

The Reserve Bank of India in the last couple of years took a slew of measures at the instance of Ministry of Cooperation to improve ease of doing business by both Urban and Rural Cooperative Banks. These measures include the following.

- Permission to open new branches by UBCs.
- Parity with Commercial Banks in implementing One Time Settlement Schemes for stressed assets.
- Additional time limit to achieve the Priority Sector Lending (PSL) targets given to UCBs.
- Appointing Nodal Officer by RBI for regular interactions with UCBs.
- Permission to provide door-step banking services to customers.
- Substantial hike in individual housing loan limit for Rural and Urban Co-operative Banks.
- Permission to lend to commercial real estate - residential housing sector, thereby diversifying their business.
- Co-operative Banks are included in the list of Member Lending Institutions [MLIs] under CGTMSE scheme.
- Reduction in the License fee for onboarding Co-operative Banks in the 'Aadhaar Enabled Payment System' (AePS) by linking it to the number of transactions.
- Finalisation of norms for declaring and publishing 'Financially Sound and Well Managed UCBs'.
- Doubling monetary ceiling for Gold Loan under Bullet Repayment Scheme from 2 Lakh to 4 Lakh for those UCBs who meet the Priority Sector Lending (PSL) targets.
- Umbrella Organization for Urban Cooperative Banks.

However, these reforms are not applicable to ARDBs since they are outside the purview of BR Act. At the same time, Ministry has taken several measures to facilitate business expansion by ARDBs including implementing the Central Sector Scheme for Computerisation and undertaking a study on 'Reforms, Restructuring and Innovations in ARDBs' through NABCONS. The Govt has already forwarded the study report to State Govts, which contains a number of recommendations relating to legal and policy reforms to be initiated by State Govts. We have proposed constitution of a committee at State level consisting of representatives of State and Central Govts, NABARD and SCARDBs to monitor implementations of reforms, recommended in the report.

The Ministry has also initiated action on following recommendations of the NABCONS study team relating to Central Govt and other agencies.

- TransUnion CIBIL membership to SCARDBs.
- Membership in credit guarantee schemes like Micro and Small Enterprises, Housing, Micro Units and FPOs etc.
- Extending crop loan interest subvention scheme of the

GOI to borrowers of ARDBs.

- SCARDBs to be included in the list of banks implementing various credit linked subsidy schemes of GOI including agricultural infrastructure fund.
- NABARD to be made the regulatory authority for SCARDBs.
- Extending national financial inclusion programme to ARDBs.
- Amendment in NABARD Act to introduce new additional refinance product based on financial strength and other qualitative norms without Govt Guarantee.

Early implementation of reforms recommended in the NABCONS study report is necessary to remove present difficulties faced by ARDBs to diversify and expand their business.

#### **IYC 2025 Action Agenda of NAFCARD**



NAFCARD in the Online Meeting with member banks on 12th February 2025, approved the Calendar of Programmes for IYC 2025. The programme includes 2 National Level Seminars, 10 State Level Seminars and about 5000 PCARDBs/Branch Level Seminars during the year. Apart from the IYC theme 'Cooperatives Build a Better World', the meeting also approved the following sub-themes relevant to the sector.

- (1) Reforms in LTCCS for Rural Empowerment
- (2) Financial Inclusion through Digitization
- (3) Enhancing Contributions of LTCCS to Sustainable Development



The first State Level Seminar is scheduled in the last week of February 2025 at Ahmedabad and expected participation of 1000 delegates. The meeting approved guidelines to undertake agroforestry involving planting of minimum 1 lakh trees by farmers financed by ARDBs, along the



boundaries of their agricultural fields during IYC 2025. Agroforestry, apart from being an additional source of income, helps to moderate temperature levels in the farmland. ARDBs will collaborate with the Department of Agriculture and Department of Environment and Forests in States in selecting suitable varieties of trees in different areas and arranging supply of



planting materials. ARDBs will also implement a programme to increase borrowing membership of Youths and Women by offering special incentives including interest subvention, as a new initiative during IYC. The meeting was attended by Chairmen, Chief Executives and Senior Executives of member banks of NAFCARD. Shri Dolar Kotecha, Chairman, Vice-Chairpersons Shri K. Ravinder Rao and Dr. Moinul Hassan addressed the participants. Shri K.K. Ravindran, Managing Director, NAFCARD made a presentation on objectives and draft action agenda of LTCCS for observance of IYC 2025.

