

77TH REPUBLIC DAY

‘Op Sindoor’ emerged as defining moment in India’s national security doctrine: LG Sinha

Lauds J&K policemen for uncovering nationwide terror network, calls them India’s true heroes; says ‘proud of them’

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Jan 25: Asserting that ‘Operation Sindoor’ emerged as defining moment in India’s national security doctrine Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday appreciated J&K Police for uncovering a nationwide terror network in October- November last year and preventing several attacks in time.

LG Sinha in a message on the eve of 77th Republic Day, as per news agency Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, “I further appreciate the Jammu & Kashmir Police for uncovering a nationwide terror network last October- November and preventing several attacks in time. They are India’s true heroes, and I am proud of them.”

Terming ‘Operation Sindoor’ as a defining moment in India’s national security doctrine, LG Sinha said, “I express my sincere gratitude to all members of the armed forces, police, paramilitary units, and civil administration who upheld the nation’s pride through their duty, dedication, and bravery during Operation Sindoor. Following the brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Operation Sindoor emerged as a defining moment in India’s national security doctrine. India made



it unequivocally clear that any terrorist attack on its soil would be treated as an act of war.”

LG Sinha said, “Operation Sindoor was not merely a military action; it was a declaration of India’s strategic resolve. I also commend exemplary courage and professionalism displayed by the personnel of Indian Army, Jammu & Kashmir Police and the CRPF. Through Operation Mahadev, they eliminated the three Pakistani terrorists involved in the attack and delivered justice for the dignity of our mothers and sisters.”

The Lieutenant Governor said, “Let us set our sights on a leadership role in the knowledge-based economy and in information technology. Let us resolve to ensure that every

citizen, especially our youth and women, has fair access to quality education, healthcare, and equal opportunities to fully realise their potential.”

He urged people to commit themselves to take Jammu & Kashmir towards greater heights of development and prosperity. “On the auspicious and momentous occasion of the 77th Republic Day of our beloved nation, I convey my heartfelt greetings and sincere good wishes to every citizen of UT of Jammu & Kashmir. I extend my warm salutations to our dedicated workers, farmers, doctors, engineers, innovators, entrepreneurs, teachers, students, youth, women, businesspersons, artists, writers, industry leaders and volunteers | More on P6

Republic Day Address

India a messenger of peace in conflict-ridden world: President

- » Highlights Op Sindoor, defence strength
- » Hails women power, gender equality
- » Calls for digital economy, self-reliance

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 25: Amidst geopolitical tensions escalating across multiple continents, President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday said India is spreading the message of



peace in the world which is crucial to secure the future of humanity. In her address to the nation

on the eve of 77th Republic Day, she spoke about various issues including Operation Sindoor | More on P6

CM Omar welcomes BJP dropping Jammu statehood agenda



Waris Fayaz

Gulmarg, Jan 25: Asserting that it’s “good” if Bharatiya Janata Party doesn’t have any agenda of carving out Jammu as a separate state, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday said (BJP) and its few friends in Kashmir had initiated this debate. Responding to | More on P6

Mann Ki Baat

PM Modi highlights Anantnag village’s collective efforts to combat substance abuse

- Hails Mir Jaffar for taking initiative to address issue
- Urges youth to register as voters; says youngsters heroes of Start-up India
- Praises Azamgarh people for reviving Tamsa river
- ‘Bhajans, kirtans soul of our culture, Gen Z keeping it alive’



Kashmir’s Anantnag district in combating substance abuse and promoting social responsibility, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that grass-roots efforts can bring about meaningful social change.

In the latest episode of his monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat, PM Modi while addressing the nation, said that challenges related to drugs, tobacco, cigarettes and alcohol had witnessed a significant rise in the (Shiekhgund) village. “The growing menace deeply concerned a local resident, Mir Jafar, who decided to take the initiative to address the issue.”

The Prime Minister said Mir Jafar mobilised the entire village, bringing together youth and elders alike, to confront the problem collectively. “When the | More on P6

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 25: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday commended the Election Commission of India and the Chief Electoral Office of J&K for historic 2024 Lok Sabha and J&K Legislative Assembly elections.

“In Jammu Kashmir, trust in democracy has solidified and democratic values | More on P6

NATIONAL VOTERS’ DAY

J&K ‘trust in democracy’ has solidified: LG Sinha





77th

REPUBLIC DAY

GREETINGS TO THE PEOPLE OF
JAMMU & KASHMIR

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS, J&K



Dated: 25-01-2026

DIPK-10366/25

16th National Voters' Day Celebrations held across Kashmir division

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 25: Commemorating the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, established on 25th January 1950, the 16th National Voters Day (NVD) was Sunday celebrated across all districts of Kashmir division with great enthusiasm and civic spirit.

The National Voters Day is observed annually on 25 January to create electoral awareness amongst citizens and encourage their active participation in the democratic process. The celebrations this year revolved around the theme "My India, My Vote", with the powerful tagline "Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy", underscoring the central role of voters in strengthening the democratic fabric of the nation.

Across the division, as per an official statement, various awareness programmes, pledge ceremonies, and outreach activities were organized to highlight the importance of informed and ethical voting.

AT KULGAM: The 16th National Voters' Day was celebrated with enthusiasm at Kulgam Sunday, where a grand function was held at the New Conference Hall of the Mini Secretariat.

Dedicated to voters, the National Voters' Day (NVD) 2026 theme is "My India, My Vote—Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy.

Since 2011, January 25 has been celebrated annually as National Voters' Day to commemorate the foundation day of the Election Commission of India.

Addressing the gathering, the ADC Kulgam Viqar Ahmad Giri, congratulated the people on the occasion and highlighted the significance of National Voters' Day.

He emphasized that the right to vote empowers citizens to exercise their democratic franchise for nation-building and strengthening democracy.

He also lauded the pivotal role played by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and other election functionaries in ensuring a robust and transparent electoral process.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy District Election Officer (Dy DEO), Bashir Ul Hassan added that every single vote is vital in government formation and urged citizens to exercise their voting rights responsibly, realizing the power vested in them.

On the occasion, best-performing officers and BLOs were felicitated with certificates and mementos in recognition of their outstanding contributions.

The programme also featured captivating cultural performances by artists, who enthralled the audience through a thought-provoking drama highlighting the importance of voting.

During the function, a pledge ceremony and mass singing of "Vande Mataram," the national song, was also held.

AT KUPWARA: The 16th National Voters' Day was celebrated Sunday with great zeal and enthusiasm at various locations in Kupwara district.

The main function was held at Town Hall, Kupwara, in the presence of Deputy Commissioner (District Election Officer) Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, and SSP Kupwara, Syed Al-Tahir Gilani.

Also present were ADC Kupwara, CEO Kupwara, Tehsildar Kupwara, election section officials and students.

This year, the theme of the event is "My India, My Vote" with the tagline, "Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy".

A video message from Chief Election Commissioner of India, Shri Gyanesh Kumar, was also screened during the event.

The Deputy Commissioner administered the Voters' Pledge to participants, including officers and students.

In his address, he highlighted the significance of voting in democracy and citizens' role in strengthening the nation's democratic fabric. He encouraged youth, particularly first-time voters, to actively participate in the electoral process.

ADC Kupwara and CEO/ Nodal officer SVEEP also emphasised the importance of National Voters' Day during the event.

Students from BHSS Kupwara presented a cultural programme highlighting the importance of voting in democracy.

An award ceremony was also held and appreciation certificates given to students and participants by the District Administration.

National Voters' Day was also marked in Handwara subdivision, presided over by ADC Handwara, Javed Naseem Masoodi, at Town Hall Handwara. SDM Lolab, Mudassir Ahmad, chaired an event at GDC Sogam. At Mini Secretariat Tangdar, Tehsildar Karnah, Mohammed Amin Bhat, led proceedings, stressing the event's significance.

Similar events were also held at AERO level and NVD pledge was administered.

AT SHOPIAN: District Administration Shopian Sunday celebrated the 16th National Voters' Day with zeal and enthusiasm at the Meeting Hall, Mini Secretariat Shopian.

The programme was organized in line with the theme of National Voters' Day 2026, My India, My Vote.

The programme was presided over by the ADC Shopian, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz, who was the Chief Guest on the occasion.



In his keynote address, the ADC highlighted voting as the cornerstone of democracy and stressed the need for active and informed participation of citizens, especially youth and first-time voters, in the democratic process.

He appreciated the sustained efforts of the Election Department, BLOs and field functionaries for their dedication in ensuring inclusive elections and urged all stakeholders to continue working towards the goal of No Voter to be Left Behind.

The event commenced with a welcome address by Dy. DEO Shopian, Shakoor Ahmad Dar, who highlighted the significance of National Voters' Day in creating electoral awareness among citizens.

He emphasized the role of the Election Department in ensuring free, fair and transparent elections and underlined the importance of voter education, particularly at the grassroots level.

SDM Zainapora, Bilal Ahmad, in his address, spoke on the importance of National Voters' Day in strengthening democratic values.

National Voters' Day Pledge was also administered during the programme, wherein all officers, officials and participants pledged to uphold democratic values, promote ethical voting and encourage greater participation in the electoral process.

A special highlight of the programme was the felicitation of first-time voters, recognizing their entry into the democratic framework and motivating them to actively participate in nation-building through informed voting.

BLOs were also felicitated on the occasion in recognition of their dedicated grassroots level role in voter registration, awareness generation and ensuring maximum electoral participation across the district.

Additionally, officials of the Election Department were also felicitated for their exemplary contribution towards smooth conduct of electoral activities, voter enrollment drives and implementation of SVEEP initiatives.

The programme was attended by Chief Education Officer Shopian, Bashir Ahmad Shah, all Tehsildars, DSWO and a large number of officials of the Election Department.

AT PULWAMA: District Administration Pulwama Sunday organized a mega function at Government Degree College (Boys), Pulwama, to mark the 16th National Voters' Day, aimed at promoting electoral awareness, participation and strengthening democratic values among citizens, particularly youth and first-time voters. The event was celebrated under the theme "My India, My Vote", which symbolizes the Election Commission of India's commitment towards citizen-centric electoral processes and inclusive participation in democracy.

The programme commenced with the rendition of the National Anthem, setting a solemn and patriotic tone for the event.

Speaking on the occasion, District Election Officer (DEO), Dr. Basharat Qayoom, said that National Voters' Day is celebrated annually on January 25 since 2011 to commemorate the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, established on January 25, 1950. He said that this year's theme "My India, My Vote" reflects the Commission's sustained efforts to build a robust, inclusive and voter-friendly electoral system.

The DEO urged all eligible but unregistered citizens, particularly youth, to enroll themselves at the earliest and actively participate in the democratic process. While appreciating the dedicated efforts of Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and supervisors, the DEO said that the electoral roll is the backbone of the electoral process and that BLOs play a pivotal role in ensuring its effective management, accuracy and credibility.

Dr. Qayoom also commended the remarkable increase in voter turnout in Pulwama district during the preceding Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly elections, stating that it reflects growing democratic awareness and public trust in the electoral system.

The DEO further highlighted the importance of democratic values and called upon citizens, especially young voters, to exercise

their franchise responsibly, emphasizing that informed electoral participation is essential for a vibrant democracy.

The Deputy District Election Officer, in his welcome address, highlighted key initiatives being undertaken by the Election Commission of India to improve electoral roll accuracy, enhance voter services and ensure greater transparency and efficiency in the electoral process.

The event featured a rich array of cultural performances, including folk songs, skits, Rouf, student speeches and traditional Ladisha, portraying the importance, power and responsibility of voting in a democratic society.

Later, the DEO administered the Voters' Pledge, wherein participants pledged to vote freely and fairly, without fear, bias or discrimination based on religion, race, caste, community or language.

Besides, on the occasion, mementos and certificates were distributed among Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), Assistant EROs, PWD icon, young voter, first-time/future voter, senior citizen, election staff, District Level Master Trainers (DLMTs), supervisors, Booth Level Officers (BLOs) for their commendable performance in previous elections while Students who presented cultural performances were also felicitated.

Among others, the programme was attended by Senior Superintendent of Police, Pulwama, Tanushree; Commandant 183 BN CRPF; Additional Deputy Commissioner, Pulwama; Chief Education Officer, Pulwama; EROs, AEROs, civil society groups, students, youth and volunteer organisations such as NCC and NYCs, supervisors and BLOs.

AT BANDIPORA: The 16th National Voters' Day—2026 was celebrated with enthusiasm across Bandipora district under the theme "My India, My Vote," with the main function held at the Auditorium Hall of N.M. Higher Secondary School, Kaloosa.

The main event was presided over by Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, and attended by Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR) Shabir Ahmad Wani, Deputy District Election Officer, Er. Hilal Ahmad, Nodal Officer SVEEP, district and sectoral officers, youth, and students.

The programme commenced with the administration of the National Voters' Day Pledge, reaffirming collective commitment towards upholding democratic values and ensuring informed participation in the electoral process.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner described National Voters' Day as a celebration of democracy and an important platform to motivate youth and first-time voters to actively participate in elections. She appreciated the dedicated efforts of Booth Level Officers (BLOs), Anganwadi workers, and election staff in ensuring free, fair, and transparent electoral processes.

Speaking on the occasion, ACR Bandipora emphasized the role of electoral literacy in strengthening democracy and shared district-level statistics related to voter registration, electoral rolls, and election management, stressing the need for continuous awareness regarding voting rights and procedures.

The event featured a series of awareness and cultural activities, including student speeches highlighting the importance of voting, a skit titled "My India, My Vote" presented by students of BHSS Bandipora, a patriotic song by Mohammad Iqbal Lone, and screening of a documentary showcasing the District Administration's initiatives on voter awareness, electoral literacy, and summary revision campaigns.

On the occasion, Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) were distributed among newly registered voters, while mementos were presented to BLOs and officers in recognition of their commendable contribution to election-related duties.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Deputy Chief Education Officer, Dr. G.M. Pujoo highlighted the significance of National Voters' Day in nurturing informed, aware, and responsible citizens.

Meanwhile, National Voters' Day was

also observed at Dak Banglow Sumbal, where Electoral Registration Officer, Murtaza Ahmad Sheikh emphasized achieving 100 percent EPIC coverage, transparent electoral registration, and enhanced voter participation. EPICs were distributed to newly enrolled voters, followed by administration of the Voters' Pledge.

Similarly, the day was celebrated at Sub Division Gurez under the leadership of SDM Gurez, Mukhtar Ahmad, focusing on voter awareness and democratic participation. Speakers highlighted the importance of every vote, especially among youth and first-time voters, and administered the Voters' Pledge to reaffirm commitment to democratic values.

