



Heavy snowfall hits life across J&K; tourists happy, weather to improve from today

- » Shopian, Zojila receive heaviest snowfall
- » Deputy CM reviews situation
- » Police assist stranded residents, patients
- » Another Western Disturbance on Feb 1-2
- » Admin issues heavy avalanche warnings

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 27: The second heavy snowfall of the season in Jammu and Kashmir brought normal life to a halt on Tuesday, with air, rail, and road services suspended due to poor visibility and severe weather conditions.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) snowfall began late Monday night in the Valley,



with South Kashmir areas, including the Shopian plains, receiving heavy snowfall and a fresh accumulation of 14-15 inches.

Meanwhile, parts of North Kashmir, including Handwara, Gurez, Karna, and Uri, also received heavy snowfall, disrupting local interior roads in these areas.

Official data revealed that Zojila received approximately three feet of snowfall, while Sonamarg recorded around two feet.

Gagangeer and Kulgam recorded nearly one and a half feet of snow, and the Kangan area in Ganderbal district saw about four inches of accumulation. | [More on P6](#)

Srinagar-Jammu highway remains closed

Over 1,400 passengers travel in two special trains

Umaisar Gull Ganie

Qazigund, Jan 27: The Srinagar-Jammu national highway remains closed for traffic due to heavy snowfall and accumulation of snow on the Qazigund-Banihal-Ramban stretch, rendering the road non-motorable, officials said on Tuesday.

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that no traffic was allowed to ply on the Jammu-Srinagar highway as snow clearance operations were underway. They said passenger safety remains paramount. "Traffic has been stopped at all holding points as the road surface has turned into a virtual ice sheet," an official said.

He said that due to heavy snowfall, the highway | [More on P6](#)

58 flights grounded at Srinagar airport

Authorities say 'safety comes first'

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jan 27: Heavy snowfall and poor visibility on Tuesday forced the complete suspension of flight operations at Srinagar International Airport, leaving hundreds of passengers stranded and marking a weather disruption, officials said here.

They said a total of 58 flights were cancelled today, including 29 incoming and 29 outgoing flights, while the status of tomorrow's operations will be known in the morning after assessing the situation on the ground.

A senior official at the airport told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer | [More on P6](#)

Snowfall ends dry spell, rejuvenates water bodies

Umaisar Gull Ganie

Kulgam, Jan 27: Fresh spells of rain and snowfall have brought much-needed relief to Kashmir, rejuvenating water bodies across the Valley, which had witnessed alarming depletion following a prolonged dry spell.

According to official data obtained by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Jammu and Kashmir recorded an overall rainfall deficit of 85 per cent between November 1 and January 21, receiving only 20.6 mm of rainfall against the normal 139 mm. The deficit had severely impacted springs, streams and rivers, raising concerns over a looming water crisis and drought-like conditions in several areas.

The Veshaw River, a major tributary of the | [More on P6](#)

Youth defy snowfall, turn field into Volleyball arena in Sopore



Waris Fayaz

Sopore, Jan 27: Amid heavy snowfall, enthusiastic youth in Tarzoo village of Sopore in North Kashmir braved freezing

temperatures and transformed a snow-covered ground into an impromptu volleyball court.

The activity, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) | [More on P6](#)

Akhil Bhartiya Hindi Kavi Sammelan

Govt committed to take J&K's local culture to new heights: LG

KNO Desk

Jammu, Jan 27: Calling poetry as a guiding force that helps individuals navigate life's journey from the familiar to the unexplored, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday reiterated the government's commitment to revitalize languages and take local culture of Jammu Kashmir to new heights.

Addressing the Akhil Bhartiya Hindi Kavi Sammelan at Abhinav Theatre here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News



Observer (KNO), said, "Poetry is a bridge between the tangible and the ethereal. It's a guiding force that helps individuals navigate life's

journey from the familiar to the unexplored."

The event was organized by J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages as a part of Republic Day celebrations.

He said, "After decades, efforts to revitalize languages and elevate local culture on Jammu Kashmir's sacred soil commenced in 2020. It remains our collective responsibility to advance this heritage not merely as memory, but as a living, breathing tradition."

Highlighting the transformative influence of the literary community, | [More on P6](#)

CRPF jawan among 4 killed in Udhampur accident

LG expresses grief

Yogesh

Jammu, Jan 27: At least four persons, including a CRPF jawan, were killed and several others injured in a road accident near Jakhani Chowk in the Udhampur district on Tuesday, officials said.

An official told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), that the accident took place after a bus collided with a pickup truck, resulting into the death of four persons, including CRPF jawan.

He said that the CRPF personnel were travelling in the bus. The injured have been shifted



to a nearby hospital for treatment, he added—(KNO)

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has condoled the loss of lives in a tragic road accident in Udhampur, today.

In a condolence message, the Lieutenant Governor has said: "I am deeply pained by the loss of precious lives in the tragic road accident in Udhampur. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved | [More on P6](#)

Railways are 'circulatory system' of India's aspirations: LG Sinha

Says tech, intelligence-driven approach will help in reducing accident risks

KNO Desk

Jammu, Jan 26: Terming Indian Railways as the "circulatory system of India's aspirations" Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday said that it drives economic growth, strengthens social cohesion, and connects the nation from remote rural areas to major industrial hubs.

Interacting with Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS) Officer Trainees at Lok Bhawan here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "From formidable mountain heights to remote rural habitation, Indian Railways transcends tracks and Infrastructure and it pulses as



marketplace while energizing the everyday lives of millions."

While sharing his insights on the evolving landscape of mobility, LG Sinha urged the young officers to focus on developing tech-inspired railway infrastructure for developed India. "Indian Railways transcends tracks and Infrastructure and it pulses as

the very circulatory system of India's aspirations. This vast network drives economic expansion, weaves social cohesion, and binds our nation as one," he added.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised the need for harnessing the wealth of operational, passenger, and freight data through scientific | [More on P6](#)

Interaction with stakeholders shapes govt priorities for Budget: CM Omar

Holds pre-budget consultations in Jammu

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 27: Continuing the series of pre-budget consultations ahead of the Budget Session, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday chaired an extensive consultation meeting in Jammu with representatives from a wide spectrum of sectors including industry & trade, tourism, hotel & hospitality, education, youth affairs and agriculture.

The meeting was attended by Ministers Sakina Ito, Javid Ahmed Dar and Satish Sharma. Chief Secretary Atal

Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Additional Chief Secretaries of Tourism and Power Development, Principal Secretary Finance, Commissioner Secretary Industries & Commerce, Secretary Education and Higher Education, DG Budget, senior officers of Finance Department, heads of departments and other concerned officers.

During the interaction, stakeholders raised several sector-specific issues and put forward several suggestions aimed at accelerating inclusive growth and regional development.

Addressing | [More on P6](#)

CM for transparent utilisation of flood relief funds

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 27: As part of the ongoing exercise for formulation of a people friendly and development-oriented budget, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday chaired a pre-budget consultation meeting with Members of the Legislative Assembly from Jammu and Samba districts, here.

Discussions were held on sector-wise priorities, district-specific developmental needs and policy interventions aimed | [More on P6](#)

India-EU announce mega FTA; PM Modi calls it New Delhi's biggest trade deal ever

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 27: India and Europe on Tuesday announced sealing of an ambitious free trade agreement—billed as "mother of all deals"—that came against the backdrop of a fractious global environment and trade disruptions largely caused by Washington's policy on tariff.

Today, India has concluded the biggest free trade agreement (FTA) in its history with the European Union, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said after holding summit talks with the 27-nation bloc's top

leaders Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa.

"This is not just a trade agreement. This is a new blueprint for shared prosperity," Modi said in his media statement.

The two sides also inked a strategic defence partnership pact and a mobility agreement.

The prime minister said India-EU partnership will help the world.

European Council President Costa said India and the EU began a "new chapter" in their relations in sectors such as trade, security, and on people-to-people ties.



"Trade agreements reinforce a rules-based economic order and promote shared prosperity. That's why today's free trade

agreement is of historic importance. It is one of the most ambitious agreements ever concluded," he said.

"We delivered the mother of all deals," von der Leyen said.

The long-awaited FTA is set to significantly expand the overall trajectory of two-way engagement as it will open up new opportunity for cooperation in diverse areas.

The EU and India had first launched negotiations for the FTA in 2007, before the talks were suspended in 2013 due to a gap in ambition. The negotiations were relaunched | [More on P6](#)

Breakthrough in India's global trade engagement: Amit Shah

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 27: Terming the trade deal inked with the European Union on Tuesday a "strategic breakthrough" in India's global trade engagement, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the deal safeguards the related sectors while heralding | [More on P6](#)



Snowfall Aftermath.....

Govt active on ground: Dy CM

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 27: Stating that people are not alone in this snow, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary on Tuesday said the government is actively working on the ground despite adverse weather and will ensure relief, connectivity and accountability.

Sharma while talking to the reporters here said, "Snow is vital for Kashmir and rain for Jammu. Both regions depend on it for their crops. There were complaints and we have been on the ground for days with the Chief Minister reviewing the situation."

Choudhary, said the administration is focused on addressing public grievances. "We cannot fight nature, but we are trying. We had a review meeting with officers this morning in Budgam and are now visiting affected areas to ensure immediate relief," he said.

