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Ruling alliance partners, divided opp gear up for high-voltage Budget Session

Joint meeting of alliance MLAs likely tomorrow | BJP legislature party meeting today

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Jan 31: As the Budget Session begins on February 2, political parties have geared up to finalize their strategies for what is expected to be a stormy session, with the opposition—particularly the Bharatiya Janata Party—set to corner the government on a range of issues.

The ruling National Conference is likely to call a joint meeting of NC, Congress, CPI (M), and independent MLAs supporting the government on Monday—the day when the Budget Session will commence with the Lieutenant Governor's address to the House.

The meeting to be held in evening will be chaired by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and attended by all alliance MLAs, including those from the Congress and independent members.

Before the joint meeting on Monday, the NC is also likely to convene a separate meeting of its MLAs.

"We have not yet finalized the date of the meeting(s)," NC chief whip and MLA from Eidgah, Mubarak Gul, told the



news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

The Bharatiya Janata Party has also called a meeting of its legislature party on Sunday afternoon to finalize its strategy for the Budget Session.

"We have called a legislature party meeting tomorrow at 6:00 PM at the party headquarters," said Leader of Opposition Sunil Kumar Sharma.

The Peoples Democratic Party is also convening a meeting of its legislators | [More on P6](#)

J&K mulls comprehensive cancer policy amid rise in cases

Top experts to be roped in for policy formulation, implementation

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jan 31: Amid a steady rise in cancer cases across Jammu and Kashmir, the administration in the Union Territory is mulling to frame and implement a comprehensive cancer policy.

A top health official informed news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the cancer policy aimed at prevention, early detection, treatment and long-term care of cancer patients is expected to be framed soon and ensure its

implementation.

He said that proposal will be framed with the active involvement of top cancer experts of the country including oncologists and public health specialists of the top institutions of the country.

Another official said that Cancer has emerged as a major public challenge in J&K with hospitals witnessing an increase inflow of patients suffering from different forms of the disease particularly cancers of the lung, breast, gastrointestinal tract, cervix and blood.

He said | [More on P6](#)

BRO breaks record this winter, ensures early access on J&K highways

Traffic resumes on Zojila, Kishtwar roads

Intensive snow clearance continues

Mughal, Bandipora-Gurez routes set to open

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 31: Traffic on the Zojila Pass section of the Srinagar-Kargil National Highway was restored on Saturday after being suspended for several days due to heavy snowfall.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir

News



Observer (KNO) that the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) undertook intensive snow-clearance operations, clearing up to four feet of accumulated snow

and reopening the strategic high-altitude route much earlier than usual. The highway, which connects Srinagar with Ladakh, | [More on P6](#)

Chillai Khurd begins, night temps stay below freezing point in Kashmir

MET forecasts light rain, snowfall in higher reaches till Feb 3

Medium-level avalanche warning issued for areas above 2,400 metres

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jan 31: Night temperatures across Kashmir remained below the freezing point but showed a rising trend at most places marking the beginning of Chillai Khurd and the conclusion of Chillai Kalan, the 40-day coldest phase of winter.

An official of the Meteorological Department told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the minimum temperatures across several locations recorded improvement compared to previous nights, though sub-zero conditions persisted in many areas of the Valley.

While sharing the details the official said that in Srinagar, the minimum temperature settled at minus 0.1 degrees Celsius on Friday night, down from 1.3 degrees Celsius the previous night, and remained around 0.5 degrees Celsius above the seasonal average. | [More on P6](#)

Cordial ties with Centre necessary for governance: CM's Advisor

Denies political ties with BJP

Says zero power curtailment targeted in cities, towns next year

'Statehood our right, no scope for compromise'

Waris Fayaz



for effective governance in Jammu and Kashmir. He, however, made it clear that they have no relations with the BJP.

Advisor Nasir, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that it is mandatory for the Chief Minister to engage with the Union | [More on P6](#)

Gunfight underway in Kishtwar

- Drones, sniffer dogs, helicopters deployed
- Contact reestablished with terrorists, search ops continue

Sajid Raina

Kishtwar, Jan 31: An encounter between security forces and terrorists recommended in Kishtwar district on Saturday after contact was re-established during a joint counter-terror operation, officials said.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the exchange of fire began around 5.40 am in the Dolgam area when security forces closed in on suspected terrorist hideouts | [More on P6](#)

NO MORE QUEUES

JKCCC introduces QR-based ski passes to ease access in Gulmarg

Infra upgrades underway to enhance winter tourist experience: Dir Tourism

Waris Fayaz

Srinagar, Jan 31: In a move to streamline services for winter tourists, the Jammu and Kashmir Cable Car Corporation (JKCCC) has rolled out a QR code-based system for online booking of ski passes, aimed at eliminating queues and ensuring hassle-free access for skiers at Gulmarg.

This digital initiative allows stakeholders and adventure enthusiasts, to | [More on P6](#)

Ensure peace, stability in J&K: DG CRPF directs officers

Reviews operational readiness across Srinagar sector, chairs meetings

Sajid Raina



IG Ops Kashmir Sector; and Pawan Kumar Sharma, IG Srinagar Sector.

At the battalion headquarters, Singh chaired an operational meeting and assessed security deployments, operational readiness, and functioning of key installations.

The DG also visited the CRPF headquarters in Srinagar, where he reviewed the newly established Command and Control Centre.

Officials said he examined the security scenario in the Valley and evaluated measures taken to prevent | [More on P6](#)

Deputy Chief Minister lays foundation stone for road upgradation in Kalakote



KT NEWS DESK

RAJOURI, JANUARY 31: Deputy Chief Minister, Jammu and Kashmir, Surinder Choudhary, Saturday laid the foundation stone for upgradation of road from Main Road Kotekabu Brehvi to Ziyarat Brehvi Baji Darbar, Kalakote.

The ceremony, as per an official statement was held in the presence of Thakur Randhir Singh, MLA

Kalakote, along with officers of the concerned departments and local residents. The upgradation work will be executed by the Public Works Department (PWD) which aims to ensure safer, smoother transportation for the people of the area.

On the occasion, the Deputy Chief Minister congratulated the local public and said that the UT government is committed to strengthen

the road infrastructure and ensuring better connectivity in remote and rural regions. He emphasized that improved roads play a vital role in boosting economic activity, accessibility to religious places, and overall development.

The locals expressed gratitude to the government for taking concrete steps towards development and improving basic infrastructure in the region.

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU/SRINAGAR, JANUARY 31: The Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) on Saturday successfully concluded the sixth and seventh batches of Management Development Programmes (MDPs) in Bandipora, Budgam, Ganderbal, Kathua, Rajouri, Reasi, Samba, Jammu and Doda districts of the Union Territory under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme. The scheme is funded by the Ministry of MSME, Government of India, and implemented by the Industries and Commerce Department, Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

A total of 208 aspiring and existing entrepreneurs successfully completed the 30-hour structured training programme, which comprised expert interactions and field exposure visits. Notably, 197 women entrepreneurs participated in the batches, marking a significant stride towards gender



inclusivity in the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The MDPs were conducted by the respective District Centres of JKEDI under the overall supervision of the Director JKEDI.

The MDPs, as per an official statement, were designed to enhance managerial, financial and strategic competencies of participants, enabling them to scale up their enterprises, improve competitiveness and develop sustainable business models.

also featured mentorship sessions, case studies, interactive discussions and hands-on workshops to provide participants with practical, real-world business insights.

Sector-specific sessions formed an important component of the MDPs, with experts from the District Industries Centres (DICs) and the Labour and Employment Department interacting with participants to share domain-specific guidance. In addition, field visits to successful enterprises were organised to provide firsthand exposure to operational best practices.

The programmes were regularly monitored by designated Range and Reviewing Officers, who interacted with participants to assess training quality and gather feedback, ensuring effective implementation and impact. The successful conclusion of the MDPs reflects JKEDI's continued commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and building local capacity to drive economic growth in Jammu and Kashmir.

DC Baramulla launches Sampoornata 2.0 Abhiyan, targets saturation of key indicators

KT NEWS DESK

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 31: Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, Saturday launched the Sampoornata 2.0 Abhiyan at Dak Bungalow, Baramulla in the presence of senior district and sectoral officers.

The campaign which will end on 14th April 2026 aims to achieve saturation of all identified 11 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) under NITI Aayog's Aspirational District Programme (ADP) and Aspirational Block Programme (ABP).

As part of the launch event, the DC inaugurated stalls and awareness camps set up on the occasion by various departments, including Rural Development Department



(RDD), ICDS, Agriculture, NRLM, and Health. These stalls aimed to spread awareness about government schemes and services, while facilitating on-the-spot outreach to beneficiaries.

Meanwhile, the DC

administered a pledge to all officers and officials present, reaffirming their collective commitment to ensuring complete saturation of the 11 KPIs under both the Aspirational District and Aspirational Block Programme.

During the launch, the DC, along with district officers, also participated in a handprint and signature pledge, symbolising shared responsibility and dedication towards achieving the objectives of NITI Aayog's Sampoornata 2.0.

Speaking on the occasion, Minga Sherpa emphasized the importance of inter-departmental coordination, proactive field engagement, and focused monitoring to ensure timely and measurable progress under the Sampoornata 2.0 Abhiyan.

Furthermore, the DC instructed the officers to ensure maximum field presence, intensive beneficiary identification, and strict adherence to timelines to translate policy objectives into tangible

benefits for the people.

The launch event was attended by the consultant NITI Aayog, Amitesh Panday; Chief Planning Officer Baramulla, Nisar Ahmad; Assistant Commissioner Development Baramulla, Mudasir Hussain; Assistant Commissioner Revenue Baramulla, Arshad Ahmad, and other district officers and officials from various departments.

Later, the DC Baramulla led a march from Dak Bungalow to the DC Office, joined by district officers and other stakeholders, collectively reaffirming their commitment to achieving saturation of key indicators under the Aspirational District Programme (ADP) and Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP).

DC Budgam reviews implementation of PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, JANUARY 31: A review of the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PM-VBRY) was Saturday undertaken in a meeting convened at DC Office Budgam, under the chairmanship of the District Development Commissioner, Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat.

During the meeting, as per an official statement the overall progress of the scheme in the district was reviewed in detail. The registration status of establishments and beneficiaries was taken up for thorough assessment, and district-wise performance indicators were examined to evaluate the pace of implementation.

It was informed during the review that 46 establishments have been registered in the district till January 30, 2026. The meeting was further informed that 130 new-time employees



have been registered under the scheme, while 67 re-joiners have also been brought under coverage, indicating gradual expansion of formal employment opportunities in Budgam district.

The DC reviewed the implementation mechanisms in place and highlighted the need for strengthening field-level execution. He emphasised on ensuring that eligible establishments are facilitated for timely registration and that

procedural bottlenecks, if any, are promptly addressed to avoid delays in onboarding.

The DC stressed that continuous monitoring of progress shall be maintained and that periodic reviews shall be conducted to track outcomes and improve performance.

He directed officers to ensure that all relevant data is updated regularly and that accurate reporting is maintained to reflect the actual progress of the scheme.

Papier mache thriving, over 8,000 artisans trained, says Handicrafts Dept

Refutes claims of art dying, published in a daily newspaper

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 31: The Handicrafts and Handloom Department, Kashmir has strongly refuted certain portions of a news story published in a local daily newspaper with headline - 'The Art Will Die with Us': Srinagar's papier mache craftsman battle extinction.

In a press release issued here on Saturday, a spokesman of the Department countered the claims made by Nasir Ahmad Mir, a papier mache craftsman, who was interviewed by a reporter for the news story published on 29.01.2026 of the said newspaper.

