

Dr Jitendra appeals J&K youth to give up ‘Sarkari Naukri’ mindset

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy, and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh, today appealed to Jammu & Kashmir youth to give up "Sarkari Naukri" mindset. Inaugurating 2-day "National Startup Festival", organized by CSIR-India Institute of Integrative Medicine at Government College for Women, Gandhi Nagar, here, the Minister dedicated the festival to the youth of Jammu & Kashmir, emphasizing the importance of innovation, entrepreneurship, and early industry linkages in ensuring startup success. Dr. Jitendra Singh highlighted the immense potential of agriculture-based startups in the region, particularly the Purple Revolution, which has enabled over 3,000 youth in Jammu & Kashmir to earn in lakhs through



Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh speaking after inaugurating 2-day "National Startup Festival" organised by Union Ministry of Science & Technology at Jammu on Saturday.

lavender StartUp initiative. He encouraged young minds to recognize their aptitudes and pursue entrepreneurial ventures, rather than solely focusing on government jobs. The Minister further emphasized that Jammu & Kashmir's agri-startup ecosystem is thriving, with lavender cultivation in Baderwah, Doda district, putting the region on the global startup map. The Minister urged greater inclusion of urban areas in agri-startups, with a focus on expanding lavender cultivation and other high-

value agricultural ventures. With two lakh StartUps currently operating in India, the country has secured the third position in the global startup ecosystem. The S&T Minister noted that start-ups are not only boosting economic growth but also providing lucrative employment opportunities, particularly for women and Self-Help Groups (SHGs). He stressed the critical role of industry linkages and market research in ensuring the long-term sus-

tainability of startups, encouraging young entrepreneurs to study market dynamics at the outset. Dr. Jitendra Singh hailed India's space economy's rapid growth, attributing its success to collaboration between the public and private sectors. He also celebrated the contributions of women-led teams in major space missions, including Chandrayaan-2 and Aditya L1. On the education front, Dr Jitendra Singh commended Prime Minister Narendra Modi's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which has revamped

India's education system by creating a level playing field and ensuring digital inclusivity. The Minister urged students to spend at least 30 minutes daily learning about government schemes and leveraging available opportunities. The Science and Technology Minister also shared that after his guidance an MoU has been signed between AIIMS, IITM, IIT, IIM, GMC Jammu for sharing co-guide for Postgraduate students for integrated research. During the festival, Dr. Jitendra Singh visited 45 startup stalls, engaging with budding entrepreneurs and students showcasing their innovations. He applauded their efforts in contributing to India's startup ecosystem and encouraged them to continue innovating. The National Startup Festival 2025 is a step toward making Jammu & Kashmir a hub of innovation, self-reliance, and economic empowerment.



J&K Branch of ICAI awarded 1st Best Branch at Annual Function

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The J&K Branch of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India was awarded with first best branch at the 73rd Annual function of the Northern Regional Council of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India organized at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The Award was presented by President of ICAI (CA.) Charanjot Singh Nanda and Chairman of NIRC of ICAI CA. Abhinav Aggarwal to J&K branch which was represented by its Chairman, CA. Vineet Kohli, CA. Sourav Pargal, Vice Chairman, CA. Vikas Purdhani Immediate Past Chairman & CA. Sanchit Aggarwal, Newly elected member (2025-29), in the presence of Central Council Members of Northern Region & Northern Regional Council Members of ICAI. The awards are presented



Representatives of J&K branch receiving award.

annually to the best performing branches of ICAI across all Northern regions by taking into consideration various parameters of excellence in performance. J&K branch, under the guidance and leadership of CA. Vineet Kohli, was given the award for its outstanding contributions and achievements. The Best Branch Award is a testament to the unwavering commitment to upholding the highest standards of professionalism and service.

It is pertinent to mention that J&K Branch of ICAI has been awarded the First award for the first time in the history at National Level amongst 176 branches and 50 overseas chapters of ICAI. The other members of Executive Committee of J&K Branch of ICAI comprise of CA. Priya Seht (Secretary), CA. Ayush Sawhney (Executive Member) & CA. Nakul Saraf (Past Chairman).

CM inaugurates Akhal Bridge at Kangan

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KANGAN (GANDERBAL): Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday inaugurated the 82-meter-long Akhal Bridge over River Sind in the Kangan area of Ganderbal district. The bridge, constructed at a cost of ₹8 crore by the Public Works (Roads and Buildings) Department, connects several villages in Kimmul-Akhal and adjoining areas. Addressing the public on



Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday inaugurating Akhal Bridge at Kangan on Saturday.

the occasion, the Chief Minister stated that the

Akhal Bridge is expected to significantly improve transportation, stimulate economic activity in the area and enhance the quality of life for thousands of residents in the district. He expressed confidence that the bridge would serve as a vital link, promoting development and bringing much-needed relief to the local population. The Chief Minister emphasized that the bridge marks the resolution of long-standing

ing connectivity issues in the area. Local public representatives and residents expressed their gratitude to the Chief Minister for addressing their long-standing demand, which will now provide greater convenience and accessibility. MLA Kangan Mian Mehar Ali, Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, DDC member Kangan, Chief Engineer R&B, and other senior civil and police officers were present on the occasion.

