

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COOPERATION**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 4885
TO BE ANSWERED ON 1st APRIL, 2025**

Progress of Cooperative Sector

**4885: Shri Sudheer Gupta
Shri Dhairyasheel Sambhajirao Mane
Shri Chavan Ravindra Vasantrao:**

Will the Minister of Cooperation (सहकारिता मंत्री) be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government reviewed the progress of the cooperative sector in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the outcome thereto;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to introduce cooperative courses in schools, colleges and IIM as well as promote successful cooperative organisation;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the aims and objectives of introducing such courses in education sector;
- (e) the time by the which it is likely to be introduced; and
- (f) the other steps taken/being taken by the Government to encourage cooperative sector in the country?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF COOPERATION
सहकारिता मंत्री (SHRI AMIT SHAH)**

(a) & (b) Review and monitoring of cooperatives is a continuous process. The Government is deeply engaged into reviewing and monitoring the progress of the cooperative sector in the country.

As a result, the Ministry of Cooperation, since its inception on 6th July 2021, has taken 60 initiatives to strengthen and deepen the cooperative movement at the grassroots level Gaps have been identified based on the review and the detailed outcomes and major initiatives is provided in the **Annexure-A**.

The Ministry of Cooperation (MoC) has adopted a multi-layered approach to monitor projects at the grassroots level for ensuring effective implementation of these projects. Regular monthly review meetings are conducted with States/UTs to assess the progress of various initiatives.

Key stakeholders such as NABARD, NDDB, NFDB, and others have been roped in to review the progress of various initiatives through their National, State and District level officials and machinery. National Level Monitoring and Implementation Committee (NLMIC), State and District Level Implementation and Monitoring Committees (SLIMC and DLIMC) have been formed to review especially the PACS Computerization Project. Further, State Cooperative Development Committee (SCDC) has been constituted at the State level under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary and District Cooperative Development Committee (DCDC) has been constituted at the district level under the chairmanship of the District Collectors to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of all the initiatives of Ministry of Cooperation.

These efforts are supported by robust reporting mechanisms through the National Cooperative Database (NCD), ensuring transparency and accountability. These reviews have led to significant and positive outcomes, ensuring effective implementation.

(c) to (e) A chapter on the cooperative sector has been introduced in the Class 6 Social Science textbook of NCERT. To further strengthen this educational initiative, the Ministry of Cooperation has engaged in consultations with the Ministry of Education to explore the introduction of cooperative courses in educational institutions and making efforts for introduction of chapters in other classes in the coming academic sessions. Additionally, "Tribhuvan" Sahkari University Bill, 2025 has been passed in Lok Sabha. The proposed University seeks to provide education, training, and capacity building in the cooperative sector and undertake research and development activities in related areas. It will offer degree programs, distance learning and e-learning courses, and develop centres of excellence in co-operative sector. It may establish outlying campuses or affiliate institutes in any other place in India or outside India. Introduction of cooperative courses in educational institutions aims to integrate practical learning with academic knowledge, equipping students with industry-relevant skills and enhancing their employability. These courses foster collaboration between academia and industries, ensuring students gain hands-on experience through internships, apprenticeships, and live projects.

The aims and objectives of such courses in education sector include bridging the gap between theoretical learning and real-world applications, developing problem-solving, leadership, and communication skills, and promoting an entrepreneurial mindset. Cooperative courses also focus on exposing students to emerging technologies, strengthening career opportunities, and encouraging lifelong learning and adaptability. Additionally, they instill social responsibility, teamwork, and ethical decision-making, preparing students for dynamic and competitive job markets. By introducing cooperative courses in schools, students gain early career insights, they develop specialized competencies, they refine managerial and entrepreneurial abilities, ensuring they are industry-ready leaders. This will play a crucial role in producing industry-ready graduates and enhancing the overall quality of education by integrating work experience with academic learning.

(f) The other steps being taken by the Government to encourage cooperative sector in the country is attached in the **Annexure-A**.

