

# Union Minister Shekhawat, LG Kavinder grace 33rd edition of SATTE 2026 in New Delhi

### Ladakh fast emerging as global tourism hub with year-round promotion initiatives: LG

#### STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Union Minister for Tourism, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, along with Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta, industry leaders, and tour operators from India and abroad, graced the 33rd annual South Asia Travel & Tourism Exchange (SATTE 2026) at Yashbhoomi, Dwarka, New Delhi.



Union Tourism Minister, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, along with LG Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta and other dignitaries at 33rd annual SATTE 2026 at Yashbhoomi, New Delhi.

of Tourism, Arunachal Pradesh, among others. Speaking at the event, Union Tourism Minister Shekhawat emphasized that tourism, long overlooked in national policy, has now become central to India's development agenda under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He noted that tourism drives livelihood generation, entrepreneurship, and inclusive economic growth. Highlighting the shift in traveler preferences, he said today's global tourists seek authentic cultural experiences, wellness, heritage, and meaningful

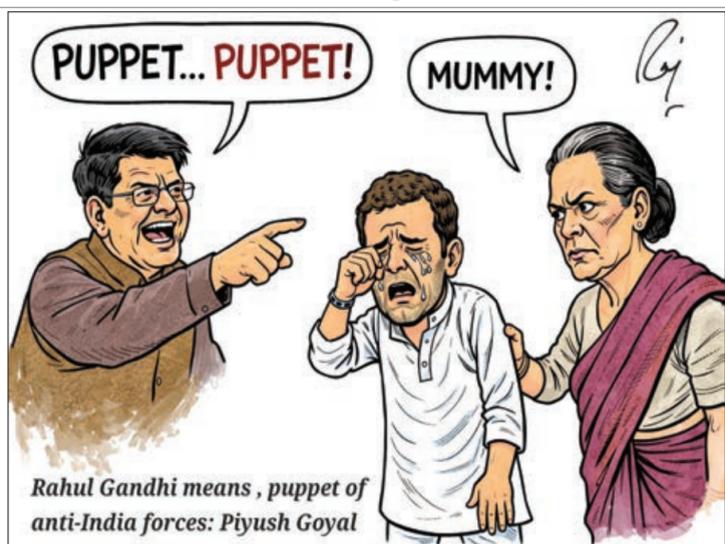
human connections. The Minister added that India is being positioned as an experience-led destination with focus on heritage conservation, environmental sustainability, and community empowerment. Kavinder Gupta highlighted the rapid development in the Union Territory, citing world-class road connectivity from Leh to remote border areas and the ongoing construction of the Zoji La Tunnel, which will ensure all-weather access to Ladakh. He showcased Ladakh's iconic attractions including Pangong Lake,

Nubra Valley, Leh, Khardung La, Magnetic Hill, Tso Moriri, Hemis Monastery, Shanti Stupa, Zaskar Valley, Lamayuru Monastery, Drass, Aryan Valley, and Hanle, home to the Indian Astronomical Observatory. Describing Ladakh as a fast-emerging global tourism hub, he detailed initiatives to promote year-round tourism, including fixed dates for UT-level festivals, participation in national and international travel fairs, FAM tours, and a new tourism logo. He

assured support to hotels and travel operators through simplified registration processes and emphasized environmental sustainability through investment in sewage treatment infrastructure. Inviting operators to showcase Ladakh prominently, he said every visitor would be ensured a safe, memorable, and enriching experience.

Concluding his address, Gupta invoked the famous line of Amitabh Bachchan, saying, "Kuch Din Toh Aaiyein Ladakh Mein," inviting travelers to explore the region's breathtaking landscapes, rich culture, and warm hospitality. He later inaugurated the Ladakh Pavilion and interacted with tourism stakeholders.

Around 2,000 exhibitors from India and abroad, representing 60 countries, are participating in SATTE 2026, which also hosts extensive B2B meetings to strengthen the global travel and tourism network.



Rahul Gandhi means, puppet of anti-India forces: Piyush Goyal

## CM felicitates Chrysanthemum Garden Photography, Reel Competition winners



CM Omar Abdullah felicitating winners of Photography and Reel Competition.

#### STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday felicitated the winners of the Photography and Reel Competition held as part of the inaugural celebrations of the Chrysanthemum Garden in Srinagar.

The felicitation ceremony, organised by the Department of Floriculture, Gardens and Parks, honoured participants for their exceptional creativity and artistic expression in capturing the beauty and grandeur of the majestic garden. The Chief Minister presented Certificates of Merit along with cash awards to the winners with Rs 20,000 as first prize, Rs 10,000 as second prize, and Rs 5,000 as third prize in each category.

