

Union Secy DFPD emphasizes on importance of availing ration portability under ONORC

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Union Secretary, Food and Public Distribution (DFPD), Sanjeev Chopra, inaugurated an awareness programme on "One Nation One Ration Card" here at Udhog Bhawan on Saturday.

Union Secretary Department of Food public distribution, while addressing on the occasion, highlighted the importance of the scheme for ensuring food security for vulnerable sections across the country. He emphasized that Government of India has been making all out efforts to ensure success of the flagship programme, for the larger interest of the beneficiaries. He also elaborated to beneficiaries the highlights of the scheme and need for availing and promoting benefits under the scheme. To symbolize the program's success and government's commitment towards food security, Sanjeev Chopra personally distributed fortified rice packets among the beneficiaries present at the event. This gesture marked a significant step toward realizing "One Nation One Ration Card" initiative's goals.

"The program's launch and the positive responses from beneficiaries in Jammu demonstrates the program's effectiveness in facilitating access to essential food items and ensuring that no eligible citizen goes without basic necessities, regardless of their location within India", maintained the Union Secretary.

During the event, Commissioner Secretary Food, Civil Supplies, and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA), Zubair Ahmed, made a detailed pres-



Union Secretary DFPD, Sanjeev Chopra speaking at awareness programme on "One Nation One Ration Card" at Udhog Bhawan, Jammu.

entation on coverage under the Public Distribution System in J&K. He revealed that the Department of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs is currently providing free and subsidized food grains to 25 lakh households, benefitting 98 lakh beneficiaries. Of these, 66,56,907 beneficiaries, covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), receive free food grains, while 31,55,292 beneficiaries receive food grains at highly subsidized rate in the NPHH group.

Commissioner Secretary said the department has been actively working on reforms and technology interventions to make the Public Distribution System more transparent and convenient for beneficiaries. Additionally, J&K has been providing additional top-up of up to 10 kilograms per month to Priority Households under the Prime Minister's Food Supplementation for Priority Households Scheme. Statutory mechanisms have been established and strengthened to ensure efficient operations of the Public

Distribution System for the greater public good, he added.

He said distribution of 100% fortified rice across all districts of Jammu and Kashmir, which commenced in October 2023, under NFSA is one of the noteworthy developments. Moreover, more than one million deletions were made during the De-duplication exercise, while 89,427 genuine households were also added to the Public Distribution System. "One Nation One Ration Card" initiative, aimed at facilitating inter-state portability, was rolled out in August 2020 in J&K and is now available in all districts at 6,413 Point of Sale (PoS) devices, he informed. He also apprised that Jammu and Kashmir is ranked 9th in the country for implementation of this scheme, with 79,530 ONORC and 21,08,150 portability transactions executed thus far.

Zubair Ahmed said the department has made substantial progress in PDS reforms by leveraging technology. Digitization of Ration Cards and Beneficiaries has reached 100%, and

Aadhaar seeding status of Ration Cards and Beneficiaries at all levels is also 100%. Additionally, the automation of Fair Price Shops, including the installation of ePOS devices, is 100%. The tracking of the supply chain management of food grains stands at 97%, and Aadhaar/OTP authenticated transactions are at 94%.

A PowerPoint presentation also made by Union Deputy Secretary, DFPD, LP Sharma, during the event explained "One Nation One Ration Card" program's objectives, emphasizing its role in streamlining the distribution of food essentials and enabling beneficiaries to access their entitled rations seamlessly, regardless of their location within the country. One of the most heartening aspects of the event was the testimonials from beneficiaries, particularly migrant laborers, who shared their experiences and expressed their joy at receiving food grains in Jammu, despite hailing from outside Jammu & Kashmir. This underscores the tangible impact the program is having on the ground, particularly for those with mobile lifestyles who otherwise face challenges in accessing essential food supplies. Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar, Labour Commissioner J&K, Abdul Rashid War, Director FCS&CA Jammu, Rifat Kohli, General Manager, FCI, Kaushik Das, and Consultant DFPD, GoI, Khushboo Kumari were present on the occasion. About 120 beneficiaries and FPS dealers attended the awareness programme. The event was broadcast live over DFPD's official YouTube page.



