

LG, CM greet people on Lohri, Makar Sankranti

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah have greeted the people on the occasion of the festivals of Lohri, which fall on January 13 and Makar Sankranti, which falls on January 14.

In his message, the Lieutenant Governor has said: "On the auspicious occasion of Lohri and Makar Sankranti, I extend my warm greetings and good wishes to all and wish them health, bliss and prosperity. I pray that this festive season and the year that lies ahead be filled with peace and joy and inspire us to work for the progress and well-being of all."

May these festivals, which honor the joy of a new harvest, the tireless efforts of our farmers, and the generosity of nature, usher in renewed prosperity, growth, and progress for our nation".

Extending his wishes for happiness, peace and prosperity to all those celebrating, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, in his message, highlighted the spirit of unity and joy associated with festivals like Lohri, which bring people together and provide moments of happiness amid busy lives. He expressed hope

that these celebrations would herald a new phase of peace, harmony and development in the region.

"Lohri is deeply rooted in our rich cultural heritage and traditions. May these festivities strengthen bonds of brotherhood and spread warmth and cheer among all," the Chief Minister said.

Abdullah also extended his best wishes to all communities observing these festivals and prayed for a bright, peaceful and prosperous future for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary has also extended warm greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion, saying that Lohri is a celebration of the bounties of nature and signifies the transition of seasons towards spring.

Wishing people peace, prosperity and happiness, the Deputy Chief Minister expressed hope that the festival would usher in a new era of peace, harmony and prosperity across Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier in the day, the Deputy Chief Minister met various public and individual delegations at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu. He reit-

erated that the government remains fully committed to the inclusive and holistic development of Jammu and Kashmir.

During the interactions, the delegations from different districts including industrialists, business representatives, students, job aspirants, aspiring entrepreneurs, civil society organisations and individuals apprised the Deputy Chief Minister of their concerns, demands and pressing issues.

The Deputy Chief Minister emphasised the importance of prompt service delivery while ensuring maximum coverage of beneficiaries under various welfare and developmental schemes.

He issued on-the-spot directions to the concerned officers for speedy resolution of issues raised during the interactions. He assured the delegations that all their genuine issues would be taken up with the concerned departments for early and effective resolution.

Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Transport, Youth Services & Sports, Satish Sharma extended warm greetings on the auspicious occasions of Lohri and Makar Sankranti.

In his message, the Minister

said that these festivals symbolise joy, unity and renewal, and reflect the rich cultural heritage of the region. He expressed hope that the celebrations would bring happiness, peace and prosperity to every household.

"Lohri and Makar Sankranti mark the spirit of new beginnings and harmony. May these festivals strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, spread warmth and cheer, and usher in a brighter future for all," Satish Sharma said.

The Minister extended his best wishes to all communities observing these festivals and prayed for a peaceful, progressive and prosperous Jammu and Kashmir.

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo extended her heartfelt greetings, saying in her message, that these vibrant festivals mark the spirit of harvest, hope and renewal and reflect our rich cultural heritage and traditions. "Such gracious occasions strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, harmony and mutual respect among our communities", Minister Sakeena stated.

The Minister hoped that such occasions will bring renewed energy, success and

brighter days ahead for the people. She also prayed for peace, progress and prosperity for entire Jammu and Kashmir.

Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, in his message said that "the festival of Lohri is a symbol of our rich culture and traditions. Such festivals not only provide an opportunity to share happiness but also help us stay connected with our roots." He added that Lohri reflects the spirit of unity, harmony and gratitude, especially towards nature and the farming community.

Javid Ahmad Dar expressed hope that the festival would bring prosperity, peace and happiness to every household. He also emphasized the importance of preserving and promoting traditional festivals, which strengthen social bonds and foster mutual respect among diverse communities.

The Minister prayed for good health, success and well-being of the people and wished that the joyous occasion of Lohri ushers in a season of growth and prosperity for farmers and rural communities.

