vaccines to over 150 countries, second in steel and rice, and has the third-largest aviation market, fourth-largest railway network, and third-largest metro rail system.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while inaugurating the conference, earlier, emphasised that India has turned diversity into the strength of its democracy and that democratic institutions provide "stability, speed and scale", where "democracy means last-mile delivery" and rests on deep roots of debate and dialogue. India works with a spirit of public welfare, ensuring benefits reach every individual without discrimination. He shared that due to this spirit of welfare, 25 crore people have come out of poverty in recent years. He asserted, "In India, democracy delivers".

Within the CSPOC framework, these attributes position India as a credible, norm-contributing parliamentary democracy, capable of bridging tradition and institutional transformation. As the Prime Minister has noted, India "strongly raises the concerns of the Global South on every global platform," reinforcing its role at CSPOC as a partner in strengthening legislatures across the Commonwealth and the wider Global South. During its G20 Presidency as well, India placed the priorities of the Global South at the centre of the global agenda, the PM added.

Conclusion

At the valedictory session on January 16, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla formally handed over the chairmanship of the 29th CSPOC to Rt. Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the UK House of Commons, and extended best wishes for the success of the next conference in London. CSPOC serves as a vital non-political forum for strengthening parliamentary democracy across the participating countries. By enabling presiding officers to uphold impartiality, procedural fairness, and institutional integrity, CSPOC promotes collective parliamentary leadership. Through its biennial Conferences and intersessional Standing Committee work, it supports sustained dialogue, institutional learning, and coordinated responses to emerging legislative challenges. India's hosting of the 28th CSPOC in 2026 highlights its parliamentary heritage and commitment to democratic values, with a focus on technology, public engagement, and institutional resilience.

Ethical direct selling vital for sustainable growth: Satish Sharma

Attends 6th Direct Selling Conclave 2026 in New Delhi

KT News Desk

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports and Transport, Satish Sharma, Wednesday emphasized the need for transparency, consumer trust and technology-driven regulation to ensure sustainable growth of the Direct Selling sector in India.

The Minister was speaking at the 6th Direct Selling Conclave 2026, held at Hyatt Centric, New Delhi, which brought together policymakers, regulators, industry leaders and national icons on a common platform.

Addressing the gathering, Satish Sharma, as per an official statement, stated that consumer confidence forms the backbone of any economic system. He stressed that strict adherence to ethical practices and regulatory compliance is



essential for the credibility and long-term stability of the Direct Selling industry.

He said that the government is vigorously strengthening the consumer protection mechanisms through policy reforms, digital monitoring systems and awareness programmes, ensuring that business growth goes hand in hand with

accountability and fairness.

Referring to youth empowerment, the Minister highlighted technology's role in transforming public service delivery and enhancing transparency, grievance redressal and market surveillance. He also noted that direct selling can provide meaningful livelihood

opportunities, especially for youth and women, when supported by skill development and compliance frameworks.

The Minister also lauded the contributions of sports personalities present at the conclave, noting that the values of discipline, integrity and perseverance demonstrated by the sports persons serve as powerful lessons for industry and society alike.

The conclave witnessed the presence of eminent personalities including Olympic Medallist, Sakshi Malik, Arjuna Awardee Satyawart Kadian, Padma Bhushan and Padma Awardee Brigadier Anil Kohli and former Secretary, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Hem Pande.

The conclave featured discussions on policy reforms, consumer rights and innovation, along with an awards ceremony recognizing excellence in the industry.

Javid Dar reviews development issues, assures time-bound redressal

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 21: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, Wednesday met several delegations and individuals at the Civil Secretariat Jammu to assess and address issues related to development works and service matters.

Various delegations from Jammu, Udhampur and various districts of Kashmir highlighted concerns regarding rural infrastructure, road connectivity, irrigation facilities, drinking water supply, implementation of Panchayati Raj schemes, employment-related issues and pending development projects.

The Minister, as per an official statement, issued on the spot directions to the concerned departments to examine the issues for early resolution. He emphasized that the government is focused on accelerating development works at the grassroots level, especially in rural and remote areas



to ensure equitable growth.

Javid Dar reaffirmed the government's commitment towards strengthening the Panchayati Raj institutions, improving service delivery and ensuring effective implementation of development schemes under Agriculture Production and Rural Development sectors. He stressed that quality execution and timely

completion of projects remain a key priority.

The Minister assured the delegations that their grievances would be addressed on a priority and time-bound basis, adding that the government is taking all necessary measures to fulfil the aspirations of the people and ensure sustainable development and prosperity across Jammu and Kashmir.

DC Kupwara reviews youth engagement, empowerment initiatives

KT News Desk

KUPWARA, JANUARY 21: Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, Wednesday chaired a detailed review meeting to assess and strengthen the Youth Engagement and Empowerment initiatives being implemented across the district.

The meeting aimed at evolving a structured approach to channel the potential and energy of youth towards positive, creative and productive avenues.

During the meeting, as per an official statement, discussions were held on promoting youth participation in sports, recreational activities, skill development programmes and other constructive engagements. Special emphasis was laid on intensifying awareness and preventive measures against drug abuse through sustained outreach and sensitisation efforts at the community level.

While addressing the meeting, the DC underscored the importance of collective and proactive involvement of all line departments to ensure meaningful youth engagement. He directed departments to reinforce drug awareness campaigns, counselling services and

grassroots-level interventions to protect young people from social challenges, particularly substance abuse.

The DC instructed all concerned departments to prepare innovative, future-ready action plans for youth engagement for the year 2026, with a focus on maximising participation in both urban and rural areas. He highlighted the need to prioritise sports activities, cultural programmes, vocational training, employment-oriented initiatives and awareness drives.

Departments were also asked to explore greater youth participation in national events such as Tiranga rallies and upcoming tourist festivals.

Reiterating that youth empowerment remains a key priority of the district administration, the DC called for strong inter-departmental coordination to ensure timely implementation of planned initiatives. He directed that the draft action plans be finalised within the stipulated timeframe to translate policy decisions into tangible outcomes on the ground.

The meeting was attended by ADDC Kupwara, Mufti Fareed ud Din; CPO, CEO, CMO, ACD, DSHO, besides other concerned officers.

New infrastructure boosts revival of Kashmir's Namda Craft

In-house wool carding to cut outsourcing costs and strengthen livelihoods of Namda artisans



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 21: In a major fillip for revival of the indigenous Namda craft of Kashmir, Department of Handicrafts & Handloom, Kashmir Wednesday awarded contract for the Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning (SITC) of card cloth for wool carding machine through Mechanical & Hospitals Engineering Department.

