

VC JU calls on LG Sinha

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Thursday.

Prof. Umesh Rai expressed gratitude to the Lieutenant Governor for his support and guidance to the University of Jammu, which played a pivotal role in the University securing the coveted A++ Grade in the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) accreditation and attaining an impressive Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 3.72.

The Lieutenant Governor, Chancellor of the University of Jammu, commended the University's relentless pursuit of excellence in academics and research, acknowl-



VC JU, Prof. Umesh Rai led delegation calling on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

edging the collective efforts of the administration, faculty, staff and students.

He said the A++ Grade reflects the collective dedication of the University's stakeholders and its vision to impart quality education.

Prof. Umesh Rai informed that the university has made a significant improvement

from the A+ Grade with a CGPA of 3.51 in Cycle III. With this accreditation, the University joins the elite group of A++ institutions in the country (in the fourth Cycle). This A++ grade shall remain valid for a period of seven years.

A seven-member NAAC Peer Team headed by Prof.

Anant Kumar Tyagi, Vice Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth, Varanasi visited the University of Jammu from 11th-13th December, 2024 to evaluate the university across various Key Performance Areas i.e. Curricular Aspects, Teaching-Learning &

Evaluation, Research, Innovations & Extension, Infrastructure & Learning Resources, Student Support & Progression, Governance, Leadership & Management and Institutional Values & Best Practices.

The Vice-Chancellor was accompanied by Prof. Anju Bhasin, Dean Academic Affairs; Prof. Meena Sharma, Dean Planning and Development; Prof. Neelu Rohmetra, Dean Research Studies; Dr. Neeraj Sharma, Registrar and Special Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor and Dr. Ginny Dogra, Director, Directorate of Internal Quality Assurance.

Prez confers Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar on Rishkek Sharma of Samba

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The President of India, Droupadi Murmu conferred the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar on 17 children, in seven categories, for their exceptional achievements at a ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre on Thursday.

During the ceremony, Rishkek Kumar Sharma, a young innovator from Smailpur in Samba district of J&K, was honoured in the field of Science and Technology for his ground-breaking work in cyber security. 17-year-old Rishkek has shown exceptional talent and leadership in scientific exploration.

Rishkek hails from the native village of nationalist leader Pandit Prem Nath Dogra. His pioneering projects have not only earned him this highest civilian honor for children but have also set a benchmark for excellence, inspiring youth across the country.



Yudhvir reaffirms BJP's commitment to public welfare

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Yudhvir Sethi, BJP leader and MLA East Constituency, reaffirmed the unwavering commitment of Bharatiya Janata Party in addressing the day-to-day challenges faced by the public during a public grievance camp held at Pt Prem Nath Dogra Bhawan Kacchi Chawni Jammu.

Various deputations, including individual persons, visited the camp to present their grievances on issues such as ration, education, pension, PHE, PDD, revenue, power, water scarcity, roads, and other development-related topics, as well as personal issues.

Yudhvir Sethi gave a patient hearing to the deputations and resolved most of their issues instantaneously. He assured the public that he would take up the rest of their issues with the concerned authorities and get them resolved soon.

While interacting with the people, Yudhvir praised



MLA Jammu East, Yudhvir Sethi listening to public issues.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his relentless efforts to uplift the lives of ordinary citizens through various welfare schemes.

He emphasized that the Modi-led government has brought transformative changes to Jammu and Kashmir, ensuring that every citizen benefits from the growth and development of the region.

"Under the leadership of PM Modi, the BJP is committed to making sure that the common man's voice is heard and their grievances are addressed in a timely manner," he said.

The senior BJP leader further said that the party's focus on improving

infrastructure, public services, and the welfare of marginalized sections is evident in the various schemes implemented across the region.

"The BJP is committed to addressing the concerns of the people, whether it's related to basic amenities like power and water, or broader development issues such as roads and education," he added.

MLA Sethi assured the people that the BJP will continue to work tirelessly to resolve all issues and ensure that Jammu and Kashmir continues to progress under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

Sham Lal pays tributes on Veer Bal Diwas at Singh Sabha Gurudwara

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: On the occasion of Veer Bal Diwas, a poignant event was held at Singh Sabha Gurudwara, Ghari, Poonchi Mohalla, to honour the supreme sacrifices of Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, the youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. These revered Sahibzade's extraordinary courage and unwavering devotion to their faith continue to inspire generations across the world.

The event was attended by a large gathering of devotees, community leaders, and distinguished personalities, all coming together to pay homage to these young martyrs.

Sham Lal Sharma, MLA Jammu North and former Minister, was the Chief Guest at the event.