### **Shah chairs Parliamentary Panel meeting; outlines roadmap of co-op growth**



Union Home and Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah chaired the first meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the MOC in New Delhi

on 12.02.2025. The meeting focused on initiatives taken to strengthen cooperative societies and was attended by Ministers of State for Cooperation Shri Krishan Pal and Shri Murlidhar Mohol, committee members, and senior ministry officials. Shri Amit Shah highlighted that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi established the MOC to empower farmers and rural areas through "Sahkar Se Samriddhi." He emphasized that cooperation is key to generating employment and ensuring rural prosperity. While the cooperative movement thrived after independence, it later weakened in many states. To revitalize it, the ministry's first step was to create a comprehensive database of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in collaboration with states. This initiative is nearly complete, providing real-time, region-wise data on cooperative societies. Additionally, the govt is pushing for PACS computerization and aims to establish PACS in every panchayat. To enhance the viability of PACS, the govt introduced model by-laws, now adopted by nearly all states. These societies have expanded into over 20



activities, including running Common Service Centres and Jan Aushadhi Kendras. The move is expected to strengthen their financial sustainability and extend their services to rural communities. He also announced the upcoming establishment of Tribhuvan Sahakari University, which will offer specialized education in cooperative management, accounting, and administration. The university will provide the sector with trained professionals, ensuring better governance and efficiency in cooperative enterprises. The govt has launched National Cooperative Organizations aimed at modernizing and expanding the sector. The newly established National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL)

will help cooperatives tap into international markets. National Cooperative Organics Limited (NCOL) is focused on promoting organic products, while Bharatiya Beej Sahakari Samriti Limited (BBSSL) will work towards advancing seed technology and distribution. These initiatives are expected to bring long-term growth and innovation to the cooperative sector. Shri Shah stressed that the govt is working to ensure that cooperatives receive the same opportunities as corporate entities. In collaboration with the Finance Ministry, RBI, and the Income Tax Department, steps are being taken to introduce a unified tax structure for cooperatives and corporations. This reform will help cooperatives compete more effectively in the market, aligning with Modi's "Sahkar Se Samriddhi" vision. A roadmap for cooperative development has been prepared in collaboration with National Federations like KRIBHCO, IFFCO, and NDDB. PACS are already engaged in railway ticket bookings, and soon, they may offer airline ticketing services as well. To address regional disparities, the govt is introducing special measures to ensure balanced development across all states. The successful "Cooperation Amongst Cooperatives" model from Gujarat will also be implemented nationwide. Committee members provided suggestions on strengthening cooperative societies and praised the govt's initiatives to revitalize the sector. The meeting reaffirmed the govt's commitment to make the cooperative movement a key driver of rural and economic development. (Source: Indian Cooperative)

### **Ministry formulating Action Plan for IYC 2025: Shah**

In a written reply in the Lok Sabha, Union Minister Amit Shah said that to commemorate International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) 2025, the MOC has formulated an action plan in collaboration with States/UTs, National Federations, Central Ministries, and other stakeholders. The initiative aims to strengthen the cooperative sector and accelerate progress toward the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The year-long celebrations will culminate with a comprehensive report on activities and progress, alongside a Business Reform Action Plan for 2026, focused on further enhancing the cooperative movement. Shri Shah clarified that the MOC has not entered into any collaboration with any nation or international organization for the IYC 2025. However, meetings have been held with delegations from Spain, Chile, Nepal, and Mongolia to exchange views on the promotion of cooperatives. The IYC 2025 was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 19.06.2024, emphasizing the role of cooperatives in democratic governance, poverty reduction, and





climate action. The event was officially launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 25.11.2024, in New Delhi during the General Assembly and Global Conference of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). (Source: Indian Cooperative)