Statue of Unity replica to feature at Jammu's upcoming waste to wonder park

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A 40-foot-high replica of the Statue of Unity, dedicated to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, is being constructed at the upcoming 'waste to wonder park', a flagship project of Jammu Smart City Limited aimed at combining sustainable waste management with tourism development, officials said on Monday.

The park is being developed on about 40 kanals of land along the banks of the Tawi river at Bhagvati Nagar, the base camp of the annual Amarnath Yatra. It will feature replicas of 14 iconic monuments from India and abroad, created mostly from recycled waste material.

Chief Executive Officer of the Jammu Smart City Project, Dr Devansh Yadav, said the park is emerging as a major attraction under the Smart City Mission.

"This is one of our flagship projects, and people are quite excited about it. Replicas of the seven wonders of the world, monuments from across India, and significant heritage sites of Jammu will be featured here," Yadav said.

Beyond aesthetics, the park aims to serve as a holistic

recreational hub with facilities such as an administrative block, ticketing counters, food courts, an open-air theatre, adventure zones for children and water points. "This comprehensive infrastructure will make it an attractive destination for families, tourists and students, providing both entertainment and educational opportunities," officials said.

Yadav added that the project is part of a larger tourism corridor along the Tawi riverfront, spread across nearly 100 kanals, which will also include a botanical park, another park, two water bodies, urban forests and running tracks.

"The park will also act as a buffer against pollution. Benches and other infrastructure are being created from recycled plastic, and there will be fun zones and food courts," he said. Artist Ram Krishna Augusti, who is leading a team of scrap artists from Odisha, said the project will be completed by the end of March.

"We have a project underway, and we expect to finish all the work by the end of March. We have plenty of materials available. Although the cold climate has slowed our pace, we are

making progress. Our goal is to construct a true replica of Sardar Patel," he said.

Engineer Prashant, associated with the project on the ground, said that work on the park began in November of last year. "About 50 to 60 per cent of the work has been completed. The replicas of the seven wonders of the world are being created using waste material," he said.

Suchandra Singh, a resident, described the project as a moment of happiness for Jammu. "Such a place will attract both locals and tourists and will also help the local economy," Singh said.

Replicas of the monuments will be created entirely from scrap materials, including iron pipes, machine parts, e-waste and rubber tyres, officials said. "Such an initiative also instils environmental consciousness by demonstrating how discarded materials can be transformed into artistic and architectural marvels," an engineer said. The transformation of what was once a municipal waste dumping ground into a hub of innovation and leisure exemplifies urban renewal, officials noted, adding that the project is expected to enhance Jammu's tourist appeal.

Chief Secretary releases DIPR Calendar-2026 and Official Diary



Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo releasing DIPR Calendar-2026 and Official Diary.

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Tuesday released the Calendar-2026 and Official Diary of the Department of Information & Public Relations (DIPR) at a function held here.

The Calendar and Diary, brought out annually by the Department of Information & Public Relations, highlight important landmarks, cultural heritage, develop-

mental initiatives and key achievements of the UT besides serving as an important reference and documentation tool for government functioning.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Secretary appreciated the efforts of the Department of Information & Public Relations in effectively documenting and disseminating information related to government poli-

cies, programmes and achievements. He underscored the crucial role played by the department in strengthening transparent communication between the government and the public, and in showcasing the socio-economic and developmental progress of Jammu and Kashmir.

Commissioner Secretary, Information and General Administration, M. Raju, and Director, Information & Public Relations, Nitish Rajora, were also present on the occasion. Among others present were Special Secretary to the Chief Secretary, K.S. Chib; Special Secretary, General Administration Department, Joginder Singh Rai; Special Secretary to the Chief Secretary, Naginder Singh Jamwal, and other senior officers of the Information Department and concerned officers.

The Calendar-2026 and Diary are expected to serve as valuable resources for government offices, institutions and stakeholders, while also reinforcing the commitment of the administration towards effective public outreach and information dissemination.

