

FARMING IN FRONTLINES

Along the quiet stretches of the International Border (IB) in Jammu, a silent revolution is taking root. Here, amidst the echoes of uncertainty and watchful eyes of security forces, farmers are tilling the land with courage and conviction, turning once-vulnerable zones into hubs of agricultural abundance. Once marked by migration, conflict, and caution, these border villages — including Suchetgarh, Arnia, Pargwal, Hiranagar, and RS Pura — are now witnessing a surge in productive farming, supported by government schemes and community-driven efforts. What was once a no-man's-land during tense times is now a green belt of prosperity. Despite occasional ceasefire violations in the past, the 2021 India-Pakistan border ceasefire agreement brought a fresh lease of life to the borderland communities. Farmers who were once hesitant to venture near fencing or live under the shadow of bunkers are now reclaiming every inch of fertile soil. From wheat and mustard to basmati rice, vegetables, and pulses, cultivation in the IB areas has picked up momentum. The fertile alluvial plains, fed by river tributaries and supported by irrigation systems, are yielding bumper crops. The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, in coordination with the Jammu & Kashmir Agriculture Department, has been instrumental in this transformation. Programs such as PM-KISAN (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi), PMFBY (Crop Insurance), Border Area Development Programme (BADDP), Fasal Bima Yojana and Kisan Credit Cards have created safety nets and opportunities for farmers at the border. Additionally, the Jammu Agricultural Extension Officers have been conducting regular awareness camps, introducing high-yield seed varieties, promoting organic farming, and providing farm mechanization tools at subsidized rates. Interestingly, the past year has seen a rise in floriculture and aromatic crop cultivation in certain IB belts. Lavender, marigold, and lemongrass have been introduced in pilot patches near Kathua and Hiranagar, with encouraging results. These crops offer high market value with low water requirements, making them ideal for the climatic profile of the region. Another heartening trend is the growing role of women farmers in these areas. Self-help groups (SHGs), supported by the J&K Rural Livelihood Mission, have trained hundreds of women in mushroom cultivation, poultry farming, and kitchen gardening. The government continues to plan more model villages, cold storage chains, and direct procurement centres to ensure these communities are not left behind. These lands, which once bore the weight of conflict, are now bearing crops, courage, and hope. As the sun rises over fields that stretch to the fence line, farmers in the IB areas carry not just ploughs and seeds — but the soul of a nation that grows stronger with every harvest.

WAVES Bazaar: India's Lagaan Moment on the Global Stage of Media & Entertainment

■ AAMIR KHAN

India is a key player in the entertainment and media industry, which is growing at a rapid pace and is thriving in the constantly evolving landscape. We are witnessing a boom in content creation across diverse platforms fueled by the rise of digital streaming services, regional language productions, and a tech-savvy audience that demands fresh, engaging, and inclusive narratives. It is important to realize the immense potential that this sector holds for India, not just as a source of entertainment but as a powerful medium for cultural expression, economic growth, and global influence. World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit, known by the acronym WAVES, hosted by the Government of India in Mumbai, Maharashtra, from May 1 to 4, 2025, promises to be a testimony to India's growing stature, and WAVES Bazaar is a key component of the event. As someone who has spent decades in the industry, I believe that storytelling has the power to unite, inspire, and transform. With WAVES and WAVES Bazaar, we are taking a bold step towards creating a more collaborative and inclusive future for the global entertainment community.

WAVES Bazaar attempts to be a revolutionary online marketplace designed to connect professionals, businesses, and creators across the global entertainment ecosystem. With its mission to foster seamless collaboration, WAVES Bazaar attempts to serve as the ultimate business hub for the Media & Entertainment industry, enabling professionals to expand their reach, discover new opportunities, and engage in high-value partnerships. Officially launched on January 27, 2025, by Shri Ashwini Vaishnav, Union Minister of Information & Broadcasting, Railways, and Electronics & Information Technology, WAVES Bazaar is a key instrument in realizing the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of transforming the WAVES Summit into a flagship event in the



Media & Entertainment sector, akin to the Davos Summit for the finance and economy sectors.