### Shah presents NCDC roadmap for Co-ops, highlights key initiatives



Union Home and Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah informed the Lok Sabha that the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) has disbursed ₹84,579.64 crore as financial assistance during the financial year 2024-25, as of 28.01.2025. Among the states and UTs, Chhattisgarh received the highest disbursement of ₹28,081 crore, followed by Telangana with ₹20,982 crore and Andhra Pradesh with ₹14,732 crore. To boost cooperative development, NCDC has launched several new schemes, including Swayamshakti Sahkar for Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Deerghavadhi Krishak Sahkar for long-term agricultural credit, and Dairy Sahkar to promote the dairy sector. In collaboration with the Department of Fisheries, NCDC is financing deep-sea trawler projects and has sanctioned ₹25.95 crore for purchasing 44 deep-sea trawlers for Fisheries Cooperative Societies in Maharashtra and Gujarat. To promote ethanol production, NCDC has introduced a scheme to support ethanol plants, cogeneration plants, and working capital. Under this initiative, the MOC has released ₹875 crore, while NCDC has sanctioned 80 loans worth ₹9,169.76 crore to 44 Cooperative Sugar Mills (CSMs). The govt has also approved the formation of 1,100 additional Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) under Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in blocks without existing FPOs. As of 27.01.2025, 958 new FPOs have been registered, adding to the 730 FPOs previously established by NCDC, bringing the total to 1,688. This initiative aims to ensure better market linkages and fair prices for farmers. NCDC continues to play a crucial role in financing cooperative societies through Term Loans, Investment Loans, and subsidies, strengthening cooperative institutions and boosting economic activities across multiple sectors. Additionally, NCDC is driving cooperative growth through the Yuva Sahakar scheme, which supports newly formed cooperative societies with innovative ideas. The scheme provides long-term loans of up to five years, along with a 2% interest subvention on NCDC's applicable term loan rates. According to data presented in the Lok Sabha, ₹295.90 lakh was sanctioned under Yuva Sahakar in FY 2023-24, while ₹241.91 lakh was sanctioned in FY 2024-25 till 31.12.2024. The disbursement figures stood at ₹136.30 lakh and ₹103.53 lakh, respectively. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttarakhand saw fresh sanctions in 2024-25, while West Bengal continued to receive assistance. The govt remains committed to strengthening the cooperative movement

by encouraging young entrepreneur-driven cooperatives and expanding financial support under the scheme. (Source: Indian Cooperative)

### 1851 ARDBs being computerized in 12 states/UT

The GOI has approved the computerization of 1,851 Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (ARDBs) across 13 States/UTs to strengthen the long-term cooperative credit structure. NABARD is the implementing agency, and proposals from 10 States/UTs have been sanctioned. So far, ₹5.08 crore has been released to 9 States/UTs in FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25 for hardware procurement, digitization and support system setup. In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Union Home and Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah stated that 1,406 ARDB units are currently being computerized. However, West Bengal and Kerala have not received any approvals, while Rajasthan (163 ARDBs) and Haryana (90 ARDBs), despite identification, are yet to receive funds. Jammu and Kashmir has withdrawn from the scheme due to financial constraints. Simultaneously, the govt is computerizing 67,930 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) across 30 States/UTs, with 50,455 PACS already onboarded onto ERP software, and hardware procurement completed nationwide. These initiatives aim to modernize rural credit systems, ensuring efficiency and transparency. (Source: Indian Cooperative)

### Computerization: 51k PACS onboarded, 68k secure sanction letters

The GOI is implementing a ₹2,516 crore project to computerize functional Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) by integrating them into a common ERP-based national software developed by NABARD, informed Union Home and Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah in the House. This initiative connects PACS with NABARD through State Cooperative Banks (StCBs) and District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs), enhancing efficiency, transparency, and governance. As of 27.01.2025, 50,455 PACS have been onboarded, while proposals for 67,930 PACS from 30 States/UTs have been sanctioned, with ₹741.34 crore released as the central share. The ERP software, customizable for state-specific needs, supports 25 economic activities, including loans, procurement, warehousing and public distribution. The project aims to strengthen PACS operations, ensuring seamless transactions and trust among farmers. (Source: Indian Cooperative)

