

# Shikha's Kariigarii presents thematic fashion showcase culminating in a moving 'Operation Sindoor' tribute

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

**SURAJKUND:** At the Surajkund International Crafts Mela, Shikha's Kariigarii presented a fashion show that blended heritage, handloom, and national emotion, redefining runway as a living narrative of India's artistic soul and collective conscience.

More than a fashion show, the presentation unfolded as a cultural journey, where each saree told a story of time, tradition and the human hands behind it. Crafted over weeks and months by artisans across the country, the collections celebrated the idea of art transformed into a wearable legacy. The opening sequence, "A Tribal Life - Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat", paid homage to India's indigenous communities and their textile traditions rooted in nature, survival, ritual and identity. From forests and hills to plains and plateaus, the drapes reflected how tribal women across regions had woven stories of resilience into fabric - each weave distinct, yet bound by a shared cultural memory.

The second sequence, "Silks



Shikha's Kariigarii and others at thematic fashion showcase in a moving 'Operation Sindoor' tribute.

of India", showcased the regal diversity of Indian silks - from Tussar and Gheecha of Chhattisgarh to Banarasi Butidar of Varanasi, Lacheha Buta of Mubarakpur, Chanderi of Madhya Pradesh, Venkatagiri of Andhra Pradesh and Kuthampully of Kerala. Every saree on the ramp stood as testimony to mindful craftsmanship, far removed from mass production. A defining moment of the evening was "Tribal to Modern Art - Hand-Painted Sarees of India", where fabric emerged as canvas and the saree as a moving gallery. The collection featured original

hand-painted artworks inspired by Pichwai, Pattachitra, Warli, Gond, Madhubani, Assamese traditions and Chittara art. Created stroke by stroke by award-winning artists, each saree carried the unmistakable imprint of its creator, preserving traditions that dated back centuries while giving them contemporary relevance. Speaking on the philosophy behind the collection, Shikha Ajmera, artist and promoter of the brand, said: "For me, a saree was not just a garment - it was a moving canvas. Every brushstroke carried the artist's

memory, belief and lived experience. Through Shikha's Kariigarii, my endeavour had always been to ensure that our traditional art forms did not remain confined to museums or walls, but lived, breathed and moved with people. When someone wore these sarees, they were not wearing fashion - they were wearing history, culture and the soul of an artist."

Recently, Shikha Ajmera had also showcased Sarees of India at the International Film Festival of India in 2025, among other important international and national events.

The grand finale, "Pride of India - Operation Sindoor", marked a first-of-its-kind fashion tribute, drawing inspiration from a contemporary moment that had unified the nation in grief, resolve and resilience. The sequence coincided with the historic milestone celebrating 150 years of the song Vande Mataram.

Set against the stirring strains of Vande Mataram, the finale transcended fashion, becoming a tribute to national pride, unity and emotional strength. Each walk

symbolised dignity, courage and collective identity, echoing the sentiment of "Saare Jahan Se Achha, Hindustan Hamara." The sequence was widely appreciated as a rare moment where the fashion ramp transformed into a space of remembrance and homage.

Shikha's Kariigarii continued to work closely with nationally recognised artisans across India, ensuring sustainable livelihoods while preserving endangered art traditions. By converting art into wearable form, the brand bridged heritage with contemporary expression, making culture relevant for modern audiences. The show was executed under the direction of fashion director Sandesh Navlakha, with expert choreography and styling support, culminating in a visually compelling and emotionally resonant experience.

The evening concluded with a standing ovation, marking one of the most memorable showcases at the Surajkund International Crafts Mela 2026, where fashion became a medium of culture, conscience and patriotism.

# DST charts futuristic biotechnology roadmap for J&K

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

**JAMMU:** The Department of Jammu and Technology is endeavouring to chart out futuristic roadmap for biotechnology, including the UT Policy for Biotechnology. In this regard, Commissioner Secretary, Science and Technology, Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, on Sunday chaired a comprehensive review meeting wherein senior officers presented findings from their extensive study visits to India's premier biotechnology clusters including Genome Valley (Hyderabad), Guwahati Biotech Park and facilities at Lucknow, Vizag and Chandigarh. The delegation comprising Special Secretary Reyaz Ahmed Beigh, Director Finance Madan Lal, Additional Secretary JKSPTIC Neelam Khajuria, Additional Director Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed, Deputy Secretary Asif Chandel and others studied operational models, technology incubation frameworks and industry-academia linkages at these established biotech hubs. Deputy Secretary Dr. Abdul Khair made a detailed presentation highlighting the globally best practices and sector-specific opportunities for Jammu and

Kashmir. Dr. Shahid Iqbal directed for immediate formulation of a comprehensive J&K Biotechnology Policy, recognizing that the Union Territory sits at the confluence of extraordinary natural wealth and untapped scientific potential.

