

Directorate of Tourism, Jammu celebrates Lohri with vibrant cultural fervour

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JAMMU: The Directorate of Tourism, Jammu, in collaboration with the Raghunath Bazaar Business Association, organised vibrant Lohri Festival celebrations today at Raghunath Bazaar, one of the city's prominent commercial hubs, showcasing the rich cultural traditions and festive spirit of the region.

Lohri, marking the culmination of the winter season, symbolises agrarian traditions, folk customs and collective celebration, and holds a special place in the cultural ethos of the Jammu region.

The event was attended by Yudhvir Sethi, MLA Jammu East, along with other distinguished guests. Senior officers of the Tourism Department present on the occasion included Director Tourism, Jammu, Vikas Gupta.; Joint Director Tourism, Jammu, Ajaz Qaiser; Deputy Director Tourism (Publicity), Savita Chouhan; Deputy Director Tourism (Administration), Jammu, Pankaj Sasan; Deputy Director Tourism (Planning), Mamta Sharma; Assistant Director Tourism (Hqr), Vishal Sadhotra;



MLA Jammu East, Yudhvir Sethi along with other distinguished guests during Lohri Festival celebrations in Jammu.

Assistant Director Tourism, Katra, Rajesh Raina, and other tourism officials.

Sanjay Gupta, President, Raghunath Bazaar Business Association, while delivering the welcome address, highlighted the cultural significance of Lohri and extended warm greetings to all dignitaries, guests and participants. He emphasised the importance of collective engagement and community participation in celebrating and preserving Jammu's rich cultural heritage.

The festival witnessed enthusiastic participation from tourists, local residents and cultural enthusiasts, who gathered in large numbers to celebrate the traditional har-

vest festival, reflecting the region's vibrant folk culture and strong community spirit.

The programme featured lively cultural performances, including traditional Chajja Dance, energetic dhol beating, and soulful musical presentations, which drew enthusiastic public response and added festive charm to the bustling market area.

The event was attended by the office bearers of the Raghunath Bazaar Traders' Association, including Sanjay Gupta, President, and Amit Goel. The celebrations were also graced by the President, Chamber of Commerce and Industry,

Jammu, along with his team; representatives of the Kanak Mandi Association; Association of Lower Raghunath Bazaar; and members of the Raghunath Bazaar Businessmen Association, who appreciated the initiative of bringing cultural festivities to the heart of the city's commercial hub.

Earlier, on January 10, the Directorate of Tourism, Jammu organised Lohri Festival celebrations at Mubarak Mandi, where tourism stakeholders from across the Jammu Division actively participated and lauded the department's efforts in promoting tourism and cultural her-

itage in the region. During the event, key stakeholders associated with the tourism sector were felicitated and honoured, while various associations expressed their gratitude for the department's continued engagement and support.

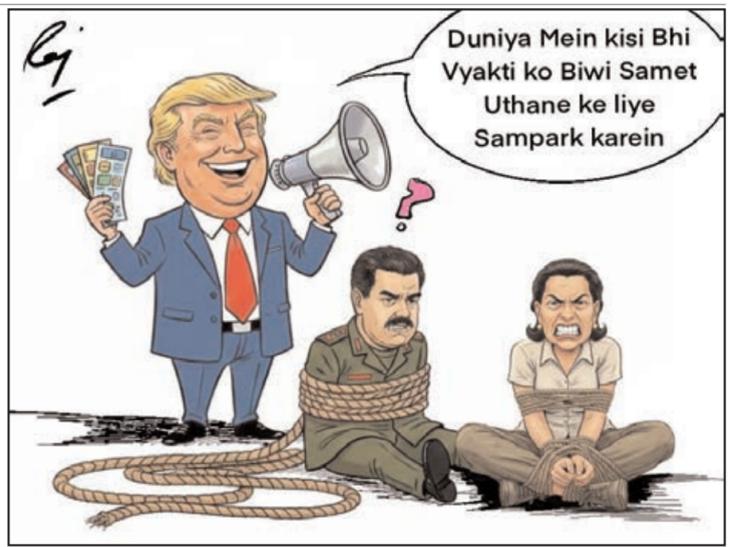
The initiative forms part of the Directorate of Tourism, Jammu's sustained efforts to promote cultural tourism and showcase the region's traditional festivals, while providing an engaging platform for local artists and an enriching experience for tourists and the local community.