### First regional office of CRCS in Pune: Shah



Union Home and Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah announced that the first regional office of the Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies (CRCS) in the

country would be set up in Pune soon. The move aims to enhance accessibility to cooperative services and streamline operations for cooperative societies across the



region. Addressing an event in Pune on 22.02.2025, Shri Amit Shah credited the initiative to his colleague in the MOC and Minister of State for Cooperation Shri Muralidhar Mohol, who hails from Pune. Shri Shah emphasized that the decision to establish the first-ever CRCS regional office in Pune was made to ensure that cooperative societies and banking institutions can avail facilities conveniently without having to approach the central office in Delhi. The establishment of the CRCS regional office will provide a significant boost to cooperative societies, particularly Scheduled Cooperative Banks, by making regulatory procedures, registration, and compliance processes more accessible. He further stated that under the leadership of Shri Mohol, more CRCS regional offices will be set up across different parts of the country. The cooperative movement plays a crucial role in India's economy, particularly in sectors like agriculture, dairy, and rural banking. With the launch of the first CRCS regional office in Pune, stakeholders in Maharashtra and nearby states are expected to benefit from easier access to cooperative governance and banking support. (Source: Indian Cooperative)

### **MoS Finance on NABARD's support to Co-op Banks**

In a written reply in the Lok Sabha, Union Minister of State for Finance Shri Pankaj Chaudhary stated that Nabard's support under direct refinance assistance to cooperative banks has been increased from ₹2,346.91 crore in 2022-23 to ₹4,051 crore in the 2023-24. Additionally, Nabard's refinance support to banks, including scheduled commercial banks, regional rural banks, and state cooperative banks, has seen a rise in short-term refinance from ₹1,240 crore in 2022-23 to ₹2,300 crore. However, the long-term refinance has decreased from ₹3,647.45 crore in 2022-23 to ₹2,389.52 crore in the 2023-24. The govt has also implemented various other schemes for the welfare of farmers, including Timely Credit through the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme, income support to farmers through PM KISAN, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), the Micro Irrigation Fund for expanding coverage under micro irrigation, the Promotion of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM), the Agri Infrastructure Fund (AIF), and the Namo Drone Didi scheme, among others. (Source: Indian Cooperative)

### **PM Modi calls Budget people-centric, force multiplier**

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi hailed the 'people's budget', calling it a 'force multiplier' and adding that it will give an impetus to savings, investment, consumption and growth. He congratulated finance minister Smt Nirmala Sitharaman and her team for a budget that aims at giving primacy not to filling govt coffers but to empowering the middle class besides bolstering the rural economy as well as the SC, ST communities, women and farmers. He cited the income tax reliefs that will benefit many in this regard. "In this budget, income up to ₹12 lakh has been exempted from taxation - tax has been reduced in all income groups. A huge benefit will accrue to our middle class and the salaried employees who have a fixed income. This tax exemption will create substantial prospects for the newly

employed. The day marked an important stage in India's growth journey. This budget is about the aspirations of 140 crore Indians. This budget is one that will fulfil the dreams of every Indian. We have opened up several sectors for the youth. The common citizen is going to drive the Viksit Bharat mission. This budget is a force multiplier," said the Prime Minister. He also emphasised that the 'historic people's budget' will give an impetus to savings, investment, consumption and rapid growth. "Usually, the focus of a budget is on how the govt treasury will be filled but this budget is exactly the opposite. It focuses on how the pockets of the citizens will be filled, how their savings will increase, and aims at building a strong foundation through which citizens will become part of the country's growth. The budget has given high priority to all avenues of job creation. I would like to draw attention to and discuss two issues which will bring a lot of transformation in the future. One, the decision to give infrastructure status to the ship-building industry will give it a major boost. Atmanirbhar Bharat will get momentum. As we all know, ship-building is the biggest employment generation sector. The second is the package of incentives to the tourism sector, which also has strong employment potential. A big boost has been given to tourism by bringing the hotels built in the 50 most important tourist destinations under the infrastructure sector. This will give new vigour to the hospitality and hotels sector which are all-round job creators. The finance minister had touched upon plans for farmers at the start of her budget speech, pointing to the importance of the agricultural sector for the govt. The announcements for farmers will become the basis for a new revolution in the agriculture sector and the rural economy. Under the PM Dhan Dhaanya Krishi Yojana, irrigation and infrastructure development will take place in 100 districts. The farmers will get more help with the increase of the Kisan Credit Card limit to ₹5 lakh. The Prime Minister asserted there was a 360° focus on manufacturing, which will strengthen entrepreneurs, MSMEs and small industrialists, while also creating more jobs. From regulatory reforms to financial reforms to Jan Vishwas 2.0, this budget will give more impetus to our commitment to minimum govt and trust-based governance. This budget not only keeps in mind our present needs but also helps us to prepare for the future like the start-ups, deep tech funds, geo-spatial mission and nuclear energy mission," said the Prime Minister.

