

Phase-II of seed dispersal begins in Trikuta hills housing Vishno Devi Shrine

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board on Thursday commenced the winter plantation drive along with the second phase of aerial seed dispersal in the Trikuta hills, as part of its efforts for environmental conservation and ecological restoration, an official said.

This phase of the drive aims to cover about 83 hectares across identified locations, including Banj Nallah, Khari Extension, and parts of Barkli, Koura Sumb, Kalal, Banjala and Matali Dabbar located on the

right side of the shrine board's Serli Helipad, the official said.

He said the activity involves the aerial dispersal of seeds of various species like Amla, Anaar, Siris, Karangal, Thuja, Gulmohar and Bamboo to enhance green cover and support ecological restoration in these hilly and environmentally sensitive areas.

The seed dispersal activity shall be carried out over the week, taking advantage of favourable weather conditions to improve seed germination and achieve better

ecological outcomes, the official said.

The aerial seeding plan has been formulated by the shrine board to improve green cover in the inaccessible areas of the Trikuta hills over the next 10 years. The programme recorded an estimated three per cent ecological regeneration success rate, which is considered meaningful given the challenging terrain of the region.

Despite steep slopes, rocky surfaces, and uneven soil depth, some of the dispersed seeds germinated successfully, resulting in early vegeta-

tion growth that helped improve soil stability and green cover, he added.

He said the experience also provided useful insights about suitable plant species, which are now being used to make the current phase more effective.

The board has made significant progress in increasing the green cover in the shrine area, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, Chief Executive Officer, Sachin Kumar Vaishya said.

Through the Annual Greening Plans (AGPs), more than 19 lakh saplings

have been planted in recent years to preserve the natural beauty and ecological balance of the sacred region, he said.

He said the aerial-based afforestation drive complements several other environmentally responsible initiatives undertaken by the board.

These initiatives include solar energy adoption, scientific waste management through a ban on single-use plastic, segregation of waste at source and water conservation measures across the shrine complex and adjoining areas.



Yudhvir addresses public grievances at Janta Darbar

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: MLA Jammu East Yudhvir Sethi on Friday addressed public grievances during a Janta Darbar held at Pandit Prem Nath Dogra Bhawan, Kachi Chawni, Jammu. The programme witnessed a large turnout of residents from different localities who raised issues related to civic amenities, infrastructure, and public services.

During the interaction, Yudhvir Sethi patiently listened to the concerns of the people, which included problems of water supply, electricity, road conditions, sanitation, and revenue-related matters. Several delegations also highlighted issues related to pension, ration cards, and delays in administrative services.

Addressing the gathering,



MLA Jammu East Yudhvir Sethi listening to public issues.

Yudhvir Sethi stated that Janta Darbars play a vital role in strengthening direct communication between elected representatives and citizens. He said that such platforms help in understanding ground realities and ensuring that government schemes reach the intended beneficiaries in a timely and transparent manner.

The MLA assured the public that genuine grievances would be taken up with the concerned departments on priority. He directed officials present at the Darbar to note down the complaints and initiate immediate follow-up action wherever possible. For complex issues, he promised regular monitoring until resolution.

Seeks budget relief for rural land owners

Sukhnandan demands revocation of sections 6 & 12 of Agrarian Reforms Act

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Former minister and senior BJP leader Sukhnandan Choudhary on Wednesday demanded the revocation of Sections 6 and 12 of the Agrarian Reforms Act, provisions introduced during the Sheikh Abdullah-led government in 1976, stating that these sections have become a major obstacle for rural landowners in Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing a press briefing, Choudhary said that land held under these sections cannot be freely bought or sold, which has severely restricted the rights of genuine landowners. He argued that while the intent of agrarian reforms decades ago may have been welfare-oriented, the continuation of these provisions in the present time has created serious hardships for rural residents.

He said that people living in villages often face urgent financial needs—such as expenses for children's educa-



Senior BJP leader Sukhnandan Choudhary briefing media in Jammu.

tion, medical treatment, marriages, or other family necessities—but are unable to sell their land due to legal restrictions imposed under Sections 6 and 12. "This land has effectively become blocked property. Owners have possession but no real rights," he remarked.

Sukhnandan Choudhary appealed to the Chief Minister to take note of

rural citizens with full land rights would also boost economic activity in villages and strengthen the rural economy, which remains the backbone of the region.

During the press briefing, Choudhary was accompanied by Deepak Pandey, District spokesperson, Dr Pradeep Majotra, Media Incharge, BJP, who supported the demand and emphasized that policy reforms must reflect present-day realities rather than outdated laws. He said the party has consistently raised issues related to farmers and rural residents and will continue to press for reforms that safeguard their interests.

The leaders urged the government to act without delay, stating that revocation of these restrictive provisions would be a long-pending corrective step and a significant relief for thousands of rural landowners across Jammu and Kashmir.