AT GANDERBAL: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, who is also District Election Officer administered National Voters Day pledge to participants in a ceremony held here to commemorate 16th National Voters' Day (NVD).

Additional District Development Commissioner, Manzoor Ahmad; Additional Deputy Commissioner, Fahim Bihaqi; Assistant Commissioner Revenue, and other district and sectoral officers were present on the occasion.

Addressing the event, the DC emphasized the significance of National Voters' Day in encouraging and facilitating new voters to participate in the democratic process.

Referring to the 16th NVD theme, "My India, My Vote" with the tagline, "Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy," the DC said that India being the world's largest democracy, its strength lies in the active participation of its citizens. Voting is not only a fundamental right but also a constitutional duty and one must exercise one's vote with due care diligence.

He said it is heartening to witness the enthusiasm of new voters and young citizens who are already well aware of the importance of their vote. During elections, it is our collective responsibility to analyse issues carefully, make informed choices and exercise our franchise wisely, as responsible voting leads to stronger governance and better outcomes for society.

The DC said the Election Commission of India has consistently worked to strengthen electoral awareness and transparency through initiatives such as the SVEEP programme and latest technological interventions all of which have further enhanced accessibility, transparency and public trust in the electoral process.

He congratulated all Booth Level Officers and election staff for their dedicated efforts during Lok Sabha and Assembly Elections held in 2024 as well as the revision exercise in the past year.

He also lauded the efforts of the grassroots level staff for completing Electoral roll revision exercise with proper care and within timelines.

Assistant Commissioner Revenue reflected on the historical significance of National Voters' Day. He urged the youth to actively participate in the democratic process and use their voting power responsibly to contribute to societal progress.

The event also featured speeches by students, who underscored the importance of voting in a democracy. They encouraged the youth to recognize their role as architects of the nation's future and highlighted the transformative power of casting a vote.

Later, a felicitation ceremony was also held during which DC felicitated the newly registered voters and handed over EPIC Cards to the new electors. He also felicitated students and BLOs and other election staff for their excellent performance throughout the year.

AT ANANTNAG: The Election Department Anantnag, in collaboration with various departments, celebrated the 16th National Voters' Day Sunday at Government Degree College (GDC) Women's Anantnag.

This year the theme for National Voters' Day was "My India, My Vote" with a tagline of "Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy". Various speakers from different institutions highlighted the importance of voting and the electoral process, along with its legal implementation. They urged the public for mass participation in voting to elect governments focused on people's welfare.

On the occasion, colorful cultural programs on patriotism, electoral rights and local folk were presented by students.

The Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC), Sandeep Singh Bali, who was the Chief Guest for the function stressed the need for timely registration in the electoral list and mass participation in voting. He highlighted the constitutional importance of voting and its role in strengthening participatory democracy.

ACD, CMO, CAO, Deputy DEO, CEO, Deputy Planning Officer, faculty from the college, officials from various departments besides students and volunteers attended the function.

AT BARAMULLA: The 16th National Voters' Day was observed with enthusiasm in Baramulla under the theme "My India, My Vote." The programme aimed

to promote electoral awareness and encourage informed participation in the democratic process, particularly among young and newly enrolled voters.

As part of the celebrations, a voters' awareness rally was flagged off by the Assistant Commissioner Revenue Baramulla, Arshad Ahmad Khan in the presence of the Deputy District Election Officer, Baramulla, Ab Rehman Bhat and Dy Chief Education Officer, Iftakhar Ahmad from the District Election Office, Baramulla. The rally culminated at Akber Chowk, Baramulla, with students from various schools and officials participating actively.

Later, the main function was organized at the Main Meeting Hall, DC Office Baramulla, which was attended by new voters, students, and officials. On the occasion, new EPIC cards were issued to newly registered electors.

During the programme, the Voters' Pledge was administered by the ACR to the newly enrolled voters, reaffirming their commitment to democratic values.

Earlier, quiz competitions, nukkad natak, painting, and other awareness activities were organized to sensitize students about the importance of voting.

Addressing the gathering, the Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR), Deputy District Election Officer (Dy DEO), and Deputy Chief Education Officer (Dy CEO) highlighted the significance of youth participation, voter awareness, and ethical voting in strengthening democracy.

Later, the ADC, ACR, Dy DEO, and Dy CEO distributed mementoes and certificates among the participants and winners of various competitions. The programme concluded with a felicitation ceremony.

BUDGAM: The 16th National Voters Day was Sunday celebrated in Budgam to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, established on 25th January 1950.

The theme of this year's National Voters day is My India, My vote. The main function was held at the Sheikh-ul Alam Hall Budgam which was chaired by the District Election Officer/Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-din Bhat.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC deliberated on the importance of celebrating the National Voters Day and said, the right to vote empowers citizens to exercise his/her franchise for nation building and for making the democracy strong. He said that this day provides us an opportunity to reach out to the new voters for enrolment in electoral rolls so that they are able to take part in the Democratic process. He said that every single vote is counted and is important for the government formation.

The Deputy Commissioner lauded the tireless efforts of all Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and other field functionaries for their dedicated work during the bye Assembly elections to 27-AC Budgam. He commended their unwavering commitment and zeal in ensuring a smooth and transparent electoral process. Their hard work played a pivotal role in strengthening democracy at the grassroots level, he said. The DC emphasised the importance of such dedication in upholding the elections and encouraged continued excellence in future endeavors. He highlighted the significance of the Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) as a vital document for ensuring voter identity and participation in the democratic process. He also stressed the importance of the Voter Information Slip, which provides key details such as polling station information and facilitates a seamless voting experience. The DC encouraged all voters to utilize these tools effectively to uphold the sanctity of elections.

On the occasion, ADC Budgam, CPO Budgam, CEO Budgam, Dy. Election officer, Dysp Hq, Officers, DIO budgam, officials from police and District administration, BLOs, and all other participants took pledge to participate in the election process free and fairly and vowed to contribute in making the nation strong by using their franchise.

CEO Budgam, who is also nodal officer of the SVEEP addressed the audiences at the function. Speaking to participants, She said, "Right to vote is our constitutional right". One should actively participate in the process of elections by casting their votes, thereby strengthening democracy, he added.

Similar functions were also held at Townhall Budgam, SDM offices, Tehsil Offices, PHE, Social welfare, District handicraft office, labour office, Chief Medical officers and all other offices of the District, where in Pledges were taken with regard to the celebration of 16th National Voters' Day.

On the occasion, painting and essay competitions were also held in almost all schools of District Budgam, in which huge number of student participants were enthusiastically seen participating to celebrate National voters day.

REPUBLIC DAY 2026

Gallantry, service medals for 52 J&K police officers, personnel

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 25: Fifty-two Jammu and Kashmir Police officers and personnel have been conferred with gallantry and service medals on the occasion of the 77th Republic Day, an official said here on Sunday.

In an official statement issued by a spokesperson, the list included 17 officers who received the Medal for Meritorious Service, 33 personnel who were conferred the Medal for Gallantry, while two officers of the rank of Deputy Inspector General received the President's Medal for Distinguished Service.

"Among those awarded the Medal for Meritorious



Service are three Inspectors General of Police—Mohd Suleman Choudhary, Sujit Kumar, and Vivek Gupta," the statement reads. It

also reads, among the other recipients are Deputy Superintendents of Police Himat Singh, Champa Devi Sharma, and Khushwant Singh;

Inspector Anil Sharma; DSP Gurmeet Singh; Inspector Reyaz Ahmad Langoo; Assistant Sub-Inspector Sham Lal; Head Constable Gopal Singh; Inspectors Sardar Singh, Neeraj Kumar Koul, and Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat; Constables Tawheed Ahmad Thoker and Shubh Kumar; and Assistant Sub-Inspector Balwinder Singh Bali.

"In addition, two senior officers, Deputy Inspectors General of Police Haseeb Mughal and Nisha Nathyal, were conferred the President's Medal for Distinguished Service," it reads, adding that 33 J&K Police personnel were awarded the Medal for Gallantry for acts

of bravery in the line of duty. "The recipients include Deputy Superintendents of Police Javid Ahmad Lone, Mohd Ashrif, and Mohan Lal; Inspector Younis Khan; Assistant Sub-Inspector Davinder Kumar; Head Constable Shaheer Ahmad Narwaroo; and several other officers and personnel across ranks," reads the statement further.

The gallantry awardees also include IPS officer Tanushree, Senior Superintendent of Police Shabir Nawab, and a number of inspectors, head constables, selection grade constables, and constables from various districts and units of the force.—(KNO)

Div Com, DC Srinagar mark Voters Day, felicitate BLOs



KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Jan 25: On the occasion of 16th National Voters Day celebrations, a grand function was organized by the District Election Office, Srinagar here at Government College of Education, M A Road to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, established on 25th January 1950.

The function was presided over by the Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Anshul Garg, while Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo who is also the District Election Officer attended the function as Guest of Honour.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz; Nodal Principal Colleges, Seema Naaz; Electoral Registration Officers, Zubair Ahmad & Umer Gulzar; Election Nodal Officers, Officials of District Election Office, Srinagar BLOs, newly registered voters and other concerned Officials were present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir highlighted the significance of National Voters Day in creating awareness and encouraging young citizens who have attained the age of 18 to enrol in the electoral rolls and actively participate in the democratic process. He lauded the efforts of the election machinery and stakeholders for sensitising citizens, especially youth, to become active participants in strengthening democracy.

The Div Com also commended the District Election Office Srinagar for the successful conduct of the 2024 Lok Sabha and J&K Assembly

Elections, which witnessed a substantial increase in voter turnout.

DC/DEO Srinagar in his welcome address said that the National voters Day serves as a reminder to all the eligible voters of their duty to participate in the electoral process and responsibilities to participate in the electoral process, to strengthen the democratic setup. He expressed appreciation for the dedication of BLOs, Electoral Registration Officers, the District Election Office and the Education Department in keeping the electoral process vibrant and dynamic in the district.

He informed that the District Election Office is actively expanding electoral literacy through awareness programmes in schools, colleges, and prominent public places across the district. During the programme, a message from the Chief Election Commissioner of India, Shri Gyanesh Kumar, was telecasted virtually.

On the occasion, participants were administered a pledge regarding National Voters Day by Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir. Later, the Divisional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner distributed Electoral Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) to newly enrolled voters. They also felicitated BLOs of Srinagar district for their dedicated services in voter registration.

SDM East, Zubair Ahmad presented vote of thanks at the end of the programme.

Notably, the Election Commission of India has chosen the theme "My India, My Vote – Indian Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy" for this year's National Voters' Day.

Prof Shafi Shauq awarded with Padma Shri

NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIE

Srinagar, Jan 25: Eminent Kashmiri scholar, poet, linguist and translator Prof Shafi Shauq on Sunday was named among the recipients of the Padma Shri Award 2026, India's fourth-highest civilian honour, for his outstanding contribution to education, language and literature.

Expressing happiness over the recognition, Prof Shauq said that it was a moment of great joy to see his name among those who have truly made a difference in society. "I have received many awards and honours in the past, but the Padma Shri is given to very few individuals who have excelled in different fields of life. Being counted among them is a matter of immense pride," he said.

He said that he was informed early in the morning over phone and that the officials were well aware of his literary work and books. "I never wrote for awards or recognition. I simply accepted whatever came my way," he added.

Prof Shauq has



authored dozens of books in English and Kashmiri, including works on poetry, history, dictionaries and grammars. He has also received several international awards for his poetic contributions. "This honour holds a special place as his name now stands alongside legendary literary figures such as Akhtar Mohiuddin and Rehman Rahi, who were earlier conferred with the Padma Shri," he said.

With academic background in science and English, Prof Shauq

devoted over five decades to Kashmiri language and literature. He served as a professor at the University of Kashmir for more than three decades, teaching Kashmiri literature and guiding students and research scholars. "If my work helps students and researchers, that itself is a great achievement for me," he said.

He highlighted the importance of documenting indigenous knowledge, noting that he frequently receives queries from across the

country and abroad about Kashmiri names of plants, flowers and insects. "Languages are shaped by such knowledge. Poetry is important, but research and information-based writing are equally essential," he added.

While reaffirming his love for poetry, Prof Shauq said his recent focus has been on comprehensive scholarly works, including books on the history of the Kashmiri language. "People read these works, and that gives me happiness. I encourage poets to write what they know and contribute something meaningful for future generations," he said.

Sharing a message for young writers, Prof Shauq urged them to move beyond poetry alone and engage with research-based writing. "Writers often complain that people don't read them. My question is—are you writing something that people feel the need to read?" he said, encouraging authors to write on subjects like flora, fauna, environment and local knowledge—(KNO)

Dr Farooq, Omar Abdullah extend greetings

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Jan 25: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference President Dr Farooq Abdullah and Vice President and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Sunday extended warm greetings to the people of the country on the 77th Republic Day of India.

In his message, Dr Farooq said that Republic Day is a reminder of the values enshrined in the Constitution, which have guided the nation through decades of challenges.

"The Constitution of India stands as a proud symbol of our collective commitment to secularism, federalism, democracy and social justice. These principles have ensured unity in diversity and must be protected at all costs to strengthen the foundations of our nation," he

said.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, in his message, said that the occasion calls for reaffirming faith in the constitutional ideals that bind the country together. "Our secular and federal Constitution guarantees equality, dignity and justice to every citizen. It is our shared responsibility to uphold these values and work towards a more inclusive, democratic, secular and harmonious India," he said.

The duo expressed hope that the country would continue to progress on the path of peace, unity and constitutional governance and wished the people prosperity and well-being on the auspicious occasion.

Party rank and file have also greeted countrymen on the solemn occasion.

IPS Haseeb Mughal awarded with President's police medal

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 25: Dr. Mohd Haseeb Mughal, a decorated IPS officer of the AGMUT cadre and a son of the soil, has been awarded the prestigious President's Police Medal for Distinguished Services.

Dr. Mohd Haseeb Mughal has been conferred with the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Services, the

announcement of which was made today.

A native of Baderwah in Doda district, Dr. Mughal—who holds a doctorate in botany (biosciences) from Jamia Hamdard University—has held crucial postings in both Kashmir and Jammu regions.

Dr. Mughal has served as district police chief of Handwara, Kishtwar, Baramulla, Rajouri, and Srinagar. He



served as SSP Srinagar during the crucial period between 2019 and 2021.

He has also served as Deputy Superintendent of Police (Operations), SSP Vigilance Jammu, SSP CID Kashmir, and SSP Traffic National Highway. After his promotion, he was posted as DIG Rajouri-Poonch range between 2022 and 2024. He is currently serving as DIG Traffic Jammu.