### **Co-operators hail Gujarat budget's stress on co-ops and rural credit**



The national-level cooperators from Gujarat have hailed the Gujarat State Budget 2025-26, presented by Gujarat Finance Minister Shri Kanu Desai on 20.02.2025 in the State Legislative Assembly. From NCUI Chairman Shri Dileepbhai Sanghani to Nafed Chairman Shri Jethabhai Ahir to NUCFDC President Shri Jyotindra Mehta, NAFCARD Chairman Shri Dolar Kotecha and others have



wholeheartedly welcomed the state budget, which outlines the budget estimates for the Cooperation Department for 2025-26 at ₹1,453.11 crore, marking an increase from ₹1,441.20 crore in the previous year. The budget focuses on strengthening cooperative institutions, supporting agricultural credit, and enhancing financial assistance programs. It also includes allocations for the formation of new PACS and the development of an electronic cooperative market. Shri Sanghani said, "The Gujarat Budget 2024-25 has prioritized agriculture, cooperation, urban, and rural development, taking several significant steps for the overall progress of all sectors, which I wholeheartedly welcome. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Bhai Patel, Finance Minister Shri Kanubhai has presented the budget for the fourth time, truly embodying the mantra of 'SarvaJan Hitay – SarvaJan Sukhaya' (For the Welfare of All, For the Happiness of All)". Shri Dolar Kotecha expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah and Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel for their visionary leadership in shaping Gujarat's progress. The Budget paves the way for Gujarat to emerge as a global leader in innovation and sustainable development. He highlighted that the Gujarat Budget 2025 lays a strong foundation for growth across agriculture, renewable energy, infrastructure, education, and industry. (Source: Indian Cooperative)

## Karimnagar DCCB launches IYC 2025, First in Telangana



The Karimnagar District Cooperative Central Bank (KDCCB) conducted its annual meeting on 27.01.2025, to mark the launch of the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) 2025, emphasizing the role of cooperatives in building a better world. KDCCB President and NAFSCOB Chairman Shri Konduru Ravinder Rao expressed enthusiasm for the initiative, inspired by the official launch by Union Home and Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah on 24.01.2025, in Mumbai, which he attended. He highlighted that Karimnagar is the first district in Telangana to organize such a meeting, aiming to promote and strengthen cooperative societies.

Addressing various stakeholders, including presidents of PACS, fisheries societies, milk societies and handloom weavers' cooperatives, Shri Rao underscored that over 40 crore families in India are connected to cooperatives, with immense potential for further expansion. He expressed gratitude to the United Nations and the GOI for prioritizing cooperatives and declaring IYC 2025. He noted that well before this declaration, India established the MOC in 2021, headed by Shri Amit Shah, marking a historic step. Model bye-laws for PACS have been framed and accepted across all states, reinforcing cooperative federalism enshrined in the Constitution. He stated that

efforts are underway to expand the network of cooperatives across villages and semi-urban centers, strengthen Farmer



