



Amid turbulence, *Bapu's* teachings offer direction to world: LG Sinha

Gandhi Jayanti celebrations in J&K over last 6 years transformed society

Massive participation in 'Tiranga Yatra', 'Har Ghar Tiranga', 'Vande Mataram' sent clear message

KNO Desk

Jammu, Jan 30: Asserting that the world and global society are changing rapidly, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Friday said that amid such turbulence, teachings of father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi offer strength and direction to the global society.

Paying rich tributes to Mahatma Gandhi on his Punyatithi, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said, "I believe that Bapu is a living guide for today's world. His philosophy of non-violence, truth, and self-reliance proves as essential today as during India's independence struggle, providing timeless wisdom for navigating contemporary crises and bridging divides that threaten global society's collective future."

LG Sinha was speaking at the



solemn event organised by the Gandhi Global Family, J&K.

The Lieutenant Governor also remembered and paid homage to the sacrifice and dedication of all great men and women on Martyrs' Day.

The Lieutenant Governor spoke on Jammu Kashmir's unwavering desire for peace and the timeless relevance of Gandhian values and ideals that have guided us through generations.

"Pujya Bapu showed through his life and works that meaningful change demands not merely strength, but character and dedicated effort," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor further elaborated | [More on P6](#)

People's welfare at core of pre-budget consultations: CM Omar

Concludes pre-budget talks with Jammu MLAs; vows inclusive, needs-based budget

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 30: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday concluded the pre-budget consultation process with public representatives from eight districts of the Jammu division, reiterating the government's commitment to inclusive and participatory approach in budget formulation aimed at the overall development of Jammu and Kashmir.

Thanking all the Members of the Legislative Assembly for their valuable inputs and feedback regarding developmental works in their respective constituencies, the Chief Minister said that these consultations were not a mere formality but an essential exercise to understand needs of people at the grassroots level and their priorities.

"There was no doubt in this. These consultations are not meant to be a formality. If it were just a formality, I would



not have called you," the Chief Minister said. He added that listening to elected representatives often brings forward ideas and perspectives that the government may not have otherwise considered.

"After listening to you, we get some ideas that we had not thought about. If you benefit from the budget, Jammu and Kashmir will benefit. If Jammu and Kashmir benefits, then

your and my work will be accomplished," he remarked.

The Chief Minister emphasized that all stakeholders shared a common objective. "We are all on one page—that Jammu and Kashmir and the people of Jammu and Kashmir should benefit. This is the purpose of these meetings," he said.

CM Omar Abdullah further thanked the MLAs for actively participating | [More on P6](#)

Political egos keep Dy Speaker's post vacant in J&K Assembly

Post remains unfilled since 2023; NC silent, BJP unassertive

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Jan 30: As the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly convenes for its 5th session on February 2, the post of Deputy Speaker in the House remains vacant, raising questions about the National Conference-led government for keeping this key statutory and legislative position unfilled.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), as per the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, the Legislative Assembly shall, as soon as may be, choose two of its members to serve as Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

While NC's Abdul Rahim Rather was unanimously elected Speaker of the Assembly on the second day of its first session, November 4, 2023, the chair of Deputy Speaker has remained empty ever since.

According to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the J&K Legislative Assembly, the election of the Deputy Speaker shall be held on such date as the Speaker may fix. The Deputy Speaker is elected once a motion proposing his or her name is moved.

The process of electing the Deputy Speaker has to be initiated by the government, but the ruling National | [More on P6](#)

Chillai Kalan ends, Kashmir continues to freeze

MeT forecasts light to moderate snow over coming days

Avalanche advisory issued for high-altitude areas above 2,400 metres

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 30: Despite Chillai Kalan, 40-day harshest winter period, coming to an end, cold wave conditions continued across Kashmir on Friday, with several areas in the Valley and higher reaches recording sub-zero minimum temperatures.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of 1.3 degrees Celsius, while the city's airport registered minus 1.2 degrees Celsius. Tourist resorts Gulmarg and Sonamarg were among the coldest places, recording minus 9.0 degrees Celsius and minus 10.6 degrees Celsius, respectively.



Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

Pahalgam recorded minus 5.3 degrees Celsius, Kupwara minus 3.1 degrees Celsius, and Shopian minus 2.6 degrees Celsius. Baramulla registered minus

1.4 degrees Celsius, Bandipora minus 0.5 degrees Celsius, Ganderbal minus 0.4 degrees Celsius, and Qazigund minus 0.3 degrees Celsius. South Kashmir | [More on P6](#)

Hunt intensified for terrorists in snowbound Kishtwar, internet barred

Operation underway since Jan 18; forces deploy elite units, sniffer dogs, aerial surveillance

Sajid Raina

Kishtwar, Jan 30: Security forces on Friday intensified a multi-agency anti-terror operation in the snowbound Chatroo area in Kishtwar district to track down a small group of terrorists believed to be linked to the Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM).

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that elite Army units, including paratroopers and Rashtriya Rifles personnel, supported by Jammu and Kashmir Police, aerial surveillance teams and sniffer dogs, have been deployed across dense forests and high-altitude terrain.



"Checkpoints have been strengthened and vehicle searches intensified across the district as part of the ongoing operation," they said.

"The operation, which began

on January 18, is focused on rugged forested areas where two to three suspected terrorists are believed to be hiding. Troops have been combing the region despite | [More on P6](#)

J&K to launch comprehensive cancer control strategy with NITI Aayog, ICMR

Chief Secy Dulloo attends high-level Cancer consultation in New Delhi

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jan 30: A high-level consultation on cancer burden, research and care in Jammu and Kashmir was convened at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, bringing together senior officers from NITI Aayog, Department of Health Research (DHR), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Government of Jammu and Kashmir and the leading clinicians, researchers and public health experts from premier national institutions.

The meeting was attended by Member (Health) NITI Aayog, Dr. V K Paul, Chief



Secretary J&K, Atal Dulloo, Secretary DHR & Director General ICMR Dr. Rajiv Behl and Secretary, Health & Medical Education, government of J&K, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah and other senior

officers and experts.

The consultation focused on evolving a comprehensive, evidence-based and implementable cancer control strategy for Jammu and Kashmir, taking into account

regional disease patterns, existing health system capacity and long-term sustainability. Deliberations emphasized the urgent need to strengthen cancer screening and early detection mechanisms, | [More on P6](#)

Union Minister presents second best Republic Day tableau award to J&K official

KT News Desk

New Delhi, Jan 30: Union Minister of State for Defence, Sanjay Seth, on Friday presented the second-best tableau award to Brij Mohan Sharma, Principal Secretary, Culture, J&K, at Rashtriya Rangshala Camp, New Delhi, recognising J&K's outstanding performance in the 77th Republic Day Parade.

Renowned theatre personality and former Secretary of J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages Balwant Thakur, who conceptualized the tableau, was present among other dignitaries. The tableau was prepared under the guidance of Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo and Principal Secretary, Culture, and

executed by Secretary of the J&K Academy, Harvinder Kaur.

The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir was honoured with the second-best Tableau award at the culmination of the National Republic Day Celebrations-2026 held in New Delhi.

This prestigious recognition marks Jammu & Kashmir's return to national prominence in the Republic Day tableau segment and stands as a proud milestone in the Union Territory's cultural journey.

The accolade is a testament to the tableau's exceptional conceptual depth, artistic excellence and meticulous execution, achieved through a highly professional and collaborative



effort. The tableau captivated the audiences and expert juries alike with its compelling and authentic portrayal of Jammu & Kashmir's rich cultural heritage.

Conceived as a vibrant cultural statement, the tableau depicted Jammu & Kashmir as a land where ancient craftsmanship and living performance traditions coexist in seamless continuity, reflecting the Union Territory's civilizational depth, diversity and creative resilience.

Unfolding like a richly woven cultural tapestry, the tableau offered a panoramic journey through Jammu & Kashmir's artistic continuum. The tableau further featured vibrant papier-mâché artefacts and Pahari miniature paintings, with special

emphasis on the bold and expressive Basohli style, evoking centuries of artistic refinement and spiritual expression. Artisans' tools—looms, chisels and brushes—symbolised dedication, discipline, and the quiet perseverance of the craftspeople sustaining these living traditions.

Adding poetic symbolism, saffron blossoms rose gracefully within the tableau, representing Jammu & Kashmir's cultural soul in bloom and underscoring the region's historical, cultural, and economic legacy rooted in the land.

On the right flank, the tableau transitioned into rhythm and movement, as the soulful strains of the rabab and

santoor set the ambience. Performers in resplendent traditional attire brought the tableau alive through the graceful Rouf of Kashmir, the vigorous Kud of Jammu, and the vibrant folk dances of the Pahari, Bhadarwahi and Gojri communities, celebrating unity in diversity.

Together, crafts, music and dance merged into a living cultural symphony, presenting before the nation and the world the enduring spirit, harmony, resilience and pluralistic ethos of Jammu & Kashmir.

The award not only honours artistic excellence but also reaffirms Jammu & Kashmir's prominent place on the national cultural map, | [More on P6](#)

Satish Sharma meets public delegations, assures time-bound service delivery



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, JANUARY 30: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma today met various public delegations at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu and held detailed interactions to review issues affecting different sections of the society.

During the meetings, the delegations, as per an official statement brought to the notice of the Minister a range of demands and grievances relating to food supply, transport services, youth welfare, sports infrastructure and other developmental matters concerning their respective areas.

The Minister, while responding to their concerns, assured the delegations that the same would be addressed on priority through coordinated departmental action.

Reaffirming government's commitment to responsive, transparent and citizen-centric governance, Satish Sharma emphasized that efficient and time-bound service delivery remains the cornerstone of effective administration. He stressed that every

government office must function with a public-first approach, ensuring accessibility, accountability and prompt resolution of grievances.

The Minister highlighted the need for greater inter-departmental coordination to eliminate delays and enhance the quality of services being delivered to the people. He directed the concerned officers to conduct timely follow-ups, maintain regular communication with stakeholders and ensure that public grievances are resolved in a transparent and outcome-oriented manner.

Satish Sharma further instructed the officials to strengthen the monitoring mechanisms so that benefits of various government welfare schemes reach the intended beneficiaries without procedural hurdles. He underlined that technology-driven governance, simplified procedures and proactive outreach are essential to improve public trust in institutions.

He added that sustained engagement with the public and grassroots-level feedback would continue to guide the government's policies and developmental priorities.

Div Com Kashmir reviews UEED projects in Srinagar

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 30: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, Friday chaired a meeting to review the status of ongoing and proposed development projects being executed by the Urban Environmental Engineering Department (UEED) in Srinagar.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Vice Chairman LCMA, Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Chief Engineers of KPDC, PHE and R&B, Superintending Engineer UEED, General Manager NBCC Srinagar, Deputy Director Planning, and other senior officers. At the outset, the Superintending Engineer, UEED, gave a detailed presentation on ongoing and envisioned projects across the Kashmir Division, with special focus on Srinagar city. He briefed the meeting on the number of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the division, DPRs framed, projects tendered, live projects, and projects under evaluation.

The SE UEED also apprised the meeting of the status of Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) works under SBM (Urban) 2.0, the overall sewerage



scenario of Srinagar city, pollution abatement measures for water bodies in the city, major ongoing UEED projects, the sewerage scheme for Zone-3 of Greater Srinagar, and the project status along with issues related to the 60 MLD Noorbagh STP.

It was given that Noor Bagh STP shall be fully commissioned by March.

Addressing the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner directed

UEED to compile stage-wise timelines for all ongoing and envisioned projects to ensure effective monitoring.

He further instructed for urgent resolution of issues pertaining to the 60 MLD Noorbagh STP, including augmentation of power supply, plugging of leakages, connection of all 20,000 households, completion of line connections at Alamgiribazar, and ensuring proper road connectivity.

DC Budgam reviews Mission YUVA progress, stresses faster sanctions, subsidies

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, JANUARY 30: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, Friday chaired a detailed review meeting to assess the progress of Mission YUVA in the district.