About Chadoora Bridge, which has been partially damaged, the Deputy CM said the government will act



against illegal mining. "We do not want revenue from illegal mining that damages infrastructure. If a bridge worth Rs 6 crore is damaged to earn Rs 1 crore revenue, it is unacceptable," he said.

The Deputy Chief Minister also said, "Rs 3 crore DPR for the bridge and nearby road will be sanctioned soon. The bypass and school works will also be expedited."

Choudhary warned officers showing negligence. "Those days are gone when officers could delay work. Wherever lapses occur, the government will act. We are not here for

formality; we are for the people," he said. Responding to criticism over the delay in visits, Choudhary said, "If you had called me earlier, I would have come earlier. We are with the people, not just for news or symbolism."

He also highlighted the government's developmental record. "In one and a half years, we have opened several bridges and roads, including Qamarwari and Sanat Nagar, which remained shut for over a decade under previous regimes," he said.

On tourist and transport connectivity, Choudhary

said snow clearance is underway with priority to main and link roads.

"Machines are deployed; first main roads, then link roads and inner lanes will be opened. We understand people's needs and especially medical emergencies. Officers must stay prepared," he said. The Deputy CM also assured that the government stands by them. "We are here in this snow to tell people they are not alone. The administration is on the ground and committed to ensuring relief, connectivity and accountability," he said—(KNO)

Tourist tracks return to fresh powder

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 27: A fresh spell of snowfall has transformed Kashmir into a winter wonderland, triggering a renewed influx of tourists and boosting morale across the tourism and hospitality sectors.

The tourists are braving chill to capture the snowy spectacle on their cameras from the slopes of Gulmarg to the pine valleys of Pahalgam and the beautiful waters of Dal Lake in Srinagar.

"We came all the way from Delhi hoping to see snow and the timing couldn't have been better," said Rahul Malhotra, a tourist enjoying the snowfall.

"The whole Valley looks magical, like a beautiful picture coming alive," he added.

The fresh snowfall and the heaviest so far this winter blanketed most parts of Kashmir, including Srinagar, on Tuesday much to the delight of tourists and locals alike.

Travel operators told KNO the spell has reignited winter tourism



after a quiet start to January. "Tourism is clearly picking up pace now," said Rouf Tramboo, President of the Travel Agents Association of Kashmir (TAAK).

He said they are witnessing a surge in arrivals across destinations. "Most hotels and tour packages for the next few weeks are already booked. Fresh snowfall has given the much-needed boost to winter tourism," he said, urging the government to reopen closed tourist destinations.

Echoing the sentiment, Tawqeer Ahmad, owner of Connect Kashmir Mobile and Travel Services, said inquiries and bookings have

surged sharply since last week. "We have been getting non-stop calls since the snowfall began. Gulmarg and Pahalgam have heavy bookings for the coming weekend and even Srinagar house-boats are receiving a large number of inquiries," he told KNO.

Locals associated with tourism say the revival comes as a relief after weeks of unusually dry weather. "Business was down earlier this month, but this snow has changed everything," said Bilal Ahmad, who runs a cafe near Dal Lake.

"Tourists are back and so is the buzz we were missing."—(KNO)

Police become lifeline for stranded, injured, patients

WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Jan 27: With the relentless heavy snowfall blanketing Valley, Jammu & Kashmir Police sprang into action, rescuing stranded residents, pregnant women, and injured persons, and even facilitating last rites in snowbound areas.

Officials said that police across Baramulla, Sopore, Handwara, Ganderbal and Kulgam, despite harsh weather conditions, braved deep snow, slushy roads and blocked routes to ensure timely aid to the needy.

In Baramulla's Watergam, Kreeri police responded to an emergency call and evacuated pregnant woman Gulshan Begum to SDH. Nearby, they rescued injured Abdul Rehman Shah from Mongam after a snow-laden shed collapsed. Police also rushed a two-year-old girl from Thindma, who had fallen unconscious, to the hospital. She is now stable.

At Kunzer, a local Tehsildar rolled up sleeves to personally push a stuck ambulance carrying

an emergency patient enroute to the hospital.

Similarly, in Sopore, police in Sangrama village trekked on foot through deep snow to carry a deceased person's body from a cut-off home, enabling the family to transport it to Uri for last rites. Locals praised the team's efforts for easing their grief during the crisis.

Handwara police deployed a JCB machine to rescue elderly Zeba Begum, stranded in Rakh Shehla Harni Pura and safely took her to a hospital.

In Ganderbal, teams cleared stuck vehicles, aided vulnerable commuters and urged caution amid advisories.

Police in Kulgam pushed a stranded ambulance near Navyug Tunnel and shifted an 80-year-old man from Behibagh to SDH Yaripora in an official vehicle.

Police have established control rooms across the Valley with helpline numbers. They have urged people to contact the dedicated numbers in case of emergencies—(KNO)

Five engineers suspended over snow clearance delays, absenteeism

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 27: The Jammu and Kashmir government has initiated departmental proceedings and placed five engineers of the Public Works (R&B) Department under suspension after reports of unauthorised absence from duty and delays in snow clearance operations.

The action follows a stern directive from the Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary during a review meeting at the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC), Srinagar.

According to an official communication issued by the Public Works (R&B) Department, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, and accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Assistant Engineer Er Sandeep

Vaishnavi of the Machinery Division, Srinagar, was found absent from duty during the Deputy CM's visit. This led to the administrative action.

The communication states that complaints were received from elected representatives and public delegations from areas including Shopian, Anantnag, Imam Sahib, Tangmarg and Zainapora, alleging poor response and delays in snow clearance that hampered road connectivity and essential services.

In response, the Deputy CM directed that the officials be placed under suspension and their duties reassigned. These officials include Er Noor Din, AEE, PW(R&B) Sub-Division Imam Sahib, Zainapora Division; Er Shabir Ahmad Ganji, AEE, Mechanical & Hospital

Division, Tangmarg; Er Nasir, AE, Mechanical & Hospital Division, Anantnag (Sub Division-II); Er Sandeep Vaishnavi, AE (PM Package), Machinery Division Srinagar; and Er Ramiz, JE, Mechanical & Hospital Division, Zainapora, Sub-Division Imam Sahib.

The communiqué also sought inputs from the Chief Engineer, M&HD Kashmir, by January 27 to proceed further in the matter.

Kashmir witnessed heavy snowfall and strong winds this week, disrupting road, air and power connectivity across the Valley.

The Deputy Chief Minister recently directed departments to ensure swift snow clearance and warned that any lapse would invite strict action—(KNO)

MLA Langate reviews snowfall-related challenges

WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Jan 27: MLA Langate Sheikh Khursheed on Tuesday expressed concerns over the absence of line duty officials, while reviewing snowfall-related challenges across his constituency.

Khursheed said, "I have taken up the matter with the commission secretariat and DC Kupwara and action will hopefully be taken as per rules."

He said, "Out of 36, 25 employees including Executive Officer were not present at Municipal Committee Langate. Only four employees were on field, while 7 were present in the office."

The MLA, however, appreciated frontline workers and daily wagers for their round-the-clock efforts, noting they

were "on their toes and working till midnight."

Expressing satisfaction with snow clearance operations, he said, "Everything was handled professionally. Priority 1 and 2 roads are now through, with priority 3 roads to be cleared by tomorrow."

On power supply, the MLA



said, "Receiving stations are charged and service is up to mark, though some far-flung sub-feeders await restoration." Despite repeated attempts Additional Deputy Commissioner Handwara, Javed Naseem couldn't be contacted—(KNO)

Govt notifies February 24, 2026, as end date for DDC tenure

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 27: The Jammu and Kashmir Government has communicated to the chief executive officers of District Development Councils (DDCs) that the term of the councils will conclude on February 24, 2026.

In a letter, the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj has directed the CEOs to inform the respective chairpersons and members about the completion of their tenure.

As per the opinion rendered by the Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, citing relevant provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Rules, 1996 (Sub-Rule (2) and (3) of Rule 108ZP), the term of the DDCs commences from the date of issuance of the notification constituting the Councils (February 25, 2021). Accordingly, the Councils shall cease to exist with effect from February 24, 2026," the letter states.

The Additional District Development Commissioner of the district is the chief executive officer of the District Development Council.

Tawi artificial lake readies for 'Boating Festival' after 15 years

YOGESH

Jammu, Jan 27: After nearly 15 years, the dream of an artificial lake on the Tawi River in Jammu city has finally taken shape, with Jammu Smart City Limited announcing a two-day Tawi Boating Festival on January 28 and 29.

An official said, "The festival will be held from 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm and will be open to the public free of charge. Boats will operate on the artificial lake while the riverbanks will be illuminated with decorative lights."

Pertinently, the artificial lake has been created by closing the barrage and retaining water in the Tawi River in collaboration with the Irrigation and Flood Control Department. Around three to four metres of water has been accumulated to facilitate boating activities.

Talking to reporters here, Smart City CEO and Municipal Commissioner Dr Devansh Yadav said the festival aims to connect people with the newly developed lake and test its operational feasibility.

"Boats will be operated for two days on a trial basis, while local bands and stalls offering traditional Dogra cuisine have been arranged to enhance the festive atmosphere," the officer added.

He said, "If the trial proves successful, boating and allied activities will be made part of routine operations in future. SDRF teams will be deployed during the event to ensure safety, and the programme will be conducted in coordination with various departments."

Dr Yadav said systems have been put in place to handle flood-like situations during the rainy season, adding that only limited water will be retained while the rest will be released as required.

