JU Academic Council takes major academic initiatives

Integrated UG-PG Programmes approved for Offsite Campuses under NEP-2020

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Academic Council of the University of Jammu (JU), in its meeting held on Monday under the Chairmanship of Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice-Chancellor, deliberated upon and endorsed a wide range of academic, statutory, and institutional matters aimed at strengthening academic innovation, expanding academic programmes, and aligning the University's academic ecosystem with the transformative vision of the National Education Policy (NEP-2020).

Prof. Rai highlighted the University's pioneering academic initiatives, particularly the innovative Integrated Undergraduate-Postgraduate programme introduced by the Faculty of Mathematical Sciences, wherein the first year equips students with multidisciplinary competencies including information technology, coding, data analytics, communication, creativity, artificial intelligence, and financial literacy before enabling them to specialize in Mathematics, Statistics, or Computer Science. He further underscored the University's commitment to preserving regional culture, heritage, and languages through academic and cultural initiatives, including the establishment of a Centre for Regional Studies, Culture, Dialects, and Emotional Intelligence, along with a series of student-centric academic and cultural activities organized through various University clubs.

Vice-Chancellor JU Prof. Umesh Rai chairing Academic Council meeting.

Dr. Neeraj Sharma, Registrar, JU presented the agenda items of academic importance for deliberations before the Academic Council. These included the start of B. Tech. (Electronics & Communication Engineering) at UIET, Kathua Campus, establishment of a "Translation Cell" in the Centre for Distance & Online Education.

The Council also approved the proposal of NIELIT (Srinagar/Jammu) for conducting free-of-cost skill development programmes for students of the University and its offsite campuses.

The Council further endorsed the introduction of the Four-Year Bachelor of Physical Education and Sports (B.P.E.S.) programme with an intake capacity of 50 students in the Directorate of Sports and Physical Education and the introduction of the Two-Year Integrated Master of Library and Information Science (M.Lib.I.Sc.) programme under NEP-2020, replacing the existing B.Lib.I.Sc (one year) from 2026-27 and M.Lib.I.Sc (one year) programme from 2027-28 offered

under the Non-CBCS pattern.

The Council endorsed the introduction of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) in the Department of Education from the Academic Session 2026-27. The Council further endorsed the adoption of statutes governing the Five-Year Integrated Programme in the Faculty of Mathematical Sciences in the University of Jammu.

In a student-centric decision, the Academic Council approved the grant of one-time special chance to reappear/failure candidates of UG/PG Professional and Non-Professional programmes for clearing backlogs up to the Academic Year 2026.

To strengthen academic governance and disciplinary growth, the Council endorsed the constitution of the Faculty of Earth Sciences and the creation of a separate Dean in the said Faculty.

It further endorsed the introduction of the Five-Year Integrated UG-PG Programme (FYIP) under NEP-2020 at the Bhaderwah Campus, on the analogy of the FYIP offered in the main campus.

It further endorsed the introduction of Five-Year Integrated UG-PG Programmes under NEP-2020 at the main campus from the Academic Session 2026-27 onwards, and the adoption of statutes governing FYIP programmes as per NEP-2020.

In the context of global academic engagement, the Council approved adoption of the guidelines for pursuing Joint degree/Twinning degree with Foreign Higher Education Institutions, as per the UGC Regulations 2022 on Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Education Institutions.

The Council also endorsed the B.Com Programme at the Centre for Distance and Online Education under Non-Collegiate Women Education Board, on the analogy of the B.Com programme being offered at the Bhaderwah Campus, University of Jammu.

The Academic Council further approved the matter of award of credits to students of UG/PG programmes who participate in various co-curricular activities in consonance

with the National Credit Framework (NCrF).

It also took note of the allocation of ISSN: 3108-2327 to the University's vernacular annual peer-reviewed journal "GYANANJALI", which will significantly enhance the institution's image by transitioning the publication from local to a globally academic resource.

Earlier Prof. J. P. Singh Joorel, Dean Academic Affairs in his welcome address acknowledged the efforts of the Deans, Heads, Rector, Directors and other faculty members for providing their valuable academic inputs.