Progress on major initiatives taken by Ministry of Cooperation

Ministry of Cooperation, since its inception on 6th July, 2021, has undertaken several initiatives to realize the vision of “Sahakar-se-Samridhi” and to strengthen & deepen the cooperative movement from Primary to Apex level Cooperatives in the country. List of initiatives taken and progress made so far are as follows:

A. Making Primary Cooperatives economically vibrant and transparent

- 1. Model Bye-Laws for PACS making them multipurpose, multidimensional and transparent entities:** Government, in consultation with all the stakeholders, including States/ UTs, National Level Federations, State Cooperative Banks (StCBs), District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs), etc., has prepared and circulated Model Bye-laws for PACS to all the States/ UTs, which enable PACS to undertake more than 25 business activities, improve governance, transparency and accountability in their operations. Provisions have also been made to make the membership of PACS more inclusive and broad-based, giving adequate representation to women and Scheduled Castes/Schedules Tribes. So far, 32 States/ UTs have adopted Model Bye-laws or their existing bye-laws are in line with Model Bye-laws.
- 2. Strengthening of PACS through Computerization:** In order to strengthen PACS, project for Computerization of functional PACS with a total financial outlay of ₹2,516 Crore has been approved by the Government of India, which entails bringing all functional PACS in the Country onto a common ERP based national software, linking them with NABARD through StCBs and DCCBs. A total of 67,930 PACS from 30 States/ UTs have been sanctioned under the project. A total of 50,455 PACS have been onboarded on ERP Software and hardware has been procured by 30 States/UTs.
- 3. Establishing New Multipurpose PACS/ Dairy/ Fishery Cooperatives in covering all the Panchayats:** The Government of India has approved the plan to establish new multipurpose PACS/dairy/fisheries cooperatives, aiming to cover all panchayats and villages in the country over the next five years. This initiative is supported by NABARD, NDDDB, NFDB and State/UT Governments. For effective implementation of the initiative, ‘Margadarshika’ has been launched on 19.9.2024, indicating the targets and timelines for stakeholders. As per National Cooperative Database, a total of 12,957 new PACS, Dairy and Fishery Cooperative Societies have been registered as on 27.1.2025 across the country since the approval of the plan on 15.2.2023.
- 4. World’s Largest Decentralized Grain Storage Plan in Cooperative sector:** Government has approved a plan to create warehouses, custom hiring centers, primary processing units and other agri-infrastructure for grain storage at PACS level, through convergence of various GOI schemes, including AIF, AMI, SMAM, PMFME, etc. This will reduce wastage of food grains and transportation costs, enable farmers to realize better prices for their produce and meet

various agricultural needs at the PACS level itself. Under the pilot project, construction of godowns in 11 PACS of 11 States has been completed.

- 5. PACS as Common Service Centers (CSCs) for better access to e-services:** An MoU has been signed between Ministry of Cooperation, MeitY, NABARD and CSC e-Governance Services India Limited for providing more than 300 e-services such as banking, insurance, Aadhar enrolment/ updation, health services, PAN card and IRCTC/ Bus/ Air ticket, etc. through PACS. So far, 42,080 PACS have started providing CSC services to rural citizens.
- 6. Formation of new Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) by PACS:** Government has allowed 1100 additional FPOs to be formed by PACS with the support of NCDC, in those blocks where FPOs have not yet been formed or the blocks are not covered by any other implementing agency. Against this allocation of 1100 blocks, 958 FPOs have been registered/ on-boarded as on 27.01.2025. Apart from this, 730 FPOs have already been formed by NCDC in cooperative sector. As on date, a total of 1,688 FPOs have been registered / on-boarded by NCDC in cooperative sector. This will be helpful in providing farmers with necessary market linkages and get fair and remunerative process for their produce.
- 7. PACS given priority for Retail Petrol/ Diesel outlets:** Government has allowed PACS to be included in the Combined Category 2 (CC2) for allotment of retail petrol/ diesel outlets. As per information received from Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), 286 PACS from 25 States/UTs have applied online for retail petrol/ diesel outlets.
- 8. PACS given permission to convert bulk consumer petrol pumps into retail outlets:** The existing bulk consumer licensee PACS have been given a one-time option by Oil Marketing Companies to convert into retail outlets. As per information shared by OMCs, 116 wholesale consumer pump licensee PACS from 5 States have given consent for conversion into Retail Outlets, out of which 56 PACS have been commissioned by the OMCs.
- 9. PACS eligible for LPG Distributorship for diversifying its activities:** Government has now allowed PACS to apply for LPG Distributorships. This will give PACS an option to increase their economic activities and diversify their income stream. As of now, 2 PACS from the state of Jharkhand have applied for LPG distributorship under CC Category.
- 10. PACS as PM Bharatiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra for improving access to generic medicines at rural level:** PACS have been allowed to operate Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya JanaushadhiKendras (PMBJKs), which will provide additional income source to them and ease the access to quality generic medicines for rural citizens. So far, 4,523 PACS/ cooperative societies have applied online for PMBJKs, out of which 2,744 PACS have been given initial approval by Pharmaceutical & Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI) and 785 PACS have received drug license from State Drug Controllers and 716 PACS have got store codes from PMBI which are ready to function as PM Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendras.

