

Shrine Board unveils portal for International Goddess Museum; Invites expert suggestions

STATE TIMES NEWS
KATRA: The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) has taken a significant step towards establishing the upcoming International Goddess Museum by unveiling a dedicated official online portal <https://suggestions.smvdsb-mog.org/#/museum> in pursuance of the approval accorded during the 76th Meeting of the Board held under the chairmanship of Manoj Sinha, Chairman, SMVDSB (Lt. Governor, JK-UT).
The launch of the portal marks a major milestone in

the conceptualization and development of an upcoming world-class museum devoted to the spiritual, cultural and historical dimensions of the Divine Feminine and the revered Shakti tradition.
The Board has invited suggestions and expert inputs from scholars, historians, architects, museologists, spiritual practitioners and other domain specialists to help shape the vision, design and content of the upcoming museum. Envisioned as a centre of international standards, the proposed upcoming museum will present the timeless heritage of Maa

Vaishno Devi Ji through modern and immersive technologies, including digital installations, interactive galleries, light and sound shows and thoughtfully curated thematic exhibitions.
The museum will also comprehensively document and showcase the history of the Holy Shrine, the evolution of the Yatra, the philosophy of Shakti worship and the broader spiritual traditions associated with Sanatan Dharma, thereby offering visitors an enriching blend of devotion, knowledge and cultural insight.
Sachin Kumar Vaishya,

Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB stated that the newly launched portal provides a collaborative platform for experts and institutions to share research-based inputs, thematic proposals, archival references and innovative concepts for the museum. He emphasized that the initiative aims to ensure authenticity, scholarly depth and contemporary presentation standards while preserving the sanctity and spiritual essence of the Holy Shrine.
Reiterating the Board's vision, the CEO said that the project is being developed as a knowledge and experiential

centre of global repute that will serve pilgrims, researchers and visitors from across the world. He appealed to experts, academic institutions and stakeholders to actively participate in this collective endeavor by visiting the dedicated portal and submitting their valuable suggestions.
The proposed International Goddess Museum is poised to further enrich the spiritual journey of devotees while enhancing the cultural and heritage profile of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi pilgrimage and the town of Katra.



Grand Finale of 17th PRAKRITI International Documentary Film Festival inaugurated at JU

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The Grand Finale of the 17th Prakriti International Documentary Film Festival was inaugurated on Monday at the University of Jammu. Justice (Retd.) Tashi Rabstan, former Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, graced the occasion as Chief Guest.



Vice-Chancellor Prof. Umesh Rai honouring Justice (Retd.) Tashi Rabstan, former Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

The festival is being organised by the University in collaboration with the Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC), New Delhi, an Inter-University Centre of the University Grants Commission. The inaugural session was presided over by Vice-Chancellor Prof. Umesh Rai. Prof. Parikshit Singh Manhas, Director, CEC; Prof. Neelu Rohmetra, Dean Research Studies; and Sunil Mehru, Joint Director, CEC, were present on the dais.
In his address, Justice Rabstan described the festival as a significant platform that goes beyond cinema to serve as a forum for awareness and social reflection. He appreciated the sustained efforts of the University and CEC in bringing together filmmakers, academicians, students, and members of civil society to engage with pressing contemporary issues. He observed that documentary films present ground realities with honesty, raise difficult questions, and foster meaningful dialogue.
Highlighting themes such as environment, development,

human rights, and social responsibility, he noted their deep interconnection and importance in building a balanced and humane society. He emphasized that when young people engage with such films, they do not merely watch but reflect and learn. Congratulating the filmmakers whose works were selected through a rigorous jury process, he expressed confidence that the festival would inspire thoughtful discussions and strengthen collective responsibility towards society and the nation.
Prof. Umesh Rai observed that the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047 can be achieved only through sustainable development, respect for human rights, and an education system responsive to contemporary challenges. He said documentary cinema meaningfully extends classroom learning by promoting critical thinking and civic awareness. Highlighting academic reforms aligned with the National Education Policy 2020, he referred to initiatives

