



“When a woman becomes her own best friend, life is easier.”

—Diane Von Furstenberg



# Opening new doors

The passage of the Jammu and Kashmir Private Universities Bill, 2026 by the Assembly marks an important moment for the future of education in Jammu and Kashmir. For a region where thousands of young students have long been forced to leave home in search of quality higher education, the legislation offers both hope and opportunity. If implemented in the right spirit, it can significantly reshape the academic landscape of the Union Territory. The new law provides a clear framework for the establishment and incorporation of private universities. More importantly, it also lays down provisions to regulate their functioning, management and academic standards so that quality education is ensured and the interests of students are protected. This balance between expansion and regulation is crucial. Private investment in education can help fill long-standing gaps but only when strong oversight ensures that institutions maintain academic credibility and ethical standards. For decades, one of the biggest challenges faced by students from Jammu and Kashmir has been the limited number of institutions offering specialised courses and advanced research opportunities. Every year thousands of young people travel to cities across India to pursue professional degrees, often placing a heavy financial burden on their families. The new bill has the potential to reduce this outward flow by creating quality options closer to home. This shift could have several positive effects. When good universities are established locally, students not only save money but also remain connected to their communities. It also creates an environment where academic discussions, research culture and innovation can grow within the region itself. The legislation also has the potential to bring students from other parts of the country to Jammu and Kashmir. Universities often act as cultural bridges where young people from different backgrounds interact, exchange ideas and build life-long networks. If reputed institutions establish campuses here, the Union Territory could gradually emerge as a vibrant centre of learning attracting talent from across India. The larger context behind this development is equally significant. Over the past decade, the Government of India under the leadership of Narendra Modi has steadily worked to strengthen educational infrastructure in the region. Institutions such as All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology and Indian Institute of Management have already been established in Jammu and Kashmir. These projects were not just about buildings and campuses. They were about creating opportunities and signalling that the region has the potential to become a national centre for higher education. The new bill complements these efforts. Government institutions alone cannot meet the growing demand for higher education. Private universities, when properly regulated, can bring new courses, research partnerships and modern infrastructure. They can also create jobs for teachers, researchers and support staff while contributing to the local economy. Of course, legislation by itself does not guarantee success. The real test will lie in how effectively the policy is implemented. Authorities must ensure transparency in approvals, maintain strict academic standards and prevent the commercialisation of education. Private universities should not become degree shops but centres of genuine learning and research.

## West Asian Conflict

# FERTILISER, FOOD TO BE HIT

■ DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

The West Asian conflict has affected global fertiliser supply. Shipments of it have piled up on the wrong side of the Strait of Hormuz. In India, Algeria and Slovakia, fertiliser plants have shut down or slowed their output due to rising natural gas prices. Australian wheat farmers are planning less and corn and soy farmers in the US are begging their President for relief. Meanwhile, China has restricted fertiliser exports.

Much of the concern about economic disruptions stemming from the Iran conflict centred on the higher price of oil and natural gas. But the cascading effects of the conflict on fertiliser supplies are growing worse by the day, raising prices for farmers globally and threatening to lead to food insecurity in some parts of the world, including India. As West Asia is a key global producer of the commodity, second only to Russia, nearly a third of the world's fertiliser is shipped through the Strait of Hormuz.

The consequences have been far-reaching, impacting farmers in countries like the US and Brazil who rely on imported fertiliser. Adding to the pressure, it is understood that Russia was unable to step up production due to drone strikes on its factories and ports from its year-long war with Ukraine. It is significant that the WTO warned about the risks of food supplies of many countries. Persian Gulf states could also face food shortages, given their imports for products like rice, corn, soybeans and vegetable oil.

Reports confirm that domestic urea manufacturing has been hit in the West Asia crisis with production falling to 18 lakh tonne in March from an earlier average of 24 lakh tonne. As is well known, the Gulf region accounts for around 20-25 percent of India's urea exports, 30 percent of diammonium phosphate (DAP) and 50 percent of LNG. The crisis has pushed up costs of inputs such as LNG, ammonia and sulphur, besides increasing freight charge.

The government maintained that there is adequate stock of fertilisers and is tapping alternative sources to boost supplies, even as urea units that had taken annual maintenance shutdowns. The Centre has asked states to monitor any abnormal spike in fertiliser sales during the current 'lean season' to prevent stockpiling and black marketing. On diversification of sources, ministry officials pointed out that a global tender has been floated and long-term arrangements have been tied up with countries such as Saudi Arabia and Oman. In addition, sourcing is proposed to be expanded to countries including Russia, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Canada.