The commissioned wool carding machine has an annual processing capacity of approximately 29,000 Kgs of wool. This enhanced

capacity is expected to significantly strengthen the local value chain associated with the traditional Namda craft. The installation of this facility will substantially reduce the cost incurred on outsourcing wool carding, thereby directly benefiting artisans engaged in the Namda craft.

In a press statement issued by the department, Deputy Director UNDP, Mirza Shahid Ali, said J&K is the second largest producer of wool fibre in India and ranks first in the production of Merino wool, despite this advantage, a substantial portion of raw wool

has traditionally been sent outside J&K for carding, resulting in higher costs and delays.

He further stated, "This initiative is cost-effective, efficient and less labour-intensive and will play a major role in strengthening sustainable livelihoods, enhancing productivity and preserving Kashmir's rich handicraft heritage, especially Namda which is in a revival mode".

The department reiterated its commitment to providing modern infrastructure and technical support to traditional crafts, ensuring their revival, sustainability, and global competitiveness.

PD&SJ Ganderbal chairs 1st UTRC meeting of 2026



KT News Desk

GANDERBAL, JANUARY 21: Principal District & Sessions Judge (Chairman District Legal Services Authority), Ganderbal, Abdul Nasir, Wednesday chaired the 1st Under Trial Review Committee (UTRC) meeting of 2026, here.

The meeting, as per an official statement, aimed to ensure timely review and release of undertrial prisoners, thereby promoting their rights and access to justice.

Jatin Kishore, District Magistrate, Ganderbal; Khalil Ahmad Poswal, Sr. Superintendent of Police, Ganderbal; Sheikh Babar Hussain, Secretary DLSA, Ganderbal, DySp, Central Jail, Srinagar, In charge Subsidiary Jail Dignibal, Ganderbal; Public Prosecutor, Sessions Court, Ganderbal; Public Prosecutor, Addl. Sessions Court, Ganderbal and Deputy, LADC Ganderbal attended the meeting.

The Under Trial Review Committee (UTRC) reviewed the

cases of 26 prisoners shortlisted by the Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Ganderbal for consideration. After thorough consideration, the committee decided to recommend 25 prisoners for release.

The meeting underscored the commitment of the District Legal Services Authority, Ganderbal, to uphold the principles of justice and ensure the rights of undertrial prisoners are safeguarded.

DLSA remains dedicated to promoting access to justice and protecting the rights of the marginalized and vulnerable sections of society.

The recommendations made by the UTRC will be forwarded to the competent authorities for necessary action, and it is expected that the release of the undertrial prisoners will bring relief to the prisoners and their families.

District Legal Services Authority, Ganderbal, will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that justice is served and the rights of all individuals are protected.

PM SURYA GHAR YOJANA

Where rooftops turn into powerhouses for households

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 21: The implementation of the Prime Minister's flagship PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSCMBY) has gained remarkable traction in Jammu & Kashmir, positioning the Union Territory at the forefront of India's household-level renewable energy revolution.

As per an official statement issued on Wednesday, designed to provide free electricity up to 300 units per month through grid-connected rooftop solar systems, the scheme is rapidly transforming energy consumption patterns while strengthening energy self-reliance and sustainability across urban and rural households.

Backed by strong administrative oversight and a robust digital delivery framework, the scheme is being rolled out in a structured, transparent, and time-bound manner, reflecting the UT Administration's commitment to clean energy adoption and consumer-centric governance.

Impressive On-Ground Progress

As of 31 December 2025, the scheme has recorded robust physical and financial progress. A total of 17,998 rooftop solar systems have been installed across Jammu & Kashmir, with 16,284 systems already commissioned and feeding clean power



into the grid.

The financial impact is equally significant. Subsidies have been disbursed to 14,889 beneficiaries by the Central Government and 2,234 beneficiaries by the UT Government, with cumulative releases amounting to 129.57 crore from the Centre and 2.99 crore from the UT, underscoring the scale and seriousness of implementation.

Consumer-Friendly Subsidy Structure

The subsidy architecture

under PM Surya Ghar has been designed to deliver maximum financial relief to households across different system capacities. For a 1 kW rooftop solar system, against an average project cost of 55,000, consumers receive 33,000 as MNRE subsidy and 3,000 as UT subsidy, bringing the total subsidy to 36,000.

Similarly, 2 kW systems receive a total subsidy of 72,000, while 3 kW systems attract a combined subsidy of 94,800,

substantially reducing upfront costs. This carefully calibrated subsidy framework has made rooftop solar installations financially viable and attractive, particularly for middle-income and lower-income households, accelerating adoption across the UT.

Digital Outreach and Vibrant Vendor Ecosystem

The scheme's fully digital execution model has ensured transparency, speed, and ease of access for consumers. The national

portal has received 86,905 consumer applications, reflecting strong public enthusiasm and awareness.

To support this surge in demand, a robust vendor ecosystem has been developed, with 1,403 vendors registered across the UT. Vendor-consumer agreements have been signed in 11,779 cases, while access to affordable finance has been facilitated through institutional mechanisms.

Availability of Attractive Finance for RTS installation

A total of 26,225 loan applications have been submitted, of which 16,186 loans have already been disbursed at a special interest rate of around 7% per annum, covering up to 95% of the project cost. This financial support has ensured that even households with limited upfront resources can participate in the solar transition. Additionally, 2,285 sites have already received material delivery, reflecting steady on-ground progress.

Strong Institutional Framework and Policy Support

The scheme's implementation is being closely monitored at the highest administrative level, with the Chief Secretary personally overseeing progress and coordination. Both power distribution utilities—Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (JPDCL) and Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL)—have

been designated as State Implementing Agencies, ensuring seamless execution across all districts.

In a significant policy intervention aimed at enhancing affordability, the UT Government opted to supplement the Central Financial Assistance (CFA) provided by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) with an additional UT subsidy. This decision led to the sanction of 53.53 crore from the UT Budget for supporting 85,000 residential beneficiaries over a three-year period from 2024-25 to 2026-27, reinforcing the Administration's pro-people approach.

Awareness, Capacity Building and Technical Preparedness

Recognising that awareness and technical competence are key to sustained success, the UT Administration has undertaken extensive outreach and capacity-building initiatives. Over 37.90 lakh bulk SMS messages have been disseminated to inform consumers, complemented by 923 IEC campaigns conducted across districts.

On the technical front, 138 structured training programmes have been organised, with 2,600 engineers trained to ensure quality installations, grid safety, and long-term system reliability. Responsive Grievance Redressal

A strong and responsive

grievance redressal mechanism has been institutionalised to maintain consumer confidence. Out of 1,157 grievances received from consumers and vendors, 1,154 have already been resolved, reflecting the Administration's emphasis on accountability and service delivery.