The meeting involved a comprehensive review of applications processed under the mission at various stages, including submission, verification, approvals, bank sanctions, disbursements and subsidy release.

During the meeting, the DC, as per an official statement, reviewed the latest status of applications as reflected on the Mission YUVA dashboard.

It was informed that a total of 4051



applications have been submitted so far, out of which 3297 applications have been verified by SBDUs, while 701 applications are pending at the SBDU level. The District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) has approved 2831 applications, whereas only 2 applications have been rejected and sent back to SBDUs.

The review further revealed that 860 cases have been sanctioned by

banks, while 757 cases have already been disbursed. It was also informed that 31 beneficiaries have received subsidy under the first tranche, while no case has yet reached the second tranche stage. Additionally, 117 applications have been rejected by the Director Employment.

The DC emphasized the need to minimize pendency at all levels and directed the concerned officers to ensure timely processing of cases.

He stressed upon strengthening coordination between SBDUs, banks and line departments to expedite sanctioning and disbursement of loans and to facilitate early release of subsidies to the beneficiaries.

The DC underscored that Mission YUVA is a key initiative aimed

Passport Seva Kendras in Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla to function on Feb 7

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 30: In view of the high demand for passport services, the Passport Office Srinagar will conduct a special drive on February 7, 2026 (Saturday). Accordingly, Passport Seva Kendra (PSK) Srinagar, Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK) Anantnag and POPSK Baramulla will remain functional on the said date for processing of passport applications as part of a special drive being conducted by the Passport Office Srinagar.

The special drive, as per PIB statement is being organised under the Passport Seva Project of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, keeping in view the high demand for passport services. The initiative aims to ensure swift and transparent delivery of passport-related services to citizens. Applicants can avail passport services by booking an appointment through the official website www.passportindia.gov.in at their nearest or preferred Passport Seva Kendra and selecting a suitable time slot for February 7.

Applicants are required to report to the designated centre at the scheduled time along with the appointment confirmation and all requisite documents in original.

Ganderbal observes 2 minutes silence to honour freedom martyrs

KT NEWS DESK

GANDERBAL, JANUARY 30: A solemn two minutes' silence was observed on Friday across Ganderbal District to pay rich tributes to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of India.

In this connection, the main event was organised at Mini-Secretariat Ganderbal at 11:00 am under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC), Jatin Kishore, joining the Union Territory level observation virtually.

The observance, as per



an official statement, was marked with dignity and

reverence, as officers, officials and staff members

participated in the tribute, remembering the supreme sacrifices made by the brave sons and daughters of the nation.

The silence was observed as a mark of respect and gratitude towards the martyrs whose courage and dedication paved the way for India's independence.

The Deputy Commissioner on the occasion highlighted the importance of remembering the sacrifices of freedom fighters and reaffirmed the collective commitment to uphold the values of unity, peace, and patriotism.

DC Shopian reviews anti-drug strategy at NCORD meeting

KT NEWS DESK

SHOPIAN, JANUARY 30: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta Friday presided over a meeting of the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) to review the district's overall strategy for prevention, detection and eradication of drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

Detailed discussions were held on enforcement measures, awareness campaigns, treatment and rehabilitation facilities and inter-departmental coordination to effectively tackle the drug menace.

The DC, as per an official statement, reviewed the action taken on previous NCORD decisions and stressed the need for real-time intelligence sharing among enforcement agencies. He directed the Police and Excise departments to intensify surveillance in identified hotspots and take strict action against those involved in drug peddling in accordance with law.

Emphasising preventive measures, the DC called for enhanced awareness programmes in educational



institutions and communities with special focus on youth. The Health Department was directed to strengthen treatment services, counselling facilities and referral mechanisms, while Social Welfare and Education departments were asked to actively involve parents, teachers and community leaders in anti-drug initiatives.

The DC also directed the

concerned for intensive inspection of drug stores and courier services, besides ensuring proper CCTV footage around drug stores and educational institutions.

The DC also highlighted the importance of data-driven monitoring, regular reporting and use of satellite imagery for tracking cropping patterns of narcotic crops.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir Govt. Industrial Training (Women) Bemina Srinagar Skill India

Gov-mail: iti-bemina@jk.gov.in

Correspondence Address : Near Directorate or Skill Development and State Board of School Education, Bemina Bye Pass, Srinagar, Kashmir, J&K. Pin code : 190018

Admission Notice

Applications are invited from the Permanent Residents of UT-Jammu & Kashmir for seeking Admission in Govt ITI Bemina for the Academic Session 2025-26, Batch-II in below mentioned trade under SCVT Scheme.

S.no	Trade	Duration (Six Months)	Scheme	Qualification
1.	Data Entry Operator	06 Months	SCVT	10 th

Candidates having minimum age of 14 years, as on Jan-2026, with no upper age bar can apply. The application form is attached as Annex-

ure "A" with this advertisement notice. The desirous candidates shall submit the application form in the office of the ITI Bemina during office hours w.e.f 30-01-2026 to 11-02-2026.

The candidates have to submit the attested photocopies of below mentioned documents along with the application form: -

1. Marks Certificate of Qualifying Examination.
2. Date of Birth Certificate.
3. Category Certificate (SC/ST/Ex. Serviceman/Physically Handicapped/EWS) if any.
4. Aadhar Card.
5. (** Domicile certificate should be produced at the time of admission in the ITI).
6. Discharge Certificate from school/college/university last attended.
7. Passport size Photograph

Mode of selection

1. Selection will be made purely on the basis of academic merit obtained by the applicants in their qualifying examination.
2. On successful completion of training in trades running under SCVT Scheme, certificate will be awarded by State Council for Vocational Training.

DIPK-10474/25
DATED: 30-01-2026

Superintendent
Women ITI Bemina

No: ITI/BEM/Trgs/2026/40-43
Dated: 29-01-2026

"ANNEXURE A"
ADMISSION APPLICATION FORM
Contact No

Trade
Name of the candidate (Block letters)
Father's Name
Mother's Name
Date of birth
Address
Pin code
Aadhar No
Email-id
Bank A/C No FSC Code &
Branch
Mandatory:-
1. 10th Marks certificate
2. Domicile Certificate
3. Discharge Certificate from school/college/university last attended.
4. D.O.B. certificate.
5. Photocopy of Aadhar Card.
6. Passport size Photograph
7. Category Certificate (SC/ST/Ex. Serviceman/Physically Handicapped/EWS) if any.

UNDERTAKING

I do hereby undertake that all the particulars given above are correct. If any kind of discrepancy is found, I shall be personally responsible. I also undertake that I am not Working in any Government or Private Sector Enterprise & I am not perusing any education in any Govern-

Snow Cricket: Winter's Coolest Game on the LoC

SAJID RAINA

Gurez, Jan 30: Amid nearly four feet of snowfall and prolonged winter isolation, snow cricket and skiing have returned to the frozen grounds of the remote Gurez Valley along the Line of Control (LoC) in north Kashmir. Local youth and the administration have come together to promote winter sports and tourism in the border region.

Officials said that a series of winter sports activities, including snow cricket, football and skiing, are being organised on snow-covered and frozen grounds to attract tourists and provide recreational opportunities to local youth.

The Gurez remains cut off from the rest of Kashmir during winter due to heavy snowfall on the Bandipora-Gurez road, the only surface link to the valley. "Gurez has immense



potential for winter sports as it remains under thick snow cover for several months every year. Like previous years, locals have taken the initiative to organise snow cricket and football tournaments, along with skiing

courses. The administration is providing all necessary support," an official said. Snow cricket has emerged as a winter tradition in the valley, with matches played on compacted snow fields, surrounded by snow-laden

mountains. Despite harsh weather and isolation, residents continue to organise annual tournaments, turning the frozen landscape into a vibrant sporting arena.

"We wait for this season all year. Playing cricket on snow keeps us active and motivated during long winters," said Irfan Ahmad, a local youth cricketer. "It gives young people something positive to look forward to when roads remain closed for months."

The tournaments, supported by the Indian Army, have drawn participation from across the valley and are seen as a symbol of resilience in the border region. Army personnel have also initiated basic snow skiing training programmes for local youth.

"Skiing here feels natural because snow is part of our life," said Mohammad Shafi, a trainee skier from Gurez. "If proper facilities are developed, many youngsters here can excel in winter sports." Residents, however,

said sustained government intervention was needed to develop Gurez as a winter sports destination. They said infrastructure, regular sporting events and promotion could help the valley remain attractive even during winter.

"If places like Gulmarg can host winter events, Gurez should not be left behind. We have the terrain and the snow," said a local organiser.

Officials said arrangements were being made to ensure the smooth conduct of all activities, adding that tourism has shown gradual growth with active community participation. Helicopter services between Bandipora and Gurez have also been initiated to maintain winter connectivity.

With snow cricket matches underway and skis gliding over frozen slopes, the valley once again stands out as a high-altitude border valley turning winter adversity into sporting opportunity—(KNO)

Ashok Koul rules out 'separate Jammu state'

Condemns attacks on businesspersons



REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 30: Ruling out any proposal for a separate Jammu state, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) J&K General Secretary (Organisation) Ashok Koul on Friday said there is no plan for a separate Jammu state and Jammu and Kashmir are one and will remain one.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting on Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar (VB-G RAM-G), in Ganderbal Koul said, "There is no plan for a separate Jammu state. Jammu and Kashmir are one and will remain one. We will not allow any division."

He said the purpose of today's session was to review the shortcomings in the scheme and highlight its restructured priorities.

"The VB-G RAM-G will now focus on four main areas—water conservation, village

infrastructure, rural employment and assistance during calamities," he said, adding that consultations have been held with various stakeholders, including businessmen, lawyers and social associations, on state-level development and the Union Budget 2026.

Responding to questions on recent incidents targeting businesspersons outside Jammu and Kashmir, Koul condemned the attacks and urged strict action. "The Prime Minister and the Home Minister have already condemned these incidents. We also strongly condemn them. Every citizen of this country has the right to live and do business anywhere in India," he said.

He added that he had spoken to the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand and party leaders regarding the issue and called for ensuring the safety and security of all traders—(KNO)

Doctors flag Kashmir's Pregabalin abuse

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Jan 30: Doctors and mental health professionals across Kashmir have raised serious concerns over the rising misuse of pregabalin, a prescription drug increasingly being consumed by people struggling with substance abuse.

Medical experts warn that the trend is fast emerging as a public health challenge among drug addicts.

Pregabalin, commonly prescribed for neuropathic pain, anxiety disorders and epilepsy, is now being misused for its sedative and euphoric effects.

Doctors said the drug is easily available in the market and is often taken without medical supervision, sometimes in dangerously high doses.

"We are witnessing an increase in patients misusing pregabalin, especially among those having a history of opioid or substance dependence," Dr Aadil Ahmad, a medical officer at Addiction Treatment Facility Shopian, said.

He said many believe it is a safer alternative to narcotics, which is a dangerous misconception.

"The prolonged and unsupervised use of pregabalin can lead to dependence, severe withdrawal symptoms, memory impairment,



dizziness and respiratory depression, especially when combined with other substances," Dr Aadil said.

Another doctor said that pregabalin is often used by addicts to cope with withdrawal symptoms and to recreate a high, quitting stronger drugs, and some recovering addicts relapse due to easy access to the medication," said Dr Abbas Ahmad.

He said some pharmacies sell it without proper prescriptions. "This loophole must be plugged immediately," he added.

Doctors urged the drug control department and law enforcement agencies to strictly regulate the sale of pregabalin and ensure it is dispensed only on valid prescriptions. They also called for regular inspections of pharmacies, saying

many patients who shun addiction to support their families are left in extremely poor conditions.

Authorities must step in not only to curb misuse but also to support those who are genuinely trying to rebuild their lives, the doctors urged.

An official said the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, along with the officials of the drug controller department, have restricted the sale of pregabalin in the district.

