

PAC reviews audit paras of RDD

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Monday held a meeting at Assembly Complex Jammu to review and discuss the Audit Paras related to the Rural Development Department (RDD).

The meeting was chaired by PAC Chairman, Sham Lal Sharma and attended by members of the Committee, Mubarak Gul, Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurezi), Qaysar Jamshaid Lone, Altaf Ahmed Wani(Kaloo), Javid Hassan Baig, Dr. Devinder Kumar Manyal, Sajad Shaheen and Muzaffar Iqbal Khan.

Threadbare discussions were held on various issues raised in CAG's Audit Paras 3.12 (2001-



PAC Chairman, Sham Lal Sharma chairing a meeting on Monday.

02), 3.25 and 3.26 (2016-17) pertaining to the Rural Development Department.

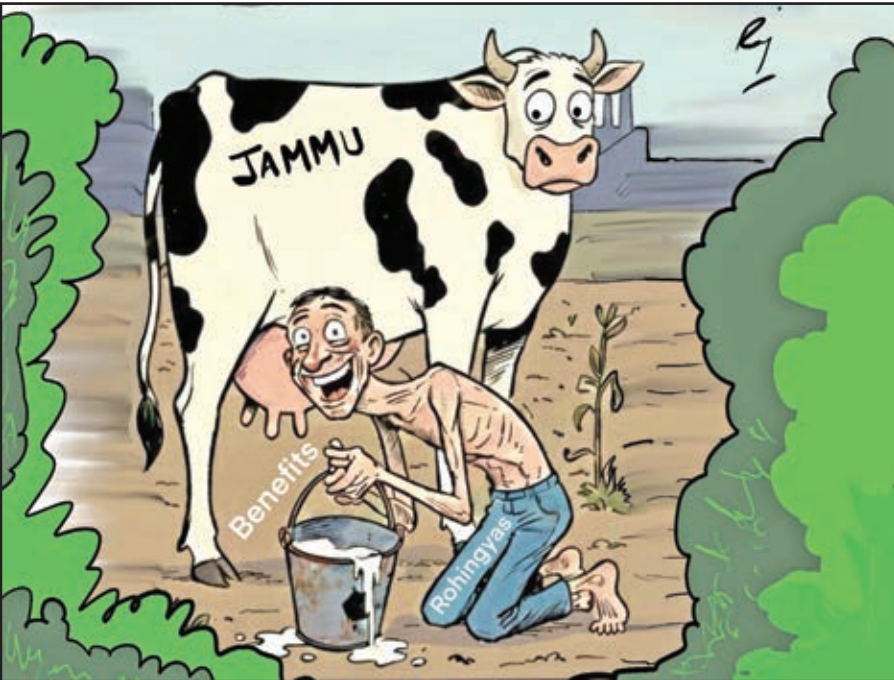
Accountant General, Tsewang Tharchin, briefed the Committee and pointed out the issues highlighted in the audit reports pertaining to RDD. Secretary, Rural Development Department, Mohammed Aijaz, briefed the

Committee about the working of the Rural Development Department and steps being taken on the observations and to make further improvement in working of the department.

MD, JKRLM J&K Dr Shubra Sharma also briefed the Committee about issues highlighted in the meeting.

The Committee also discussed various other issues regarding implementation of different centrally sponsored schemes launched for welfare of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and stressed to provide maximum benefits of the schemes to the local people. The Chairman directed the concerned officers

to prepare a comprehensive detailed report regarding the action taken so far by the department to settle CAGs Audit Paras of 3.25 and 3.26 and submit to the Committee as early as possible. After thorough examining, the Committee decided to drop Audit Para no 3.12 (2001-02) pertaining to the Rural Development Department with the directions to remain conscious in future in this regard. Among others, DG, Accounts & Treasuries, F A Lone; Directors, RDD, Kashmir/Jammu; Additional Secretary, RDD; GM J&K Bank besides senior officers of concerned departments and Assembly Secretariat attended the meeting.



Amitava Chatterjee calls on LG Ladakh Kavinder Gupta Discusses banking outreach, financial inclusion and digital services for remote areas of Ladakh

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Amitava Chatterjee, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of Jammu & Kashmir Bank, on Monday paid a courtesy visit to the Lt Governor of Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta in Jammu.

During the meeting, Chatterjee briefed the Lt Governor on the bank's ongoing initiatives and its commitment to strengthening banking outreach and financial inclusion in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

The Lt Governor appreciated the role of J&K Bank in supporting economic growth and emphasized the importance of robust banking services to facilitate sustainable development, employment generation, and ease of doing business in Ladakh.

The Lt Governor encouraged the bank to further



Amitava Chatterjee, MD & CEO J&K Bank calling on Lt Governor of Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta.

expand its customer-centric services and leverage digital banking solutions to the people residing in far-flung and remote areas of Ladakh with an aim to ensure inclusive growth, financial empowerment, and easy access to credit and digital

banking facilities for all sections of society.

He emphasised that strengthening last-mile connectivity in banking is crucial for fostering sustainable development and economic self-reliance in the region.