CCI Jammu facilitates Amit Sharma as Director Census, offers support from all trade federations

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JAMMU: President, Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CCI), Jammu Arun Gupta along with his team on Monday called on Amit Sharma, Director Census Operations (DCO) & Director Citizen Registration (DCR), Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for the UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh in his office chambers and warmly welcomed him back in the UT while expressing deep gratitude towards Ministry of Home Affairs for giving him a pivotal role on Central Deputation to this historical juncture to conduct upcoming Digital Census 2027 in both the UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. He was accompanied with Anil Gupta, Senior Vice President, Rajeev Gupta, Junior Vice President, Manish Gupta General Secretary and Rajesh Gupta Treasurer during the visit.

CCI Jammu President mentioned DCO/DCR Government of India, MHA for J&K and Ladakh Amit Sharma as a subject specialist,



CCI Jammu facilitates Amit Sharma as Director Census, offers support from all trade federations



CCI Jammu delegation calling on Amit Sharma, DCO & DCR, GoI, MHA for UTs of J&K and Ladakh.

after having served for almost two decades in the erstwhile state at critical positions and proven his mettle and lastly as IT Secretary consecutively in three states and especially being son of the soil and expected to grasp the ground realities in a much better manner and make it a historically memorable Census for the benefit of all citizens of the UT.

Amit Sharma shared several perspectives about upcoming Census 2027 for which Houselisting Operations (HLO) shall be held in first phase for a one month period in J&K between April to September and later, Population Enumeration (PE)

shall be held in second phase in September in snow-bound areas of UT and February 2027 in plain areas of Jammu & Kashmir.

The team of CCI Jammu assured Amit Sharma to give full support in creating awareness drive in more than 3000+ members and their families to ensure grand success of this largest and herculean Census exercise to be undertaken in Bharat after a huge gap of more than one and half decades after 2011.

Amit Sharma also apprised visiting team of CCI Jammu that Government of India shall be conducting upcoming

Census as the first-ever Paperless Digital Census since its inception in India, which shall be backed by innovation & technology and it shall have a far reaching impact upon the Indian economy, demography, politics and even the exports and imports happening in the nation.

Amit also sensitized them about a unique novel initiative of upcoming Digital Census which is 'Self Enumeration' simply meaning that public shall be given the facility of filling their respective data-sets directly through the requisite online application forms, which shall be counter-verified during the visit of enumerators and supervisors at their households during the survey period.

Before leaving, the team of Chamber of Commerce and Industry requested Amit Sharma to lead a day's long awareness workshop of CCI exclusively to create awareness and share novel features of upcoming Digital Census with its members towards which he assured full backing for its conduct soon at mutually convenient dates.

Satish launches Jammu-Haridwar Yatra Bus service

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JAMMU: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Transport, Youth Services & Sports, Science & Technology, Satish Sharma, on Monday flagged off the JKRTC Jammu-Haridwar Yatri Bus service from the revered Panchmukhi Hanuman Mandir, Jewel Chowk, Jammu, marking a significant step towards strengthening pilgrimage tourism and public transport connectivity in Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the new service will serve as a spiritual and cultural bridge between Jammu, the City of Temples, and Haridwar, the gateway to the holy River Ganga. He said that lakhs of devotees from Jammu and Kashmir visit Haridwar every year to perform Ganga Aarti, shradh, pind daan and other sacred rituals and this direct service will make their journey safe, comfortable and affordable.