Earlier, he was awarded the President's Police Medal for Meritorious Services, the Police Medal for Gallantry (three times), the J&K Police Medal for Meritorious Services, and the J&K Police Medal for Gallantry.

He has also received commendation discs from the Army Commander, DGP J&K, Vice Chief of Naval Staff, and DG CRPF—(KNO)

DC G'bl flags-off 'Youth Run' to mark 150 years of Vande Mataram

KT NEWS DESK

Ganderbal, Jan 25: As part of the second phase of the ongoing commemoration of 150 years of the National Song "Vande Mataram," Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, Sunday flagged-off a Youth Run from the Mini Secretariat, Ganderbal.

The marathon was organised with the objective of promoting physical fitness, encouraging active participation among youth and officials, and strengthening the spirit of nationalism and unity.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Dr. Syed Faheem Bihaqi, District Youth Services and Sports Officer, besides other officers and officials, were present on the occasion.

Officials of the Youth Services and Sports Department,



including Physical Education Lecturers, Physical Education Masters, Physical Education Teachers, Rehbar-e-Khel and National Youth Corps, actively participated in the event. Their enthusiastic participation reflected a strong sense of teamwork, discipline, and commitment to national values.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC said that the celebration of Vande Mataram is a reminder of the nation's rich heritage and the sacrifices made for freedom. He emphasized that such

activities inspire youth to imbibe the values of patriotism, unity, and discipline.

"The Youth Run is a symbolic expression of our collective resolve to honour the national song by promoting health, harmony and dedication towards the nation," he added.

The run concluded successfully at the Clock Tower, Ganderbal, marking the event as a meaningful and spirited tribute to the 150-year legacy of the National Song Vande Mataram.

Budgam awarded for bye-election 2025 excellence

KT NEWS DESK

Budgam, Jan 25: Budgam District has been conferred with the Best District Election Award for its outstanding performance in the conduct of the recent Bye-Elections.

The award was presented by the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir at a function convened at the Convention Centre, Jammu.

The award recognizes the District administration's exemplary planning, efficient execution, and strict adherence to the guidelines of the Election Commission of India.

The district was selected for the award in recognition of its transparent, peaceful, voter-friendly election management, ensuring high standards of electoral integrity and seamless coordination among all stakeholders.

Dr Bilal Mohi ud Din Bhat, District Election Officer (DEO) Budgam dedicated this award to the Team Budgam and all other stakeholders. "It is an acknowledgement to the collective efforts of all officers, polling personnel and security forces who contributed to the successful conduct of the bye-elections," he said. The DEO appreciated the cooperation of political parties, candidates, media, and voters.

The district administration reaffirmed its commitment to upholding democratic values and strong belief in transparency and professionalism.

INOX

Happy Republic Day

MOVIES WATCHLIST

Monday, 26th January

DHURANDHAR (A)
HINDI - 12:05 PM

MERCY (UA/13+)
HINDI - 11:30 AM

BORDER 2 (U/A 13+)
HINDI - 01:45 PM, 04:15 PM, 05:45 PM
HINDI ATMOS - 11:00 AM, 02:55 PM, 06:45 PM

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EDITORIAL

77th R-Day: Celebrating Our Republic, Standing By Our Promise

On our 77th Republic Day, the real meaning of the day is bigger than the big parade in Delhi. It is about promising again to live by our Constitution—a set of rules for our country that promises every person justice, freedom, equality, and brotherhood. In Jammu and Kashmir, this day feels even more important. It reminds everyone that this region is a

strong and vital part of India's democracy. The real spirit of the day is in the people. The police chief of Kashmir invited families and school children to come and join the celebrations. This is a very good step. It shows that real safety comes when people feel involved and trusted. Seeing people practice for parades in all districts shows that the idea of India is alive

in our hearts. Students performing dances and songs, showing love for the country and for local culture, is a perfect example of our national motto: "unity in diversity". When the Lieutenant Governor takes the salute in Jammu, and the Chief Minister does it in Srinagar, it shows our political system is working as the Constitution planned. However, Republic Day must also be

a day of reflection and renewed commitment. The constitutional promises of socio-economic justice and a dignified life are a continuous work in progress. The journey towards a more perfect union demands that we bridge gaps in development, ensure equitable opportunities for the youth of Jammu & Kashmir as for all Indians, and strengthen the bonds of mutual

respect. This January 26th, let's celebrate with more than just flags and parades. Let's make a promise together. A promise to stand by the values of our Constitution, to work for a future where every single citizen, in every corner of India, feels secure in their rights and feels they truly belong. That is the best way to honour our Republic.

A People-First Republic: Governance In Service Of Citizens

Democracy thrives when state action uplifts the last person through rights, reservation and welfare

Rajnath Singh

On 16th May 1952, while addressing the first popularly elected Parliament, the first President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad, underscored the historic significance of the moment. He also reminded the members that this marked only the completion of one stage of India's journey and in the second phase, there will be "no resting place for a nation or a people on their onward march."

It was a subtle yet profound reminder that while political independence and constitutional sovereignty had been achieved, the work of the Republic was far from complete. As Dr Prasad put it, the true task before India was "to bring a measure of happiness to our people and a lessening of the burdens they suffer from"—a charge that defined the moral purpose of the new Republic.

By placing this moral obligation at the heart of democratic governance, Dr Prasad reshaped the relationship between the State and its people. India would no longer be a nation of subjects, but a republic of citizens—equal in political voice, bound by the Constitution, and united as fellow travellers in a shared national journey.

The Indian Republic, therefore, was not born merely of freedom, but of a conscious constitutional choice that established democracy in the truest sense.

Democracy is often summed up as the government "of the people, by the people, and for the people"—a phrase that captures its essential philosophy.

The principle of "of the people" was realised with the adoption of the Constitution, which vested sovereignty in citizens and subjected State power to constitutional limits. The principle of "by the people" found

expression in the first General Elections of 1952, when universal adult franchise entrusted every adult Indian, regardless of background, with an equal political voice.

However, the third strand, "for the people," entails an ongoing obligation on the part of the State to provide agency and well-being to citizens. Every state action must be directed towards the goal of socio-economic justice and the uplift of marginalised and underprivileged sections. The Indian Constitution also enjoins the state to secure a social order for the promotion of the welfare of the people.

The success of a democratic republic lies in the extent to which governance serves the people. Democratic legitimacy is sustained not by procedures alone, but by performance—by the State's ability to respond to social needs, reduce inequalities, and uphold human dignity. The strength of a republic is measured by how it treats its weakest citizens.

Indian political thought has consistently emphasised a human-centric understanding of democracy. In ancient India, the concept of "Yoga-Kshema" advocated well-being and protection of the individual. Mahatma Gandhi's idea of Sarvodaya envisioned the upliftment of all, particularly the last person. Deendayal Upadhyaya's Ekatma Manavvad articulated a holistic, human-centred approach to development.

In contemporary governance, the vision of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" echoes an enduring ideological commitment to inclusive, people-centric governance. This commitment, in which the State actively works "for the people" by prioritising the uplift of the weakest and most vulnerable, has yielded remarkable results over the last 12 years under

the leadership of PM Modi. The government has translated ideological vision into tangible action, delivering inclusive growth that reaches every corner and section of society.

Under Part 4 of the Constitution, the state is duty-bound to make provision for just and humane conditions of work. By consolidating twenty-nine labour laws into four comprehensive Labour Codes, an efficient framework has been created to promote workers' rights and welfare in accordance with the constitutional directive.

In the last decade, socio-economic justice has been given increased priority to promote inclusive development "for the people". According to the World Bank's Spring 2025 Poverty and Equity Brief, over the past decade, India has lifted 171 million people out of extreme poverty. Economically Weaker Sections have been provided reservations in educational institutions and employment to further the goal of affirmative action.

Progressive legislation, such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, has been enacted to uphold dignity and equality and to provide substantive justice for historically disadvantaged groups.

One of the most powerful illustrations of this people-centric governance is the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). The Mission operationalised the democratic ideal of "for the people" at the grassroots level. Far more than a sanitation initiative, it became a nationwide movement centred on human dignity, public health, women's safety, and social inclusion. By addressing an issue long neglected despite its profound impact on everyday life, the Swachh Bharat Mission has emerged as the world's largest and most

successful people-led and people-driven public movement of this century.

Welfare of the deprived, less-abled, aged, and those facing personal tragedy/misfortune is necessary to ensure equality of opportunity and status. The provision of free food to more than 80 crore persons under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana is an example of this.

For millions of Indian families, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana has meant more than just a policy—it has meant dignity and hope in their darkest hours. With 53% of beneficiaries being women and over 72% from rural India, the scheme has expanded access to life insurance nationwide.

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave the clarion call for Aatmanirbhar Bharat, it was not merely an economic slogan but an extension of self-reliance at the individual level. Through initiatives such as the Mudra Yojana and the Skill India Mission, the emphasis was on empowering citizens to become self-reliant, entrepreneurial, and confident in their own abilities. Self-reliance lies at the core of individual autonomy, and these interventions gave it a decisive boost.

Similarly, Ayushman Bharat sought to expand freedom by ensuring access to dignified and affordable healthcare, while the Jan Dhan Yojana brought millions of the poor into the formal banking system. By freeing them from dependence on unscrupulous moneylenders, it restored financial security and personal dignity to those who had long been excluded from institutional support.

This same democratic imperative of governance "for the people" finds powerful expression in the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, which provides 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and

State Legislative Assemblies.

This reform reinforces "of the people" by widening the social base from which sovereignty is exercised. It enriches "by the people" by making representative institutions more reflective of society's diversity. Most importantly, it advances the principle of "for the people" by ensuring that governance outcomes are shaped by perspectives rooted in lived experiences.

India's democratic journey, therefore, is not a static constitutional achievement but a continuous national project. While the Constitution and elections establish the framework of democracy, the Republic is sustained through responsive governance, ethical leadership, and constant engagement with the people's aspirations. Democracy, in its truest sense, endures when the State remains unwaveringly committed to governing "for the people".

The strength of the Republic lies not only in the endurance of its institutions but in the continual effort to align governance with the lived realities of its people. Each generation is called upon to renew the constitutional promise—that freedom must translate into dignity, opportunity, and justice for all. The Indian Republic is not a finished project; it is a shared responsibility, sustained by democratic participation and judged by how faithfully the State serves its citizens.

On this 77th Republic Day, it can be said that citizens are at the centre of governance today, and the Indian Republic is advancing, strengthening social justice, enabling economic inclusion, and reinforcing the constitutional vision of a welfare-oriented democratic republic.

The author is the Union Minister of Defence

Why Asking AI Feels So Good

Why our brains enjoy the relief that comes from AI responses

Ankita Guchait

When was the last time you asked a chatbot something personal like, "Can you help me with this?"—and felt a small wave of relief when the answer appeared right away?

You are not alone. More and more, people are turning to conversational AI not just for information, but also for emotional reassurance and clarity. That quiet sense of, "OK, that helps," reflects deep psychological and neurobiological processes: how our brains respond to certainty, feedback, prediction, and reward.

From a psychological perspective, interacting with AI taps into familiar human mechanisms: seeking reassurance when we are uncertain, building trust through clear feedback, and basic forms of learning from experience. What is new is not the psychology itself, but how quickly and widely these mechanisms are activated in the digital world.

Information Seeking or Reassurance Seeking?

Psychological research has long shown that people often ask the same questions again and again, not to get new information, but to ease anxiety. In cases of health anxiety or excessive online searching, this kind of repeated checking usually serves to soothe emotions rather than solve a problem (Starcevic, 2013; Starcevic & Berle, 2013).

Conversational AI fits this pattern perfectly. When people return to chatbots, they are often looking for confirmation that their thoughts make sense, that their reactions are normal, or that they are not overlooking something important. The answer matters, but so does the sense of relief it brings.

Why AI Feedback Feels Rewarding

Part of AI's appeal comes from how our brains handle prediction and feedback. Decades of neuroscience research show that dopamine, a key chemical involved in learning and motivation, signals the difference between what we expect and what actually happens (Schultz, Dayan, & Montague, 1997; Schultz, 2016).

When feedback comes quickly and clearly,



the brain registers that uncertainty has been resolved. That sense of resolution can feel rewarding in itself. In reinforcement learning, a concept used in both neuroscience and artificial intelligence, behaviour is shaped by feedback loops that encourage actions linked to positive outcomes (Sutton & Barto, 2018).

Even though we don't yet have direct measurements of dopamine release during AI use, the way conversational systems deliver feedback—fast, responsive, and sometimes surprisingly helpful—resembles other digital environments that are known to engage the brain's reward circuits and keep attention focused (Montag et al., 2019).

Reinforcement and Reassurance

In humans, dopamine-driven learning doesn't need big rewards. Small signals like clarity, confirmation, or relief are often enough to shape behaviour. When a chatbot offers reassurance at just the right moment, that relief can stick in our minds.

Over time, the brain learns: When I feel uncertain, this helps.

This process helps explain why people may keep returning to AI during moments of doubt, stress, or indecision. It's not that every response is perfect, but sometimes it comes exactly when uncertainty feels hardest to bear.

Emotional Validation Without a Human Unlike traditional search engines,

conversational AI feels more like a dialogue. It mirrors our language, notices emotion, and responds in ways that feel attentive. Humans are wired to pick up on social feedback, and even simple signals of understanding, like feeling heard, can help reduce stress.

Interestingly, this effect happens even when we know the system is not conscious or truly relational. The brain responds to how we interact, not to what the source actually is.

Using AI With Awareness

The same psychological mechanisms that make AI feel comforting also introduce potential risks. Rapid reassurance can crowd out reflection. Polished, confident language may conceal uncertainty. The relief that

follows can subtly reinforce reliance.

Using AI thoughtfully does not require avoiding it. It requires paying attention to why we are turning to it.

Helpful questions to consider include:

Am I looking for insight or immediate reassurance?

Am I allowing space for uncertainty before handing it off?

Am I balancing AI input with human judgment and connection?

AI did not create our need for reassurance. It simply delivers it efficiently. Recognising the psychology behind that relief helps us use these tools without surrendering curiosity, confidence, or resilience.

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Source: Psychology Today

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Celebrating National Girl Child Day

Progress, initiatives, and achievements in girl empowerment

Press Information Bureau

National Girl Child Day is celebrated annually in India on January 24, dedicated to highlighting the rights, education, health, nutrition, and overall welfare of girls.