BJP not ready to face ULB & Panchayat elections: Congress

Congress hits out at recovery of waived off irrigation arrears



JKPCC spokesperson Ravinder Sharma talking to reporters at Jammu.

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JAMMU: Hitting out at the UT administration for the delay in the ULB and Panchayat elections besides raising the issue of the recovery of arrears of waived off/abolished irrigation tax (Abhiyana) from the farmers, JKPCC has said that BJP can't face people and deferring all polls except Lok Sabha in J&K for fear of defeat.

Addressing a joint press conference JKPCC Working President Shri Raman Bhalla and Sr Vice President JKPCC Shri Ravinder Sharma said that it was congress party which raised the issue of reservation to OBCs in the ULB and Panchayats as per 73rd and 74th amendment, in a letter cum objections to the J&K Chief Electoral Officer on 13th Sept. 2023, demanding reservations to OBCs besides holding of ULB elections under State Election Commission (SEC) as per constitution. It was the result of the Congress party's letter that the Govt. has woken up to consider reservation to the OBCs and the setting up of SEC for ULBs. But the delay in the matter is deliberate out of fear of defeat by the ruling party. They said that as per law

and constitution, the elections to these bodies were required to be conducted one month prior to the expiry of their 5 years term. While all municipal bodies including Jammu and Srinagar Municipal Corporations will complete their term by No. 14, the elections should have been conducted and completed by Oct. 15th but it has been delayed and deferred.

The Senior Congress leaders said the ruling BJP is afraid of facing all elections be it ULB/Panchayats and especially assembly elections, for fear of loosing, as LAHC Kargil elections were a trailor for BJP, the real picture will unfold after Assembly elections and the BJP shall be wiped out in Jammu region too.

The non holding of Assembly elections and the deferment of the ULB/Panchayat elections is a silent murder of democracy and the people are suffering a lot due to the autocratic style of the bureaucratic regime who are passing arbitrary orders every other day at their whims and fancies. Citing a case of bureaucratic arbitrariness and anti farmer decisions of BJP Govt. controlled UT administration, JKPCC leaders questioned

the recovery of the arrears of waived off/abolished Irrigation tax from the farmers, whereas it was PDP-BJP Govt. which itself had abolished this tax (Abhiyana) in the budget in 2015-2016. What right the Govt. has to recover the waived off/abolished tax and even charge future tax when an elected Govt. had abolished the same.

Bhalla and Sharma lashed out the anti-farmers approach and mind set of the BJP Govt. and its proxy bureaucratic regime and demanded immediate withdrawal of these arbitrary orders of recovery of tax and instead grant adequate compensation to paddy farmers recently affected by untimely rains.

The Congress party demanded immediate and expeditious exercise for the reservations in all tiers of ULBs and Panchayats to the OBCs besides constitution/extension of the jurisdiction of SEC for the conduct of early elections to the basic institutions of democracy as per constitution 73rd and 74th. PCC general secretaries Narinder Gupta & Narinder Sharma besides Media Coordinator Neeraj Gupta were also present.

CS discusses modalities for establishment of CoE in production of temperate flower bulbs

Asks for optimal exploitation of floriculture on commercial lines

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta on Thursday impressed upon the experts in the field to explore the possibility of developing floriculture on commercial lines by optimal utilization of the resources and favourable climatic conditions.

The meeting was attended by Vice Chancellor, SKUAST, Kashmir; Commissioner Secretary, Floriculture; Director Floriculture, Kashmir; Field experts, HoDs/Professors from SKUAST besides other concerned officers of the Department.

The Chief Secretary took this occasion to impress upon the officers to avail all the opportunities of providing avenues to the people in J&K for adopting floriculture on commercial lines since it had potential to provide much better returns than other options. He maintained that the cli-



Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta chairing a meeting at Srinagar.

matic conditions of the UT are most suitable for this activity and it has a great potential to provide economic support to thousands of people.