Congratulating the winners, the Chief Minister said such initiatives provide an important platform for creative engagement and youth participation.

"Kashmir's gardens are not merely landscapes of flowers; they are living symbols of

our heritage, creativity and cultural pride. Through photography and reels, our youth have beautifully captured the spirit of this garden and shared it with the world," he said.

He added that encouraging artistic expression around nature and public spaces strengthens community bonding and promotes eco-consciousness.

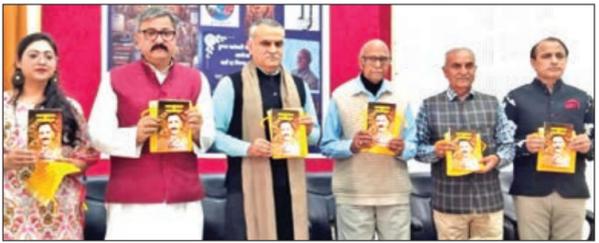
"When our young people use their talent to celebrate nature, they become ambassadors of Kashmir's beauty and values. Such platforms must continue to inspire innovation and cultural expression," he remarked.

The competitions witnessed enthusiastic participation from both young and seasoned photographers, reflecting the growing interest in nature-based creative pursuits and digital storytelling. The felicitation ceremony was attended by Advisor to the CM Nasir Aslam Wani, Director Floriculture, Gardens and Parks Kashmir, along with senior officers of the department.

## Shakti Pathak, Zorawar release Padma Shri N D Jamwal's "1947 Da Pakistani Amlaa, Te Brig Rajinder Singh Ji"

#### STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Director, Anti-Corruption Bureau (J&K), Shakti Kumar Pathak along with Chairman, Team Jammu, Zorawar Singh Jamwal and volunteers of Duggar Baraadari, on Wednesday released the book "1947 Da Pakistani Amlaa, Te Brigadier Rajinder Singh Ji" authored by Padma Shri awardee Narsingh Dev Jamwal at a well-attended function organised at the Writers Club, here. The event was held in the presence of volunteers from Team Jammu and Duggar Baraadari, along with prominent citizens and members of the literary fraternity. Addressing the gathering, Chief Guest, Shakti Kumar Pathak lauded the author for presenting a compelling and meticulously documented account of the pivotal role played by Brigadier Rajinder Singh in repelling the 1947 Pakistani aggression. He observed that the book vividly brings out the extraordinary courage and strategic acumen demonstrated by the Dogra forces in the face of overwhelming odds.



Director ACB J&K, Shakti Kumar Pathak along with Chairman, Team Jammu, Zorawar Singh Jamwal and volunteers releasing the book.

of history," he remarked, adding that Pakistan's armed aggression-camouflaged as a tribal invasion from the Muzaffarabad sector-was aimed at destabilising the defence of Jammu and Kashmir. Pathak further highlighted that at Garhi in the Uri sector, Brigadier Rajinder Singh, acting under the directions of the Maharaja and despite limited manpower and resources, successfully stalled the advancing forces from 23rd October 1947 until the signing of the Instrument of Accession. This crucial resistance paved the way for the timely airlifting and landing of Indian forces at Srinagar. He emphasised that the integration of Jammu & Kashmir with the rest of India is indelibly inscribed in the

sacrifice of the brave Dogra soldiers under the visionary leadership of Brigadier Rajinder Singh.

Speaking on the occasion, 96 year old writer of the book, Padam Shree N D Jamwal said, "Though this was a noble cause to script the memoirs but it was also a herculean's role of establishing Brig. Rajender Singh (MVC) a Saviour of Kashmir and properly highlight his martyrdom as a great Dogra warrior."

"Whatever achievements, till date, are quite in knowledge of us all. This booklet is only a comparative study of till date views other Speakers/Writers and what I being a part of that small contingent, personally experienced or could visualise, concerning to that very limited

but of much historical importance event which led to the failure of Pakistan's Well planned "Operation Gulmarg".

"I boldly welcome rather appreciate if someone else throw more light on it, supported by easily acceptable reasonings. To me that will be the true history of those days Dogra Valour as well as best tribute to all those martyred with brave Soldiers including Brig. Rajinder Singh (MVC)," N D Janwal highlighted.

