

Ladakh to have SE Asia's first Night Sky Sanctuary: Dr Jitendra

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Ladakh will soon have South East Asia's first Night Sky Sanctuary, Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh, has said.

The Minister informed that the Sanctuary is being set up with the help of Indian Institute of Astrophysics Bengaluru, which is affiliated to the Department of Science & Technology, Govt of India. He profusely appreciated the Lt Governor of Ladakh, Brig (Retd) B.D. Mishra for his active cooperation in the project.

On behalf of the Ministry of Science & Technology and CSIR, we will request Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate the Night Sky Reserve at Hanle, the Minister said.

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, was addressing the gathering after inaugurating the exhibition 'Ladakh's Pride' being held here to mark the fourth anniversary of the establishment of the Union Territory of Ladakh.

The exhibition is organised by Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Leh at the initiative of Chief Executive Councillor (CEC) Tashi Gyalson.



Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh speaking after inaugurating the exhibition 'Ladakh's Pride' to mark the 4th anniversary of creation of the Union Territory of Ladakh, at New Delhi.

The Dark Sky Reserve will be located at Hanle village in Eastern Ladakh as a part of Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary. It will boost Astro-tourism in India and will be one of the world's highest-located sites for optical, infra-red, and gamma-ray telescopes. Spread over 1,073 square kilometres, the Night Sky Reserve is located within the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent to the Indian Astronomical Observatory, the second-highest optical telescope in the world, of Indian Institute of Astrophysics at Hanle at an elevation of 4500 metres.

"At a time when the country is celebrating the success of Chandrayaan-3

and Aditya-L1 solar mission, this Dark Sky Reserve will fascinate the stargazers, being among only the 15 or 16 of its kind in the world," said Dr Jitendra.

The Union Minister said that a tripartite MoU was signed among the UT Administration, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Leh and the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) for launching the Dark Space Reserve. He said, the site will have activities to help in boosting local tourism and economy through interventions of Science and Technology.

Dr Jitendra complimented the LAHDC-Leh for organising the exhibition 'Ladakh's Pride' outside Ladakh. The exhibition showcases GI-tagged treasures of Ladakh, - Seabuckthorn, Raktsey Karpoapricots, Ladakh wood carvings and Pashmina wool.

The Minister said that commercial cultivation of three medicinal plants is also being promoted at a height of above 15,000 feet. This includes "Sanjeevani Booti", locally known as "Sola", which has very high life saving and therapeutic properties.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that Department of Atomic Energy will set up facilities in the UT for Gamma Irradiation Technology for preservation/shelf life extension of fruits and vegetables. He was happy to note that

Apricot from Ladakh is now being exported to Dubai.

"This is the first of its kind roadmap devoted exclusively to the Ladakh region," he said.

Underlining that Ladakh is "India's youngest Union Territory, but it is also India's oldest civilization", Dr Jitendra Singh said, "Ladakh, the land of the Buddhist Lamas, is a peace loving region, but confronted with a history of political and other turmoil. PM Modi, for the first time, fulfilled the aspirations of the Ladakhii people by forming the UT of Ladakh on 31st October 2019."

"Though the first Ladakh Buddhist Association delegation met then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1949 seeking separate UT status for the remote region, the dream fructified only seven decades later under PM Modi," he said.

"PM Modi walks the talk", said Dr Jitendra Singh, quoting PM Modi, "My efforts will be to fulfil aspirations of the neglected remote regions of the country including Ladakh and the North-East."

In his address, Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC-Leh, Tashi Gyalson thanked Dr Jitendra Singh.

Executive Councillor (Minority/Forest), LAHDC-Leh, Ghulam Mehdi also spoke on the occasion.



Kashmir Advocate's Association marks Constitution Day with grand celebration

Pays homage to 26/11 Mumbai Attacks Martyrs

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: In a significant event held at the Common Bar room in the Central Administrative Tribunal Srinagar Bench, the Kashmir Advocate's Association (KAA) orchestrated a profound gathering to mark the celebration of Law Day.

Led by Waseem Gul, President of KAA, the function witnessed the active participation of prominent legal figures, including Mubashir Majid Malik, Vice President of KAA, and S. Jeetender Singh, General Secretary of KAA.