In his address to the Sangat, Sharma emphasized the importance of remembering the unparalleled sacrifices made by the Sahibzade, who displayed immense bravery and stood firm for justice, righteousness, and faith at a tender age. Their sacrifice, he said, remains a bea-



MLA Jammu North, Sham Lal Sharma and others offering prayer.

con of courage and moral strength for people of all faiths.

Sharma began his visit by offering prayers at the holy Gurudwara, expressing his reverence for the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh, which continue to inspire individuals toward righteousness and unity.

He acknowledged the spiritual ambiance of the Gurudwara, which reinforces the profound message of Guru Gobind Singh's teachings.

Sharma encouraged the younger generation to draw inspiration from the lives of the Sahibzade and adopt them as role models.

He pointed out that their lives exemplify qualities such as bravery, moral integrity, and unwavering commitment to righteousness.

He highlighted the importance of selfless service to community and religion, emphasizing that serving one's faith and society is, in essence, serving the nation.

The MLA also stressed the need for integrating Sikh values into everyday life, especially for youth. He urged the younger generation to engage actively in community service, promoting a harmonious and progressive society.

Addressing the growing social issue of drug abuse,

Sharma urged parents and educators to educate children about the dangers of addiction and to work together in creating a healthier and safer environment for future generations.

"We must instill in our youth the importance of responsibility, empathy, and integrity," he said.

The event also included spiritual hymns and discourses, where attendees reflected on the sacrifices of the Sahibzade. Harnam Singh, Tarlochan Singh, and all Mandal Presidents of Jammu North Constituency, along with Ex-Councillors, Ex-Sarpanchs, and other prominent personalities, were present to pay homage and support the message of unity, spirituality, and community service.

The Sangat expressed gratitude to Sham Lal Sharma for his inspiring words and active participation in the event.

The gathering reflected a deep sense of reverence and commitment to the teachings of the Guru and the values they impart.

Suresh Gupta pitches for inclusion, bridging gaps for access and participation of learners

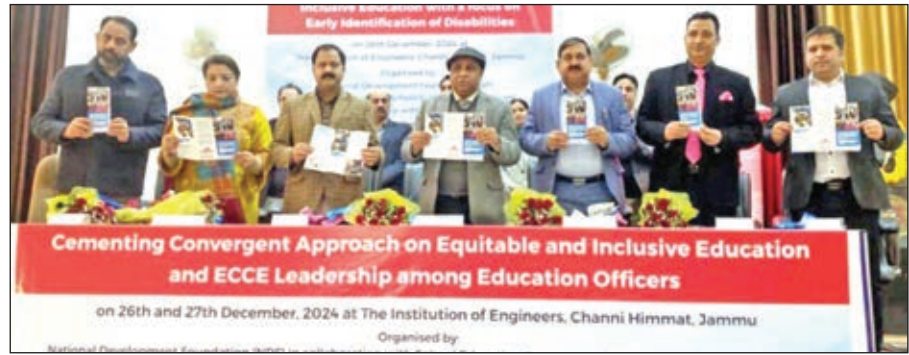
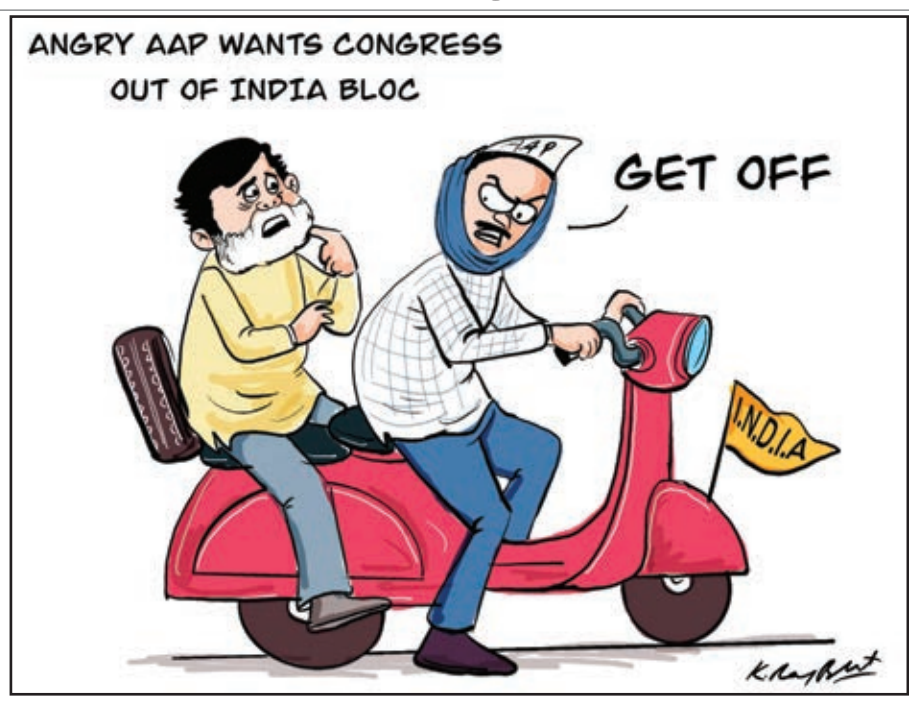
■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Suresh Kumar Gupta, Principal Secretary to the J&K Government School Education Department, called upon the School Education Functionaries, particularly the Mid-level Managers and HOIs, to ensure Inclusive and Equitable Education for all children in Jammu & Kashmir:

He was speaking in a consultation workshop on Equitable and Inclusive Education with a focus on the Early Identification of Disabilities organized by the National Development Foundation Jammu in collaboration with the Directorate of Samagra Shiksha J&K, Directorate of School Education Jammu and UNICEF India.

Around 100 HOIs from Jammu & Samba districts participated in the workshop.

Director School Education Jammu Ashok Kumar Sharma, Director Poshan J&K Kishori Lal Sharma, Joint Director SCERT Prof. Sindhu Kapoor, Dr. Bilal Rashid Deputy Director Planning Samagra Shiksha J&K and Danish Aziz, Education Specialist UNICEF India also



Prpl Secy School Education Department Suresh Kumar Gupta and other dignitaries releasing brochure at Jammu on Thursday.

addressed the participants and retreated the commitment of School Education Department for the Inclusive and Equitable Education.

Rajiv Khajuria, President of the National Development Foundation, presented a keynote address and briefed the participants that NEP advocates the Rights of Children with Special Needs at par with the Rights of Persons with Disability Act 2016. The Resource Persons of the workshop were Raj Kumar Chadha (Coordinator Inclusive Samagra), Harkasha Kar (Early Intervention Expert GMC Jammu), Neha Kalra (Special Educator), Dr.

Nikhil Jamwal (MO RBSK, CMO Off. Jammu) and Vidushi Sharma (State Programme Coordinator CIIT J&K).

Sunny Kumar, Programme Manager NDF, welcomed the participants while Nisha Pandita acted as stage secretary. IEC material on inclusive education was also released.

Suresh Kumar Gupta further added that National Education Policy 2020 has infused all aspects of Disability Inclusion throughout the policy with a special chapter on inclusive and equitable education focusing on the issues, challenges and recommendations to bridge the

gaps to reduce disparity and to ensure access and participation of the learners.

He added that the policy had covered the issues and challenges of the unrepresented children, including Children with Disability, which are covered under socio-educationally backwards groups, which refer to gender identities, socio-cultural identities, socio-economic identities, geographic identities and disabilities.

Gupta called upon all the functionaries of the School Education Department to ensure Inclusive and Equitable Education in the best interest of the children in Jammu & Kashmir.

Dr Jitendra lauds India's global excellence in 'disaster warning'

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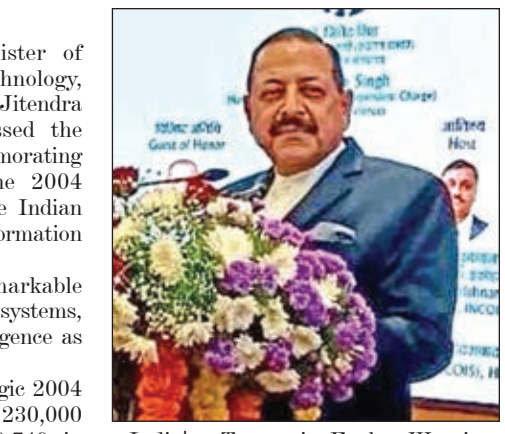
HYDERABAD: Union Minister of State for Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, and PMO, Dr. Jitendra Singh, on Thursday addressed the Hyderabad Conclave commemorating the 20th anniversary of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami at the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS).

He lauded India's remarkable progress in disaster warning systems, highlighting the nation's emergence as a global leader in this field.

Dr. Singh noted that the tragic 2004 tsunami, which claimed over 230,000 lives worldwide, including 10,749 in India, spurred significant advancements in India's disaster preparedness and ocean research capabilities.

The Minister emphasized that INCOIS, established after the 2004 disaster, has evolved into one of the world's most advanced institutions for ocean research and disaster warning, thanks to continuous support from Prime Minister Narendra Modi since 2014.