He said the medical shop owners have been directed to have CCTV and photocopies of prescription of pregabalin and other NRX drugs.

"Such steps are stopping drug addicts, to some extent, from getting the medicine illegally," the official said—(KNO)

Shopian Admin bans stray horses from markets

KNO

Shopian, Jan 30: Concerned over growing public inconvenience and safety hazards, the Shopian administration has issued a strict directive ordering the immediate removal of freely roaming horses from market areas and busy public roads.

Officials said that a large number of horses have been seen wandering unattended across Shopian town, especially in crowded marketplaces and arterial roads. This unchecked movement has been causing frequent traffic congestion, obstructing the free flow of vehicles and pedestrians, and posing a serious threat to public safety.

"Such incidents are not only causing avoidable hardship to commuters

and shopkeepers but also increasing the risk of accidents in busy areas," an official said, adding that the situation has drawn repeated complaints from the general public.

The administration has termed the practice a public nuisance and a violation of existing laws, stressing that allowing animals to roam freely in public spaces cannot be tolerated.

In a formal notice issued by Tehsildar Shopian, Anjum Bashir Khan Khattak (JKAS), all horse owners and keepers have been directed to remove their horses from Shopian town within 24 hours of the issuance of the order and ensure that they are not allowed to roam freely in market areas, roads, or other public places.

*Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in*

KCCI discusses tourism sector issues with Govt

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 30: The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) President, Javid Ahmad Tenga, along with the President of the Kashmir Hotel and Restaurant Owners Association, Gowher Maqbool, today met Dr. Ashish Chandra Verma, Additional Chief Secretary and Financial Commissioner (Tourism), Government of Jammu & Kashmir at Civil Secretariat Jammu to discuss pressing issues affecting the tourism sector in the Union Territory.

According to a statement, during the interaction, Javid Tenga

informed the Additional Chief Secretary that the tourism industry has suffered a severe setback following the April 22 terror attack in Pahalgaon, which led to widespread cancellations and a sharp fall in tourist footfall.

He said the downturn has caused significant financial stress for stakeholders across the sector, including hoteliers, houseboat owners, tour operators, transporters, tourist guides, and thousands of daily-wage earners who are directly dependent on tourism for their livelihood.

*Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in*

NHM staff demand regularisation, service rules

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Jan 30: Employees working under the National Health Mission (NHM) across Jammu and Kashmir on Friday reiterated their long-pending demands of regularisation, service bylaws, salary revision and social security benefits.

Addressing a press conference here, the representatives of the Association said that despite rendering uninterrupted services for over two and a half decades, NHM employees, comprising doctors, paramedics and management staff, continue to work without a proper job policy, uniform service rules or social security, causing severe distress to their families and dependents.

"We have been raising our genuine demands for more than 25 years through every available forum, but successive governments have failed to deliver justice to NHM employees who form the backbone of public healthcare in Jammu and Kashmir," the representatives said.

They said that all formalities related to the regularisation of NHM employees have already been completed and lie pending at the Civil Secretariat under File No. HD/NHM/10/2015.

The Association informed

that a High-Level Committee, followed by a Sub-Committee in 2018, had recommended phased regularisation of 1,026 NHM employees, a proposal that was even placed and approved on the floor of the then J&K Legislative Assembly.

"It was clearly proposed that NHM staff be absorbed against vacant sanctioned posts in the Health and Medical Education Department, which would simultaneously address staff shortages and improve healthcare delivery," the representatives said, adding that NHM workers are trained, experienced, and already serving in rural and far-flung areas.

The Association further pointed out that during 2025-26, multiple official communications strongly supported the absorption of NHM employees, including: A D.O. from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India (April 28, 2025) advocating absorption with financial support under Mission guidelines, A detailed proposal submitted by the Mission Director, NHM J&K (May 30, 2025) and a comprehensive roadmap prepared by the Director Health Services, Kashmir (July 10, 2025).

"Despite clear recommendations and complete

documentation, the issue remains stalled for reasons best known to the authorities," it remarked.

The Association expressed concern over the non-framing of Service Byelaws, despite repeated assurances from the administration during Executive Committee meetings held in February and October 2022.

"The administration had agreed in principle to frame byelaws on the pattern of Haryana, but no progress has been made so far. The absence of service rules has created uncertainty, exploitation and insecurity among NHM employees," they said.

NHM employees demanded immediate salary revision, stating that they continue to work on "meagre and inadequate wages" despite serving in difficult terrains and during major crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, 2014 floods and other health emergencies.

The representatives added, "At a time when the 8th Pay Commission is being discussed nationally, excluding NHM employees from any meaningful salary revision is unjust and discriminatory. We urge the government to utilise the HR Rationalisation component to address salary disparities for 2026-27." The Association

highlighted the plight of NHM employees who have retired without any financial security. They demanded a Golden Handshake of Rs 25 lakh for retiring NHM employees, with retrospective effect, under the Contributory Corpus Welfare Fund.

Other demands from the Association included EPF coverage for all categories, including doctors and management staff, paid maternity, paternity, medical and extraordinary leave, group medical insurance on corporate lines, and immediate payment of hardship allowance to employees posted in remote areas.

"The continued denial of these benefits amounts to discrimination and violates basic principles of natural justice," the representatives said.

The Association appealed to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to take time-bound decisions in the larger interest of public healthcare and thousands of NHM employees.

"Failure to address our legitimate demands will leave us with no option but to come out on the roads and launch peaceful protests," the representatives warned—(KNO)

Tarigami demands one-time remission of KCC loans for farmers, orchardists



KNO

Jammu, Jan 30: Kulgam, CPI(M) leader and MLA Kulgam Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami on Tuesday demanded a one-time remission of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans for farmers and orchardists who have suffered heavy losses this season.

In a statement, Tarigami said fruit crops were damaged due to repeated highway blockades, floods and incessant rains, which severely affected the overall produce. He said many farmers and orchardists are hardly able to recover even the cost of pesticides and fertilisers, pushing them into financial distress.

He said banks are putting pressure on farmers and orchardists to repay KCC loans at a time when their income has been

badly hit, making repayment extremely difficult this season.

The CPI(M) leader urged the government to intervene and direct banks to show leniency towards farmers and orchardists facing hardship. He said the authorities must take into account the ground realities being faced by the farming community.

Tarigami further demanded that the government should at the earliest grant a one-time remission of KCC loans and announce a compensation package for affected farmers and orchardists to help them recover from the losses.

He said timely relief is essential to protect the livelihoods of families dependent on agriculture and horticulture in the region—(KNO)

Police arrest 6 drug peddlers

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 30: In its continued efforts to curb the drug menace from the society, J&K Police have arrested six drug peddlers from various locations and recovered contraband/psychotropic substances from their possession. According to a statement, in Anantnag, a police team intercepted a vehicle bearing registration number JK03C-4157 at a checkpoint established at Achabal Chowk, driven by Arif Ramzan Mir son of Mohd Ramzan Mir resident of Shangus. During search, 16 grams of heroin-like substance was recovered from his possession.

Similarly, in Pulwama, during routine naka checking near Hawal Bridge, intercepted a vehicle bearing registration number UP38 AK 7313 (Thar) with two persons on board. They have been identified as Mohd Fahad son of Ateek Ahmad resident of Hindupora Khada, Uttar Pradesh and Aman son of Aabid resident of Begam Sarai, Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh. During search, 11 bottles of Codeine Phosphate were recovered from their possession.

Meanwhile in Sopore, during the investigation of Case FIR No. 23/2026 registered under Sections 8/22-29 of the NDPS Act and Section 281 BNS at Police Station Sopore, based on the disclosure of the earlier arrested accused, J&K Police apprehended two more persons namely Mohd Umar Dar son of Ghulam Nabi Dar and Nisar Ahmad Bhat @ Shanu son of Mehraj-ud-Din Bhat, both residents of Naseem Bagh, Sopore. Acting on their disclosures, Police recovered a substantial quantity of Codeine Phosphate bottles from their possession.

*Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in*

EDITORIAL

India's Blueprint For Stable And Inclusive Prosperity

The Economic Survey 2025-26 presents a portrait of an Indian economy that is not only growing but fundamentally transforming. The data reveals an impressive convergence of resilience, stability, and momentum, which is a testament to coordinated policy-making and structural reforms. With robust GDP growth projected at 6.8-7.2% for FY27, historic low inflation averaging 1.7%, and a record-breaking export performance, the survey underscores an economy that is confidently navigating global headwinds while building domestic strength.

The government's multi-pronged strategy deserves recognition for this holistic performance. Prudent fiscal management has been pivotal, transitioning from crisis support to credible consolidation, as evidenced by sovereign rating upgrades and a declining debt-to-GDP ratio. Simultaneously, strategic capital expenditure, both at the Centre and incentivised in states via SASCI, has created a multiplier effect, fueling infrastructure and crowding in private investment. This balance, which includes fiscal discipline without sacrificing growth-enhancing spending,

is a masterclass in economic stewardship. The sectoral breadth of growth highlights the success of targeted interventions. The manufacturing surge, powered by the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, signifies a crucial shift towards job-creating, value-added production. The services sector's dynamism, especially in exports, showcases India's rising global competitiveness in knowledge-intensive domains. Meanwhile, a stable agricultural performance, supported by allied activities, has provided crucial ballast and sustained rural demand. The monetary-fiscal

synergy has been equally effective. Timely repo rate reductions and liquidity injections by the RBI have supported credit flow, particularly to MSMEs, without triggering inflationary pressures. A strengthened, well-capitalised banking system has been instrumental in this transmission. Beyond the macro numbers, the survey highlights profound structural gains: a formalising economy with a widening tax base, deepening financial inclusion, and a labour market showing rising participation, especially among women. These are the foundations of

sustainable, inclusive growth. The survey is more than a report card; it is a validation of a policy framework that prioritises long-term resilience over short-term stimuli. It confirms that India's economic journey is on a sustainable, high-quality trajectory. The challenge now is to maintain this discipline, double down on innovation and skills, and ensure that this robust growth translates into tangible improvements in quality of life for every citizen. The blueprint is working; the task ahead is to build on it with unwavering focus.

Economic Survey 2025-26

India transitions towards a high-growth and resilient economy

Press Information Bureau

India enters FY26 with strong economic momentum supported by stable macro-economic fundamentals, sustained policy support, and broad-based sectoral performance. Despite a challenging global environment, the economy has remained resilient, with robust growth, historically low inflation, improving labour market indicators, and strengthening external and financial buffers. Coordinated fiscal, monetary, and structural policies have reinforced macroeconomic stability while supporting investment, consumption, and inclusion.

The emerging macroeconomic environment reflects an economy that is consolidating its gains while strengthening the foundations for sustained and inclusive growth.

STATE OF THE ECONOMY

Growth Outlook: GDP and Demand Conditions

India's growth outlook remains robust, underpinned by strong macroeconomic fundamentals and broad-based demand momentum. As per the First Advance Estimates, real GDP and Gross Value Added (GVA) are projected to grow by 7.4% and 7.3% respectively in FY26.

A strong agricultural performance has bolstered rural incomes and consumption, while improvements in urban demand- supported by tax rationalisation measures indicate a broadening of the consumption base. India's potential growth is estimated at around 7%, with real GDP growth for FY27 projected in the range of 6.8-7.2%, reflecting sustained medium-term growth capacity amid a challenging global environment.

Inflation Trends and Outlook

India recorded the lowest inflation rate since the beginning of the CPI series, with April-December 2025 average headline inflation coming in at 1.7%, attributing to general disinflationary trend in food and fuel prices.

Among major Emerging Markets & Developing Economies (EMDEs), India has recorded one of the sharpest declines in headline inflation in 2025 over 2024, amounting to about 1.8 percentage points.