It may be recalled that the project, executed at a cost of about Rs 180 crore, was revived after 2019. It was originally launched in 2010 by the then NC-Congress coalition government and later expanded from the initial plan of 1.5 km to nearly seven km, stretching

from Gujjar Nagar to Bhagwati Nagar. Work on the project was stalled for several years before being resumed following the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019.

In the first phase, a 2.7-km stretch from the Bhagwati Nagar fourth bridge to the Bikram Chowk bridge, including an island and both riverbanks, has been developed along with the artificial lake. The remaining 4.3 km stretch up to Gujjar Nagar will be developed in the second phase.

Jammu Smart City Limited has developed the riverfront on the lines of the Sabarmati riverfront in Gujarat. Future plans include water sports, green zones and commercial complexes along the riverbanks under a PPP model, officials said.

To check pollution, five major drains falling under the first phase have already been diverted from the Tawi River, while work on diverting the remaining drains is expected to be completed this year—(KNO)

'Kachra Man,' Advocate Ganai Wins Lifetime Achievement Award 2026

KNO CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Jan 27: A social activist and environmentalist from south Kashmir's Anantnag district has been selected for a prestigious award for his contributions to environmental conservation.

Advocate Farooq Ahmad Ganai, popularly known as the "Kachra Man of Kashmir," has been selected for the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award 2026 in Environmental Services at the World Achievers Awards (WAA), a renowned global platform.

The award ceremony will be held on February 21 in New Delhi and will be attended by several dignitaries.

Ganai gained widespread recognition for his innovative "Give Plastic, Take Gold" campaign. Under the initiative, villagers exchange 200 kilograms of plastic waste for a gold coin, transforming Sadiwara into a model village for cleanliness.

Talking to KNO, Advocate Ganai said the award belongs to all those working for cleanliness and

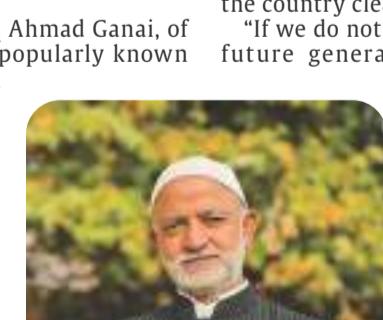
pro-environmental activities, particularly people of his native village Sadiwara and Panzath village in Qazigund.

Ganai said he envisions bringing all pro-environment activists under one umbrella to keep Kashmir and the country clean.

"If we do not act at the right time, future generations will have to face devastating environmental conditions. Strict laws are already in place, but they need to be enforced in full spirit," he said.

He expressed gratitude to the media for helping spread his cleanliness message and also thanked the Deputy Commissioner Anantnag and the Lieutenant Governor of J&K for their guidance and encouragement.

Advocate Ganai appealed to people to segregate household waste and avoid polluting water bodies and roads to safeguard future generations. "We easily throw garbage into water bodies, forgetting that the same water is consumed by people," he said, adding that his fight to clean the Kashmir Valley will continue—(KNO)



EDITORIAL

LG's Blueprint For Self-Reliant Jammu & Kashmir

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's Republic Day speech offered a comprehensive and hopeful blueprint for the future of Jammu and Kashmir. It wove together the essential themes of security, economic growth, and social welfare into a single, forward-looking narrative. The address began by honouring the sacrifices of security forces and civilians, firmly establishing that safety and stability are the essential foundation for all progress. From this foundation, the Lieutenant Governor

detailed an impressive picture of economic growth, noting that the region's economy is now estimated to be worth 2.62 lakh crore and is growing rapidly. He explained that this growth is being built through specific programs: 'Mission YUVA' is creating new entrepreneurs with over 800 crore in support, farmers are being helped to grow more through new agricultural plans, and over 27,000 crore is being invested to bring new industries to the region. The plan also focuses on critical

infrastructure everyone needs, like better roads and railways, reliable electricity, solar power, and the 'Har Ghar Jal' mission to provide tap water to every home. A core part of this vision is a strong focus on inclusive development to ensure no one is left behind. The speech celebrated the success of women, particularly two lakh 'Lakhpatti Didis' who have achieved financial independence. It also highlighted work to mainstream tribal communities, and welfare pushes for migrants, disabled

persons, and pensioners. A quiet revolution in governance was also underscored, with over 82 crore services now delivered online to ensure transparency and ease for citizens. By connecting large-scale projects like the Zojila Tunnel to the direct empowerment of small artisans and weavers, the Lieutenant Governor presented a holistic vision for the region. The speech also demonstrated clear-eyed leadership by honestly addressing ongoing challenges like drug abuse and

calling for societal unity against terrorism. Ultimately, this was more than a ceremonial address; it was a confident articulation of Jammu and Kashmir as a region of great promise, a promise being realised through determined effort, effective governance, and a true partnership with its people. For its scope, depth, and unwavering optimism, this speech deserves recognition as a definitive roadmap for a peaceful, prosperous, and self-reliant Jammu and Kashmir.

India-EU Partnership: India's Growing Engagement With European Union

Press Information Bureau

India-EU relations have entered a phase of renewed strategic momentum, with both sides intensifying engagement ahead of the forthcoming India-EU Summit in New Delhi. India and the European Union are seeking to advance long-pending Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations and adopt a new Joint Strategic Agenda to steer the partnership beyond the existing roadmap. This ongoing engagement underscores a mutual commitment across trade, investment, clean and green energy, science and technology, security and defence, digital initiatives, connectivity, space, and agriculture.

High-level India-EU engagements have strengthened in recent years, with the EU College of Commissioners, led by President Ursula von der Leyen, visiting New Delhi in February 2025 - the first-ever such visit to a bilateral partner outside Europe. Leaders also met on the sidelines of multilateral forums like the G7 and G20, most recently in June 2025 in Canada, and maintained regular contact through telephonic discussions, including calls between the Prime Minister, President von der Leyen, and President Antonio Costa in September 2025.

Overview of India-EU Relations

The relationship between India and the European Union rests on shared values and principles, including democracy, rule of law, a rules-based international order, and commitment to effective multilateralism. Ties encompass a broad spectrum, including trade and investment, security and defence, climate action and clean energy, digital transition, connectivity, science and technology, and people-to-people exchanges. The EU remains India's largest trading partner for goods, with bilateral trade reaching approximately \$136 billion in 2024-25. EU is also among India's top overall trading partners in both goods and services.

The multifaceted partnership, guided by the India-EU Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025 (adopted in 2020), continues to evolve towards greater mutual prosperity and global stability in the following aspects:

Past Engagement of India and EU

India-EU partnership has developed over decades, beginning with basic diplomatic engagements and expanding into a multi-faceted strategic alliance that encompasses political dialogue, economic cooperation, security, and global challenges like climate change, and technology. From initial recognition in the 1960s to the establishment of annual summits and joint initiatives in the 21st century, the ties have progressed significantly, reflecting mutual interests in trade, investment, and sustainable development.

Early Foundations

Diplomatic relations between India and the EU trace back to the early 1960s, with India being among the first countries to establish ties with the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1962. This laid the groundwork for formal cooperation, culminating in the 1993 Joint Political Statement and the 1994 Cooperation Agreement, which aimed to strengthen bilateral political and economic links.

Key Milestones Achieved in Early 2000s

In early 2000s, several pivotal events shaped the partnership. The first India-EU Summit occurred in June 2000 in Lisbon, initiating annual high-level dialogues on political and economic matters. This was followed by the upgrade to a Strategic Partnership in 2004 at the 5th Summit in The Hague, expanding the scope beyond trade to include security and cultural exchanges.

Recent Breakthrough in India-EU Relations

In contrast to early 2000s milestones, which established the framework, developments have accelerated, with the adoption of the 'India - EU Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025' in July 2020, resumption of free trade and investment negotiations in May 2021, and the launch of the India-EU



Trade and Technology Council (TTC) in April 2022. The TTC's second ministerial meeting in February 2025 in New Delhi further built on this, fostering cooperation in digital and green technologies, marking a shift from foundational dialogues to actionable, technology-driven partnerships.

India-EU Dialogue - Strategic Partnership Architecture

India-EU relations have significantly deepened in last decade, transitioning from primarily dialogue-based interactions to actionable, strategic collaborations across defense, infrastructure, investments, labor mobility, and emerging global priorities.

The 'India - EU Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025' has been instrumental in guiding this evolution, culminating in high-level commitments like the proposed Security and Defence Partnership and the Trade and Technology Council (TTC), positioning India as a pivotal partner in addressing shared challenges such as climate change, supply chain security, and regional peace.

Trade and Economic Focus

Trade has been a cornerstone, with the EU emerging as a significant partner. The bilateral merchandise trade between India and EU has grown substantially, reaching \$136 billion in 2024-25, with EU exports to India including machinery, transport equipment, and chemicals, and imports from India featuring machinery, chemicals, base metals, mineral products, and textiles.

Moreover, from 2019 to 2024, India-EU bilateral trade in services exhibited steady growth, with Indian exports increasing from EUR 19 billion in 2019 to EUR 37 billion in 2024. Further, imports from the EU also saw an increase, reaching EUR 29 billion in 2024.

Defense and Security

India-EU security and defence ties have deepened significantly in 2025, marked by the Leaders' Statement from the February College of Commissioners' visit to India [1], which agreed to explore a Security and Defence Partnership and included discussions between the EU Commission for Defence and Space and India's Minister of State for Defence.