Giving details, the spokesman, as per an official statement, stated that the Handicrafts and Handloom Department, Kashmir, has 19 training centres across Kashmir Division, imparting hands-on training in papier mache craft to around 400 artisans in elementary and advance training courses every year. "The Department has trained as many as 8,102 new papier mache artisans across the valley, who have taken the unique craft forward and carved out a niche for themselves," he said.



adding that a large number of papier mache artisans are still in the unorganised sector, who are being registered so that they can avail the benefits of various flagship schemes of the Government.

In order to promote and encourage artisans in papier mache craft, as many as 25 master craftsmen have been conferred with UT Awards over the last 10 years. "Apart from this, J&K has been made proud by papier mache craft maestros like Fayaz Ahmad Jan and Iqbal Hussain Khan, who have been conferred with Padma Shri & Shilp Guru awards respectively in recognition of their contribution in promotion of the craft," he added.

Referring to the Department's initiative of Know Your Artisan, under its Soulful Kashmir brand promotion campaign, the spokesman said that special representation is made for papier mache craft, which remains the most popular, along with walnut wood carving, and engraved copperware," he added.

Apart from this, the spokesman added that a large number of papier mache artisans are recommended to JKTPO for participation in various J&K and national trade fairs, including IITF at Bharat Mandapam, Suraj Kund Mela in Haryana, Gandhi Shilp Bazaar and other high-profile events.

Dwelling upon the export potential of papier mache products, the spokesman stated that in the last 10 years, artefacts worth 212.06 Cr have been exported to outside destinations from Kashmir. "These figures remain the highest in respect of non-textile crafts in Kashmir Division," he added.

In order to ensure the transition of skill from the master to the budding artisans, the Department has instituted a flagship Karkhanadar Scheme in the department. "The scheme focuses on preserving traditional crafts such as papier mache, walnut wood carving, silver filigree, carpet weaving, Kani shawl weaving, Khatamband, and others like Sozni, tapestry, and engraved copperware," he added.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI (PHE) DEPTT

Ground Water Division Srinagar

Tel./FaxNo: 0194-2411285

Cancellation Corrigendum/Notice

S.No	e-NIT. No & Date	Tender ID No	Name of Work
01	e-NIT No: 30 of 2025-26, Dated: 12-08-2025	2025_PHE_284009_7	Construction of 01 No. 125mm dia, Machine Drilled Hand Pump Tube Well & SITC of Electro mechanical works at Ground Colony Khimber District Srinagar. (Sl. No: 01)
		2025_PHE_284009_8	Construction of 01 No. 125mm dia, Machine Drilled Hand pump Tube Well at Astan Colony Khomkh near Darul-Uloom Sheikh Ali Sarhadi at Khomkh B district Srinagar. (Sl. No: 03)
02	e-NIT No: 41 of 2025-26, Dated: 02-09-2025	2025_PHE_286817_19	Construction of Machine Drilled Hand Pump Operated Bore Well at Ajas Bandipora Near House Of Zahoor Ahmad and Tariq habib and Others in District Bandipora. (Sl. No: 18)
		2025_PHE_288027_3	Installation of Bore wells at different Spots of Chuntwaliwar District Ganderbal. (Sl. No: 01)
03	e-NIT No: 42 of 2025-26, Dated: 11-09-2025	2025_PHE_288027_4	Installation of Bore wells at different Spots of Block Gund District Ganderbal. (Sl. No: 02)
		2025_PHE_293028_30	Construction of Machine Drilled Well with motor and NHO Younis Khan for community benefit at Galan Khiram. (Sl. No: 24)
04	e-NIT No: 48 of 2025-26, Dated: 11-09-2025	2025_PHE_295794_4	Construction of Production Bore Well at Kharbatpora Ratnpora District Pulwama. (Sl. No: 02)
05	e-NIT No: 60 of 2025-26, Dated: 20-11-2025	2025_PHE_299098_2	Construction of (1 No) of 125 mm dia machine drill tube well with motor at SBF Daksum in District Anantnag. (Sl. No: 02)
06	e-NIT No: 70 of 2025-26, Dated: 24-12-2025	2025_PHE_299108_2	Installation of Tube Well at Meeripora Wadar Mohalla near Mohd Iqbal Ganie S/o Ab Rashid Ganie. (Sl. No: 02)
07	e-NIT No: 71 of 2025-26, Dated: 24-12-2025	2025_PHE_299108_2	Installation of Tube Well at Meeripora Wadar Mohalla near Mohd Iqbal Ganie S/o Ab Rashid Ganie. (Sl. No: 02)

Refer to the above mentioned table, In this connection, due to "No Response" the above mentioned works against the various e-NIT's and Tender ID's is hereby cancelled and will be retendered.

No: -JS-PHE/GWDS/25-26/Camp. / 18042-50
Dated: 28-01-2026

DIPK-10506/25
DATED: 31-01-2026

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt.
Ground Water Div. Srinagar.

DC Budgam assesses demarcation of Hokarsar Wetland



KT NEWS DESK

Budgam, Jan 31: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat Saturday conducted an on-site visit to Hokarsar Wetland, a designated Ramsar Site, to personally assess the progress of the ongoing demarcation exercise being carried out by Revenue and allied departments.

During the field visit, the DC took a detailed stock of the demarcation works on ground and reviewed the placement and extension of boundary pillars.

It was informed that a significant portion of the demarcation process has progressed, with boundary pillars being installed/extended (elongated) at multiple identified locations to clearly mark and secure the wetland boundaries.

The DC interacted with the field teams and inspected geo-referenced boundary points, revenue records, and site measurements to ensure that the demarcation is being carried out in a scientific, accurate, and dispute-free manner. He stressed that clear and permanent boundary identification is critical to prevent encroachment, illegal land use, and ecological degradation of this internationally important wetland.

The DC emphasised that Hokarsar Wetland holds immense ecological, environmental, and biodiversity significance, and therefore its protection through proper demarcation is a top priority of the district administration.

He directed the concerned officers to ensure that all boundary pillars are installed strictly as per approved records, satellite mapping, and field verification to avoid any future ambiguity.

The DC further instructed Revenue, Forest, Survey & Land Records, and Police departments to maintain close inter-departmental coordination and ensure that all remaining stretches of the wetland are demarcated in a time-bound, transparent, and technically sound manner. He also directed for regular on-ground monitoring and submission of updated progress reports to the district administration.

The DC stated that robust demarcation will strengthen legal protection of Hokarsar Wetland and support long-term conservation efforts, safeguarding the site from encroachment and ensuring its ecological sustainability for future generations.

Besides SDM west Srinagar Irfan Bahadur, DFO Budgam, NT hqs Budgam and other concerned officials accompanied the DC during his visit.

Anganwadi workers protest, demand wage hike

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jan 31: Anganwadi workers under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) on Saturday staged a protest at Press Enclave here, demanding enhancement of their honorarium, release of pending wages and implementation of pension and gratuity schemes.

Led by their president, the protesting workers raised slogans in support of their demands, urging the government to address their long-pending issues including regularization of services.

"We have been working tirelessly for years but our salaries are meagre and often delayed. We want the government to enhance our honorarium and provide us social security benefits," said Fahmidah, president of the association while speaking with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) on the sideline.

Another protester said despite years of service, their contributions continue to be overlooked. "We are the backbone of the child care system under ICDS, yet our efforts go unrecognised," she said—(KNO)



Shopian residents demand separate mechanical division

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Shopian, Jan 31: Residents of south Kashmir's Shopian district have once again pressed for a separate Mechanical Division, saying continued dependence on an Anantnag-based unit leaves the district crippled after snowfall and reflects years of official apathy toward a long-pending demand.

The district currently depends on a single Mechanical Division based in Anantnag, which caters to the entire south Kashmir region.

Locals allege that due to this arrangement, Shopian is usually the last district to receive snow clearance machinery, resulting in prolonged disruption of normal life.

"Even after a moderate snowfall, our roads remain blocked for two to three days," said Abdul Rashid, a resident of Keller. "Snow clearance machines arrive very late because Shopian does not have its own mechanical division. Patients suffer the most as ambulances cannot reach hospitals on time."

Residents said that interior areas, particularly Keller, Zainapora, Harmain and several outskirts of Shopian town, remain completely cut off whenever snowfall occurs. Link roads, they alleged, are often ignored, forcing people to fend for themselves. Mohammad Yousuf, a shopkeeper from Kapran said locals are compelled to clear snow manually. "People come out with shovels to clear roads on their own. It is shameful that in this day and age, a full-fledged district like Shopian does not have adequate snow clearance machinery," he said.

The lack of a dedicated mechanical division, residents said, has serious economic consequences as well.

"Fruit growers, traders and daily wage workers suffer heavy losses," said Kifayat Ahmad, an apple grower from Shopian. "Markets remain shut for days and transportation comes to a halt. Shopian is one of the most important horticulture districts of Kashmir, yet basic infrastructure is missing."

Women and elderly residents expressed grave concern over medical emergencies during winters. Naseema Begum, a resident of Harmain, said pregnant women and elderly patients are the worst affected. "Many times, patients are carried on foot or on makeshift stretchers because roads are blocked and vehicles cannot reach

our villages," she said.

Residents said the issue resurfaces every winter despite repeated representations and assurances from authorities. "The file for a separate mechanical division has been lying with the government for years," said Ghulam Nabi, a retired employee. "Both locals and concerned departments have been following up on this demand for over a decade, but nothing concrete has been done."

The locals also reacted strongly to the recent statement of the Deputy Chief Minister during his visit to Shopian, where he said that no one had approached him with such a demand. "This is completely incorrect," said several residents. "The Deputy CM must verify records. The demand has been officially raised multiple times, both by the public and by departmental officials."

Residents from the area urged the government to immediately intervene and sanction a separate Mechanical Division for Shopian, equipped with sufficient snow cutters, dozers and manpower. They said only a dedicated division can ensure timely road clearance and spare the people from recurring hardships every winter—(KNO)

Sherpa chairs meeting of revenue officers

KT NEWS DESK

Baramulla, Jan 31: Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa Saturday chaired a meeting of Revenue Officers at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office, Baramulla, to review key administrative and developmental issues related to the revenue sector.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the digitization of revenue records, implementation of the SVAMITVA Scheme, disposal of SRO-43 cases, and preparedness for Census/NPR activities. The DC also reviewed progress on land acquisition cases, land transfer cases of various departments, and the status of DVO/vigilance cases.

Special emphasis was laid on the timely disposal of migrant grievances, both online and offline, ensuring transparency and prompt redressal.

The Deputy Commissioner directed all concerned officers to expedite pending cases, maintain accuracy in records, and ensure strict adherence to timelines. He stressed coordinated efforts among departments to improve service delivery and uphold public trust.

DC Budgam conducts On-Site Assessment of Hokarsar Wetland Demarcation Works (Ramsar Site)

Bandipora Admin reviews Sumlar, Aragam developmental initiatives

KT NEWS DESK

Bandipora, Jan 31: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib on Saturday undertook a tour of Sumlar and Aragam villages to review the status of ongoing and proposed developmental initiatives in the area. During her visit to Sumlar village, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the process for identification of suitable land for the establishment of a receiving station and assessed the related ground-level requirements. She emphasized the need for timely coordination among the concerned departments to ensure smooth and efficient execution of the project.

Later, the Deputy Commissioner visited Aragam Book Village and took stock of the progress achieved under the unique initiative. Situated in a scenic locale, the village's natural beauty offers a serene and inspiring environment for visitors, fostering creativity and thoughtful reflection.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner appreciated the efforts made so far and reiterated the administration's commitment to promoting Aragam as a hub of knowledge, culture, and literary engagement.

ACB charge-sheets officials over land, ration fraud

KNO

Srinagar, Jan 31: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) Jammu on Saturday produced charge-sheets in two separate cases before the Special Judge, Anti-Corruption, Jammu—one related to the illegal transfer of over 196 kanals of state land in Nagrota and another involving fraudulent issuance of ration to 188 non-existent BPL/AAY families in village Khandwal Jammu.

