

JU organizes extension lecture on Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy and Youth Empowerment

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Department of Buddhist Studies organized an enlightening extension lecture titled "Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy and the Role of Youth towards Viksit Bharat" at Prof Gyan Chand Jain Seminar Hall. The session featured the esteemed guest speaker, Col. Akash Patil, Dr. Ambedkar International Centre (DAIC) Director, New Delhi. Dr. Vikrant Sharma was the special guest and Prof. Sucheta Pathania, Dean Faculty of Arts was the Chief Guest.



Section of dignitaries during the programme at JU.

The programme started with the National Anthem and Buddha Vandana followed by a welcome address by Prof. Mohd: Reyaz Ahmad, Head of the Department of Buddhist Studies. Col. Patil delivered

a thought-provoking talk that delved into Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's philosophy, emphasizing its relevance in contemporary society. He highlighted the vital role of youth in shaping a developed and inclusive

India, or Viksit Bharat. Through engaging anecdotes and insights, Col. Patil encouraged the students to draw inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar's teachings on social justice, equality, and empowerment. Dr Vikarant Sharma in his address expressed gratitude to Col. Patil for his insightful contributions and emphasized to promote discussion that aligns with the values of Ambedkar's vision for an equitable society. Dr. Ambedkar believed that true development could only be achieved when all members of society were empowered. His thought emphasizes the value of education, self-awareness, and active involvement in governance, he added.

The lecture was attended by faculty members, students, and distinguished guests, including Prof. Shashi Manhas, Dr. Vivek Sharma, Dr. Neetu Kumari, Dr. Mandeep Singh, Dr. Rohit Sharma, Mr Parduman Singh and others. They actively participated in a lively discussion following the lecture.

The interaction highlighted the importance of youth engagement in national development and emphasized the need to foster a mindset of innovation and social responsibility.

Prof. Sucheta Pathania in her remarks congratulated the Head and faculty members of the Department of Buddhist Studies for organizing the Extension Lecture on Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy and Youth Empowerment. She added that in "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India), we must recognize that the youth are not just the leaders of tomorrow; they are the change-makers of today. The challenges we face require innovative solutions that can only come from the dynamic minds of our younger generation.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Rajesh Sharma, Assistant Professor in the Department of Buddhist Studies at the University of Jammu. MS Sonia Jasrotia coordinated the entire proceedings of the function.

Trustee Ranvijay Singh reviews Maha Shivratri preparations at Ranbireshwar Temple

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Ranvijay Singh, Trustee of J&K Dharmarth Trust, on Thursday conducted a comprehensive review of the preparations for the upcoming Maha Shivratri festivities at the renowned Ranbireshwar Temple in Jammu.

Ashok Kumar Sharma (IPS Retd), Secretary; Varinder Jamwal, Additional Secretary of the Trust, and other staff members were present in the meeting.

During the extensive inspection of the temple premises, the Trustee assessed the arrangements being made to facilitate devotees and ensure a smooth and joyous celebration of Maha Shivratri, one of the most auspicious festivals in the Hindu calendar.

The Secretary briefed the Trustee about the necessary arrangements, including security measures, sanitation, and facilities for devotees in all the Shiv Temples including Shankaracharya Temple Srinagar, Purnmandal, Utter Behni, Raghunath ji Temple, Jammu, Ranbireshwar



Ranjiv Singh, Trustee of J&K Dharmarth Trust taking stock of preparations at Ranbireshwar Temple in Jammu.

Temple, Sudh Mahadev, Mantalai, Shiv Temple Nagrota, Shiv Temple Satwari, etc. falling under the ambit of Dharmarth Trust. He apprised him of the steps being taken to ensure a seamless flow of devotees, the availability of essential services, and the completion of necessary repairs and renovations before the festival.

Ranjvijay emphasized the significance of thorough planning to accommodate the expected surge in devotees and ensure their safety and convenience during the prayers and rituals associated with Maha Shivratri. He also directed the timely completion of ongoing repairs in the temple premises and stressed the importance of maintaining cleanliness and hygiene.

The Trustee highlighted that the Dharmarth Trust, a centuries-old institution under the patronage of Hon'ble Chairman Trustee Dr. Karan Singh Ji and other Trustees, has a remarkable legacy of providing state-of-the-art facilities to pilgrims and visitors. He emphasized the importance of upholding this tradition and enhancing services to accommodate devotees better.

He asserted that it is the solemn responsibility of every staff member of the Trust to patiently and respectfully assist devotees, ensuring a comfortable and spiritually fulfilling experience at the temples and shrines managed by the Trust.