With over 6,500 plant species including 200+ high-value medicinal and aromatic plants including saffron, lavender, wild mushrooms, rare herbs and unique climatic zones from subtropical Jammu to alpine Kashmir; J&K possesses inherent advantages that remain underexploited in India's rapidly expanding \$130 billion bio economy, projected to reach \$300 billion by 2030 under the national BioE3 Policy. The Secretary emphasized that the proposed policy will strategically target the agriculture biotechnology for crop improvement and climate resilience; pharmaceutical manufacturing leveraging J&K's rich phytochemical biodiversity; food processing and nutraceuticals from horticulture produce; dairy biotechnology for probiotic innovations; industrial enzyme production and environmental bioremediation for water bodies like Dal and Wular lakes. The policy framework

will align with J&K's existing strengths while creating new value chains in bio-manufacturing, moving beyond raw material export to high-margin biotech products. Critically addressing the youth employment challenge, Dr. Shahid Iqbal suggested a structured internship programme for biotechnology graduates from J&K institutions, creating direct pathways from academic training to industrial application. This initiative responds to the gap between qualified graduates and sector-relevant opportunities within the UT. Drawing lessons from Genome Valley's public-private partnership model and Guwahati Biotech Park's incubation success with 26 lab facilities and NABL accreditation pathways, Strategic partnerships with SKUAST-Jammu (NIRF Rank 7) and SKUAST-Kashmir (Rank 3 among state agricultural universities), along with CSIR-IITM's pharmaceutical R&D capabilities, will provide the intellectual infrastructure for translating indigenous knowledge into patents, products, and prosperity.

# Navya Srijan Sewa Sanstha organizes 4th Blood Donation Camp



Volunteers donating blood in a camp.

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

**JAMMU:** The 4th Blood Donation Camp was successfully organized by Navya Srijan Sewa Sanstha in collaboration with Bee Enn General Hospital as a solemn tribute to the brave martyrs of Pulwama Attack.

The camp witnessed an overwhelming response from citizens, youth volunteers, and social workers, with more than 30 units of blood donated during the drive. The initiative aimed to honor the supreme sacrifice of the Pulwama mar-

tyrs by contributing towards saving precious lives and promoting a culture of humanitarian service.

The program was graced by the esteemed presence of Spiritual Leader Brahmakumari Behan Nirmal Didi, who emphasized the importance of selfless service and compassion in society. Quiser JKAS Officer Ajaz Quiser lauded the efforts of the NGO and highlighted the importance of youth participation in nation-building activi-

ties. Senior BJP Leader Ved Sharma appreciated the initiative and said that blood donation is one of the noblest services to humanity. Social Activist and BJP leader Deepak Gupta reiterated that such programs strengthen social harmony and reflect true nationalism through service. The entire program was coordinated by Rameek Sharma, Chief Patron of Navya Srijan Sewa Sanstha, along with dedicated NGO volunteers who ensured smooth organization and participation. Speaking on the occasion, the organizers stated that Navya Srijan Sewa Sanstha remains committed to organizing regular social welfare initiatives including blood donation drives, health awareness programs, and youth engagement activities. The camp concluded with a collective pledge to continue working towards humanitarian causes and keeping alive the spirit of sacrifice and national service.

# Teachings of saint Guru Kabir Dass are still alive: Mula Ram

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

**JAMMU:** 508th Saint Kabir Dass Nirvan Diwas was celebrated with great enthusiasm and religious fervour across the Jammu region today, marked by special prayers, community Langars, and 'Shabeel' arrangements at various temples dedicated to the revered saint.

Among the dignitaries paying homage was former Minister of J&K and Chairman All J&K Sadguru Kabir Sabha, Mula Ram, who addressed multiple functions in Marh, Kot Bhalwal and R.S Pura block, including Jhiri, Kalyanpur, Ghou Manahsan, Slamchak, Ghaink and Patta Borhi Chungi.

At prominent functions held at Kabir Mandirs Mula Ram, accompanied by community leaders and others, paid floral tributes to Saint Kabir and reflected on the timeless teachings of the 15th-century poet and saint. He urged the people to follow the footsteps of Guru



Kabir Dass Ji Maharaj and embrace the values that the saint propagated, which continue to hold immense relevance today.