Producer Organizations (FPOs), milk societies, fisheries societies, procurement and marketing societies, and promote integration among cooperatives. The MOC has formed expert committees to work on policies and implementation strategies to strengthen the cooperative sector. He reiterated the govt's commitment to "Sahakar Se Samrudhi & Samrudhi Se Vikasit Bharat" (Prosperity through Cooperation for a Developed India). He urged members to enrol more people into cooperatives over the next 12 months to ensure no eligible individual is left out. He emphasized the need for financial literacy programs, customer meetings, and member education initiatives to raise awareness about the significance of cooperatives. With Karimnagar DCCB and its affiliated societies delivering outstanding performance over the past decade, he expressed confidence that stakeholders would embrace and advance these initiatives to benefit the people. He concluded by calling for collective efforts toward achieving the goal of building a better world through cooperatives. (Source: Indian Cooperative)

## Former Cooperation Secretary takes over as CEC

Shri Gyanesh Kumar, ex-Secretary, MOC and currently senior member in the Election Commission has been appointed as the new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC). A



1988-batch Kerala cadre officer, Shri Kumar has held key positions in the MOC, Parliamentary Affairs, and Defence. Reflecting on his tenure in the Cooperation Ministry, he described it as the most fulfilling phase of his career, highlighting its impact on farmers' lives. He retired as Cooperation Secretary on 31.01.2024. He is credited with launching several new initiatives in the cooperation ministry aimed at transforming the cooperative landscape which includes computerisation of PACS and ARDBs. His appointment as CEC marks another significant milestone in his distinguished career. (Source: Indian Cooperative)

## Govt, RBI will work together for growth: Finance Minister

The combined effect of the govt's fiscal policy and the Reserve Bank of India's monetary measures would help boost consumption and private investments and thereby accelerate economic growth, finance minister Smt Nirmala Sitharaman said on 08.02.2025. Addressing the media after a post-Budget meeting with the central bank's board in Delhi, Smt Sitharaman said the triggers of consumption-driven growth cycle are clearly being felt by a number of firms that have to make investment decisions. "I see this as



a positive sign and with rate cut by the RBI on 07.02.2025, things can move together in alignment," she said. The minister also stressed the govt would continue to work in a well-coordinated fashion with the RBI to prop up growth and contain inflation. RBI governor Shri Sanjay Malhotra said market forces decide the value of rupee with respect to the US dollar and the central bank is not worried about day-to-day movement of the currency value. The central bank focuses on the value of the rupee in the medium to long term. On the impact of the depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar on price rise, the governor said a 5% fall in rupee's relative value impacts domestic inflation to the extent of 30-35 bps. The governor added that the RBI will be agile in responding to the liquidity needs of the banking system, both transient and durable. In the Budget for 2025-26 presented on 01.02.2025, the Union govt lowered its fiscal deficit estimate for FY25 to 4.8% of GDP from 4.9%. It also

budgeted a 4.4% deficit for FY26, seen as helping anti-inflationary measures. On its part, the RBI's monetary policy committee on 07.02.2025 announced a 25-basis point cut in the repo rate, bringing it down to 6.25%, marking the first reduction in nearly five years. Analysts expect headline inflation around 4.5% on year in H1FY25 on the back of easing food inflation, which should allow the RBI to follow up rate cut with an additional 25bps policy repo rate cut in the April meeting, with risks skewed towards a slightly deeper easing cycle. Sitharaman said whether it is inflation or growth, monetary policy and fiscal policy are acting together for the welfare of the economy and people, without encroaching on each other's territory. In the coming times also, RBI and govt will work in a well-coordinated manner keeping our growth impulses in mind. The RBI has pegged its real GDP growth forecast for FY26 at 6.7% compared with the Economic Survey's estimate of 6.3% to 6.8%.

### Bhutani briefs Standing Committee on Ministry' new initiatives



A meeting of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Food Processing was held to discuss the Ministry of Cooperation's demand for grants on 20.02.2025. Dr. Ashish Kumar Bhutani, Secretary, MOC, along with senior officials, briefed the committee, including Chairperson Shri Charanjit Singh Channi, on the Ministry's ongoing schemes and upcoming initiatives, which aim to ensure the development of the cooperative sector. During the meeting, Hon'ble Member of Parliament of Jhalawar, Shri Dushyant Singh, inquired about the National Cooperative Database dashboard and requested the Ministry's support for the growth of the cooperative sector in his district.