In a statement issued, ACB spokesperson said Anti-Corruption Bureau, Jammu on Saturday produced charge-sheets in two cases before the Hon'ble Court of Special Judge, Anti-Corruption Jammu regarding illegal transfer of huge chunk of state land situated in Nagrota in favour of beneficiaries and issuance of ration in favour of non-existent BPL/AAY families in village Khandwal Jammu respectively.

The statement reads, charge-sheet in case FIR No. 09/2020 u/s 5(1)(d) r/w 5(2) J&K PC Act, 2006 and section 120-B RPC pertaining to the illegal transfer of state land situated in villages Jagti, Nagrota, Dung, Marh and Sutni of Tehsil Nagrota, District Jammu in favour of beneficiaries, in violation of Govt.

"Order No. LB-6/ of 1958 and S-432 of 1966 was produced before the court of Special Judge, Anti-Corruption, Jammu against the accused persons, namely, Rajesh Kumar, then Incharge Tehsildar Nagrota, Riaz Ahmed, then Incharge Patwari Halqa Jagti Nagrota along with other 31 beneficiaries."

It reads, the case pertains to the period 2016 to 2018, during which the then Tehsildar Nagrota, Rajesh Kumar, and Patwari Halqa Jagti,

Riaz Ahmed, in furtherance of a criminal conspiracy, dishonestly conferred proprietary (ownership) rights over State land in favour of private individuals, who were in illegal occupation of the same.

"Investigations conducted by ACB Jammu revealed that the accused public servants, in connivance with the illegal operators/beneficiaries, fraudulently invoked Government Notifications LB-6/C of 1958 and S-432 of 1966, while willfully violating the mandatory conditions and safeguards prescribed under the said notifications," the statement reads.

It reads, as a result, State land measuring 196 Kanal and 10 Marla was illegally transferred to private individuals through 18 unauthorized mutations, the present market value of which is more than rupees 22 crores. These illegal acts resulted in wrongful loss to the State Exchequer and corresponding unlawful gain to the beneficiaries, thereby depriving the Government of valuable State land.

"After completion of investigation, the Anti-Corruption Bureau found sufficient evidence establishing the commission of offences by the accused public servants and private beneficiaries. Accordingly, a charge-sheet has been filed today before the Hon'ble Court of Special Judge, Anti-Corruption, Jammu, which further transferred the same to the Court of Addl. Sessions Judge, Anti-Corruption, Jammu for judicial determination."

The statement further reads, charge-sheet in case FIR No. 16/2011 u/s 5(1)(c)(d) r/w 5(2) J&K PC Act, 2006 and sections 409,

120-B RPC pertaining to the issuance of ration to 188 non-existent BPL/AAY families in village Khandwal, Jammu was produced before the Hon'ble Court of Special Judge, Anti-corruption, Jammu against accused persons, namely, Bhajan Singh, then Tehsil Supply Officer (TSO), Jammu. (2) Miraj-U-Din, then Assistant Director, CA&PD, Rural Jammu. (3) Mohd Rashid, then Patwari Halqa Khandwal, (4) Paramdeep Singh, then Sarpanch Panchayat Khandwal, (5) Dhrub Singh, then Panchayat Khandwal, (6) Harbans Lal, then Ration Dealer Panchayat Khandwal (now expired), (7) Balbir Singh, then Panchayat Khandwal (now expired), (8) Romesh Singh, then Nambardar village Khandwal (now expired) and (9) Ami Chand, then Chowkidar village Khandwal (now expired).

"The instant case came to be registered at P/S VOJ (now ACB) on 10-08-2011, on the basis of a verification conducted by this bureau, into the allegations that in the year, 2004 then Tehsil Supply Officer (TSO), Bhajan Singh and others, in connivance with Harbans Lal and others, misappropriated the ration meant for BPL/AAY families, causing a huge loss amounting to Rs 30,33,326.05 to the State Exchequer, for their pecuniary advantages as the said ration carries a huge subsidy provided by the Government."

"Verification has further revealed that from the year, 2004 to 2010 on the basis of said list of beneficiaries, CA&PD Officers/Officials from time to time without verification of the said list kept on issuing subsidized ration to 165 and 66 families under

"After the completion of investigation of the case as Proved, charge-sheet has been produced against the said above named accused persons for judicial determination," reads the statement further—(KNO)

Police arrest 3 drug peddlers



KNO

Srinagar, Jan 31: Continuing its relentless fight against the drug menace, Police have arrested three drug peddlers in Sopore & Awantipora and recovered contraband substances from their possession.

According to a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), a police party during naka checking at Aftab Mohallah, Warpora crossing intercepted two suspicious persons who tried to flee from the spot but was apprehended tactfully. During search, Charas-like substance was recovered from their possession. They have been identified as Ghulam Nabi Bhat son of Ghulam Mohammad Bhat and Aabid Hussain War son of Mohammad Afzal War, both residents of Warpora, Sopore.

Similarly in Awantipora, during naka checking at Reshipora, a police party led by IC Police Post Reshipora under the supervision of SHO PS Awantipora intercepted a suspicious person. During search, 630 grams of Charas powder like substance was recovered from his possession. He has been identified as Abdul Qayoom Beig son of Ali Mohammad Beig resident of Beigpora.

All the accused have been arrested and shifted to respective police stations where they remain in custody. Accordingly, cases under relevant sections of law have been registered at respective police stations and further investigation have been taken up to ascertain the source and wider linkages involved.

Police reiterate their zero-tolerance policy against drug trafficking and reaffirm their commitment to sustained, intelligence-driven action to protect youth and society from the scourge of drugs. The general public is urged to cooperate and share information to help eradicate the drug menace from the society—(KNO)

Counting What Counts: Strengthening India's National Accounts And Core Economic Statistics

Press Information Bureau

India's statistical system is undergoing a comprehensive modernization to better capture the realities of a fast-changing economy. Over the decade since the last base year (2011-12), the country has seen significant structural shifts, the services sector has expanded rapidly, formalization has increased under the Goods and Services Tax (GST), and digital platforms have transformed business models. These changes created demand for more timely indicators, finer geographic detail, and improved coverage of the informal and services sectors. In response, the Government has initiated coordinated reforms as part of a broader modernization of the national statistical system aimed at strengthening data quality, credibility and policy relevance.

Major reforms under this include the upcoming revision of GDP and price indices base years, improvements in measuring the informal and services economy, enhancements to labour market statistics, cross-cutting innovations in survey methods and technology, and steps to boost transparency through stakeholder engagement.

Together, these reforms are poised to improve the timeliness, granularity and trustworthiness of India's official statistics for evidence-based policymaking.

National Accounts Base Year Revision

Periodic base year updates ensure that GDP and other indices reflect the current economic structure and relative prices, which tend to evolve over time. The base year is revised periodically to better capture the structural changes happening in the economy by updating the methodology of compilation and incorporation of new data sources.

Moreover, rebasing allows adoption of international best practices in methodology as recommended by bodies like the UN Statistical Commission. Aligning with updated global standards ensures that India's statistics remain comparable and methodologically sound in light of new guidance on measuring the digital economy, supply-use tables, etc.

Base Year Revision in Compilation of GDP Series

One of the major reforms has been the revision of the base year for Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimates, from 2011-12 to 2022-23. In the decade since 2011-12, India's economy has transformed drastically, with new industries emerging (e.g. renewable energy, digital services) and changes in consumption patterns and investment behaviour. Such structural changes necessitate rebasing so that metrics like GDP capture true contribution of growing sectors and changes in technology and productivity.

Over the years extensive digitization has also opened up new data sources and incorporating these data into national accounts will improve accuracy and detail. For instance, real-time administrative databases like e-Vahan (vehicle registrations), the Public Financial Management System (PFMS), and the GST system now provide granular economic data.

Rationale for Selecting 2022-23

The year 2022-23 was chosen as the new base because it is the most recent "normal" year after the disruptions of 2019-2021. The years 2019-20 and 2020-21 were significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which temporarily altered consumption patterns and industrial output.

GDP will continue to be compiled using the expenditure and production/ income approaches. While the overall framework remains unchanged, methodological refinements are being introduced in the compilation of economic aggregates under the production/income approaches, in both nominal and real terms, as well as under the expenditure approach.

Revision of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) Base Year

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) provides a comprehensive and timely measure of inflation reflecting the consumption patterns of different population groups. The CPI series will also be revised with a new base year of 2024. This update will use data from the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2023-24 to revise the item basket and expenditure weights so that they reflect current consumption patterns in both rural and urban India. The revision is intended to improve the accuracy and relevance of CPI estimates, strengthen methodological transparency, and support better-informed economic policymaking.

Process of Base Year Revision

The base revision of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) began in early 2023 under the guidance of an Expert Group comprising representatives from RBI, key ministries, academia, and senior government officials.

The revision has followed a structured, multi-stage process, using the HCES 2023-24 sample, including verification of samples, identification of markets and dwellings, and collection of base prices.

Multiple meetings of the Expert Group



have been held to review progress and methodology. Extensive consultations were also conducted with international organisations, including IMF, World Bank, financial institutions, and government bodies, along with the release of discussion papers to invite stakeholder feedback.

Revision of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) Base Year

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is a key indicator that measures how industrial production is changing over time. It is a monthly indicator which reflect the monthly changes in the volume of production of a representative basket of industrial products, with reference to a specified base year. IIP is widely used for economic policy formulation and serves as an important input for estimating the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the manufacturing sector in GDP.

As industries evolve due to technology changes, new products, and structural shifts, the IIP base year needs periodic revision to reflect current industrial realities and landscape. The Government is currently in the process of revising the IIP base year to 2022-23 to incorporate the latest data and improve accuracy. This revision seeks to strengthen the IIP by updating sectoral coverage, revising item weights, improving factory representation, and adopting enhanced methodologies. The update is being aligned with the base year revision of the National Accounts to ensure consistency across major macroeconomic indicators.

Timeline for New Series

The Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI) has announced a clear schedule for releasing the rebased series. The new series of GDP (base year 2022-23) will be released on 27 February 2026. The new series of CPI (base year 2024) to be released on 12 February 2026. The new series of IIP (base year 2022-23) is slated for release on 28 May 2026.

These updates are expected to enhance confidence in official statistics and facilitate better-informed decisions in economic policy, monetary management, and business planning.

Improving Informal and Services Sector

The Government places special emphasis on strengthening the measurement of the informal economy and services sector output, given their substantial contribution to economic output and employment. To enhance the robustness and reliability of estimates, new survey frameworks, pilot studies, and experts consultations have been undertaken.

Strengthening Data on India's Services Sector

Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises

It is conducted to measure the unincorporated non-agricultural sector, which is a major contributor to GDP, a significant source of employment, and a key driver of local entrepreneurship and supply chains.

The services sector is a major pillar of India's economy, contributing 50% of GDP and generating millions of jobs. While the unincorporated segment is covered under the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE), there is a lack of granular data on the economic and operational characteristics, employment, and other related aspects of the incorporated service sector.

This gap in data is primarily due to the

absence of a regular national-level survey covering the various sub-sectors of the incorporated non-agricultural non-manufacturing sectors. To address this gap, the National Statistical Office (NSO) undertook a pilot study for the Annual Survey of Service Sector Enterprises (ASSE). The objective of the pilot study was to assess key operational aspects, including enterprise response, clarity of survey instructions, effectiveness of the questionnaire, and the availability of key data from official records such as books of accounts, profit and loss statements, and labour registers.

Based on the experience and discussions, the ASSE questionnaire has been developed under the overall guidance of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for Enterprise Surveys. The survey aims to capture key indicators such as gross value added (GVA), fixed capital, capital formation, number of persons employed and other important features pertaining to the units belonging to service sector.