CM concludes pre-budget consultation with public representatives



CM Omar Abdullah chairing pre-budget consultations meeting in Jammu.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday concluded the pre-budget consultations with public representatives, holding separate meetings with elected representatives from Kishtwar and Doda districts of Jammu division at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu.

Chairing the session for Kishtwar district, the Chief Minister engaged with public representatives, including Leader of Opposition (LoP) Sunil Sharma, who represents Padder-Nagsen in the J&K Assembly, the Chairperson of the District Development Council (DDC) Kishtwar and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from the district. The representatives presented their demands and issues, with the Chief Minister assuring them that their suggestions and inputs would be duly considered in the budget formulation.

In his comments, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah stated that the series of consultations with public representatives from all 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir had concluded, providing valuable insights into the ground-level issues faced by the people.

"These interactions help us understand the priorities of the people. Since you are directly connected with the public, your inputs and suggestions are crucial for policy-making," the Chief Minister told the elected representatives. Similarly, representatives from Doda district also discussed their development priorities and concerns with the Chief Minister.

Among key issues raised about twin districts, staff shortages in educational institutions and healthcare centers, drinking water supply, road connectivity & widening, construction of tunnels, and improving mobile connectivity in

remote areas were put forth.

The Deputy Commissioners of Kishtwar and Doda, in their presentation, provided constituency-wise breakdown of demands prioritized by the MLAs.

The DDC chairpersons and MLAs expressed their gratitude to the Chief Minister for involving them in the budget formulation process, noting that it was the first time such consultations had taken place.

They urged that this participatory approach should continue as a regular feature.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to the CM Dheeraj Gupta, Principal Secretary Finance Santosh D. Vaidya, Director General Budget M.S. Malik, Director General Expenditure Division-I Sajad Hussain Ganai and other concerned officials.

Chief Secretary reviews expansion plan for Jambu Zoo

Zoo to offer major attractions like Zebra, bird aviary & AR/VR facility in future

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo conducted a comprehensive review meeting to assess the expansion plan for Jambu Zoo. The meeting focused on the revised layout plan, which includes the construction of new animal enclosures, a walk-through aviary, infrastructure developments, and additional visitor facilities to enhance the zoo's appeal. During the meeting, the Chief Secretary reviewed the current footfall at the zoo and engaged in detailed deliberations on strategies to increase visitor numbers. He emphasized the need to position Jambu Zoo as a prime destination, particularly during the summer months, to attract a larger audience.

Chief Wildlife Warden Sarvesh Rai provided a detailed presentation outlining the existing facilities designed for visitor convenience and the



Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo chairing a meeting at New Delhi on Thursday.

ambitious expansion plans for the coming years. At present, the zoo features 17 enclosures housing a diverse range of wild animals, including tigers, lions, leopards, Himalayan black bears, blackbucks, snake chambers, and crocodiles. The Chief Secretary was informed that 13 new animal enclosures are under construction during 2024-25, with plans to introduce prominent species such as the hippopotamus, ostrich, Indian gaur, hyena, wolf, and fishing cat.

Additionally, a walk-through

aviary is in progress, which will house an array of beautiful native and exotic bird species. Future expansion will also see the addition of a botanical garden and a butterfly/multi-sensory garden. About the infrastructure augmentation in the zoo it was added that the development plan includes the creation of nature trails and elevated walkways, log huts and tree houses, themed resting areas, and a toy train for children, enhancing the overall visitor experience. Regarding the future expansion plans it was

revealed that the Department is looking ahead with an expansion blueprint that includes the construction of 18 additional animal enclosures. These will house prominent species such as the brown bear, snow leopard, zebra, giraffe, rhinoceros, markhor, and red panda.

A major attraction planned for the future is a Fossil/Dinosaur Park, aimed at educating and entertaining visitors. Additionally, an AR/VR setup will be installed, offering an immersive experi-

ence where visitors can explore extinct and rare species in a virtual habitat. Plans also include supervised feeding sessions with prime species, further enhancing visitor engagement. The meeting highlighted that a total of 2,13,523 visitors toured Jambu Zoo during 2023-24. The footfall has already reached 1,80,144 visitors in 2024-25, generating a net revenue of Rs 3.22 crore during this period.

It was also noted that a dedicated workforce of 80 staff members operates in three shifts to ensure smooth functioning and maintenance of the facility.

Chief Secretary emphasized the need for sustained efforts in the zoo's development to make it a world-class attraction. The expansion plans align with the broader vision of enhancing wildlife conservation, visitor engagement, and eco-tourism in the region.