Dr. Singh credited PM Modi's vision, including the 'Deep Sea Mission' announced on Independence Day, for providing the impetus to India's oceanic and disaster resilience initiatives.



India's Tsunami Early Warning System, now internationally acclaimed, was highlighted as a key pillar of the nation's disaster preparedness. The Minister also pointed out India's ongoing collaboration with UNESCO and the Tsunami Ready Initiative, which strengthens community resilience in vulnerable regions.

Dr. Singh referenced the recognition of 24 Indian communities under this initiative as evidence of India's commitment to building community-centric disaster resilience.

Further, Dr. Singh underscored the strategic importance of India's oceanic exploration in its journey toward becoming

ing "Viksit Bharat." With a 7,500-kilometer coastline and rich marine resources, he stressed the need for sustainable exploration and conservation.

He pointed to projects like the Deep Sea Mission and BioE3 (Biotechnology for Environment, Employment, and Economy) as integral to enhancing biodiversity and contributing to national prosperity.

Looking ahead, Dr. Singh expressed optimism about India's future achievements in space and marine missions, including plans to deploy an Indian in the deep sea and space by 2026. He also stressed the importance of integrating tsunami warnings with other ocean-related hazards like storm surges and high waves into a comprehensive multi-hazard early warning system.

Concluding his address, Dr. Singh reaffirmed the crucial role of INCOIS in India's Vision 2047, emphasizing its contribution to disaster readiness, sustainable development, and the creation of a self-reliant, resilient India.

The event, attended by Dr. M. Ravi Chandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, and eminent scientists and policymakers, served as a platform to celebrate two decades of achievements while charting a path forward for holistic and sustainable development.

Shutdown in Katra against ropeway project, protestors launch hunger strike

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

REASI/JAMMU: A shutdown in Katra, the base camp for the Vaishno Devi pilgrimage in Jammu and Kashmir, against a proposed ropeway project entered its second day on Thursday, with the protestors sitting on a hunger strike to press for the release of those detained by police the day before.

The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Sangharsh Samiti has called for a 72-hour shutdown, which commenced on Wednesday, announcing that all activities in Katra would remain suspended during the bandh.

"The bandh will continue until the government shelve the ropeway project. It is an assault on the livelihoods of most Katra residents, who are dependent on the pilgrimage economy," a samiti spokesperson said.

Last month, the board decided to install the ropeway to facilitate

access to the temple for senior citizens, children and others who find it difficult to climb the 13-km-long track to the cave shrine.

The samiti which claims to represent shopkeepers, pony operators and palanquin owners, claimed that the ropeway would destroy the livelihoods of local business owners and demanded that the project be scrapped.

For the second consecutive day on Thursday, all shops, restaurants and business establishments remained closed and traffic was off the roads in the holy town.

The bandh has affected normal life in Katra.

A samiti member said that instead of holding talks with them, the administration is using force, including detaining their leaders during a peaceful protest. "They are deliberately creating such a situation with their attitude," he said.

Six of the protestors sat on a

hunger strike on Wednesday night, demanding the release of 18 samiti members who were detained during a protest march against the ropeway project.

"We demand their release. If the



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Several protestors, including two leaders of the Samiti -- Bhupinder Singh and Sohan Chand -- were detained by police and taken away in a police vehicle from the protest site during Wednesday's march.

In Udhampur, some people held protests against the Shrine Board and the government, criticising their failure to address the demands of Katra residents and seeking the release of the detained individuals.

The proposed Rs 250-crore ropeway project will connect Tarakote Marg to Sanji Chhat, leading to the cave shrine in Reasi district.

Faced with difficulties due to the bandh, the Shrine Board has made arrangements for the boarding and lodging of the pilgrims arriving in the town.

"Over 93 lakh yatris have paid obeisance at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine this year," said Anshul Garg, CEO of the Shrine Board, on

X.

He added that special langars set up by the Shrine Board at the Katra railway station, Banganga and Tarakote are offering tea and milk to pilgrims, ensuring the yatra continues smoothly on both tracks.

However, pilgrims undertaking the journey to the cave shrine expressed displeasure over the shutdown of eateries and the lack of local transport, which caused significant inconvenience.

"We want the protestors to call off the bandh as it is affecting our pilgrimage. If this continues, there will be cancellations by pilgrims travelling from outside," said one pilgrim.

Another devotee emphasised that eating points, local transport, and lodges should be kept out of the bandh, as it is causing significant hardship.

"The bandh is causing huge inconvenience to the pilgrims," another devotee added.