

Jeevan Sangharsh Trust, RTI Activist celebrate Lohri with cancer patients at GMC Jammu

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Jeevan Sangharsh Trust marked the festival of Lohri with cancer patients at the Government Medical College (GMC), Jammu, spreading warmth, hope and emotional support among patients undergoing treatment. The heartfelt celebration aimed to bring joy and positivity to those battling serious illnesses, especially patients away from their homes during the festive season.

The programme witnessed the presence of members of Jeevan Sangharsh Trust, senior faculty members of GMC Jammu, hospital officials and several dignitaries. A renowned RTI activist, Sh. Balvinder Singh, was specially invited as a guest and graced the occasion with his presence.

Addressing the gathering, Rajni Sharma, President of



Jeevan Sangharsh Trust members celebrating Lohri festival with cancer patients at GMC, Jammu.

Jeevan Sangharsh Trust, along with Talbinder Singh, Founder President, Sh. Mukesh Gupta, Convener, and Mann Mahajan, stated that celebrating festivals with cancer patients has become a regular initiative of the Trust. They emphasized that patients undergoing treatment are considered part of the Trust's extended family. Such celebrations, they said, play a vital role in restoring hope, positivity

and emotional strength among patients facing physical and mental challenges. Prayers were offered for the speedy and complete recovery of all patients, while heartfelt appreciation was expressed for the doctors, nurses and medical staff who continue to serve patients with dedication and compassion, day and night.

Speaking on the occasion, Ashutosh Gupta, Principal, GMC Jammu, and

Balvinder Singh, RTI Activist, lauded the Trust for its humane and thoughtful initiative. They remarked that such gestures provide emotional relief, happiness and renewed courage to patients during difficult phases of life.

The Trust expressed sincere gratitude to the GMC administration, including Varinder Trishal, Superintendent GMC Jammu, Dr. Bharat Bhushan, Deputy Superintendent, hospital supervisory staff, Sh. Anoop Kohli, Chief Technologist GMC, medical officers, and Satinder Singh, social activist, for their cooperation. Special thanks were also extended to Pushpinder Singh, SHO Samba, and all participants for making the Lohri celebration meaningful and memorable for the patients.

Sat participates in Lohri celebration at Gangyal, highlights cultural unity and peace

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JAMMU: J&K BJP President and Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) Sat Sharma today participated in a Lohri programme organized by BJP J&K General Secretary Baldev Singh Billawaria under the banner of Dogra Sewa Sambhal Trust (Regd.) at Gangyal.

The programme was marked by traditional rituals, and enthusiastic participation from local residents. J&K BJP Vice President Rekha Mahajan and several senior BJP leaders were also present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, Sat Sharma said that Lohri is not merely a festival but a celebration of life, nature, and collective prosperity.

He said that Lohri symbolizes the deep-rooted bond between people and nature and reflects gratitude for a bountiful harvest and the tireless efforts of farmers. Emphasizing the spirit of the festival, he said that



J&K BJP President and MP Rajya Sabha Sat Sharma and others at Lohri celebration.

Lohri reminds society of the values of togetherness, optimism, and renewal. Praying for peace, harmony, and progress, Sat Sharma wished for bumper harvests, economic prosperity, and lasting peace in Jammu & Kashmir and the entire nation. He also reiterated the BJP's firm commitment to peace, strongly condemning terrorism and violence, and prayed for lasting stability and development in Jammu & Kashmir.

He further emphasized that such traditional celebrations play a vital role in strengthening social harmony and keeping

the rich cultural heritage alive, particularly among the younger generation. On the occasion, Baldev Singh Billawaria said that the Dogra Sewa Sambhal Trust has been consistently working to preserve and promote Dogra culture and traditions. He said that festivals like Lohri bring people together beyond political or social differences and strengthen the spirit of unity, brotherhood, and cultural pride in society.

The programme concluded with traditional Lohri rituals and cultural performances, reflecting the rich Dogra ethos.