Prof. Neelu Rohmetra, Dean Research Studies; Prof. Sangita Gupta, Dean Planning and Development also shared their inputs.

Dr. Manohar Lal, Principal, Govt Degree College Boys Kathua; Dr. Sanjeev Verma, Principal Govt Degree College (Boys) Udhampus; Dr. Naveen Anand, Principal Govt Degree College Women, Bhagwati Nagar; Dr. Savi Behal, Principal Govt Degree College, Paloura; Dr. Vandana Verma, Principal, Govt, Degree, College, Sunderbani; Prof Mohd. farooq Mirza, Principal Govt Degree College Bhaderwah; Head Department of Music, Govt Degree College, R.S Pura; Dr Bandana, Head, Department of Arabic, Govt Degree College, Mandi also attended the meeting.

The vote thanks was presented by Dr. Saran Preet Broca, Joint Registrar, Academics.

Shrine Board begins free Prasad distribution from Maha Shivratri

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KATRA: To further enhance pilgrim facilities and enrich the spiritual experience of devotees, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) has commenced free distribution of Prasad to all devotees paying obeisance at the Holy Shrine. The initiative began on the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivratri following Vedic rituals and Kanya Poojan.

The initiative was formally launched by Manoj Sinha, Chairman of SMVDSB and Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, during the 76th Meeting of the Shrine Board held earlier this month.

With the launch of the initiative, the Shrine Board has introduced an improvised Pouch Prasad specially designed for free distribution among pilgrims. The pouch contains dry fruits, a sacred Mouli (Kalava), and an engraved commemorative coin depicting the Holy Pindies, symbolizing the divine blessings of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Ji. The thoughtfully designed pouch ensures hygiene, sanctity, and ease of handling.

Sachin Kumar Vaishya, Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB, stated that commencing the distribution on Mahashivratri holds immense religious significance.

He informed that systematic arrangements have been put in place to ensure smooth distribution of Prasad to pilgrims along the exit route after darshan at the Holy Cave Shrine. He emphasized that the initiative aims to provide every devotee with a sacred token of bless-

ings.

Reiterating its commitment to pilgrim welfare, the Shrine Board continues to provide several essential services free of cost, including accommodation, langars, cloakroom and blanket facilities, battery car services for specially-abled pilgrims, and medical facilities through dispensaries along the yatra route. Additional amenities such as water ATMs, sanitation services, waiting halls, and assistance booths have also been established.
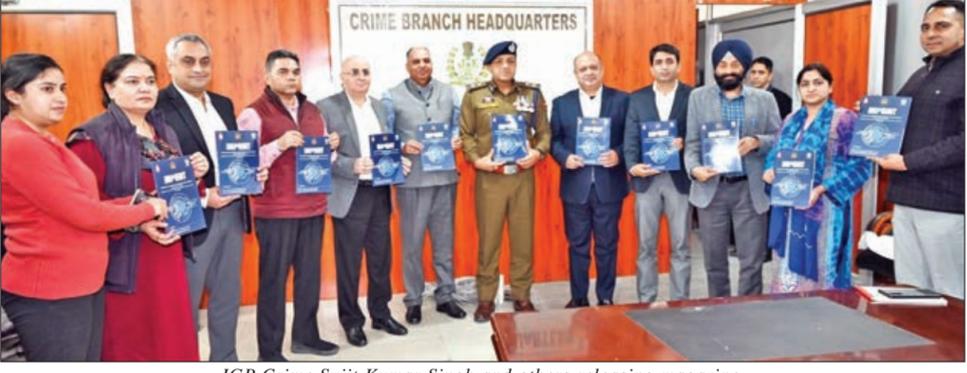
The newly introduced free Prasad distribution reflects SMVDSB's ongoing efforts to ensure a comfortable, safe, and spiritually fulfilling pilgrimage experience. SDM Bhawan, Pujaris, Shrine Board officials, and numerous devotees were present on the occasion.

IGP Crime releases maiden Fingerprint Bureau Magazine of JKP

IGP Crime Sujit Kumar Singh and others releasing magazine.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The first edition of the Fingerprint Bureau's Magazine of Jammu & Kashmir Police was released by Sujit Kumar Singh, Inspector General of Police (Crime Branch), at a function held at the Crime Branch Headquarters, Jammu. The event was attended by senior officers of the Crime Branch and marked a significant step toward strengthening scientific investigation practices in the Union Territory.