Stampede at Mata Vaishno Devi Bhawan

Petitioner filed Affidavit & DB fixes Contempt Petition for final Consideration

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A Division Bench of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh at Jammu comprising Chief Justice Tashi Rabstan and Justice M.A. Chowdhary in the much publicised Public Interest Litigation followed by Contempt Petition seeking disclosure of the 3-member Enquiry Report which was assigned the task to examine in detail the causes/reasons behind

the unfortunate stampede at the Bhawan of Mata Vaishno Devi, Katra in the intervening night of December 31, 2021/January 1, 2022 which resulted in the death of 12 pilgrims and injuries to several devotees has directed the Registry to list the instant Contempt Petition for final consideration on April 22nd, 2025 and the Division Bench also observed that Response Affidavit

to the Statement of Facts has been filed on October 21st, 2024 by the petitioner. When the Contempt petition filed by the Petitioner-Advocate Sheikh Shakeel Ahmed alleging non-compliance of the Judgement dated April 26th, 2023 passed in WP(C) PIL No.12/2022 came up for hearing, Advocate H.A. Siddiqui with Advocates Supriya Chouhan and Rahul Raina appearing for the

petitioner submitted that the petitioner pursuant to order dated September 18th, 2024 passed by the Division Bench in the Contempt Petition has filed his Response Affidavit on October 21st, 2024 to the Statement of Facts filed by Sanjeev Verma (IAS), the then Commissioner/Secretary to Government of J&K. Advocate H.A. Siddiqui in the

open Court submitted that the Division Bench had directed the Govt. of J&K to take effective steps in furtherance of the decision/recommendations of the 3-Members Committee constituted for ensuring safety of the pilgrims and devotees and the Statement of Facts filed by Sanjeev Verma (IAS), Commissioner/Secretary to Govt. of J&K, General Administration Department is not

in tune with the Judgement passed by the Division Bench on 26-04-2023. He further submitted that the Statement of Facts is completely silent with regard to the action taken against the delinquent Officers/Officials on whose negligence 12 innocent devotees lost their lives in the stampede. Advocate H.A. Siddiqui further submitted that in the Response Affidavit, the petitioner-Advocate

Sheikh Shakeel Ahmed has averred that it is unfortunate that till date the 3-members Enquiry Report has not seen the light of the day and even the said report was suppressed from the Division Bench and all out attempt has been made to shield the erring officials who remained remiss in the performance of their duties which resulted into the stampede which claimed 12 innocent lives.

Satish reviews development projects, flagship schemes in Udhampur

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

UDHAMPUR: To assess the progress on various developmental projects and flagship schemes being implemented across different sectors in Udhampur, Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Transport, Science and Technology, Satish Sharma, chaired a high level review meeting here today.

Among others the meeting was attended by DDC Chairperson Udhampur; Lal Chand; MLA Chenani, Balvant Singh Mankotia; MLA Rammagar, Sunil Bhardwaj; MLA Udhampur East, Ranbir Singh Pathania; Vice Chairperson DDC, Juhi Manhas Pathania; Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Saloni Rai; SSP Udhampur, Amod Ashok Nagpure along with divisional and district heads of various departments. The Minister, while reviewing all the sectors, directed the officers to ensure 100 percent coverage of eligible beneficiaries under all the government schemes.

He emphasized the need for intensifying public awareness initiatives so that people can fully avail the benefits of these schemes. He directed the officers to increase public awareness



Sports Minister Satish Sharma chairing a meeting at Udhampur.

about the flagship schemes and programmes in the district. He directed the concerned officers for mobilisation of resources and manpower for effective implementation of all the welfare and development schemes.

The Minister asked the Chief Education Officer to identify the school dropouts and provide a list at the earliest.

He instructed the Health Department to streamline patient referral cases for better healthcare delivery. While Chief Agriculture Officer was directed to conduct awareness camps on HADP and other farmer centric schemes.

Regarding PMAY, the Minister asked the concerned officials to simplify the process of survey and don't ask for ration card as mandatory document so that maximum people in actual need can get benefit of the scheme.

The Minister directed the PMGSY, PWD and RDD authorities to expedite road construction projects and

achieve set targets within the stipulated timelines. He exhorted upon the officers to work in close coordination to ensure effective grievance redress and enhanced public service delivery. He also emphasised on promoting rural sports and developing sports infrastructure at the grassroots level.

The Minister highlighted the importance of organic farming and encouraged its adoption in the district for enhanced yield.