This momentum continued with a December 2025 delegation from the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers visiting Brussels to engage with the EU Commissioner, fostering industrial cooperation. In September 2025, the EU Political and Security Committee - representing all 27 member states - made its first-ever visit to Asia, holding high-level meetings in India with the Foreign Secretary, Deputy NSA,

and Secretary (West) to advance strategic dialogue.

Complementing these efforts, joint naval exercises have strengthened maritime security cooperation, including in the Indian Ocean in June 2025, the Gulf of Guinea in October 2023, and the Gulf of Aden in June 2021, alongside collaborative escort operations for humanitarian assistance near Somalia in 2018 and 2019.

Clean Energy and Climate

Energy and climate cooperation forms a central pillar of the India-EU partnership, reflecting shared commitments to sustainable development, climate action, and clean energy transition.

At the centre of India-EU energy and climate engagement is the Clean Energy and Climate Partnership (CECP), established in 2016, with Phase III adopted in November 2024, reflecting the growing scope of bilateral cooperation. The EU has been a partner of the International Solar Alliance since 2018, supporting solar energy deployment, while the European Investment Bank finances sustainable transport and urban mobility projects, including urban rail and metro systems in select Indian cities.

India-EU Cooperation also covers offshore wind energy, gas infrastructure development, methane emissions reduction, investments, and technology transfer, and the EU's joining of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) in March 2021 underscores shared priorities on climate-resilient infrastructure. In advanced scientific domains, India and the EU signed an R&D agreement on peaceful uses of nuclear energy with EURATOM in July 2020, and India has been an associate member of CERN since 2017.

Connectivity

India and the European Union have steadily expanded their cooperation on connectivity as a strategic pillar of their partnership, aimed at promoting sustainable, inclusive, and resilient linkages across regions. India-EU connectivity initiatives seek to enhance economic integration and support balanced development beyond bilateral engagement.

India-EU Connectivity Partnership (2021) - Launched in 2021, the India-EU Connectivity Partnership seeks to strengthen cooperation across transport, digital infrastructure, and energy networks, while facilitating the seamless movement of people, goods, services, data, and capital.

Trilateral Development Cooperation (June 2025) - In June 2025, India and the European Union agreed on an administrative arrangement to advance trilateral development

cooperation, enabling joint implementation of development projects in third countries.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) (September 2023) - On the margins of the G20 Leaders' Summit held in New Delhi in September 2023, leaders from India, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the United States announced a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate on the development of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).

Science & Technology

Science and technology cooperation is a key pillar of the India-EU partnership, supported by institutional frameworks that promote collaborative research and innovation.

Bilateral engagement is anchored in the Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement signed in 2007, with a Joint Steering Committee guiding cooperation in areas such as smart grids, water, vaccines, ICT, polar science, and the mobility of young scientists working with the European Research Council.

In addition, the Ministry of Earth Sciences and the European Commission have established a co-funding mechanism to support Indian participation in selected projects under the European Research and Innovation Framework Programme "Horizon 2020", particularly in climate change and polar research.

India-EU Space Cooperation

Space cooperation represents an important dimension of the India-EU strategic partnership, built on decades of technical collaboration and growing institutional engagement.

India-EU engagement in space dates back to the 1980s, when Indian satellites were launched using Europe's Ariane launchers. Subsequently, the Cooperation Agreement between the European Commission and the Department of Space strengthened collaboration in Earth observation, including mutual access to data from Earth observation satellites. In parallel, ISRO and the European Space Agency (ESA) have signed cross-support arrangements, enabling exchanges in navigation, operations, and data handling, including during key missions such as Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-L1. Further reflecting operational cooperation, ESA's Proba-3 mission was successfully launched by ISRO's PSLV-XL in December 2024.

High-level institutional engagement has accompanied these operational linkages. In February 2025, the EU Commissioner for Defence and Space met the Minister of State for Science and Technology in New

Key Takeaways

- India's engagement with the EU highlights its strategic focus on Europe, aligned with the upcoming India-EU Summit and the ongoing Free Trade Agreement.
- Bilateral trade volume reached approximately \$136 billion in 2024-25, making the EU India's largest goods trading partner.
- Between 2019 and 2024, India-EU bilateral trade in services grew steadily, with Indian exports rising from €19 billion to €37 billion and EU exports to India increasing to €29 billion.
- As of 2024, over 931,607 Indians resided in the EU, including 16,268 Blue Card holders, and in the past 20 years, more than 6,000 Indian students received Erasmus Mundus scholarships, highlighting India-EU mobility and educational ties.

Delhi to discuss avenues for enhanced cooperation. This was followed by the inaugural India-EU Space Dialogue, held in Brussels in November 2025, providing a dedicated platform for structured engagement. Additionally, in May 2025, ISRO and ESA signed a Joint Statement of Intent on Cooperation for human space exploration, marking an expansion of collaboration into future-oriented space domains.

Migration and Mobility

Early migration dialogues have progressed into structured frameworks like the 2016 Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (CAMM), emphasizing skilled worker flows, social security, and orderly migration to meet EU demographic needs and India's workforce surplus.

The 9th High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Mobility (November 2025) advanced implementation, proposing a pilot European Legal Gateway Office in India for ICT professionals and exploring comprehensive mobility frameworks for young professionals. At the end of 2024, a total of 931,607 Indian citizens resided in the EU, the largest group (20.8%) for Blue Cards holders, (16,268 in 2024).

Indian students have been among the top recipients of the Erasmus Mundus scholarships. In the last 20 years, over 6,000 scholarships have been awarded to Indian students for studying and working at leading institutions across Europe.

Strategically, this supports India's diplomatic outreach through migration partnerships enhancing human-centric ties and global talent flows amid expansions like new European missions. India's advancements are evident in streamlined legal pathways and qualification recognition, positioning it as a key talent source for both India and EU nations.

Conclusion

India-EU relations have evolved into a strong and forward-looking partnership based on shared values, growing economic ties, and common strategic interests. Rising trade, steady EU investments, and cooperation in areas such as connectivity, clean energy, digital technologies, security, and labour mobility reflect a partnership that is producing clear and practical outcomes.

Initiatives such as the Trade and Technology Council, the Global Gateway, IMEC, and progress in FTA negotiations reflect deepening institutional alignment between India and the EU. Building on this momentum, India's invitation to the President of the European Council, H.E. Mr. António Luís Santos da Costa, and the President of the European Commission, H.E. Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, for a State Visit from 25-27 January 2026 underscores government intent to elevate India-EU relations as a core pillar of its global and European strategy.

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

J&K Tourism showcases destinations at FITUR Madrid, attracts global visitors

Advisor to Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani leads delegation

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 27: The J&K Tourism Department participated in the leading annual global trade fair for tourism FITUR in IFEMA Madrid held from 21st to 25th January 2026.

The delegation of J&K Tourism, as per an official statement was headed by Nasir Aslam Wani Advisor to the Chief Minister. Besides, the delegation was comprised of Joint Director Tourism Kashmir Waseem Raja and Joint Director Tourism Jammu Ajaz Kaiser Malik.

The event was also attended by tour operators of J&K.

The highlight of the event was the facility of Virtual Reality (VR) which was introduced first time by the J&K Tourism Department. Visitors were mesmerised by watching the captivating videos of landscapes through the VR mode.

Besides, the display of arts



and crafts of J&K like Paper Machine, Basholi Paintings, Wicker Willow enthralled the foreign visitors. The Kashmiri Kehwa became a huge attraction among the foreign visitors. The beautifully designed J&K stall with aesthetic display of

arts and crafts received huge appreciation from the visitors and officials of the Ministry as well as the Embassy.

The event started with inauguration of J&K Tourism Stall on 21st January by Advisor to CM, with senior officers from

Indian Embassy in Spain, officers of Ministry for Tourism Govt of India and leading tour operators participating in the inaugural.

In order to promote J&K Tourism at the global level, the J&K Tourism Department hosted a high tea for the tour operators on 22nd Jan 2026. The event was attended by a large number of leading tour operators and media persons. The event was graced by Ambassador of India in Spain and Advisor to CM J&K.

Besides, the Advisor to Chief Minister also attended a high profile meeting on promotion of Tourism hosted by the Indian Embassy in Spain on 23rd January.

During the five day event, the Advisor to the Chief Minister held meetings with various prominent tour operators and media persons for promotion of J&K Tourism at the global level.

The event concluded on 25th January 2026.

J&K HCLSC, DLSA Jammu conduct inspection of Central Jail Kot Bhalwal



KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 27: Under the guidance of R. N. Watal, Principal District and Sessions Judge (Chairman DLSA Jammu), Jammu & Kashmir High Court Legal Services Committee (J&K HCLSC) and District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Jammu on Tuesday conducted a joint inspection of Central Jail Kot Bhalwal.

Sunil Kumar, Secretary-J&K HCLSC and Maleeka Sharma-Secretary, DLSA Jammu visited the Central Jail to get first-hand appraisal of the living conditions of under-trial prisoners and other inmates, besides reviewing the overall functioning of the jail, including the Prison Legal Aid Clinic. The visiting judicial officers, in the presence of the Senior Superintendent, interacted with the under-trial and convicted prisoners in the ground area of the jail and took

stock of facilities available.

The primary aim of the jail visit was to screen out poor prisoners who fall within the ambit of "Support to Poor Prisoners Scheme". Further, the visiting officers directed the Prison Authorities to identify those convicts who can avail the benefit of "Policy Guidelines for Remission/Premature release of Life Convicts" and refer the list to the Empowered Committee.