The government has also been trying unconventional methods like 'spot buying', which is resorted to for immediate operational needs during unexpected supply disruptions. Besides bringing forward the maintenance of fertilizer manufacturing units, it is carrying out a heat-mapping exercise for all districts for early detection and quick response to any signs of trouble.

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cial sources pointed out that all partners of India in the fertilizer supply chain have assured the government 'uninterrupted supplies' and there will be comfortable stocks by mid-May when the kharif demand peaks. Information & Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw stated recently that urea stock was 6.2 million tonne, one MT higher than this time last year

gap in food security between richer and poorer countries, with the sharpest declines expected in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The report suggested that India's vulnerability is shaped by more than just temperature rise. A large share of the country's population still depends directly or indirectly on climate-sensitive agriculture, while food affordability

present, accounted for 21.8 percent of India's total agri export in FY25 with cereals, fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and spices accounting for bulk of the basket. Key shipments include rice, bananas, onions and vegetables, pulses, nuts, coffee, tea and a wide range of spices.

According to available data, rice faces

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India is among the large economies most at risk of worsening food insecurity as global temperatures rise, a new study has found, with projections showing a steady decline in access to adequate and nutritious food under warming scenarios. In fact, the country is set to face a significant decline in food security as global temperatures rise, a new study by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) revealed recently.

The report placed India's position in a newly developed food security index among the most concerning. Its baseline score of 5.31 is well below the global average of 6.74 — and behind countries such as Brazil (6.72), Mexico (6.36) and Indonesia (5.87). But the outlook worsens under warming scenarios. India's score is projected to fall to 4.96 at 1.5 degrees Celsius (°C) of global warming, which may happen any time and further to 4.52 at 2°C. The analysis further showed that temperature increases will widen the already significant

and nutritional access remain uneven across regions. That means repeated climate shocks such as heatwaves, rainfall disruption or crop failures could have consequences far beyond the farm, affecting household budgets, diet quality and long-term food stability, including exports.

With such a frightening report, it is an added concern that input cost of fertilisers along with pesticides and seeds have increased manifold. Some of the other consequences of the Green Revolution are being felt — the pollution of crops, soil, groundwater, air, the decimation of insect populations, declining soil fertility and the rise in human diseases. Added to this if such conflicts or wars take place, Third World countries may be severely affected as fertilisers are vital for increasing production and productivity.

In such a situation, India's agri and food products worth \$11.8 billion in West Asia are at risk as the war-ravaged situation has been disrupting shipping routes, raising insurance costs and creating uncertainty in logistics, think tank GTRI warned. The region, engulfed in war at

the largest potential impact as India exported \$4/43 billion of rice to West Asia, accounting for 36.7 percent of the global rice exports, making Gulf countries crucial for producers in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Apart from rice, India exported \$7.48 billion of cereals, fruits, vegetables and spices to West Asia in 2025, with the region accounting for over 29 percent of India's global exports in this category.

It is a known fact that wars — first between Russia and Ukraine and now the more dangerous one between Israel backed by US and Iran — has had its consequences on varied fronts. India has, no doubt, been a sufferer from various angles and if the latter conflict continues, the country's exports and imports would be greatly affected. With agricultural exports playing a great role in the total export basket, and on the other hand, prospects of procuring adequate quantities of gas looking not quite favourable, India may have to suffer in the coming months. ---INFA

## World Namokar Mantra Day

# One Mantra, One World: A Call for Global Peace and no War

■ LALIT GARGG

In this transitional phase of world history, when humanity is groaning under the burden of war, violence, tension, terrorism and intolerance, the celebration of World Namokar Mantra Day on April 9, 2026 emerges as a unique explosion of spiritual energy. This day is not merely a religious observance, but a powerful awakening of divine consciousness—an occasion where the miraculous and transformative energies generated through collective chanting are poised to illuminate the entire world. With the resolve of “One World, One Day, One Mantra,” when the sacred Namokar Mahamantra resonates simultaneously across the globe at dawn, it will not be just sound—it will be the creation of a divine wave of energy. According to spiritual science, when millions chant a single sacred mantra together, the vibrations purify the environment, dissolve negative energies, amplify positive consciousness, and herald peace and non-violence. This collective energy becomes a form of Sankalp Shakti (power of intention), capable of transforming the impossible into reality.