Introduction of Quarterly Bulletins on Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (QBUSE)

The Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises has been revamped by enhancing it to incorporate more frequent estimate releases. Starting 2025, Quarterly Bulletins on Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (QBUSE) have been introduced, providing interim results every quarter instead of waiting for an annual report. The quarterly data are intended to capture short-term movements in the sector.

While ASUSE continues to publish detailed annual estimates covering a wider set of financial and non-financial indicators, QBUSE provides quarterly estimates on the scale, composition, and employment profile of unincorporated non-agricultural enterprises using the same framework.

Its introduction reflects NSO's effort to deliver timely and actionable data for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders on one of India's most dynamic economic segments.

Labour Market Statistics Reform (PLFS)

Considering the importance of availability of labour force data at more frequent time intervals, National Statistical Office (NSO) launched Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) in April 2017.

The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is the primary source of official data on labour force participation and employment and unemployment conditions of the population in the country. The survey provides estimates of the key employment and unemployment indicators (viz. Worker Population Ratio, Labour Force Participation Rate, Unemployment Rate). Major reforms were introduced to the PLFS in 2025, marking a shift towards higher-frequency, more granular labour statistics.

Introduction of Monthly Labour Indicators: With effect from January 2025, the PLFS methodology has been revised to generate monthly estimates of key labour market indicators at the national level.

Quarterly Estimates for Rural Areas: Until December 2024, PLFS Quarterly Bulletins presented labour market indicators only for urban areas. With the revision in the PLFS survey methodology, its coverage has been extended to rural areas as well. In addition, state-level estimates are also provided for selected States.

The changes have enhanced the capability to track employment and unemployment trends in near-real time and across both urban and rural areas, supporting evidence-based

interventions for inclusive growth.

Cross-Cutting Data Reforms: Granularity and Digitalization

Beyond specific surveys or indices, MoSPI implemented several cross-cutting reforms in 2025 aimed at strengthening the overall statistical infrastructure. These initiatives address the need for more fine-grained data at local levels and leverage technology to improve survey efficiency, accuracy, and agility.

District as a Statistical Unit

From January 2025, sampling design in National Sample Surveys (NSS) has been modified with a provision for generating district level estimates with district as a basic stratum with an aim to enable data-driven planning at more granular levels. This shift marks a major step towards supporting evidence-based planning and policy formulation at the district and sub-district levels.

The National Sample Survey (NSS) conducts large-scale socio-economic surveys to generate key indicators traditionally available at the national and State/ UT levels.

District, adopted as the basic stratum within each State, enabling generation of quarterly estimates from ASUSE 2025, in addition to the annual results.

District, made the primary geographical unit (basic stratum) in PLFS sample design within each State/ UT, separately for rural and urban sectors.

States are actively participating in PLFS, ASUSE, Domestic Tourism Expenditure Survey (DTES) and Health survey and 27 States have expressed willingness to participate in flagship NSO surveys for 2026-27.

Digital Data Collection and Real-Time Validation

NSS surveys are now conducted using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) through the e-SIGMA platform, which includes in-built validation checks, real-time data submission, multilingual interfaces, and AI-enabled chatbot support. These features have significantly improved data quality and field efficiency.

Stronger survey design: Sampling designs have been strengthened to generate monthly, quarterly, and district-level estimates, increasing the usefulness of NSS data for both local and national planning.

Faster data release: These initiatives have substantially reduced publication delays.

Annual survey results are now released within 90-120 days

Quarterly results are released within 45-60 days, and;

Monthly results are released within 15-30 days of survey completion.

Comprehensive Modular Surveys (CMS)

To meet evolving data requirements and immediate policy needs, MoSPI has undertaken Comprehensive Modular Surveys (CMS) to collect focused information on specific themes within shorter time frames.

CMS on Telecom was conducted during January-March 2025, to generate national-level estimates of telecom and ICT skills related indicators.

CMS on Education was carried out during April-June 2025, to generate national and state level estimates of average expenditure on school education and private coaching during the academic year.

The Forward-Looking Survey on Private Sector Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) was conducted between November 2024 and January 2025, to assess investment intentions of private sector enterprises. This was MoSPI's first survey to engage the corporate sector

Key Takeaways

- Base year for GDP estimates being revised to 2022-23 to reflect new economic structures.
- CPI base year is revised to 2024, updating the consumption basket and weights for both rural and urban households.
- IIP is being revised to 2022-23, aligned with the new national accounts series.
- Informal sector measurement has improved with quarterly QBUSE bulletins.
- District-level estimation has become a core design feature across PLFS, ASUSE, and NSS surveys.
- Public access to official data has been expanded through GoIStats, e-Sankhyiki, and the revamped Microdata Portal, supporting transparency and data reuse.

through a self-administered, web-based platform, using digital tools such as chatbot support to collect structured information on planned capital expenditure.

Data Dissemination Platforms

Complementing improvements in data collection, data dissemination has also been modernized to make official statistics more accessible to the public.

GoIStats Mobile App: Launched in June 2025, the GoIStats mobile application reflects the vision of building an integrated and accessible data ecosystem that enables stakeholders to access official statistics anytime, anywhere.

The app presents major socio-economic indicators through dynamic visualisations, covering metrics such as GDP, inflation, and employment.

Users can directly access NSO datasets, supported by advanced search and filtering tools, comprehensive metadata, and mobile-optimised tables for easy viewing.

e-Sankhyiki Portal: Launched in June 2024, the e-Sankhyiki portal is a comprehensive data platform hosting over 136 million records, 772 indicators, and 18 statistical products across nine thematic areas.

At present, datasets from three Ministries/ Departments, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Labour and Employment, and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, have been onboarded, along with data from the Reserve Bank of India.

Designed in line with global best practices, e-Sankhyiki provides data dissemination through Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), enabling integration with other platforms such as the National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP).

Microdata Access and Other Tools: A revamped Microdata Portal was launched in 2025 serving as a central repository for unit-level data from national surveys and economic censuses and addresses the technological limitations of the earlier system.

Developed in collaboration with the World Bank technology team, the upgraded portal uses a modern and scalable technology framework, ensuring compliance with current security standards while offering a more user-friendly, responsive design and improved data access mechanisms.

88 lakh hits have been recorded on microdata portal since January 2025.

New websites of National Statistical Commission (NSC) and National Statistical Systems Training Academy (NSSTA), Data Innovation Lab Portal, Internship Portal, Metadata Portal have also been launched.

Conclusion

The recent statistical reforms mark a decisive shift in India's statistical system towards greater relevance, responsiveness, and credibility. By updating base years for GDP, CPI, and IIP, strengthening measurement of the informal and services sectors, and transforming labour statistics, the Government has aligned official data more closely with the structure and dynamics of today's economy.

At the same time, various measures have been undertaken to significantly improve data quality, timeliness, and public access. The coordinated rollout of new series and systems reflects a commitment not only to methodological rigor and international best practices, but also to transparency and stakeholder engagement.

These initiatives lay a stronger statistical foundation for evidence-based policymaking, effective decentralised planning, and informed public discourse, ensuring that India's official statistics remain fit for purpose in a rapidly evolving economic landscape.

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

J&K Chief Justice launches orientation on ICT, AI for newly appointed judges

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 31: Under the patronage of Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh (Patron-in-Chief, J&K Judicial Academy), Arun Palli and guidance of Chairperson and members of Governing Committee for J&K Judicial Academy, the Jammu & Kashmir Judicial Academy on Saturday organised a one day orientation programme on "ICT and e-Courts Induction Programme" for the newly recruited Civil Judges (ECT-17-2025)" and "Artificial Intelligence and its Impact on Judiciary" at J&K Judicial Academy, Janjira, Jammu.

The programme, as per an official statement, was inaugurated by the Chief Justice, who in his inaugural address observed that the judiciary is entering a decisive phase where technology and justice delivery are inseparably linked.

Referring to recent observations of the Chief Justice of India, he noted that Artificial Intelligence and digital platforms will increasingly be



used for monitoring case dependency, data analysis and case management.

The Chief Justice emphasised that for officers serving in remote and challenging districts, technology is not merely an aid but a vital instrument to ensure timely and effective justice. Stressing that such programmes are meant to build not only technical proficiency but also institutional understanding, the Chief Justice called upon the officers to adopt technology with confidence and purpose to strengthen the justice delivery system.

In his special address, Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Chairperson, Governing Committee for J&K Judicial Academy, observed that Artificial Intelligence is increasingly being used in the process of adjudication, including as an aid in the drafting of judgments. Justice Rajnesh Oswal remarked that while AI has significant merits and can substantially assist the judicial officers in research, analysis and efficiency, it also carries inherent limitations and demerits.

Emphasising the need for

judicious application, Justice Oswal cautioned that AI should be used profusely as a supportive tool but never as a substitute for human reasoning. He said that the judicial officers must use AI with their own intellect and discernment, without relying solely upon it.

The programme commenced with an introductory address by Naseer Ahmad Dar, Director, J&K Judicial Academy. He highlighted that the objective of the programme was to sensitise the newly recruited Civil Judges to the practical aspects of ICT tools, e-Courts applications and emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence.

M.K. Sharma, Registrar General, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, and Rajeev Gupta, Registrar Vigilance, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, along with other officers of the Registry, also attended the inaugural session.

During the first technical session, Umesh Sharma, Registrar (IT), High Court of J&K and Ladakh, provided an overview of the e-Courts Project, introduced the Case Information

System (CIS) and conducted a practical demonstration of key CIS features relevant to day-to-day judicial functioning.

The second Technical session was conducted by Faizan I Nazar, CPC, e-Courts, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, who deliberated on the rules governing ICT, including e-Filing Rules, Nyay-Shruti Rules, NSTEP and the rules relating to preparation and supply of copies, including e-True Copies of records in the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh.

In the third technical session, Dr. Karnika A. Seth, Advocate, Supreme Court of India, delivered an insightful lecture through virtual mode on "Artificial Intelligence and its Impact on Judiciary", discussing the opportunities, challenges and ethical considerations associated with the use of AI in judicial processes.

The programme concluded with an interactive session and feedback from the participants, followed by a vote of thanks proposed by the Director, J&K Judicial Academy.

National Girl Child Day celebrated at Kulgam, DC presides over function



KT News Desk

KULGAM, JANUARY 31: Kulgam celebrated National Girl Child Day with a grand function held at Conference Hall mini-secretariat and presided over by the Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan.

The function was organised by District Social Welfare Department, Kulgam under the aegis of Mission Shakti Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), aiming to promote awareness about the rights, education, health, safety, and empowerment of the girl child.

Joint Director Planning Malik Subail; ACD, Bilal Ahmad Kamgar; CEO, CMO, DSWO and other officers participated in the programme.

Addressing on the occasion the DC highlighted that girls are excelling and achieving remarkable success across diverse

fields and play a pivotal role in the nation's overall progress and development.

He appreciated the efforts of the Department in organizing the event and emphasized that empowering girls through education and equal opportunities is essential for building a progressive and inclusive society.

On the occasion, appreciation certificates were distributed to meritorious girls and dedicated staff members in recognition of their achievements, commitment, and valuable contributions towards the promotion and protection of girl child rights in the district.

As part of the celebrations, a rally under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao was also organized within the premises of the Mini Secretariat Kulgam to spread the message of gender equality and girl child empowerment.

DC Budgam reviews progress of social security, financial inclusion schemes

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, JANUARY 31: Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat, Saturday chaired a detailed review meeting at the DC Office Complex, Budgam, to assess the implementation of key social security and financial inclusion schemes in the district.

The meeting focused on the progress of flagship schemes including Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), and Atal Pension Yojana (APY), along with a review of ongoing financial inclusion initiatives in the district.

During the meeting, it was informed that 6791 applications have been received under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) while Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) has recorded 48,202 applications in the district. Under Atal Pension Yojana (APY), a total of 854 applications have been received so far.