JKEDI commences Sixth Batch of MDP under RAMP

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BANDIPORA: Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) District Centre Bandipora today commenced the sixth batch of the Management Development Programme (MDP) under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance Programme (RAMP) at the District Employment & Counselling Centre Bandipora.

A total of 22 female candidates have registered for the programme. Speaking on the occasion, Syed Asraar Qadri, District Nodal Officer, JKEDI Bandipora, highlighted the objectives of the programme and emphasised the importance of women entrepreneurship in the Valley, underscoring its vital role in fostering inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Lohri Festival celebrated with cultural spirit at Vridh Ashram



Padma Shri Prof. Vishwamurti Shastri interacting with inmates during Lohri celebration at Vridh Ashram.

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The sacred festival of Lohri was celebrated on Tuesday with great enthusiasm, warmth, and traditional fervour at the Home for the Aged & Infirm (Vridh Ashram), Ambphalla, Jammu.

The celebration brought joy, positivity, and a sense of togetherness among the elderly inmates, staff members, and guests, reflecting the true spirit of Indian cultural heritage.

The programme was graced by Padma Shri Prof. Vishwamurti Shastri, who attended the occasion as the Chief Guest.

In his inspiring address, Prof. Vishwamurti elaborated on the cultural, spiritual, and social significance of the Lohri festival.

He highlighted that Indian festivals are deeply rooted in tradition and values, carrying meaningful messages for society, and emphasized that all Indians should celebrate every festival with mutual respect and inclusivity, irrespective of region or community.

Prof. Vishwamurti also recited selected Vedic mantras during the programme and explained their relevance and importance in promoting inner peace,

harmony, and positive living.

His enlightening discourse deeply touched the audience and added spiritual depth to the celebration. His presence made the entire programme highly meaningful and memorable for everyone present, especially the senior citizens residing at the Ashram.

Earlier, the Chief Guest was accorded a warm welcome by Er. Pankaj Gupta, President, and Dr. Dinesh Gupta, Secretary of the Managing Committee, who expressed their gratitude for his gracious presence and valuable guidance.

Several prominent members of the Managing Committee were present on the occasion, including Sat Pal Sharma, Rajinder Singh, Dr. Surinder Kumar, and Dr. Ritesh Gupta, along with all staff members of the Home, who actively participated in the celebrations and ensured the smooth conduct of the event.

The Lohri celebration concluded on a joyful note, with the lighting of the traditional bonfire and collective prayers, spreading happiness, warmth, and festive cheer among the inmates. The event reaffirmed the Ashram's commitment to nurturing cultural values while ensuring emotional well-being and dignity for the elderly.

Modi Govt's VB G RAM G act brings new hope to rural India: Yudhvir Thanks PM Modi for special relief package of Rs 1430 crore to J&K

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: MLA Jammu East Yudhvir Sethi today visited Sandhi area of Lower Khanna Chargal Panchayat in the Jammu East Assembly constituency, where he addressed a large public meeting and interacted with local residents. The visit was aimed at reviewing development works and understanding the concerns of people at the grassroots level.

In his address, Sethi expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for approving a Rs 1,430-crore Special Central Assistance package for Jammu and Kashmir to restore public infrastructure damaged by flash floods and heavy rains in the Jammu region in August last year. He said this timely support reflects the Prime Minister's strong commitment to Jammu and Kashmir and thanked him for standing firmly with the people during difficult times.

Gardhari Lal, Shiv Sharma (Mandal President), Anita Rajput (Mahila Morcha Mandal President), Madan Lal, Mohan Rana (SC Morcha President), Khalid Malik, Talik Raj, Vinod, and other local leaders were present on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering,



MLA Jammu East Yudhvir Sethi addressing public meeting at Sandhi.

Yudhvir Sethi highlighted the major development works carried out in the area during his tenure. He said roads, drainage, sanitation, and public facilities in Lower Khanna and nearby localities have received focused attention. "Our goal has always been to ensure that basic amenities reach every household and that development is visible and meaningful," he said. The MLA informed that several community-related projects have already been completed and assured that the remaining pending works will be taken up on priority through his Constituency Development

Fund (CDF). "No genuine demand will be left unaddressed. I am fully committed to ensuring balanced and planned development in every part of Jammu East," he added.

