

# Dr Jitendra inspects ‘Microbe Repository’ at Chandigarh, virtually inaugurates Palampur ‘Tulip’ Garden

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
CHANDIGARH: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh, inspected "Microbe Repository" and other facilities at the CSIR-Institute of Microbial Technology (CSIR-IMTECH) here and also took an update on the ongoing projects in the institute.

During the review, Dr. Jitendra highlighted that microbial technology is a crucial pillar of biotechnology, emphasizing its growing significance in shaping the next generation industrial revolution.

Dr. Jitendra underscored India's rapid progress in the biotech sector, stating, "India's bioeconomy has witnessed an extraordinary surge from \$10 billion in 2014 to over \$130 billion in 2024, with projections to reach \$300 billion by 2030."

The Minister also recalled the recent launch of India's



first indigenous antibiotic, Nafthronycin, developed to combat resistant infections. He noted that the number of biotech startups in India has grown exponentially from just 50 in 2014 to nearly 9,000 today, solidifying India's position as a global hub for biotech innovation.

Furthermore, he informed that India now ranks third in the Asia-Pacific region and 12th globally in bio-manufacturing, underscoring the increasing importance of CSIR-IMTECH in driving pioneering research in microbial genetics, infectious diseases, fermentation technol-

gy, environmental microbiology, and bioinformatics.

CSIR-IMTECH, a premier research institute in microbial biotechnology, hosts a repository of over 14,000 microbial strains through its Microbial Type Culture Collection and Gene Bank (MTCC).

Connecting virtually with CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (CSIR-IIHT), Palampur, Dr. Jitendra inaugurated several new facilities and participated in critical scientific discussions. He joined the EMBO Workshop on High Elevation Plant Adaptation in a Changing Climate (HEPACC) and the Industry, Farmer & Academia (IFA) Meet, emphasizing that such initiatives reflect the Government of India's commitment to scientific advancement, economic empowerment, and sustainable agriculture.

Dr. Jitendra also virtually inaugurated the new "Tulip"

Garden at Palampur in Himachal Pradesh, commending the CSIR-IIHT Palampur team for their scientific interventions that have enabled wider tulip cultivation even in other seasons, a model that can be replicated in other regions. Additionally, he launched products developed by agri-startups that have been supported by the institute, fostering innovation in the agricultural sector.

Dr. Jitendra Singh lauded CSIR-IIHT for leading multiple national missions, including:

- CSIR Floriculture Mission - Expanded floriculture to 1,000 hectares, benefiting 3,800 farmers across Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh, generating an income of Rs 80 crore.

The Minister also inaugurated state-of-the-art facilities, including Autonomous Green House, Heeng Seed Production Centre, Heeng

QPM Facility, Ornamental Bulb Processing Facility and Phyto-Analytical Facility.

Additionally, he laid the foundation stone for the Phyto factory Facility and dedicated a Cement Concrete Road from Floriculture Junction to Chandpur R&D Farm.

Dr. Jitendra emphasized that by integrating scientific research, industry collaboration, and government policies, the rich biodiversity of Himalayan states can be harnessed for economic prosperity, benefiting farmers and advancing India's scientific ecosystem.



## JKSSAAT holds second governing body meet, reviews future roadmap

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Society for Social Audit Accountability & Transparency (JKSSAAT) held its second governing body meeting under the chairmanship of its Chairperson, Ravi Kesar (former IFS).



JKSSAAT Chairperson, Ravi Kesar chairing a meeting in Jammu.

The meeting was aimed to review the performance, address key issues and strategise future initiatives of the social audit unit.

The meeting was attended by Principal Accountant General (PAG), J&K, K.P. Yadav; Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad; Director Finance, Umar Khan; Additional Secretary, Waseem Raja; former Director General, Accounts and Treasuries, J&K, Dr. Mohammad Ishaq Wani; Former State Information Commissioner J&K, Professor Sudesh Kumar Sharma; Head of Centre for Rural Development & PR, IMPARD, J&K, Dr. Reva Sharma and representatives of School Education and Social Welfare Departments.

The governing body discussed the ongoing activities and future plans of JKSSAAT, including performance of the Social Audit Unit in auditing various government schemes such as

MGNREGA, PMAY(G), SBM(G) and PMAY(U). It appreciated the Social Audit Unit, J&K, for achieving complete coverage of Gram Panchayats (GPs) for the fiscal years 2022-23 and 2023-24, earning the Union Territory a top rank nationally.

The agenda also covered issues reported under MGNREGA including financial discipline, adherence to scheme guidelines and grievances. The governing body reviewed the progress in financial recoveries with a focus on transparency and accountability in implementation of various government initiatives.

Chairman, JKSSAAT, Ravi Kesar, appreciated the Social Audit Unit's dedication, noting that they delivered outstanding results despite facing a manpower crunch.

Secretary RDD, Aijaz Asad, appreciated the

progress saying that by conducting thorough audits and engaging the community, the Social Audit Unit has enhanced the efficiency of public programs.

Assuring full support to SAU established under the scheme guidelines, he remarked that positive impact of the Social Audit Unit's work is evident in better policy implementation and increased public trust in government initiatives.

Principal Accountant General (PAG), J&K, K.P. Yadav, emphasized the need to prioritize and clear the oldest social audit cases. He called for hiring additional manpower to support the unit's growing responsibilities.

Director, Social Audit Unit, J&K, Shafia Naqshbandi, while presenting the performance overview of the unit, highlighted the key achievements and milestones

for the current financial year.