Dr Mehta enjoined upon the officers of the floriculture department to demonstrate to public the significantly higher benefits this could yield to them. He maintained that commercial scale activity could bring returns worth millions. He asked the Department to formulate a massive floriculture programme on lines of the

Holistic Agriculture Development Programme.

The Chief Secretary also directed the Department to make endeavors for plantation of flowers along newly developed cycle tracks, Riverfronts and other public spaces of the smart city areas so increase their appeal to public.

He advised them to go for massive flowering of all the gardens and parks with long-lasting domestic flower varieties like those of Orchids, Daffodils, Dahalias, Jasmines,

Marigolds etc. He observed that it takes little planning to spruce up the public spaces if we are watchful towards our surroundings.

During this meeting the Chief Secretary also held deliberations with the University experts about the establishment of Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Temperate flower bud production. He expressed that such flowers have a great commercial value and can be successfully implemented in a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode in the UT. He asked for incul-

cating this proposal in the upcoming budget by the Department so that the same is established during next few years.

The experts including the Vice Chancellor, SKUAST Kashmir informed the meeting that this CoE is envisaged to make UT the hub of temperate bulb production for meeting the national requirements.

It was further revealed that India imports about 10-15 Cr temperate bulbs annually which includes 20 lakh Tulip bulbs, 10 Cr Lilium and 4-5 Cr other bulbs from European countries.

It was added that the value in terms of foreign exchange amounts to nearly Rs 400-500 Cr and can be tapped by the UT by establishment of this centre here. The further course includes capacity building and transfer of requisite technology from Holland to develop this sector on commercial lines in PPP mode in the UT.

Dr Jitendra for initiating nationwide public outreach in technology, innovation, StartUps



Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh chairing a meeting of all the Science Secretaries to prepare a roadmap for a public outreach campaign in Science, Technology & Innovation, at New Delhi.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh on Thursday called upon scientific organisations and research institutions across the country to chalk out a roadmap for initiating a nationwide public outreach campaign to create awareness in science, technology, innovation related enabling provisions introduced by the Modi government for StartUps and potential entrepreneurs.

The Union Minister said, after the Chandrayaan-3 landing on the Moon, Dr Jitendra Singh said, there is a massive public interest generated in India's Space exploration projects and the momentum needs to be sustained.

"This campaign will not only raise public awareness about our pioneering achievements by DST, CSIR, DBT, ISRO, DRDO & other scientific Departments during the more than nine years of the Government led by PM Modi, but also inspire and motivate the youth to contribute and be a part of this exciting journey," he said.

Dr Jitendra was chairing a meeting of all Science Secretaries in New Delhi. The meeting was attended by Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India, Professor Ajay Kumar Sood; Secretary, DST, Prof. Abhay Karandikar; Secretary, CSIR, Dr (Mrs) N. Kalaiselvi; Secretary, DBT, Dr Rajesh S.

Gokhale; Secretary, Department of Space and Chairman, ISRO, S. Somanath; Director, BARC, took over the charge of Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, and Secretary Department of Atomic Energy; Dr. Ajit Kumar Mohanty, besides senior officers.

Launching the 'One Week One Lab' student connect programme of CSIR-NIScPR conducted between Jan.1, 2023- Sep 24, 2023 by 37 CSIR Laboratories/Institutions during which their doors were thrown open to the students and public, Dr. Jitendra called for grooming innovation aptitude in school children.

"Innovative learning will contribute to make India a \$5 trillion economy goal and fulfil the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Aatmanirbhar Bharat," he said.

The S&T Minister said the INSPIRE scheme is helping create a scientific temper as every year there is an increasing number of aspiring students competing for the awards. The first-ever Mentorship Programme for Young Innovators was launched in November 2021 to mark the 75th Year of India's Independence, he said.

Dr. Singh pointed out that flexible infrastructure grants are being provided to universities nationwide to keep up the vigour of conducting highly challenging R&D activities with an investment of Rs 950

Crores till date.

The Promotion of University Research and Scientific Excellence (PURSE) with a nationwide reach supports the university's research ecosystem by making high-end research equipment available to our academicians/scientists, enabling our universities to compete with global standards. A new scheme, SUPREME, has also been launched to provide financial support for repair/ upgradation/ maintenance/ retrofitting or acquiring additional attachments to increase functional capabilities of existing Analytical Instrumentation Facilities (AIFs).