Driving Sustainable Development and Energy Security

The PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana is fast emerging as a transformational initiative in Jammu & Kashmir. Beyond substantially reducing electricity bills—even making them zero for many households—the scheme is strengthening grid resilience through decentralized generation and reducing dependence on conventional power sources.

With strong policy backing, substantial financial support, and enthusiastic public participation, Jammu & Kashmir is steadily advancing towards its renewable energy targets while contributing meaningfully to India's national climate and energy security goals.

The J&K Administration remains firmly committed to scaling up rooftop solar adoption and ensuring that the benefits of this landmark initiative reach every eligible household within the stipulated timeline, ushering in a cleaner, greener, and more self-reliant energy future for the Union Territory.

Trump in Davos says NATO should allow US to take Greenland but he won't use force

AP

Davos, Jan 21: President Donald Trump insisted Wednesday that he wants to "get Greenland, including right, title and ownership," but said he would not use force to do so while repeatedly deriding European allies and vowing that NATO should not try to block US expansionism.

In an extraordinary speech at the World Economic Forum, the president said he was asking for "a piece of ice, cold and poorly located." He said the US had effectively saved Europe during World War II and even declared of NATO: "It's a very small ask compared to what we have given them for many, many decades."

Even as Trump tried to downplay his designs on Greenland, the implications of his remarks could be enormous, potentially rupturing an alliance that has held firm since the dawn of the Cold War and seemed among the globe's most unshakable pacts.

NATO was founded by leading European nations and Canada, which have been steadfast in saying Greenland is not for sale and cannot be wrested from Denmark. That means the Davos meeting could be the beginning of a larger standoff that may eventually reshape geopolitics worldwide.

Trump, though, simply urged NATO to stand aside and added an ominous warning.

"We want a piece of ice for world protection, and they won't give it," Trump said. "You can say yes, and we will be very appreciative. Or you can say no, and we will remember."

Despite that, he also acknowledged: "We probably won't get anything unless I decide to use excessive strength and force where we would be frankly unstoppable. But I won't do that, OK?"

"I don't have to use force," he said. "I don't want to use force. I won't use force."

Instead, he called for opening "immediate negotiations" for



the US to acquire Greenland.

"This enormous unsecured island is actually part of North America," Trump said. "That's our territory."

Trump suggests Europe is fizzling while US booms

The president has spent weeks saying that the US will get control of Greenland no matter what it takes, arguing that Washington should be in charge to counter threats in the surrounding Arctic sea by Russia and China.

Trump also argued at every turn that the US is booming and its economy is strong, in sharp contrast, he said, to Europe.

"I want to see Europe go good, but it's not heading in the right direction," said Trump, who also noted, "We want strong allies, not seriously weakened ones." He said of European economies, "You all follow us down, and you follow us up."

Trump turning the Davos gathering upside-down began even before he got there.

His arrival was delayed after a minor electrical problem on Air Force One forced a return to Washington to switch aircraft. As Trump's motorcade

headed down a narrow road to the speech site, onlookers — including some skiers — lined the route. Some made obscene gestures, and one held up a paper cursing the president.

Billionaires and business leaders nonetheless sought seats inside the forum's Congress Hall, which had a capacity of around 1,000, to hear Trump's keynote address. By the time he began, it was standing room only. Attendees used headsets to listen to the speech in six languages besides English. Attendees mostly stood and offered applause, some merely polite, as Trump took the stage.

Trump is also expected to have around five bilateral meetings with foreign leaders, though further details were not provided. There are more than 60 other heads of state attending the forum.

Tariff threat looms large

Trump has threatened steep US import taxes on Denmark and seven other allies unless they negotiate a transfer of the semi-autonomous territory — a concession the European leaders indicated they won't make.

Trump said the tariffs would start at 10 per cent next month and climb to 25 per cent in June, rates that would be high enough to increase costs and slow growth, potentially hurting Trump's efforts to tamp down the high cost of living.

The president in a text message that circulated among European officials this week also linked his aggressive stance on Greenland to last year's decision not to award him the Nobel Peace Prize. In the message, he told Norway's prime minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, that he no longer felt "an obligation to think purely of Peace."

Even before his speech, Trump's Greenland ambitions rankled Europe.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer vowed during his weekly questioning in the House of Commons, "Britain will not yield on our principles and values about the future of Greenland under threats of tariffs, and that is my clear position."

French President Emmanuel Macron, in his address to the forum, urged fellow leaders to reject acceptance of "the law of

the strongest" while European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen warned that should Trump move forward with the tariffs, the bloc's response "will be unflinching, united and proportional."

The US stock market, meanwhile, appeared to be bouncing back on Wednesday from its worst day since October, as Trump's talk of Greenland-related tariffs spooked investors. There were still some lingering signs of fear over the issue, however.

Trump's housing plan overshadowed

The White House had insisted Trump would focus his Davos address on how to lower housing prices in the US — part of an effort to bring down the cost of living, which continues to rise and threatens to become a major liability for the White House and Republicans ahead of November's midterm elections.

Greenland instead carried the day, with Trump lashing at Denmark for being "ungrateful" for the US protection of the Arctic island during the World War II. He also mistakenly referred to Iceland, mixing up that country with Greenland four times during his speech and for the fifth time since Tuesday.

When he finally did mention housing in his speech, Trump suggested he did not support a measure to encourage affordability. He said bringing down rising home prices hurts property values and makes homeowners who once felt wealthy because of the equity in their houses feel poorer.

US home sales are at a 30-year low with rising prices and elevated mortgage rates keeping many prospective buyers out of the market. Trump previously announced plans to buy \$200 billion in mortgage securities to help lower interest rates on home loans, and he has called for a ban on large financial companies buying houses.

'Stronger NDA for prosperous Tamil Nadu': Shah after Dhinakaran-led AMMK rejoins alliance



PTI

New Delhi, Jan 21: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said the return of the T T V Dhinakaran-led AMMK to the NDA has made the coalition stronger under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and asserted that people of Tamil Nadu are ready to "bless" it in the upcoming polls to take the state to newer heights of development and prosperity.

Ahead of the keenly anticipated Tamil Nadu assembly polls, the AMMK returned to the NDA, months after walking out of the AIADMK-led bloc blaming "betrayal".

In apparent signs of thaw after years of bickering stemming from an internal feud in the AIADMK in the past, party chief Edappadi K Palaniswami welcomed Dhinakaran back into the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

The AMMK founder reciprocated with a "heartfelt thanks," admitting that there was "sibling rivalry" with the AIADMK, the party he was once associated with.