One of the major highlights of the presentation was the Social Audit Unit's achievement of 100% Gram Panchayat (GP) coverage in the fiscal years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The SSAAT was informed that in order to strengthen the capacity of social audits, approximately 600 Village Resource Persons (VRPs) have been trained over the years across 20 districts.

The meeting also discussed issues such as the staff structure of JKSAU, the proposed budget for FY 2025-26 and plans to extend the scope of social audits to centrally sponsored schemes being implemented by other departments.

The approval of a new project proposal for social audits, including the District Capex Plan and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, was also a key highlight of the meeting.

## Tourism Deptt's Mahashivratri Mahotsav at Peer Kho Temple continues

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
JAMMU: Under the guidance of Commissioner secretary Tourism J&K, Yasha Mudgal, the vibrant festivities of the Mahashivratri Mahotsav, organized by the Department of Tourism J&K, in collaboration with JKAACL and District Administration Jammu, continued with great enthusiasm on its second day at the revered Peer Kho Cave Temple in Jammu. The event witnessed mesmerizing performances by renowned artist Ravi Raghuvanshi Ji and other prominent artists of Jammu, adding a cultural charm to the religious celebrations.



A section of dignitaries during the event in Jammu on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Vikas Gupta, JKAS, Director Tourism Jammu, emphasized the importance of such festivals in preserving the cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir while boosting pilgrimage tourism. He expressed gratitude to the devotees and artists for their active participation, which has made the Mahashivratri Mahotsav a grand success.

Joint Director Tourism Jammu, Sunaina Sharma Mehta, JKAS, Director Tourism Jammu Their presence highlighted the significance of the festival and the collective efforts to promote religious tourism in the region. She invited devotees and travelers

to embark on a spiritual sojourn, experiencing the divine essence of Jammu's sacred sites.

The Peer Kho Temple, adorned with festive decorations, echoed with devotional chants and cultural performances, creating an atmosphere of spiritual bliss and communal harmony. The event showcased the exhibition through departmental stalls, rich Dogra culture, with traditional dance forms and music captivating the audience.

The Mahashivratri Mahotsav, which began on 25th February, will continue to enthrall devotees and visitors with its blend of religious fer-

vor and cultural extravaganza. The festivities at Peer Kho Temple will culminate on 28th February, with a grand finale of Dargah, marking the end of four day celebration

Also present on the occasion were Vishal Manhas, senior police officer; Sugandhi Banotra, JKAS, Assistant Director Tourism Jammu, shashi. khajuria (coordinator; Peerkho temple).

The Department of Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir, invites everyone to join in the celebrations and experience the divine aura of Mahashivratri amidst the natural beauty and cultural richness of the Jammu region.

## Dy CM attends Shivratri festivities at Rajouri, Jammu

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
JAMMU: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary attended several festivities held to mark Maha Shivratri celebrations at various places in Rajouri district.

At the main function held at Bhambla, the Deputy Chief Minister prayed for peace and prosperity of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that these festivals are a strong projector to the composite culture of the region in which people from all communities participate since ages.

"We should work together for strengthening the mutual brotherhood and our composite culture and syn-



Dy CM Surinder Choudhary speaking at a religious event.

cretic traditions, which is the need of the hour ", the Deputy Chief Minister maintained.

On the occasion, the Deputy Chief Minister inaugurated several public utilities. He also attended Shivratri festivities at Kameshwar Mandir Akhnour.

While interacting with the devotees there, the Deputy Chief Minister reiterated Government 's resolve for ensuring quality deliverance of essential services. He said that requisite instructions stand passed to the concerned and the implementation is also being closely monitored.

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
JAMMU: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, on Wednesday chaired a meeting at Civil Secretariat here to review the performance and functioning of Jammu and Kashmir Medical Supplies Corporation Limited (JKMSCL).

The meeting was attended by Secretary Health and Medical Education, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed; Managing Director, JKMSCL, Principals of all GMCs, Principals of Dental Colleges, CMOs of all districts and other concerned officers, either in person or



Health Minister Sakeena Itoo chairing a meeting in Jammu.

virtually.

Addressing the officers, Sakeena Itoo underscored the need for further strengthening monitoring system of medical supplies for enhanced healthcare service delivery across Jammu and Kashmir. She called for bringing added transparency and efficiency

in medicine distribution for patients in all district and Sub-district hospitals as well as health centres.

The Minister asked the Principals of all GMCs to maintain proper record of medicines distributed among patients at their respective hospitals as well as of those prescribed for

patients but not available in their stocks.

Sakeena further stressed on the management of JKMSCL to maintain quality standards in medical supplies as well as machinery and equipments being procured by the corporation.

Acknowledging the role of JKMSCL in upgrading the healthcare infrastructure across J&K, she urged the management to work towards a more responsive and efficient system that caters to growing medical needs of locals here.

While reviewing the status of Drugs and Vaccine Distribution Management System (DVDMS) portal, Sakeena Itoo stressed on the

management of JKMSCL for physical monitoring of drugs being distributed among various health facilities. She asked them to constitute teams for conducting surprise inspections of drugs and medicines being delivered to hospitals and other facilities.

She further asked the management of corporation to take action against officers who are yet to on-board on DVDMS portal.

During the meeting, MD, JKMSCL, provided a detailed presentation on procurement mechanisms, supply chain management, availability of medicines as well as financial position of the Corporation.



Glimpses of Maha Shivratri celebrations in Jammu on Wednesday. (Details on Pg-1)