During the meeting, the local MLAs highlighted several concerns and demands seeking a speedy resolution of the same.

Their issues inter alia included expansion of Chenani bus stand, construction of multi-storey parking at Patnitop, shortage and rationalisation of teaching staff in educational institutions, land transfer for KV School, Forest clearance for various projects, operationalisation of JKRTC Bus Yard in Udhampur, promotion of sports infrastructure and

rural sports activities, installation of hand pumps and early completion of JJM works, mitigation of traffic congestion, staff shortage in health institutions, acute shortage of drinking water, establishment of an ITI in Rammagar, development of Seoz Dhar as a tourist destination, conversion of Basantgarh Hospital into a CHC, resolution of issues related to Hanging Schools and dismantling of Pavilion at Sports Stadium Udhampur.

Earlier, DC Udhampur gave a sector-wise detailed PowerPoint Presentation on various ongoing projects and schemes, highlighting the progress of major initiatives. These included Chenani-Sudhmahadev road NH-244, Government Medical College & Associated Hospital, Udhampur, Devika project, integrated development of tourist facilitation centre at Mantalai. The DC briefed the chair about the key sectors such as PHE, PWD, PDD, Health, PMGSY, FCS&CA,

Youth Services & Sports, Transport, Social Welfare, Education, Agriculture, Horticulture, RDD, ICDS, Animal & Sheep Husbandry, Jal Jeevan Mission, MGN-REGA, PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, PMAY-G, HADP and financial updates on the District Capex Budget 2023-24 and 2024-25. Earlier, the Minister visited the Sports stadium Udhampur to inspect the ongoing pavilion construction work and interacted with players at the Indoor sports hall. Later, scores of public delegations and individuals met the Minister and put forth their issues and demands. These included installation of weighing machine at Rammagar food store, forest clearance issues in Sharda Mata road construction, construction of playfield in Ghanthal and Badminton Indoor Hall in Chenani, provision of RTC bus service from Pattangarh and Sudhmahadev to Jammu, overcharging by matadors operating in Udhampur town, establishment of PHC in Block Narsoo and other issues.

The Minister assured the public that their demands would be reviewed and appropriate measures would be taken to address them.

Secy RDD inaugurates 10-day SARAS Aajeevika Mela in Jammu

Says 'participation of SHGs from various states demonstrates country's rich cultural, regional diversity'

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Secretary, Rural Development Department and Panchayati Raj (RD&PR), Mohammad Aijaz Asad, on Thursday inaugurated the 10 day SARAS Aajeevika Mela at Kala Kendra, Jammu.

The Secretary described the event as a 'Mini Bharat' that celebrates the country's rich cultural diversity and the entrepreneurial spirit of rural women. Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Aijaz Asad emphasised the significance of the event in highlighting the talent and resilience of rural women entrepreneurs.

"Our country is a union of many cultures and today, you can see self help groups from 19 states of India displaying their products. Along with cuisines, other cultural aspects are also being highlighted. A 'Mini Bharat' has come to Jammu today," maintained the Secretary. Being organised by the Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM) under the Department of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, the SARAS Aajeevika Mela aims to provide a national platform for rural women artisans under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM (DAY-NRLM). This year's



Secretary, RD&PR Mohammad Aijaz Asad inaugurating Mela at Kala Kendra, Jammu.

event is featuring 70 unique stalls showcasing handicrafts, handlooms, jewellery, pottery, metalwork, paintings and home décor besides a variety of traditional cuisines from across India. The Secretary inspected the stalls representing 19 states, along with those showcasing the unique crafts of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh UTs. He interacted with the exhibitors, applauding their entrepreneurial spirit and innovation in rural enterprises.

"The SARAS Mela is not just an exhibition; it is a learning platform for SHG women to witness new products and innovative ideas," he added. He encouraged the visitors to attend the event and support rural women entrepreneurs by purchasing their handmade products, emphasising the importance of creating sus-

tainable market linkages for SHGs.

Highlighting the role of NRLM in empowering rural women, Aijaz Asad described it as not just a mission but a revolution, a silent revolution to uplift women. He noted the significant achievements of rural women entrepreneurs who, through NRLM support, have gained financial independence and developed sustainable businesses. Among others the exhibition was attended by Mission Director J&K Rural Livelihoods Mission, Dr Shubhra Sharma; Director, Panchayati Raj, Sham Lal; Chief Executive Officer, IWMP; Rajnish Kumar; Chief Operating Officer, HIMAYAT; Rajneesh Gupta; Additional Mission Director JKRLM, Manpreet Kaur and State Project Managers JKRLM.