Zorawar Singh said, "The writer has beautifully scripted the Dogra valour as he himself was witness as a Soldier to that Pakistan attack in 1947. Hundred Javans with one rifle and 100 rounds each in bag and had just six chapaatis, one or two pieces of onion and few grams in bag's pocket and fighting more than 7000 Pakistani army men in the camouflage of Kabaalis for three days and three nights at Garhi and Uri sector of Kashmir reflects the Dogra Valour and martyrdom for mother land saving thousands Kashmiri women, men and children from Pakistani aggression".

Earlier, Convener of Duggar Baraadari Randhir Singh Raipuria welcomed the dignitaries and participants.

Co-Convener Duggar Baraadari, Heena Mahajan, conducted the proceedings of the programme.

## Dr Jitendra launches 'Green' building construction in IIIM Jammu, hails President's award for Aroma

#### STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, and MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh laid the foundation stone of a new state-of-the-art "Green" building, possibly the first of its kind, at CSIR-IIIM (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine here today.



Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh laying Foundation Stone of new building at CSIR-IIIM, Jammu on Wednesday.

India upon the "Team Aroma Mission" under CSIR-IIIM is a national recognition of the "Purple Revolution" that originated from Jammu & Kashmir. He noted that large-scale lavender cultivation under the mission has generated sustainable alternative livelihood opportunities for farmers and youth, particularly in remote areas. It has transformed the region into a hub of aroma-based agri-economy, he added.

Highlighting the significance of the new building, Dr Jitendra Singh said that the upcoming complex will be the first-ever green construction of its kind in Jammu. The state-of-the-art complex will incorporate non-fossil energy resources and advanced research facilities to meet global standards. He added that the enhanced Biological, Chemical and QCQA facilities will strengthen the institute's capacity to produce and export high-quality medicines, reinforcing India's position in the

global pharmaceutical sector. Referring to the growing concern over drug abuse in certain regions, including Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab, the Minister said that the unique Cannabis project in PPP model undertaken by this institute will aim to put the so-called drug abuse drugs to medicinal use as pain killers etc and add to quality medicine production and research capabilities under the aegis of CSIR-IIIM would be a strong societal message by promoting health, innovation and constructive engagement.

Dr Jitendra Singh also announced that a new guest house will be constructed at CSIR-IIIM, which will be the first of its kind across the chain of CSIR-IIIM institutions in the country, facilitating greater academic collaboration and scientific exchange. Underlining the Government's commitment to cutting-edge technologies, the

Union Minister said that India is moving rapidly in frontier areas, such as biotechnology, artificial intelligence and clean energy. Referring to reforms in the nuclear energy sector, the Minister said that reliable non-fossil energy sources will be critical to meet the rising power demands of emerging technologies, including AI-driven data infrastructure. Earlier in his welcome address, Dr Zabeer Ahmed, Director, CSIR-IIIM said the upcoming building has been sanctioned at an estimated cost of 54.55 crore rupees. He said it aims to enhance the institute's capabilities in biological sciences, natural product chemistry, quality control & quality assurance, strengthening India's initiatives in modern drug discovery. It would be constructed over approximately 7500 square, and the building is expected to be completed within 18 months, Dr Zabeer informed.

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#### STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Gaurav Gupta, BJP Spokesperson and Convener, International Affairs, on Wednesday launched a sweeping attack on the Congress party, alleging what he termed a decades-long "compromise mission" under the Nehru-Gandhi family that, he claimed, weakened India strategically, diplomatically and institutionally. Issuing a statement, Gupta said the issue was not about "one isolated mistake" but a "pattern stretching from Jawaharlal Nehru to Rahul Gandhi." Gupta alleged that key historical decisions - including the handling of Tibet, internationalising Kashmir at the United Nations, and the Berubari territorial agreement - reflected what he described as strategic concessions that diluted India's leverage.



Gaurav Gupta speaking at a podium.

Referring to the Shimla Agreement signed after the 1971 war, he claimed that Indira Gandhi "converted battlefield advantage into diplomatic compromise."

"Time and again, strength was traded for concession. Red lines were softened and bargaining replaced resolve," Gupta asserted.

Gupta further alleged that Congress had historical links with foreign intelligence agen-

cies, claiming that agencies like the CIA and KGB had funded the party during past elections

allegations that have long been politically disputed. He also referred to reported remarks by former U.S. Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan regarding Cold War-era funding claims, asserting that such episodes "raise serious questions about Congress' political independence."

Turning to the 2004-2014 period, Gupta criticised the functioning of the National Advisory Council, alleging it acted as a "parallel power centre" under Sonia Gandhi.