such as "Design Your Degree" and integrated UG-PG programmes that encourage interdisciplinary learning, digital competence, creativity, and responsible citizenship. Tracing the festival's journey since its inception in 1997, Prof. Manhas noted that it has travelled across several Indian cities and evolved into a respected academic and cultural platform. He emphasized the vital role of documentary filmmaking in education, especially in addressing themes like environment, development, human rights, and Swachh Bharat. In the digital era, he said, learning extends beyond classrooms through media and technology, and CEC remains committed to strengthening ICT-enabled higher education in line with national goals. This year's edition received 72 entries from across India and Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Bangladesh. After a rigorous jury process, eight films were shortlisted, including two from Jammu & Kashmir. Each win-

ning documentary will receive a cash prize of Rs 50,000.
Sunil Mehru welcomed the gathering and described the festival as a celebration of ideas, creativity, and social responsibility. The formal vote of thanks was delivered by Prof. Neelu Rohmetra. On the opening day, documentaries were screened at the Brigadier Rajinder Singh Auditorium and three additional venues on campus to ensure wider participation. A dramatic presentation of Kashmiri rithi added a cultural dimension to the event and drew appreciation from the audience. The University has invited members of civil society and the media to attend the remaining screenings and interactive sessions on February 24, 2026.

Devyani Rana leads Youth Empowerment Drive; dozens from Nagrota secure placements in prestigious Hotels & Restaurants across India

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: In a proud and celebratory moment for Nagrota Assembly Constituency, dozens young boys and girls from Panchayats Barn, Seri Panditan, and Lower Jandiyal have secured placements in prestigious hospitality establishments and Restaurants across India after completing a 45-day free-of-cost training programme.



MLA Nagrota, Devyani Rana with companies representatives and selected students.

The selected candidates have been placed at reputed properties including Sarovar Hotels (Chandigarh), Welcome Hotel by ITC Hotels (Delhi), Holiday Inn (Katra), Lords Hotels & Resorts (Jammu), Vivanta Jammu, Eden, and Pracheen Indian Restaurant. The candidates will be serving in the Food & Beverage (F&B) and Front Office departments, marking a significant step forward in their professional careers.
The achievement was celebrated during the Batch Closing Ceremony of the Oberoi CSR - Arc Hospitality Institute Training Programme, con-

ducted under the aegis of Arc Hospitality Institute as part of a dedicated skill development initiative spearheaded by Devyani Rana, MLA Nagrota.
The programme was specially designed to provide free professional training to local youth, enabling them to access employment opportunities in the rapidly growing hospitality sector.
The journey began at Panchayat Ghar Ghaink in the Amb Gharota area of Nagrota Constituency, where expert trainers from Arc Hospitality conducted structured classes, practical sessions, and field visits. Over the course of 45 days,

the trainees received intensive hands-on exposure and classroom instruction designed to build both technical and soft skills essential for the hospitality industry.
Addressing these candidates along with the parents during the Batch closing Ceremony, Devyani Rana stated that the ceremony is the proud commencement of promising careers for these young participants from Nagrota.
She described their success as an inspiration for others and encouraged more youth to come forward and take advantage of similar opportunities.

Rana assured that more free, employment-oriented skill development initiatives will soon be launched across Nagrota Constituency to benefit a larger section of youth. She underlined her continuous endeavour to ensure that every young individual recognizes their potential and utilizes their abilities to build a secure and successful future while contributing meaningfully to society.
Speaking on the occasion, Chitwan Khorana, Director of Arc Hospitality Institute, congratulated the candidates and appreciated their dedication throughout the training period.