Mula Ram emphasized that Sant Kabir's path is a beacon of brotherhood, equality, and communal harmony. "The teachings of Sant Kabir Ji are not just a part of history but remain a living source of inspiration for humanity. His message transcends religions and promotes love, unity, and peace in society," he said.

Mula Ram highlighted that Kabir's verses have influenced the Bhakti movement and can be found

bridged the gap between various religions, Mula Ram said, "Saint Kabir Ji provided a universal path that can be followed by all, irrespective of faith or background. His life and teachings encourage us to look beyond religious differences and unite as one human family."

The former minister also prayed for peace, progress, and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory, invoking the blessings of Saint Kabir Dass Ji. He called upon the people to imbibe the saint's teachings in their daily lives to foster harmony and goodwill.

Other speakers at the functions included, Joginder Lal Retd DC and Former president All J&K Sadguru Kabir Sabha, Puran Bhagat Retd DFO, Madal Lal Bhagat former BDC Chairman, Kuldeep Bhagat former BDC chairman, Ram Ditta Bhagat Retd Principal, Shemsher Bhagat, Ghari Ram, Sohan Bhagat, Bittu Rampal, Er. Rajinder Kumar Happy, Pradeep Bhagat and others,

who also paid homage and reiterated the importance of Kabir's teachings in today's world.

Sant Kabir Jayanti celebrations featured fervent prayers, devotional singing, and community service, symbolizing the spirit of Sant Kabir's message of love and equality. The events across the region reflected the enduring respect and reverence for the saint who remains an eternal source of guidance for humanity.

In his concluding message, Mula Ram stated, "The teachings of Saint Kabir Dass Ji remain an eternal source of guidance for humanity, inspiring us to build a just, peaceful, and united society. Let us all follow his path and work towards a future grounded in brotherhood and harmony."

The day's celebrations stood as a reminder of the power of Saint Kabir's teachings to transcend time and societal boundaries, urging all to uphold his legacy for generations to come.

# Natrang presents new Hindi play 'Aakhiri Boond'

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

**JAMMU:** Natrang presented a new Hindi play 'Aakhiri Boond', written and directed by Neeraj Kant, here today at Rani Park, Jammu. The play highlighted the importance of water conservation, community responsibility, and sustainable water management in rural India. The play Aakhri Boond beautifully and creatively portrayed the vision of the Jal Jeevan Mission, Jammu & Kashmir, using the powerful and engaging medium of theatre. Through compelling performances, thought-provoking storytelling, and impactful visuals, the production effectively highlighted the mission's core objective of ensuring safe and adequate drinking water for every household. The play not only entertained the audience but also sensitized them to the importance of water conservation and sustainable water management.

On the occasion, Director



Natrang artists performing in a play.

Balwant Thakur of Natrang informed that the theatre group had recently produced ten theatrical "quickies" dedicated to the Jal Jeevan Mission. These short yet powerful performances were showcased in a series of six shows and received an overwhelming response from audiences across the region. Encouraged by this appreciation and public engagement, Natrang decided to dedicate one of its Sunday theatre performances exclusively to Jal Jeevan Mission J&K, reaffirming its commitment to supporting

socially relevant initiatives through the transformative power of theatre. The story revolves around a village celebrating the successful implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission, under which clean tap water has reached every household. The play opens with a festive atmosphere as villagers celebrate "Jal Arpan Divas" and "Jal Mahotsav", expressing their joy that water now flows directly into their homes. Women in the village share how they no longer need to walk miles to fetch water, saving both time and effort.

Children, especially young girls who previously spent hours collecting water, can now attend school regularly. Farmers and youth pledge their support for maintaining the system through active participation in Gram Sabha meetings and collective responsibility.

The narrative takes a critical turn when a villager is seen wasting water while washing his car. Through engaging dialogues, the characters emphasize responsible water usage and highlight simple conservation practices such as turning off taps while brushing, fixing leakages, reusing kitchen water, and utilizing purifier wastewater.

The play further addresses the looming threat of drought and depleting groundwater levels. Villagers discuss the need for rainwater harvesting, building ponds, recharging groundwater, planting trees, and ensuring that every drop of rain is conserved. The slo-

gan "Save Water Today- Secure Life Tomorrow" reinforces the urgency of collective action. In the final segment, women take the lead by testing water quality using field test kits and promoting laboratory testing through certified labs. They proudly call themselves "Water Guardians," symbolising empowerment and community ownership of water resources.