The overall status of enrolment and outreach under various schemes was reviewed, with emphasis on the need to further expand coverage and reach



underserved and uncovered populations across the district.

While addressing the participants, the DC underscored the critical role of financial protection and social security schemes in providing safety nets to vulnerable sections of society. He expressed concern over gaps in outreach, particularly in rural and remote areas, and stressed the need for enhanced mobilisation efforts.

The DC directed all stakeholders to intensify awareness campaigns and adopt a targeted, block-level strategy to ensure wider participation under all schemes. He instructed for the organisation of village-level camps and enrolment drives with the active involvement of Block Development Officers, Anganwadi Workers, Common Service Centres, and Self Help Groups.

He further directed for strengthened door-to-door Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities to reach unbanked and underbanked households. The DC also instructed for regular monitoring of scheme-wise progress through the Lead District Manager's office, with periodic updates to the DC office.

Emphasising interdepartmental coordination, the DC called for stronger convergence between banks and departments including Social Welfare, Labour, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and Rural Development to ensure coordinated and effective implementation.

The DC reiterated that no eligible beneficiary should be left out of the financial safety net and directed all concerned to treat saturation of social security schemes as a priority governance objective. He stressed the need for renewed momentum through collaborative efforts, reaffirming the District Administration's commitment towards achieving comprehensive financial inclusion across Budgam district.

Sakeena Itoo conducts surprise inspection of GMC Jammu, reviews patient care



KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 31: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo Saturday conducted surprise inspection of Government Medical College (GMC) Jammu and took detailed appraisal of healthcare delivery and patient-centric services at the facility.

During the visit, the Health Minister, as per an official statement, undertook an extensive review of various healthcare facilities within the institution, including emergency wards, in-patient wards, diagnostic units and other critical departments.

She assessed the availability of essential medicines, medical equipment, cleanliness, staff attendance and overall patient care mechanisms.

The Health Minister also interacted with patients and their attendants to obtain first-hand feedback regarding the quality of treatment, availability of doctors, nursing care and other support services available at the hospital.

She keenly listened to their concerns and assured them that the government is committed to address gaps and improve healthcare infrastructure across J&K.

During the visit, Minister Sakeena also interacted with

doctors, paramedical staff and hospital authorities. "Empathy, professionalism and accountability in public healthcare institutions is very important to ensure quality treatment for patients", she stated.

The Minister also directed the hospital administration to ensure timely medical attention for patients, maintaining hygiene standards and upholding patient dignity at all levels. She also laid emphasis on strengthening of grievance redressal mechanisms so that patient issues are resolved promptly.

"Public trust in Government hospitals depends mainly on conduct and compassion of doctors and paramedical staff", Minister Sakeena said.

She further underscored the Government's resolve to upgrade medical facilities and enhance healthcare service delivery across the length and breadth of Jammu and Kashmir.

Principal GMC Jammu, Dr. Ashutosh Gupta; Medical Superintendent GMC Jammu, Medical Superintendent GMC Jammu, Medical Superintendent Super Speciality Hospital and other senior officers of hospital administration GMC Jammu also accompanied the Health Minister during the visit.

From Orchard to Opportunity: The Quiet Revolution in Apple Farming under HADP

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JANUARY 31: Horticulture is not merely an agricultural activity in J&K it is the backbone of the rural economy here. Among its many produce, apple occupies a central place, supporting lakhs of farming families and anchoring allied livelihoods across the length and breadth of the valley and some districts of Jammu region. Yet, despite producing apples renowned for their quality, the economic structure surrounding the crop remained constrained for decades.

Traditionally, the apple economy of Jammu & Kashmir, as per an official statement operated within a narrow and unforgiving window. Harvest season brought urgency rather than opportunity. With limited access to scientific grading, storage or organised marketing, fruit flooded the market in a short span, softening prices. Growers, even those producing premium-quality apples, had little say over when, where or at what value their produce would be sold.

That imbalance is being addressed through the interventions of HADP.

Under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), being implemented by the Agriculture Production Department (APD), the apple sector is being reorganised not as a seasonal activity, but as an integrated value chain, linking planting material, orchard design, post-harvest management and market access into a single economic framework.

The response from growers has

been strong. HADP Project-21, focused on the 'Production of designer plants for high-density plantations and orchard rejuvenation', has received over 10,000 applications, with 4,500 approvals and more than 1,500 units already established across apple-growing districts within the first two years of implementation.

Rebuilding the chain from the root

One of the most consequential changes under HADP is taking place at the very beginning of the apple lifecycle, often out of public view. In several parts of south Kashmir, traditional nursery growers, once operating at small and informal scales, have transitioned into integrated propagation enterprises. Rootstock banks, mother orchards and modern nursery units are now supplying large volumes of uniform, disease-free planting material, supporting both orchard rejuvenation and high-density plantations.

In one such instance, a nursery operator who earlier served a limited local market now supplies rootstocks, budwood and "designer" apple plants at volumes sufficient to support commercial orchards across multiple districts. The significance lies not merely in individual enterprise growth, but in what it enables—uniform orchards, predictable yields, faster adoption of modern planting systems and reduced long-term risk for growers.

When design matters more than land

The economic impact of this shift becomes most visible inside



the orchard. High-density apple plantations promoted under HADP are demonstrating that productivity is no longer determined by landholding size alone. In central Kashmir, growers who earlier cultivated apples across hundreds of kanals under traditional systems are now reporting higher annual returns from a fraction of that land under high-density plantations.

Uniform tree structure, consistent output, consistent fruit size and improved quality are reshaping labour use, input efficiency and income outcomes.

Gradually, this experience is influencing how growers evaluate their orchards by shifting the focus from how much land is under apples to how that land is designed, managed and connected to the market.

Capturing value after harvest

If orchard design determines potential, post-harvest systems

& Kashmir dispatched its first railway-borne apple consignment from the Valley marking a structural expansion in market access and reducing dependence on road-based movement alone.

From infrastructure to intelligence

Infrastructure alone does not change outcomes unless matched by information. Recognising this, HADP has embedded market and risk intelligence into the apple value chain through the Kisan Khidmat Ghar (KKG) digital ecosystem.

Growers now have access to live mandi prices from major terminal markets, enabling them to track price movements in real time rather than rely on delayed or informal channels. An apple price forecasting model offers early indications of likely price trends by variety and grade, helping growers and entrepreneurs plan harvesting, grading, storage and sale strategies more effectively.

The same platform is being used to anticipate production risks. Disease and pest forecasting, covering scab and key insect pests, is linked to local weather data, enabling orchard management to shift from post-damage response to timely, preventive action. This improves fruit quality while reducing avoidable losses and unnecessary input costs.

Parallel investments in controlled-atmosphere (CA) storage and refrigerated transport are giving growers greater flexibility over market timing. Decisions that were once driven by compulsion at harvest are increasingly shaped by demand trends and price signals.

This transition has been reinforced by improved logistics connectivity. In 2025, Jammu

growers can see, interpret and act upon.

Improved access to real-time market information has also coincided with a sharp rise in participation on national trading platforms. E-NAM transaction values in Jammu & Kashmir have increased from 14 lakh in 2020-21 to over 670 Cr in the current financial year, reflecting deeper integration with national markets.

Lower costs, safer produce

Alongside market reforms, HADP is addressing growing consumer concerns around pesticide use through targeted interventions aimed at cost and risk reduction. Model orchards are being developed to demonstrate how improved canopy management, precise spraying techniques and need-based application can significantly reduce chemical use without compromising yield or quality.

Early results indicate that pesticide costs can be lowered while maintaining productivity by offering growers an economic incentive to adopt safer practices.

Officials emphasise that the focus is not on certification or labels, but on demonstrating cost advantages that can be replicated widely across apple-growing regions.

From transactions to decisions

What ultimately connects these interventions is a shift in decision-making. Growers who once reacted to the market are increasingly able to plan by choosing when to harvest, whether to grade, whether to store and when to sell. This change is being reinforced through structured

skilling and advisory systems that promote enterprise thinking rather than subsidy dependence.

The result is a gradual but meaningful transfer of control back to producers and local enterprises.

A system taking shape

Individually, none of these interventions is entirely new. What is unprecedented is their alignment. Nursery systems feed modern orchards; orchards supply uniform fruit; grading and storage enable quality-based pricing; and logistics reduce movement risk.

With apple production exceeding 21 lakh metric tonnes annually, even modest improvements in grade distribution and market timing carry substantial economic impact. More importantly, they build resilience by helping growers absorb shocks and price volatility with greater confidence. Notably, practices such as high-density plantations and improved post-harvest handling are increasingly being adopted even without government subsidy, indicating that their economic logic is beginning to stand on its own.

The apple economy of Jammu & Kashmir is still evolving, but its direction is now clear. By addressing long-standing constraints across the value chain, HADP is steering the sector away from distress-driven outcomes towards more deliberate and informed participation in the market.

That shift is visible in nurseries, orchards and grading floors across the region marking the much anticipated transformation currently underway.

With 'mother of all deals' in bag, Goyal says she will be compassionate, fair to all 28 children

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 31: The trade agreement between India and the EU is likely to double the country's exports to Europe in five years, and this "mother" will be "compassionate and loving", ensuring that all her 28 children gain from the pact, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday.

The two sides announced the conclusion of negotiations for the pact on January 27. It is likely to be implemented this year itself, creating a free market of 2 billion people in India and 27 European Union countries.

The free trade agreement has been widely described at top levels as the "mother of all deals".

Asked if the mother will be strict or lenient, Goyal said: "Neither... This mother is going to be compassionate, this mother is going to be loving, and this mother is going to make sure that both her children and, for that matter, the 27 nations of Europe and India, all 28 children will enjoy the fruits of this free trade agreement".

India already has a trade surplus in exports of both goods and services to the European Union, he added.

Now, with 99 per cent of India's exports set to get duty-free access from day one of the implementation of the pact, the country's outbound shipments are likely to double in five years, Goyal told PTI Videos in an interview.

The duty-free entry for domestic firms in Europe will give a big fillip to many sectors, such as leather goods, sportswear, toys, and marine products.

India's bilateral trade in goods



with the EU was USD 136.53 billion in 2024-25 (exports worth USD 75.85 billion and imports worth USD 60.68 billion), making the EU India's largest goods trading partner. India's services exports stood at USD 46 billion.

The EU market accounts for about 17 per cent of India's total exports, and the bloc's exports to India constitute 9 per cent of its total overseas shipments.

"I could easily see a doubling of exports," Goyal said.

He appealed to domestic businesses to "seize" the opportunity, increase investments, expand capacities, and get out of the cosy comfort of the large and huge domestic market.

He was replying to a question about whether the EU's strict safety and quality standards could pose challenges for Indian exporters.

Meeting the EU's standards will not be challenging as domestic exporters have the capability, wherewithal, and knowledge.

"All we need to do is expand capacities, we need to get out of the cosy comfort of this large, huge domestic market and look for outward markets, which we are opening up through these various trade deals, particularly

in developed nations where you get a good price, where there's no competition, because we are largely exporting labour-oriented goods and services," he said.

The EU mainly exports innovative products which are needed by India in its development cycle, the minister said, adding that the two complement each other.

"So, it's a very calibrated opening, wherever there could be a potential for a competition going forward as we also go up the development cycle, we've kept longer transition period for Indian industry to be competitive," he said, adding that at the end of the day, "while we have business to look after, we have 140 crore consumers also to look after".

Consumers are the largest stakeholders in the FTA with the EU, and goods need to become cheaper for them, he added.

"So, it's a very fine balance one has to create and develop, particularly where there's fair play, where there's no predatory pricing or dumping of overcapacity in your economy. I think equal opportunities on both sides will ensure the balance," Goyal said.

Indian bakers, confectioners,

fruit juice makers and processed meat producers should not worry and, in fact, start looking at the high-paying large European market, the minister said.