Farooq reaffirms commitment to transform Jammu into North India's business hub

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference President Dr. Farooq Abdullah on Monday reaffirmed the party's commitment to the development of Jammu as a prominent business hub in North India, highlighting the region's emerging potential.

His remarks came during an interactive session with the representatives of the Fruit Mandi Association of Narwal Jammu, who expressed their concerns and suggestions regarding the growth of the local fruit business.

Dr. Farooq Abdullah, accompanied by Rattan Lal Gupta, Provincial President of JKNC Jammu, was warmly welcomed by the members of the Fruit Mandi Association. During the visit, he engaged with Raj Kumar Gupta and other office bearers of the Association,



J&KNC President Dr. Farooq Abdullah with party leaders after the meeting at Jammu.

addressing various issues pertaining to the local fruit trade and associated infrastructure.

The key concerns raised by the association included the urgent renewal of lease deeds with shopkeepers, the need for the upgradation of the park adjacent to the Mandi, and the expansion of the Mandi to meet global standards. The Association emphasized the importance of improving basic civic amenities such as roads, parking facilities, sanitation, and waste management systems. They also called for better infrastructure to support the industry, including reliable electricity for processing and storage facilities.

In addition to the immediate issues, the Association outlined several long-term goals aimed at enhancing the fruit business in Jammu. These included the establishment of Post-Harvest & Quality Control units, the introduction of Controlled

Atmosphere (CA) storage units to preserve fruit quality and extend shelf life, and the installation of hi-tech grading lines and portable graders to standardize the produce.

Furthermore, the association called for the development of laboratories for physical, chemical, and microbiological analysis, as well as the establishment of dedicated processing units and a dispensary for the benefit of the Mandi workers. Rattan Lal Gupta also supported the issues raised by the association being genuine and justified.

Dr. Farooq assured the representatives that he would take up their concerns with the concerned ministers and departments to ensure prompt and effective action. He reiterated that the Jammu region's agricultural and business sectors were critical to the economic development of the Union Territory, and the government

under the leadership of Omar Abdullah, was committed to facilitating their growth.

"Jammu's potential as a business hub is immense, and initiatives like these will not only boost local economies but will create job opportunities for the youth," Dr. Farooq said. "Our government is dedicated to creating an environment where local industries can thrive, and the people of Jammu will be the ultimate beneficiaries of this growth."

The Fruit Mandi Association expressed its gratitude for Dr. Farooq's visit and for his continued support in addressing their concerns. The meeting ended on a positive note, with the Association hopeful that their demands will be met with the urgency they require.

Among those who were present included: Vijay Lochan Chairman SC Cell, Rakesh Singh Raka Vice President Central Zone and others.

Bitter cold grips Jammu, 5 flights cancelled

Traffic restored on Mughal Road, night temp rises in Valley

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU/SRINAGAR: Bone-chilling cold tightened its grip on Jammu on Monday as the city recorded the coldest day and night temperatures of the season, disrupting normal life and forcing the cancellation of five flights at Jammu airport due to dense fog and poor visibility, officials said.

Jammu recorded a maximum temperature of 9.6 degrees Celsius, nearly eight notches below the seasonal average, while the minimum dipped to 3.4 degrees Celsius, around 3.5 notches below normal, marking the lowest temperature recorded in the city this season, an official of the meteorological department said.

He said Jammu city was colder than most recorded places in Jammu and Kashmir, with Banihal town the gateway to the Kashmir Valley-much warmer at 19.3 degrees Celsius, followed by Srinagar at 12.4 degrees Celsius and even the famous Pahalgam hill resort in south Kashmir at 10.8 degrees Celsius.

Katra, the base camp for the pilgrims visiting Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in Reasi district recorded a high of 15.5 degrees Celsius and a low of 5.0 degrees Celsius.



Scenes of people huddling around bonfires were witnessed at various places across Jammu as residents tried to keep themselves warm after waking up to dense fog in the morning.