The distinguished presence of legal luminaries added prestige to the occasion, with Deputy Solicitor General of India T M Shamsi, Senior Additional Advocate General of J&K High Court and Retired District & Sessions Judge Abdul Rashid Malik,

Director Litigation Kashmir Khursheed Ahmad Bhat and Advocate Farooq Ahmad Ganie President Dooru Bar Association gracing the event.

The gathering commenced with a solemn moment of reflection as a two-minute silence was observed to pay homage to the martyrs of 26/11.

This poignant gesture served as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made for the cause of justice and the rule of law.

The meeting delved into the heart of constitutional principles, as the preamble of the Constitution was read aloud.

This symbolic act underscored the commitment of all attendees to uphold the constitutional values that form the bedrock of India's legal system.

Waseem Gul President Kashmir Advocate's Association, in his

address, emphasized the crucial role of legal professionals in safeguarding justice and the constitutional framework. The gathering resonated with a shared dedication to the principles enshrined in the Constitution.

As the event drew to a close, the atmosphere was charged with patriotic fervor, culminating in the singing of the national anthem. The entire assembly stood united, reinforcing their allegiance to the nation and its legal foundations.

The Constitution Day celebration organized by the Kashmir Advocate's Association not only served as a platform for legal luminaries to come together but also highlighted the enduring commitment to justice and constitutional ideals that form the cornerstone of the legal fraternity in the region.

India did extremely well under Swachh Bharat Mission: Ex-Mayor

'3 mn people participated in SBM, over 8.9 mn public toilets made'

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Humanity Aid, an NGO in collaboration with GRP Jammu conducted cleanliness cum awareness drive at Railway Station Jammu.

Ex-Mayor Jammu, Rajinder Sharma joined as Chief Guest while DySP GRP Railways Jammu, Albeena Malik was Guest of Honour along with SHO GRP Railway Station Jammu, Madan Sharma.

Speaking on the occasion, Ex-Mayor Jammu, Rajinder Sharma appreciated the NGO Members and shared his valuable experience and gave tips on how to clean the surroundings.



Ex-Mayor Jammu, Rajinder Sharma and others during an awareness drive.

He also motivated the gathering on how to always remain affirmed towards one common goal that is Green India, Clean India.

"PM Modi had given a call for Swachh Bharat after which cleanliness improved throughout the

country," Sharma said adding, "All the Wards of Jammu Municipal Corporation have now become open defecation free."

He said that awareness about cleanliness has improved among the youth

of the country and they have now become brand ambassadors of cleanliness.

"The set deadline of 2030 by the United Nations for India to achieve sixth level for open defecation free nation has been achieved much before," the Ex-

Mayor said.

"Three million people have participated in Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) throughout the country from different organizations," he maintained adding, "Over 8.9 million public toilets have been made across the country under this mission."

DSP GRP Railway Jammu and SHO GRP Railway Station Jammu also congratulated all the members for the beautiful conduction of all the activities covered under 'Swachhata He Sewa'.

At last, vote of thanks was given by Swarn Veer Singh Jaral, President Humanity Aid NGO.

Sham Lal presides over valedictory function of First J&K Orthodontic Symposium



Former Health Minister, Sham Lal Sharma and others during closing ceremony of J&K Orthodontic Symposium.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Former Health Minister, Sham Lal Sharma, presided as the Chief Guest for the valedictory function of the first Orthodontic Symposium in J&K, held at Radisson Blu, here on Sunday.

The Special Guest of Honour, Brijesh Sharma, SP Raj Bhawan and Guest of Honour, Dr Ritu Duggal, Chief CDER AAIMS New Delhi, also graced the event.

During his address, Sham Lal Sharma congratulated Dr. Akshay Gupta, Professor & Head of Indira Gandhi

Government Dental College, for organizing this unprecedented event in Jammu and Kashmir.

He emphasized the importance of applying the latest technologies in medical sciences and shared valuable insights about the healthcare facilities across the region. Furthermore, he emphasized the pivotal significance of ethics in medical and dental practices.

Dr. Akshay Gupta, in his closing address, provided a comprehensive overview of the symposium's proceedings. He expressed gratitude to

all dignitaries, guest speakers, and delegates, making special mention of the Jammu Orthodontic Study Group and the Department of Orthodontics at IGGDC Jammu for their crucial roles in organizing this memorable event.

Dr. Rohit Gupta, Organising Secretary, Dr. Rishabh Gupta, Scientific Convenor, and Dr. Aseem Sharma, Joint Organising Secretary, were acknowledged for their important contribution among others, who were honoured with certificates of appreciation.

