

**Address by H.E. Ms Neeta Bhushan, High Commissioner
on the occasion of Navreh Festival and J&K State Promotion
(17th May 2025)**

Namaskar and Warm greetings to everyone,

Mr Sudesh Wasoori ji, President of Vitasta NZ,

Distinguished leaders and members of Indian Diaspora,

Friends, Well-Wishers,

Ladies & Gentleman!

Namaskar and a very Happy Navreh to all...

Today, as we gathered here to celebrate Navreh, the Kashmiri New Year, a tradition that goes back thousands of years, a festival that represents renewal, hope, and a deep spiritual connection with nature and heritage celebrated by Hindu community in J&K. Its reflected roots, values, and the vibrant culture of Kashmir, often referred to as “Paradise on Earth.” Despite challenges, the Kashmiri spirit continues to shine through its art, music, cuisine, and traditions. It reminds us of who we are and what we stand for—peace, unity, and progress.

2. While we celebrate our rich cultural heritage today, it is also important to look ahead towards the bright future of U.T. of Jammu & Kashmir as a hub of business, tourism, and trade. Jammu & Kashmir has unmatched natural beauty. From the snow-capped peaks of Gulmarg and Sonamarg to the spiritual serenity of Vaishno Devi and Amarnath, the

region is a year-round destination. Adventure tourism, eco-tourism, spiritual tourism, and heritage trails are opening new doors for travelers and entrepreneurs alike.

3. The Union Territory of J&K is seeing a wave of development and investment. The government has introduced progressive policies to attract businesses in sectors such as horticulture, handicrafts, handloom, renewable energy, IT, and food processing. With new infrastructure, improved connectivity, and investor-friendly reforms, the region is becoming a promising destination for business growth.

4. Today, I would like to take a moment to celebrate two historic milestones that are transforming the future of Jammu & Kashmir milestones that represent not only engineering excellence but also a strong commitment to regional growth and national unity.

First, Chenab Railway Bridge: a marvel of modern engineering and now the world's highest railway bridge towering 359 meters (1,178 feet) above the Chenab River, it connects Kashmir Valley to India's national railway network, significantly improving accessibility, trade, and economic development in the region.

Equally inspiring is the successful trial run of the Vande Bharat Express, which recently reached Srinagar in January 2025. This high-speed train service once launched by Hon'ble PM, will connect Delhi to Srinagar offering faster and more comfortable travel for thousands of passengers.

Most importantly, it will boost tourism in the region, opening up new opportunities for local businesses.

5. Let us not forget the unique products of Jammu & Kashmir: Pashmina shawls, saffron, dry fruits, papier-mâché crafts, and exquisite carpets. These are not just goods, they are symbols of our cultural excellence. By promoting local artisans and traders, we support livelihoods and help preserve centuries-old traditions.

6. I would like to sincerely thank Shri Sudesh Wasoori ji and the entire team at Vitasta NZ for their hard work and dedication and took responsibility to promote the beauty and potential of U.T. of Jammu & Kashmir on the world stage.

7. Let this festival be a reminder that every new beginning holds the promise of growth, harmony, and unity. Let us celebrate Navreh with joy, and with a renewed commitment to contribute to the bright future of Jammu & Kashmir.

Navreh Mubarak to you and your families!

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