- 11. PACS as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhhi Kendras (PMKSK):** PACS have been enabled to operate PMKSK for ensuring easy accessibility of fertilizer & related services to farmers in the country. As per the information shared by Department of Fertilizers (GOI) and States/ UTs, a total of 36,193 PACS are functioning as PMKSK.
- 12. PACS to carry out O&M of rural piped water supply schemes (PWS):** PACS have been made eligible to carry out the Operations & Maintenance (O&M) of PWS in rural areas. As per information received from States/ UTs, 934 PACS have been identified/ selected by 13 States/ UTs to provide O&M services at Panchayat/ Village level.
- 13. Convergence of PM-KUSUM at PACS level:** Farmers associated with PACS can adopt solar agricultural water pumps and install photovoltaic modules in their farms.
- 14. Micro-ATMs to Bank Mitra Cooperative Societies for providing doorstep financial services:** Dairy and Fisheries cooperative societies can be made Bank Mitras of DCCBs and StCBs. To ensure their ease of doing business, transparency and financial inclusion, Micro-ATMs are also being given to these Bank Mitra Co-operative Societies with support from NABARD to provide 'Door-step Financial Services'. To facilitate effective implementation of the initiative, an SOP has been launched on 19th September 2024. So far, 8,322 Micro-ATMs have been distributed to Bank Mitra cooperative societies in Gujarat.
- 15. Rupay Kisan Credit Card to Members of Milk Cooperatives:** In order to expand the reach of DCCBs/ StCBs and to provide necessary liquidity to the members of Dairy Cooperative societies, Rupay Kisan Credit Cards (KCCs) are being distributed to the members of cooperatives for providing credit at comparatively lower interest rates and to enable them to carry out other financial transactions. To facilitate effective implementation of the initiative, an SOP has been launched on 19th September 2024. So far, 7,43,810 Rupay KCC have been distributed in the State of Gujarat.
- 16. Formation of Fish Farmer Producer Organization (FFPO):** In order to provide market linkage and processing facilities to fishermen, NCDC has registered 70 FFPOs in the initial phase. In addition, Department of Fisheries, Government of India has allocated the work of converting 1000 existing fisheries cooperative societies into FFPOs to National Cooperative Development Corporation. National Cooperative Development Corporation has identified 997 Primary Fisheries Cooperatives Societies to strengthen as FFPOs, with an approved outlay of Rs. 280.65 crore.
- 17. White Revolution 2.0:** The Ministry of Cooperation has launched an initiative to usher Cooperative-led "White Revolution 2.0" aimed at expanding cooperative coverage, employment generation and women's empowerment with an objective "To increase the milk procurement of dairy cooperatives by 50% from the present level over next five years by providing market access to dairy farmers in uncovered areas and increasing the share of dairy cooperatives in organised sector." The SOP for White Revolution 2.0 was launched on 19.11.2024 by Hon'ble Home & Cooperation Minister in presence of Hon'ble Minister of

Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying. On 25.12.2024 Hon'ble Home & Cooperation Minister in the presence of Hon'ble Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying inaugurated 6,600 newly set up Dairy Cooperative Societies. So far, 8,294 DCSs have been registered in 27 States/UTs.