A total of 278 undergraduate colleges across the country comprising more than 1.5 lakh students are supported under the DBT Star College Scheme. This includes 55 colleges from rural areas and 15 colleges in Aspirational districts.

Dr Jitendra said, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is now steering the world in innovative technologies. We are on course to our target of reducing Greenhouse gases emission, and achieve Net Zero by 2070.

India is today one of the leading users of non-conventional energy including electric automobiles, wind & solar energy and the world's first Hydrogen powered bus has been made in India, said the Minister. "The world is looking up to us for leaders," he said.

A lot of this has been possible because of groundbreaking reforms brought by Prime Minister Modi, including StartUp policy, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Space sector and Drone deregulations, new geospatial policy, National Research Foundation etc, he said.

During the meeting, the Union Minister reviewed preparations for the 9th India International Science Festival (IISF) - 2024 to be held at the NCR Biotech Science Cluster, Faridabad from January 17-20, 2024.

Food Safety teams of DFCO Jammu conduct extensive market checkings on eve of upcoming festivals

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Implementing the strict directions of Commissioner FDA J&K, the teams of Food Safety DFCO Jammu actively preparing for extensive market checkings and inspections on the eve of Holy Festival Deepawali and Forthcoming festivities.

Teams the Enforcement Officers/ Officials entrusted with the duties under FSSA Act and Provisions made thereunder, visited markets in Jammu City and raided upon the establishments of the Food Business Operators including M/S Surya Paneer Corner BC Road Jammu, M/S Jandyal Cheese Corner, BC Road Jammu and M/S Vishal Sharma Cheese Dealer BC Road Jammu who were found selling suspicious cheese.

The teams lifted three random samples of Paneer from each FBO under the Act for analysis, due to swift augmented labs analysis three of the samples found Sub-Standard under the Act and Regulations made therein, the rest of Paneer weighing about more than 02 quintals of Such Suspicious Sample which was kept under the proper vigil and Custody, got destroyed on spot.



DFCO employees destroying suspicious cheese.

Emphasizing over the Consumer Safety the teams have been directed to carry out consistent and extensive drives to nip the menace of Adulteration especially on the eve of forthcoming festivities, the teams instructed the FBOs especially Sweets Shops, Bakery dealers, Milk and milk products and allied establishments to avoid malpractices, maintain hygienic practices, cleanliness and sanitation, prevent profiteering viz a viz to refrain from pouring & pushing the products of inferior quality in the market.

The team cautioned all the FBOs that necessary action whichever be deemed fit shall be initiated against the defaulters

and wrong doers.

Meanwhile, at Udhampur one Sample of Paneer has also been drawn and report is to be expedited.

Moreover, erring FBOs if found shall be booked under the Act for violating norms of Hygiene & its critical parameters Sec. 58 and Sec 69.

The teams imparted awareness to FBO and the consumers exclusively regarding usage of unpermitted colours, trans fats (20%) & mono sodium glutamate for prep of momos and other relevant malpractices.

The leading health Hazards & side effects were highlighted amongst the fraternities.

All the traders dealing with essential commodi-

ties were instructed to follow guidelines of packing & labelling laid down under the Act & were advised to keep sufficient /safe quantity of consumables to the public especially on the Day of Deepawali so that.

The main objective of Food Safety will act as a glittering milestone for the general public During the Course of the inspections all the vendors were instructed to display licences & rate lists at their prominent places of their establishments.

During the Awareness the Consumers were Loudly appealed to register Grievance complaint on 104 in Case of inconvenience/Grievances caused if any especially Food items sold in the market.

The checking Squad expressed that the support of public is the backbone of our mandates of duties and desired that it is Public Genuine support which entitled UT J&K three consecutive times at the rank 1st under Eat Right and Food Safety Indexes thereof, hopefully due to the outright Co-operation of the Public the UT J&K will again prop up with rank top 4th time under Eat Right initiatives and valued targets of Food Safety Indexes.