Jammu Bar condemns killing of Dipu Chandra Das in Bangladesh, to hold protest today



JKHCB AJ President Senior Advocate K. Nirmal Kotwal talking to reporters.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jammu & Kashmir High Court Bar Association, Jammu, today held a press conference under the chairmanship of Senior Advocate K. Nirmal Kotwal, along with all office bearers, to strongly condemn the brutal killing of Dipu Chandra Das, a 25-year-old Hindu man, in Mymensingh, Bangladesh. The incident has triggered widespread outrage and raised serious concerns in India regarding the safety and security of religious minorities, particularly Hindus, in Bangladesh.

According to information shared during the press conference, Dipu Chandra Das, a member of the Hindu community, was working as a factory labourer at the Pioneer Knit Composite Factory in the

Square Masterbari area of Mymensingh city. On Thursday night, unverified allegations and rumours of blasphemy reportedly spread within the factory premises and nearby areas, creating an atmosphere of fear and tension.

Citing local eyewitness accounts reported by Bangladeshi media outlet Barta Bazar, the Bar Association stated that an angry mob assaulted Dipu Chandra Das, leading to his death. Reports further indicated that the victim's body was later abandoned on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and set on fire, resulting in disruption of traffic on both sides of the road. The incident has also heightened fears among the Hindu community in Bangladesh regarding their safety.

Addressing the media, Nirmal K. Kotwal,

President of the J&K High Court Bar Association, Jammu, expressed deep anguish and shock over what he described as an inhuman and barbaric act. He, along with other office bearers and members of the Bar, strongly condemned the incident, asserting that mob violence in the name of religion or alleged blasphemy is a grave violation of human rights and the rule of law.

The Bar Association urged the Government of Bangladesh to conduct a fair, transparent, and time-bound investigation into the incident, ensure that all perpetrators are brought to justice, and take effective measures to safeguard religious minorities so that such incidents are not repeated in the future.

The Association also appealed to the Government of India to take up the matter at an appropriate diplomatic level to ensure the safety, dignity, and fundamental rights of minorities living in neighbouring countries.

In this regard, the J&K High Court Bar Association, Jammu, announced that a protest will be held on December 23 at 1:30 PM at the District Court Complex, Janipur, to express solidarity with the victim and to denounce violence against religious minorities.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jammu & Kashmir Joint Churches Fellowship, Christian Colony, Residency Road, Jammu, today organised a colourful and vibrant Christmas Rally in Jammu city to celebrate the joyous occasion of Christmas and spread the message of peace, love, and harmony.

The rally commenced from Shahidi Chowk and passed through Residency Road, Raghunath Bazar, City Chowk, Shalamar Road, Parade, Library Chowk, Kachi Chawni, Panjirthi, CPO Chowk, Jain Bazar, Link Road, Purani Mandi, Kanak Mandi, and City Chowk, before culminating back at Shahidi Chowk. The procession witnessed enthusiastic participation from members of the Christian community and drew the attention of large numbers of people across the city.

Santa Claus, beautifully



Christmas procession being taken out in Jammu.

designed tableaux depicting angels and King Herod-the Roman ruler during the time of Jesus Christ-along with church choirs, were the major attractions of the rally. Choirs from various churches of Jammu city sang melodious worship songs related to the birth of Lord Jesus Christ, creating a festive and spiritual atmosphere throughout the route. People from different communities appreciated the presentation of the tableaux and warmly welcomed the procession.

Market associations at several locations extended a cordial welcome to the rally participants and offered refreshments, reflecting the spirit of communal harmony and brotherhood that Jammu is known for.

The rally was organised under the leadership of Rev. Shoukat Peter, President, Joint Churches Fellowship, Jammu, along with Rev. Hemant Digal, Priest In-Charge, St. Paul's Church;

Rev. Musraf Bhatti, Vice President; Rev. Rohil Mattoo, General Secretary; and several pastors, community leaders, and volunteers from various churches, whose collective efforts ensured the success of the event.

At the conclusion of the rally, the organisers expressed sincere gratitude to the District Administration for their support and cooperation. Special thanks were also extended to the Jammu Police, including SSP Jammu, SP City North, DSPs, traffic police, JMC officers and staff, shopkeepers, and the general public for their cooperation and warm reception.

The organisers conveyed heartfelt wishes to all citizens for a Merry Christmas and a Blessed and Prosperous New Year 2026. Special appreciation was also expressed to the media teams for their continuous coverage of the rally from start to finish.