A MoU was signed between PM Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) and the National Council for Cooperative Training (NCCT) to enhance awareness and provide training on crop insurance schemes for PACS and their farmer members on 30.01.2025. This agreement, aimed at empowering farmers with essential knowledge, to strengthen insurance coverage and financial security for farmers across the country.



The Managing Director of Bharatiya Beej Sahkari Samiti Limited (BBSSL) and the Chairman of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the bulk supply of fodder seeds to dairy cooperatives by BBSSL, in the presence of Dr. Ashish Kumar Bhutani, Secretary, MOC on 04.02.2025. This MoU will facilitate the distribution of Bharat Beej-branded quality fodder seeds through the network of dairy cooperatives.

## AGRICULTURE NEWS

### Govt to soon roll out credit guarantee scheme for farmers

The govt will soon roll out ₹1000 crores credit guarantee scheme for pledge financing to be availed of by small and marginal farmers against electronic negotiable warehouse receipts (e-NWRs) after depositing commodities in accredited warehouses. "Within a month's time we will be taking up the first case under the credit guarantee scheme which is expected to provide confidence to lenders to finance farmers against e-NWRs. Usage of e-NWRs by farmers and small traders have not gone up, with the credit guarantee the bankers will be

willing to lend to farmers," said Smt Anita Praveen, chairperson, Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) at the event organised by National E-Repository, an NCDEX group company. Farmers getting loans against stored commodities also provide liquidity in the hands of farmers at the time of harvest. They can also sell their commodities when prices are remunerative. Post harvesting, when prices of commodities decline, farmers can deposit their produce at 8,000-odd WDRA-registered warehouses and generate e-NWRs for accessing bank credit for the next crop. By increasing post-harvest lending against e-NWRs, the scheme aims to improve



farmers income and enhance their access to institutional credit. The pledge financing against e-NWRs was not gaining traction to a satisfactory level despite the govt's efforts to make it seamless with the introduction of the e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi (Digital Gateway) portal of WDRA. Last year, the govt launched an online digital gateway, e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi, which would allow farmers to store agricultural produce with the WDRA and obtain post-harvest loans from banks. Food secretary Shri Sanjeev Chopra recently had stated that the credit guarantee scheme will boost the post-harvest lending to ₹5.5 lakh crore in the next 10 years from ₹3962 crore in FY24. Increasing warehouse registration to 40,000 in the next 1-2 years needs to be taken up. Out of one lakh agri warehouses in the 40,000 are privately held. The scheme aims at loan coverage of upto ₹75 lakh and ₹2 crore for agricultural and non-agricultural purpose respectively. It would guarantee coverage of 85% of loans upto ₹3 lakh and 80% for loans between ₹3 lakh to ₹75 lakh. These loans were availed by small farmers, women, FPOs and cooperatives.

#### **Maharashtra govt explores AI in agriculture sector**

In a bid to boost agricultural productivity and reduce production costs for farmers, the Maharashtra govt is considering the experimental use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the agriculture sector. Deputy Chief Minister Shri Ajit Pawar announced the initiative on 03.02.2025 during a review meeting with State agriculture officials and stakeholders. Shri Pawar directed the State's agriculture and cooperation departments to assess the technical and financial feasibility of integrating AI into farming practices. The meeting was attended by Agriculture Minister Shri Manikrao Kokate, Minister of State for Agriculture Shri Ashish Jayswal, and Minister of State for Cooperation Shri Pankaj Bhoyar, All India Grape Growers Association President Shri Kailas Patil, and other senior officials. Highlighting the transformative potential of AI, Shri Pawar stated, "AI can play a pivotal role in monitoring critical factors such as crop health, soil carbon levels, and soil quality. By deploying it on an experimental basis, we aim to enhance agricultural productivity and reduce costs for farmers." He stressed that the initiative must be practical and financially viable for farmers to adopt widely. AI is revolutionising industries across the globe, and agriculture should not be left behind. In the coming years, AI will be essential in tackling challenges like erratic weather patterns, unseasonal rains, pest infestations, and labour shortages. It has the potential to significantly increase productivity while lowering production costs. The Deputy Chief Minister outlined how AI could provide precise insights into soil carbon levels, pest identification, disease detection, and weed management. These advancements would enable farmers to adopt resource-efficient techniques, optimise supply chains, improve harvesting efficiency, and reduce dependency on chemical inputs. Additionally, AI could enhance disease management and lower labour costs, making farming more sustainable and

cost-effective. Shri Pawar stressed that the integration of AI in agriculture is not merely about increasing yields but also about creating a more sustainable and economically viable farming model. The Maharashtra govt's move to explore AI in agriculture comes at a time when the sector faces mounting challenges due to climate change and resource constraints.