Dy CM visits GMC; assures hassle free deliverance of healthcare services



Dy CM Surinder Kumar Choudhary visiting GMC Jammu.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Kumar Choudhary on Saturday visited Government Medical College, Jammu and reviewed functioning of the institution. The Deputy Chief Minister took stock of the facilities being provided to the patients besides assessing the strength of doctors and para medical staff deployed there. While interacting with the staff, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the government has already issued instructions that the people should not face any inconvenience with respect to the public services, especially the healthcare facilities. He said that the government is committed to ensure speedy and hassle free deliverance of public services to the people. "Patients should not face any inconvenience while availing the facilities meant for them as health is one of the main priority sectors of the Government," maintained the Deputy Minister. The Deputy Chief Minister directed the hospital authorities to ensure that the patients are provided with quality healthcare facilities. He said that it should be ensured that benefits of all health related policies are provided to them without any fail. Principal Medical College and other senior faculty members accompanied the Deputy Chief Minister during his visit.

Kashmir Shawls, Carpets lead in exports

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The world-famous handicraft and handloom products worth Rs 2,567 crore have been exported from Kashmir valley in the last two financial years and the first three quarters of the current fiscal. However, the exports in the current financial year have been hit by global conflicts. Giving details, a spokesperson of the Handicrafts and Handloom Department, Kashmir, hoped that the exports are expected to touch cumulatively ₹3000 crore for 3 years, by the end of the last quarter of the CFY. As per the figures available with the Department, while Kani and Sozni shawls lead exports worth Rs 1105 crore, hand-knotted carpet exports stood at Rs 728 crore in the last three years. The other products exported include crewel, papier mache, chain stitch and wood carving. The spokesman further stated that the Department shall facilitate export of hand-made Kashmir products for which a subsidy scheme is available, giving incentive of 10% of the total volume of handloom/ handicraft export products to any country with maximum reimbursement up to 75 crore in favour of the eligible exporters registered with the Department," he added. Highlighting the Government's strategy for welfare of artisan community, the spokesman said the Department has a well-established Design Studio in the Indian Institute of Carpet Technology and unique prototypes conceived by the School of Designs and Craft Development Institute. "The artisans can access these contemporary designs and packaging models to add value to their products in

niche high-end markets," he added. For welfare of artisans, the Department has several flagship schemes in operation including Credit Card Scheme, Mudra, Financial Assistance Scheme for Cooperatives, Karkhandar Scheme and Education Scholarship for the children of craftsmen. Under the National Wool Policy, the department has selected 100 weaver beneficiaries for distribution of free modified modern steel carpet looms in Kashmir at a total cost of Rs.43.70 lakh and the department will pitch for another 250 improvised looms for distribution in the next financial year. Emphasizing upon the department's focus on testing and QR coding of GI registered craft products to weed out sale of counterfeit products, the spokesperson stated that the department has augmented manpower and equipment at its premier Pashmina Testing and Quality Certification Centre (PTQCC) and ICT lab for carpets. "The waitlist of 6 craft products including Sozni, Kani, Walnut Wood Carving, Khatamband, Papier Mache and Kashmir Pashmina at PTQCC has come down from 1700 on February 5 to 671 as on February 21, after strengthening of manpower," he said, adding that the lab will be further strengthened after more staff shall undergo necessary training at the Wool Research Association, Thane. He further stated that the proposal for additional equipment including Scanning Electron Microscope and a Digital Microscope have been submitted in the Union Ministry of Textiles, which shall further enhance the speed of testing and certification in PTQCC.

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SRINAGAR: Minister for Agriculture Production and Rural Development Department, Javed Ahmed Dar, on Saturday inaugurated GONGUL 2025, the 10th SKUAST-K AgriTech mela, a three-day mega event showcasing cutting-edge agricultural innovations, sustainable farming practices and entrepreneurial opportunities in the agriculture sector at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir, Shalimar campus. This year's mela is special as it emphasises secondary and sustainable agriculture, reflecting the objectives of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP). With a greater focus on value addition, climate resilience and agri-entrepreneurship, the event brings together policymakers, industry leaders and farmers to shape the future of agriculture in J&K. The mela has more than 400 stalls exhibiting the latest farm



Agriculture Minister Javed Ahmed Dar and others during inauguration of Mela.