Satish Sharma said the initiative has been launched under



Transport Minister Satish Sharma with JYBT members at flagging off ceremony.

the visionary leadership of the Chief Minister with the aim of ensuring that pilgrims do not face any hardship while travelling to major religious destinations. "The dedicated service from Panchmukhi Hanuman Mandir to Jammu Yatri Bhawan, Haridwar will provide seamless direct connectivity, eliminating inconvenience and ensuring peace of mind for devotees," he added.

The Minister informed that the service will be operated with modern, comfortable buses equipped with essential amenities, experienced drivers for safe night travel and affordable fares, keeping in view the needs

of common people, senior citizens and families. The buses will provide direct drop-off at Jammu Yatri Bhawan, Haridwar, enabling easy access to Ganga Aarti, religious rituals and accommodation.

Highlighting the government's commitment towards promoting religious tourism and people-centric transport services, Satish Sharma said that improved connectivity to holy shrines such as Vaishno Devi, Amarnath and now Haridwar has significantly transformed pilgrimage travel while also boosting economic activities.

The Minister expressed

thanks to the Jammu Yatri Bhawan Trust, the JKRTC management and staff and religious institutions for their support in making the service operational.

He prayed for a safe and blessed journey for all the pilgrims and reaffirmed that the government will continue working towards better transport facilities, enhanced religious tourism and citizen-friendly services across Jammu and Kashmir. Pawan Kumar Shastri, President Jammu Yatri Bhawan Trust and Rajkumar Gupta Vice President JYBT besides other members were also present on the occasion.

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JAMMU: The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu on Sunday inaugurated the six-day International Painters Symposium 2026, being held from January 12 to 17, positioning its Jagti campus as a vibrant hub of creative leadership, cultural integration and interdisciplinary learning. Titled "Brushstrokes Beyond Borders," the symposium brings together eminent painters from India and abroad for collaborative creation, artistic dialogue and cross-cultural exchange. The inaugural ceremony was formally inaugurated by Kavinder Gupta, Lieutenant Governor, Union Territory of Ladakh, in the presence of Padmashri Dr. Milind P. Kamble, Chairman, Board of Governors, IIM Jammu, who presided over the function. Shriram Dandekar, Vice Chairman and Executive Director; Kokuyo Camlin Ltd. and former Chairman, Board of Governors, IIM Jammu, attended as Guest of Honour, while Prof. B. S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu, graced the occasion. The Lieutenant Governor was accorded a warm reception and given a comprehensive tour of the campus. He planted a sapling symbolising sustainability and growth, followed by the lighting of the ceremonial lamp, Saraswati Vandana and the National Anthem, marking

the formal commencement of the symposium. On the occasion, the International Painters Symposium brochure was also unveiled. Addressing the gathering, Kavinder Gupta described the symposium as more than a cultural event, calling it a meaningful celebration of learning, values and creativity. He praised the modern infrastructure, classrooms and library of IIM Jammu, remarking that the institute stands as a knowledge institution rather than merely a management school. Highlighting the institute's growth from a small cohort to over 1,400 students, he said it reflected IIM Jammu's strong academic vision. He emphasised that creativity forms the soul of leadership and ethics its foundation, aligning the symposium with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the vision of VIKSIT Bharat 2047. Art, he noted, is a universal language that enhances India's soft power and nurtures holistic nation-building.

IIM Jammu inaugurates International Painters Symposium 2026

Ladakh LG assures support for IIM centre in Leh



LG Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta with others releasing Language Lab at IIM Jammu. (Pic by Ashok Anand)

Kavinder Gupta also called for greater academic engagement in the Union Territory, stressing the importance of knowledge-driven, sustainable, and locally tailored solutions for the region's unique geography and fragile ecosystem. He assured full administrative support for establishing an IIM Jammu academic centre in Leh and said close collaboration between academia and administration forms a strong foundation for balanced and sustainable development. Guest of Honour Shriram Dandekar reflected on IIM Jammu's journey from its early days at a temporary campus to its present stature. He lauded the institute's multidimensional approach that integrates management education with creativity and culture.