The magazine encompasses detailed

"Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)" designed for field staff to enhance the quality of investigations and improve conviction rates in compliance with the guidelines of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The programme was organized under the supervision of Mohd Yousuf, Senior Superintendent of Police, Fingerprint Bureau, J&K, and was graced by the Director Prosecution and all SSPs of Crime Branch, Jammu & Kashmir.

The publication elaborates on SOPs covering every critical step, from

chance fingerprint lifting at crime scenes to uploading data into the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS). It also highlights the implementation of the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network's CrPIS system (Measurement Collection Unit), developed by the National Crime Records Bureau under the guidance of MHA.

Addressing the gathering, IGP Crime emphasized strict adherence to SOPs related to NAFIS, Measurement Collection Units (MCUs), and

Fingerprint Bureau operations to ensure accuracy, transparency, and efficiency in criminal investigations. He underscored the pivotal role of scientific evidence and digital fingerprint identification in enhancing conviction rates and strengthening inter-state crime tracking.

The magazine will serve as a professional reference for investigators and forensic personnel, reinforcing J&K Police's commitment to modernization, capacity building, and technology-driven investigative practices.

Satish meets delegations; reaffirms public welfare, sports empowerment
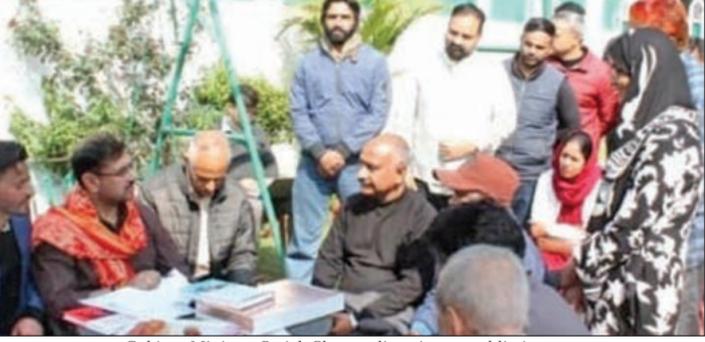
■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Youth Services and Sports, and Science and Technology, Satish Sharma, on Monday met several deputations and individuals who called on him to apprise him of various public and sector-specific concerns.

Among those who met the Minister were NYC volunteers and deputations from different areas, who projected a wide range of issues relating to the Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department, transport services and promotion and development of sports infrastructure.

The deputations raised matters concerning strengthening public distribution mechanisms, improving transport facilities, enhancing accessibility and efficiency of services, and expanding opportunities for youth engagement in sports and allied activities.

The Minister gave a patient hearing to all delegations and assured them that their genuine concerns would be examined in detail and addressed in a time-

Cabinet Minister Satish Sharma listening to public issues.

bound manner.

He reiterated that responsive governance and effective public service delivery remain top priorities and emphasised that departments under his charge are committed to ensure transparency, efficiency, and accountability in their functioning.

A group of prominent athletes and sportspersons also called on the Minister and expressed their happiness and appreciation over the recent notification of the order providing for appointment of outstanding sportspersons in Government service. They described the decision as a progressive and motivating

step that would encourage young talent to pursue excellence in sports while ensuring recognition and career security for achievers.

Interacting with the sportspersons, the Minister said that the Government is committed to creating a conducive environment for nurturing sporting talent and strengthening sports infrastructure across regions. He highlighted that sustained efforts are underway to promote grassroots participation, provide modern facilities, and support athletes through structured policies and initiatives.

Reaffirming his commitment to youth empower-

ment and inclusive development, the Minister stated that regular interactions with stakeholders and public representatives will continue to ensure that policies remain responsive to people's needs. He assured that necessary directions would be issued to the concerned departments for prompt follow-up on the issues raised during the meetings.

The Minister emphasized that collective participation of citizens, youth, and stakeholders plays a vital role in shaping effective governance, and reiterated the Government's resolve to work tirelessly for the welfare and progress of the people.