He also mentioned funding received by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, questioning the propriety of foreign-linked donations during the UPA tenure. Gupta revived references to the Bofors scandal during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi, alleging that defence

procurement processes were compromised to protect personal and political interests. He claimed such controversies reflected a broader pattern of weakening national security frameworks. In sharp remarks against Rahul Gandhi, Gupta described him as a "poster boy of negative politics," alleging that his foreign visits and international engagements were aligned with narratives detrimental to India's image.

"Over 247 foreign trips, meetings with controversial global figures, and political messaging abroad - under what mission was this being done?" Gupta asked, alleging that such actions were part of a larger "compromise agenda."

He further accused the Congress leadership of misleading youth and aligning with "appeasement politics" under the guise of ideological positioning. Summing up his remarks, Gupta said the Nehru-Gandhi family's political trajectory showed a consistent pattern of "compromising national interests while safeguarding personal and political interests."

"This is not youthful enthusiasm. This is a conspiracy against India's long-term interests. History will not call this prudence - it will call it failure," he said.

## Union Govt need to have a relook at composition of National Commission for Minorities

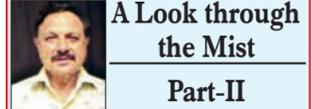
### NDA Govt should get implemented Clause - 7 of UPA-II PM's New 15 Point Prog for Welfare of Minorities

#### DAYA SAGAR

As per press release of Ministry of Minority Affairs ( PIB 23 MAR 2023 ) as could be found from the website of National Commission for Minorities 18 States/UTs have set up statutory State Minority Commissions (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana & West Bengal) and The Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJKV) is implemented through the State Governments/UT administrations where department in the State looking after minority welfare is the nodal department for implementation of PMJKV but schemes implemented by Ministry of Minority Affairs are not promoted by States or State Minority

Commissions. A 15 Point Programme was drawn in 2005 by UPA government seeking to ensure welfare of religious minorities through, increasing educational and employment opportunities, Improving living conditions, preventing and controlling communal riots and rehabilitation of victims of communal riots. The objective being to enhance opportunities for education and ensuring an equitable share for minorities in economic activities & employment through existing and new schemes; enhanced credit support for self-employment & recruitment to State & Central jobs in districts which have substantial population (M).

The term 'substantial minority population' in the 15 Point Programme referred to such districts/sub-district units where at least 25% of the total population of that unit belongs to minority communi-



ties. The programme covers 121 districts of the country where population of Minority Communities is concentrated. The programme advocated allocating 15% of plan outlays of welfare schemes identified under the 15 Point programme which are related to various ministries. The Hon'ble President, in his address to the Joint Session of Parliament on February 25, 2005, had announced that the Government would recast the 15 Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities with a view to incorporate programme specific interventions. Prime Minister, in his address on the occasion of Independence Day, 2005, also announced

inter-alia that "We will also revise and revamp the 15 Point Programme for Minorities. The new 15 Point Programme will have definite goals which are to be achieved in a specific time frame". In pursuance of these commitments, the earlier programme was in October 2009 revised as the Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities in 2009 and three more schemes were brought in the scope of National Rural Drinking Water Programme ,2.Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns 3.Urban Infrastructure and Governance (UIG) .

All is good. But states of Punjab, Meghalaya, Mizoram & Nagaland and UT of Lakshadweep & UT J&K do have one of the notified national level religious minority as a majority community there in on state / UT level. So,

in case any welfare / reforms policy or order of the government in any way appears cultivating some conflicting instincts / impressions/understandings amongst the people of India the Executive as well as the Legislature must take timely steps for removing the misunderstandings and / or any improper drafting. In the instant case there is need for taking some reformative steps at the level of Union atleast for implementing the para/ clause/point 7 of the PM's 15 point programme for the welfare of minorities that requires disallowing benefits like National scholarships offered by GOI to six religious minorities notified by GOI to the members of those communities who reside in states that have that community in Majority at state level and distributing that unused share to left over minorities in other states since otherwise it sends

wrong signal to the world community about the community that is in majority numbers at the National Level. And ofcourse the condition of having atleast 5 members from notified national level religious minorities for constituting the National Minority Commission too needs a relook for strengthening the bonds between the notified minorities and the 'majority' community.

Not only that all States/UTs too must have Minority Commissions at their local level also for safe guarding the minorities at local levels as well to provide them socio economic support at the state level as otherwise the job to be done by State Level Minority commissions remains incomplete once the principle of National Level minority has been recognised.

(The writer is Sr Journalist and social activist)