On concerns over the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), Goyal said there are adequate safeguards in the trade agreement.

"First of all, it must be noted that CBAM applies to everybody. All domestic producers in Europe also have to pay the same taxes as people who export to Europe. You could almost consider it like a GST. Like we have GST on domestic as well as on imports, they have a CBAM on everybody. So, it's not a discriminatory tax," he said.

He added that the FTA is about the future.

"As I said earlier, we may be today 30-40 per cent more carbon intensive, but the speed at which we are going green is so fast that the same thing will become a competitive advantage for our manufacturers."

The minister said Europe has plans to invest USD 800 billion in the next five years on defence, and for that, they may need skilled labour from India, or they will bring their technologies here to manufacture in the country.

"So, this will open up a very comprehensive, multifarious dimension between the two countries," he said.

Asked when the 'father of all deals' will be finalised, a reference to a deal with the United States, the minister said India is working towards closing it "quickly", as "good negotiations" are happening.

On India's exports target of USD 2 trillion, he expressed hope that it can be achieved by 2032.

mechanism would pose challenges for the Indian steel sector, which is more carbon-intensive than the global average, the minister said there were two aspects to the issue, noting that CBAM would apply even without a free trade agreement and that the pact provides additional safeguards, including the presence of verifiers in India.

On concerns over the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), Goyal said there are adequate safeguards in the trade agreement.

"If we feel that we are being discriminated, or it's hurting our exports in any way, or any new sectors are coming in (under this regulation), we can talk to Europe and rebalance to make sure our exporters don't get hurt, or the benefits of FTA don't get hurt," he said.

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Delegations call on LG Sinha



KT News Desk

Jammu, Jan 31: Baldev Raj Sharma, Member of Legislative Assembly from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Constituency called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday.

Representatives of Mata Bhaderkali Asthapan Trust Thalwal led by its President

Dileepji Pandita also called on the Lieutenant Governor.

Vibodh Gupta, former MLC and senior BJP leader also called on LG Sinha. Munish Sharma, senior BJP leader also called on Manoj Sinha. Aftab Malik, Chairman, District Development Council Srinagar called on the Lieutenant Governor.

Expect warmer February, rain over Himalayas declining: IMD

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 31: India is expected to witness a warmer February with below normal rains, particularly in the Himalayan region where a drier winter can be linked to climate change, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Saturday.

Further, the minister said Europe has plans to invest USD 800 billion in the next five years on defence, and for that, they may need skilled labour from India, or they will bring their technologies here to manufacture in the country.

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particularly in northwest and central India.

"Crops like wheat and barley may experience forced maturity, leading to sterile spikelets and chaffy grains, resulting in yield reduction," the top meteorologist said.

He said that monthly rainfall in February over Northwest India -- comprising East Uttar Pradesh, West Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh -- is most likely to be below normal.

The absence of western disturbances in December and most of January, he said, had resulted in drier winters in the western Himalayan region, which experienced snowfall only after January 20.

CONT'D. FROM FRONT PAGE

Ruling alliance

on Sunday or Monday to discuss its strategy for the session.

"We will hold a meeting of MLAs after they arrive here," senior-most PDP MLA and Kupwara representative Mir Muhammad Fayaz told KNO.

The Budget Session is likely to be stormy, with divided opposition parties-the BJP, PDP, PC, and others-set to corner the government on issues ranging from the regularization of daily-wagers to the pre-election promises of the NC. (KNO)

LG, CM extend

that Guru Ravidas Ji's teachings of equality, social justice and universal brotherhood continue to inspire generations and remain profoundly relevant in today's times.

He said that the life and philosophy of Guru Ravidas Ji emphasised compassion, harmony and respect for human dignity, and called upon people to imbibe these values in their daily lives to build a just and inclusive society.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah wished happiness, peace and prosperity to all on the occasion.

J&K mulls

presently cancer care in J&K is largely managed through general health programmes, tertiary hospitals, and referral systems outside the UT.

However, experts believe that the substance of a dedicated, structured cancer policy has resulted in delayed diagnosis, inadequate screening in some cases and over dependence on treatment facilities outside the J&K.

"A comprehensive cancer policy is the need of the hour. It will help in streamlining diagnostic infrastructure, improving access to treatment and ensuring palliative care at the grassroots level," said an oncologist.

He said that policy must place strong emphasis on preventive healthcare and early detection, including population based screening programmes for common cancers.

"Early detection can save lives and significantly reduce treatment costs and the policy must aim to integrate cancer screening into primary healthcare services especially in rural and remote areas," he said.

The new policy, according to the official, is expected to address the infrastructure gaps, including the expansion of oncology departments in government medical colleges, setting up of district level diagnostic facilities and improving availability of new cancer related facilities and treatments.

Doctors said that there is financial and emotional burden of cancer on families and there is need for financial assistance, psychological support and palliative care and rehabilitation services for patients and survivors and these all things need to be addressed.

They hoped that this step will significantly strengthen cancer care in the region and if implemented effectively, a well designed cancer policy can transform the way cancer is prevented and treated in Jammu and Kashmir.

Pertinently, Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing a worrying rise in cancer cases, with official figures revealing that an average of 38 new detections every day.

As per Union Health Ministry data, J&K recorded 14,112 cancer cases in 2024 alone, taking the total number of reported cases over the past five years to 67,037.

In 2020, J&K registered 12,726 cancer cases, followed by 13,060 in 2021. The number climbed further to 13,395 in 2022 and 13,744 in 2023 before reaching 14,112 in 2024. (KNO)

BRO breaks record

had been closed as a precautionary measure after fresh snowfall between January 22 and 27 blocked the stretch.

The BRO teams began clearance operations once weather conditions improved, and traffic was gradually restored from the Kargil side.

Authorities advised motorists to carry anti-skid chains and exercise caution due to slippery conditions.

In another major achievement, the BRO restored connectivity along the 112-kilometre Kishtwar-Sansari road, linking Doda's Kishtwar Valley with Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul-Spiti region.

A BRO spokesperson said the 118 Road Construction Company of the 35 Border Roads Task Force, under Project Sampark, cleared nearly 3.5 feet of snow within 72 hours, reopening the high-altitude route well ahead of its typical April-May schedule.

For the first time since assuming responsibility for the Mughal Road from Jammu and Kashmir's R&B Department, the BRO launched unprecedented snow-clearance operations during the ongoing Chilai Kalaan.

Teams of the 56 RCC cleared avalanches at Razdan Pass and other high-altitude stretches, raising hopes that the historic route may reopen much earlier than in previous years.

Similarly, the Bandipora-Gurez road, another crucial lifeline for North Kashmir, witnessed swift snow and avalanche clearance by BRO teams.

Officials said that despite extreme winter conditions, operations along this route progressed rapidly, restoring access and ensuring safe passage for local commuters.

The BRO's record-breaking winter operations this year have ensured uninterrupted inter-state and intra-state connectivity across Jammu and Kashmir at a pace rarely seen before.

The restoration of roads connecting Srinagar, Kargil, Doda, Kishtwar, and the northern frontier marks a significant achievement in maintaining strategic mobility during severe winter conditions. (KNO)

Chilai Khurd begins

He said that a famous ski resort in North Kashmir, Gulmarg recorded the lowest temperature in the Union Territory at minus 6.5 degrees Celsius, improving from minus 10.6 degrees Celsius a night earlier.

Pahalgam in south Kashmir recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.6 degrees Celsius, up from minus 5.3 degrees Celsius on the previous night.

Qazigund registered a low of minus 2.2 degrees Celsius, while Kokernag and Kupwara recorded minimum temperatures of minus 3.0 degrees Celsius and minus 2.5 degrees Celsius, respectively, the official said.

Chilai Khurd, which lasts for 20 days, is followed by Chilai Bachha, a 10-day phase

marking the final part of winter in the Valley.

The weather office forecast generally cloudy conditions with the possibility of light to moderate rain or snowfall, particularly in higher reaches, along with thunder or gusty winds at several places on January 31 and February 1 across Jammu and Kashmir.

For February 2 and 3, the department predicted generally cloudy weather with light rain or snowfall in higher altitude areas at scattered to many places.

From February 4 till the evening of February 6, partly cloudy weather is expected, while February 7 may see generally cloudy conditions with light rain or snow at a few places.

Dry weather has been forecast from February 8 to February 10, the official added.

An advisory has been issued for farmers, asking them to suspend agricultural activities till February 7 in view of the prevailing and expected weather conditions.

Authorities have also advised people living in avalanche-prone areas to remain cautious while moving outside.

Travellers and transporters have been asked to check the status of the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway with traffic department control rooms before undertaking journeys.

The Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority said an avalanche with a medium danger level is likely to occur above 2,400 metres in Bandipora district during the next 24 hours and urged people to avoid avalanche-prone zones and follow official advisories. (KNO)

JKCC introduces

generate and avail ski passes from the comfort of their homes.

Director Tourism Kashmir, Syed Qamar Sajad, while speaking to news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), highlighted the surging momentum in tourist footfall at the Gondola cable car system. "The recent snowfall has significantly contributed to this boost", he said, attributing the uptick to favorable weather conditions.

However, the director said that there is a need for collaborative efforts across stakeholders to further promote tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. "This requires joint initiatives from the government, Tourism Department, local communities and industry stakeholders", he added.

Regarding key infrastructure gaps at high-altitude points, the Director said the long-standing issue of no washroom facilities at Kongdori will be resolved in the coming days, with the structure made fully functional soon. Within this month, similar amenities will be operational at Affarwut, he assured.

On demands for a separate Jammu state, floated by some BJP circles, he firmly opposed division. "We have always wanted to be a complete state (Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh). They are doing the politics of breaking", Wani said, while invoking J&K's historical harmony praised by Mahatma Gandhi and rejecting communal divisions.

"National Conference remains committed to unity, peace and inter-community friendship," he added.

On the sub-committee report on reservations, Nasir said, "The same has been approved by the Cabinet and forwarded to the Lieutenant Governor. We are waiting further action."

Budget for world's fastest-growing major economy: Key numbers to be watched

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 31: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present her record 9th straight Budget, and all eyes will be on the much-awaited customs reforms.

Sitharaman had, in her first Budget in 2019, replaced the leather briefcase – which had been in use for decades for carrying Budget documents – with a traditional 'bahi-khata' wrapped in red cloth. This year's budget will be in paperless form, as done in the last four years.

Here are the key numbers to watch out for in the Union Budget for 2025-26:

* **Fiscal Deficit:** The budgeted fiscal deficit, which is the difference between the government expenditure and income, for the current fiscal (April 2025 to March 2026 or FY26), is estimated at 4.4 per cent of GDP.

Having achieved a fiscal consolidation roadmap with a deficit below 4.5 per cent of GDP in FY26, markets will keenly watch for direction on debt-to-GDP reduction in the FY27 Budget, as well as whether the government will provide a specific fiscal deficit

number for the next financial year. There is an expectation that the government could announce a fiscal deficit of 4 per cent of the GDP for FY27.

* **Capital Expenditure:** The government's planned capital expenditure for this fiscal year is budgeted at Rs 11.2 lakh crore. The government is likely to maintain its focus on capital expenditure in the upcoming Budget, with a 10-15 per cent increase in the capex target from the current level, as private sector players remain cautious.

The government would have space for capex, and it should be in excess of Rs 12 lakh crore, as the pay revision will be announced in FY28, leaving little room for others.

* **Debt Roadmap:** The finance minister, in her 2024-25 budget speech, had stated that from 2026-27 onwards, fiscal policy would endeavour to maintain the fiscal deficit in a way that the central government debt is on a declining path as a percentage of GDP.

Markets will closely look for the debt consolidation roadmap from FY27 onwards to see when the finance minister sees general government debt-to-GDP fall to



the 60 per cent target. The general government debt-to-GDP ratio was 85 per cent in 2024, which included central government debt of 57 per cent.