Initiated in 2008 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), the day serves as a platform to raise awareness about gender discrimination, promote equal opportunities, and foster an environment where girls can thrive as empowered citizens. It underscores the critical role of girls in shaping a brighter, more equitable future for the nation. This, in turn, aligns effectively with India's vision of women-led development and Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Advocating for Empowerment of Girls

National Girl Child Day provides an opportunity to address persistent inequalities faced by girls, including gender biases, female foeticide, challenges related to the child sex ratio, child marriage, and barriers to education and health. Furthermore, it emphasises changing societal attitudes to value and respect girls as equals, thereby promoting their holistic development.

Key focus areas include advancing girls' education, skill development, digital inclusion, participation in STEM fields, mental health support, safety from violence, and opportunities for leadership roles. Significant progress has been made through sustained efforts, particularly under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme, with the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) rising from around 918 in 2014-15 to 930 in 2023-24 at the national level.

In addition to this, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls at the secondary level (Classes 9-10) in India has shown improvement, rising from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 78.0% in 2023-24. Furthermore, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls at the secondary level reached 80.2 per cent in 2024-25.

This upward trend reflects higher female participation and the impact of initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Samagra Shiksha. This underscores ongoing efforts to enhance girls' access to secondary education amid broader challenges in retention and transition.

Key Government Initiatives and Achievements

The Government of India has implemented a range of targeted schemes to protect, educate, and empower the girl child, many integrated under the umbrella Mission Shakti, which combines safety, security, and empowerment interventions.

Mission Shakti

Mission Shakti was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2022 (effective from April 1, 2022) as an integrated umbrella scheme for the 15th Finance Commission period (2021-26). It strengthens interventions for women's safety, security, and empowerment through two key sub-schemes:

Sambal (focused on safety and security, incorporating One Stop Centres, Women Helpline, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and Nari Adalats)

Samarthya (focused on empowerment, including Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Palna, Shakti Sadan, Sakhi Niwas, and SANKALP hubs).

This mission promotes convergence across government departments, citizen participation, and life-cycle support to enable women and girls to thrive as equal partners in nation-building. In the Union Budget 2025-26, Mission Shakti, received an allocation of Rs. 3,150 crores. Complementing these efforts are strong legal frameworks designed to protect children and prevent gender-based violence.

Facilitating Empowerment through Education and Skill Development

Recognising education as the cornerstone of gender equity and long-term empowerment, several flagship programmes have been designed to address enrolment gaps, enhance learning outcomes, and open pathways to STEM and professional fields for girls.

Progress in School Education for the Girl Child:

The total number of girl students enrolled from the foundational to secondary stages stood at 11,93,34,162 during 2024-25.

A total of 14,21,205 schools reported the availability of girls' toilets, of which 13,72,881 are functional.

Samagra Shiksha

This integrated scheme for school education (from pre-school to Class XII), launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Education, subsumes earlier programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. It aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and focuses on bridging gender and social category gaps through targeted interventions such as separate toilets for girls, stipend for children with special needs (CWSN), gender-sensitive teaching materials, and teacher sensitisation programs. Samagra Shiksha emphasizes inclusive quality education, foundational literacy/numeracy, and vocational exposure, ensuring equitable access for girls from disadvantaged sections.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)

KGBVs provide residential schooling facilities



for girls aged 10-18 from marginalised communities (SC/ST/OBC/minority/BPL families), covering Classes VI to XII in educationally backward blocks. Upgraded under Samagra Shiksha, KGBVs ensure smooth transition from elementary to higher secondary levels.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)

Launched in 2015 in Haryana, this flagship scheme has marked over a decade of impact (celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2025 with nationwide events). Now integrated into Mission Shakti's Sambal sub-scheme and expanded across all districts, BBBP focuses on preventing gender-biased sex selection, ensuring survival and protection, and promoting education. It has driven improvements in Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB), increased girls' enrolment in secondary education[5], enhanced healthcare access, and fostered community-level behavioural change through multi-sectoral campaigns and collaborations with NGOs and media.

UDAAN

UDAAN is an innovative initiative launched in 2014 by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), under the guidance of the Ministry of Education. The project specifically targets the low enrolment of girl students in premier engineering colleges. It does so by bridging the gap between school-level learning and the demands of engineering entrance examinations (such as JEE).

It provides free online resources, including study materials, video tutorials, virtual classes, and weekend contact sessions. The flagship initiative aims to empower Class XI and XII girl students, particularly from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to prepare effectively and increase their participation in STEM higher education.

This scheme aligns with broader national goals of promoting gender equity in technical education and supports the vision of inclusive access to quality, higher education for girls.

Nurturing Aspirations through Vocational Training for Young Adolescent Girls (NAVYA)

Launched on June 24, 2025, in Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh, NAVYA is a joint pilot initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). It targets adolescent girls aged 16-18 years (with at least Class 10 qualification) in 27 Aspirational and North-Eastern districts across 19 states, with an initial training goal of 3,850 girls under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 (PMKVY 4.0). The programme focuses on equipping participants with vocational skills in non-traditional and emerging sectors. Aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047, NAVYA promotes socio-economic independence, breaks gender stereotypes in the workforce, and empowers girls as agents of inclusive development, especially in underserved and tribal regions. The initiative covers 27 districts across 19 States, targets training 3,850 adolescent girls under PMKVY 4.0 in non-traditional and futuristic sectors like digital marketing, cybersecurity, AI-enabled services, and green jobs[6].

Vigyan Jyoti Scheme

Implemented by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Vigyan Jyoti scheme encourages meritorious girls from Classes IX-XII (especially rural areas) to pursue STEM fields. Activities include counselling, lab visits, workshops, role model interactions, science camps, and academic support. Since its launch, the Vigyan Jyoti programme has supported more than 80,000 meritorious girls from 300 districts spanning 35 States and Union Territories[7].

Scholarships for Girl Child

The Government of India has implemented several targeted scholarship schemes to promote girls' education, reduce dropout rates, and support meritorious female students across secondary, higher, and technical education levels.

Enrolment of Females in STEM Subjects

To boost female enrolment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), supernumerary seats have been introduced for women in IITs and NITs. This model has improved gender diversity across other higher education institutions nationwide.

UGC NET-Junior Research Fellowship

The fellowships are provided to pursue Ph.D. in all disciplines, including STEM education. During FY 2023-24, out of total 12323 scholars in STEM subjects, 6435 are women which is more than 50%.

During 2024-25, out of a total of 13727 scholars in STEM subjects, 7293 are women, which is more than 53% of the total fellows.

National Scholarship for Post Graduate Studies

The Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship for College and University Students was implemented on the National Scholarship Portal (NSP) in 2023-24. It supports postgraduate students pursuing regular, full-time programs by merging four existing schemes: P.G. Scholarship for University Rank Holders; P.G. Scholarship for GATE/GPAT qualified students for M.Tech/M.E./M.Pharm; P.G. Scholarship for Professional Courses for SC/ST candidates; and P.G. Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child. A merit list is prepared for 10,000 slots, with 30% reserved for women (3,000 selected), adhering to Government of India reservation norms. Slots are equally divided between STEM subjects (50%) and Humanities (50%), and scholars receive Rs. 1,50,000 annually for the program's duration. Rs. 1,50,000/- per year is awarded to students for the duration of programme.

According to the AISHE report, female post-graduate enrolment has grown substantially from 2014-15 to 2022-23. It increased from 19,86,296 to 32,02,950, reflecting an absolute rise of 12,16,654 students and a 61.3% growth rate.

Enrolment of females in Ph.D. Degree

As per the AISHE Report, between 2014-15 to 2022-23, Ph.D. enrolment among females has shown remarkable growth. Female Ph.D. enrolment increased from 47,717 in 2014-15 to 1,12,441 in 2022-23, registering an absolute rise of 64,724 candidates and a growth of about 135.6%.

AICTE PRAGATI Scholarship Scheme

The AICTE PRAGATI Scholarship Scheme, launched in 2014-15, aims to empower meritorious girl students to pursue higher education, offering 10,000 scholarships annually—5,000 each for Diploma and Degree courses. It covers 23 States/UTs and all eligible girls from the remaining 13 regions, including the Northeast and J&K. In 2024-25, 35,998 female students benefited from the scheme, highlighting its wide reach and impact.

Gender Equality Improving in Indian HELs

Between 2014-15 and 2022-23 (Provisional), there has been significant growth in Higher Educational Institutions (HELs) in India. The number of HELs registered in the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) increased from 51,534 in 2014-15 to 60,380 in 2022-23. During the same period, student enrolment in higher education also witnessed substantial growth, rising from 3.42 crore in 2014-15 to 4.46 crore in 2022-23. Notably, female enrolment experienced a remarkable increase, reaching 2.18 crore in 2022-23 compared to 1.57 crore in 2014-15, which represents a 38% rise. The Female Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) also improved, going up from 22.9 in 2014-15 to 30.2 in 2022-23(Provisional), reflecting steady progress towards gender parity in higher education. Additionally, India has achieved one of the highest rates of female participation in STEM education globally, with women comprising 43% of total enrolments in STEM disciplines.

As a result of the various initiatives and schemes put in place by the Department of Higher Education, Female enrolment in IITs and NITs has more than doubled—from under 10

percent to over 20 percent—thanks to the introduction of supernumerary seats. The number of Higher Educational Institutions (HELs) rose from 51,534 in 2014-15 to 60,380 in 2022-23 (Provisional), with total student enrolment increasing to 4.46 crore, including a 38 percent rise in female enrolment to 2.18 crore. Female Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) improved to 30.2 in 2022-23(Provisional), up from 22.9 in 2014-15, reflecting progress in gender parity. Women now make up 43 percent of STEM enrolments—among the highest globally. Infrastructure has also improved, with girls' toilets in schools rising to 97.5 percent. Initiatives like IIT-Madras's Vidya Shakti Scheme further support rural and female students in STEM education.

Ensuring Safety and Health for Every Daughter

The Government prioritises a secure and nurturing environment for every girl through comprehensive laws against abuse and child marriage. Central interventions in this domain encompass:

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 offer comprehensive safeguards for children. POCSO is a gender-neutral law that defines a child as anyone under 18 and criminalises sexual assault, harassment, and child pornography. It incorporates child-friendly procedures, mandatory reporting requirements, and the establishment of special courts to ensure speedy trials.

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 replaced the earlier Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (Sarda Act). It shifts the focus from merely restraining child marriages to legally prohibiting them, while providing enhanced protection and relief for the affected. The Act provides the legal backbone to empower girls, ensuring their right to education and health, countering the severe risks of early marriage like interrupted schooling, health complications, and limited opportunities. Under the Act, child marriages remain voidable at the option of the party who was a child at the time of the marriage. The affected individual (or their guardian/next friend) can petition a district court to annul the marriage by a decree of nullity, typically within two years of attaining majority.

Bal Vivah Mukti Bharat

Building on the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, the Government of India launched the Bal Vivah Mukti Bharat (Child Marriage-Free India) campaign in November 2024, under the Ministry of Women and Child Development. This nationwide initiative aims to eradicate child marriages through intensive awareness, enforcement, community mobilisation, and multi-sectoral collaboration. It aligns closely with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.3, which targets the elimination of all harmful practices—including child, early, and forced marriages—by 2030. The campaign includes features like a dedicated portal for reporting and awareness, district-level monitoring, awards for high-performing areas, and a 100-day intensive phase (launched in December 2025), to accelerate progress toward reducing prevalence by 10% by 2026 and achieving a child marriage-free India by 2030.

Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG)

The Scheme for Adolescent Girls targets girls aged 14-18 years in Aspirational Districts nationwide and all districts of North Eastern States. It aims to improve their health and nutritional status. There are two main components under the scheme.

The nutrition component provides supplementary food and nutrition (600 calories, 18-20g protein and micronutrients) for 300 days annually, delivered as Hot Cooked Meals and Take Home Ration incorporating local produce, fortified rice, millets, nuts, and fresh fruits/vegetables[8][9]. The non-nutrition component, through inter-ministerial convergence, includes

Iron-Folic Acid (IFA) supplementation, health check-ups, nutrition & health education, skill-ing, and anaemia management. It also motivates adolescent girls to go back to formal schooling, provides life skills, literacy and numeracy skills, and helps them improve their decision-making capabilities. As of 31 December 2024, 24,08,074 adolescent girls are registered on the Poshan Tracker app.

Menstrual Hygiene Scheme (MHS)

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched a scheme to promote menstrual hygiene among rural adolescent girls aged 10-19 years.

The scheme aims to build awareness about safe and hygienic menstrual practices among adolescent girls.

It seeks to improve access to affordable, high-quality sanitary napkins in rural areas.

Environment-friendly and safe disposal of sanitary napkins is also a key focus of this scheme.

Launched in 2011 across 107 selected districts, the scheme provided subsidised napkins under the brand "Freedays." From 2014 onwards, states procure napkins under the National Health Mission, with ASHAs managing distribution and awareness activities. As on November 2025, the collective sales of Suvridha Napkins is 96.30 Crores. ASHA workers distribute subsidised sanitary napkin packs and conduct monthly health awareness meetings. While the Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) provides Jan Aushadhi Suvridha sanitary pads at Re. 1 per pad to ensure affordable menstrual hygiene access.

POSHAN Abhiyaan

Launched on 8th March 2018 in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, the Abhiyaan aims to improve the nutritional status of adolescent girls, pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children aged 0-6 years. Through technology-driven monitoring, inter-sectoral convergence, and community participation, the programme aims to reduce stunting, wasting, and underweight issues in children primarily. This adopts a holistic approach in addressing malnutrition.

Mission Vatsalya

Mission Vatsalya is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme which aims to foster a sensitive, supportive, and synchronized ecosystem for children in difficult circumstances as they transit different ages and stages of their development. The Scheme provides financial support to state Government/UT Administrations, for delivering of institutional care and non-institutional care services to the such children as defined under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (as amended in 2021) and Rules thereof.

Complementing these efforts, an emergency outreach helpline for children as mandated under the JJ Act, 2015 is run in coordination with States/UTs under the scheme with integration with 112 Helpline of MHA. State WCD Control Rooms have been set up in all States/UTs and 728 District Child Help Line Units have been connected,(as on 21.01.2026).

Further, the Mission Vatsalya Portal - a unified digital platform has been developed that integrates earlier child protection systems like 'Track Child' and 'Khoya-Paya', making services for missing, orphaned, abandoned, and surrendered children more accessible and transparent. By providing a single workspace for stakeholders such as CWC, JJB, and CCI, it reduces duplication of work, strengthens monitoring through MIS dashboards.

Fostering Financial Inclusion

In order to promote long-term economic security and independence for girls, the Government of India has introduced dedicated savings and investment schemes that encourage families to plan for their daughters' education, marriage, and future needs.

Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY)

Launched in 2015 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as a part of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, this flagship offers financial security and savings for girls' future education and marriage. By November 2024, more than 4.2 crore accounts had been opened nationwide, indicating strong public participation and confidence in the scheme. Marking its 11-year milestone this month, SSY continues to encourage families to invest in their daughters' futures—fostering financial inclusion, gender equity, and long-term social progress.

Conclusion

National Girl Child Day 2026 serves as a reminder of the importance of empowering girls and fostering an environment of equality and opportunity. Through different initiatives, supported by community participation, NGOs, schools, and Anganwadis, measurable gains have been made in girls' survival, education, and empowerment. Through multi-sectoral awareness campaigns, policy enforcement, and community engagement, India continues to build momentum towards gender equity and societal attitudes.

With the ongoing commitment from government, civil society, and communities, India is advancing towards an equitable society where every girl child is valued, protected, and empowered to realise her full potential.

‘Op Sindoor’ emerged

of civil society. Through their steadfast commitment and tireless efforts, they continue to fortify our democracy and drive holistic progress across the Union Territory,” he added.

“I offer special commendation to the brave personnel of our armed forces, paramilitary forces, and the Jammu & Kashmir Police. Their unwavering vigilance, courage, and sacrifice stand as a shield for our people, enabling us to live in an atmosphere of peace, security, and harmony,” LG Sinha said.

“With renewed purpose and collective determination, let us commit ourselves to guiding Jammu & Kashmir towards greater heights of development and prosperity,” he added.

LG Sinha said, “We must harness and consolidate our collective strengths to accelerate economic progress with unwavering determination. By reinforcing our established areas of excellence and creating robust, future-ready infrastructure across Jammu & Kashmir, we must also pursue with courage and consistency the new and emerging engines of growth.”

“Our institutions of higher education must prepare themselves for a future driven by constant innovation, technological proficiency, and a dynamic entrepreneurial ethos,” he said, adding, “I bow in reverence to the visionary architects of our Republic, whose exceptional wisdom, courage, and sacrifice won us freedom and gifted us a constitution rooted in the timeless ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. These enduring principles and values uphold our ethos and reinforce the democratic and socialist ideals that define our nation.”

He said, “Let us set our sights on a leadership role in the knowledge-based economy and in information technology. Let us resolve to ensure that every citizen, especially our youth and women, has fair access to quality education, healthcare, and equal opportunities to fully realise their potential.”

“May each one of us rise to our responsibilities with sincerity and selflessness, working for the greater good of society. Together, let us reaffirm our steadfast dedication to building a strong, prosperous, and developed India,” he added. (KNO)

India a messenger

and women empowerment, and also touched upon the topics of Vande Mataram and growing economy of the country.

President Murmu outlined India's position as a “messenger” of peace while reinforcing ancient civilisational commitment to universal harmony.

“In our tradition, we have been offering prayers for peace to prevail in the entire universe. The future of humanity can remain secure only if there is peace in the whole world.

“In an atmosphere marked by conflicts in many parts of the world, India is spreading the message of peace,” she said.

During her speech, the President also underscored a firm commitment to national security by highlighting the recent success of Operation Sindoor, a precision strike that dismantled terror infrastructure across the border.

“Last year, our country launched precision strikes against terror infrastructure...terror centres were destroyed, and many terrorists met their end,” she said, highlighting country's “self-reliance” in the field of defence that powered the historic success of Operation Sindoor.

Reflecting on the strength of the Armed Forces, the President recalled personal visits to the Siachen Base Camp and sorties in the Sukhoi, Rafale, and the submarine INS Vaghsheer.

“Based on the strength of the Army, Air Force, and Navy, people have complete trust in our defence-readiness,” she said, linking the military readiness to India's ability to advocate for peace from a position of strength.

In her address, President Murmu hailed the rise of “nari shakti” (women power) as the cornerstone of India's journey toward becoming a developed nation by 2047.

She emphasised that the “active and empowered participation of women is extremely important for the development of the country”.

From the depths of rural self-help groups to the frontiers of space and defence, the story of modern India is increasingly being written by its daughters, she said.

The President noted that over 10 crore women associated with self-help groups are currently redefining the grassroots economy.

She said that women now make up nearly 46 per cent of representatives in Panchayati Raj institutions and the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam is set to take political empowerment to “unprecedented heights”, ensuring women-led development remains a national priority.

The past year served as a “golden chapter” for Indian women in the global arena, the President said, as she took special pride in the dominance of India's daughters in sports, specifically citing the historic win at the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup and victory in the Blind Women's T20 World Cup.

President Murmu highlighted that women are making significant marks in the Armed Forces, space research, and entrepreneurship, proving that no field remains a “traditional stereotype” for the women in the country.

The ‘Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’ campaign was credited with encouraging girls’ education across the country, she said.

“With increasing contribution by women, our country will set an example of an inclusive Republic based on gender equality,” the President remarked, signalling that the future of Viksit Bharat is inseparable from the empowerment of its female citizens.

She also underscored India's transformative progress in poverty alleviation, noting that millions of citizens who struggled with poverty for decades have finally been lifted above the poverty line.

Embodying the spirit of ‘Antyodaya’, the government's focus remains on ensuring these citizens do not fall back into the “poverty trap”, she said.

The President affirmed the core ideal that “no one should go hungry in our country”, with various central government schemes currently providing vital support to nearly 81 crore beneficiaries.

She emphasized that the path to a ‘Viksit Bharat’ must be inclusive with special focus placed on tribal and marginalised communities through targeted interventions.

“Such efforts for the welfare of the poor give concrete shape to Mahatma Gandhi's ideal of Sarvodaya (progress for all),” she said.

President Murmu also announced that the Constitution of India is now available in all 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule and said the milestone aims to foster “constitutional nationalism”, allowing citizens to engage with the nation's foundational document in their mother tongue.

The initiative is part of a broader shift toward “good governance” based on mutual trust, where the

gap between the government and the general public is being systematically closed through technology and legislative reform, she said.

The administration has pivoted toward a citizen-centric model by stripping away bureaucratic hurdles. Key efforts include deregulation of thousands of unnecessary rules that have been repealed and compliance requirements eliminated, she added.

The President highlighted that national goals are now being achieved through unprecedented public participation, transforming government campaigns into powerful mass movements.

A primary example of this “revolutionary change” is India's global leadership in the digital economy. Today, more than half of the world's digital transactions occur within India, she said.

Emphasising that building a Viksit Bharat is a “shared responsibility”, she called upon local institutions in every village and city to act as instruments of progressive change.

She also highlighted a significant push toward cultural decolonisation saying the government has reaffirmed its commitment to eradicating the “vestiges of colonial mindset” in a time-bound manner.

The President said that today's India is moving forward with a renewed self-confidence, rooted deeply in its glorious traditions and a “Gyan Bharatam” (knowledgeable India) approach.

She emphasized that self-reliance is not merely economic but also cultural and by placing a renewed emphasis on Indian languages and indigenous knowledge systems, the state is providing a distinct cultural foundation for its pursuit of total self-reliance.

President Murmu hailed India's ascent as the world's fastest-growing major economy, attributing this resilience to deep structural reforms and a commitment to self-reliance.

Despite a backdrop of global economic uncertainty, India is now firmly on track to become the world's third-largest economy in the near future, she said.

A cornerstone of this economic transformation has been the Goods and Services Tax (GST), which the President described as the most significant decision for economic integration since Independence.

She said that the journey toward becoming the third largest economy is being guided by the twin principles of ‘atmanirbharta’ and ‘swadeshi’ and the government's focus on world-class infrastructure and labour reforms is expected to further accelerate the development of enterprises.

The President also highlighted the ongoing celebrations marking 150 years since the composition of ‘Vande Mataram’.

In her address, she emphasised how ‘Vande Mataram’ transcended linguistic barriers to unify the masses during the freedom struggle. She remarked that translations into various Indian languages have further cemented the song as a universal symbol of oneness.

“From north to south and from east to west, the fabric of our ancient cultural unity was woven by our ancestors. Every effort to promote this spirit of oneness through ‘Vande Mataram’ is highly commendable,” the President added.

J&K ‘trust in

resonate deeply. Unprecedented electoral participation in 2024 confirms that citizens view voting as a duty, not mere right,” the Lieutenant Governor said while addressing the 16th National Voters’ Day celebrations on Sunday in Jammu.

Speaking on the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor called upon the officers to cultivate awareness among citizens regarding profound power of their franchise and motivate them to exercise it with thoughtful prudence to become a true architect of a strong, fair and flourishing India.

“Every ballot cast becomes foundational to our nation's edifice. Thus, elections represent far more than present-day choices- they embody our sacred duty to posterity, to collective destiny, and to democratic resilience.

The franchise reinforces accountability, transparency, and governmental responsiveness. I firmly believe a vote is the potent expression of citizen aspiration, conviction, and purpose. Jammu and Kashmir must never forget: democracy's essence lies in this-our collective will alone determine our nation's path,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that every vote holds the power to shape policies, institutions, and national direction. He said, when exercised responsibly, the ballot becomes our most potent tool for determining the nation's destiny.

“India, the world's largest democracy, has reached remarkable heights while championing equality and harmony. Our democratic foundations are unmatched in depth and strength. Though many nations won freedom when we did, democracy has thrived most vigorously on Indian soil,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor congratulated youth and citizens who, after decades, received their first complete opportunity to exercise their franchise.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor administered the National Voters’ Day pledge to the officials and the people.

The Lieutenant Governor felicitated District Election Officers from across J&K, senior officials of Civil and Police administration, Youth icons and other stakeholder departments. He also distributed Electors Photo Identity Cards among the new voters.

The celebrations were marked by enthralling performances from artists, members of social organisations and youth. Their creative depictions of the importance of voting received special appreciation from the Lieutenant Governor.

The event also featured a video message from the Chief Election Commissioner of India, Gyanesh Kumar.

Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Nalin Prabhat, DGP; Shaleen Kabra and Shailendra Kumar - Additional Chief Secretaries; Chandraker Bharti, Principal Secretary, Home; Sanjeev Verma, Chief Electoral Officer J&K; Bhim Sen Tuti, IGP, Jammu; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu; senior officials of Police and civil administration; prominent citizens and youth in large number were present.

PM Modi highlights

strength of family and society comes together, even the biggest challenges can be overcome,” PM Modi remarked.

He added that the community-led effort had a visible impact, with shops in Sheikhgund stopping the sale of tobacco products. The initiative also helped spread awareness among residents about the harmful effects of drugs and other intoxicants.

The Prime Minister praised the village's collective resolve, saying the Sheikhgund example demonstrated how grassroots efforts and community participation can bring about meaningful social change.

FIRST ‘MANN KI BAAT’ OF 2026

He said, “This is the first ‘Mann Ki Baat’ of the year 2026. Tomorrow, on the 26th of January, we shall all celebrate our Republic Day. Our Constitution came into effect on this very day. This day; the 26th of January, gives us an opportunity to pay homage to the founding fathers of our Constitution. Today, the 25th of January, is also a very significant day. Today is National Voter’s Day... Matadata Diwas. A voter is the soul of democracy.”

He said, “Usually, when someone turns 18, becomes a voter, it is considered a normal milestone in life. However, this occasion is actually a major milestone in any Indian's life. Therefore, it is very important that we celebrate becoming a voter in our country. Just as we wish and celebrate birthdays... similarly, whenever a young person becomes a voter for the first time, the entire neighbourhood, village, or city should come together to congratulate them and distribute sweets. That would raise awareness about voting and strengthen the feeling of how important it is to be a voter.”

URGES YOUNGSTERS TO REGISTER AS VOTERS

“I would like to express my deep appreciation to all those people in the country who are involved in the electoral process and work at the grassroots level to keep our democracy vibrant. Today, on ‘Voter’s Day’, I would once again urge my young friends to register themselves as voters upon turning 18. This will fulfil the sense of duty that the Constitution expects of every citizen and will also strengthen India's democracy,” he added.

PEOPLE RELIVING THEIR MEMORIES

“These days I am seeing an interesting trend on social media. People are reliving their memories of the year 2016. In the same spirit, today I too would like to share one of my memories with you. Ten years ago, in January 2016, we embarked upon an ambitious journey. We had realised then, that even if it were a small one, it was very important for the future of the country for the young generation. At that time, some people could not understand what it was all about, after all! Friends, the journey I am referring to is the journey of Start-up India. The heroes of this amazing journey are our young friends. The innovations they came up with by stepping out of their comfort zones are being recorded in history,” PM Modi said.

INDIA HAS TURNED INTO THIRD LARGEST START-UPS ECOSYSTEM

PM Modi said, “Today India has turned into the third largest Start-ups ecosystem in the world. These Start-ups are out of the box; they are working in sectors that were unimaginable even 10 years ago. AI, Space, Nuclear Energy, Semiconductors, Mobility, Green Hydrogen, Biotechnology... you name it and you'll find one Indian Start-up or the other working in that sector. I salute all my young friends who are associated with one Start-up or the other or want to start one of their own.”

“Today through ‘Mann Ki Baat’, I want to urge my countrymen; especially the youth associated with industry and Start-ups. India's economy is progressing rapidly. The world is watching India. At such a juncture, we all shoulder a huge responsibility. That responsibility is to emphasize on quality. The era of ‘it just happens... it works... it will go through somehow’ is over. Come, let us prioritize quality with all our might this year. Let our only mantra be quality, quality and only quality. Better quality today than what it was yesterday. Let us resolve to improve the quality of whatever we manufacture. Be it our textiles, technology or electronics... even packaging; the connotation of an Indian product should become – ‘top quality’. Come, let us make excellence our benchmark,” PM Modi said, adding, “Let us resolve that there will be no laxity on quality, nor will there be any compromise on quality. And I had expressed from Red Fort - ‘Zero Defect Zero Effect’. Only by doing this shall we be able to accelerate the journey towards a ‘Viksit Bharat’.

PRaises AZAMGARH PEOPLE

He said, “The people of our country are very innovative. Seeking solutions to problems is part of our countrymen's nature. Some do this through start-ups; while others try to find a solution through the collective strength of society. One such effort has emerged in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh. The people there have lent life anew to the Tamsa River that flows through this place. The Tamsa is not just a river; it's a Live continuum of our cultural and spiritual heritage,” PM Modi said.

“This river, which crosses Ayodhya and merges with the Ganga, was once the axis of life for the people of this region. However, on account of pollution, its uninterrupted flow was obstructed. Silt, garbage and filth had blocked the flow of this river. After that, the people here started a campaign to give it a new lease of life. The river was cleaned, and shady, fruit-bearing trees were planted along its banks. Local people engaged themselves at the task with a sense of duty... and through everyone's efforts, the river was revived,” he added.