The occasion also included a ceremony for the distribution of prizes, recognizing the exceptional contributors of the best papers and posters across various categories. President Mahant Rohit Shastri, Dr. Sanjay Sharma, Jagdev Singh Chib, and other members of the Shri Kailash Jyotish Avam Vedic Sanathan Trust were also in attendance.

Yasha Mudgal oversees Special Summary Revision in Doda

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

DODA: Commissioner Secretary, Cooperative, Yasha Mudgal, who is also designated Observer for Electoral Rolls for Doda, on Sunday reviewed progress on Special Summary Revision in the distr.

She had exhaustive interaction with District Election Officer, Harvinder Singh (DC), EROs, AEROs, BLOs and other stakeholders regarding progress on ongoing Special Summary Revision of Photo Electoral Roll. A Preamble Reading Ceremony was also held during the meeting, administered by the Commissioner Secretary on Constitution Day. Pertinently, the ECI has recently started the revision of electoral rolls ahead of the upcoming elections with the objective of preparing error-free electoral rolls with a special focus on the inclusion of new eligible voters, who are going to attain the age of 18 years on 1st of January 2024.

She also conducted an extensive tour of Polling Stations of Doda to oversee the ongoing Special Summary Revision of



Commissioner Secretary, Cooperative, Yasha Mudgal visiting Election office at Doda.

Electoral Rolls with respect to 01/01/2024 as qualifying date.

Yasha Mudgal inspected Election Office, Control Room and Strong Room and expressed satisfaction on the safe custody of EVMs, Election related machinery, and record.

While interacting with representatives of various political parties in the conference hall of DC office complex Doda, Commissioner Secretary urged upon them to appoint and activate Booth Level Agents (BLAs) for assisting Electoral Officials in updating and preparing error free Photo Electoral Rolls for each polling

stations. During her meeting with EROs, AEROs and BLOs, Commissioner Secretary stressed on inclusion of every eligible voters in the Electoral Roll while removing the duplications, and discrepancies so that an error free Photo Electoral Roll is prepared within the stipulated time frame.

Yasha Mudgal asked to set the targets according to the sci-

entific calculations based on the demographic data for registration of new/ eligible voters including Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), so that every eligible citizen is involved in the election of their representative during upcoming elections. She was informed that there are three Assembly Constituencies in Doda, viz 51-Bhadervah, 52- Doda, and 53- Doda West, with 529 polling stations 22 zones and 109 sectors. The registered voters in the district, as of date, are 302227. Besides, 100 percent of voters have been issued EPICs, and the discrepancies in Electoral Rolls have been removed.

Commissioner Secretary along with District Election Officer inspected various polling stations including Government Higher Secondary School (Boys) Doda, Sheep Husbandry Office Doda,

Government Higher Secondary School Girls (Doda), Agriculture Complex Doda, Town Hall Doda, Government Higher Secondary School Khellani, Government High School Jathli, and Government Higher Secondary School Assar. She assessed availability of Assured Minimum Facilities (AMFs), for the voters in the visited polling stations.

DEO apprised the Observer that almost all the polling stations have AMFs in place, and some of the deficiencies noticed by him in the review meeting last week shall be rectified by the 3rd of December 2023.

Yasha Mudgal asked the district administration to arrange a workshop for BLAs and BLOs so that their coordinated efforts can be instrumental in bridging the gap between the electoral machinery and political parties in preparing error free Photo Electoral Roll.

JKMPCL celebrates 'National Milk Day'



JKMPCL officials during a celebration of National Milk Day.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Milk Producers Cooperative Limited (JKMPCL) celebrated National Milk Day with zeal and enthusiasm at the Convention Centre Jammu on Sunday. The event witnessed the presence of registrars, deputy registrars, assistant registrars and around 300 farmer members from various districts of Jammu.

National Milk Day in India is celebrated on November 26th each year to commemorate the birth anniversary of Dr. Verghese Kurien, who is often hailed as the "Father of the White Revolution" in India.

Under the chairmanship of A.K. Angurana (IAS, Retd.), Chairman of JKMPCL, the event brought together key figures in the cooperative sector to commemorate the invaluable contributions of the dairy industry to the nation's

growth. Mohammed Akbar Wani, Registrar Cooperative Societies, Jammu and Kashmir, presided as the Chief Guest, bringing his vast expertise to the event.