* **Borrowing:** The government's gross borrowing Budget was Rs 14.80 lakh crore in FY26. The government borrows from the market to fund its fiscal deficit. The borrowing number will be watched

by the market as it gives a sense of the fiscal health of the country, and also about revenue and non-revenue collection.

* **Tax Revenue:** The 2025-26 Budget had pegged gross tax revenue at Rs 42.70 lakh crore, an 11 per cent growth over FY25. This includes Rs 25.20 lakh crore estimated to come from direct taxes (personal income tax + corporate

tax), and Rs 17.5 lakh crore from indirect taxes (customs + excise duty + GST).

* **GST:** Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection in 2025-26 is estimated to rise 11 per cent to Rs 11.78 lakh crore. FY27 GST revenue projections will be closely watched, as the revenue growth is expected to gain momentum with the government's implementation of rate reductions since September 2025.

* **Nominal GDP:** India's nominal GDP growth (real GDP plus inflation) in FY26 was estimated to be 10.1 per cent, while the real GDP growth estimated by NSO is 7.4 per cent. However, nominal GDP has been revised downward to 8 per cent due to inflation falling below the estimation during the Budget.

FY27 nominal GDP growth projections in the Budget will give an idea about the inflation trajectory in the next fiscal. As per the various estimates, the government may announce a nominal GDP between 10.5 and 11 per cent for FY27.

* **Spotlight:** would also be on spending on key schemes like G RAM G, as well as key sectors like health and education.

Indian Coast Guard to observe 50th Raising Day today



PTI

New Delhi, Jan 31: The Indian Coast Guard (ICG), established in 1977 with just seven surface platforms, has evolved into a "formidable maritime force" comprising 155 ships and 80 aircrafts, officials said on Saturday.

The ICG will observe its 50th Raising Day with an event here on Sunday, marking five decades of dedicated, selfless service to the nation, they said.

Raised on February 1, 1977, the ICG was envisioned to address emerging maritime challenges and safeguard India's expanding marine interests.

"From its humble beginnings in 1977 with just seven surface platforms, the ICG has evolved into a formidable maritime force comprising 155 ships and 80 aircrafts today," the ICG said.

By 2030, the ICG is "poised to achieve its target force levels of 200 surface platforms and 100 aircrafts, firmly establishing itself among the world's premier coast guard services," it said.

Since its inception, the organisation has "rescued over 11,800 lives", forging a legacy defined by compassion and courage, earning recognition as the enduring 'Saviours at Sea', a senior ICG official said.

Headquartered in Delhi, the force maintains vigil over 20.1 lakh sq km of India's Exclusive Economic Zone and 11,098.01 km of coastline, the ICG said in a statement. From modest origins, it has grown into a powerful, versatile, and highly respected force entrusted with maritime law enforcement, coastal security, search and rescue, marine environmental protection, and humanitarian aid, officials said.

From close coordination with the Indian Navy during Operation Sindoar to daring rescue operations in Lakshadweep and the firm handling of three major maritime incidents off the Kerala coast in recent months, the ICG has demonstrated preparedness across the full spectrum of maritime contingencies, they said. With extensive deployment of ships and aircrafts, coupled with high-tech electronic

surveillance, the Coast Guard's persistent presence at sea reassures the maritime community and deters transgressions, they added.

Aligned with the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India', the ICG is steadily moving towards self-reliance through induction of indigenously-built ships, aircrafts, helicopters, and advanced surveillance systems, while simultaneously prioritising infrastructure development and personnel welfare, the statement said.

The ICG said it also "remains firmly committed to gender neutrality and inclusivity, ensuring equal opportunities for women across seagoing, aviation, and shore-based roles, and fostering a professional environment defined by respect, merit, and mutual trust".

Guided by the prime minister's vision of 'Amrit Kaal' and anchored in the doctrines of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), the ICG forms a key pillar of India's maritime resurgence, promoting security, growth, cooperation, and collective prosperity across the oceans, it said.

In this evolving era, India's seas are not merely frontiers to be guarded, but "pathways of partnership, progress, and shared destiny", the ICG added.

On the global stage, the ICG strengthens maritime partnerships through humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions and capacity-building initiatives, the force said, adding that the unanimous decision to hand over presidency of 50th Coast Guard Global Summit to ICG in 2025 stands as a recognition of India's growing maritime leadership.

Ahead of the 50th Raising Day, the President of India, the vice-president, prime minister, and the defence minister, have extended regards to all ranks to the ICG, commanding its remarkable achievements and acknowledging its vital role in safeguarding India's maritime interests, it said.

Filmmaker meets UP CM, seeks tax-free status for movie on cow protection

PTI

Lucknow, Jan 31: The producer-director of the film 'Godan', centred on cow protection and its significance, paid a courtesy visit on Saturday to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath here, during which the trailer of the film was launched.

An official statement said the film highlights cow conservation, the role of cows in Indian culture and a scientific outlook based on panchgavya (a mixture derived from five cow products).

Producer-director Vinod Chaudhary expressed hope that the film would be made tax-free, saying it was meant for all sections of society, especially the youth.

He said Uttar Pradesh has witnessed the most extensive and ground-level work on cow protection in the country, attributing it to the chief minister's "clear vision and committed leadership".

He said after Adityanath assumed office, action against cattle smugglers was intensified across the state, leading to large-scale arrests. Chaudhary also referred to the "establishment of over 7,500 cow shelters in the past nine years and protection of more than 12 lakh destitute cattle".

Cow protection committees have been formed in every district, with district magistrates and senior superintendents of police designated as nodal officers, the statement said.

Godan, produced and directed by Chaudhary, is scheduled for a nationwide release on February 6. The filmmaker briefed the chief minister about the film's theme, objectives and social message, describing it as a document reflecting cow protection, Indian culture, scientific awareness and social

guidelines.

Given the Shah claimed.

The home minister also alleged that the TMC government fuelled tension among communities in West Bengal, alleging that no other administration in the country was as corrupt as the Mamata Banerjee-led regime.

Addressing a meeting of BJP workers in Siliguri, he also accused the state government of obstructing border security measures, and failing to provide land to the BSF for fencing along the international boundary. "I had stated in Parliament that the BSF needs land for fencing. I wrote to Mamata Banerjee seven times. I even personally went to her office, yet it was not

TMC govt in West Bengal most corrupt in India: Amit Shah



PTI

Siliguri, Jan 31: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday slammed the TMC government in West Bengal, alleging that no other administration in the country was as corrupt as the Mamata Banerjee-led regime.

Predicting an electoral storm, Shah said the BJP would "sweep all the seats in north Bengal" in the forthcoming assembly elections, claiming that people were fed up with the "syndicate raj and corruption" of the TMC.

He also accused state officers of not cooperating with the Election Commission in conducting the SIR.

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He also accused state officers of not cooperating with the Election Commission in conducting the SIR.

Foreign ministers of Arab countries call on Modi

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 31: Foreign Ministers of Arab countries on Saturday called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who appreciated their role in supporting peace and stability in West Asia.

The foreign ministers of Arab nations are in New Delhi for the second India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

Modi highlighted the deep and historic people-to-people ties between India and the Arab world, which have continued to inspire and strengthen the relations between the two sides over the years, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

The prime minister

outlined his vision for the India-Arab partnership in the years ahead and reaffirmed India's commitment to further deepen cooperation in trade and investment, energy, technology, healthcare and other priority areas, for the mutual benefit of the people of the two sides, it said.

"The prime minister reiterated India's continued support for the people of Palestine and welcomed ongoing peace efforts, including the Gaza peace plan," the statement said.

Modi conveyed his appreciation for the important role played by the Arab League in supporting efforts towards regional peace and stability, it said.

NCP submits letter on Sunetra Pawar's election as legislature party leader to CM Fadnavis



PTI

Mumbai, Jan 31: The NCP, a constituent of the Mahayuti government in Maharashtra, on Saturday submitted a letter on the election of Sunetra Pawar, wife of late Ajit Pawar, as its legislature party leader to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

Sunetra Pawar is set to take oath as the Deputy Chief Minister of the state, replacing Ajit Pawar, who died in a plane crash on Wednesday.

Senior NCP leaders,

including Praful Patel, Sunil Tatkare and Chagan Bhujbal, met CM Fadnavis at 'Varsha', latter's official residence in south Mumbai, and handed over the letter to him.

Fadnavis will forward the letter to Governor Acharya Devvrat.

Sunetra Pawar was elected the NCP's legislature party leader during a meeting held in Mumbai on Saturday afternoon.

Governor Devvrat is scheduled to administer the oath of office and secrecy to her at 5 pm on Saturday.

Sleep well, cut belly fat to reduce breast cancer risk

TOI HEALTH



New Delhi, Jan 31: In India, the annual rise in breast cancer cases among women is alarmingly pegged at 6%, a trend largely influenced by inadequate sleep, relentless stress, and rising obesity.

This signals a worrying shift where younger women are increasingly affected. Experts urge the importance of proactive education and risk-based screening that goes beyond traditional mammography.

Breast cancer cases among Indian women are rising by 6% a year, according to a recent ICMR study. Poor sleep, chronic stress and rising central obesity are the key risk factors. Dr Shubham Garg, director of Surgical Oncology at Dharamshala Narayana Hospital, Delhi speaks to Anuja Jaiswal about how lifestyle and metabolic shifts are reshaping risk, why younger women are getting affected, and what they can do to minimise risk.

How strong is the evidence linking disrupted sleep to breast cancer risk in Indian women?

The evidence is steadily strengthening. Recent findings from National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research add Indian data to global research

linking disrupted sleep and circadian rhythm disturbance to breast cancer risk. Poor sleep affects melatonin secretion, estrogen regulation, immune surveillance and DNA repair. While it is not a standalone cause, it increases vulnerability when combined with obesity, chronic stress, sedentary behaviour and urban lifestyles – factors now common among Indian women, especially in cities.

Is poor sleep now a risk factor or a par with family history or age? Poor sleep does not match non-modifiable factors like age or genetic predisposition, which remain the strongest predictors. However, it is emerging as one of the most important modifiable risk factors. Clinically, many women without a family history present with breast cancer after

prolonged sleep deprivation, night-shift work, high stress and metabolic dysfunction. It now forms a crucial part of comprehensive risk assessment.

Why does central obesity raise breast cancer risk more than overall body weight, especially after menopause?

Central obesity reflects excess visceral fat, which is biologically more active than peripheral fat.

It produces inflammatory cytokines, promotes insulin resistance and increases estrogen production. After menopause, adipose tissue becomes the primary source of estrogen, fuelling hormone-receptor-positive breast cancers. Waist circumference correlates more strongly with risk than overall weight and signals chronic inflammation and

metabolic stress.

Can lifestyle changes actually reduce breast cancer risk?

Lifestyle changes cannot eliminate risk but can significantly reduce it. Better sleep restores circadian rhythm, melatonin levels and immune function. Stress control lowers prolonged cortisol exposure, which otherwise drives inflammation and hormonal imbalance. Reducing central obesity lowers estrogen production, improves insulin sensitivity and decreases inflammatory markers. These changes also improve outcomes and reduce recurrence risk in women already treated.

How does chronic stress affect tumour biology?

Chronic stress raises cortisol levels, suppressing immune surveillance and reducing the body's ability to eliminate abnormal cells. It promotes systemic inflammation, alters glucose metabolism and disrupts estrogen pathways – factors that support tumour initiation and progression. Over time, this creates a biological environment favourable for cancer development.

Why is breast cancer appearing at younger ages in India? Do risk drivers differ from western countries?