10 WATER RESERVOIRS REVIVED IN ANANTHAPUR

PM Modi said, “A similar endeavour of public participation has also been witnessed in Ananthapur, Andhra Pradesh. This is a region that has been grappling with a severe drought. The soil here is red and sandy, which is why people face water shortages. Many areas here do not receive rain over long periods. People sometimes even compare Anantapur to a desert drought.”

He said, “To address this problem, locals resolved to clean the reservoirs. After that, with the support of the administration, the ‘Ananta Neeru Sanrakshanam Project’ was launched. Under this effort, more than 10 reservoirs have been revived. These reservoirs are filling with water now. Simultaneously, more than 7,000 trees have been planted. This means that along with water conservation, the green cover in Anantapur has also increased. Children now, can also enjoy swimming here. In a way, the entire ecosystem here has been revitalized.”

IT'S HEARTENING TO SEE PEOPLE UNITING AND FULFILLING BIG RESOLVES

PM Modi said, “Whether it's Azamgarh, Ananthapur, or anywhere else in the country, it's heartening to see people uniting and fulfilling big resolves with a sense of duty. This spirit of public participation and collectivity is our country's greatest strength.”

BHAJANS, AND KIRTANS SOUL OF OUR CULTURE FOR CENTURIES

PM Modi said, “In our country, bhajans and kirtans have been the soul of our culture for centuries. We have listened to bhajans in temples, during kathas and every era has embodied Bhakti according to respective times. Today's generation is also achieving something spectacular. Today's youth have incorporated the spirit of devotion into their experiences and lifestyles. This thinking has given rise to a new cultural trend. You must have seen such videos on social media.”

“Large numbers of the youth are gathering in

different cities across the country. The stage is decorated... there is lighting, music... there is all the pomp and show, and the atmosphere is no less than a concert. It feels like a huge concert, but what is being sung there is the resonance of bhajans sung with complete concentration, dedication, and rhythm. This trend is being called ‘bhajan clubbing’ today, and it's becoming increasingly popular, especially among Gen Z,” he added.

“It is heartening to see that the dignity and purity of bhajans are maintained at these events. Devotion is not taken lightly; neither the decorum of words nor the emotion is compromised. The stage may be modern, the musical presentation may be different, but the core spirit remains the same; a constant flow of spirituality is felt there,” he said.

INDIAN COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA DOING COMMENDABLE WORK

PM Modi said, “Today our culture and festivals are making their mark across the world. Indian festivals are celebrated with great enthusiasm and joy in every corner of the world. Our Bharatvanshis, brothers & sisters of Indian origin, play a vital role in maintaining cultural vibrancy of all kinds. Wherever they are, they are preserving and promoting the essence of their culture. Our Indian community in Malaysia is also doing commendable work in this regard.”

He said, “You will be pleasantly surprised to know that there are more than 500 Tamil schools in Malaysia. In addition to teaching the Tamil language, other subjects are also taught in Tamil. Furthermore, along with Telugu and Punjabi there's also a lot of focus on other Indian languages.”

One society plays a major role in strengthening the historical and cultural ties between India and Malaysia. Its name is ‘Malaysia India Heritage Society’. In addition to various programs, this organization also organizes a heritage walk. This program covers the cultural sites that connect the two countries. Last month, the “Lal Paad Saree” iconic walk was organized in Malaysia. This sari has had a special connection to our culture of Bengal. This event set a record for the largest number of people wearing this sari, which was recorded in the Malaysian Book of Records. On this occasion, Odissi dance and Baul music won the hearts of the people. I can say: “I am proud of the Indian diaspora in Malaysia; they are bringing India and Malaysia even closer. My best wishes to our Indian diaspora in Malaysia.”

PRaises UNIQUE TRADITION OF CHANDANKI VILLAGE IN GUJARAT

PM Modi said, “Wherever we go in India, we are bound to witness something extraordinary and unprecedented. Often, these events are obscured by the media's glare. But they reveal the true strength of our society. They also provide a glimpse into our value systems, wherein the spirit of solidarity is paramount. The tradition of Chandanki village in Beharaji, Gujarat is unique. You would be surprised if I told you that the people here; especially the elderly, do not cook in their homes. The reason for this is the village's magnificent community kitchen. Food for the entire village is cooked in this community kitchen, and people sit together to eat. This tradition has been continuing for the past 15 years. Not just that, if someone is ill, a tiffin service is available, meaning - home delivery is also fully arranged for. These community meals fill people with joy. This initiative not only connects people; it also fosters a sense of family. Friends, India's family system is an integral part of our tradition. It is viewed with great curiosity in many countries around the world. In many countries, such family systems are highly respected.

UAE CELEBRATING 2026 AS YEAR OF THE FAMILY

PM Modi said, “Just a few ago, my brother, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, visited India. He conveyed to me that the UAE is celebrating 2026 as the Year of the Family. The aim is to strengthen harmony and community spirit among its people - indeed, it's a truly commendable initiative.

“There are many organizations in our country that have been selflessly engaged in social service for years. For example, there is an organization in Faridpur, East Medinipur, West Bengal. Its name is ‘Vivekananda Lok Shiksha Niketan’. This organization has been engaged in the care of children and the elderly over the last four decades. Along with providing education through the Gurukul system and training teachers, this organization is engaged in many noble endeavours for social welfare. I wish that this spirit of selfless service continues to gain strength among the countrymen,” he added.

YOUTH VERY CONSCIOUS ABOUT CLEANLINESS AROUND THEM

PM Modi said, “In ‘Mann Ki Baat’, we have consistently raised the issue of cleanliness. I am proud to see that our youth are very conscious about the cleanliness around them. I have learnt about one such unique effort in Arunachal Pradesh.”

“Arunachal is the land where the Sun's rays reach first in the country. Here, people greet each other with ‘Jai Hind. In Itanagar, a group of young people came together to clean areas that needed more attention. These young people made it their mission to clean public spaces in various cities. Subsequently, this campaign was also launched in Itanagar, Naharlagun, Doimukh, Seppa, Palin, and Pasighat. These young people have so far cleaned over 11 lakh kilograms of garbage. Imagine, friends, young people together removed 11 lakh kilograms of garbage,” the Prime Minister said.

“Another example is from Assam. In Nagaon, Assam, people are emotionally attached to the old streets there. Here, some people resolved to clean their streets together. Gradually, more people joined them. Thus, a team was formed that removed a lot of garbage from the streets. Friends, a similar effort is underway in Bengaluru. Sofa waste has become a major problem in Bengaluru, hence some professionals have come together to solve that issue in their own way,” he added.

“Today, many cities have teams dedicated to recycling landfill waste. One such team in Chennai has done excellent work. Such examples demonstrate the importance of every effort related to cleanliness. We must increase our efforts for cleanliness, either individually or as a team... only then will our cities become better,” PM Modi said.

PRaises EFFORTS OF BENOY DAS

He said, “When we talk about environmental protection, we often think of grand plans, grand campaigns, and large organizations. But many a time, change begins in a very simple way. From one person, one area, one step, and even small, sustained efforts can bring about significant change. The effort of Benoy Das, a resident of Cooch Behar, West Bengal, is an example of this. For the past several years, he has single-handedly worked to make his district green. Benoy Das ji has planted thousands of trees. He has often borne the entire cost of purchasing, planting, and caring for the saplings. Where necessary, he has collaborated with local people, students, and

municipal bodies. Through his efforts the greenery along the roadsides has further improved.”

COMMENDS FOREST GUARD FOR IDENTIFYING AND RECORDING MEDICINAL PLANTS

PM Modi said, “The endeavour of Jagdish Prasad Ahirwar ji, from Panna district in Madhya Pradesh is also highly commendable. He serves as a beat-guard in the forest. Once, during a patrol, he realized that information about many medicinal plants in the forest was not systematically recorded anywhere. Jagdish ji wanted to pass this knowledge on to the next generation. That's why, he began identifying and recording medicinal plants. He identified over one hundred and twenty five medicinal plants. He collected photograph and information about name, usage and location of each plant.”

He said, “The Forest Department compiled the information and published it as a book. The information contained in this book is now very useful to researchers, students and forest officials.”

“This same spirit of environment protection is being seen on a larger scale today. With that thought in mind, the ‘Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam’ campaign is being run across the country. Today, crores of people have joined this campaign. More than 200 crore trees have been planted in the country so far. This shows that people are now more aware of environment protection and want to contribute in some way or the other,” PM Modi said.

PEOPLE OF COUNTRY CONTINUOUSLY GROWING IN LOVE WITH SHREE ANNA

The Prime Minister said, “I would like to express my deep appreciation to all of you for one more thing. The reason is millets, i.e. Shree Anna. I am happy to notice that the people of the country are continuously growing in love with Shree Anna. Although we had declared 2023 as the Millet Year; even today; three years later, the passion and commitment towards it in the country and the world is very encouraging.”

“A group of women farmers in Kalla-Kurichi district of Tamil Nadu has become a source of inspiration. Around 800 women farmers are associated with the Periyapalayam Millet FPC here. Seeing the rising popularity of millets, these women established a Millet Processing Unit. Now they are directly supplying the products made from millets to the market,” he added.

“Farmers in Ramsar, Rajasthan, are also innovating with Shree Anna. More than 900 farmers are associated with the Ramsar Organic Farmer Producer Company. These farmers primarily cultivate pearl millet. Pearl Millet is processed here to prepare ready-to-eat laddus. These are in great demand in the market. Furthermore, friends, I am delighted to know that many temples nowadays use only millets in their prasad. I heartily congratulate all the administrators of these temples for this initiative,” PM Modi said.

Millet Shree Anna not only raises the income of farmers but is also guaranteeing improvement in people's health. Millets are rich in nutrition and are a superfood. In our country, the winter season is considered very good for dietary consumption. Therefore, we should definitely consume Shree Anna during these times.

INDIA AI IMPACT SUMMIT TO BE HELD NEXT MONTH

PM Modi said, “In Mann Ki Baat we once again had the opportunity to touch upon myriad topics. This programme gives all of us an opportunity to realise and celebrate our country's achievements. Another such occasion is on its way in February. The India AI Impact Summit is going to be held next month. Experts from across the world, especially those from the field of technology, will come to India for this summit. This summit will also highlight India's progress and achievements in the world of AI.”

He said, “I heartily congratulate everyone who is participating in it. We will definitely talk about the India AI Impact Summit in ‘Mann Ki Baat’ next month. We will also discuss some other achievements of the countrymen. Till then, I take leave of you in this episode of ‘Mann Ki Baat’. Once again, my best wishes to all of you for Republic Day tomorrow.”

CM Omar welcomes

BJP leader Tarun Chug's claim that demands for Jammu's separation stem from the National Conference (NC) CM Omar, according to the news agency–Kashmir News Observer (KNO), told reporters here that it was the BJP that ignited the controversy. “The BJP MLAs started this debate. How many of them should I name? We never wanted Jammu and Kashmir to be separated,” the Chief Minister said.

He reiterated his party's long-standing stance on maintaining the territorial and administrative unity of the region.

CM Omar also recalled his party's opposition to the separation of Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir, stating that he still believes Ladakh should be reintegrated with J&K. “We were against Ladakh being separated from Jammu and Kashmir, and we still want it to become part of J&K,” he said.

Referring to recent concerns over selection results in the judiciary where majority of the candidates are from Jammu region, CM Omar said, “Disparities should not be viewed through the lens of religion or regional bias. In selection list for medical seats the trend was opposite. We should stop seeing everything through the prism of religion and region and leave it to merit,” he said.

The Chief Minister said that if there are genuine allegations of wrongdoing, the government is ready to act. “If you tell me a fraud has been committed, I will investigate it. But we should not play politics on merit,” he warned.

Omar also cautioned that politicising such issues could have serious consequences, recalling past events. “It is the same politics that was played in Jammu which led to the closure of a medical college,” he said.

CM also expressed optimism for hosting the Khelo India Games on schedule this season, pinning hopes on fresh snowfall after last year's postponement due to snow shortages.

While inspecting complaints over snow clearance, electricity disruptions and technical snags in the newly launched ski lift in Gulmarg, CM Omar said technical faults will be cleared as soon as possible. “Won't leave from here until that gets restored”.

Highlighting snow's dual role in boosting tourism and averting summer water scarcity, CM said more precipitation is expected soon, which is a positive sign for the valley's economy.

The Chief Minister described the upcoming budget as people-friendly, similar to previous years, aimed at easing public inconveniences.

CM Omar also said that weather challenges have slashed power supply from the targeted 1700 MW daily to just 100 MW amid gusty winds and snow, though levels crossed 1500 MW by last night. “Far-flung areas are yet to receive it, but officials have assured full restoration today”. (KNO)

India to display military might, growth story at Republic Day parade

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 25: India will display its development journey, cultural diversity and military might, including newly-raised units and mock-ups of major weapon systems deployed during Operation Sindoor, at the 77th Republic Day celebrations on Monday.

The President of the European Council, Antonio Costa, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, will be the chief guests at the event in the national capital.

The overarching theme of the event at the Kartavya Path will be 150 years of 'Vande Mataram'. President Droupadi Murmu will lead the ceremony that will commence at 1030 hours and will last for approximately 90 minutes.

It will start with the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the National War Memorial, where he will lead the nation in paying solemn tributes to the fallen heroes by laying a wreath.

Murmu and the chief guests are expected to arrive at the venue in a 'traditional buggy' that will be escorted by the President's Bodyguard.

Around 100 cultural artistes will be heralding the parade, on the theme 'Vividata Mein Ekta (Unity in Diversity)' which is set to be a grand presentation of musical instruments, demonstrating the nation's unity and rich cultural diversity.

Showering of flower petals will be carried out by four Mi-17 IV helicopters of the 129 helicopter unit in the Dhvaj formation.

The parade will then begin with President Murmu taking the salute. The parade will be led by Parade Commander Lt General Bhavnish Kumar, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area, a second-generation officer.

The proud winners of the highest gallantry awards will follow and the team will comprise Param Vir Chakra winners -- Subedar Major (Honorary Captain) Yogendra Singh



Yadav (Retd) and Subedar Major Sanjay Kumar.

Ashok Chakra winners Maj Gen CA Pithawalia (Retd) and Colonel D Sreeram Kumar will also be part of the team.

A small military contingent of the European Union (EU) will also feature in the parade.

For the first time, the parade will showcase a phased 'Battle Array Format' of the Indian Army that will include an aerial component. It will feature a high mobility reconnaissance vehicle and India's first indigenously designed armoured light specialist vehicle.