Since the launch, I believe 5500 buyers, more than 2000 sellers and approximately 1000 projects have been registered on the portal from different verticals of M&E sector. In the long term, the portal hopes to evolve into a comprehensive content marketplace and networking hub for the M&E industry, featuring AI-powered profiling and matchmaking tools. It will also host online pitching sessions, virtual B2B meetings, webinars, and more, all within the platform.

WAVES Bazaar is a one-of-a-kind e-marketplace that brings together stakeholders from across the Media & Entertainment spectrum including film, television, animation, gaming, advertising, XR, music, sound design, radio, and more. The platform will act as a bridge between buyers and sellers, ensuring that industry professionals can easily showcase their expertise, connect with potential clients, and secure meaningful collaborations.

Whether you're a filmmaker searching for a production partner, an advertiser seeking the right platform, a game developer looking for investors, or an artist wanting to showcase your work to global audiences, WAVES Bazaar hopes to provide a dynamic space for industry professionals to network, collaborate, and grow their businesses.

WAVES Bazaar is an integrated B2B marketplace revolutionizing how the global entertainment industry connects, collaborates, and grows. Bringing together professionals from film, television, music, gaming, animation, advertising, and immersive tech like XR, AR, and VR, the platform provides a comprehensive space for listing, discovering, and transacting across diverse creative sectors. Whether you're a producer seeking distribution, a game developer pitching new IPs, or a sound designer looking for licensing opportunities, WAVES Bazaar streamlines the entire process with category-specific listings, secure viewing rooms, and curated networking features.

Designed for seamless business interac-

tions, WAVES Bazaar empowers both sellers and buyers to find the right partners and opportunities without geographical limitations. Sellers—from film studios and animation houses to podcast creators and marketing agencies—can showcase their services and content to a global audience of investors, distributors, and collaborators. At the same time, buyers gain access to high-quality, cutting-edge projects, while investors discover co-production deals and scalable ventures. The platform also integrates exclusive access to industry events, viewing rooms, investor meet-ups, and live screenings, ensuring that meaningful deals go beyond virtual interactions.

The highlight of WAVES Bazaar will be its physical presence at the WAVES Summit at the Jio Convention Centre, BKC, Mumbai from 1st to 4th May 2025. Selected participants from the digital marketplace will gain the opportunity to pitch, network, and close deals in person with top-tier stakeholders. From curated screenings to live discussions and collaboration forums, this summit merges the digital and physical to shape the future of entertainment networking. With its innovative approach, WAVES Bazaar is not just a platform—it's a movement towards a smarter, more connected, and globally inclusive entertainment industry.

As artists, we constantly seek spaces that challenge us, inspire us, and push us to think beyond the conventional. WAVES attempts to be such a space—a movement that encourages collaboration across languages, cultures, and mediums. I'm proud to be a part of this visionary journey, and I look forward to seeing how WAVES will redefine the way we connect, create, and celebrate stories—not just in India, but around the world. I believe we are witnessing India's Lagaan moment in the media and entertainment world—a moment of unity, courage, and vision that will echo far beyond our borders. Let us come together to imagine, to share, and to build a future where every voice has a chance to be heard.

(The writer is Actor and Producer)

Enchanting Dudu Valley

■ GL KHAJURIA

Dudu Valley in Udhampur district lies amidst the lush green vibrant coniferous forest intermingled with broad leaved trees, shrubs, herbs, climber with multi-hued variety of other flora. The valley lies around 171 kms from Jammu city itself. The break up journey through local buses, hired/ owned vehicles is from Jammu to Chenani (100 kms), Chenani to Man Talai (50 kms) through various hamlets viz Basti, Bast, Gauri Kund, Sudhmahadev (where 2800 years old lord Shivas temple) exists. At Sudhmahadev, an annual Shiv mela is religiously celebrated where pilgrim across the country assemble in the form of a pilgrimage in the first week of June every year.