18. Atmanirbharta Abhiyan: Ministry of Cooperation has launched the initiative to incentivize production of pulses (tur, masur and urad) to reduce dependency on imports, and production of maize to be used for production of ethanol for meeting the goal of Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP) through National Cooperative Consumer Federation (NCCF) and National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED). Both have developed their own web portal i.e. e-samyukti and e-samridhi respectively for registration of farmers through cooperatives. Both have assured pre-registered farmers of tur, urad, masur and maize to procure 100% of their produce at Minimum Support Price (MSP). However, if market prices exceed the MSP, farmers are free to sell their produce in the open market. A total of 12,64,212 farmers have already registered on the e-samyukti portal of NCCF. Similarly, 6,75,178 farmers have registered themselves on the e-samridhi portal of NAFED.

B. Strengthening the Urban and Rural Cooperative Banks

19. Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) have been allowed to open new branches to expand their business: UCBs can now open new branches up to 10% (maximum 5 branches) of the existing number of branches in the previous financial year without prior approval of RBI.

20. UCBs have been allowed by RBI to offer doorstep services to their customers: Door step banking facility can now be provided by UCBs. Account holders of these banks can now avail various banking facilities at home such as cash withdrawal, cash deposit, KYC, demand draft and life certificate for pensioners, etc.

21. Cooperative banks have been allowed to make one-time settlement of outstanding loans, like Commercial Banks: Co-operative banks, through board-approved policies, can now provide the process for settlement with borrowers, along with technical write-off.

22. Time limit increased to achieve Priority Sector Lending (PSL) targets given to UCBs: RBI has extended the timeline for UCBs to achieve Priority Sector Lending (PSL) targets by two years i.e., up to March 31, 2026.

23. A Nodal Officer designated in RBI for regular interaction with UCBs: In order to meet the long pending demand of the cooperative sector for closer coordination and focused interaction, RBI has notified a nodal officer.

24. Individual housing loan limit more than doubled by RBI for Rural and Urban Cooperative Banks:

- a. Housing loan limit of Urban Cooperative Banks has now been doubled from Rs. 30 lakhs to Rs.60 lakhs.
- b. Housing loan limit of Rural Cooperative Banks has been increased to two and a half times to Rs.75 lakhs.

25. Rural Cooperative Banks will now be able to lend to commercial real estate/ residential housing sector, thereby diversifying their business: This will not only help Rural Cooperative Banks to diversify their business, but will benefit Housing cooperative societies also.

26. License fee reduced for Cooperative Banks: License fee for onboarding Cooperative Banks to 'Aadhaar Enabled Payment System' (AePS) has been reduced by linking it to the number of transactions. Cooperative financial institutions will also be able to get the facility free of cost for the first three months of the pre-production phase. With this, farmers will now be able to get the facility of banking at their home with through biometrics.

27. Non-scheduled UCBs, StCBs and DCCBs notified as Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) in CGTMSE Scheme to increase the share of cooperatives in lending: Cooperative banks will now be able to take advantage of risk coverage up to 85 percent on the loans given. Also, cooperative sector enterprises will also be able to get collateral free loans from cooperative banks now.

28. Notification of Scheduling norms for including Urban Cooperative Banks: UCBs that meet the 'Financially Sound and Well Managed' (FSWM) criteria and have maintained the minimum deposits required for classification as Tier 3 for the last two years are now eligible to be included in Schedule II of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 and get 'Scheduled' status.

29. Monetary ceiling doubled by RBI for Gold Loan: RBI has doubled monetary ceiling from Rs. 2 lakhs to Rs.4 lakhs, for those UCBs that meet the PSL targets.

30. Umbrella Organization for Urban Cooperative Banks: RBI has accorded approval to the National Federation of Urban Co-operative Banks and Credit Societies Ltd. (NAFCUB) for the formation of an Umbrella Organization (UO) for the UCB sector, which will provide necessary IT infrastructure and operational support to around 1,500 UCBs.

C. Relief to Cooperative Societies in the Income Tax Act

31. Surcharge reduced from 12% to 7% for co-operative societies having income between Rs. 1 to 10 Cr.: This will reduce the burden of Income Tax on Cooperative Societies and more capital will be available with them to work for the benefit of their members.