Commenting on the

development, Shah wrote on X, "Stronger NDA for a prosperous Tamil Nadu. I welcome Amma Makkal Munnettra Kazagam, led by TTV Dhinakaran Ji, on becoming part of the NDA," he said.

"People of Tamil Nadu are fed up with the corrupt and dynastic rule of the DMK and ready to bless PM Narendra Modi-led NDA to take Tamil Nadu to newer heights of development and prosperity," Shah, the BJP's key strategist, added.

Dhinakaran reciprocated with "sincere thanks" to Shah and assured that his party will work together with the NDA constituents with "full dedication" to defeat the "corrupt" DMK and remove it from power in the coming months.

"I sincerely thank the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah Ji, for welcoming and congratulating the Amma Makkal Munnettra Kazagam on joining the NDA," the AMMK general secretary said in a post on X.

"On behalf of the NDA, I assure that we will work together with full dedication to defeat the corrupt DMK and remove it from power," he added.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Twin western

13.3 degrees. Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a weather advisory warning that two western disturbances in quick succession are likely to affect Jammu and Kashmir and adjoining areas from January 22 to 24 and again from the night of January 26 to the forenoon of January 28.

According to the advisory, the first western disturbance, expected to be intense, will impact the region between January 22 and 24, with peak activity on January 23. The second system, of moderate intensity, is likely to affect the Union Territory from the night of January 26, with peak activity on January 27.

Under the influence of these systems, widespread light to moderate rain and snowfall is expected across Jammu and Kashmir, with heavy rainfall or snowfall at isolated places, particularly over the Pir Panjal range, including the Chenab Valley of Jammu division, and the middle and higher reaches of south Kashmir.

Areas likely to be affected include Anantnag, Pahalgam, Kulgam, Shopian, Pir Ki Gali, Gulmarg, the Sonamarg-Zojila axis, Bandipora-Razdan Pass, Kupwara-Sadhna Pass, and the districts of Doda, Udhampur, Reasi, Kishtwar and Ramban.

The IMD said the weather systems may lead to disruption of surface and air transport, including the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and other major roads in the middle and higher reaches of the Union Territory.

There is also a possibility of landslides, mudslides and gusty winds with speeds of 40-60 kmph at vulnerable locations.

Travellers, tourists and transporters have been advised to plan their movement accordingly, while residents of snow-bound areas have been asked to avoid venturing into avalanche-prone zones. (KNO)

CM Omar chairs

people-centric and performance-driven approach, the Chief Minister said that the upcoming budget must focus on strengthening health-care and education infrastructure, expanding social security coverage, improving road connectivity, promoting industrial growth and generating employment opportunities for the youth.

He stressed that departments must ensure timely completion of projects, transparency in execution and efficient service delivery. "The budget should reflect the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and must focus on inclusive growth, balanced regional development and sustainable economic progress," the Chief Minister said.

He further directed the departments to submit well-structured and need-based proposals, aligned with the government's development roadmap and fiscal discipline.

On Tuesday, the Chief Minister began

pre-budget discussions with nine key departments. The consultative process will conclude on January 22 with the remaining departments.

These pre-budget consultations are aimed at finalising a comprehensive, growth-oriented and people friendly budget for Jammu and Kashmir.

EAC holds env

through an Office Memorandum dated October 30, 2025 clarified that if a project was halted due to proceedings before the NCLT or Courts, that period would be treated as "zero period," provided documentary proof was submitted.

According to the record note of the meeting, RHPLC submitted documentary evidence showing that the project was halted for four years.

"The EAC inquired about the necessary documentary evidence, wherein it was justified that the project was halted for four years. The Project Proponent, vide email dated 10.01.2026, provided the requisite documents. Therefore, the EAC opined that four years shall be considered as zero period in calculating the validity of the EC," the documents state.

The EAC held that the EC granted to the Ratle Hydroelectric Project on December 12, 2012 is valid until December 11, 2030, and further extendable by a maximum of two years. (KNO)

Lok Bhavan J&K

also safeguarding and celebrating the region's unique cultural identity, attracting tourists and boosting hospitality sectors," he said. "Today, the local economies of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya is flourishing. Heritage preservation and infrastructure development, enhanced connectivity, new premier educational institutions are sparking pride, motivating youth to innovate while honoring roots and reviving art and crafts."

"May these states scale new heights of progress in the times to come," the Lieutenant Governor added.

Air power sent

India to send a clear message through coordinated strikes on multiple locations across the border. "Such actions underlined the role of air power in responding to security challenges and deterring hostile activity," he added.

The economic capacity alone cannot ensure national security, the Air Chief said, adding that military capability remains essential. He said history shows that nations with economic strength but limited military preparedness have faced occupation and external pressure.

Singh also referred to air operations carried out for evacuations from conflict zones and strikes against terror infrastructure, saying these missions reflected the flexibility of air power across different scenarios.

He said developments in India's neighbourhood often shape security responses and require readiness for quick decisions.

Singh called for faster progress on indigenous defence manufacturing and partnerships for advanced engines and weapon systems to support operational requirements.

"The ability to use military power when required is a key factor in national security planning," the Air Chief said, adding that strengthening air power capabilities should remain a priority to address present and future challenges. (KNO)

Affected students

came months after the institute had received a conditional approval in September 2025.

While the withdrawal directly impacted the inaugural batch of 50 MBBS students, the uncertainty surrounding their future has now become a major cause of distress.

"Our college was scrapped all of a sudden, and along with it our mental health, our hard-earned MBBS seat, and our dreams were played with," Umdat, one of the affected students, told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO). "We worked for years to secure a medical seat. From building our foundation to become doctors, we are now left sitting idle, questioning where it went wrong—when it was never our mistake."

Students said that immediately after the NMC decision, CM Omar Abdullah assured them that they would be adjusted in other government medical colleges in the Union Territory. However, they allege that no official notification or transfer order has been issued so far.

"The government assured us time and again that we would be shifted, but till today there is not a single official notice," said Rakshan, another student. "It feels like after shutting down the college, everyone forgot about our existence. Was closing the college the only concern, while our lives were pushed into darkness?"

Another student, Ubair, said, "We are a batch of just 50 students, but the uncertainty could lead many of us to chronic depression. We have left the campus, classes are suspended, and we don't know where or when we will resume our studies. Even our parents and families are very much depressed."

Soon after the NMC announcement, classes at the institute were suspended, and students began vacating the campus, further adding to the sense of abandonment.