The inspection, as per an official statement also covered a wide range of areas, including the Jail Legal Aid Clinic, Virtual VC rooms, interview area, prisoner calling system, Jail Hospital, Kitchen Area, etc.

The team observed that some areas of the jail premises require renovation and the Superintendent was asked to identify the issues and coordinate with the concerned authorities under the applicable rules.

DC Kupwara reviews snow clearance, health services in Lolab amid fresh snowfall

KT NEWS DESK

KUPWARA, JANUARY 27: Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, Tuesday undertook an extensive tour of Lolab Sub-Division to review snow clearance operations and assess the functioning of health institutions following the second spell of snowfall in the district.

The Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, was accompanied by SDM Lolab, Mudassir Ahmad; ACR Kupwara, Peerzada Mumtaz Ahmad and other concerned officers.

During the tour, the DC inspected ongoing snow clearance work on the Kupwara-Lolab Road, Badibera-Lolpora Road, and other interior roads.

He directed all snow clearing agencies including Mechanical Engineering Department, R&B, and PMGSY to expedite snow clearance across all routes to ensure uninterrupted movement and minimize inconvenience to the public.

The Deputy Commissioner also visited Sub-District Hospital Sogam, where he inspected various sections including OPD, Dialysis Unit,



X-Ray, Laboratory, Pharmacy, Gynaecology, Labour Room, Dental Section, and other facilities. He reviewed the duty roster of doctors and hospital staff and instructed the Block Medical Officer to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of healthcare services. Besides, he inspected NTPHC Lalpora and verified staff attendance and duty arrangements.

The Deputy Commissioner also reviewed the movement of essential services in Lalpora Tehsil and directed the concerned Tehsildar to ensure prompt clearance of snow heaps from the main chowk at Lalpora to facilitate smooth traffic flow and public convenience.

Later, the DC chaired a review meeting at the SDM Office, Sogam, to assess the status of snow clearance and the functioning of essential services in the Lolab Sub-Division.

The meeting was attended by SDM Lolab, ACR Kupwara, Executive Engineer R&B, Tehsildar Lalpora, and other concerned officers.

Rana reviews development works at Behra, announces Eco Park

KT News Desk

MENDHAR, JANUARY 27: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, Tuesday conducted a comprehensive review of ongoing development works at Behra in Mendhar during a public outreach programme.

The Minister announced establishment of a new Eco Park in the area with an estimated cost of Rs. 45 lakh, aimed at promoting environmental conservation and providing recreational space for the locals.

Addressing the gathering, the Minister, as per an official statement, informed that several key road infrastructure projects approved under the Public Works Department (PWD) are currently under execution. These included macadamisation of the Behra-Qasab Road, repair of potholes on the Qasab-Tota Road, construction of upstream and downstream approach works to bridges and development of the Jaba-Behra bypass road. These all projects are expected to significantly improve the connectivity and ease of transportation in the region.

Highlighting the initiatives under the Tribal Sub-Plan, the Minister said that development works at the Ekavaya Model Residential School (EMRS), Behra, are progressing steadily. These works are aimed at strengthening the infrastructure, improving amenities and enhancing the educational facilities, thereby ensuring better learning opportunities for the students from tribal and remote areas.



During the interactive session, the residents raised several demands while seeking speedy redress of the same. These included establishment of playground near Behra, improvement of water supply, installation of hand pumps and provision of other essential civic amenities.

Responding to these concerns, the Minister assured the public that all their genuine demands would be examined and addressed on a priority basis.

The senior officers of the concerned departments were also present on the occasion. They interacted with the public and took stock of their grievances and suggestions.

Principal GMC Srinagar reviews hospital preparedness amid adverse weather



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 27: In view of the prevailing adverse weather conditions, Principal/Dean Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar, Prof (Dr) Iffat Hassan, conducted an extensive visit to all associated hospitals, accompanied by Administrator Associated Hospitals, Mohammad Ashraf Hakak.

The visit, as per an official statement, covered SMHS Hospital, Super Speciality Hospital Shireen Bagh, Lalla Ded (LD) Hospital, Chest Disease Hospital, Bone & Joint Hospital, Children Hospital Bemina, Psychiatry Hospital, SDH Block Hazratbal, Kashmir Nursing Home, UG/ PG Hostels, Nursing Hospital GMC Srinagar and others.

Prof. Iffat reviewed healthcare facilities preparedness, directing Medical Superintendents to ensure uninterrupted patient care, essential medicines, emergency services, and critical care services.

She emphasized zero tolerance for lapses in patient services during harsh weather. The Administrator assured full administrative and logistical support, stating departments are on high alert.

Medical Superintendents confirmed essential facilities are in place and staff is deployed for seamless healthcare delivery.

Bashir Ahmad Bhat, Personnel Officer, and other officers accompanied the Principal/Dean during the inspection.

PIB Jammu hosts media workshop at BGSBU on tribal welfare initiatives

KT NEWS DESK

Rajouri, January 27: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Jammu organised a media workshop 'vartalap' at Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (BGSBU) here Tuesday on the developmental initiatives of Government of India, particularly Vibrant Villages Programme and Tribal Welfare Schemes, with focus on achievements in district Rajouri.

Addressing the workshop, Prof Javaid Iqbal, the Vice Chancellor of BGSBU, as per PIB statement highlighted the significant role of the media in creating widespread awareness about the Union government's various schemes aimed at socio-economic development of tribal communities. He stated that the media serves as a vital link between the government and the public by not only disseminating information but also by ensuring transparency and accountability in the effective implementation of these schemes. Emphasising the growing importance of digital platforms, he further said that digital media plays a crucial role in disseminating information in the native languages of tribal communities,

thereby improving outreach, inclusivity, and public participation among marginalised sections of society.

In her address, Director of the Press Information Bureau (PIB) Jammu, Neha Jalali said that the media serves as an important interface between the government and the public. She said the media is an important stakeholder in development of tribal communities. Emphasising inclusive growth, she stressed that the unique culture of tribal communities must be preserved alongside their socio-economic development. She noted that natural resources in tribal regions should not be compromised and called for a balanced approach to ensure sustainable development in these areas. The Director also urged the media to actively highlight the impact of government welfare schemes in tribal regions to create awareness and ensure their effective implementation.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner, Abhishek Sharma highlighted a range of critical challenges confronting the contemporary media landscape. These included the rapid spread of disinformation and misinformation, the increasing use of



deep-fake and other artificial intelligence-driven technologies to manipulate content, and the expanding influence of digital and social media platforms on public opinion. He also emphasised the growing importance of media ethics, credibility, and responsible journalism in an era of instant news and viral content. Addressing these issues, the Deputy Commissioner underscored the need to strengthen professional standards, enhance digital literacy, and prepare journalism for

the evolving demands of the future.

Assistant Commissioner of Development, Auqil Nuvaid elaborated on the objectives and progress of the Vibrant Villages Programme, highlighting the various measures being implemented for the socio-economic upliftment of tribal communities. He informed that several villages have been selected and are being developed on a pilot basis, with focused efforts on ensuring the availability of basic amenities such

as housing, drinking water, healthcare, education, connectivity, and livelihood opportunities. He further stated that the experiences and outcomes from these pilot villages would serve as a model for scaling up the initiative and replicating the development framework in other villages to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth.

District Social Welfare Officer, Abdul Raheem, spoke about the ongoing efforts to improve living conditions in tribal areas. He emphasized

that the government is focusing on enhancing basic amenities, such as access to clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, healthcare, and education, to ensure a better quality of life for tribal communities. He stated that drug de-addiction centres are being established under the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan, a nationwide campaign aimed at creating drug-free communities. These centres will provide counseling, rehabilitation, and support services to help individuals overcome addiction, particularly among vulnerable populations in remote and tribal areas.

Coordinator, Centre for Multidisciplinary Studies and Research, BGSBU, Dr. Danish Iqbal spoke on the theme of transformation in media and emphasised the evolving role of media in society. He underscored that media must remain sensitive to the culture, traditions, and lifestyle of tribal communities while reporting on issues related to them. He highlighted the immense tourism potential of Rajouri and stressed the need to bring the district prominently onto the tourism map of Jammu and Kashmir.

Among others, the workshop was also attended by Joint Registrar, Sunit Gupta; Controller, Examination, Mohammed Ishaq; Media and Communication Officers, Zakir Nazeer and Muzafar Hussain Wani; and District Information Officer, Ashiq Rafiq. The event highlighted the government's efforts to promote socio-economic development in remote and tribal areas, showcasing significant achievements in district Rajouri. Participants were briefed on various welfare measures, infrastructure improvements, and programmes aimed at empowering tribal communities. The workshop served as a platform to engage the media in understanding and disseminating information about government initiatives, thereby ensuring greater awareness and outreach at the grassroots level.

The workshop also featured an interactive session, during which members of the media raised questions regarding the status of implementation of various government schemes in tribal areas. The media persons also offered valuable suggestions to the district administration, to improve outreach, transparency, and effectiveness of welfare programmes in the region.

36th UTLCC: CS calls for tech-driven measures, real-time coordination to curb cyber frauds

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 27: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Tuesday emphasised the need for robust technology-driven solutions, strengthened enforcement mechanisms and real-time coordination among regulators and law enforcement agencies to effectively curb cyber frauds and online financial scams.