In December 2025, the RBI lowered its inflation forecast for FY26 from 2.6% to 2.0%, supported by a good kharif harvest and healthy rabi sowing. The IMF projects inflation at 2.8% in FY26 and 4.0% in FY27. The RBI's forecast for headline inflation for Q1 and Q2 of FY27 currently stands at 3.9 and 4%.

Looking ahead, the inflation outlook remains benign, supported by favourable supply side conditions and the gradual pass-through of GST rate rationalisation.

SECTORAL DRIVERS OF GROWTH

Agriculture: Stabilising Rural Demand

Agriculture and allied activities continue to play a stabilising role in India's growth cycle by supporting rural demand and income security. The sector is estimated to grow by 3.1% in FY26, supported by a favourable monsoon during H1 FY26. Agricultural GVA expanded by 3.6% in H1 FY26, higher than the 2.7% growth recorded in H1 FY25, reflecting improved crop performance.

Allied activities particularly livestock and fisheries have exhibited stable growth of around 5-6%, providing resilience and diversification reflecting a relatively stable expansion in allied sectors.

Industry and Manufacturing: Momentum Builds

Industrial activity is expected to gain momentum in FY26, with the industrial sector projected to grow by 6.2%, up from 5.9% in FY25. The sector recorded growth of 7.0% in the first half of FY26, exceeding the growth of 6.1% in H1 of FY25 and the pre-COVID trend of 5.2%.

Manufacturing has emerged as a key growth engine, with GVA growth accelerating to 7.72% in Q1 and 9.13% in Q2 of FY26, signalling a structural recovery. Government-led initiatives, particularly the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes across 14 sectors, have played a catalytic role attracting over 2.0 lakh crore of actual investment, generating incremental production/sales exceeding 18.7 lakh crore, and creating over 12.6

lakh jobs as of September 2025.

India's innovation ecosystem has also strengthened, with the country's Global Innovation Index rank improving to 38th in 2025, up from 66th in 2019, reinforcing the role of manufacturing-led innovation in long-term growth.

Services: The Dominant Growth Engine

Services sector is estimated to have grown by 9.1% in FY26, up from 7.2% in FY25, indicating a further acceleration in services-led expansion. Services' share in GDP rose to 53.6% in H1 FY26, while its share in GVA reached a historic high of 56.4% as per the FY26 First Advance Estimates, reflecting the rising importance of modern, tradable, and digitally delivered services.

India is now the world's seventh-largest exporter of services, with its share in global services trade more than doubling from 2% in 2005 to 4.3% in 2024. And the sector remains the largest recipient of foreign direct investment. Implicit estimate for H2 suggests a continuation of the services sector's momentum, supported by resilient domestic demand and steady export activity.

Employment and Labour Market Trends

India's labour market continues to demonstrate resilience alongside economic expansion. In Q2 (July to September 2025) FY26, total employment stood at 56.2 crore persons (aged 15 years and above), reflecting the creation of approximately 8.7 lakh new jobs compared to Q1 (April to June 2025) FY26.

According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), key labour indicators point to strengthening employment conditions.

The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for persons aged 15 years and above increased to 56.1% in December 2025.

Female LFPR rose to 35.3%, indicating rising participation and improving inclusion.

The Worker Population Ratio (WPR) increased to 53.4%, reflecting steady employment absorption.

The unemployment rate declined to 4.8% in December 2025, continuing its downward trajectory.

The Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) FY24 highlights the strength of organised manufacturing, with employment rising by 6% year-on-year, translating into an addition of over 10 lakh jobs compared to FY23.

As of January 2026, the e-Shram portal has registered over 31 crore unorganised workers, with women accounting for more than 54% of total registrants significantly strengthening the outreach of gender-focused welfare initiatives. The National Career Service (NCS) platform has emerged as a key labour market intermediary, with over 5.9 crore registered job seekers and 53 lakh job providers, and mobilisation of approximately 8 crore vacancies across sectors. It recorded over a 200% increase in job vacancies in FY24 compared to FY23.

Trade Performance: Export Diversification and Services Strength

On the trade front, India's total exports reached record levels of USD 825.3 billion in FY25 and USD 418.5 billion in H1 FY26, driven by strong growth in services exports and sustained momentum in non-petroleum, non-gems, and jewellery exports.

India's integration into global trade continues to deepen, marked by diversification and strong services-led growth. India's share in global merchandise exports increased from 1% in 2005 to 1.8% in 2024.

According to UNCTAD's Trade and Development Report 2025, India ranks third among countries in the Global South in terms of the diversity index of trade partnerships, following China and the UAE. India's index score of 3.2 exceeds that of all countries in the Global North, underscoring its resilience in the face of tariff uncertainties and other emerging challenges.

Services exports emerged as a key growth engine, reaching an all-time high of USD 387.5 billion in FY25, registering a robust 13.6% year-on-year growth. This performance reinforced India's position as a global hub for technology, business, and professional services, with rising demand across IT, financial, and knowledge-intensive segments.

External buffers remained strong. Foreign exchange reserves stood at USD 701.4 billion

as of 16 January 2026, providing an import cover of around 11 months and covering over 94% of external debt, thereby strengthening India's capacity to withstand external shocks.

India also remained the world's largest recipient of remittances, with inflows reaching USD 135.4 billion in FY25, offering critical support to the current account. Notably, the share of remittances from advanced economies increased, reflecting the growing contribution of skilled and professional Indian workers in global labour markets.

Industrial Output: IIP and Core Sector Performance

Industrial activity gathered further momentum in December 2025, with broad-based improvement reflected across both the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI).

The combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) measures both the individual and aggregate performance of production across eight key sectors viz. coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilizers, steel, cement, and electricity. It serves as a leading indicator of industrial performance and accounts for 40.27% of the total weight of the IIP.

The IIP rose by 7.8% in December 2025, marking its highest level in over two years, following robust growth of 7.2% (RE) in November 2025. Sector-wise, Manufacturing remained the primary growth driver, expanding by 8.1%, while Mining and Electricity recorded growth of 6.8% and 6.3%, respectively.

Within manufacturing, strong performance was observed in technology- and mobility-linked segments, with notable growth in:

Computer, electronic and optical products (34.9%)

Motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (33.5%)

Other transport equipment (25.1%)

On the core sector front, Cement production surged by 13.5% year-on-year, followed by Steel at 6.9%, reflecting sustained demand from construction and infrastructure-related activities. Other core sectors also posted positive growth, including Electricity (5.3%), Fertilizers (4.1%), and Coal (3.6%), reinforcing the recovery across energy and input-intensive industries.

Overall, the synchronised improvement in IIP and ICI points to strengthening industrial fundamentals, supported by infrastructure spending, resilient domestic demand, and steady expansion across core and manufacturing sectors.

Fiscal Development

Strengthened Fiscal Credibility and Rating Upgrades

Prudent fiscal management by the government has enhanced credibility and strengthened confidence in India's macroeconomic and fiscal framework, resulting in three sovereign credit rating upgrades in 2025 by Morningstar DBRS, S&P Global Ratings, and Rating and Investment Information (R&I), Inc.

Improvement in Centre's Revenue Receipts

The Centre's revenue receipts improved from an average of about 8.5% of GDP in FY16- FY20 to 9.2% of GDP in FY25 (PA), mainly supported by buoyant non-corporate tax collections that increased from about 2.4% of GDP pre-pandemic to around 3.3% post-pandemic.

Expansion of the Direct Tax Base

The share of direct taxes in total taxes rose from 51.9% pre-pandemic to 55.5% post-pandemic, reaching 58.8% in FY25 (PA). Meanwhile, the direct tax base expanded steadily, with income tax return filings rising from 6.9 crore in FY22 to 9.2 crore in FY25, indicating better compliance, wider use of technology in tax administration, and more individuals entering the tax net as incomes increased.

GST Performance and Transaction Activity

Gross GST collections during April-December 2025 amounted to 17.4 lakh crore, reflecting year-on-year growth of 6.7% and broadly tracking nominal GDP growth conditions. High-frequency indicators point

Rise in Effective Capital Expenditure

The government's effective capital expenditure increased from an average of 2.7% of GDP in the pre-pandemic period to about 3.9% post-pandemic, and further to 4% of GDP in FY25.

Support to States' Capital Spending (SASCI)

Under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure (SASCI), the Centre has incentivised States to maintain capital spending at around 2.4% of GDP in FY25.

Trends in State Governments' Fiscal Deficit

The combined fiscal deficit of State Governments remained broadly stable at around 2.8% of GDP in the post-pandemic period, similar to pre-pandemic levels, but rose in recent years to 3.2% in FY25, reflecting emerging pressures on State finances.

Reduction in General Government Debt Ratio

India lowered its general government debt-to-GDP ratio by about 71 percentage points since 2020 while continuing to maintain high levels of public investment

Building a Balanced Financial Ecosystem

India's monetary and financial sectors have strong performance during FY26 (April-December 2025), amidst elevated uncertainty in the global financial markets. In an increasingly fragmented global financial environment, India's regulatory framework, institutional resilience, and growing reliance on domestic financial channels have played a stabilising role. With support of strong monetary management and financial intermediation across channels, India has remained stable and safeguarded against economic shocks.

Monetary Policy Actions and Liquidity Management

In response to the evolving macroeconomic and financial developments, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee cumulatively reduced the repo rate by 100 basis points between April to December 2025, currently at 5.25%. The reductions have been aimed to boost credit flow, investment, and overall economic activity.

Complementing policy rate cuts, the RBI reduced the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 100 basis points to 3.0% during September-November 2025. In addition, the RBI injected durable liquidity of 239 lakh crore through open market operations during April-May 2025, followed by further OMO purchases of 1 lakh crore and a 3-year USD/ INR buy-sell swap of USD 5 billion in December 2025. As a result, system liquidity remained in surplus, averaging 1.89 lakh crore in FY26 (up to 8 January 2026), compared to 1,605 crore in FY25.

Monetary Aggregates and Credit Transmission

While reserve-money growth moderated to 2.9% by December 2025, compared to 4.9% as of December 2024, the CRR adjusted growth stood at 9.4% as compared to 6.2% a year ago. The trend reflects the expansionary stance of monetary policy.

During the same period, broad-money growth rose to 12.1% as compared with 9% a year ago, indicating that banks effectively leveraged the liquidity released by the CRR cut. The trend is driven primarily by rising aggregate deposits with banks, which are the largest component of broad money.

The money multiplier increased to 6.21 in December 2025 from 5.70 a year earlier, signalling improved financial intermediation by the banking system, thereby ensuring adequate systemic liquidity.

Banking Sector Performance and Credit Dynamics

The banking sector strengthened further in FY26 with Gross non-performing asset (GNPA) ratios declining to multi-decadal lows and net NPAs reaching record low levels. The capital-to-risk-weighted assets ratio (CRAR) of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs)

Key Takeaways

- India's growth remains robust, with real GDP growth for FY27 projected in the range of 6.8-7.2%.
- Inflation fell to historic lows, averaging 1.7% in April-December 2025.
- All major sectors contributed to growth, with agriculture stabilising rural demand, manufacturing gaining momentum, and services leading expansion.
- India's total exports reached record levels of USD 825.3 billion in FY25 and USD 418.5 billion in H1 FY26
- Fiscal position strengthened, with improved revenue buoyancy, rising capital expenditure, and enhanced credibility reflected in sovereign rating upgrades.
- Monetary conditions turned supportive, repo rate at 5.25% as of December 2025.

remained strong at 17.2% as of September 2025.

Profitability also improved; Profit after tax of SCBs rose by 16.9% in FY25 and by 3.8% year-on-year as of September 2025. Return on equity stood at 12.5% while return on assets stood at 1.3% in September 2025.

Credit growth, after moderating earlier in FY26, picked up momentum. Outstanding credit by SCBs increased to 14.5% (YoY) in December 2025, compared to 11.2% in December 2024. December 2025 marked the highest YoY growth rates for both bank credit and non-food credit in FY26.