Dr. Shubra Sharma, Director of Animal Husbandry, Jammu, graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour, highlighting the crucial role of animal husbandry in the dairy sector's progress and added depth to the celebration.

Around 300 farmer-members associated with JKMPCL across Jammu division actively participated in the celebrations, showcasing unity and solidarity towards the cooperative movement.

As part of the National Milk Day celebrations, JKMPCL recognized and felicitated, progressive cooperatives exhibiting the highest annual bonus distribution. Women milk producers who made remarkable

contributions with the highest milk pouring. Distribution of share certificates among the valued shareholders, acknowledging their integral role in the JKMPCL's success.

A.K. Angurana expressed his gratitude towards all participants and emphasized the pivotal role of cooperation in fostering growth in the dairy sector. He reiterated JKMPCL's commitment to supporting and empowering milk producers.

Chief Executive Officer JKMPCL, Chirag Bhensdadia thanked all those who have helped to make JKMPCL's event on National Milk Day a successful event. He said that the progress of JKMPCL has been achieved due to the sincere interest of the milk producers of Jammu & Kashmir and their commitment to make JKMPCL, a viable cooperative organization for Dairy Development in the Union Territory.

Traditional Kashmiri Kangri is back as temperature touched sub zero

Artisans are busy to meet demand of local market

■ MASROOR AHMAD

BUDGAM: In addition to modern-day heating appliances, such as electric blankets, gas heaters and electric Hammam and traditional Hammams as well as woollens are available to cope with the chilling cold but one thing that Kashmiris think of while making preparations for winter is Kangri, an earthen pot encased in an exquisitely woven wicker basket.

Kashmir experiences harsh winters from November to the ending February every year, with temperatures dropping to -8 degree Celsius, but Kashmiris have traditionally used Kangri and Pheranto fight the cold.

The Kashmir valley is witnessing an increase in demand for a traditional fire pot known as 'Kangri' these days as the winter ice grip strengthens. Artisans in the villages of various districts including Budgam are working tirelessly to produce thousands of Kangri's every day to meet this seasonal surge.

The craft of making Kangris is a community affair. It is woven in four distinct styles, for different occasion like, Khoja Kanger for elite class or rich people used in functions, Mahren Kangir, or bridegroom Kangri which is being gifted to newly wedded couples. Each type has its own set of admirers and



price points, catering to a diverse customer base.

Artisan families that make the Kangris are spread in different villages across Kashmir. The potter makes an earthen bowl. The Kangri-maker weaves the wicker basket around the bowl, providing two handles so that it can be carried easily, besides a base is made to balance the kangri on the floor.

According to artisans, Charar Kangri made in Charari e Sharief area of Budgam district takes the highest preference among customers. It's Charar Kangri that has truly captured the hearts of the local people, it is being made in a charming way for history and culture.

"We produce daily 500 to 1000 Kangris every day in the area. Our Kangris reach every nook and corner

of Kashmir, from North to South, as people throughout the Kashmir valley find 'Chara rKangri' as the best winter remedy. Making a Kangri needs a lot of skill and patience. Men and women collect the slender wicker twigs from forests. They process the twigs by scraping, peeling, boiling, and drying before weaving them into Kangris. As each process requires skilled hand, thousands earn their living in the production of Kangris," artisan said.

From the beginning of November, one can see the delectable presence of Kangri stacked up for sale in every market across Kashmir.

Depending on the design, each Kangri has different price between 150 to Rs 2000, but for common use sold at an affordable price range of Rs

150 to Rs 250 and the sale lasts until early spring.

"With the Kashmir Valley witnessing long power cuts in winter, many find it practical to use Kangris to warm their homes. We have electric heaters but due to power shortage we are not able to use these electric gadgets so we are dependable on traditional Kangri", said Shanawaz a young man from Budgam.

Some citizens said that even if there is a regular power supply, Kangri would still not lose its significance given its economic viability as compared to electric and gas heaters. Using Kangri for heating doesn't cost much and it has been seen that Kashmiri people can live without electricity but not without Kangri, as we are finding extremely useful. Whoever invented it must have been a genius.

Despite the thriving local business, artisans voiced concerns over the lack of government support, emphasising the challenges they face when seeking financial aid to expand the trade.

"Banks require a government employee as a guarantor for loans, and even then, the interest rates are high," he explained, asserting the need for government assistance to elevate the Kangri industry.