J&K Joint Churches Fellowship takes out colourful Christmas procession

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University Act 1999 & Admissions in Professional Colleges of SMVDU

■ DAYA SAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University has been very much in news in November 2025 after selections for admissions in the first batch of MBBS Degree Course in Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME) (Medical College & Associated Hospital) were made by the J&K Board of Professional Entrance Examinations (J&K BOPEE) for 50 MBBS degree seats based on ranks in the NEET UG 2025 UT of J&K Merit List since protests were made by some organisations / groups when 42 out of the 50 candidates selected for the said course belonged to Muslim community and only seven candidates belonged to Hindu community. It is not out of place to mention here that the J&K Board of Professional Entrance Examinations) J&KBOPEE makes selections for govt. & private medical colleges of UT of J&K in terms of the provisions for the selections as conveyed by the managements of the colleges to the BOPEE. The representations/ suggestions have been made pleading / contesting that since the SMVDIME medical college belonged to a most revered Hindu shrine and was run with the support of offerings made to the shrine the seats there should be allotted to only the 'Hindu' students and that too more

particularly since in the premises of the SMVDU University only the Hindu traditions & religious practices are supposed to be observed { it needs to be quoted here that for duties of the Shrine Board Section-18(6) of the related Act of Legislature lays down to make suitable arrangements for the imparting of religious instructions and general education ; and Section -21 (Grant to religious institutions).-- The Board may make grants in favour of any institution for religious spiritual purposes - and the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine is a Hindu Shrine.}

It had been Vide NOTIFICATION No. 153-BOPEE of 14 -10-2025 that J&K BOPEE had notified the available seats & schedule for online filling of the new sanctioned MBBS seats of first batch of Shri Mata Vaishno Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME) and in the seat matrix of dated 15-10-2025 under the category of private colleges it was mentioned that there were 50 MBBS seats available in Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence, Kakryal, Katra & all seats were in the Open Merit category (OM male female) and the selection was to be made on the basis of merit in NEET UG score 2025 where as in the other private medical college , ASCOMS (initially 100 seats were notified which



were later on increased), the seats out of 100 were to be distributed as OM Government seats 40, Poor & Backward (P&B) 10, OM Management 15 seats , HM (Hindu Minority) 25 seats, NRI seats 10.. Finally based on the NEET score selections were made based on the J&K UT Rank from amongst the domicile of UT of J&K applicants irrespective of the caste / creed race where 42 Muslim, 7 Hindu and 1 sikh candidate was selected on the basis of general merit.

It needs to be particularly noted that Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University was established in terms of the Jammu and Kashmir Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University Act, 1999 (Act No. XII of 1999) which lays down in Section - 4 of the Act :. Objects.-- The objects of the University shall be to disseminate and advance knowledge, wisdom and understanding, and to offer scientific and technical education of the highest standards by teaching and research and by the example and influence of its corporate life and Section -6 provides that - - The University shall be open to all persons of either sex and of whatever,

race, creed, caste or class.;& Section 8(1) of SMVDU Act provides that The Lieutenant Governor of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir shall by virtue of his office be the Chancellor of the University and Section -5(1-a) provides that The Lieutenant Governor of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir shall be the ex-officio Chairman of the Board, and if the Lieutenant Governor be not a Hindu, then he may nominate an eminent person professing Hindu religion and qualified to be a member ; Section -8 (3) reads There shall be a Vice-Chancellor appointed in the manner prescribed by the Statutes who shall be the Principal Executive and Academic Officer of the University and Ex-Officio Chairman, of the Executive Council, Academic Council and Finance Committee .

As regards admission of students Section-16 (1a) provides that subject to the provisions of this Act and the Statutes, the Ordinances may provide for all or any of the matters, namely :- (a) the admission of the students, the courses of study and the fees therefor, the qualifications pertaining to degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic distinctions, the conditions for grant of Fellowships, Awards and the like. As regards the role of Shri Mata

Vaishno Devi Shrine Board Section-9 lays down that SMVDSB is one of the Authorities of the University which as per Section-10 shall also be the supreme authority of the University so much so that Section -15 (3) lays down that every new Statute or addition to the Statutes or any amendment or repeal of a Statute shall require the approval of the Shrine Board who may assent thereto or withhold assent or remit to the Executive Council for consideration.

It is very particularly worth mentioning here that Section- 18(5) of the SMVDS Act 1988 also lays down that it shall be the duty of the Board to undertake the developmental activities concerning the area of the Shrine and its surroundings. Section-18(6) provides to make suitable arrangements for the imparting of religious instructions and general education ; and Section -21 provides -- The Board may make grants in favour of any institution for religious spiritual purposes.

Going by the particular references made here in above all decisions about affairs of the University & the colleges with the university are initiated , conceived and related proposals are drawn by the Shrine Board / the University academic management

council/ committee so no outside authority / or even government is directly involved in matters like what courses are to be started, what fee is to be charged, who should be admitted / who should not be admitted in the colleges / in the management & in the faculty etc but of course with in the provisions of the related Act / provisions of the Constitution of India as may relate to reservation on the basis of caste/ sect/ region/religious status for private or government or government aided institutions / established under an act. And so any new proposals or amendments if felt necessary have to be considered for review by the the SMVDSB/ University Academic Council/ Finance Committee etc and submitted to the appropriate authorities / Government for n.a concerning the students to be admitted, reservations & the fee etc to be charged keeping in view the suggestions being made as regards the religion of the students / faculty as well as suggestions also being made for the welfare / development of the people of areas around the Shrine like reservations of seats as well as the tuition fee to be charged.

To be Continued... (The writer is Sr Journalist & analyst of J&K affairs)