The play delivers a powerful message that government initiatives alone are not enough; sustainable water management requires active public participation, awareness, and responsibility at every level.

The artists who performed in the play included Neeraj Kant, Pawan Verma, Kananpreet Kaur, Vishal Sharma, and Kushal Bhat, who captivated the audience with their impactful performances and meaningful presentation. The presentation of the play was coordinated by Mohd. Yaseen.

# AHD distributes subsidised dairy products on Maha Shivratri, reaches multiple areas through outreach drive



AHD Jammu providing good-quality milk and milk by-products to the public at subsidised rates.

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

**JAMMU:** Marking the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivratri, the Animal Husbandry Department (AHD) Jammu organised a special outreach and sale programme to provide good-quality milk and milk by-products to the public at subsidised rates. The initiative was held under the directions of Dr. Sanjay Gupta, Director, Animal Husbandry Department Jammu. As part of the programme, fresh and hygienic

dairy products including milk, ghee, paneer, dahi and other value-added items were made available to consumers, ensuring both affordability and quality during the festive period.

The drive was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Zaffar Iqbal, LDO Jammu, in collaboration with Self Help Group Uzma, which has been supported by the department under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADDP). The self-help group has been actively engaged in

milk value-addition activities, contributing to livelihood generation and strengthening the rural economy. Mobile sale units and field teams covered several areas including Aap Shambu, Roop Nagar, Durga Nagar, Bantalab, Borhi, Talab Tillo, Nagrota, Jagti and adjoining localities, ensuring doorstep delivery of quality dairy products to residents. The initiative not only facilitated the availability of pure dairy products during the festival but also promoted local dairy farmers and self-help groups associated with the department. Residents appreciated the effort, describing it as a public-friendly step that reflects the department's commitment to welfare and dairy development in the Jammu region. Officials reiterated that similar programmes will continue in the future to benefit the public and further strengthen the dairy sector across the region.

# Akashvani Jammu celebrates Radio Kisan Divas

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

**JAMMU:** Akashvani Jammu celebrated Radio Kisan Divas with great enthusiasm in its premises. An impressive and well-attended function was organized to mark the occasion, in which progressive farmers, agricultural experts and officials from allied departments actively participated.

Addressing the gathering, Ravikantha Babu, DDG (Engineering), Akashvani Jammu, warmly welcomed the participants and emphasized the importance of adopting modern agricultural technologies. He motivated the youth to explore agricul-



Akashvani Jammu officials during celebration.

ture as a promising and sustainable career option, highlighting that innovation and scientific farming practices can significantly enhance agricultural production and farmers' income.

Dr. Sanjay Khajuria, Incharge, KVK Samba, in his address, gave a detailed overview of the various agricultural initiatives and extension activities undertaken by KVK Samba for the welfare and empowerment of farmers. He stressed the role of training, field demonstrations, and farmer awareness programmes in improving productivity and sustainability.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Balbir Dhotra highlighted the growing importance of organic and natural farming. He encouraged farmers to shift towards eco-friendly

agricultural practices to ensure soil health, reduce input costs, and meet the ris-

ing demand for chemical-free produce. Among the progressive farmers who shared their experiences, Anita Devi, a progressive woman farmer from Block Akhnoor, informed that she has formed a Self-Help Group comprising around 300 active members. The group has successfully established a turmeric processing unit, generating employment and enhancing income for rural women. Meenakshi Devi, a progressive farmer from District Samba, shared her experience in millet cultivation and production, emphasizing the nutritional and economic value of millets in the present

agricultural scenario. Rakesh Kumar Khullar also expressed his views on the importance of Radio Kisan Divas and appreciated Akashvani Jammu for providing a platform where farmers can share knowledge and learn from experts.

Nirmala Devi, a progressive woman farmer from Border Village Jabowal of Tehsil Arnia, shared her success story in beekeeping. She has established a honey production unit and advised fellow farmers to adopt alternative agriculture-related activities such as apiculture to supplement their income and achieve financial stability.

Speaking on the occasion, Bachan Lal, Assistant Director (Programme), Akashvani Jammu, extended a vote of thanks to all participants and assured that Akashvani Jammu will continue to disseminate timely, reliable, and farmer-centric information through its various programmes, as it has been doing in the past, to support and strengthen the farming community.

The celebration of Radio Kisan Divas reaffirmed Akashvani Jammu's commitment to serving as a vital communication bridge between agricultural experts, policymakers, and farmers.