

GMC Anantnag - To new beginnings

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

ANANTNAG: It was in 2017 that the technical evaluation committee of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare approved the establishment of 5 new medical colleges, Govt Medical College, Anantnag being one among the five. While the institution had been operating from District Hospital Anantnag, the new campus at Dialgam has been partially completed with five buildings handed over and expected to be fully handed over likely by March of 2022.

Deputy Commissioner Anantnag, Dr Piyush Singla said that the college and associated hospital will provide much needed specialised patient care not only to District Anantnag but the adjoining districts as well. He said that owing to its proximity to NH44, the medical infrastructure will be instrumental in treatment of trauma cases. He emphasized that the college will reduce the referral rate

from the district and minimize burden on tertiary care centres in Srinagar.

The College Campus at Dialgam is spread over sprawling 20 acres of land and is being constructed at a cost of Rs 116 crores. The infrastructure at the new campus includes a total of 10 blocks spanning 31,287 square metres. These include administrative block, central library, laboratory cum lecture complex, 2 departmental blocks, Principal's residence, accommodation for faculty and 2 hostel blocks that will house 472 students. The campus includes 4 lecture halls with a combined capacity of 500, a lecture theatre to seat 250 students at once, central library with a seating capacity of 200 people at any given time, a conference hall, an examination hall and 9 common laboratories.

Er Showkat Ahmad Dar, SE JKPOCC, the implementing agency for the project said that the college campus has been meticulously

planned with provisions of green spaces and keeping in consideration the environmental aspect of development.

He said that while 5 blocks have been handed over, the construction has been mostly completed and only internal finishing is under process in the remaining blocks and these will likely be handed over in March. He said that plans related to landscaping are at the approval stage and will be taken up simultaneously while the college is functioning.

GMC Anantnag has an annual intake capacity of 100 medical students and 100 nursing students. At present, two batches are pursuing their degree at the college. The nursing college caters to nursing colleges of Pulwama, Kulgam and Shopian and also functions as the south campus of Islamic University of Science and Technology.

The college bestowed 58 member strong faculties catering to various depart-

ments including gynaecology, ophthalmology, ENT, Anaesthesia, Paediatrics and Radiology among others. The college has introduced special ophthalmological clinics for retina, glaucoma and cornea evaluations and phacoemulsification procedures have been started in the optha department.

In addition, laser assisted vitrectomy has been started along with anti vegf injection are given in routine for which patients previously had to go to PGI Chandigarh or Amritsar. In the psychiatric department, drug de addiction facility is being provided. In obstetrics and gynecology, laparoscopic surgeries are being conducted on regular basis. Similarly, the ENT wing is conducting navigation based ENT tumor removal procedures and advanced spinal surgeries are being undertaken by the orthopedic section. Owing to its proximity to NH44, the college is often the first destination for trauma cases and has an inflow of about 24 trauma patients on a daily basis.

The college has also been leveraging information and communication technology to impart modern education and training to its students. Recently, Dr Vikas Agarwal, Director Specialty ENT Hospital, Mumbai did a live demonstration of navigation based endoscopic surgery. Similar programs were hosted by other eminent physicians and surgeons from different parts of the country.

Dr Tariq Qureshi, Principal

GMC Anantnag said that the the health institution is the first academic medical college in South Kashmir. He said that the college campus is nearing completion and probably by March, 2022, the new campus will be made completely functional.

He said that the college is catering to around 10,000 patients on a weekly basis and people do not have to travel to Srinagar for every other procedure. He said that along with the faculty, he is committed to bring GMC Anantnag at par with the best health institutions in the UT.

He said that the college has been receiving national recognition at various levels. Recently, Dr Ramshoo, HoD medicine at the college along with Dr Adil was awarded at a national level forum in Delhi. Similarly, Dr Qureshi's academic paper was selected as the best by All India Ophthalmological society.

The hospital has been fitted with four state of the art oxygen plants to cater to oxygen requirements in normal times and as a contingency facility to tackle any jump in COVID cases. The college aims to introduce MRI facility, cath lab, advanced surgery in ophthalmology, advanced dermatology laser centre, orthopedic advanced surgery in the near future so that people can take benefit of these facilities without having to travel long distances.