Breast cancer is increasingly being diagnosed in women aged 35-50 years. This shift is linked to sedentary lifestyles, central obesity, poor sleep, chronic stress, delayed childbirth and reduced breastfeeding, which are also breast cancer risk drivers in the West. While genetics still matter, these modifiable factors are accelerating risk at younger ages, highlighting the need for earlier awareness and risk-based screening. Besides, Indian women often face delayed diagnosis. Prevention must, therefore, go beyond mammography to include lifestyle education, metabolic health, stress management and sleep hygiene, supported by community-level counselling.

How should women delaying childbirth interpret these findings?

With perspective, not fear. Delayed childbirth slightly increases lifetime estrogen exposure, which may modestly raise risk but cancer is not inevitable. Many women delay pregnancy for valid personal and professional reasons. Risk can be mitigated through healthy lifestyle choices, regular physical activity, weight control, good sleep, breastfeeding when possible and appropriate screening.

UK PM Starmer seeks to bolster China ties despite Trump warning

AFP

Shanghai, Jan 31: Visiting Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Friday Britain has a "huge amount to offer" China, after his bid to forge closer ties prompted warnings from US President Donald Trump.

Starmer's trip is the first to China by a British prime minister in eight years, and follows in the footsteps of other Western leaders looking to counter an increasingly volatile United States.

Leaders from France, Canada and Finland have flocked to Beijing in recent weeks, recoiling from Trump's bid to seize Greenland and tariff threats against NATO allies.

Trump warned on Thursday it was "very dangerous" for Britain to be dealing with China.

Starmer brushed off those comments on Friday, noting that Trump was also expected to visit China in the months ahead.

"The US and the UK are very close allies, and that's why we discussed the visit with his team before we came," Starmer said in an interview with UK television.

"I don't think it is wise for the UK to stick its head in the sand. China is the second-largest economy in the world," he said.

Asked about Trump's comments on Friday, Beijing's foreign ministry said "China is willing to strengthen cooperation with all countries in the spirit of mutual benefit and win-win results."

Starmer met top Chinese leaders, including President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, on Thursday, with both sides highlighting the need for closer ties.

He told business representatives from Britain and China



on Friday that both sides had "warmly engaged" and "made some real progress."

"The UK has got a huge amount to offer," he said in a short speech at the UK-China Business Forum at the Bank of China.

The meetings the previous day provided "just the level of engagement that we hoped for," Starmer said.

He signed a series of agreements on Thursday, with Downing Street announcing Beijing had agreed to visa-free travel for British citizens visiting China for under 30 days, although Starmer acknowledged there was no start date for the arrangement yet.

The Chinese foreign ministry said only that it was "actively considering" the visa deal and would "make it public at an appropriate time upon completing the necessary procedures."

Starmer hailed the

agreements as "symbolic of what we're doing with the relationship." He also said Beijing had lifted sanctions on UK lawmakers targeted since 2021 for their criticism of alleged human rights abuses against China's Muslim Uyghur minority.

"President Xi said to me that that means all parliamentarians are welcome," Starmer said in an interview with UK television.

He traveled from Beijing to economic powerhouse Shanghai, where he spoke with Chinese students at the Shanghai International College of Fashion and Innovation, a joint institute between Donghua University and the University of Edinburgh.

- Visas and whisky -

The visa deal could bring Britain in line with about 50 other countries granted visa-free travel, including France, Germany, Australia and Japan, and follows a

similar agreement made between China and Canada this month.

The agreements signed included cooperation on targeting supply chains used by migrant smugglers, as well as on British exports to China, health and strengthening a bilateral trade commission.

China also agreed to halve tariffs on British whisky to five percent, according to Downing Street.

British companies sealed £2.2 billion in export deals and around £2.3 billion in "market access wins" over five years, and "hundreds of millions worth of investments," Starmer's government said in a statement.

Xi told Starmer on Thursday that their countries should strengthen dialogue and cooperation in the context of a "complex and intertwined" international situation.

Relations between China and the UK deteriorated from 2020 when Beijing imposed a national security law on Hong Kong and cracked down on pro-democracy activists in the former British colony. However, China remains Britain's third-largest trading partner, and Starmer is hoping deals with Beijing will help fulfil his primary goal of boosting UK economic growth.

British pharmaceutical group AstraZeneca said on Thursday it would invest \$15 billion in China through 2030 to expand its medicines manufacturing and research.

And China's Pop Mart, makers of the wildly popular Labubub dolls, said it would set up a regional hub in London and open 27 stores across Europe in the coming year, including up to seven in Britain.

U-19 WC: After pep talk from Tendulkar, India eye revenge against Pakistan

PTI

Bulawayo, Jan 31: Five-time champions India will look to avenge their humiliating Asia Cup final loss against arch-rivals Pakistan when the two teams lock horns in a Super Six match of the ICC Men's U-19 World Cup here on Sunday.

India lost to Pakistan by 191 runs in the Under-19 Asia Cup final in Dubai last December after winning the group match of the same tournament against the arch-rivals by 90 runs.

India are also likely to continue with their 'no handshake' policy with Pakistan in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack and the ensuing Operation Sindoor carried out by the country's armed forces.

The Indian Under-19 team avoided the post-match handshake with Pakistan in the final of the U-19 Asia Cup. The Indians had skipped the gesture during the two sides' group stage match of that tournament as well.

And come Sunday, the Ayush Mhatre-led Indian side will be eyeing a revenge of that loss. Prior to any game, a virtual pep talk from Sachin Tendulkar is a stuff of dreams and the Indian boys did get some priceless advice from the legend.

"The India Under 19 team playing in the ongoing Under 19 World Cup had a virtual interaction with the legend of World Cricket, Mr. Sachin Tendulkar.

"In what was an invaluable experience, the next generation got insights and perspectives on the important ingredients for success and longevity in an ever evolving sport, not just limited to technical skills and remaining fit but also the importance of staying focused, disciplined,



humble and rooted in success," the BCCI posted on X.

"Your experiences and perspective had a powerful impact. They were clearly inspired and motivated. These are lessons they will carry with them for a long time and they are truly grateful," wrote head of Centre Of Excellence VVS Laxman, who is also heading the team of support staff at the junior global event.

It has been a dominant run for India so far in the Under-19 World Cup. The Indians started their campaign with a comprehensive six-wicket win over USA, before beating Bangladesh and New Zealand in the group stage.

In their first Super Six match, India thrashed hosts Zimbabwe by 191 runs in the group stage match of the Under-19 World Cup. The Indians had skipped the gesture during the two sides' group stage match of that tournament as well.

But in Pakistan a strong opponent awaits India and the big loss in the Asia Cup final would be haunting the Mhatre-led side.

Wicket-keeper Abhigyan Kundu (183 runs from four matches, 80 highest score) and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi (166 runs from four matches) have been consistent with the bat, scoring



two fifties each, but they would look to convert those into three-figure marks.

Vihaan Malhotra (151 runs from four matches) is one more batter India would be banking on as the left-hander smashed an unbeaten 109 against Zimbabwe in the last match and would be looking to carry on his good form.

On the bowling front, right-arm medium pacer Henil Patel (10 wickets in four matches) and left-arm fast bowler Udhav Mohan, who picked up three wickets in the last match against Zimbabwe, have been the standout performers for India.

Skipper Mhatre too sparked with his off-breaks, getting three scalps against Zimbabwe, while right-arm medium RS Amrish has also been among wickets upfront.

Pakistan, on the other hand, lost their opening group game against England but won their next two matches against Scotland and Zimbabwe.

They notched a comprehensive eight-wicket win over New Zealand in their Super Six match on January 27, and are coming into the India game with confidence.

Senate passes Trump-backed govt funding deal, sending to House

AP

Washington, Jan 31: The Senate voted on Friday to fund most of the government through the end of September while carving out a temporary extension for Homeland Security funding, giving Congress two weeks to debate new restrictions on federal immigration raids across the country.

With a weekend shutdown looming, President Donald Trump struck a spending deal with Senate Democrats on Thursday in the



Venezuela announces amnesty bill that could lead to mass release of pol prisoners

AP

Caracas, Jan 31: Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodriguez on Friday announced an amnesty bill that could lead to the release of hundreds of prisoners, including opposition leaders, journalists and human rights activists detained for political reasons.

The measure had long been sought by the United States-backed opposition. It is the latest concession Rodriguez has made since taking the reins of the country on Jan. 3 after the brazen seizure of then-President Nicolas Maduro in a US military attack in Venezuela's capital, Caracas.

Rodriguez told a gathering of justices, magistrates, ministers, military brass and other government leaders that the ruling party-controlled National Assembly would take up the bill with urgency.

"May this law serve to heal the wounds left by the political confrontation fueled by violence and extremism," she added in the pre-taped televised event. "May it serve to redirect justice in our country, and may it serve to redirect coexistence among Venezuelans."

Rodriguez also announced the shutdown of Helicoide, a prison in Caracas where torture and other human rights abuses have been repeatedly documented by independent



organisations. The facility, she said, will be transformed into a sports, social and cultural centre for police and the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Rodriguez made her announcement before some of the officials whom former prisoners and human rights watchdogs have accused of ordering the abuses committed at Helicoide and other detention facilities.

Relatives of some prisoners' lives have livestreamed Rodriguez's speech on a phone as they gathered outside Helicoide. Some cried. Many chanted "Freedom! Freedom!"

"God is good. God heard us," Johana Chirinos, a prisoner's aunt, said as tears rolled down her face.

Opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria

Corina Machado, in a statement, said the announced actions were not taken "voluntarily, but rather in response to pressure from the US government." She also noted that people have been detained for their political activities for anywhere between a month and 23 years.

"The regime's repressive apparatus is brutal and has responded to the numerous criminal forces that answer to this regime, and it is all that remains," Machado said.

"When repression disappears and fear is lost, it will be the end of tyranny."

The Venezuelan-based prisoners' rights group Foro Penal estimates that 711 people are in detention facilities across the South American country for their political activities. Of those, 183 have been sentenced.

NGT slaps Rs 5,000 fine each on 12 cricket stadia for not providing groundwater use details

PTI

New Delhi, Jan 31: The National Green Tribunal has slapped Rs 5,000 fine each on 12 cricket stadia across the country for failing to submit replies to the Central Ground Water Authority regarding the use of groundwater to irrigate cricket grounds.

The tribunal also rapped the IS Bindra Stadium of Mohali under the Punjab Cricket Association for using 6,000 Kilo Litres per Month (KLM) of groundwater to

irrigate the ground, without installing any sewage treatment plant (STP).

The green body was hearing a plea against the use of groundwater or fresh water to maintain cricket grounds instead of the STP-treated water, and the non-installation of rain water harvesting system for storage, discharge and restoration of groundwater.

A bench of NGT Chairperson Prakash Srivastava and expert member A Senthil Vel said a CGWA report disclosed that 12 stadia

or cricket associations did not comply with the tribunal's earlier order to provide details regarding the use of fresh water.

These comprised Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi; Sawai Mansingh Stadium, Jaipur; DY Patil Stadium, Mumbai; Holkar Stadium, Indore; MCA Cricket Stadium, Gahunj, Pune; Green Park Stadium, Kanpur; Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow; Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Hyderabad; Himachal Pradesh Cricket

Association Stadium, Dharamsala; Barabati Stadium, Cuttack; Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium, Rajkot; and Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium, Raipur. "The non-submission of report by the above cricket associations has delayed decision in this matter. Hence, a cost of Rs 5,000 each is imposed upon the above 12 cricket associations who have not submitted a copy of the reply to the CGWA," said the tribunal's order dated January 22.

INOX SRINAGAR

Movies Watchlist

Sunday, 1st February

DHURANDHAR (A)
HINDI - 12:00 PM

MARDAANI 3 (U/A 16+)
HINDI - 11:00 AM, 04:00 PM, 06:40 PM

BORDER 2 (U/A 13+)
HINDI - 11:20 AM, 01:40 PM, 03:10 PM, 05:30 PM, 07:00 PM

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