The affected students have now urged the government, especially CM Abdullah and Health Minister Sakeena Itoo, to act immediately, issue formal transfer orders, and ensure a smooth and time-bound adjustment process so that their academic year and mental well-being are not irreversibly damaged.

"The authorities must remember that behind

the files and inspections are real students whose futures depend on swift and humane decision-making," they said. (KNO)

Deal firmly

district, the spokesperson said. Addressing the officers, Prabhat issued clear directions to deal firmly and decisively with anti-national elements posing a threat to public safety, peace and tranquility.

He reiterated zero tolerance towards activities inimical to national security and stressed the importance of sustained operations against such elements.

The DGP also asked officers to maintain a people-friendly policing approach while continuing to work with dedication, professionalism and commitment to uphold the rule of law and ensure a secure environment for the residents of Shopian, the spokesperson said.

J&K wrote thrice

traders continue to suffer. "They are just passing politics to each other and doing nothing. Are they really a government?" he said.

Traders alleged that livestock trucks continue to face harassment and extortion at Shambhu and Madhopur checkpoints. They warned of protests if the Punjab government fails to intervene. (KNO)

Sharma meets

Satish Sharma emphasized the need to expedite major projects related to road connectivity, public utilities and urban infrastructure. He underlined that strengthened infrastructure is vital for economic growth, improved service delivery and balanced regional development, particularly in rural, border and far-flung areas of the Union Territory.

The Minister also raised issues concerning the sports sector, stressing the importance of developing modern sports infrastructure, upgrading existing stadiums and playgrounds besides expanding training and coaching facilities at the grassroots level. He enumerated that focused investment in sports is essential for harnessing youth potential, promoting fitness and enabling young sportspersons from Jammu and Kashmir to compete at national and international platforms.

Likewise, matters related to the transport sector formed an important part of the discussion. Satish Sharma highlighted the need for strengthening the public transport services, modernising transport infrastructure and improving inter-district and inter-regional connectivity. He emphasized that enhanced transport facilities are crucial for public convenience, tourism promotion and economic activity, especially in remote and hilly regions.

The Minister further discussed issues pertaining to human resource development, underscoring the importance of capacity building,

manpower augmentation and skill upgradation across departments.

Satish Sharma also highlighted the role of information technology in governance and called for greater integration of digital platforms to enhance transparency, efficiency and citizen-centric service delivery.

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh, while responding to the issues projected during the meeting, assured full cooperation and appropriate support from the Government of India for addressing the developmental requirements of Jammu and Kashmir. He reiterated the Centre's commitment towards the holistic and inclusive development of Jammu and Kashmir.

World must display

among India's important trade partners in the EU (European Union), and our bilateral trade in goods has crossed USD 8 billion in recent years." Jaishankar said Spanish companies have made a significant presence in India, particularly in infrastructure, renewable energy, urban mobility, engineering and water management sectors.

"Indian companies are also active in Spain in IT, pharmaceuticals, and automotive components. We see considerable potential to further deepen this business cooperation," he said.

"We are expecting the first "Made in India" C-295 aircraft to roll out of the factory before September this year. It reflects the growing depth of our defence industrial collaboration and our commitment to build resilient manufacturing capabilities," he said.

The external affairs minister also made a mention of India hosting the AI Impact Summit next month.

"Our approach to AI is human-centric, inclusive, and focused on its responsible and ethical use. I think it is very similar to the approach of Europe," he said.

Jaishankar said India and Spain enjoy warm and friendly relations, rooted in shared democratic values and respect for multilateralism and a rule-based order.

India and Spain will celebrate in 2026 the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

"Our partnership is enriched by strong cultural ties. The popularity of Yoga, Ayurveda and Indian culture in Spain, and the growing interest in Spanish language and culture in India, reflect the deep people-to-people connect between our societies," Jaishankar said.

Tourism is also an important and growing pillar of our partnership, he said.

Jaishankar also unveiled a logo to commemorate 2026 as India-Spain "Dual Year" in the fields of culture and tourism.

The logo has been selected from over 1,900 entries received through an open competition.

India will definitely become 3rd largest economy: Vaishnaw

● Gita Gopinath predicts by 2028 or earlier

PTI

Davos, Jan 21: Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Wednesday asserted that India will definitely become the world's third-largest economy over the next few years, with economist Gita Gopinath saying it can happen by 2028 or even earlier.

Speaking in a World Economic Forum Annual Meeting session here, Vaishnaw said the only matter of concern is what will happen with the mountains of debt in the rich world and what could be the impact on India.

Gopinath said the challenge for India is not becoming the third-largest economy; the challenge is raising per capita income to higher levels.

Vaishnaw said what is working really well is that in the last decade, there has been a transformational change in our country, and it's a very well thought-through, well-defined and a very focused execution.

He said it's built on four pillars -- the pillar of public investment in physical, digital and social infrastructure, the pillar of making sure that the entire society grows with the growth of the country, that is inclusive growth, the pillar of manufacturing and innovation, and the fourth pillar of simplification.

"All these put together with the technology platform, we have created...will make sure that India will see a real growth of 6-8 per cent with moderate 2-4 per cent inflation and nominal growth of 10-13 per cent in the next five years," he said.

"We can say that with a



lot of confidence, and what's working very well is that the entire society is seeing the benefit of it.

"Also, the security of the poorest comes as a priority for our Prime Minister and the government and that has helped us bring out 250 million people from poverty," the minister said.

"What's really a matter of concern on our mind is the global debt, which is there in the rich world and how these mountains of debt will unravel and how that will impact.

"We saw in Japan a run on the bonds, and if those kinds of things happen on a large scale, it will be a matter of concern as to what would be the impact on our country," he added.

Otherwise, everything else is in a proper shape that we will become the third largest economy in the coming years, he said.

Gopinath said India will become the third-largest economy without any doubt, and it's a matter of a few years, unless something

catastrophic happens.

"If you just look at the maths of India's growth rate relative to Germany and Japan, it will be very hard to say that India won't get there. Based on current projections, India gets there by 2028, and it can be even sooner than that, depending on how the revision of GDP numbers happens," she added.

Gopinath said she agrees with the minister that substantial reforms have happened, physical and digital infrastructures are impressive, and tax reforms have been great.

"So to keep the momentum going, and raising the per capita income and getting to the 2047 goal of becoming a developed nation is the challenge, and that will require a steady pace of reforms to get there," she said.

She said it is a tremendous challenge in India to acquire land and a constraint on manufacturing and growth, though some states are doing a good job by experimenting

with some changes in ways to acquire land.