Severe cold was witnessed a day before Lohri, a popular festival in Jammu which marks the end of winter and the onset of longer days after the Winter Solstice. It also coincides with the harvesting season of Rabi crops.

An airport official said that of the 36 scheduled flights to and from Jammu airport, five were cancelled while eight others were delayed due to poor visibility.

The cancelled flights included Delhi-Jammu-Delhi, Srinagar-Jammu-Delhi, Leh-Jammu-Leh, Delhi-Jammu-Srinagar and another Delhi-Jammu-Delhi

service. The historic Mughal Road, connecting Rajouri and Poonch districts with the Kashmir Valley, was reopened for normal traffic after remaining closed for a week due to heavy snowfall, officials said.

They said the road was initially reopened partially on Sunday night, allowing only those vehicles which were stranded on either side to pass through.

"On Monday morning, traffic movement was fully restored. The highway was closed for vehicular traffic due to heavy snowfall", they said. However, the traffic police has issued fresh cut-off timings, stipulating that vehicles would be allowed to cross the cut-off points at both ends only till 2.30 pm, after which no traffic would

be permitted on the stretch. Officials said there is still partial snow-cover at Pir Ki Gali, and slippery road conditions are likely during evening hours.

The Jammu-Poonch highway, which remained shut for three hours due to landslide, has also been restored for the normal traffic, they added.

Meanwhile, Kashmir received some respite from intense cold wave conditions as minimum temperatures rose by a couple of degrees, even as they remained below the freezing point, officials said.

The sub-zero temperatures and clear skies resulted in freezing of parts of the Dal Lake and other water bodies in the valley.

Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.4 degrees Celsius on Sunday night, up from the previous night's minus 5.2 degrees Celsius, the official said.

Srinagar recorded its coldest night this season on Thursday, with the mercury dipping to a low of minus 6 degrees Celsius.

South Kashmir's Pulwama town was the coldest place in the valley with a minimum temperature of minus 6.5 degrees Celsius.

Pahalgam tourist resort, which also serves as one of

the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra, recorded a low of minus 3.4 degrees Celsius.

The night temperature in the popular ski resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district settled at a low of minus 3.4 degrees Celsius, up from the previous night's minus 6.2 degrees Celsius.

The tourist resort of Sonamarg in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district recorded a minimum temperature of 2.4 degrees Celsius.

Qazigund, the gateway town of the valley, registered a low of minus 3.4 degrees Celsius, Kokernag minus 1.8 degrees Celsius and Kupwara minus 3.7 degrees Celsius.

Kashmir is currently in the midst of 'Chilla-i-Kalan', 40 days of extreme cold, when night temperatures often drop several degrees below the freezing point and the chances of snowfall are the highest.

'Chilla-i-Kalan', which began on December 21 last year, ends on January 30.

The plains of the valley have not received any snowfall so far this season.

The India Meteorological Department has said the weather is likely to remain dry but cloudy till January 21.

Educational institutions celebrate Int'l Youth Day

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: International Youth Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm and inspiration in the Educational Institutions across Jammu Division.

Government College of Education Canal Road hosted an awareness event themed "Ignite the Self, Impact the World." The programme aimed to promote

youth empowerment, self-awareness and social responsibility among students. The staff members and teachers attended the online address of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on "Viksit Bharat - Youth Leaders," which further inspired the participants to actively contribute towards building a developed and self-reliant India.

Government Degree College Paloura celebrated National Youth Day to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The day served as a reminder of the vital role the youth play in Nation-building and social transformation.

A slogan writing competition was organized by Prof. Moni Mehra, Convenor Red Ribbon club to

mark the National Youth Day. The club members Dr. Gaurav Kumar, Dr. Seema Rani and Prof. Neha Bhagat also coordinated.

About 20 students participated in the slogan writing competition. The First position was secured by Neelakshi Sharma, 2nd by Muskan Devi and 3rd position was shared by Tannu Kumari and Sakshi Sindhu.

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