32. MAT reduced for cooperatives from 18.5% to 15%: With this provision, now there is parity between Cooperative Societies and Companies in this regard.

- 33. Relief in cash transactions under section 269ST of the Income Tax Act:** In order to remove difficulties in cash transactions by cooperatives under Section 269ST of IT Act, Government has issued a clarification that cash transaction of less than Rs. 2 lakhs done by a cooperative society with its distributor in a day will be considered separately, and will not be charged with income tax penalty.
- 34. Tax cut for new manufacturing Cooperative societies:** Government has decided that a flat lower tax rate of 15% will be charged, compared to an earlier rate of up to 30% plus surcharge, for new cooperatives commencing manufacturing activities by March 31, 2024. This will encourage the formation of new cooperative societies in the manufacturing sector.
- 35. Increase in limit of Cash Deposits and Cash Loans by PACS and PCARDBs:** Government has enhanced the limit for Cash Deposits and Cash Loans by PACS and Primary Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (PCARDBs) from Rs. 20,000 to Rs.2 lakh per member. This provision will facilitate their activities, increase their business and benefit members of their societies.
- 36. Increase in the limit of Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) in Cash Withdrawal:** Government has increased the cash withdrawal limit of cooperative societies without deduction of tax at source from Rs.1 crore to Rs.3 crore per year. This provision will save Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) for cooperative societies, which will enhance their liquidity.

D. Revival of Cooperative Sugar Mills

- 37. Relief from Income Tax to Sugar Cooperative Mills:** Government has issued a clarification that cooperative sugar mills would not be subjected to additional income tax for paying higher sugarcane prices to farmers up to Fair and Remunerative or State Advised Price, from April, 2016 onwards.
- 38. Resolution of decades old pending issues related to Income Tax of Sugar Cooperative Mills:** Government has made a provision in its Union Budget 2023-24, wherein Sugar cooperatives have been allowed to claim as expenditure their payments to sugarcane farmers for the period prior to assessment year 2016–17, giving them a relief of more than Rs.46,000 crore.
- 39. Rs.10,000 crore loan scheme launched for strengthening of Sugar Cooperative Mills:** Government has launched a scheme through NCDC for setting up ethanol plants or cogeneration plants or for working capital or for all three purposes. So far, the Ministry has released Rs. 875 crore to NCDC (Rs. 500 crore in FY 2022-23 and Rs. 375 crore in FY 2024-25) under the scheme and as of now, NCDC has sanctioned 80 loans amounting to Rs.9,169.76 crore to 44 CSMs.

40. Preference to Cooperative Sugar Mills in purchase of ethanol: Cooperative Sugar Mills have now been put at par with private companies for ethanol procurement by Government of India under the Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP).

41. Strengthening of Cooperative Sugar Mills by converting their molasses-based ethanol plants into multi feed ethanol plants: Ministry of Cooperation has taken initiative in consultation with National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd. (NFCSFL) for conversion of existing molasses-based ethanol plants of CSMs into multi feed ethanol plants. The Cooperative Sugar Mills (CSMs) also produce ethanol from molasses and sugar syrup by installing ethanol production plants. However, the availability of raw material i.e., molasses and sugar syrup for production of ethanol is limited by many factors viz, Government Policy on diversion of sugarcane syrup, B heavy molasses for production of ethanol and duration of sugar cane crushing season and availability of sugarcane depending on rainfall, etc. On account of these limiting factors, the CSMs having ethanol plants are not able to operate them at full capacity round the year. The Government of India has prioritized maize for production of ethanol, therefore, it is prudent for CSMs to convert their existing ethanol production units into multi feed ethanol production units so that they are able to produce ethanol by using maize as raw material.

42. Reduction in GST on molasses from 28% to 5%: Government has decided to reduce the GST on molasses from 28% to 5% which will enable cooperative sugar mills to earn more profits for their members by selling molasses to distilleries with higher margins.