Appreciating the leadership of Padmashri Dr. Milind Kamble and Prof. B. S. Sahay, he highlighted the institute's modern library, academic governance and

growing reputation, wishing students success in their professional journeys.

In his address, Dr. Milind Kamble, Chairman, Board of Governors, emphasised that the symposium reaffirmed IIM Jammu's commitment to holistic and humane education. He said the participation of 21 international and national painters enriched the learning ecosystem by fostering visual thinking and meaningful interaction between artists and students. Welcoming the dignitaries and artists, Prof. Sahay, highlighted the institute's mission to nurture ethical and socially responsible leaders. He recalled the institute's evolving engagement with art through live painting initiatives, Basohli art workshops and contemporary art collaborations, stressing that IIM Jammu has consciously invited artists to co-create a living artistic legacy on campus. The symposium was introduced by Prof. Shyam

Narayan Lal, Chairman, ?nandan: The Centre for Happiness, IIM Jammu, while internationally renowned painter Kamlesh K. Gandhi, Curator of the Symposium, welcomed the gathering and introduced the participating artists. The symposium features eminent artists including Tapan Kumar Dash, Anjani Reddy, Santosh Verma, Svetlana Kravchenko, Krishna Shetty, Pradeep Naik, Hina Bhatt, Shrikant Kadam, Binoy Varghese, Dr. Chaminda Gamage, Dr. Sunil K. Vishwakarma, among others, representing diverse artistic traditions. With participation of 21 eminent painters, 25 emerging artists and 90 art students, it stands as one of the largest collaborative artistic platforms hosted by an academic institution in the region. On the eve of the event, the Language Lab "The Akshar" - The Communication Lab was inaugurated. The inaugural proceedings concluded with a vote of thanks by Brigadier (Prof.) Neeraj Soni, Co-Chairperson, Anandam, IIM Jammu. Organised under the aegis of ?nandan: The Centre for Happiness and the Painting Club of IIM Jammu, the symposium reinforces IIM Jammu's role as a pioneering institution integrating management education with cultural excellence and creative leadership.

JU celebrates Lohri as reflection of cultural traditions, unity



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JAMMU: Reflecting the spirit of India's rich heritage and seasonal traditions, the University of Jammu celebrated the festival of Lohri on its campus with enthusiastic participation of faculty members, officers, staff, research scholars and students. The event provided a vibrant platform for cultural engagement, community bonding and collective participation within the academic environment.

Addressing the gathering, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jammu, Prof. Umesh Rai, complimented the Campus Cultural Committee, led by Prof. Prakash Antahal, Dean Students Welfare, for organising cultural programmes that promote inclusivity and participation across all sections of the University. He observed that such initiatives strengthen institutional bonding and foster unity among faculty, staff and students. Highlighting the cultural significance of Lohri, Prof. Rai remarked that the festival-celebrated across the country as Lohri, Pongal and Makar Sankranti-symbolises India's deep-rooted connection with agriculture and seasonal cycles. Referring to the open-air theatre, now named "Padma Saehdev Sur Samvad Rangsthal," where the celebration was held, he said the venue represents the University's commitment to promoting cul-

tural expression and artistic dialogue. He also linked the celebration to the ongoing initiatives of the Campus Cultural Committee and Utsah the Club, which for the past three years have curated programmes around the theme of "Jammuiyat," familiarising students with the diverse cultural traditions of the Jammu region, including Dogri, Pahari, Gojri, Bakarwali, Punjabi and Hindi streams.