Providing aerial support would be the indigenous Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopter and its armed version, Rudra, in Prahar formation, demonstrating battlefield shaping, officials said.

The combat elements will then follow with T-90 Bhisma and Main Battle Tank Arjun rolling past the saluting dais with aerial support from Apache AH-64E and Prachand light combat helicopters.

Other mechanised columns will include BMP-II Infantry Combat Vehicle, along with Nag missile system (Tracked) Mk-2.

A tri-services tableau showcasing replicas of major weapon systems deployed by the Indian military

during Operation Sindoor in early May is expected to be a major attraction.

The tableau will represent India's resolve to respond decisively to national security challenges.

A glass-cased integrated operational centre, depicting the conduct of Operation Sindoor in brief, will also roll down Kartavya Path. While the Brahmos missile struck deadly blows to the enemy during the operation, the Akash missile systems and S-400 provided a protective shield.

The Indian Navy contingent will comprise 144 young personnel, led by Lt Karan Nagyal as contingent commander, and Lt Pawan Kumar Gandhi, Lt Priti Kumari and Lt Varun Dreveriya as platoon commanders.

It will be followed by the Naval tableau that will present a vivid depiction of the theme 'Strong Navy for a Strong Nation'. The tableau depicts a stitched ship from the fifth century CE, now christened as INSV Kaundinya, Gurab class ships of the Maratha Navy, and frontline indigenous platforms, including the aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and INS Udayagiri.

The tableau will also feature a depiction of the circumnavigation route followed by INSV Tarini as part of the Navika Sagar Parikrama-II

expedition. In addition to naval personnel, young cadets from the Sea Cadets Corps, a non-governmental organisation that imparts basic nautical skills to youth in Mumbai, will march alongside the tableau.

The Indian Air Force contingent will comprise four officers and 144 airmen. The contingent commander will be Squadron Leader Jagdish Kumar with Squadron Leader Nikita Choudhery, Flt Lt Prakhar Chandrakar and Flt Lt Dinesh as supernumerary officers.

Syncing with the marching contingent would be a thrilling fly-past by two Rafale jets, two MiG-29s, two Su-30s and one Jaguar aircraft in 'Spearhead' formation, symbolising the "Sindoor Formation", officials said.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will showcase its hypersonic glide missile LR-ASHM. It is capable of engaging static and moving targets and is designed to carry various payloads.

A total of 30 tableaux -- 17 of states and Union Territories and 13 of various ministries and departments -- will roll down the Kartavya Path.

The tableaux will showcase a unique mix of 150 years of the national song Vande Mataram and the nation's rapid progress.

This year, around 2,500 cultural artists drawn from every state and Union Territory will perform on Kartavya Path.

A joint 'Dare Devils' team of motorcycle riders drawn from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) will enthral the audience.

The aerial fly-past, which is one of the most eagerly-awaited events of the parade, will witness the participation of a total of 29 aircraft, including 16 fighter jets, four transport aircraft and nine helicopters.

These include Rafale, Su-30 MKI, MiG-29 and Jaguar aircraft, complemented by strategic assets -- C-130 and C-295, as well as the Indian Navy's P-8i aircraft. The formations include Arjan, Vajraang, Varuna and Vijay.

PM Modi lauds UAE's 'Year of the Family' initiative



PTI

New Delhi, Jan 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lauded UAE's initiative to declare 2026 as the 'Year of the Family', likening it to India's family system which is part of the country's traditions.

In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' programme, the prime minister recalled an initiative in a Gujarat village that runs a community kitchen for all resident families. "The

tradition of Chandanki village in Becharaji, Gujarat is unique. You would be surprised if I told you that the people here; especially the elderly, do not cook in their homes. The reason for this is the village's magnificent community kitchen," Modi said.

This initiative not only connects people; it also fosters a sense of family, he said, adding that India's family system was an integral part of the tradition. "In many countries, such

family systems are highly respected. Just a few days ago, my brother, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, visited India," PM Modi recalled.

Al Nahyan told Modi that the UAE was celebrating 2026 as the 'Year of the Family'.

"The aim is to strengthen harmony and community spirit among its people... indeed, it's a truly commendable initiative," the prime minister said.

45 citizens awarded Padma Shri in 'unsung heroes' category on R-Day

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 25: A former bus conductor who set up the world's largest free-access library, a paediatrician who formed Asia's first human milk bank, and a 90-year old rare musical instrument player were among 45 individuals from across India chosen for the Padma Shri award in the 'unsung heroes' category on the occasion of Republic Day, sources said on Sunday.

Anke Gowda, once a bus conductor, set up the world's largest free-access library, 'Pustak Mane', comprising more than two million books in 20 languages along with

rare manuscripts. The 75-year-old bibliophile from Haralahalli village near Mysuru in Karnataka has been chosen for the Padma Shri for his unique effort to empower learners across India.

Joining him will be Armida Fernandes, the Mumbai-based paediatrician who set up Asia's first human milk bank, improving the survival prospects of infants, Bundeli war art trainer Bhagwandas Raikwar from Madhya Pradesh, Bhikhya Ladakya Dhinda, a 90-year old tribal Tarpa player -- a musical instrument made of bottle gourd and bamboo -- from Maharashtra, and distinguished social worker from Jammu and Kashmir, Brij Lal Bhat, among others.

Jaishankar hosts US lawmakers: Security, economy top agenda

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 25: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday discussed with a three-member American Congressional delegation various aspects of India-US relations, including trade and security, against the backdrop of continuing strain in ties between the two countries.

US Ambassador Sergio Gor, who was also present at the meeting, said the talks were "productive" and that the focus was on strengthening the bilateral partnership in the domains of security, trade and critical technologies.

The visit of the US Congressional delegation to India, comprising Jimmy Patronis, Mike Rogers and Adam Smith, came as both sides are looking to move forward in the negotiations for a bilateral trade deal.

In a social media post, Jaishankar described the meeting as a "good interaction".

"Discussed various aspects of India-US ties, Indo Pacific and Ukraine conflict. Congressional interactions have always been an important facet of our relationship," he said.

On his part, Gor said on X: "Just wrapped a productive meeting with EAM @DrSJaishankar, @RepMikeRogersAL, @RepAdamSmith, and @JimmyPatronis on



ways to strengthen US-India partnership for stronger security, expanded trade, and cooperation on critical technologies."

The India-US ties witnessed a major downturn after President Donald Trump slapped a whopping 50-per cent tariff on Indian goods, including a 25-per cent punitive levy over Russian oil purchases.

Both sides have held multiple rounds of negotiations last year to firm up the proposed bilateral trade deal. However, it could not be sealed yet largely in view of Washington's demands to open up India's farm and dairy sectors.

Apart from the tariffs, the relations came under strain on a number of other issues, including Trump's claim of ending the India-Pakistan conflict in May last year and Washington's new immigration policy.

Veteran journalist Mark Tully passes away in Delhi at 90

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 25: Veteran journalist Mark Tully, a chronicler of India and an acclaimed author, breathed his last at a private hospital here on Sunday, his close friend said. He was 90.

The award-winning journalist was ailing for some time and had been admitted to the Max Hospital in Saket for the past week. "He (Tully) was admitted to Max Hospital, Saket, on January 21, and died today. He (Tully) was admitted under the head of the nephrology department," a hospital source told PTI.

Satish Jacob, veteran journalist and a close friend of Tully, told PTI, "Mark passed away at Max Hospital Saket this afternoon." Born in Calcutta (now Kolkata) on October 24, 1935, Tully was the chief of bureau for the BBC, New Delhi, for 22 years.

An acclaimed author, Tully was the presenter of the BBC Radio 4 programme 'Something Understood'. He was also part of several documentaries on subjects



ranging from India and the British Raj to the Indian Railways.

Tully was knighted in 2002 and received the Padma Bhushan from the government of India in 2005.

He wrote several books on India, including 'No Full Stops in India', 'India in Slow Motion', and 'The Heart of India'.

Shun allurements, prejudice, employ wisdom while casting votes: President Murmu

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 25: President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday said she hoped that Indians would exercise their right to vote by employing wisdom and shunning allurements, prejudice and misinformation to strengthen the country's electoral system.

She also lauded women voters for coming out in large numbers to exercise their franchise during elections.

Addressing a 16th National Voters' Day event held here, Murmu asserted that while the right to vote is important, it is also imperative that all citizens exercise it by keeping in mind their constitutional duties.

For the last 16 years, the foundation day of the Election Commission (EC) has been celebrated as the National Voters' Day.

On November 26, 1949, when the Constituent Assembly adopted the Indian Constitution, 16 of its articles came into force immediately, including one that pertained to the creation of the EC.

The EC came into existence on January 25, 1950, a day before India became a republic.

The remaining part of the Constitution came into force on January 26, 1950.

Addressing the gathering, the president said the strength of India's democracy lies not only in the sheer size of its voters but also in the depth of its democratic spirit.

Even the oldest voters, divyang (differently-abled) voters and those living in remote areas exercise their franchise, she pointed out.

Murmu said public participation gives a practical shape to the spirit



of democracy at the grassroots level. She noted that the EC has made numerous efforts with the objective of ensuring that "no voter is left behind".

The president said voting is not merely a political expression, it is a reflection of the citizens' faith in the democratic process of elections. It is also a means for citizens to express their aspirations.

The right to vote, available to all adult citizens without discrimination, gives a concrete expression to the constitutional ideals of political and social justice and equality, Murmu said.

The "One Person, One Vote" principle enshrined in the Constitution was a result of the Constitution makers' firm faith in the wisdom of the common people, she underlined.

Separately, Vice President C P Radhakrishnan said over the last 75 years, India's electoral journey has been a remarkable testament to the strength, resilience and inclusiveness of its democracy, upholding the values enshrined in the Constitution.

In a post on X, Radhakrishnan

said by exercising the right to vote with responsibility and awareness, citizens contribute to inclusive and credible democratic processes.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people to take part in democratic processes, saying being a voter is not just a constitutional privilege, but an important duty that gives every citizen a voice in shaping the country's future.

"Greetings on National Voters' Day. This day is about further deepening our faith in the democratic values of our nation," Modi said in a post on X.

"Being a voter is not just a constitutional privilege, but an important duty that gives every citizen a voice in shaping India's future," he added.

"Let us honour the spirit of our democracy by always taking part in democratic processes, thereby strengthening the foundations of a Viksit Bharat," the prime minister said.

Addressing the voters' day gathering, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said NVD is not just an annual event but an occasion to hold "dialogue with the soul of

India's democracy".

He said the principle of "One Person, One Vote, One Value (of every vote)" is the gift of B R Ambedkar.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar said all democracies worldwide recognise that a clean electoral roll is the cornerstone of a strong democracy.

According to the Constitution and the law, only those who are 18 years of age or older, who ordinarily reside in a constituency and who are citizens of India are eligible to register in the electoral roll of that constituency, he said.

"To fulfil this fundamental objective, the EC has launched a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) to ensure that no eligible voter is left out and no ineligible person is included in the electoral rolls," the CEC said.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge claimed that in recent times, institutions like the EC have faced sustained pressure and therefore, it is "our responsibility" to protect their independence, so that democracy does not merely survive, but truly thrives.

He said snatching the "Right to Vote" through "vote chori" (vote theft) and an unplanned SIR tarnishes India's long-cherished democracy.

In a post on X, Kharge said the National Voters' Day is a powerful reminder that a country's future belongs to its people and that their collective voice can shape their shared destiny.

"The people of India deserve free, fair and fearless elections, where clean electoral rolls and level-playing field is the primary requisite," the Congress chief said.

Egypt aims to double trade with India to \$12 billion

IANs

New Delhi, Jan 25: Egypt has set a strong goal to nearly double its trade with India, aiming to reach \$12 billion in the coming years.

Currently, trade between the two countries stands at around \$5 billion, which Egypt believes is far below the real potential of the partnership.

Speaking at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia here, Egypt's Ambassador to India, Kamel Zayed Galal, said both nations have many opportunities to grow

together, especially in sectors like energy, manufacturing, agriculture and connectivity.

He also shared that Indian investments in Egypt, which are now around \$3.7 billion, are expected to cross \$10 billion in the future.

The Ambassador encouraged Indian companies to see Egypt as a long-term strategic partner rather than just a short-term business destination.

Energy cooperation is becoming a major focus, especially in renewable energy and green hydrogen.

Galal explained that Egypt has

strong solar and wind resources, along with growing infrastructure and easy access to major global shipping routes.

These advantages could help Egypt become an important hub for green energy production and exports. He also pointed to fertilisers, agriculture and industrial manufacturing as areas where closer supply chain links could quickly increase trade.

The Ambassador highlighted Egypt's industrial zones and its free trade agreements with African and European countries as major benefits

for Indian businesses.

He said Egypt is not just a market to sell products but also a base for production and exports to wider regions.

Egypt's ports on the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea, along with the Suez Canal -- which handles about 12 percent of global trade -- make it a key global trade gateway.

India and Egypt upgraded their relationship to a Strategic Partnership in 2023 after meetings between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Faced with Trump, Greenlanders try to reassure their children

AFP

Nuuk, Jan 25: In a coffee shop in Greenland's capital Nuuk, Lykke Lyngé looked fondly at her four kids as they sipped their hot chocolate, seemingly oblivious to the world's convulsions. Since Donald Trump returned to the White House last year with a renewed ambition to seize Greenland, international politics has intruded into the Arctic island's households.

Dictated by the more or less threatening pronouncements of the US president, it has been an unsettling experience for some people here — but everyone is trying to reassure their children.

Lyngé, a 42-year-old lawyer, relied on her Christian faith.

"There's a lot of turmoil in the world," she said. "But even if we love our country, we have even higher values that allow us to sleep soundly

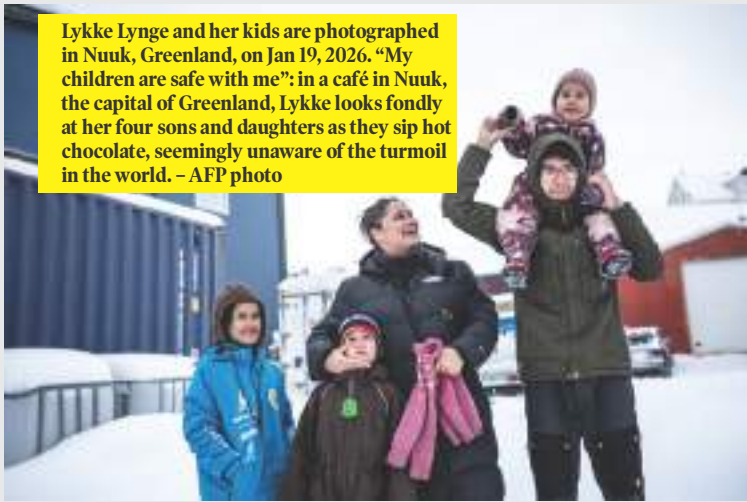
and not be afraid," she said.