#### **Projects worth ₹58,000 crore get support of agri-infra fund**

To boost post-harvest facilities, the govt has approved proposals worth ₹58,000 crore under Agri Infrastructure Fund (AIF) for more than 92,000 projects since its launch four years back. So far these sanctioned projects by the agriculture ministry have mobilised an investment of ₹91,856 crore in the agriculture sector, out of which a large chunk has been mobilised from private entities. The AIF, which was launched in May, 2020 aims at disbursing ₹1 lakh crore through banks and financial institutions by the end of FY26. The scheme is operational from 2020-21 to 2032-33. While first two years under the fund are considered as gestation period, improved marketing infrastructure and logistics at the farm gate would reduce post-harvest losses and increase farmers' remuneration. The fund aims at creation of farm gate storage and logistics infrastructure to enable farmers to store and preserve their farm produce properly and sell them in the market at better price with reduced post-harvest losses and lesser number of intermediaries. It facilitates loans upto ₹2 crore, with a maximum repayment period of 7 years from financial institutions. The fund provides 3% interest subvention with a cap of 9% on rate of investment. The fund also covers the reimbursement of credit guarantee fees paid by banks. Borrowers under AIF are to contribute at least 10% of total project cost irrespective of available capital subsidy. It connects ecosystem players, fostering collaboration between entrepreneurs and farmers for greater impact and it supports rural industrialization, creating employment opportunities and boosting markets of processed agricultural goods. The agriculture ministry has stated that improved post-harvest management infrastructure like warehouses, cold stores, sorting and grading units, ripening chambers etc. will allow farmers to sell directly to a larger base of consumers and hence, increase value realization for the farmers. Following the implementation of the fund, the agriculture ministry has projected annual savings from post-harvest losses of 1.86 million tonne (MT) and 0.34 MT of horticultural crops. To promote clean energy solutions alongside agricultural infrastructure development, the govt has allowed convergence between the PM-KUSUM scheme, aimed at providing energy and water security to farmers and AIF. In addition, the fund has provision of convergence with Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME). Entities including farmer collectives, farmer producer organizations, cooperatives, PACS, agricultural produce market committees, agri-entrepreneurs and start-ups avail the fund.



## IYC 2025

### Gujarat SCARDB

#### Meeting with Honourable Governor of Gujarat on 8th February 2025



Shri Dolar Kotecha, Chairman Kheti Bank, Gujarat and Chairman NAFCARD, met Shri Acharya Devvrat Ji Hon. Governor, Gujarat on 8th February, 2025, to apprise about Kheti Bank's action plan as a part of observance of IYC 2025 and the role of ARDBs in empowering farmers and rural population.



Gujarat SCARDB organised induction training programme in conjunction with celebrating International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) 2025 on 01.03.2025 at Ahmedabad. Dignitaries present for the occasion were Shri Jetha Bhai Bharwad, Chairman, NAFED and Deputy Speaker Gujarat Legislative Assembly, Shri Mayank Bhai Nayak, Member of Rajya Sabha, Shri Dolar Kotecha, Chairman, Gujarat SCARDB and NAFCARD, Shri Jivan Bhai Ahir, Vice Chairman, Gujarat SCARDB, Shri K. K. Ravindran, Managing Director, NAFCARD along with the directors of the bank.



## NEWS FROM MEMBER BANKS



### West Bengal SCARDB

West Bengal SCARDB Special Officer Dr. Moinul Hassan hosted Shri Kapil Meena, Director, MOC on 28.02.2025 at their head office in Kolkata.



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