Chairing the 36th Union Territory Level Coordination Committee (UTLCC) meeting, convened by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Jammu, the Chief Secretary asserted that comprehensive technological interventions, coupled with stringent legal action, are imperative to safeguard the public from the menace of cyber-enabled financial frauds.

The UTLCC is a statutory coordination forum constituted by the Ministry of Finance to ensure close cooperation among regulators and enforcement agencies, curb unauthorised deposit-taking and other unregulated financial activities, and facilitate sharing of market intelligence.

The meeting was attended by the Regional Director, RBI,

Jammu; Principal Secretary, Home Department; IGP Crime; Commissioner Secretary, Law; Director, Information; Director, Industries, Jammu, and other senior officers.

Senior officials including GM, RBI; Registrar of Cooperatives; Market Intelligence Unit, RBI, along with representatives of SEBI and ICAC, also participated.

Taking serious note of

instances of cyber fraud and online cheating reported in the UT, the Chief Secretary directed that the strictest possible action be taken against offenders under the relevant provisions of the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes (BUDS) Act, which has now been operationalised in Jammu and Kashmir.

He called upon the RBI and law enforcement agencies to

clearly define and streamline cyber regulatory protocols for swift and effective enforcement. Stressing on public awareness, the Chief Secretary directed the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), J&K, to publish awareness campaigns in local newspapers and across official social media platforms, in coordination with RBI Jammu, particularly highlighting the

importance of investing only in RBI-authorised and white listed entities.

The Chief Secretary further urged regulatory authorities, including the Registrar of Companies (RoC), to proactively share details of unregistered and suspicious entities with law enforcement agencies to enable timely action against repeat offenders.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Heavy snowfall hits

A senior official said administration teams are working around the clock to clear snow and reopen national and district roads across the Valley.

WEATHER TO IMPROVE FROM WEDNESDAY
The Meteorological Department has forecast additional snowfall late Tuesday night, but conditions are expected to improve from Wednesday morning, with dry weather predicted for the next 48 hours.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) warned of fresh snowfall and possible avalanches in higher reaches of J&K over the next 48 hours.

A senior IMD official said the recent snowfall across the Valley has left snow depths ranging between 1 to 2 feet along the Pir Panjal range, from Kulgam to Kupwara. Gulmarg recorded 31 cm of snow in the lower reaches, while upper areas reported between 1.5 to 2 feet of accumulation.

"The snowfall that began yesterday is expected to reduce by Tuesday evening. By Wednesday morning, most parts of Jammu and Kashmir will see clear skies, though some residual snow may remain in isolated areas by Wednesday afternoon," the official said.

He added that a Western Disturbance is likely to bring light to moderate rain or snow in parts of Kashmir between Wednesday afternoon and Thursday, with heavy snowfall possible in areas along the Kulgam-Kupwara axis.

The IMD has advised residents and visitors not to venture into higher reaches during the next 48 hours due to increased risk of snow avalanches. Locals in snow-prone areas have also been urged to exercise caution.

People travelling on national highways across the Union Territory have been asked to follow the guidance of law enforcement and local authorities to ensure safety, the official said.

ANOTHER WESTERN DISTURBANCE TO HIT J&K ON FEB 1, 2

The IMD predicted that another Western Disturbance is likely to hit J&K on February 1 and 2, bringing fresh precipitation to the region.

The Jammu and Kashmir UT Disaster Management Authority (JKUTDMA) has issued a high alert warning of a potential avalanche with a high danger level above 2,000 metres in Bandipora, Baramulla, Ganderbal, and Kupwara over the next 24 hours.

Residents and visitors have been advised to avoid avalanche-prone areas and strictly follow official safety instructions. In case of emergencies, people are urged to dial 112 for immediate assistance.

SNOWFALL MAKES TOURISTS HAPPY

Tourists in Kashmir are making the most of the second snowfall this week, especially in the higher altitude areas. Places like Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Sonamarg have turned into stunning winter landscapes, drawing large numbers of visitors.

Many were spotted enjoying the snow, taking in the scenic views, and experiencing the region's enchanting winter atmosphere firsthand.

Furthermore, police personnel have assisted numerous people in reaching safer locations and provided help during medical emergencies amid heavy snowfall across the Valley, including in Sopore, Hanwara, Bandipora, Ganderbal, and Kulgam.

DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER, SURINDER CHOUDHARY TOURS BUDGAM

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, conducted an extensive tour of Budgam district to assess the post-snowfall situation, including snow clearance operations, restoration of essential services and healthcare facilities.

During the tour, the Deputy Chief Minister reviewed the snow clearance arrangements at the office of the Superintending Engineer, PWD Budgam. He directed the concerned authorities for prompt deployment of men and machinery in the affected areas.

He stressed strict rationalisation of snow clearance equipment to ensure timely reopening of roads and restoration of connectivity. He emphasised that all available machinery must be pressed into service to clear main roads as well as interior links to facilitate hassle-free movement of the general public. (KNO)

Srinagar-Jammu highway

was closed from both the Jammu and Kashmir divisions. "Though clearance work was taken up, the highway is still inaccessible for full traffic movement," he added.

According to officials, some heavy motor vehicles (HMVs) are stranded along the snow-bound Qazigund axis and in the Banihal-Ramban sector.

"Restoration efforts are ongoing and are subject to weather conditions. Stranded vehicles are being provided with the necessary assistance, and traffic will be allowed only after a green signal from concerned agencies," the official said.

The Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri (SSG) Road, Baderwah-Chamba Road, Mughal Road and Sinthian Road are also closed due to snow accumulation.

Speaking to KNO, Inspector General of Police (Traffic), M. Suleman Choudhary said the Jammu-Srinagar highway was closed due to

snowfall on the Qazigund axis and the Banihal-Ramban stretch.

"The highway will remain closed tomorrow as well, and traffic will be restored only if weather conditions improve and a green signal is received from road agencies," the IGP said.

Railway services were also affected due to snowfall, with three up and five down trains suspended, officials said. However, Vande Bharat trains and two additional special trains were operated amid the inclement weather.

Around 1,400 passengers travelled in the two special reserved trains operated by the Jammu Division to manage the rush caused by road closures and adverse weather. More than 650 passengers travelled in the first special train, while over 700 passengers travelled in the second one.

Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Uchit Singh, said that the special reserved train ensured connectivity between Katra and the Kashmir Valley during the adverse weather.

"The train maintained an occupancy rate of over 100 per cent. Passengers appreciated the service, terming it extremely beneficial, especially when road and air connectivity were disrupted," Singh said. "Such initiatives ensure safe travel during bad weather and improve passenger convenience, particularly during the tourist season." (KNO)

58 flights grounded

(KNO) that all scheduled flights for the day were cancelled due to continuous snowfall and visibility levels.

"Safety always comes first. Flight operations were called off to ensure passenger safety," the official said.

He said all incoming and outgoing flights, including those of IndiGo, Air India, Alliance Air, Air India Express and SpiceJet, among others, were grounded as runway clearance and visibility remained below operational minimums.

"Due to adverse weather conditions and continuous snowfall in Srinagar, the runway is currently not available for safe aircraft operations. In the interest of passenger safety, all flight operations to and from Srinagar have been cancelled for the day," the official added.

He said the airport and airline teams are "closely monitoring the weather" and will resume services once the runway is declared operational.

Passengers have also been advised to stay in touch with their respective airlines for updates and rescheduling. "We regret the inconvenience caused and appreciate the understanding and cooperation of passengers," the official said.

According to the official, a total of 58 flights were cancelled for today, including 29 arrivals and 29 departures, amid relentless snowfall that blanketed the runway and nearby areas.

Similarly, at the terminal, scenes of disappointment and anger were visible as travellers waited for updates. "We had been waiting since morning, hoping the flight would take off," said a passenger waiting for travel towards Delhi.

"But once the snowfall intensified, we knew it was not happening today. It is frustrating, but safety matters."

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department has also forecast continued widespread light to moderate rain and snowfall across Jammu & Kashmir in the next 24 hours, raising concerns about further disruptions to air and surface traffic.

Airport officials appealed for patience and caution, urging passengers not to rely on social media rumours but to follow official advisories for real-time updates.

"We are working round-the-clock with all stakeholders to ensure that as soon as the weather improves and visibility allows, normal flight operations will resume," the official said, adding the flight schedule for tomorrow will be known in the morning after reviewing the situation. (KNO)

Snowfall ends dry

Jhelum in Kulgam district, was among the worst-hit water bodies and had dried up completely.

Officials said fresh precipitation has now led to its revival, raising hopes for the rejuvenation of other major springs across the Valley.

An official from the Jal Shakti department said that water discharge has improved considerably. The drinking water supply pipelines are now functioning smoothly in areas that were earlier affected by low flow, he added.

Farmers termed the snowfall a lifeline after months of dry conditions. "We were deeply worried as our springs had dried up and the soil had lost moisture. This snowfall has revived our hopes and will help recharge groundwater," said Abdul Rashid, a farmer from Yaripora.

He said the snowfall would prove beneficial for crops and orchards. "Snow acts as a natural fertiliser and also protects crops from frost damage. If such weather continues, it will ensure a good agricultural season ahead," he added.

Environmental expert Rouf Hamza told KNO that the depletion of water bodies in Kashmir was primarily due to insufficient snowfall this winter. "Snowfall plays a vital role in sustaining and recharging water bodies. The recent snowfall has led to the rejuvenation of these critical water sources," he said.