DC Kupwara inaugurates Mentorship session for Civil Services Aspirants

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KUPWARA: Deputy Commissioner, Kupwara, Imam Din on Sunday inaugurated Mentorship Session for the interested students, appearing in Competitive and Civil Services Examinations, at Town Hall, here.

The session was aimed at to provide professional guidance and counseling to the students to build up their confidence and knowledge bank.

In his address, the Deputy Commissioner appreciated the organizers for conducting such a valuable session. He said the students of Kupwara district are bestowed with natural talent and there are many famous personalities who have made district proud. He urged upon the

organizers and other concerned officers to show their utmost dedication in flourishing the talent of the students of the district.

Deputy Commissioner also advised and exhorted the Civil Services aspirants to come forward and avail the opportunity of free guidance.

Earlier, brief introduction of the initiative and mentorship program was given by a team of experts.

Shakeel Maqbool, IAS allied services, 2014, DC North Enforcement State Taxes Department gave a lecture on his journey from NIT to UPSC, importance of civil service as a professional career and essence of appearing in such exams, entitlements, ranks, role and responsibility of a civil servant.

Likewise, Saqib Yousuf, UPSC qualifier 2017, Chief Railways Kashmir Division gave lecture on how he reached this milestone at such a young age.

Other speakers including Tahir Wani State Taxes officer, Srinagar also shared their experiences.

Naveed Ajaz, CEO, Municipal Council, Kupwara; Shabir Khan, Director and Mentor Mission Academy, Karanagar, Srinagar also attended the function.

Syllabus for Preliminary Examination (paper wise) was also provided in the session.

The civil services aspirants hailed the organisers and the district administration for providing such a great opportunity.

DC Kulgam visit COVID Hospital; takes stock of arrangements, inspects patients care services at DH

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KULGAM: The Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat on Sunday visited Dedicated Covid Hospital at Kulgam and took stock of the arrangements and facilities available for isolation and treatment of Covid patients here.

The DC, during his visit to MCH building, also took stock of installation of heating system in the building.

He instructed the executing agency to expedite the process of installation of heating system in building.

The DC later also inspected Oxygen plant and also took stock of availability of Covid care medicines, Bed availability and other equipment requisite for treatment of patients in this hospital.

He was accompanied by ADC, CMO and other officers.

The DC also inspected the district hospital and took stock of patient care services here.

During the visit, the DC held an extensive inspection and review of different sections of District hospital and directed concerned to ensure all the facilities are put in place for the patients in the IPD, besides maintaining proper hygiene within and outside the hospital.

He also directed the hospital administration not to allow people without masks and enforce COVID-19 SOP in letter and spirit

The Deputy Commissioner enjoined upon the entire medical and paramedical staff to serve the patients with utmost dedication and sincerity.

AP&FW Department Kashmir sends 4th Consignment of Kashmir vegetables to Dubai

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: While pursuing the Department's vision of introducing & promoting Kashmir based vegetables, spices and other agriculture commodities on the global marketing platform so that the farmers, agriculture entrepreneurs and other stakeholders from the UT of J&K could play a role and experience new horizons of global agriculture economy, Department of Agriculture Kashmir in collaboration with an international marketing group LuLu has sent the fourth consignment of Kashmir specific vegetables ,spices, cereals.

The consignment includes Kale, Turnip, Carrot, Radish, Broccoli, Lotus root and G.I tagged Saffron to Sharjah Dubai.

Regarding today's initiative , Director Chowdhary

Mohammad Iqbal said the Department of Agriculture Kashmir under the supervision of Principal Secretary AP&FWD Navin Kumar Chowdhary is working on a long term ambitious plan to strengthen agriculture sector in J&K and a number of initiatives including integrated farming approach, diversification of agriculture, organic way of cultivation, introduction of new marketing channels, MoUs with different stakeholders, e-marketing of saffron at IIKSTC Dussoo, etc have been taken.