Axis Bank opens new branch at Katra; HRA Katra & PHDCCI assure full support

STATE TIMES NEWS
KATRA: Axis Bank, formerly known as UTI Bank, today inaugurated its new branch at Katra in an impressive and well-attended function, marking a significant step towards strengthening banking and financial services in this important pilgrimage and tourism hub of Jammu & Kashmir.

The branch was formally inaugurated by President, Hotel & Restaurant Association (HRA), Katra and Chairman, PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PHDCCI), Jammu Region, Rakesh Wazir, in the presence of senior officials of Axis Bank and other distinguished guests. Prominent among those present on the occasion were Anil Aggarwal, President (Government Business), Axis Bank; Kanwalbir Singh, Circle Head; Mohd. Moin Shaikh, Cluster Head; Kamal Singh, Naib Tehsildar Katra; Shyam Lal Kesar, Chairman HRA Katra; Virender Kesar, Senior Vice President HRA Katra; and Yogesh Khajuria, Branch Head, Axis Bank, besides other officials and invitees.



President, HRA Katra and Chairman, PHDCCI Jammu Region, Rakesh Wazir inaugurating branch.

Addressing the gathering, Rakesh Wazir congratulated Axis Bank on opening its new branch at Katra and assured full cooperation and support from the organisations he represents, including HRA Katra and PHDCCI Jammu Region and the people of Katra. He said that the inauguration of this branch marks another important milestone in enhancing banking outreach and financial infrastructure in Katra,

which serves as a major centre for pilgrimage, tourism, hospitality and trade.

Wazir highlighted that Axis Bank, as one of India's leading bank, offers a comprehensive range of financial products and services catering to retail customers, MSMEs, corporates and institutional clients. With its strong nationwide presence, robust digital banking platforms and customer-

centric approach, Axis Bank has emerged as a trusted name in the Indian banking sector and continues to play a vital role in promoting economic growth and financial inclusion across the country.

Kesar while appreciating the role of Axis Bank in Jammu & Kashmir, said that the bank has played a positive and constructive role in the region by extending timely banking support to businesses, entrepreneurs and the service sector, thereby contributing meaningfully to the economic development of the Union Territory.

Senior officials of Axis Bank, while addressing the gathering, thanked Wazir and other dignitaries for sparing their valuable time to attend the inauguration ceremony. They assured that the bank would leave no stone unturned in providing the best possible banking facilities to the people of Katra and expressed confidence that the newly opened branch would soon emerge as one of the leading and most customer-oriented branches in the town.

GM Northern Railway inspects Srinagar-Katra section amidst heavy snowfall; prioritizes staff safety

STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: Ashok Kumar Verma, General Manager, Northern Railway, conducted an extensive inspection of the Srinagar to Katra rail section today. The inspection comes at a crucial time when the Kashmir Valley is witnessing challenging weather conditions due to ongoing heavy snowfall and sub-zero temperatures.

During the visit, the General Manager inspected several key stations, including Srinagar, Pampore, Anantnag, and Quazigund. He meticulously reviewed the passenger amenities available at these stations to ensure that travelers are comfortable despite the harsh winter.

Verma paid special attention in reviewing the ongoing maintenance and construction work on various tunnels and bridges. To ensure the highest safety standards, he personally inspected critical track elements, including points, switches, and turnouts, ensuring they remain operational during the freeze. A major highlight of the inspection was the General Manager's interaction with the ground staff and track maintainers. Acknowledging their dedication to working in freezing conditions, Verma sought direct feedback regarding the challenges they face in maintaining the tracks during winter. "The safety and well-being of our ground staff, who work tirelessly in sub-zero temperatures, is paramount," Verma stated. He instructed the accom-



panying officials to ensure that all necessary winter equipment and safety gear are provided to the ground staff immediately. He emphasized that the workforce must be fully equipped to handle track maintenance effectively given the current climatic conditions. Concluding the inspection, the General Manager reviewed other ongoing infrastructure projects in the region. He advised all officers to adhere to strict deadlines, ensuring that the railway network remains robust and developmental works are not hindered by the weather.

Hardware Dealers Association calls-on Amit Sharma, share concerns before conduct of Census 2027



STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: A delegation led by President, Hardware Paint & Sanitary Dealers Association, Jammu Neeraj Gupta along with his team members today called-on Amit Sharma, IAS, 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 shared several issues pertaining to upcoming Digital Census 2027 in both the UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The delegation included Varun Sharma,

Vice President, Krishan Dutt, Rajesh Gupta, Madhur Gupta and others.

DCO/DCR Government of India, MHA for J&K and Ladakh Amit Sharma gave a patient hearing to all their concerns related to proper enumeration to be conducted for all the association members, proper enumeration of goods and services during Houselisting Operations (HLO) to be conducted in the month of June 2026 so that there is adequate relevant data preparation of the items being dealt by them which shall help in demand and supply forecasting for the UT and the same shall be based on the precise data to be released

as per Census 2027 figures.