Ol Chiki script 'powerful symbol' of Santhali identity that must be preserved: President Murmu

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Describing the Ol Chiki script as a "powerful symbol" of the Santhali identity, President Droupadi Murmu on Monday said efforts should be made to preserve and promote this century-old script.

Addressing a gathering to commemorate the centenary of the Ol Chiki script, Murmu also expressed happiness that the script is growing in the digital medium.

In 1925, Pandit Raghunath Murmu created the Ol Chiki script. Since then, it has become a powerful symbol of the Santhal identity.

It was included in the Constitution's Eighth Schedule in 2003.

In her address, Murmu described India as a "garden of multiple languages", stressing the importance of using one's mother tongue in communication.

She also said efforts should be made to preserve and promote the Ol Chiki script.

Earlier, a military band welcomed Murmu at the venue - the Bhim Hall of the Dr Ambedkar International Centre. It first played the national song, 'Vande Mataram', followed by the national anthem, 'Jana Gana Mana'.

A group of folk artistes sang songs in

President Droupadi Murmu releasing Ol Chiki script at New Delhi on Monday.

Santhali, followed by a performance by a troupe of Santhali dancers on a theme that celebrated nature and the cultural diversity of India.

A short film on the genesis and evolution of the Ol Chiki script was also screened on the occasion.

A special postage stamp and a commemorative Rs 100 coin, along with a souvenir on Ol Chikiscript, were also released at the event.

Ol Chiki is the official script of the Santhali language, one of India's prominent tribal languages spoken widely

across Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Assam, and Bihar.

Belonging to the Austroasiatic language family, Santhali has historically thrived through oral traditions.

The script consists of 30 letters, designed to accurately represent Santhali phonetics. It has two styles - 'Chapa' and 'Usara'.

Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Jual Oram, Union Culture Minister, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and Union Culture Secretary, Vivek Aggarwal, were present at the event, .

▶ Ministry of Culture is organising inaugural function of centenary celebrations of Ol Chiki script

▶ A commemorative coin and commemorative postage stamp are being released by GoI to mark 100 years of the Ol Chiki script

▶ Ol Chiki script was developed in 1925 by Pandit Raghunath Murmu specifically for the Santhali language, which was later included in the Constitution of India's Eighth Schedule in 2003

▶ The script consists of 30 letters designed to accurately represent Santhali phonetics

Murmu also felicitated several persons who worked to promote the Ol Chiki script.

"In 1925, Pandit Raghunath Murmu invented the Ol Chiki script. Since then, it has been used for the Santhali language. Now, this script is a powerful symbol of the Santhal identity worldwide. It is also an effective means of fostering unity among the Santhal community," the president said.

On December 29 last year, Murmu participated in a centenary celebration of the script in Jamshedpur,

Jharkhand.

In her address then, Murmu said that apart from getting education in any other language, learning the mother tongue, Santhali in the Ol Chiki script, is also important for the overall development of the community.

Shekhawat in his address said the invention of the Ol Chiki script gave "phonetic completeness" to Santhali culture, terming its centenary a "bright chapter in the inclusive consciousness of India".

Terming Ol Chiki an "absolutely sci-

entific script", he described its evolution as a "sangam" (confluence) of various cultural ethos, of ebb and flow of cities, and a confluence of tradition and innovation.

Secretary Aggarwal termed Pandit Raghunath Murmu a "visionary inventor" and Ol Chiki script a "gift to India".

Ol Chiki script is borne out of Santhali culture and its form drew inspiration from natural elements such as fire, earth and facial forms, Aggarwal said.

Prior to the 20th century, Santhali was transcribed using various borrowed scripts, including Roman, Bangla, Odia and Devanagari, according to a note shared on the script by the government. These scripts facilitated limited written expression, and hence they were not specifically designed to accurately represent the distinctive phonetic features of the Santhali language. The language includes unique sounds, such as glottal stops and specific vowel patterns, which were difficult to accurately represent using external writing systems.

Consequently, this often led to distortions in pronunciation and meaning, thereby creating obstacles in educational contexts and hampering systematic linguistic development preservation, the note said.