Extending his greetings, the Vice-Chancellor wished peace, prosperity and well-being to the University fraternity and expressed confidence that students would continue to excel academically and professionally, bringing greater recognition to the University of Jammu at national and international levels. Prof. Neelu Rohmetra, Dean Research Studies, also conveyed her warm greetings and expressed satisfaction over the enthusiastic participation of students and faculty. She wished that the year 2026 brings renewed energy, intellectual growth and personal well-being to the University community. Prof. J. P. Singh Joorel, Dean Academic Affairs, extended greetings on the occasion of Lohri and Makar Sankranti, wishing happiness, harmony and progress for the University fraternity. Prof. Sangita Gupta, Dean Planning and Development, described the celebration as a reflection

of institutional unity and collective strength, noting that such cultural engagements promote positivity and collaborative spirit within the academic ecosystem. Earlier, Prof. Monika Chadha, Chairperson, Campus Cultural Committee, in her welcome address highlighted that the celebration was integrated with National Youth Day, encouraging young students to connect with cultural values and traditions. Students from various departments presented captivating cultural performances, immersing the audience in the vibrant essence of Lohri. A traditional folk performance of 'Herni', a unique folk art form of Jammu, was also showcased by traditional artists to help youth reconnect with their roots. The ceremonial lighting of the bonfire added a poignant touch, reinforcing the festival's traditional significance.

The events of DSW are conceived, planned and organised by the team consisting of Prof. Prakash Antahal (Dean Students Welfare), Prof. Monika Chadha (Chairperson, Campus Cultural Committee), Prof. Sarika Manhas (Co-Chairperson, Campus Cultural Committee), Dr. Pritam Singh (Associate Dean SW), Dr. Shalsh Sharma & Dr. A.R. Manhas (Deputy Chief Proctors), Dr. Harleen Kaur & Dr. Ripudaman Parihar (Assistant Dean, SW), members of Campus Cultural Committee, Mansi Mantoo (Media Officer), Sumeet Sharma (Drama Instructor). The sound was looked after by Kulbhushan Thakur and Arif Paul. The programme was conducted by Avni Verma & Nidhi and was coordinated by Sunny Singh Rajput along with Cultural Representatives from different departments.

Northern Railway's GM inspects ongoing works in Jammu Div

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JAMMU: General Manager of Northern Railway Ashok Kumar Verma conducted a comprehensive inspection of ongoing redevelopment works at Jammu Tawi Railway Station here, highlighting that the project will transform the station's appearance and significantly enhance comfort and convenience for millions of passengers. Verma also conducted a detailed inspection of a railway bridge over Ravi River between Kathua and Madhopur and Pathankot city railway station in the Jammu division, an official statement said. The General Manager was accompanied by Divisional Railway Manager of Jammu Division Vivek Kumar, and other senior officials during the inspection which was

meant to ensure that the modernisation and redevelopment works being carried out under the 'Amrit Bharat Station Scheme' (ABSS) are progressing according to the prescribed standards and timelines. The General Manager conducted a detailed inspection of Jammu Railway Station, including the waiting rooms, retiring rooms, and booking offices during the inspection besides reviewing the progress of various development projects including beautification and expansion of the station building, upgradation of platform surfaces and provision of passenger shelters, modernisation of the Foot Over Bridge (FOB) and installation of lifts and escalators. Verma gave strict instructions to maintain quality standards and directed offi-

cial to prioritize the completion of passenger amenities to minimise inconvenience to passengers due to the construction work. "Jammu is one of the major and busiest railway stations in North India, and the aim of this scheme is to provide world-class facilities to passengers," he said, expressing confidence that after the completion of these works under the 'Amrit Bharat Station Scheme', the appearance of Jammu Tawi Railway Station will be completely transformed, and millions of passengers travelling from here will have a pleasant and comfortable experience.

The GM also conducted a detailed inspection of Railway Bridge number 17 between Kathua and Madhopur During a detailed inspection of Pathankot city

railway station in Punjab, the general manager issued specific instructions to the concerned officials regarding the redevelopment works. He also conducted a detailed inspection of key railway stations on the Pathankot-Jogindernagar narrow gauge (762 mm) railway line, including Nurpur Road, Talara, and Jawanwala sahar, the railways said in another statement. The objective was to review safety standards, assess passenger amenities, and explore possibilities for modernizing this historic route. Verma also inspected the Rail Chakki Bridge on the narrow gauge section, which is currently undergoing repair work. He laid special emphasis on track stability and safety checks, particularly in the hilly areas.