Credit growth for MSMEs continued to show momentum and remained robust, with MSME credit expanding by 21.8% in November 2025. Within this sector, micro and small enterprises recorded an increase of 24.6% (YoY) in November 2025, up from 10.2% in November 2024.

Improving Financial Inclusion Metrics

RBI's Financial Inclusion (FI) Index measures the country's progress in achieving financial inclusion. It captures data on 97 indicators related to banking, investments, insurance, postal, and pension sectors across three dimensions: access, usage, and quality. These dimensions are represented through three sub-indices, viz., FI-access, FI-usage, and FI-quality. India's Financial Inclusion Index rose from 64.2 in March 2024 to 67.0 in March 2025.

Capital Markets and Household Financialisation

Capital markets played an increasingly prominent role in capital formation. During FY26 (up to December 2025), total resource mobilisation from primary markets stood at 10.7 lakh crore. Over the past five years, from FY22 to FY 26 (till December 2025), primary markets mobilised a total of 53 lakh crore through equity and debt issuances.

Household financial savings continued to shift towards market-linked instruments. Individual investors' share in equity ownership increased to 18.8% by September 2025, with household equity wealth increasing by about 53 lakh crore between April 2020 and September 2025. The share of equity and mutual funds in annual household financial savings rose from around 2% in FY12 to over 15.2% in FY25.

Conclusion

The macroeconomic trends in FY26 point to an economy characterised by stability alongside momentum. Growth remains broad-based across agriculture, industry, and services, while inflation has moderated and labour market indicators have strengthened. External sector performance, rising services exports, and comfortable foreign exchange reserves provide resilience against global shocks. Fiscal consolidation has advanced in parallel with sustained capital expenditure, and the financial system remains well-capitalised and supportive of credit expansion and financial inclusion.

Together, these developments indicate strengthening economic fundamentals and an improved capacity to sustain growth while maintaining macroeconomic stability.

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

Speaker JKLA chairs all-party, BAC meet ahead of budget session

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 30: Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather chaired a joint meeting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) and all-party representatives Friday at Assembly Secretariat Jammu. The meeting focused on finalizing the agenda, ensuring coordination, and preparing for the upcoming Budget Session, which is scheduled to commence on February 2, 2026.

The committee, as per an official statement included key members from various political parties, such as Ali Mohammad Sagar, Mubarik Gul, Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, Surjit Singh Slatia, Gulam Ahmad Mir, Mir Mohammad Fayaz and Choudhary Mohammad Akram. At the outset, the Speaker welcomed the members and said that it is obligatory on the part of each and every Member of the House irrespective of his/her party affiliation to ensure smooth functioning of the House.

The Speaker stressed that



Members should represent their constituencies in the House sincerely by way of raising the important public issues and highlight the problems being faced by them for the sake of their redressal by the Government.

Rather asserted that the Members should carry out healthy debates and discussions which is the essence of democracy but at the same time they should strictly keep

the discipline and should not encourage any disorder and disruption which tells upon the dignity of the House. He added that the proceedings are watched by the people and any irresponsible behavior will send a wrong signal to them and as such have to behave as role models for the whole society.

The Speaker emphasized that the Members should not disrupt the Question Hour which is considered as the most important

tool for raising the important public issues besides making the Government answerable/accountable to the people.

He urged that party leaders should advise the members belonging to their respective parties to ensure that the Question Hour runs smoothly without any disruption so that the problems of the people could be raised on the floor of the House and maximum number of questions are taken up for oral

answers.

The members also gave their valuable suggestions for making the current Assembly Budget session more fruitful and result oriented in the largest interest of the general public. They raised certain issues related to parking facilities in the Secretariat premises, restrict the entry into the lobby and canteen which are solely meant for the Members of the House.

The Speaker assured the Members that necessary directions have already been given to the concerned departments to make the appropriate arrangements for them.

He also said that a separate area at the main entrance of the Assembly Secretariat has been designated for the media interaction/interviews for the Members and no one will be allowed in the lobby area and central hall area to be exclusively for use by the Members.

Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Manoj Kumar Pandita and other senior officers of Assembly Secretariat also attended the meeting.

D&FCO seizes psychotropic drugs worth lakhs in Jammu

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 30: Drugs & Food Control Organization has intercepted and seized a huge consignment of Habit forming drugs (15,000 Unit Doses worth Rs 5,57,500/-) being pushed in J&K through Courier service.

The seizure included 10,000 capsules of Pregabalin-300 and 5,000 tablets of Tapentadol-100, which were being transported through a private courier service in a clandestine manner.

The exercise, as per an official statement, was carried out by Drugs Control Officer, Poonch Vikas Sharma under the overall supervision of Assistant Drugs Controller, Rajouri/Poonch Archana Mujoo and with the active cooperation of the Courier Service Provider.

A suspicious parcel was identified and opened in the presence of authorized personnel. Upon examination, a large quantity i.e 10000 Capsules of Pregabalin-300 (SP-NYL-300)& 5000 tablets of Tapentadol (Tapdol-100) medications which were purported to be used for intoxication by antisocial elements was found concealed without valid documentation. Taking immediate cognizance in the matter, the team seized the consignment on spot on Form-16 under the

provisions of Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the consignment was being illicitly routed into the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir through a neighbouring State and was intended for unauthorised sale therein.

Further investigation is underway to ascertain the source and destination of the parcel and the consignee details are being verified for initiating appropriate legal proceedings under the relevant provisions of the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940.

State Drugs Controller, J&K, Rajesh Kumar appreciated the active cooperation extended by the courier service agency in the successful interception of the consignment. He has urged all courier service providers to extend full cooperation to the Government in its efforts to crack down on this illicit network

Lauding the efforts of sleuths of DFCO, Smita Sethi, Commissioner, FDA, J&K, reiterated that the Government of Jammu & Kashmir remains steadfast in its resolve to eradicate the menace of illegal drug trafficking from the Union Territory through sustained enforcement and coordinated action.

DC Kulgam reviews ‘Classes of Joy’ initiative, finalises action plan

KT News Desk

KULGAM, JANUARY 30: A comprehensive review meeting on the ‘Classes of Joy’ initiative was held Friday under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan at the Mini-Secretariat, Kulgam.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by the Chief Education Officer, Deputy CEO, ZEOs of all zones, District Coordinators, ZRPs, and representatives from the Pratham Education Foundation.

The agenda focused on a detailed review of last year’s implementation of the Classes of Joy programme, assessment of key performance parameters, and formulation of a renewed and strengthened action plan for the upcoming cycle.

The Deputy Commissioner instructed to start fresh orientation sessions in English and Mathematics subjects to strengthen classroom delivery and improve learning outcomes. He also directed the conduct of zone-level sensitization workshops on English and Mathematics using the Teaching at the Right Level approach. Experts from the Pratham Education Foundation and the Education Department



will jointly ensure the smooth and effective conduct of subject-wise trainings. Immediate steps will be taken to finalize the selection of teachers and commence their training on priority.

The DC further instructed that a robust monitoring mechanism be put in place, with special focus on identified weak areas to ensure 100 percent coverage and effective implementation. He also directed the preparation and provision of durable Teaching-Learning Material kits to teachers for enhanced classroom facilitation.

Supplementary activities, supported by well-designed modules, will be introduced to enhance student engagement

and learning outcomes.

Special focus was laid on Aspirational Block Manzgam, with detailed discussions on strengthening infrastructure, enhancing digital classrooms, and ensuring effective implementation of teaching at the Right Level interventions. It was also informed that the Pratham Education Foundation will provide digital literacy content for all schools across the district.

The Deputy Commissioner further instructed the launch of a special initiative to provide individualized support to students from Grade 1 to Grade 10, including the development of individual learning profiles for effective progress tracking.

Kupwara administration observes 2-minute silence in tribute to freedom martyrs

KT News Desk

KUPWARA, JANUARY 30: District Administration Kupwara Friday observed a two-minute silence in remembrance of the brave martyrs who made their sacrifice for the freedom of the country.

Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, as per an official statement, along with Officers and officials of the district administration participated in the solemn

observance, paying heartfelt tribute to the selfless contributions of the freedom fighters. The moment of silence was observed as a mark of respect and gratitude towards those who laid down their lives to secure the nation's independence.

The District Administration reaffirmed its commitment to uphold the values of patriotism, unity, and service to the nation, inspired by the sacrifices of the freedom martyrs.

Shopian observes Anti-Leprosy Day under NLEP

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JANUARY 30: District Shopian Friday observed anti-leprosy day under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) to raise awareness about leprosy, eliminate stigma and promote early detection and timely treatment.

The programme was organized under the overall supervision of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Shopian, Dr. Arshid Hussain Tak and was observed across the district with the active participation of all health institutions.

Awareness activities were

conducted at various levels focusing on dispelling myths associated with leprosy, encouraging early reporting of symptoms and ensuring free and timely treatment for affected individuals.

On the occasion, CMO, as per an official statement, distributed blankets, shoes and medical kits among patients who have been released from treatment, as a gesture of care, compassion and social support.

The initiative aims at commitment towards patient welfare and inclusive healthcare, ensuring dignity and quality of life for all.

Kupwara administration evacuates patients across snowbound Sadhna Pass



KT News Desk

KUPWARA, JANUARY 30: In a swift and well-coordinated midnight rescue operation, the District Administration Kupwara successfully facilitated the evacuation of three critical patients, including a seriously ill child, from snowbound areas of Karnah across Sadhna Pass to GMC Handwara.

The operation was undertaken after Beacon 109 RCC cleared heavy snow and permitted emergency movement at Sadhna Pass. The evacuation was led by Tehsildar Karnah, Mohd Amin Bhat, in close coordination with the Indian Army, Kupwara Police, Health

Department, 109 RCC Project Beacon and District and Sub-Divisional Administration.

Patients were stabilized at SDH Tangdhar before two ambulances departed at 11:40 PM and safely reached GMC Handwara in the early morning hours marking the first vehicular movement across Sadhna Pass after nearly a week of closure.

The District Administration appreciated the dedication and courage of the medical teams, ambulance drivers, security forces, and all departments involved, reiterating its commitment to ensuring timely medical assistance and public safety even under extreme weather conditions.

Shopian administration restores essential services after heavy snowfall

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JANUARY 30: District Administration Shopian has set a commendable example of efficient governance and crisis management by ensuring the timely restoration of normal life following successive heavy snowfall spells.

During the intervening night of 22-23 January, the district experienced intense and widespread snowfall, disrupting road connectivity, power supply, and water supplies.

Immediately thereafter, the district administration swung into action, activating its snow clearance and emergency response mechanism to ensure that basic facilities were restored in a swift, coordinated, and systematic manner.

The entire operation, as per an official statement was personally supervised and closely monitored by the Deputy Commissioner, Shopian, Shishir Gupta who played a pivotal leadership role throughout the crisis.

He tirelessly monitored the situation round the clock and maintained continuous communication with field officers, reviewed ground reports in real time, and issued timely directions to ensure uninterrupted restoration and rescue efforts across the district.



A phased snow-clearance plan was implemented, with Priority-I and Priority-II roads, including major roads and key traffic corridors, cleared on priority, enabling early restoration of traffic mobility. Subsequently, inner and link roads, particularly in rural and interior areas to ensure last-mile connectivity, were taken up and cleared.

A major highlight of the district's response was the restoration of electricity supply in majority parts of the district within a day after the first heavy snowfall spell, despite severe weather and terrain challenges.

Subsequently, the district faced another heavy spell of snowfall on 27 January 2026. Once again, District Shopian demonstrated its preparedness and resilience by ensuring the mobility, electricity and water supplies, ensuring minimal

inconvenience to the public.

Rescue of vulnerable populations and shifting of ailing including critical ill, pregnant patients were ensured by joint efforts of Revenue, Police and R&B teams during both the spells. Healthcare services remained largely unaffected throughout the period.

Areas facing temporary water scarcity were catered through water tanker services until the restoration of most water supply schemes. Out of the affected schemes, only three remained impacted for a few days, of which only one is currently under restoration and is expected to be functional soon.