E. Three new National Level Multi-State Societies

43. New National Multi-State Cooperative Seed Society for certified seeds: Government has established a new apex multi-state cooperative seed society under the MSCS Act, 2002, namely Bharatiya Beej Sahakari Samiti Limited (BBSSL) as an umbrella organization for quality seed cultivation, production and distribution under a single brand. During the Rabi 2024-25 season, 57 Varieties of 12 Crops were sown/ planted in 5,596 hectares. Similarly, during the Kharif 2024 season, 23 varieties of 8 Crops have been planted on 176.59 hectare of land. So far, 17,425 PACS/ Cooperative Societies have become members of BBSSL.

44. New National Multi-State Cooperative Organic Society for organic farming: Government has established a new apex multi-state cooperative organic society under the MSCS Act, 2002, namely National Cooperative Organics Limited (NCOL) as an umbrella organization to produce, distribute and market certified and authentic organic products. So far, 5,184 PACS/ cooperative societies have become members of NCOL. NCOL has launched 13 products i.e., Whole Wheat Flour, Moong Dhuli, Moong Whole, Moong Chilka Dal, Moong Split, Arhar/ Toor Dal, Urad Whole, Urad Dal, Masoor Whole, Masoor Malka, Brown Chana, Rajma Chitra, Chana Dal under 'Bharat Organics Brand'.

45. New National Multi-State Cooperative Export Society for promoting exports: Government has established a new apex multi-state cooperative export society under the MSCS Act, 2002, namely National Cooperative Export Limited (NCEL) as an umbrella organization to give thrust to exports from cooperative sector. So far, 7,933 PACS/ cooperative societies have become members of NCEL. Till date, NCEL has achieved a total export quantity of commodities (rice, sugar, onion, wheat, maize and Jeera) of 12,52,083 Metric tonnes with an exported value of Rs. 5,099.24 crore.

F. Capacity Building in Cooperatives

46. Promotion of training and awareness through National Council for Cooperative Training (NCCT): By increasing its reach, NCCT has conducted 2,872 training programs and provided training to 2,35,060 participants till December 2024.

G. Use of Information Technology for 'Ease of Doing Business'

47. Computerization of the Central Registrar's Office: Central Registrar's office has been computerized to create a digital ecosystem for Multi-State Cooperative Societies, which will assist in processing applications and service requests in a time bound manner.

48. Scheme for computerization of office of RCSs in States/ Union Territories: To increase 'ease of doing business' for cooperative societies and create a digital ecosystem for transparent paperless regulation in all the States/ UTs, a Centrally Sponsored Project for Computerization of RCS Offices has been approved by the Government. Grants are provided for the purchase of hardware, development of software, etc. to the States/ UTs. So far, proposals received from 35 States/ UTs have been sanctioned by GOI.

49. Computerization of Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (ARDBs): To strengthen the long-term cooperative credit structure, the project of computerization of 1,851 units of Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (ARDBs) spread across 13 States/ Union Territories has been approved by the Government. NABARD is the implementing agency for the project. So far, proposals from 10 States/UTs have been received and sanctioned. Further, GOI share amounting to Rs 5.08 crore has been released to 9 States/UTs in FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25 for procurement of hardware, digitization and setting up of support system.

H. Other Initiatives

50. New National Cooperative Database for authentic and updated data repository: A database of cooperatives in the country has been prepared with the support of State Governments to facilitate stakeholders in policy making and implementation of programmes/ schemes related to cooperatives across the country. So far, data of more than 8.2 lakh cooperatives across 30 sectors, with approximately 30 crore members, has been captured in the database.

51. Cooperative Ranking Framework: The Government launched the Cooperative Ranking Framework on 24th January 2025 to rank cooperatives State-wise and sector-wise. The ranking

framework enables State RCS to assess Cooperative Societies' performance based on key parameters, including audit compliance, operational activities, financial performance, infrastructure, and basic identity information. The RCS of the States/ UTs, through login on NCD portal, can generate ranks of Cooperative Societies, initially of 7 major sectors namely PACS, Dairy, Fishery, Urban Cooperative Banks, Housing, Credit and Thrift, and Khadi and Gram Udyog. This ranking system aims to enhance transparency, reliability and competitiveness among cooperative societies, ultimately fostering their growth. Furthermore, top-performing cooperative societies in each sector will be recognized and honoured by the Ministry of Cooperation and respective State/ UT authorities, aligning with the objectives of the International Year of Cooperatives.