This extraordinary day will unite people beyond caste, creed, and community barriers

across thousands of temples and venues, becoming a beacon of inspiration where the flowers of friendship bloom and the rays of peace and harmony shine brightly. Despite remarkable progress in science and knowledge, humanity has lost sensitivity towards its own life and that of others. Intellectual revolutions have occurred, but ethical transformation remains limited. Discussions on peace, non-violence, and human rights are widespread, yet the absence of right conduct, right vision, and right character is deeply felt. The Namokar Mahamantra—profound, miraculous, and transformative—is not confined to any one religion; it is universal, timeless, and global. Through its chanting, individuals can shape pure conduct, healthy living, and manifest peace, non-violence, coexistence, and harmony.

This initiative, organized by Jain International Trade Organization (JITO), aims to unite people worldwide through collective chanting. Participants from over 180 countries will take part, with more than 100 mega-events and 6,000+ venues hosting the chant globally. The main event in Delhi will be graced by dignitaries like Ram Nath Kovind and Amit Shah, giving it a global stature. The miraculous and transformative powers generated through this collective chanting

are not merely a matter of faith but of experience. The mantra touches the deepest layers of the soul, from where pure streams of consciousness flow. It is believed that during this collective chant: Mental peace and stability are profoundly experienced, reducing stress, fear, and depression. The aura is purified, enhancing positivity and personal influence. Health improves, as positive vibrations balance the body's cellular energy. The power of intention (Sankalp Siddhi) strengthens, helping fulfill noble desires. The process of Karma Nirjara (shedding of karmas) accelerates, aiding spiritual growth.

Among the many mantras in the world, two are considered especially powerful—the Gayatri Mantra and the Namokar Mahamantra. The Namokar Mantra is not only the fundamental mantra of Jainism but also a universal formula for purification and elevation of consciousness. Its power is infinite and eternal. It does not invoke any individual but reveres the pure, perfected state of the soul. Unlike worldly mantras that yield material benefits, this transcendental mantra fulfills both worldly and spiritual aspirations. It is regarded as a supreme, all-accomplishing mantra that destroys sins and generates profound peace. Numerous experiential accounts suggest relief from illness, fear, poverty,

and distress through its remembrance.

The energy generated through its chanting serves as a guiding force for transforming lifestyle—towards environmental awareness, non-violence, mindful living, and harmony between body, mind, soul, and nature. Its essence reflects the noble principle of “Live and Let Live.” The mantra consists of 68 syllables and is considered an eternal, auspicious, and all-beneficial chant. Its practice leads ultimately to liberation (moksha) from worldly bondage. It is a repeated sacred intention—a powerful vibration shaping reality—and thus holds immense relevance for building a peaceful, war-free world.

The message of Mahavira—“Happiness is dear to all, suffering is disliked by all”—forms the essence of this mantra. When it resonates from millions of voices simultaneously, it becomes a global declaration of compassion, non-violence, and coexistence. Philosopher Acharya Umaswati's dictum “Parasparopagraho Jivanam” (all life is bound by mutual support) comes alive through this collective practice. Even Narendra Modi, in his previous address, described this mantra as a medium of “inner revolution”—a force that connects individuals to themselves and society into unity. At a time when the world struggles with war, violence, and terror,

this event can become a powerful “spiritual resolution for peace.” It is a moment when humanity collectively invokes peace, and the divine vibrations of the Namokar Mantra guide the world toward a new direction. Ultimately, this day reminds us that true transformation is internal. By imbibing the power of this mantra, not only can individual lives be transformed, but the entire world can move towards peace, harmony, non-violence, and joy. This is its miraculous power, its spiritual accomplishment, and its global message.

The Namokar Mahamantra nurtures the grand vision of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”—the world as one family. Humanity has suffered and continues to suffer from the devastating consequences of war and violence. To safeguard humanity and the world, there may be no greater refuge than this mantra. Thus, World Namokar Mantra Day serves as a powerful medium to awaken humanity—from self-welfare to global welfare. For purification, liberation, and a life of happiness, prosperity, health, and joy, regular chanting of the Namokar Mahamantra is essential. It is the greatest inner support in overcoming life's difficulties, anxieties, and obstacles—spreading auspiciousness and elevating consciousness across the world.