Sethi also made people aware about the Vibrant Villages Programme under the VB G RAM G Act, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to strengthen villages, especially in border and backward areas. He said the programme focuses on better infrastructure, employment, healthcare, education, and livelihood opportunities.

He added that roads, drinking water, electricity, mobile connectivity, and internet services are being improved, reducing migration and creating local opportunities. Skill development, self-help groups, and women entrepreneurs are also being supported. He further said the employment guarantee has been increased from 100 to 125 days, benefiting both farmers and labourers. The residents welcomed the initiative and raised local issues, which the MLA assured would be resolved promptly, reflecting his commitment to inclusive and transparent development.

DSS celebrates Lohri Festival with traditional fervour



Dogra Sadar Sabha members celebrating Lohri Festival.

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Dogra Sadar Sabha (DSS) celebrated the festival of Lohri with great enthusiasm and traditional spirit at the Sabha Bhawan, reaffirming its commitment to promoting secular and cultural harmony. The legendary folk hero Dulla Bhatti was remembered for his role in keeping the diverse communities of Jammu and Kashmir united through shared traditions and values.

Lohri marks the end of the coldest days of winter and the beginning of the harvest season. It also signifies the sun's Uttarayan or northward movement after Makar Sankranti. The festival is traditionally celebrated with bonfires, folk songs, and dancing, as people express gratitude to the Sun and Fire Gods for warmth and pray for a prosper-

ous agricultural season, especially for winter crops like sugarcane, mustard, and wheat. Lohri symbolises new beginnings, happiness, and community bonding across religions, and it is also an occasion to bless newborns and newly-married couples.

The Sabha also paid tribute to Rai Abdullah Khan Bhatti, popularly known as Dulla Bhatti, a 16th-century Punjabi folk hero who stood against the oppressive taxation policies of Mughal Emperor Akbar.

Often compared to Robin Hood, Dulla Bhatti looted imperial caravans and distributed wealth among the poor in the Sandal Bar region. He is fondly remembered for rescuing and marrying off two abducted girls, Sundari and Mundri, whose story lives on through the popular Lohri

folk song "Sundariye Mundariye." Dulla Bhatti was executed in Lahore in 1599, but his legacy as a champion of justice continues in Punjabi folklore.

The celebrations were held under the leadership of DSS President Col Karan Singh, who spoke about the deep cultural and social importance of Lohri. Those present on the occasion included Adv H. C. Jalmaria, Col Dr Virendra K. Sahi (VrC), Arvinder Singh Ann, Amanat Ali Shah, Brig Vijay Sagar Dheeman, Ravi Slathia, Neeraj Anand, Rajesh Gupta, Pawan Sharma, Virinder Singh, Dinesh Gupta, and other distinguished members.

The event reflected the DSS commitment to preserving shared heritage and strengthening community unity through cultural traditions.

IIT Jammu hosts workshop on Tribal Heritage Mapping

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, on Tuesday said that tribal heritage constitutes a living, dynamic knowledge system embedded in language, belief structures, customary practices and social organisation.

He emphasised that its preservation requires a participatory, community-driven research framework that acknowledges indigenous epistemologies and lived traditions.

The Minister was addressing a workshop, as the chief guest, titled "Mapping Tribal Heritage", organised by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jammu. The workshop focused on digital documentation, archival technologies and critical engagement with cultural expressions, oral narratives and socio-cultural formations of indigenous communities across India.

Rana asserted that safeguarding tribal heritage cannot be an external intervention alone but must be rooted in community stewardship and intergenerational transmission.

"Tribal heritage can survive only when communities become active custodians of their own traditions. Preservation must evolve organically from within those who live, practise and transmit this heritage every day," he said.