As early as January 27, 2025, one week after Donald Trump's inauguration, the Greenlandic authorities published a guide entitled "How to talk to children in times of uncertainty?"

"When somebody says they will come to take our country or they will bomb us or something, then of course children will get very scared because they cannot navigate for themselves in all this news," said Tina Dam, chief program officer for Unicef in the Danish territory.

Unanswerable questions
This guide — to which the UN agency for children contributed — recommends parents remain calm and open, listen to their children and be sensitive to their feelings, and limit their own news consumption.

As in many parts of the world, social media, particularly TikTok, has become the primary source of



information for young people.

Today, children have access to a lot of information not meant for them, said Dam — "and definitely not appropriate for their age," she added.

"So that's why we need to be aware of that as adults and be protective about our children and be able to talk with our children about the things they hear — because the rhetoric is

quite aggressive."

But reassuring children is difficult when you do not have the answers to many of the questions yourself.

Arnakkuluk Jo Kleist, a 41-year-old consultant, said she talked a lot with her 13-year-old daughter, Manumina.

The teenager is also immersed in TikTok videos but "doesn't seem very nervous, luckily, as much as maybe we are," she added.

"Sometimes there are questions she's asking — about what if this happens — that I don't have any answers to" — because no one actually has the answer to such questions, she said.

'Dear Donald Trump'

The Arctic territory's Inuit culture also helped, said Kleist.

"We have a history and we have conditions in our country where sometimes things happen and we are used to being in situations that are out of our control," said Kleist.

"We try to adapt to it and say, well,

what can I do in this situation?"

Some Greenlandic children and teenagers are also using social media to get their message out to the world.

Seven-year-old Marley and his 14-year-old sister Mila were behind a viral video viewed more than two million times on Instagram — the equivalent of 35 times the population of Greenland.

Serious in subject but lighthearted in tone, the boy addresses the American president.

"Dear Donald Trump, I have a message for you: you are making Greenlandic kids scared."

Accompanied by hard stares, some serious finger-wagging and mostly straight faces, he and his sister go on to tell Trump: "Greenland is not for sale."

"It's a way to cope," his mother, Paninguaq Heilmann-Sigurdson, said of the video. "It's kid-friendly, but also serious."

Trump threatens Canada with 100% tariff over pending trade deal with China

REUTERS

Washington, Jan 25: US President Donald Trump said on Saturday he would impose a 100 percent tariff on Canada if it follows through on a trade deal with China and warned Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney that a deal would endanger his country.

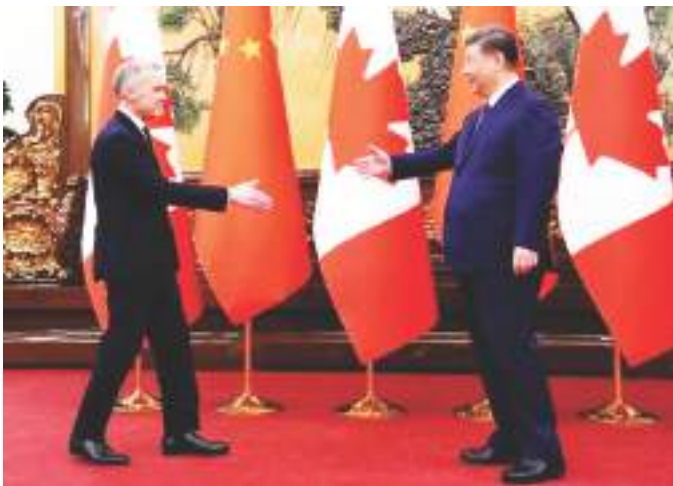
"China will eat Canada alive, completely devour it, including the destruction of their businesses, social fabric, and general way of life," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

"If Canada makes a deal with China, it will immediately be hit with a 100 percent Tariff against all Canadian goods and products coming into the USA."

In a video on Saturday, Carney urged Canadians to buy domestic products, but did not directly mention Trump's tariff threat.

"With our economy under threat from abroad, Canadians have made a choice to focus on what we can control," Carney said. "We can't control what other nations do, we can be our own best customer."

The Canadian prime minister this month traveled to China to reset the countries' strained relationship and reached a trade deal with Canada's second-biggest trading partner after the US



Immediately after Carney's China trip, Trump sounded supportive. "It's a good thing for him to sign a trade deal," Trump told reporters at the White House on January 16. "If you can get a deal with China, you should do that."

"There is no pursuit of a free trade deal with China. What was achieved was resolution on several important tariff issues," Dominic LeBlanc, the minister responsible for Canada-US Trade, said on Saturday in a post on X.

The Chinese embassy in Canada said in a statement to Reuters that China was ready to work with Canada to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries.

US-Canada tensions have grown in recent days following Carney's criticism of Trump's pursuit of Greenland.

More pressure on Canadian industries

On Saturday, Trump suggested China would try to use Canada to evade US tariffs.

"If Governor Carney thinks he is going to make Canada a 'Drop Off Port' for China to send goods and products into the United States, he is sorely mistaken," Trump said, using a title for Carney that refers to Trump's past calls for Canada to become the 51st US state.

In a second Saturday post, Trump said, "The last thing the World needs is to have China take

over Canada. It's NOT going to happen, or even come close to happening!"

If Trump makes good on Saturday's threat, the new tariff would greatly increase US duties on its northern neighbor, adding pressure to Canadian industrial sectors such as metal manufacturing, autos and machinery.

Relations between Carney and Trump seemed relatively placid until the Canadian leader this week spoke out forcefully against Trump's pursuit of Greenland.

Carney subsequently at the World Economic Forum called on nations to accept that a rules-based global order was over and pointed to Canada as an example of how "middle powers" might act together to avoid being victimized by American hegemony.

Carney, during his speech in Davos, Switzerland, did not directly call out Trump or the US by name. However, the prime minister said "middle powers must act together because if you are not at the table, you are on the menu."

Many world leaders and industry titans present at the Switzerland confab responded with a standing ovation.

Trump shot back in his own Davos speech and said Canada "lives because of the United States," a statement that Carney rejected on Thursday.

"Canada and the United States

have built a remarkable partnership in the economy, in security and in rich cultural exchange," Carney said in Quebec. "Canada doesn't live because of the United States. Canada thrives because we are Canadian."

Since then, Trump has dug in against Canada, revoking its invitation to his Board of Peace that he wants to deal with international conflicts and Gaza's future. After Carney's election last year, Trump and Carney shared a congenial tone. "I think the relationship is going to be very strong," Trump said at the time.

But Trump this month dismissed the mega trade deal between the US, Canada, and Mexico — up for renegotiation in July — as "irrelevant."

Trump has issued many tariff threats since returning to the presidency, though in several cases he has paused them during negotiations or relented entirely. This week, Trump backed off his recent threat to impose stiff tariffs on European allies after the NATO chief and other leaders promised to step up security in the Arctic.

"We hope the two governments can come to a better understanding quickly that can alleviate further concerns for businesses who face the immediate consequences of torqued up uncertainty," the Canadian

Geopolitics once again tangles sub-continent cricket



PTI

New Delhi, Jan 25: Cricketing contours are once again being redrawn by geopolitics in the Indian sub-continent.

For decades, political disruption in the region's cricketing ecosystem was largely framed as an India-Pakistan issue. That distinction no longer holds.

Unresolved bilateral tensions stemming from political and diplomatic issues have led to Bangladesh's exclusion from the T20 World Cup, starting February 7.

The troubles briefly threatened to widen with Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday saying that his country's participation in the tournament would depend on government advice, hinting that they may pull out in solidarity with Bangladesh.

"Pakistan was fishing in muddy waters and trying the game of 2 vs 1. (Pakistan and Bangladesh against India)," former off spinner Harbhajan Singh told PTI.

"They already are playing in Sri Lanka, this wasn't their matter. Why interfere where you are needed? In the end, it

is Bangladesh cricket team and its players who are losing. The players missing out on a World Cup participation is massive."

In any case, Naqvi's threat fizzled out as the PCB announced its 15-member squad for the World Cup on Sunday.

Still, it is clear that political frictions that once disrupted only one bilateral axis are now spilling into relationships previously considered stable, such as Bangladesh.

It exposes how deeply cricket in the Indian sub-continent is now intertwined with diplomatic equations.

Relations between India and Bangladesh strained following former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's dramatic exit from Dhaka and her subsequent move to India.

This was followed by a surge of anti-India feelings in Bangladesh and several killings of Bangladeshi Hindus.

For cricket, the first visible signs of strain emerged with the ouster of Mustafizur Rahman from the IPL, apparently as retaliation for the killings of Hindus in Bangladesh. What followed was a battle for reputation for Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

Australia calls on Trump to respect NATO soldiers



AFP

Sydney, Jan 25: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Sunday that comments from US President Donald Trump lamenting the efforts of non-US troops in Afghanistan were "completely unacceptable."

Trump said in a Fox News interview that NATO sent "some troops" but "stayed a little back, a little off the front lines."

Trump appeared to be partially walking back his remarks on Saturday amid growing outrage from European and now Australian allies.

Speaking on the ABC's Insiders program on Sunday morning, Albanese said Australian families of fallen soldiers would be "hurting" as a result of Trump's comments.

"Those 47 Australian families who will be hurting by these comments,

they deserve our absolute respect, our admiration," Albanese said.

"The bravery that was shown by 40,000 Australians (who) served in Afghanistan, they were certainly on the frontlines in order to, along with our other allies, defend democracy and freedom and to defend our national interests," he added.

"They deserve our respect"

On Saturday, a day after British Prime Minister Keir Starmer condemned Trump's remarks as "appalling," Trump appeared to change his position — at least as far as British troops were concerned.

"The GREAT and very BRAVE soldiers of the United Kingdom will always be with the United States of America!" Trump said on his Truth Social platform.

Ganguly brings sense of calm to dressing room: Maharaj

PTI

Cape Town, Jan 25: Pretoria Capitals captain Keshav Maharaj has credited head coach Sourav Ganguly for transforming the team's culture, saying the former India skipper's positive outlook and patience have brought calm and belief into the dressing room ahead of the SA20 final against Sunrisers Eastern Cape.

Led by Maharaj, the Capitals have scripted a remarkable turnaround this season after failing to reach the playoffs in the previous two editions.

In his debut stint as head coach, Ganguly has guided the side to its second-ever final, where they will face a formidable Sunrisers team at the Newlands Cricket Ground here Sunday.

"Dada (Ganguly) was really excited, obviously it's his first assignment as head coach. He's been a captain who won many big occasions for India and feeding off his knowledge and having someone of his stature in the change room, along with our South African legends, has brought that sense of calm," Maharaj said ahead of the summit clash.

"He's very positive and very accessible with information because he wants the best out of his players. He gives everyone the same



love, care and attention that is required," he added.

The Sunrisers, who won back-to-back titles in 2023 and 2024 before finishing runners-up last season, are aiming for a historic third crown after reaching the final for the fourth consecutive year.

Maharaj said Ganguly's experience of handling big-match pressure has been invaluable for the Capitals, who regained momentum after an inconsistent league phase.

"Obviously, we've had a bit of an up-and-down season. We haven't played too well at home, to say the least, but we've found a bit of rhythm at the right time. It is about keeping the momentum and implementing our basics," he said.

The second qualifier at the Wanderers was played on a slow surface, but

Maharaj is optimistic about conditions at Newlands.

"I'm sure it'll be better than Qualifier 2. It looks like a good wicket and we've had really good weather in Cape Town, so we're hoping for a surface that balances both teams," he said.

On the fitness front, Maharaj said there were no major concerns despite Dewald Brevis suffering a finger injury in the qualifier and fast bowler Lungi Ngidi failing to complete his quota of overs in the previous match.

"There's no concern about Brevis; he's fine. Ngidi bowled today, so I hope he'll be back in action tomorrow," he said.

Sunrisers captain Tristan Stubbs also confirmed that his entire squad is available for the final. Leading the side for the first time in the SA20, Stubbs said the

responsibility has helped him grow as a cricketer, with senior player Quinton de Kock playing a key mentoring role.

"I've actually enjoyed it. Some days you know exactly what needs to be done and other days I lean on Quinny. He's been a great help, and it's helped my fielding as well because you think less about yourself and more about the game," Stubbs said.

Despite losing to the Capitals by seven wickets in the first qualifier, Stubbs said the Sunrisers are not driven by thoughts of revenge.

"We start nought for nought in a final. We'll plan like we do for every game. I've been hounded for tickets, so it's going to be sold out and exciting," he said.

Stubbs also praised England all-rounder James Coles, who starred in Qualifier 2 with figures of one for 15 and an unbeaten 45 off 19 balls against Paarl Royals.

"I don't think many South Africans would have seen him before this. He's probably having the best month of his life. From what the English boys and AB (de Villiers) told us, they said he's a player — a really good spinner and a really good batter — and he's been magnificent for us," Stubbs said.

Cuba defends military drills as deterrent against US aggression

AFP

Havana, Jan 25: Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel defended his country's military preparedness exercises on Saturday as a deterrent against potential aggression from the United States.

US President Donald Trump this month warned that Cuba "is ready to fall" and told Havana to "make a deal" or pay a price similar to Venezuela, whose ousted leader Nicolas Maduro was taken to America by US forces in a January 3 bombing raid that killed dozens of people.

Venezuela was a key ally of Cuba and a critical supplier of oil and money, which Trump has vowed to cut off.

Diaz-Canel on Saturday supervised military exercises that included a tank unit from Cuba's armed forces.

He was accompanied by Cuban General Alvaro Lopez Miera, who is the minister of the armed forces, and other high-ranking military officials. "The best way to prevent

aggression is for imperialism to have to calculate the price of attacking our country," Diaz-Canel said in remarks broadcast on Cuban television. "And that has a lot to do with our preparation for this type of military action... This takes on significant importance in the current circumstances," he added.

Cuba's National Defense Council, which is led by Diaz-Canel, recently met "with the objective of increasing and improving the level of preparedness and cohesion" among the country's leadership, according to an official government statement.

The council met to "analyze and approve the plans and measures for transitioning to a State of War," the statement added, without providing further details. These military exercises are part of the country's preparation "under the strategic concept of the War of the Entire People," a term used by authorities for the mobilization of civilians in the event of armed conflict.