Successful restoration of services and rescue operations was made possible due to excellent inter-departmental coordination among Revenue, PMGSY, R&B, MED, Jal Shakti, KPDCI and other allied departments.

Frontline workers, engineering staff and supervising staff worked relentlessly on a 24x7 basis, braving extreme weather conditions to restore normalcy.

Deputy Commissioner, Shopian, congratulated and appreciated the collective efforts of all officers and officials, including SDM, ACD, Tehsildars, BDOs, engineers, supervisory staff, and other frontline workers, who worked hand in hand to mitigate public hardships.

NCORD meeting reviews drug control measures in Kishtwar

KT News Desk

KISHTWAR, JANUARY 30: A District-Level NCORD (Narco Coordination Centre) meeting was convened Friday under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner, Pankaj Kumar Sharma to review drug control measures, de-addiction framework and assess the progress of the Information, Education & Communication (IEC) campaign under the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan.

The Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, conducted a comprehensive review of the prevailing drug abuse scenario in the district and sought detailed inputs on vulnerable areas, affected age groups and identified hotspots. He directed that all nine nominated resource persons from the line departments to ensure wider outreach and effective public awareness on drug abuse prevention.

The ACR apprised the meeting that details of four persons involved in drug-related cases have been received from the SSP and action for freezing and seizure of their properties is being initiated as per the procedure.

The Tehsil Social Welfare officer presented the Action Taken Report (ATR) on the



decisions taken at the previous NCORD meeting.

It was informed that with the start of internet service in Marwah the implementation of computerized billing systems in Jan Aushadhi Kendras and other medical establishments, along with the installation of CCTV cameras, has been initiated in the area.

The Deputy Commissioner directed for deploying special flying squads across the District to keep check on sale and consumption of tobacco around educational institutions,

The Sub-Divisional Magistrates and Tehsildars, heads of Sub-Division and Tehsil Level Committees were

asked to accelerate declaration of Panchayats as Nasha Mukht in consonance with the prescribed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The Chief Education Officer informed the meeting that 246 schools in the district have been declared tobacco-free.

The installation of CCTV cameras at identified hotspots and monitoring of courier services was also reviewed. The SDM Paddar and E&T Department were directed to conduct joint exercises to curb the sale of illicit liquor (Desi Laahan) in the area.

It was informed that the District Employment Centre has sanctioned two loan

cases under the Mission YUVA scheme to support the rehabilitation of two youth who recovered from drug addiction.

The meeting was attended by SSP, Naresh Singh, ADDC, Vinod Kumar Behnal, ADC Pawan Kotwal, ACR Idrees Lone, all SDMs (Virtual Mode), ACD Manoj Kumar, CEO MC Mirza Mumtaz Iqbal, ARTO Tasleem Wani, CAO Kushal Chandel, Chief Education Officer Sanjay Dogra, Inspector Excuse and Taxation Department, Drug Inspector, Nodal Officer ATF Dr. Hariss (Via Virtual Mode) along with other officers and officials of the concerned line departments.

Rana meets public delegations; Directs time-bound redressal of grievances

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 30: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana on Friday met various public delegations at Civil Secretariat, Jammu who apprised him of their issues and grievances.

During the interactions, the delegations apprised the Minister of a range of grievances and developmental concerns related to their respective sectors.

The Minister gave a patient hearing to all issues raised and



reaffirmed the government's commitment to addressing genuine public grievances in a transparent, accountable, and time-bound manner. The Minister issued specific

directions to the concerned Heads of Departments (HODs) to thoroughly examine the matters brought to notice and ensure their prompt resolution on priority.

Earlier, a delegation of contractors associated with the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) highlighted the issue of non-release of their pending dues. The contractors informed the Minister that the delay in payments was causing significant financial hardship and affecting ongoing works.

Responding to their concerns, the Minister assured the delegation that the issue is under active consideration and reiterated that all genuine pending dues would be resolved at the earliest in accordance with established norms.

Another delegation from Bathindi raised the issue of irregular supply of drinking water supply and urged upon the minister to intervene for ensuring regular, adequate and uninterrupted water supply to the area.

Emphasizing that public welfare and the timely execution of developmental works remain the top priorities of the government, the Minister directed all concerned departments to maintain close inter-departmental coordination to ensure effective implementation of welfare schemes and efficient grievance redressal.

Altaf Bukhari calls on LG Sinha



KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 30: Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari, President, J&K Apni Party called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday. A public delegation led by

Er. Sandeep Majotra, Member District Development Council Nagri Kathua also called on the Lieutenant Governor. Subsequently, a delegation headed by Rajinder Sharma, former Mayor, Jammu Municipal Corporation called on LG Manoj Sinha.

Legal framework pertaining to stem-cell research fragmented: SC

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 30: The Supreme Court on Friday said the legal framework pertaining to stem-cell research is "fragmented" and spread out across legislations with little harmony, which makes both compliance and enforcement an uphill task.

It said the obscurity in the legal regime also enables manipulation of patients' vulnerabilities by errant medical practitioners.

"Such obscurity, whether conscious or unintended, has arisen directly from legislative short-sightedness," a bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan said.

The court's observations came in a verdict that said stem-cell "therapies" for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) cannot be offered by medical practitioners as a clinical service, outside an approved and monitored

clinical-trial setting.

The judgment came on a plea that had raised concerns over the rampant promotion, prescription and administration of stem-cell "therapy" for treating ASD at several clinics across the country.

The bench noted that the discussion in its verdict is indicative of the shortfalls and fault lines in the regulatory mechanism for stem-cell research.

It said considering the nature of such research and its potential, it is imperative to ensure that the law in this regard is accessible and clear.

"As things currently stand, the legal framework pertaining to stem-cell research is fragmented and spread out across legislations with little harmony. This makes both compliance and enforcement an uphill task," the bench said.

The court said it finds it

apposite to suggest a consolidation of rules, regulations and guidelines to govern stem cell-based clinical trials and research.

It said the legislation ought to address certain points, including clearly defining stem cells and their derivatives and laying down a specific procedure for application for clinical trials, including a flexible yet definite list of standards or guidelines that need to be adhered to.

The bench said ideally, the National Guidelines for Stem Cell Research (NGSCR), 2017, and the National Ethical Guidelines should be given a clearer statutory recognition through these provisions.

It suggested setting up a protective net for the safety and welfare of the human subjects in these trials through a rights-based approach, including patient disclosure and consent protocols.

"If the patient is opting for an unproven therapy in a clinical setting, then a higher standard of voluntary, free, informed consent and associated protocols must be set," it said.

The bench said the patients undergoing experimental therapies in a clinical-trial setting should not be charged any amount for "treatment", rather their participation is voluntary.

"In case of injury or death, there should be a provision for interim compensation on immediate basis," it said.

The bench said a reasonable timeline should be there for the completion of the licensing and approval procedures and there should also be periodic inspections of the clinical-trial site.

It said the procedure for approval and licensing of stem-cell banks, along with the list of standards and guidelines that need to be complied with,

should be specified.

The bench also suggested laying down penalties for the violation of the law, with imprisonment in cases where the health of the patient or the trial subject is endangered.

"For the aforesaid points to be addressed in a meaningful manner, it is also important that a dedicated authority that has clear and well-defined powers of regulatory oversight is created," it said.

The bench suggested that the NAC-SCRT (National Apex Committee for Stem Cell Research and Therapy) is constituted once again to ensure proper and coherent monitoring and regulation of stem-cell research.

The court said it is cognisant of the profound difficulties faced by individuals diagnosed with ASD and their caregivers, which often drive them to explore experimental or unproven interventions in

the hope that even partial symptomatic relief may be achieved.

It noted that a pre-condition for a valid consent to be obtained is the disclosure of adequate information concerning the nature of the medical treatment, so that a patient knows what he is consenting to.

"Consent is a mode of exercising patient autonomy. Since consent does not confer on a patient the right to demand a particular form of treatment, patient autonomy cannot be stretched to seek an entitlement to subject oneself to a clinical procedure that is scientifically unvalidated, ethically impermissible and outside the bounds of reasonable medical practice," the bench said.

It said consent is an informed authorisation, grounded in adequate disclosure of the nature, procedure, purpose, benefits, effects, alternatives, substantial risks and adverse consequences

of refusing treatment.

The bench said where the requisite information is unavailable, a choice cannot mature into a valid consent.

"We have already arrived at the finding hereinabove that therapeutic use of stem cells in ASD cannot be offered as a service by medical practitioners until there is further research, which establishes this as a sound and relevant medical practice," it said.

It added that although one cannot demand that a form of medical intervention be permitted to be administered, one would still have the liberty to participate in an approved and regulated research or clinical trial involving such medical interventions.

The bench said it is as clear as a noon day that the lack of safeguards for biomedical and health research in therapeutic use of stem cells is stark.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Amid turbulence

on Bapu's vision for a resilient, peaceful and inclusive society.

"Bapu envisioned that safeguarding fundamental rights- human dignity, equality, justice, welfare of the marginalized, and women's and youth rights, dignity, and unity we can create unshakable societal strength even amid gravest challenges," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also called upon the younger generation to recognize Gandhi's non-violence as supreme courage, not weakness. He stated that through sacrifice and Satyagraha, Gandhi ji showed nonviolence as actionable wisdom.

"Gandhi Ji throughout his life advocated dialogue instead of vengeance, compassion rather than rage, and understanding over confrontation.

"Bapu demonstrated that moral values are humanity's core strength and invaluable treasure, enabling a united society to overcome any challenge," he said.

LG Sinha expressed his firm belief that in times of global despair, hope will emerge from Gandhian values and principles.

"Following Gandhi's values enable us to address current issues, build better futures, create global harmony, and promote human welfare," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that the grand celebrations of Gandhi Jayanti in J&K over the last six years have had a transformational impact in society.

This transformation is clearly visible in the massive public participation in national integration programs like the 'Tiranga Yatra', 'Har Ghar Tiranga', and 'Vande Mataram', he said.

He also called upon the citizens to take a collective pledge for an "Ujjawal Jammu Kashmir" and "Ujjawal Bharat."

The Lieutenant Governor honoured the NoKs of martyrs, and family members of Late Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa, and civilians who lost their lives due to unprovoked firing by Pakistan during Operation Sindoor.

School students were conferred with the Shanti Doot Puraskar for their efforts in promoting Gandhian values. Additionally, officials on behalf of the Civil Administration, J&K Police, and Security Forces also received the Rashtriya Sewa Puraskar.

Earlier, a two-minute silence was observed as a mark of respect to the Father of the Nation and the martyrs who made the supreme sacrifice during India's struggle for freedom. (KNO)

People's welfare

in the consultation process and placing their demands and suggestions before the government. "What you have spoken, what you have written, and what you have submitted has all been noted. I thank you for that and participating in these meetings " he said.

He noted that the pre-budget consultation process was initiated last year and has been continued this year to strengthen participatory governance. He explained that the primary objective of these meetings is to listen to public representatives and incorporate feasible suggestions during budget preparation.

"Every honourable minister receives a report of these consultations so that while setting departmental priorities, the suggestions that can be accommodated are included. The remaining issues are discussed during budget debates,

grants, and cut motions," he explained, while assuring the MLAs that all constituency-specific demands had been duly recorded.

The Chief Minister said that efforts would be made to adjust priorities across various funding avenues, including UT Capex, district plans, SASCI, and centrally sponsored schemes. "The list of priorities that we started a year ago will be taken forward this year as well. We may not be able to include every demand due to budget constraints but your priority works initiated since last year shall be completed and handed over," he said.

Referring to losses suffered due to snow, floods, and heavy rains, CM Omar Abdullah said that the Rs. 1430 crore relief package needs to be utilized judiciously to repair and restore affected areas.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary, Ministers Sakina Itoo, Javed Rana, Satish Sharma, and Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani.