Highlighting the intrinsic relationship between the language vitality and cultural continuity, the Minister stated that languages survive only through sustained community use and institu-



Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana lighting a lamp.

tional support. Referring to Gojri, he noted that it is not merely a contemporary mode of communication but a language with a deep historical and civilisational lineage, whose speakers are its authentic inheritors and protectors.

The Minister lauded IIT Jammu's pioneering engagement with tribal research, describing it as a socially responsive academic initiative. He remarked that the Institute has ventured into an area where few technical institutions have tread and congratulated IIT Jammu for integrating technology-driven methodologies with humanities-based inquiry to preserve cultural heritage for future generations.

Drawing attention to history, Javed Rana referred to the Gurjar-Pratihara legacy, urging the scholars to undertake rigorous historical and archaeological research to document the contributions of the Gurjar-Bakarwal community in art, architecture and state formation. He encouraged the Institute to further expand the scope of its research to ensure historical justice and accurate representation.

He also emphasised the value of interdisciplinary

research, noting that the convergence of technology, social sciences and public policy enables evidence-based governance. "Such research empowers the governments to design informed, inclusive and need-based welfare programmes for marginalised and indigenous communities," he said.

The Minister encouraged IIT Jammu to pursue policy-oriented and applied research in areas such as resettlement, seasonal migration, climate change adaptation and sustainable livelihoods. He stressed that academic outputs must translate into improved governance and tangible benefits at the grassroots level.

Assuring full cooperation from the Tribal Affairs Department, he stated that scholars, writers, cultural practitioners and poets would be actively engaged in future research initiatives. He reiterated the government's commitment towards strengthening initiatives such as the Tribal Chair, affirming sustained institutional support for preserving the rich cultural and civilisational heritage of tribal communities. On the occasion, IIT Jammu launched a dedi-

ated digital portal for tribal knowledge documentation, envisioned as an open-access repository hosting archival documents, ethnographic records, photographs, audiovisual materials and research outputs related to tribal heritage, culture and welfare initiatives.

The platform aims to provide curated, authentic and easily accessible information for researchers, policymakers and communities alike. Earlier, setting the context of the workshop, Head, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr Amitash Ojha, stated that documenting and safeguarding local cultures is a shared societal responsibility. Dr Ojha added that the workshop aimed to disseminate ongoing research and foster collective engagement in cultural preservation.

Highlighting the linguistic challenges, he observed that much of the knowledge related to the Gojri language remains undocumented and undigitised and that developing a comprehensive digital corpus and linguistic dataset for Gojri is a core research priority of the Institute. Dean Planning and Management, IIT Jammu, Dr Anurag Mishra, stated that the Humanities Department has adopted a specialised, community-centric approach towards working with marginalised populations and is making steady progress.

Secretary, Kala Kendra, Dr Javid Rahi, expressed pride in IIT Jammu's efforts to conduct research in tribal communities' native languages, stating that such an approach ensures authentic-

ity and inclusivity. Dr Rahi underscored the importance of tribal heritage mapping as a tool for visually representing the cultural geography of Jammu and Kashmir. He called for focused documentation of tribal artistry, particularly in regions such as Poonch and Bandipora, including traditional attire, craftsmanship and material culture. He also praised the work of women artisans in Kupwara, especially their expertise in beadwork and indigenous crafts.

On the occasion, a documentary titled 'Zuban-e-Kalam' was released, capturing the lived experiences of tribal communities. Speaking about the documentary, Professor Qulien Kaur said the initiative seeks to ensure that tribal cultural heritage is preserved for future generations. She noted that over the past two years, the research team has engaged closely with communities, documenting migration experiences, recording oral histories, and tracing the intergenerational transmission of songs and narratives.

She added that the project also documents marriage and funerary rituals, as well as how tribal communities negotiate the impacts of development on traditional ways of life. These efforts, she said, are contributing to the creation of a comprehensive digital repository of the Gurjar-Bakarwal community, serving as a critical resource for research, policymaking and cultural preservation.

Professor Garima Singh presented the vote of thanks.