Department has already introduced Kashmir specific vegetables and other agriculture products at different marketing platforms in and outside J&K.

Earlier, also vegetable consignments were sent to UAE from Srinagar International Airport and the entire opera-

tion of grading, packing, labeling was conducted under the strict supervision of Director Agriculture Kashmir. Pertinently, all the global requirements for the international trade of vegetables and other agricultural commodities were considered while sending the consignment.

Director Agriculture said that so far as the recent initiative of sending vegetables to UAE is concerned, it will open a new window for Kashmir Specific vegetables, agri products/ commodities, spices to a new global marketing arena.

Joint Director Agriculture Extension, Shahid Iqbal, M. Rafiq Kakroo Pathologist, Shamsul Hassan Nodal Officer Marketing Kashmir besides other senior officers of the department were also present on the occasion.

Over 5 lakh devotees throng Kashi Vishwanath Dham on New Year

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Kashi Vishwanath Dham, the renovated temple complex which was recently inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saw a record footfall on the first day of the new year with over five lakh devotees thronging the holy place, official sources said on Sunday.

Even on Mahashivratri, considered the most auspicious day to visit the temple in Varanasi, the devotees' numbers never exceeded 2.5 lakh, they added. "Local administration was up for a surprise on January 1 when more than 5 lakh people thronged the Kashi Vishwanath temple. For them, this number was unprecedented. They were expecting a best case number of not more

than 1 lakh," a source said.

Such a huge number of people turning up on a non-festival day at the temple shows the immense enthusiasm among people across the country to visit the Kashi Vishwanath Dham after Modi inaugurated it, the sources noted.

The local administration in Varanasi is now requesting devotees, especially VIPs, to stagger their visit to the dham to ensure proper crowd management. The prime minister had last month inaugurated the first phase of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham, a project which is spread over five lakh square feet and connects the temple premises to the River Ganga besides providing several facilities to devotees.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The notion that Omicron is a natural vaccine is a "dangerous idea" spread by irresponsible people who don't take into account "long COVID" about which very little is understood, experts have said.

The Omicron variant of COVID-19, which is said to be much more infectious than the other variants, is, however, causing milder infections, less hospitalisation and deaths which is leading to the notion that it can act as a natural vaccine.

Recently, a Maharashtra health official also claimed that Omicron will act as a natural vaccine and may help in COVID-19's progression towards the endemic stage.

Omicron natural vaccine? Experts call notion dangerous, say doesn't take long COVID into account

Noted virologist Shahid Jameel said the notion that Omicron is a natural vaccine is a dangerous idea spread by irresponsible people.

"It breeds complacency and is rooted more in pandemic fatigue and the inability to do more, than in evidence available at this time," he told PTI.

Jameel, the former head of the advisory group to the Indian SARS-COV-2 Genomics Consortia (INASACOG), said those who advocate this don't take into account "long COVID" about which very little is understood.

"Especially in India, where malnutrition, air pollution and diabetes are rampant, to willingly let people be exposed to a virus about which you understand little is not good science and public health," he said.

Giridhara R Babu, professor and the Head of Lifecourse Epidemiology

at the Public Health Foundation of India, said however mild Omicron is, it is not a vaccine.

"There are deaths and hospitalisations due to this variant. Stay away from misinformation. Compared to vaccination, natural infection cannot protect the population (against death or hospitalisation) against any variant (Alpha, Beta, Gamma or Delta). Proponents of herd immunity are saying it again that Omicron would provide herd immunity. Evidence matters, not opinions," he said.

Shuchin Bajaj, founder director, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals, said there may be long term effects of the disease and people need to be careful about it.

"It has been shown that it can be seen persisting for more than six months in various other organs in

addition to lungs, like heart and brain and kidneys etc, even after very mild infections. So we don't really know what long term effects it can cause. We are already seeing a lot of long COVID patients with brain fogging, inappropriate sinus tachycardia," he said.