The journey onwards passes through Mantali (12 kms) prominently famous as a beautiful spot amidst deodar, kail and chir forest. Here, late Sh. Dharendra Bharnchhari raised beautiful structures for yoga center of international fame apart from petrol pump, gaushalla, mini zoo, rosary, and a swimming pool. But unfortunately with the passing away of yog guru for back around 90's in a helicopter crash while landing under a dense fall. All his further ambitious planning stood at standstill. It is painful to add over here that many writers have of repeatedly emphasized about the hefty invested money on yoga ashram together with allied developments to warrant their up keep, preservation and further enhancement to restore the beauty of the spot by bringing it under Patnitop Development Authority (PDA) but nothing concrete has so far been materialized.

The writer was posted as a Forest Officer (Headquarter Chenani) had occasionally deliberations with yog guru who used to tell that he had taken up the issue with Hilton Group Of Hotels for the further development of this picturesque spot but unfortunately no head way could be made. (For the visual illustration the photographs of the time) are within this write up.

It would be incomplete to make a mention about the leg-



endary multistarrer movie "Jani Dushman" by R K Kohli, most part of the movie was shot at Chenani and its mesmerizing spots of this area. Sh Dharendra Bharnchhari was forest conscious and as requested, he raised a nursery with around one lakh seedling in poly parts which were afterwards were planted out in the vicinity of the area. Apart from that he was a socially very affectionate as he provided employment to the locals of the area who still remember him whole heartedly.

Now, onwards from Mantalai the road winds through various hamlets viz Bap, Srara, Marothi, Koi, Latti, Dhooana, Jakhed and finally Dudu valley. However this road has further extension to seri the main base camping point. And uphill there is suezdhar and further trekking the suezdhar is hazardous. Sauz Dhar forms the northern aspect of the dudu valley.

It will be most interesting and enchanting to make a mention that while the writer with his staff was conducting markings in

the dudu valley on the southern aspect, the most of the time stayed at chari forest rest house. It was to my astonishment while viewing northern aspect of the dudu valley where there were twinkling's like glow worms. And on enquiry from the locals, I came to know that there is a vast potential of multi medicinal herbs. Also they told that one can conveniently trek from base camp chari during the day. But with the sunset, the herbs emit fragrance which makes one drowsy and it becomes cumbersome to cross the area.

The top of the Sauz Dhar is just like a small plateau and on the other side there are lush green forests of deodar, kail, coniferous and spruce with broad leaved trees such as maple, rhododendron. And descending down one lands in charming Chenab Valley. So, descending down from the top of Sauz Dhar means to land into Bhadharwah Valley which is still more thrilling and enchanting. One is though indeed lucky to have a view of the valley to have a closed look of the natural bounty.

Concluding, therefore, it is prudent to mention here that nature has all along been worshipped across the globe for its timelessness. The mesmerizing meadows and mountains make for a great home. Everyone experiences richness of nature and all its bounty at least one's lifetime. Light amongst stars and the open sky, the green grass and towering trees that give us shade, a lake are snow capped mountain all make breath taking moments of feeling of being one with nature.

And William Blake says trees which move some to tears of Joy is in the eyes of others, only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see nature in all ridicule and deformity and small sears see at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, nature is imaginative itself.

Let us, there, spend time with nature, accepting the diversity and brilliance of what is really a gift to mankind. Let us learn to revere and preserve nature at all costs and at all times.

(The author is former Dy. Conservator of Forest, J&K)

Why India's First National Cooperative University Matters

■ BALASUBRAMANIAN IYER

The passage of the bill for India's first national cooperative university, Tribhuvan Sahkari University, in Parliament marks a historic milestone in the journey of the Indian cooperative movement. That this development comes during the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives only adds to its significance. As Union Minister for Cooperation Shri. Amit Shah noted, this university is poised to become a powerful vehicle in realizing the vision of "Sahkar Se Samridhhi"—"Prosperity Through Cooperation."