"Besides, judicial reforms are also very critical," she said.

Also, the contribution to growth from labour remains low due to complications relating to hiring labour, and the country's growth is very capital-intensive, she added.

The government has passed a good labour reform law, and the states need to take that forward. Labour market flexibility is very critical, and on top of that, skilling of human capital is also very important, she added.

Industrialist Sunil Bharti Mittal said India is clearly in a very good spot, and it will definitely become the third-largest economy.

What we need as the business community is an enabling environment, a committed government and stability in the country, and all of that is available now, he added while speaking in the same panel.

"One factor that is coming as a challenge to our growth

is the massive competition that is out there in the world today. China had a huge market in the form of the US to grow its economy during the last few decades, and that opportunity is not available to India," he said.

"We will have to find our own ways. Thankfully, we have a huge market in India itself. We will hopefully sign a deal with the EU soon; several deals have been done, and many are in the pipeline, but the big one is the US, and hopefully that will also get done soon."

We are definitely going to grow at 6-8 per cent, when the world may settle for much lower, and what can derail us is the massive competitiveness in the world, he said.

Gopinath said pollution is a challenge in India, and it is also a high cost to the economy and to human life. Addressing it on a war footing is critical, and it also has to be a key mission for India, she added.

Asked how India is insulating its growth story from the high US tariffs, Vaishnaw said India is a very resilient economy with strong macro and micro fundamentals, and that has helped the country through this turbulent period.

"Our producers are finding new markets, and our exports have actually increased despite high tariffs. We are expanding to new markets and also trying to find good and healthy trade agreements in the existing markets. In the last ten years, India has emerged as a very good value chain partner for the world," he added.

SC asks states to devise policy for media briefing by police

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 21: The Supreme Court has asked states to devise an appropriate policy for media briefing by police after considering the manual prepared by a senior lawyer assisting it as amicus curiae.

A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh was hearing a batch of petitions regarding the modalities followed by the police in conducting media briefings where a probe is in progress.

In an order dated January 15, the bench noted "the laborious exercise" undertaken by the amicus, senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, and said the police manual had been prepared after taking into account the perspectives of the Centre and international practices.

The apex court, however, said that the states had not shown adequate interest in taking note of the manual and doing the needful.

It said, "We deem it appropriate to direct the states to evolve an appropriate policy for media briefing by taking into consideration the 'Police Manual for Media Briefing' furnished by the learned Amicus Curiae. The needful will have to be done within three months from the date of receipt of a copy of this order."

The top court also directed the registry to upload the manual on its website within two weeks.

The 60-page manual, divided into four parts, said its purpose is to establish a principled, rights-compatible and investigation-safe framework for communications between the police, public and media.

The top court in 2023 had directed the Ministry of Home Affairs to prepare a comprehensive manual on media briefings by police personnel about criminal cases.

Biased reporting gives rise to public suspicion that a person has committed an offence, it observed, and added the apex court had said media reports can also violate the privacy of a victim.

No 'perfect murders': Delhi Police solves over 95 pc murder cases in 2025

PTI

NEW DELHI: A UPSC aspirant killed in a cylinder explosion in his flat, a dairy owner shot 69 times, and a woman bludgeoned to death in her house -- these were among several "perfect murders" in the city last year.

However, technology-driven policing and sharper forensic analysis helped the police crack these cases and many others, with a remarkable success rate of more than 95 per cent.

According to official data shared on Wednesday, the Delhi Police solved 95.32 per cent of the city's 491 murder cases in 2025.

CCTV cameras, forensic experts, call data records and old-fashioned ground work ensured that none of the killers got away, a senior police officer told PTI.

According to figures compiled by the police, the national capital recorded 491 murder cases in 2025, down from 504 in 2024 and 506 in 2023.

One of the most striking cases of 2025 involved a 21-year-old forensic science student who believed her academic training and binge-watching crime thrillers could help her commit the perfect murder.

According to police, Amrita Chauhan, along with her former boyfriend Sumit Kashyap and an associate, strangled her 32-year-old live-in partner, a UPSC aspirant, inside his north Delhi flat in October.

To erase evidence, oil, ghee and wine were poured on the body. A gas cylinder valve was left open near his head before ignition, making the scene appear like an accidental fire. But forensic experts noticed inconsistencies in burn patterns that did not match a typical explosion. CCTV footage from the neighbourhood then turned the case on its head.

"Following all the leads, the police cracked the case and arrested the accused," the senior police officer said. In November, a 55-year-old dairy owner was gunned down near his establishment in south Delhi's Aya Nagar.



Forensic examination later revealed a staggering 69 bullet injuries, pointing to a meticulously planned attack.

According to the police, the assailants waited for nearly half an hour before opening fire as the victim arrived. Given the contract killing and suspected gang rivalry, the case was handed over to the Crime Branch.

Investigators traced links to a violent feud stemming from an earlier murder and a long-running property dispute. Later, the police arrested two gang members following an encounter.

In another chilling murder, a woman was found bludgeoned to death with a hammer in her home in south Delhi's Neb Sarai. The motive initially remained unclear, but CCTV footage again proved decisive. A manhunt was launched and the accused, her estranged husband, was arrested.

The accused, who disguised himself as a sadhu to avoid suspicion while entering his estranged wife's home, told police that he came to Delhi from Munger in Bihar to kill his wife.

According to the data, attempt to murder cases showed a fluctuating trend, rising from 757 cases in 2023 to 898 in 2024 before dipping to 854 cases in 2025. Despite the variation, police solved 98.13 per cent such cases in 2025.

"Solving over 98 per cent cases of attempt to murder reflects focused investigation and swift follow-up action," the officer said.

Robbery cases registered a downward trend over the three-year period. While 1,654 cases were reported in 2023, the number fell to 1,510 in 2024 and further declined to 1,326 in 2025.

According to the data,

PM to lay foundation stone for CSIR-NIIST hub in Thiruvananthapuram tomorrow

PTI

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone for the CSIR-NIIST Innovation, Technology and Entrepreneurship Hub at the Bio-360 Life Sciences Park here on January 23.

The state-of-the-art hub, which will be established by CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST), a constituent laboratory of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Ministry of Science and Technology is envisioned as a national Centre for deep-tech innovation, technology translation, and entrepreneurship in the life sciences sector, an official release said here on Wednesday.

The newly conceptualised hub will house a Centre of Excellence in Ayurveda Research (CEAR) and focus on strategic national priority areas, including spice incubation, coir and rubber technologies, sustainable packaging, biomanufacturing, and green hydrogen, it said.