The consultative sessions were attended by Members of the Legislative Assembly from the districts of Udhampur, Kathua, Reasi, Ramban, Rajouri, Poonch, Kishtwar, and Doda. The MLAs present included Pawan Gupta (Udhampur West), R.S. Pathania (Udhampur East), Balwant Singh Mankotia (Chenani), Sunil Bharadwaj (Ramnagar), Dr. Rameshwar Singh (Bani), Satish Kumar Sharma (Billawar), Darshan Kumar (Basohli), Rajeev Jasrotia (Jasrota), Bharat Bhushan (Kathua), Vijay Kumar (Hiranagar), Kuldeep Dubey (Reasi), Baldev Raj Sharma (Shri Mata Vaishno Devi), Er. Khurshed Ahmed (Gulabgarh), Sajjad Shaheen (Banihal), Arjan Singh Raju (Ramban), Javed Iqbal (Budhal), Muzaffar Iqbal (Thanamandi), Iftikhar Ahmed (Rajouri), Randhir Singh (Kalakote-Sunderbani), Aijaz Ahmed Jan (Poonch-Haveli), Choudhary Akram (Surankote), Pyare Lal Sharma (Inderwal), Shagun Parihar (Kishtwar), Shakti Parihar (Doda West), and Daleep Singh Parihar (Bhaderwah).

The meeting was also attended by Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary PWD Anil Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary Finance Santosh D. Vaidya, Commissioner Secretary Social Welfare, Commissioner Secretary Education/Higher Education, Deputy Commissioners of the concerned districts, Director General Budget, and other senior officers of the Finance Department and allied departments. Officers posted outside Jammu participated in the meeting through video conferencing.

Earlier, the MLAs highlighted a range of issues and projects requiring priority attention in the forthcoming budget. These included road widening and construction of new roads, upgradation of health and educational institutions, enhancement of sports infrastructure, provision of potable drinking water, development of tourist destinations, strengthening healthcare facilities with adequate staffing, and establishment of new colleges and schools in their constituencies.

The elected representatives also emphasized the need for focused interventions to improve basic amenities and accelerate socio-economic development across both urban and rural areas.

The MLAs expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah for initiating and continuing the pre-budget consultation process, appreciating the government's effort to incorporate grassroots perspectives and elected

representatives' inputs into the budgetary framework.

J&K Assembly budget

of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly allows the House to conclude at 17: 00 hours with a lunch break for one hour.

The budget session of Jammu & Kashmir assembly is likely to be stormy with the opposition parties-especially BJP-likely to corner the government on a gamut of issues. (KNO)

Chillai Kalan ends,

districts also experienced cold conditions, with Anantnag recording 0.3 degrees Celsius, Kulgam 1.1 degrees Celsius, Pulwama 0.1 degrees Celsius, and Beerwah in Budgam minus 2.9 degrees Celsius.

In Jammu, minimum temperatures were relatively higher. Jammu city recorded 9.3 degrees Celsius, Katra 8.4 degrees Celsius, Banihal 1.1 degrees Celsius, Batote 3.2 degrees Celsius, Bhaderwah minus 1.0 degrees Celsius, and Udhampur 3.6 degrees Celsius.

LEH, KARGIL RECORD EXTREME COLD CONDITIONS

Ladakh recorded extreme cold conditions, with Leh recording minus 10.4 degrees Celsius, Hanle was the coldest at minus 16.0 degrees Celsius, Kargil minus 9.2 degrees Celsius, and Nubra Valley minus 9.3 degrees Celsius.

Officials warned that cold conditions are likely to continue in the coming days. The Meteorological Department (MeT) said feeble western disturbances (WDs) are moving across the region, bringing a possibility of light rain or snowfall, especially in mountainous areas. WDs are expected to affect the region on alternate days over the next ten days.

"There is a possibility of light to moderate snowfall in areas of Ganderbal, Anantnag, and Bandipora districts. Moderate snowfall cannot be ruled out in some locations," a MeT official said.

He advised farmers to pause irrigation work and warned the public against venturing into avalanche-prone zones.

The IMD forecast for Jammu and Kashmir said light snow is expected at higher reaches on January 30, followed by light to moderate rain or snow with gusty winds in several areas on January 31 and February 1.

Light rain or snow is expected again on February 2-3, with generally dry conditions from February 4-6 and 8-10.

An avalanche advisory with medium danger level has been issued for areas above 2,400 metres in Bandipora for the next 24 hours.

Authorities urged the public to avoid high-risk areas and follow official advisories, and dial 112 in case of emergencies. (KNO)

Political egos keep

Conference does not appear to be in a hurry to fill this key slot.

If sources are to be believed, the egos of both NC and BJP have kept the post vacant. While NC has not shown any inclination to offer the post of Deputy Speaker to the BJP, the latter has not demanded it from the former.

Repeated attempts to seek comments from the National Conference proved futile as its chief whip Mubarak Gul didn't respond to repeated calls from KNO.

J&K BJP General Secretary (Organisation), Ashok Koul, said that the government has to set

the ball rolling for the election of the Deputy Speaker.

"It is not necessary that they choose our MLA as Deputy Speaker; they can even elect their own MLA as Deputy Speaker," he said. (KNO)

J&K to launch

particularly through identification of priority cancer types suitable for population-based screening.

Addressing the consultation, the Chief Secretary said that the J&K government will adopt a phased, evidence-based and implementable cancer control framework, anchored in research and aligned with national priorities to effectively address the growing cancer burden in J&K.

The Chief Secretary emphasized the need for a context-specific cancer control strategy for Jammu and Kashmir, taking into account regional disease patterns, health system capacity and long-term sustainability. He underlined that early detection, timely referral and equitable access to quality cancer care must form the backbone of future interventions.

Secretary Health J&K, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah, presented recent initiatives, including expanding tertiary healthcare services and increasing medical seats. He emphasized the need for context-specific, evidence-based cancer prevention guidelines and strengthened information, education, and communication mechanisms

On the occasion, deliberations also highlighted the importance of district-level implementation models supported by structured implementation research to assess coverage, feasibility, cost-effectiveness and health outcomes.

A strong consensus emerged on positioning implementation research as a core pillar of cancer prevention, screening and care. It was proposed that a Centre for Implementation Research in Oncology be established to generate scalable, real-world solutions, with particular emphasis on improving quality of life, integrating palliative care and strengthening health systems. The role of community medicine departments in advancing preventive oncology initiatives was also underscored.

The meeting highlighted the need for context-specific, evidence-based cancer prevention guidelines aligned with national frameworks of the Department of Health Research, along with strengthened information, education and communication (IEC) mechanisms. Preventive strategies were advised to focus on tobacco control, HPV-related cancer prevention, dietary and lifestyle risk factors, and infection-associated cancers, including Helicobacter pylori-linked gastrointestinal malignancies.

The participants stressed the need for prioritizing large, high-impact research initiatives over fragmented small-scale studies, with a strong focus on translational relevance. The creation of longitudinal cohorts, biobanks and randomized controlled trials was recommended to generate robust evidence on causative factors, screening effectiveness and clinical outcomes. Establishment of a comprehensive, state-wide cancer registry was identified as a critical requirement for evidence-based planning, monitoring and policy formulation in Jammu & Kashmir.

Strengthening cancer care infrastructure across Jammu and Kashmir was identified as a key priority. Recommendations included

development of advanced diagnostic facilities in all medical colleges, encompassing molecular diagnostics and immunohistochemistry, along with clearly defined referral pathways and patient navigation mechanisms through designated Centres of Excellence.

The consultation concluded with agreement on adopting a phased, research-linked and implementable cancer control framework for Jammu & Kashmir, supported through institutional partnerships and technical collaboration with ICMR and leading national cancer institutions.

The outcomes of the meeting are expected to guide the future policy actions, research collaborations and health system strengthening initiatives aimed at reducing the cancer burden and improving patient outcomes in J&K.

Hunt intensified

challenging conditions, including over two feet of snowfall and steep, thickly vegetated slopes.

Searches are being carried out during daylight hours, with night operations limited to reduce risks to civilians, officials said.

The crackdown was launched following an encounter in the Sonnar forest near Mandrel Singhpora on January 18, when security forces acting on intelligence inputs came under heavy fire.

During the initial gunfight, an Army para-trooper, Havildar Gajendra Singh, lost his life, while several soldiers sustained injuries. Three critically wounded personnel were later evacuated for specialised medical treatment. Officials said the terrorists used grenades and heavy firing in an attempt to break the cordon before retreating deeper into the forest under the cover of terrain and darkness.

Security forces re-established contact with the group on January 22, leading to fresh exchanges of fire. Additional firefighting were reported in the Mali Dana top area on January 22 and Jansoor Kandiwar on January 25, but the militants managed to evade capture.

Security sources said preliminary assessments indicate the group includes foreign militants who are well-armed, mobile and prepared to use explosives to escape encirclement. During searches, forces also detected a suspected militant hideout, though details of recoveries have not been officially disclosed.

As part of the operation, agencies are probing possible local support networks. Several individuals have been detained for questioning to ascertain whether logistical assistance, including food supplies, was provided to the terrorists.

Meanwhile, as a precautionary measure, the Jammu and Kashmir Home Department ordered the temporary suspension of mobile internet services within a six-kilometre radius of Singhpora, Chingam and Chatroo.

The suspension, affecting all mobile data services from 2G to 5G, was imposed following inputs from the police to prevent misuse of communication networks during the operation.

Officials said the restrictions, extended till 11.59 pm on January 30, were imposed in the interest of security, public order and the sovereignty and integrity of the country. (KNO)

Union Minister presents

reflecting the Union Territory's steadfast commitment towards preserving, promoting and celebrating India's rich and living heritage.

Rahul disrespected NE by not wearing 'gamosa' at Prez's R-Day event: Amit Shah

PTI

Dibrugarh, Jan 30: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of disrespecting the North East by refusing to wear a 'gamosa', presented by President Droupadi Murmu at the 'At Home' reception hosted by her on Republic Day.

All dignitaries, including those from abroad, had worn the scarf as a mark of respect, but Gandhi was the "only person to refuse" to do so, Shah claimed, while addressing a public rally at the Khanikar Parade Ground here.

He asked Gandhi "what enmity does he have towards the people of NE...why such injustice against the people of the region".

"Rahul Gandhi can do whatever he wants, but as long as the BJP is in power and politics, it will not allow any disrespect of the North East's culture. We are firm on this, and nobody can shake us from this firm stand," the BJP leader said.

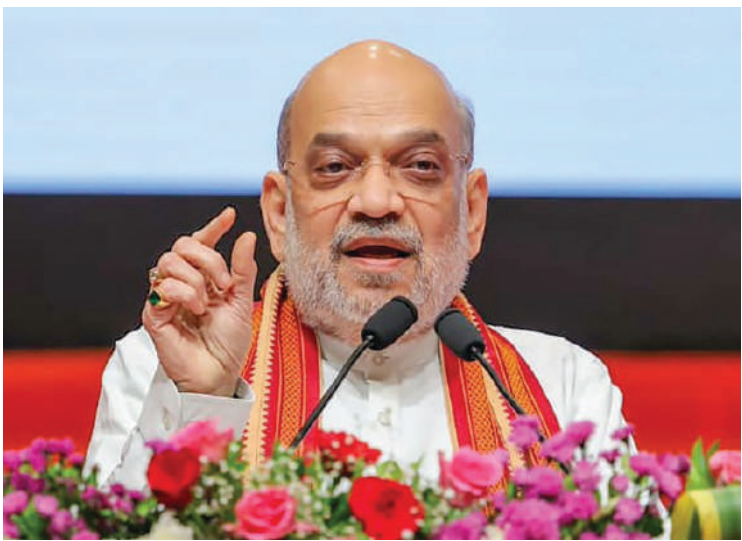
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has worn the Assamese 'gamosa' at the UN and talked about Vaishnav saints Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, thereby spreading the state's culture globally, he said.

Shah also accused the Congress of using infiltration as a "weapon of its vote bank politics".