machinery, precision agriculture, sale of seeds and planting material besides farm animals and birds. The mela for the first time organised a pet animal show in which pet dogs and cats displayed their training skills. Besides, the event is also featuring the majestic horses. The Minister lauded SKUAST-K for choosing 'Gongul' as the name for AgriTech mela, which connects the next generation with rich Kashmiri culture. He narrated the childhood activities linked with Gongul (onset of sowing)

in Kashmir and evolution of tech-driven farming in the valley. He emphasised the need for preserving the Kashmiri culture, known globally for its cuisine, literature, architecture and rich traditions. While hailing the HADP, he said the initiative is going to change the fortunes of the people of J&K. The Minister assured full support of the J&K Government to SKUAST-K in leading the transformation of agriculture landscape of the region. He also ensured strict

law enforcement for checking the trade of spurious agrochemicals. Prof Nazir Ahmad Ganai, Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-K, said the Gongul-2025 reflects the achievements and aspirations of J&K's Holistic Agriculture Development Program. He said SKUAST-K has envisioned J&K as a model bio-economy for Viksit Bharat through futuristic innovation-led farming. He thanked the J&K Government for generous support to the university initiatives. Member Legislative

Courts Judge only mistakes in law committed by accused, not his sins: Justice Atul Sreedharan

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

BHADERWAH: Reaffirming commitment of Legal Services Institutions towards ensuring access to justice and upholding the constitutional rights of prisoners, Justice Atul Sreedharan, Judge, High Court of J&K and Ladakh and Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority today conducted an extensive tour to District Jail Baderwah to assess the living conditions of inmates, legal aid availability and evaluate the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reformative measures. Amit Kumar Gupta, Member Secretary, J&K LSA, Anoop Sharma, Registrar IT, High Court of J&K and Ladakh as well as Muzamil Hayat Kabli, Under Secretary (Adm), J&K LSA, accompanied the Executive Judge, J&K LSA. Present on the occasion were Balbir Lal, District & Sessions Judge (Chairman, DLSA), Baderwah; Harvinder Singh, District Magistrate Doda; Sandeep Mehta, SSP Doda; Hamidullah Malik, Jail Superintendent and Tabraiz Qazi, Secretary, DLSA Baderwah. During the visit, Justice Sreedharan inspected various facilities within the jail, which



Justice Atul Sreedharan during visit District Jail Baderwah.

currently houses 164 undertrial prisoners, 23 detenues and 04 convicts, against a total capacity of 155 persons. He also visited the separate female block, where 15 undertrial prisoners including 7 foreign nationals are lodged. The video conferencing facility in the jail was also found operational, with an ongoing trial in the case titled "State vs Sahil Dimgra" in which the accused appeared before the 2nd Additional Sessions Judge, Jammu through virtual mode from district jail Baderwah. The Executive Chairman also inaugurated an Eye Check-up Camp organized by the District Administration in collaboration with the Red Cross Society, where 60 inmates were

registered for examination and all the medicines prescribed were provided free of cost by the Red Cross Society. Taking note of medical needs, Justice Sreedharan directed the District Magistrate to explore the feasibility of providing e-consultations through tele-medicine services, particularly for addressing psychiatric and psychological concerns of the inmates. He also advised the District Administration to consider installation of a defibrillator within the jail dispensary to cater to the cardiac emergencies. Justice Sreedharan also inspected the 10-bedded medical dispensary, which was found clean and well-maintained. He also visited the Yoga and Meditation Centre, where

live yoga classes were being conducted under the guidance of Dr. Nidhi Padha, helping inmates incorporate physical and mental wellness into their daily routine. Besides, rehabilitation and vocational training being imparted to the jail inmates in the Vocational Centre was also inspected, where inmates were engaged in tailoring, incense stick (agarbatti) manufacturing, Kashmiri crewel embroidery and crafting flower pots and decorative items from waste paper material. A showcase of handcrafted items by the inmates highlighted their skill development and the potential for self-sufficiency post-release. In a bid to promote positive engagement and recreational activities, a cricket match was organized and trophies were distributed among the winning and runner-up teams, along with a special award for the 'Man of the Match.' Interacting with the jail inmates during his special address, Justice Sreedharan emphasized that judges only adjudicate the mistakes of an accused committed in law and not the sins committed by them. He reiterated the importance of ensuring timely legal aid for inmates and

strengthening rehabilitation measures within correctional facilities. He also visited the Jail Legal Aid Clinic, where he appreciated the role of Legal Aid Defense Counsels and Para-Legal Volunteers in facilitating legal assistance to inmates. Hamidullah Malik, Superintendent Jail, highlighted various reformative initiatives being implemented for the well-being of inmates. Deputy Commissioner Doda, who is also a member of the Undertrial Review Committee (UTRC), expressed gratitude to Justice Sreedharan for choosing Baderwah Jail as the first destination for inspection after assuming the charge as Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority. The Secretary, DLSA Baderwah, briefed about various legal aid initiatives being carried out across the district and the role of Legal Services Institutions in ensuring access to justice for all. This visit underscored the commitment of Legal Services Institutions towards ensuring access to justice, promoting reformation and upholding the dignity of inmates.