The initiative aims to strengthen scientific standardisation, quality assurance, value addition, and scalable manufacturing while fostering a vibrant ecosystem for startups and MSMEs.

A key highlight of the hub is its focus on scientific validation, quality control, and global compliance of AYUSH products, addressing growing international demand for evidence-based traditional medicine and wellness solutions.

Through collaboration with agencies such as the Spices Board, the Hub will also promote technology-driven processing, value addition, and startup incubation to enhance global competitiveness and farmer incomes. he hub will leverage



Kerala's strong natural resource base and scientific talent to develop high-value, sustainable technologies in coir, rubber, and eco-friendly packaging, aligned with CSIR's national mission on sustainable packaging.

Advanced biomanufacturing and industrial biotechnology platforms will support the production of bio-based products, biochemicals, nutraceuticals, and functional foods, while green hydrogen initiatives will contribute to India's clean energy transition, the release said.

Aligned with national missions and Government of India priorities, the CSIR-NIIST Innovation, Technology and Entrepreneurship Hub is designed to accelerate technology-to-market translation, skill development, employment generation, women's empowerment, and inclusive economic growth, with a special focus on the life sciences sector.

The Government of Kerala has allotted 10 acres of land at Bio-360 Life Sciences Park for the expansion of CSIR-NIIST, further strengthening Thiruvananthapuram's position as an emerging life sciences and innovation hub.

The inauguration coincides with CSIR-NIIST's Golden Jubilee, marking 50 years of dedicated service to science, technology, and national development.

Lancet report outlines roadmap for citizen-centred universal healthcare coverage in India

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 21: A new Lancet Commission report outlines a path for a rights-based, citizen-centred health system for India involving innovative financing, regulation and community engagement that delivers accessible, equitable and high-quality care.

Aligning with the country's broader vision of 'Viksit Bharat', a developed and inclusive nation by 2047, the reforms described in the report promote community participation, transparency and equity -- key principles of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) -- aimed at ensuring high-quality, affordable care for all.

An international team of authors, including those from the US'



Harvard Medical School and the Population Foundation of India, a Delhi-based NGO, emphasise the urgent need to strengthen India's public healthcare by integrating services across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, increasing government investments, and harnessing digital technologies.

Author Poonam Mutreja, executive director, Population Foundation of India, said, "Recognising people as partners

rather than merely patients is essential to bringing the public into public health. Health systems become more responsive, equitable, and compassionate when citizens participate in the planning, delivery, and accountability of services."

Healthcare reforms driven by decentralisation, multi-stakeholder collaboration and continuous learning are required to cater to India's vast diversity, the team said.

Improvements to the country's health system must go beyond technical fixes, which requires a strong political will and leadership to ensure accountability, it added.

Established in December 2020, the Lancet Commission on a citizen-centred health system for India identifies reforms needed to realise the vision.

A diverse range of expertise and existing and new research were drawn upon for arriving at recommendations, the team said.

"Our clarion call is for an integrated, citizen-centred health-care delivery system that is publicly financed and publicly provided as the primary vehicle for UHC, while shaping the private sector to leverage its strengths," the authors wrote.

Delhi hospital introduces MRI-guided biopsy for breast cancer detection

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 21: A cancer centre in the national capital has introduced an advanced MRI-guided breast biopsy technique, as studies show that around 10-20 per cent of breast cancers may be missed during mammography, especially in women with dense breast tissue.

According to an official statement issued on Wednesday, the Apollo Athenaa Women's Cancer Centre has launched MRI-guided Vacuum-Assisted Breast Biopsy (MRI-guided VABB) to help detect cancers that often go unnoticed during routine screening. The statement said such cancers can grow silently, without forming a lump or showing early symptoms, making them difficult to detect



through conventional tests and often leading to diagnosis at a later stage.

This concern is particularly serious in India, where breast cancer is increasingly being diagnosed in younger women, often nearly a decade earlier than in Western countries, it said. Many cases are still detected at advanced stages, resulting in more aggressive treatment and poorer outcomes.

Dr Preetha Reddy, executive vice chairperson of the Apollo Hospitals Group, said the new technique will help confirm cancer earlier and more accurately. "This initiative strengthens the entire breast diagnostic pathway with greater precision, speed and clinical confidence, helping detect breast cancer earlier and enabling timely, minimally invasive intervention," she added.

Divisions emerge among western European nations over Trump's Board of Peace for Gaza

AP

Jerusalem, Jan 21: Divisions emerged on Wednesday over Donald Trump's Board of Peace envisaged in the US president's peace plan for Gaza, with some Western European countries declining to join while others remained noncommittal.

The development underscores European concerns over the controversial and ambitious project — which some say seeks to replace the United Nations' role as a mediator in global conflicts — as Trump arrived in Davos, Switzerland, where he was expected to provide more details about his vision for the board.

A White House official said about 30 countries were expected to join the board, without providing details. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe internal plans not yet made public, said about 50 countries had been invited to join the organisation.

Norway and Sweden said Wednesday they won't accept their invitations, after France also said no, stressing that while it supports the Gaza peace plan, it was concerned the board could seek to replace the UN as the main venue for resolving conflicts.

Chaired by Trump, the board was originally envisaged as a small group of world leaders overseeing the Gaza ceasefire plan. But the Trump administration's ambitions have since expanded into a more sprawling concept, with Trump extending invitations to dozens of nations and hinting at the board's role as conflict mediator.



Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, meanwhile, said he's agreed to join the board — a departure from an earlier stance when his office criticised the make-up of the board's committee tasked with overseeing Gaza. Months into the ceasefire, Gaza's more than 2 million Palestinians continue to suffer the humanitarian crisis unleashed by over two years of war. Israeli fire in the enclave on Wednesday left five Palestinians dead, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

The relatives of one final Israeli hostage, whose body remains in Gaza, continued to call on the government and Trump to ensure the release of his remains. Since the truce went into effect in October, Hamas and Israel have each accused the other of ceasefire violations.

Norway and Sweden say no, following in France's footsteps.

Norway's state secretary, Kristoffer Thoner, said Norway would not join the board because it "raises a number of questions that require further dialogue with the United

States." He also said Norway would not attend the signing ceremony in Davos.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said on the sidelines of Davos that his country wouldn't sign up for the board as the text currently stands, Swedish news agency TT reported, though Sweden hasn't formally responded.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said Tuesday that France says, "Yes to implementing the peace plan presented by the president of the United States, which we wholeheartedly support, but no to creating an organisation as it has been presented, which would replace the United Nations."

Hearing late Monday that French President Emmanuel Macron was unlikely to join, Trump said, "Well, nobody wants him because he's going to be out of office very soon."