"So we should not really think of this as a vaccine. It's not really a vaccine, we have had deaths due to Omicron. We have had ICU admissions due to Omicron. So it is a much milder version compared to Delta but still, it is a virus and we need to be careful," he said. Yash Javeri, Head, Critical Care, Regency Health, Lucknow, however, said that due to Omicron's higher infectivity coupled with less severity, it may help pause the pandemic

"As a result, the whole community becomes protected, not just those

who are immune. An infection with the Omicron variant not just induces an immune response against this variant but also offers heightened protection against the Delta variant, a South African study has found. Due to its higher infectivity coupled with less severity, Omicron may raise the herd immunity still higher and help pause the pandemic," he said.

Herd immunity occurs when a large portion of a community (the herd) becomes immune to a disease, making the spread of disease from person to person unlikely. ICMR director general Balram Bhargava last week said that hybrid immunity, which is developed as a result of vaccination and natural infection, mounts a stronger response against COVID-19 and its variants.

Hindus from India, US, UAE pray at 100-yr-old renovated temple in Pak

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

PESHAWAR: Over 200 Hindu pilgrims from India, the US and the Gulf region prayed at the 100-year-old renovated Maharaja Paramhans Ji mandir in Pakistan on Saturday amidst tight security, a year after the temple was demolished by a mob belonging to a radical Islamist party.

The delegation of Hindus consisted of nearly 200 devotees from India, 15 from Dubai, the rest from the US and other Gulf states.

The temple and 'samadhi' of Paramhans Ji in Karak district's Teri village of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa underwent extensive repair last year after it was demolished by an angry mob in 2020, an incident that was condemned globally.

The Indian pilgrims crossed over through the Wagah Border near Lahore, and were escorted to the temple by armed personnel, officials said. The programme has been organised by the Pakistani Hindu Council in collaboration with the national carrier Pakistan International Airlines.

On the day, the funerary monument and Teri vil-

lage at large was fortified with 600 men from the Rangers, Intelligence and Airport Security Force keeping guard, led by a Superintendent of Police-rank officer.

The rituals took place until Sunday afternoon, Hindu Council officials said.

'Hujras' or open-air reception rooms were converted into shelters for the pilgrims.

The markets near the temple were seen buzzing with tourists and the children from the Hindu contingent were photographed playing cricket with the local kids.

Rohit Kumar, in-charge of legal affairs at Hindu Community commended the Pakistan government for the arrangements and the repair works.

"Today's prayers at the mandir by yatriis from India is a positive message for India, for promoting peace and religious harmony in the region," he said.

The Pakistan Hindu Council has promoted the initiative under the aegis of faith tourism .

Maharaaj Paramhans Ji died at Teri village in 1919.

Some members of the

radical Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) had vandalised the 'samadhi' on December 30, 2020. The temple had also been

demolished in 1997.

The provincial government renovated it after Rs 3.3 crore was recovered from the JUI-F mob.

IUST's Food Testing Lab accorded NABL Accreditation

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AWANTIPORA: In a significant development, the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) has joined the list of prestigious institutions of the country engaged in the testing of food products as its Food Testing Laboratory (FTL) has now been accredited by the National Accreditation Board (NABL), under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

NABL, a constituent Board of the Quality Council of India (QCI), has authorized the Food Testing Laboratory at IUST to provide certified testing and analysis reports for food samples as per the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) procedures. This is for the first time that any lab in any of Universities in the JKUT has been granted this accreditation and IUST has officially become part

of the Food Safety ecosystem. Now, IUST can go for analysis of the approved food items and detect any adulteration by using the most sophisticated high-end equipment.

Varsity's Vice-Chancellor, Prof Shakil A. Romshoo complimented the efforts of HoD food Technology Prof H R Naik and the team comprising Dr. B. N. Dar (Coordinator), Dr Sajad A. Sofi (Food Analyst), Dr. Darakshan Majid (Quality Manager), Dr. Hilal A. Makroo (Technical Manager), supporting staff and other officers of the University associated with the accreditation process. He said that the NABL accreditation of the IUST's Food Testing Laboratory would support the food industries of UTs of J&K and Ladakh for testing their food samples and also the samples referred by the government agencies.