He said the snowfall has also recharged

Kashmir's glaciers, often referred to as the Valley's 'water banks'. "Glaciers are the lifeline of Kashmir's economy. Fresh snowfall strengthens glacier mass, ensures sustained river flows during summer and supports agriculture, hydropower and drinking water needs," Hamza said.

He expressed optimism about the coming months, saying the fresh snowfall would benefit farmers and orchardists alike. "Snow is crucial for Kashmir as it supports agriculture, horticulture and tourism, which form the backbone of the Valley's economy," he said.

The expert added, "Snowfall helps protect forests from forest fires, as fires tend to spread throughout the year due to a lack of moisture in the forests. Snow also reflects a good amount of sunlight, which helps reduce global warming." (KNO)

Govt committed

The Lieutenant Governor said that the poets wield an exceptional power and they can reform society's inner architecture, propel its momentum forward, and breathe renewed vigor into the nation's consciousness.

"A truly prosperous society-rich in material progress yet balanced in culture and spirit-needs the essential contributions of both Scientists and Poets," LG Sinha said, adding, "To me, poetry is a craft that navigates us through existence and carries us across life's expanse from familiar ground to undiscovered territory. Poetry springs to life when inner emotions transcend verbal expression. A poet's language evolves beyond simple communication and it reverberates with existence's rhythm. In my view, poetry emerges precisely when raw feeling crystallizes into articulate form," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He stated that culture provides direction to the soul, while economic empowerment grants it stability. He emphasised that a harmonious, progressive, and self-reliant society emerges solely from the balance of these two dimensions. "We possess natural resources, human capability, and rich cultural heritage. Our sole need is wise and deliberate deployment of these resources. Achieving this will enable Jammu Kashmir to realize the people's dreams while serving as a catalyst for national advancement," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Padma Shri Dr SP Varma; Dr. Mandeep K Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Brij Mohan Sharma, Principal Secretary Culture; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Shakti Kumar Pathak, Director Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB); Shiv Kumar Sharma, DIG Jammu-Samba-Kathua Range; Shruti Awasthi, Regional Director, IGNCA; Ms Harvinder Kour, Secretary JKAAJ, senior officers of Police and Civil Administration, prominent literary personalities and people from different walks of life attended the Kavi sammelan. (KNO)

CRPF jawan among

families in this hour of grief. Praying for a speedy recovery of the injured." (KNO)

Youth defy snowfall

drew cheers from onlookers. The video clips of the volleyball match played in the snow went viral on social media, drawing applause from the netizens.

Donning jackets and pherans (long Kashmiri coat), over a dozen of youth had marked boundaries and erect a net on the snow-covered ground, which was followed by an hour-long friendly match filled with dives, high-fives and roars of laughter.

"The snowfall is heavy, but yet our passion for the sport is heavier", said Bilal, a 25-year old youth. "We have grown up playing here, snow is just adding adventure," he added.

Another youth said, "It's heartwarming to see young people active and happy, even in this weather. The energy level is inspiring while such activities unite everyone".

It is noteworthy that, Tarzoo in Sopore outskirts is the same village where a maiden Volleyball tournament on synthetic turf was played in 2025. (KNO)

Interaction with

the gathering, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah underscored the seriousness and purpose of the pre-budget consultation process, stating that such interactions are not ceremonial but play a crucial role in shaping government priorities.

"These consultations have been going on for many years, and today we have once again taken them forward. Some may feel that this is a routine exercise with little impact on the ground, but that perception is far from reality," the Chief Minister said.

He emphasized that the presence of the entire senior leadership of the government reflected the administration's commitment to listening to stakeholders. "If we were not serious about your suggestions, we would not have brought the entire government machinery here—from the Chief Secretary and senior officers to my Cabinet colleagues. Our intention is to consult you extensively and, wherever possible, incorporate your inputs into the budget and our policies," he added.

Highlighting the value of stakeholder engagement, CM Omar Abdullah said that such consultations bridge the gap between official assessment and ground realities. "It is not

clearly define and streamline cyber regulatory protocols for swift and effective enforcement. Stressing on public awareness, the Chief Secretary directed the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), J&K, to publish awareness campaigns in local newspapers and across official social media platforms, in coordination with RBI Jammu, particularly highlighting the

importance of investing only in RBI-authorised and white listed entities.

The Chief Secretary further urged regulatory authorities, including the Registrar of Companies (RoC), to proactively share details of unregistered and suspicious entities with law enforcement agencies to enable timely action against repeat offenders.

Railways are

analysis to transform service delivery.

He said, "This technology and intelligence-driven approach will sharpen demand forecasting, help in optimizing resource allocation, help in reducing accident risks, and strengthening infrastructure.

"Smart technology holds the key to reimagining Indian Railways as a sleek, passenger-first mobility powerhouse for 21st Century," LG Sinha added.

He said, "India's economy continues to grow, our cities are expanding and the demand for logistics steadily intensifies. Indian Railways is evolving to be swifter, safer and more dependable, with our emphasis placed on enhanced operations and optimal resource deployment."

The Lieutenant Governor also spoke on the crucial role of reforms and technology in the freight sector. "Dedicated freight corridors, modern logistics terminals, and integrated digital platforms can make freight transport faster, cheaper, and more competitive. It will reduce the cost for industries and give impetus to the Indian economy," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He highlighted that developing a multimodal logistics network by linking rail with road and other modes of transport is the need of the future.

The Lieutenant Governor extended his best wishes to the officer trainees and encouraged them to look into fresh challenges and promising opportunities. "Keep national interest paramount. Every file, every decision, and every order you make must have the ultimate objective of serving the nation and building a developed India," he said.

The IRMS Officer Trainees are on their visit to the UT of Jammu Kashmir as a part of Bharat Darshan.

Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Course Directors-Rahul, Professor (Traffic Planning & Costing) and Pranjalya Parth Lathe, Professor (Logistics & Supply Chain Management, Indian Railways Institute of Transport Management and other senior officials were also present. (KNO)

India-EU announce

in June 2022.

The EU, as a bloc, is India's largest trading partner in goods.

For the financial year 2024-25, India's total trade in goods with the EU was worth about USD 136 billion, with exports around USD 76 billion and imports at USD 60 billion.

The broad focus of the summit was on trade, defence and security, climate change, critical technologies and strengthening the rules-based global order.

India and the European Union have been strategic partners since 2004.

The proposed Security and Defence Partnership (SDP) will facilitate deeper defence and security cooperation between the two sides.

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 27: India and Europe have concluded the "mother of all" trade deals, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Tuesday as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the top EU leadership held summit talks to elevate the two-way ties to jointly navigate geopolitical turbulence and trade disruptions.

Prime Minister Modi hosted von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa at the summit.

"Europe and India are making history today. We have concluded the mother of all deals. We have created a free trade zone of two billion people, with both sides set to benefit," Von der Leyen said.

"This is only the beginning. We will grow our strategic relationship to be even stronger," she said.

The two EU leaders graced the 77th Republic Day celebrations at the Kartavya Path as chief guests on Monday.

The long-awaited free trade agreement is expected to significantly expand the overall trajectory of two-way engagement as it will open up new opportunities for cooperation



in diverse areas. Following the summit, the two sides are set to ink a document to formally announce the conclusion of the FTA negotiations. It may take at least six months to formally sign the deal as it will require legal scrubbing by both the sides.

The EU and India had first launched negotiations for the free trade agreement in 2007, before the talks were suspended in 2013 due to a gap in ambition. The negotiations were relaunched in June 2022.

The EU, as a bloc, is India's largest trading partner in goods. For the financial year 2024-25, India's total trade in goods with the EU was

worth about USD 136 billion, with exports around USD 76 billion and imports at USD 60 billion.

The broad focus of the summit was learnt to be on trade, defence and security, climate change, critical technologies and strengthening the rules-based global order. Besides firming up the free trade agreement, the two sides are set to unveil a defence framework pact and a strategic agenda. India and the European Union have been strategic partners since 2004. The proposed Security and Defence Partnership (SDP) will facilitate deeper defence and security cooperation between the two

sides, officials said. The SDP will bring interoperability in the defence domain and will open up avenues for Indian firms to participate in the EU's SAFE (Security Action for Europe) programme.

The SAFE is the EU's Euro 150 billion financial instrument designed to provide financial support to member states to speed up defence readiness.

At the summit, India and the EU are also set to launch the negotiations for a Security of Information Agreement (SOIA).

The SOIA is expected to boost industrial defence cooperation between the two sides. The two sides are also set to ink an agreement on facilitating the mobility of Indian workers to Europe. It will provide a framework for advancing mobility initiatives by EU member states with India, the officials said.

France, Germany and Italy are among the European nations that have migration and mobility partnerships with India.

The two sides are also expected to ink a number of agreements to provide for deeper cooperation in a range of other sectors. They are also likely to deliberate on the pressing global challenges, including the Russia-Ukraine war.

Actual economic growth often exceeds Economic Survey's projections



PTI

projection of 8-8.5 per cent.

In 2021-22, due to COVID, the Economic Survey did not make any projection, but the growth worked out to be 9.7 per cent, mainly because of the base effect.

The growth in 2020-21 was negative at 5.8 per cent, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget on February 1.

Presented just ahead of the Budget, the survey sets the tone for the government's economic thinking and offers a detailed snapshot of where India stands financially before new policy decisions are announced.