The United Kingdom, the European Union's executive arm, Canada, Russia, Ukraine and China have also not yet indicated their response to Trump's invitations.

Israel and Egypt to join, along with several others in the Mideast and beyond.

Parties key to the Gaza ceasefire — Israel and Egypt — said on Wednesday they would join the board, as did Bahrain, Kosovo and Azerbaijan.

Netanyahu's decision was significant because the office had previously said the composition of the Gaza executive committee — which includes Turkey, Israel's key regional rival — was not coordinated with the Israeli government and ran "contrary to its policy," without clarifying its objections.

The move could now put him in conflict with some of the far-right allies in his coalition, such as Israel's Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who has criticised the board and called for Israel to take unilateral responsibility for Gaza's future.

Those who have accepted the invitation are the United Arab Emirates, Armenia, Morocco, Vietnam, Belarus, Hungary, Kazakhstan and Argentina.

Death toll ticks up in Gaza

Israeli forces killed at least five Palestinians on Wednesday, including a woman and two children, hospital authorities said.

A man and his 13-year-old son were killed along with a 22-year-old man while collecting firewood on the eastern flank of the central Bureij refugee camp, said Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies. The hospital said Israeli drones had fired on the men. The military did not respond to a request for comment, and it was not clear if the men had crossed into military-controlled zones.

Another 13-year-old boy was shot and killed by troops — also while collecting firewood — in the eastern town of Bani Suhailla, the Nasser hospital said, which received the body.

In footage circulated online, the boy's father was seen weeping over his son's body on a hospital bed.

Nasser said it also received the body of a woman shot by Israeli troops in the Muwasi area of the southern city of Khan Younis. The hospital said she was killed in an area not controlled by the military.

Since the ceasefire started in October, more than 460 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire, according to the strip's health ministry. The ministry, which is part of the Hamas-led government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by UN agencies and independent experts.

Most of Gaza's population depends on firewood for cooking and heat as the strip experiences a cold, wet winter.

ICC rejects BCB request, Bangladesh matches to be played in India as schedule

PTI

Dubai, Jan 21: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday rejected the request from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to shift its team's T20 World Cup fixtures to Sri Lanka, saying the matches will proceed as scheduled since there was no credible threat to the safety of Bangladesh players, officials or fans at any of the tournament venues in India.

The decision was taken at an ICC Board meeting held via video conference, which was convened to discuss the situation after the BCB raised concerns and sought a change in venues.

According to the ICC, the Board reviewed multiple security assessments, including independent evaluations, all of which concluded that there was no credible threat to the safety of Bangladesh players, officials, media personnel or fans at any of the tournament venues in India.

The ICC noted that making changes to the schedule at such a late stage was not feasible and that



altering fixtures in the absence of a verified security risk could set an undesirable precedent for future global events.

"The ICC Board noted that relocating matches under the present circumstances could jeopardise the sanctity of ICC events and undermine the organisation's neutrality as a global governing body," the ICC said in a statement.

The world governing body said its management had held a series of meetings and correspondences with the BCB in recent weeks, sharing detailed information on the tournament's security arrangements.

These included venue-specific plans and assurances of layered protection involving federal and state law enforcement agencies.

NASA astronaut stuck in space for nine months retires

AFP

Washington, Jan 21: A NASA astronaut who was stuck in space for nine months because of problems with her spacecraft has retired after 27 years of service, the space agency said Tuesday.

Suni Williams stepped down from her post on December 27 — making her ill-fated mission her last journey to space.

Williams and fellow astronaut Barry "Butch" Wilmore set out on an eight-day mission in June 2024 to test fly Boeing's new Starliner capsule on its first crewed mission when they were

unexpectedly marooned. Despite the incident, Williams on Tuesday called her time with NASA "an incredible honor."

"Anyone who knows me knows that space is my absolute favorite place to be," she said in a statement.

Boeing's new Starliner developed propulsion issues while Williams and Wilmore were traveling to the International Space Station (ISS) and it was deemed unfit to fly back.

The technical problems prompted NASA to entrust the return of their astronauts to Elon Musk's SpaceX, snubbing Boeing.

To prevent India Open-like mess, Sports Ministry asks SAI to draw up SOP

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 21: Mindful of the international scrutiny that India is facing as an aspiring Olympic host, the Sports Ministry has asked SAI to draw up a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to avoid the kind of slip-ups that marred the recent India Open of badminton here.

Bird poop on the field of play, monkey in spectators' stand and unhygienic conditions in training facilities and public utilities were among the issues that damaged the tournament's image.

SAI (Sports Authority of India) is responsible for the upkeep of five stadia in the national capital, including the Indira Gandhi Stadium that hosted the India Open.

"As much as we would like the National Sports Federations to have the freedom to conduct events but the fact is when something goes wrong, it is always the sports ministry which becomes answerable in public eye. So, it is only fair that the ministry is involved at the planning stage itself," a well-placed source told PTI.

"So, an SOP will be formulated to ensure that



every event being held in India is planned properly with zero scope of athlete discomfort, especially for international participants. Ministry will keep a tab through this mechanism," he added.

International players like Danish shuttler Mia Blichfeldt spoke openly about the discomfort at India Open and also demanded better facilities at the world championships, scheduled to be held at the same venue in August.

The ministry's role in conduct of events in India is mostly limited to providing financial assistance. But with India's 2036 Olympic bid at stake, it plans

INOX CINEMA
SHIVPORA SRINAGAR

Movies Watchlist
Thursday, 22 January

DHURANDHAR
DHURANDHAR (A)
HINDI - 11:30 AM, 02:40 PM, 04:45 PM

HAPPY PATEL
KHATARNAK JASOOS (A)
HINDI - 12:00 PM, 06:15 PM

RAHU KETU
RAHU KETU (U/A 16+)
HINDI - 03:25 PM, 06:45 PM

AVATAR
FIRE AND ASH (UA 16+)
3D HINDI - 12:45 PM

BOOK TICKETS NOW
www.bookmyshow.com, www.inoxmovies.com
Paytm, Innox App, or directly from the booking counter at the cinema.

CALL 95416 13868
FOR ASSISTANCE WITH TICKETS

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ



With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the sad demise of our beloved

FATEH KHAWANI

With profound grief, we inform the passing of Fatima Bashir on 19/01/2026.

May Almighty Allah bestow His choicest blessings on the departed soul.

Fateh Khawani will be observed on Friday, the 23rd of January, at 2:30 Pm at Beeroni Kathi Darwaza, Central Jail Road, Near Umer Masjid.

BEREAVED FAMILY
9682122829