DCO/DCR Amit Sharma shared special features about upcoming Census 2027 for which Houselisting Operations (HLO) shall be held in first phase for one month in June this year, followed by Population Enumeration (PE) in second phase in September 2026 in snow-bound areas of UT and February 2027 in plain areas of Jammu & Kashmir.

The delegation assured DCO/DCR Amit Sharma that the hardware and sanitary association and the related industry shall fully support awareness creation drives in this behalf and there shall be

focused participation by all members in this biggest enumeration drive in nation which is being held after a long time after 2011.

DCO/DCR Amit Sharma also told the delegation of Hardware Association that Government of India shall be conducting upcoming Census as the first-ever Paperless Census with digital means 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 Sharma also disclosed them about a unique novel initiative of upcoming Digital Census which is Self Enumeration (SE) wherein public shall be given the option of filing their respective data on the app, which shall be counter-verified by enumerators and supervisors later during their household visits during the survey period and the window for SE shall be opened for a fortnight before upcoming dates of HLO and PE for the convenience of citizens of the UT.

JU conferred category-I status by UGC

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: University of Jammu has been accorded Category-I status by the University Grants Commission (UGC) under the UGC (Categorisation of Universities for Grant of Graded Autonomy) Regulations 2018, marking a significant milestone in the institution's journey of quality assurance, academic and research excellence and global relevance.

Category-I status is the highest level of autonomy granted by the UGC to universities that demonstrate outstanding performance in teaching, research, governance and institutional quality. This recognition places the University of Jammu among a select group of the country's distinguished higher education institutions.

The decision to grant Category-I status to the University of Jammu was taken by the UGC in its 594th Commission meeting held on 6th November 2025. The status has been granted based on the comprehensive data, documentation and quality metrics submitted by the Directorate of Internal Quality Assurance (DIQA), University of Jammu, reflecting the University's robust internal quality systems and adherence to national bench-

marks.

With this recognition, the University of Jammu will enjoy enhanced academic and administrative autonomy, including the freedom to introduce new and interdisciplinary academic programmes, establish international academic collaborations, joint and twinning degree programmes, research partnerships with leading foreign universities, hire foreign faculty and admit foreign students. The University can now launch Open and Distance Learning programmes in compliance with UGC regulations without prior approval. The status is expected to provide a significant impetus to research, innovation and global academic engagement.

Speaking on the occasion, the Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu, said: "Being granted Category-I status by the UGC is a proud moment for the University of Jammu. This recognition validates our commitment to academic rigor, research and innovation. It empowers us to further elevate our academic offerings, strengthen global partnerships and create transformative learning experiences for our students. I sincerely thank the Chancellor, Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor, JK

UT and the Hon'ble Pro-Chancellor, Omar Abdullah, Chief Minister, JK UT whose continued encouragement and support have enabled the university to reach this distinguished milestone. I also congratulate the DIQA team for their meticulous efforts in compiling and presenting the institutional data that reflects our academic strength, quality culture, and governance standards. This achievement is a collective outcome of sustained commitment to excellence across the University."

The Vice Chancellor reiterated that the University remains committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, inclusivity and excellence. He expressed hope that the Category-I status will serve as a catalyst in advancing the University's vision of becoming a globally respected Centre of Learning, Research and Innovation.

The Category-I status builds on the University's strong quality credentials, including its NAAC A++ accreditation—the highest grade awarded by NAAC—and its 51st position in the NIRF rankings, reflecting consistent performance across teaching, learning, research and outreach.

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE						
The Deputy Chief Engineer/BR/Workshop, Northern Railway, Jalandhar Cantt. for and on behalf of the President of India invites open-tender under Single Packet System for the undernoted work:-						
S. No.	Tender No.	Name of work	Approx Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Date of opening	Bidding start date on IREPS
1	OT-02-JRC-2026	Provision of side pathway on Bridge No. 242 UP (2 x 12.2m + 1x25.62m) & 242 DN (2 x 12.2m + 1x25.62m), Br. No. 251 UP (1x61m) & 251 DN (3x30.5m) on SRE-UMB section and Br. No. 272 (1x18.3m) & Br. No. 800 (1x18.3m) on KLK-SML section under jurisdiction of SSE/Br/M/UMB.	1,00,05,212.44	2,00,000.00	19.02.2026	05.02.2026 to 19.02.2026
Date & Time for submission of Tender and opening of tender			Up to 15:00 hrs on dates shown against each and opening of tender thereafter at 15:00 hrs on same date.			
Website Particulars where complete details of Tender can be seen & downloaded.			The detailed e-tender notice is available on Northern Railway web site i.e. www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in and tender document is available on www.ireps.gov.in .			
No. 80-W/30/Bridges/ Invitation Dated: 28.01.2026						
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