52. International Year of Cooperatives – 2025 in India: The United Nations has declared 2025 as the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC 2025) to highlight the role of cooperatives in economic growth, social inclusion, and sustainability. The Ministry of Cooperation has developed an action plan in collaboration with National Cooperative Federations, State Governments, Central Ministries and other stakeholders emphasizing transparency, policy reforms, and rural economic transformation through PACS. Activities include training, board meetings, cooperative flag hoisting, exhibitions, and business expansion workshops at District, State, and National levels. To ensure effective execution, committees at national, state, and district levels have been formed. The National Execution Committee (NEC) and National Cooperative Committee (NCC) will oversee coordination and financial mobilization. State Apex Committees (SAC), along with State and District Cooperative Development Committees (SCDC & DCDC), will organize and manage State/ District/ Village level programs.

53. Multi-State Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Act, 2023: Amendment has been brought in the MSCS Act, 2002 to strengthen governance, enhance transparency, increase accountability, reform electoral process and incorporate provisions of 97th Constitutional Amendment in the Multi State Cooperative Societies.

54. Cooperative Ombudsman: Following the amendment in the Multi–State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002, Cooperative Ombudsman has been appointed under Section 85A of the said Act vide gazette notification dated 05.03.2024. The Ombudsman office is fully functional and deals with complaints or appeals, from members of the MSCS regarding their deposits, equitable benefits of the Multi–State Co-operative Society's functioning or any other issue affecting the individual rights of the concerned member.

55. Cooperative Election Authority (CEA): Following the amendment in the Multi–State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002, the Cooperative Election Authority has been set up to strengthen governance and accountability, with a mandate to conduct free and fair election in all MSCSs. Elections in more than 80 MSCS have been conducted successfully up to December, 2024.

- 56. Inclusion of Cooperatives as 'buyers' on GeM portal:** The Government has permitted cooperatives to register as 'buyer' on GeM, enabling them to procure goods and services from over 67 lakh vendors to facilitate economical purchases and greater transparency. So far, 574 cooperative societies have been onboarded on GeM as buyers.
- 57. Expansion of National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) to increase its range and depth:** NCDC has launched new schemes in various sectors such as 'Swayamshakti Sahkar' for SHGs; 'Deerghavadhi Krishak Sahkar' for long term agricultural credit and 'Dairy Sahkar' for dairy. During the current FY 2024-25, so far, total financial assistance of Rs. 84,673.70 crores has been disbursed by NCDC.
- 58. Financial assistance by NCDC for Deep Sea Trawlers:** NCDC is providing financial assistance for projects related to deep sea trawlers in coordination with the Department of Fisheries, Government of India. NCDC has already sanctioned financial assistance of Rs. 25.95 crore for purchase of total 44 deep sea trawlers for the Fisheries Cooperative Societies of Maharashtra and Gujarat State.
- 59. National Cooperation Policy (NCP):** The formulation of New National Cooperation Policy (NCP) has been envisaged to fulfil the mandate of the Ministry of Cooperation - "Sahakar se Samridhi." A National level committee was constituted on 2.9.2022 under Shri Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu with experts of the cooperative sector, representatives from National/ State/ District/ Primary level cooperative societies, Secretaries (Cooperation) and RCSs from States/ UTs and officers from Central Ministries/ Departments to formulate the New Cooperation Policy to provide a framework to unlock the true potential of the Cooperative sector. The Committee conducted four regional workshops throughout the country to elicit suggestions from stakeholders. The received suggestions have been incorporated into the draft policy appropriately. The draft policy has been prepared and is under finalization.
- 60. Refund to Investors of Sahara Group of Societies:** A portal has been launched for making payments to the genuine depositors of the cooperative societies of Sahara Group in a transparent manner. Disbursements have already started after proper identification and submission of proof of their deposits and claims. So far, Rs. 2,025.75 crores have been disbursed to 11.61 lakh applicants.