"There has been no infiltration in Assam since the BJP came to power. Those who had come to India illegally will be identified and sent back," he added.

Asserting that before the last elections, the BJP had pledged that infiltration, which "changed Assam's demography and compromised the nation's security", would be stopped, Shah said, "We kept our promise".

The Assam government has stopped the process of changing demography, and has freed 1 lakh 26 thousand acres of land from infiltrators, he said. "If



demographic change is not stopped, Assam may face difficulties in the coming days, and only our government can stop it."

Shah alleged that the opposition party, for the sake of vote banks, had even handed over the sacred land of Srimanta Sankardeva to infiltrators, which the Himanta government of Assam has now made infiltrator-free.

He also alleged that the Congress did nothing for Assam's development, and the BJP dispensation in Assam, under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has taken a series of initiatives for the progress of all sectors.

Both BJP Chief Ministers Himanta Biswa Sarma and his predecessor Sarbananda Sonowal initiated several development works, and this is happening because Prime Minister Narendra Modi has Assam in his heart, he said.

"The Congress ruled at the Centre for decades since Independence but did nothing for the development of the state. Now the BJP gives priority to Assam, whether it be in

infrastructure, wildlife and environment, semiconductors, cancer facilities, airport, railways, waterways, industry and others," he said.

"I want to ask Rahul Gandhi what his party has given to Assam except guns, bullets, conflicts and deaths of youth," the union home minister said.

After the BJP government was formed at the Centre, more than 20 peace agreements were signed in the North East and more than 10,000 youth laid down their arms to make Assam and the region peaceful and secure, Shah said.

There was a time when there were guns and explosions but now it is the music of Bhupen Hazarika that is reaching the world and it was the BJP government that gave Bharat Ratna to him, he said.

The Congress did not honour even its first chief minister Gopinath Bardoloi with Bharat Ratna, and it was the BJP that did it, he added.

"We have started a new culture of peace, good governance, development and taking all together in the

path of progress", he said.

The chief minister has ensured equal rights for all communities by focusing on their all-round development, the union minister said.

Shah also charged the Congress with doing "nothing for the welfare of the tea garden workers" who have positioned Assam, particularly Dibrugarh, as the tea capital of the country.

"The chief minister has amended the law to ensure that the tea garden workers get ownership rights of land to over 20,000 people in around 850 tea gardens," he said.

The people have struggled for decades for land ownership -- first they did during British rule and then when Congress was in power -- but none paid any attention to them, he said.

Shah alleged, without elaborating, that the Congress had issued a toolkit to defame Assam and its tea industry.

The recent free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the EU will ensure that Assam tea shipments will go to European countries with zero tariff, he said.

"The EU-India trade pact will boost Assam tea exports to European countries", he asserted.

Shah said the BJP had promised in the last polls that its government would make Assam flood free, and "the steps in this direction have already been taken before the 2026 elections".

He appealed to voters in Assam to "elect the BJP for the third consecutive term to ensure development, peace, security, industrial and agricultural progress, and make Assam free from infiltration and flood".

Shah also paid his tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of Martyrs' Day.

"Bapu had united the entire country to ensure Swaraj for the country, and I pay my humble tributes to him," he said.

Menstrual hygiene verdict meant for classrooms where girls hesitate to seek help: SC



PTI

New Delhi, Jan 30: The Supreme Court on Friday said its judgment on menstrual hygiene is meant for the classrooms where girls hesitate to seek help and the teachers who cannot help due to lack of resources.

In a landmark judgment to ensure gender justice and educational equity, a bench comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan on Friday declared the right to dignified menstrual health as part of the right to life and education under the Constitution.

It also issued a slew of directions including the one asking all states and Union Territories to provide free oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins to girl students and functional, gender-segregated

toilets for all the students.

Justice Pardiwala, in his concluding remarks, reached out directly to the students affected by these systemic failures.

"We wish to communicate to every girl child, who might have become a victim of absenteeism because her body was perceived as a burden, that the fault is not hers," it said.

"Before we part, we would like to say something on the issue we have addressed. This pronouncement is not just for the stakeholders of the legal system, it is also meant to be for the classroom where girls hesitate to ask for help, it is for the teachers who want to help but are restrained due to lack of resources and it is for the parents who may not realise the impact of their silence, and for the society to

establish that progress is measured how we protect the most vulnerable.

"These words must travel beyond the courtroom, law review reports and reach the everyday conscience of society at large," it said.

The bench directed the apex court registry to forward one copy each of this judgment to all the high courts, state governments and Union Territories.

It also said the copy of the judgment be also sent to ministries of health, education, drinking water and sanitation, and women and child development.

"We treat this matter as part heard. The Registry shall notify this matter after three months alongwith the compliance report on behalf of the States and Union Territories before this very Bench," it said.

NCP legislature party meeting on Jan 31 to name Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra as its leader: Bhujbal



PTI

Mumbai, Jan 30: The legislature wing of the NCP in Maharashtra will hold a meeting in Mumbai on January 31, where Deputy Chief Minister late Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra is set to be named as its leader, state minister Chhagan Bhujbal said on Friday.

Talking to reporters at the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) office here, Bhujbal said Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has conveyed that he has no issues if her swearing-in ceremony as the deputy CM takes place on Saturday itself provided a decision to that effect is taken by the party.

The meeting will take place at the NCP office in Vidhan Bhavan in south Mumbai on Saturday afternoon, party sources said.

Sunetra Pawar will attend the

meeting. The legislature party is expected to name her as the new leader and she may take oath as a deputy CM on Saturday itself, they added.

Sunetra Pawar is currently a Rajya Sabha MP and not a member of either House of the Maharashtra legislature. However, the Baramati assembly seat in Pune district has fallen vacant after Ajit Pawar's death in a plane crash on Wednesday.

Bhujbal said, "The legislature party meeting of the NCP will be convened on Saturday, where Sunetra Pawar will be named as its leader. Many leaders want her to become the deputy CM."

The most important thing is to fill the vacant post of the legislature party leader and subsequently that of the deputy CM, he said.

Gold plunges by Rs 14,000, silver by Rs 20,000 in a single day on profit-taking, stronger US dollar

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 30: Gold prices tumbled by Rs 14,000 per 10 grams and silver prices tanked by Rs 20,000 per kg in the national capital on Friday as investors booked heavy profits amid weak global trends and a rebound in the US dollar.

According to the marketmen, gold of 99.9 per cent purity plunged by Rs 14,000, or 7.65 per cent, to Rs 1,69,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). The precious metal had hit an all-time high of Rs 1,83,000 per 10 grams on Thursday, after rising by Rs 12,000.

Silver tumbled by Rs 20,000, or nearly 5 per cent, to Rs 3,84,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). The white metal had soared Rs 19,500 to hit a record of Rs 4,04,500 per kg in the previous market session.

"Gold and silver experienced a significant correction on Friday as investors moved to aggressively book profits following a recent record-breaking rally.

"This decline was mainly fuelled by the heavy liquidation of long positions by large institutional players, who sought to secure gains after a strong multi-session advance," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. He added that a



recovery in the US dollar placed further pressure on bullion. "From a technical standpoint, both gold and silver had been trading in overbought territory over the past several sessions, heightening the risk of a corrective move."

The combination of stretched technical conditions, institutional profit-taking, and a recovery in the US dollar that is likely to continue adds pressure on bullion in the short term, Gandhi said.

In the international market, spot gold was trading 5.31 per cent lower, or USD 285.30, to USD 5,087.73 per ounce. The yellow metal tumbled by USD 425.86, or 7.92 per cent, to hit an intraday low of USD 4,945.26 per ounce.

"Gold slipped below USD 5,100 per ounce and silver dipped below USD 105 per ounce amid continued profit-taking amid Trump and Senate Democrats have reached a tentative deal to avoid a US government shutdown, weighing on safe-haven assets," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP Commodity Research, Kotak Securities, said.

On Thursday, gold touched a new record of USD 5,595.02 before settling at USD 5,371.12 per ounce.

Spot silver also dropped USD 14, or 12.09 per cent, to USD 101.47 per ounce, after falling as much as 17.5 per cent in the intraday trade USD 95.26 per ounce in the overseas trade. On Thursday, it hit a fresh peak of USD 121.45 per ounce.

Four Naxalites with total bounty of Rs 8 lakh surrender in Chhattisgarh

PTI

Sukma, Jan 30: Four Naxalites, including two women, carrying cumulative rewards of Rs 8 lakh, surrendered along with their weapons in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Friday, a senior police official said.

The cadres, who belonged to the Kistaram area committee of the south Bastar division of Maoists, turned themselves in here under the state's 'Poona Margem (from rehabilitation to social reintegration) initiative, Inspector General of Police, Bastar Range, Sundarraj P said.

The Naxalites told the police that they were impressed by the state government's surrender and rehabilitation policy, he said. Of the surrendered cadres, Sodhi Joga, an area committee member, carried a reward of Rs 5 lakh.

The others, Dabar Ganga, alias Madkam Ganga, Sodhi Raje, and Madvi Budhari, carried a bounty of Rs 1 lakh each, he said.

They also handed over one Insas rifle, a Single Loading Rifle (SLR), one .303 rifle and a .315 rifle, and ammunition, he said, adding that police from Sukma district and Alluri Sitarama Raju district (Andhra Pradesh) played a key role in their surrender.

The newly established security camps in the Kistaram and Golapalli areas of Sukma, improved road connectivity, and the success of continuous and effective anti-Naxal operations have resulted in frequent surrender of cadres in the region, he said.

These security camps have helped curb Maoist activities, and their area of free movement has been significantly reduced, he said. The surrendered cadres will be provided with rehabilitation, financial assistance, and other facilities as per government policy, he added.

Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan appealed to all the remaining Maoist cadres active in the area to give up violence, assuring them that the government would provide them security and a dignified life.

Immune cells in gut help spread Parkinsons disease to brain: Study

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 30: A new study demonstrates how immune cells in the gut facilitate the spread of Parkinson's disease to the brain, pointing towards a potential target for therapy.

Parkinson's disease -- a neurodegenerative condition characterised by tremors, stiffness, and slowness of movement, among others -- is thought to originate in the gut, as one of the first cranial regions to be affected is the dorsal motor nucleus of the vagus nerve which is directly connected to the gut.

However, researchers from University College London said the exact neurological pathways of the spread of Parkinson's disease to the brain were



not known earlier.

The study, conducted in mice and published in the Nature journal, identifies a key role of gut macrophages -- a specialised immune cell that kills pathogens -- in the transfer of toxic proteins from the gut to the brain.

Reducing the number of gut macrophages led to reduced spread of such proteins, and improved motor symptoms in mice with Parkinson's disease, the researchers said.

Co-lead author Tim Bartels, group leader at the UK Dementia Research Institute at University College London, said, neurodegenerative diseases have slow trajectories over decades.

"Understanding how Parkinson's begins in the body could allow us to

develop simple blood tests to screen for it, enabling diagnosis long before damage to the brain starts. Having the ability to detect and manage Parkinson's before it even reaches the brain could have a huge impact for those affected," Bartels said.

Studies have shown how people with Parkinson's disease exhibit gut symptoms long before motor symptoms begin -- for example, chronic constipation decades before diagnosis.

The researchers isolated a specific neurotransmitter alpha-synuclein (an amino acid) from brains of people who have died due to Parkinson's disease.

Tiny amounts of the patient-derived alpha-synuclein were inserted into the

small intestines of mice and the spread of the toxic proteins from the gut to the brain was tracked.

According to researchers, gut macrophages or immune cells consumed the alpha-synuclein protein, and began showing signs of dysfunction in their lysosomal systems, which is responsible for breaking down the cell's waste material. The team found that the macrophages then signalled T-cells -- part of the body's immune response -- to travel from the gut to the brain.

Depleting the number of gut macrophages before injecting alpha-synuclein into the small intestine of mice was found to result in reduced levels of the toxic proteins in the brain.

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