Border District Rajouri secures top position nationwide in MY Bharat Budget Quest 2026

STATE TIMES NEWS
RAJOURI: District Rajouri has achieved a remarkable distinction by securing the top position nationwide in the MY Bharat Budget Quest 2026 Quiz, registering the highest number of submissions in the country. A total of 14,402 youth from the district participated in the national-level online competition. New Delhi district ranked second with 11,097 submissions, while East Delhi secured the third position with 8,307 submissions. The quiz, conducted from February 3 to February 22 on the MY Bharat Portal, recorded participation of over 11 lakh youth across India. The initiative aims to promote awareness and understanding of the Union Budget among young citizens. Quiz qualifiers will now advance to the Essay Round and selected candidates will get an opportunity to interact with the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.
The achievement of Rajouri, a border district, reflects the enthusiasm and proactive engagement of its youth in national initiatives. In her

Budget Speech, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman termed this year's Budget as "Yuva-Shakti driven," highlighting the incorporation of youth suggestions received during the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. Speaking to media persons, the Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma described the accomplishment as the result of systematic planning and coordinated efforts. He acknowledged the vital contribution of educational institutions, including schools, Degree Colleges and Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University, where special sessions on the Union Budget were conducted to guide participants. "This success reflects true teamwork. Focused academic guidance and regular monitoring ensured better performance and higher participation," the DC stated. The competition, organized by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, GoI, will now move to the Essay Competition stage, followed by the final interaction of essay qualifiers with the Prime Minister.

absence will be deeply felt by colleagues and members of the Bar, as his contributions have left an indelible mark on the profession. His legacy will continue to inspire future generations of lawyers.
While speaking on the occasion, President JKHCBAJ, K. Nirmal Kotwal, described late Madan Mohan Baru as a mentor par excellence who nurtured young talent and played a pivotal role

JKHCBAJ pays tribute to late Advocate Madan Mohan Baru

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court Bar Association, Jammu (JKHCBAJ) held a Shardanjali Samroh on Monday under the Presidentship of K. Nirmal Kotwal, President JKHCBAJ, to mourn the sad demise of Advocate Madan Mohan Baru, who left for his heavenly abode on February 21, 2026.
As a mark of respect, the members of the Association abstained from work in all courts, including the High Court, Subordinate Courts, Tribunals, Revenue Courts, and other forums.
The members fondly remembered his immense contribution to the legal fraternity. With his demise, the Bar has lost not only a highly experienced Advocate but also a pillar of wisdom, integrity, and dedication. His



JKHCBAJ members and Lawyers paying tributes to late Advocate Madan Mohan Baru.

in shaping the future of the Bar.
He emphasized that Baru Sahab guided and mentored numerous junior lawyers, many of whom rose to prominent positions. His generosity in sharing knowledge and his unwavering commitment to the profession remained exemplary until his last breath.
Several senior members of the Bar also paid rich tributes, including Adv.

D.S. Saini (Former President, JKHCBAJ), Sr. Adv. Abhinav Sharma (Former President, JKHCBAJ), Sr. Adv. Sh. D.C. Raina, Sr. Adv. S. K.S. Johal, Sr. Adv. Seema Shekhar Khajooria, Sr. Adv. Shah Mohd Choudhary, Sr. Adv. Vishal Sharma, V.B. Gupta, Jameel Qureshi, H.C. Jalmeria, Mandeep Reen and S.S. Ahmed. All speakers recalled his professional excellence,

humility, and invaluable service to the legal community.
The Shardanjali Samroh was attended by a large number of lawyers, including senior advocates and young members of the Bar.
The members observed two minutes of silence to pray for the eternal peace of the departed soul and expressed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family, praying for strength and courage to bear this irreparable loss.
The office bearers of JKHCBAJ, including Baldev Singh (Vice President), Pradeep Majotra (General Secretary), Anshu Mahajan (Joint Secretary), and Rahul Aggarwal (Treasurer), were also present and paid their respects to the departed soul.