India is home to the largest cooperative movement in the world, comprising over 800,000 cooperatives and 287 million members. Deeply embedded in the daily lives of people—from roti, kapda, to makan (food, clothing, and shelter) —cooperatives are more than just economic institutions; they represent an expression of community-driven development, economic equity, and social justice. The establishment of the Ministry of Cooperation (MoC) in 2021 signaled a renewed national commitment to this sector, aimed at expanding its reach, improving its efficiency, and integrating it as a cornerstone of inclusive development.

Ministry of Cooperation has taken commendable steps: allocating ₹2,516 crore to computerize 67,390 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS), introducing model byelaws adopted in 32 states to enable over 25 business activities, creat-

ing 2 lakh new multipurpose cooperatives, supporting 1,100 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and transforming 44,000 PACS into Common Service Centers. Tax incentives, easier access to credit, and decentralized storage solutions are enhancing cooperatives' operational capacities. The establishment of three new national federations for seeds, exports, and organic products further signal that cooperatives are being positioned as key agents of India's development.

Yet, for all its scale and reach, the cooperative sector's education and training infrastructure remains fragmented, under-developed, and unevenly distributed. The demand for qualified professionals—from managerial and administrative to technical and operational—is far outpacing the available supply. Equally critical is the need to invest in the capacity-building of existing employees and board members, many of whom lack access to regular training or structured learning opportunities. Without standardized curricula, quality assurance, and institutional coherence, the sector cannot fully realize its potential or sustain its growth. There is also a pressing need to attract newer and younger generations to the cooperative movement—individuals who are not only professionally equipped but also inspired by cooperative values and driven to innovate within the sector. This is where Tribhuvan Sahkari University can play a transformative role:



by serving as a hub for education, training, and research that builds capacity across all levels while fostering a new generation of cooperative leaders.

Named after Shri Tribhuvandas Patel, the visionary architect of the AMUL model, and based in Anand, the cradle of India's dairy cooperative revolution, the university is as much a symbolic tribute as it is a strategic intervention. The choice of the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA)—an institution that has pioneered cooperative management edu-

functional areas, and the new generation of youth interested in ethical, sustainable, and inclusive business models. The university will support this through flexible learning modules, certification programs, degree offerings, digital access, and field-based research—all rooted in cooperative values of self-help, democratic control, and mutual responsibility.

Importantly, the university can also serve as a national knowledge platform, facilitating dialogue among stakeholders, providing evidence-based policy insights, and supporting innovations tailored to rural realities. With India's diverse cooperative landscape—spanning dairy, credit, housing, fisheries, textiles, and more—the university has the potential to act as a converging space for multidisciplinary expertise, linking academia, practitioners, and policymakers.

Globally, cooperative education has been foundational to the success of cooperative movements. As far back as the Rochdale Pioneers in 1844, the original rules of conduct included allocating a portion of profits to education. The fifth Cooperative Principle—Education, Training and Information—remains a core pillar of the movement, ensuring that members, leaders, and the broader community understand and uphold the cooperative model. It is this deep-rooted educational tradition that sustains cooperative governance, fosters innovation, and strengthens accountability.

In this context, Tribhuvan Sahkari University can be more than just an academic institution—it can become a national and global knowledge hub for cooperative development, a space where practice meets policy, and learning fuels leadership. At the ICA Global Cooperative Conference held in New Delhi, Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi called on India to lead the Global South in uniting cooperatives to build shared platforms, tackle common challenges, and collectively chart a path forward. The national university offers just such a platform—capable of nurturing dialogue, sharing best practices, and strengthening south-south cooperation among cooperatives.

In a world that is increasingly seeking inclusive, democratic, and sustainable economic models, India's cooperative movement—and now its first cooperative university—offers not just inspiration but direction. The university must rise to this moment by being accessible, innovative, and impact-driven, fostering leadership at every level of the movement. The foundation has been laid; it is now time to build an institution worthy of the vision it represents—one that will educate, empower, and energize generations to come through the enduring power of cooperation—and ensure cooperatives build a better future for all.

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