'Health impacts due to plastics worldwide may double by 2040'

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 27: Adverse effects on health due to emissions from the world's plastics system, including greenhouse gases, air-polluting particles and toxic chemicals released from production, could more than double by 2040, compared to levels in 2016, if current trends continue, according to a study.

The study, published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal, also highlighted that the global production of plastics may not peak until beyond 2100, worsening environmental and health burdens in an already overwhelmed system.

Plastic pollution and emissions released across its lifecycle are increasingly recognised for their potential impacts on human health, yet the overall scale of the impact is only beginning to be fully quantified, researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and institutes in France, said.

Quantifying health impacts throughout plastics' lifecycles can inform global action against pollution, promoting sustainability across the environment, economy and health, they said. The team added



that a non-disclosure of the chemical composition of plastics is "severely limiting" lifecycle assessments in informing effective policy.

The plastics lifecycle assessment study is the first global-scale one to estimate health impacts in terms of 'disability-adjusted life-years' related to greenhouse gases, air pollutants and chemicals released, the researchers said.

Lifecycles of plastic products analysed include raw material extraction to polymer production to

post-consumption waste collection, recycling technologies, dumpsites and open burning and environmental pollution.

The model put forth in the study contributes a flexible framework that can be expanded to include new data and methods and improve precision in health impact estimates associated with plastics, their alternatives and substitutes -- the information can contribute towards a rapidly changing policy landscape, the authors said.

India needs USD 145 bn annual energy investment to align growth with climate goals: Wood Mackenzie

PTI

Betul (South Goa): India will need to mobilise average annual investments of about USD 145 billion in its energy sector to bridge the gap between sustained economic growth and its net-zero ambitions, Wood Mackenzie said on Tuesday, outlining a critical pathway to maintain around 6 per cent GDP growth through 2035 while advancing the energy transition.

Speaking at India Energy Week 2026, Joshua Ngu, Vice Chairman, Asia Pacific at Wood Mackenzie, said capital deployment must be strategically focused on power generation, energy storage and urgent grid modernisation to support India's expanding economy and decarbonisation goals.

"India's next decade is decisive," Ngu said. "The challenge is a dual mandate: India must de-risk its immediate energy security while simultaneously building the low-carbon architecture required to support a

top-tier global economy. Today's investment choices will determine whether the country locks in carbon-intensive infrastructure or leads the world in low-carbon industrialisation."

Wood Mackenzie said the power sector, while remaining India's largest source of emissions, is also the primary engine of the energy transition. The sector has already undergone a structural shift, with non-fossil installed capacity now exceeding fossil fuel capacity.

Going forward, the transition will be driven by the scale-up of renewable energy, grid flexibility and

storage, while coal additions are expected to be largely limited to reliability and peak-balancing needs rather than energy growth.

However, the pace of decarbonisation is creating system integration challenges. Wood Mackenzie estimates USD 1.5 trillion in energy transition investment between 2026 and 2035, with a significant portion required for transmission and distribution infrastructure. "The USD 1.5 trillion investment for energy transition is not just about adding megawatts; it is about the wires," said Rashika Gupta, Vice President, Power

and Renewables Research at Wood Mackenzie. "Success hinges on the pace of market reforms, specifically the Electricity Amendment Bill to improve distribution competition and provide the transparent investment signals needed to unlock private capital for grid modernisation."

Despite the acceleration of renewable energy, Wood Mackenzie said hydrocarbon fuels remain essential for near-term energy security. India is on track to meet its 1.5-billion-tonne coal production target by 2030, with growing emphasis on coal gasification to diversify the energy mix.

At the same time, dependence on crude oil imports is expected to rise, with import reliance projected to reach 87 per cent by 2035.

"To mitigate this, India must revitalise its upstream sector," Ngu said. "Attracting international oil companies (IOCs) back to Indian exploration and production (E&P) is no longer optional. It is a security imperative."

India-EU FTA: Zero-duty for apparel, chemicals; concessional access for cars, wines

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 27: India and the European Union on Tuesday announced the conclusion of negotiations for the free trade agreement (FTA), under which a number of domestic sectors such as apparel, chemicals and footwear will get duty-free entry into the 27-nation bloc, while the EU will get access to the Indian market at concessional duty for cars and wines, an official said.

The deal, concluded after negotiations spanning over two decades, has been termed as the "mother of all deals" as it will create a market of about 2 billion people.

The official said that, except for auto and steel, almost all the Indian goods (over 93 per cent) from India will get zero-duty access in the European Union (EU), and of the remaining over 6 per cent, Indian exporters will get tariff reduction and quota-based duty concessions (for goods like automobiles).

The EU will eliminate import duty on 90 per cent of Indian goods on the first day of implementation of the free trade agreement (FTA), which is expected to come into force early next year. On three per cent, levies will be eliminated in a phased manner in seven years.

"So 99.5 per cent of the trade value, concessions are being given by the EU to India," the official said.

On the other hand, the EU will get duty-free access for 93 per cent of its goods over a ten-year period in India. India will remove duties on only 30 per cent of



European goods on the first day of implementing the pact.

India is also giving duty concessions and quota-based reductions on 3.7 per cent of trade value for the EU. In all, India is giving duty concessions on 97.5 per cent of the total bilateral trade value," the official said.

The major Indian sectors which will get duty-free access include textiles, apparel, clothing, marine products, chemicals, plastics, rubber, leather and footwear, base metals, gems and jewellery, furniture, toys, and sports goods, the official said.

At present, these sectors attract duties ranging from 0 to 26 per cent in the EU.

India has also liberalised tariffs for EU goods under the FTA. "But in our case, India will reduce import duty to zero for the EU in over 10 years. The

initial drop-down to zero is limited. On EIF (entry into force), we will reduce to 30 per cent of our trade value. But gradually, we will go down to zero on 93 per cent of our total bilateral trade value," the official said.

On the services front, the EU has made one of its best offers to India, opening 144 sub-sectors out of 155, and India is opening 102 sub-sectors to them.

In addition to that, there are commitments around students' mobility, the official said, adding "we do have some commitments on post-study work visas also from the EU".

At present, these sectors attract duties ranging from 0 to 26 per cent in the EU.

Outside trade in goods and services, the FTA has chapters on digital trade, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, and intellectual property rights. There is no chapter

on energy, critical minerals and government procurement.

The average EU tariffs are already low. They are around 3.8 per cent, and under the trade deal, they will be reduced to 0.1 per cent for India.

But in some sectors, the duties are high. These include marine, chemicals, plastics and rubber. On all these, the EU will eliminate the duties for India under the trade deal.

India's exports from these sectors totalled USD 35 billion in 2024. Duties will be removed on USD 33.5 billion on the first day of the implementation. And on remaining, it will go down to 'zero' in three, five and seven years.

In automobiles, both sides have negotiated on a "quota" based duty concessions because the EU has a "very" aggressive demand in this sector.

India's auto sector is largely dominated by small cars (retail prices Rs 10 lakh-Rs 25 lakh), and the EU's interest in that segment is not great.

"We have decided that cars which are likely to sell below Rs 25 lakhs in this country, the EU will not be exporting those cars to India. They may manufacture it here," the official said.

The Rs 25 lakh vehicles include petrol, diesel, and hybrid. Above Rs 25 lakh, India's market is limited, but the EU's interest is high as they are good manufacturers in this segment.

At present, India's import duty on automobiles ranges from 66

per cent to 125 per cent. India will not give any out-of-quota duty reduction.

For electric vehicles (EVs), India's quotas will start from the fifth year of the agreement.

Duty reductions for EVs will vary across segments.

"In some segments, it will be 35 per cent and in some, it will be 30 per cent in the first year. And then it will go down slowly," the official said.

India will not give any duty concessions in the dairy (including cheese), soya meal and cereals sectors. The EU is also protecting its sugar, beef, meat and poultry sectors.

India has received quota-based duty reduction for table grapes in the EU. The EU imports about USD 1.4 billion worth of table grapes annually.

"We have got duty-free access for around USD 100 million, that is 85,000 tons of grapes," the official said.

India will reduce duties in seven years. The duty would fall from 150 per cent to 20 per cent on high-value wines over seven years. For wines below 2.5 euros, there will be no concessions.

At present, bilateral trade in goods stands at about USD 136 billion and is expected to cross USD 200 billion within three to four years of the pact's implementation, according to the ministry official.

Similarly, trade in services, currently estimated at around USD 80-85 billion, could reach USD 125 billion over the same period.

EU-India trade deal a major breakthrough after years of talks: Envoys

IANS

New Delhi, Jan 27: European Union envoys on Tuesday welcomed the India-EU trade deal, calling it a major achievement that will strengthen trade and investment ties between the two sides after years of long and complex negotiations.

Speaking to IANS, Malta's High Commissioner to India, Reuben Gauci, said the agreement marks a significant milestone after many years of discussions.

He said the deal is substantive and carefully balanced, while respecting the interests of both parties.

Gauci added that the

agreement will be highly beneficial for boosting trade and investment relations, as trade often acts as a key driver for investment.

He noted that opening up markets creates new opportunities for businesses on both sides.

"It's a great achievement after many years of negotiation. I think we managed to reach an agreement that is substantive, while respecting the right lines of the two parties," he added.

Italian Ambassador to India, Antonio Bartoli, described the deal as an extremely important development for both India and the European Union.



SNOWFALL SPARKS JOY AND RENEWED HOPE IN SRINAGAR

Pics: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