Commissioner JMC inspects civic amenities in 63 & 65 Wards Directs improvement of drainage, sanitation

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Commissioner Jammu Municipal Corporation, Dr. Devansh Yadav on Monday conducted an extensive inspection of 63 and 65 Wards to take first-hand stock of the civic issues raised by locals, particularly concerning sanitation, cleaning of streets and drains and the construction of new drainage infrastructure.
During his visit to Ward No. 63, Chinor, the Commissioner inspected the condition of the major storm water drain after receiving complaints from residents that it frequently overflows during the rainy season.
Locals informed him that the overflowing drain not only disrupts daily life but also causes water logging, damage to adjoining properties and nearby roads and lanes.
Taking note of the grievances, Dr. Yadav directed the concerned engineering wing to conduct a detailed technical assessment of the existing



JMC Commissioner Dr. Devansh Yadav interacting with officials.

storm water drain and identify the causes of overflow. He instructed the Executive Engineer to prepare a comprehensive estimate for strengthening and remodeling the drainage system to ensure smooth flow of rainwater and prevent future incidents of flooding.
The Commissioner also reviewed the overall sanitation scenario in the area, including the cleanliness of streets, lanes and public spaces. He emphasized regular desilting of drains before the onset of the mon-

soon season to avoid water logging and public inconvenience.
In Ward No. 65, covering Bantalab, Barnai and Ganganagar, residents apprised the Commissioner of the lack of adequate drainage in several localities. They urged the JMC to construct new drains and improve existing street infrastructure to address the chronic water stagnation issues. Responding promptly, Dr. Yadav directed the Executive Engineer to prepare a detailed project report and cost estimate for the construc-

tion of new drains and improvement of streets in the affected areas. He stressed on giving priority to areas facing severe water logging and sanitation challenges.
The Commissioner further instructed Health Officer, Dr. Vinod Sharma to intensify sanitation drives in both wards and ensure regular cleaning of drains and streets. He also directed strict monitoring of sanitation workers' attendance and deployment to maintain accountability and efficiency in service delivery.
Deputy Commissioner South JMC, Sanjay Badiyal, Executive Engineer, Rajesh Kumar, Chief Transport Officer, Ranjan Sharma and other senior officers and officials of the Corporation accompanied the Commissioner during the inspection. The team interacted with residents at multiple locations to understand ground realities and assure them of timely action.

CBP on inclusive, equitable strategies concludes at DIET



DIET Jammu officials with participants of capacity building programme.

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: District Institute of Education and Training Jammu organized a five-day capacity building programme for 50 teachers on Inclusive and Equitable Strategies for Supporting Diverse Learners-- an approach aimed at strengthening inclusive and learner-centered classroom practices. The programme was conducted under the overall guidance of Principal, R.G. Dogra

and under the mentorship of Joint Director State Council of Educational Research and Training, Prof. Sindhu Kapoor.
Key themes included the Concept of Inclusion, classroom diversity and barriers, Inclusive Education Strategies, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Holistic Progress Card (HPC), Children with Special Needs (CWSN), pedagogical and assessment adap-

tations, digital tools for inclusion, the Prashast App and experiential activities such as "Learning with a Difference" and role-play on "Teacher as an Empathetic Listener." The sessions were facilitated by Programme Coordinator, Dr. Romesh Kumar, Preeti Sharma, Dr. Jyoti Malhotra, Indu Agnotra, Neha Kalra, Akhsh Gupta, Bindu Kumari and Sachin Goel. Anil Gupta (Co- coordi-

nator) and Suniya Mehta, Lecturers at DIET Jammu ensured smooth conduct of the programme, with proceedings managed by Suniya Mehta and technical support provided by Sanjay Seth.
The training adopted an experiential methodology incorporating role plays, interactive sessions, reflective activities, games, poems and digital technology. The programme concluded with a valedictory session during which Principal GHSS Canal Road Jammu, Anita Koul shared her experiences on inclusion, inspiring participants to promote inclusive and equitable practices in their classrooms.
The Principal DIET advised the trainees to implement the learning in their schools and sensitize fellow teachers at the cluster level to ensure wider outreach and systemic impact.