

JU to organise Goonj 2026 on Feb 27-28

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The University of Jammu today unveiled the third edition of its flagship multi-genre youth festival, Goonj 2026, at a Curtain Raiser press conference held on campus. Scheduled for February 27-28, 2026, the two-day festival aims to provide a collaborative platform for students, faculty, and teaching departments to showcase creativity, talent, and institutional pride.

The press conference was addressed by Vice Chancellor Prof. Umesh Rai, accompanied by Dean Research Studies Prof. Neelu Rohmetra, Dean Planning and Development Prof. Sangita Gupta, Registrar Dr. Neeraj Sharma, Director of the Centre for Distance and Online Education Prof. Pankaj K. Srivastava, and Dean Students Welfare Prof. Prakash C. Antahal.

Prof. Rai reflected on Goonj's journey since its inception in



Vice Chancellor Prof. Umesh Rai addressing a press conference on Wednesday.

2024, emphasizing that the festival was conceived to promote holistic student development and strengthen a sense of belonging within the University community. "Education must extend beyond the classroom. Platforms like Goonj enable students to explore their potential through participation, interaction, and collective engagement," he stated. Reiterating the theme "Dissolving Boundaries, Evolving Education," the Vice Chancellor highlighted the importance of academic col-

laboration and synergy, noting that the festival allows departments to share strengths, exchange best practices, and grow together. This year, around 600 students from teaching departments, offsite campuses, affiliated colleges, and neighboring universities have registered for participation, with numbers expected to rise. Prof. Rai announced that the Lieutenant Governor of J&K UT, and Chancellor of the University, will inaugurate the festival, while the valedictory function

will be graced by Prof. Bechan Lal, former Vice-Chancellor of Cluster University and Advisor to the Governor of Assam, as Chief Guest. Dean Research Studies Prof. Neelu Rohmetra highlighted that Goonj offers a unique opportunity for departments to showcase their academic identity through exhibition stalls presenting research initiatives, publications, training activities, and innovative practices. Prof. Pankaj K. Srivastava informed that the festival comprises three major segments -

Sports, Cultural Activities, and the Best Practices Showcase - with departmental performances evaluated by a six-member expert jury. Winning departments will be awarded cash prizes and consolation awards. Dean Students Welfare Prof. Prakash C. Antahal added that a new component, the Exhibition of Rare and Best-Selling Books, has been introduced to promote reading habits. Stress management sessions have also been incorporated to support students' mental well-being. Participation in cultural and sports activities has increased, reflecting growing enthusiasm among students. Other dignitaries present included Prof. Monika Chadha, Chairperson Campus Cultural Committee, Prof. Sarika Manhas, Co-Chairperson, and members of various committees and staff, all contributing to the successful launch of Goonj 2026.

Two-day training on Digital Literacy and Online Safety concludes at DIET Doda

STATE TIMES NEWS
DODA: In a significant initiative to strengthen digital education and promote safe online practices, a two-day training programme on Digital Literacy and Online Safety was conducted at the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Doda. The programme witnessed the active participation of around 120 teachers drawn from 10 educational zones of District Doda. The training was aimed at enhancing the digital competencies of teachers and equipping them with the necessary skills and awareness to ensure safe, responsible, and effective use of digital platforms in the teaching-learning process. During the training ses-

sions, resource persons delivered detailed presentations on key aspects such as cyber safety, data privacy, responsible use of social media, identification of online threats, and effective integration of digital tools in classroom teaching. The sessions included practical demonstrations and interactive discussions, enabling participants to gain hands-on experience and a deeper understanding of emerging digital challenges and their solutions. The valedictory function was attended by the Chief Education Officer, Doda, Bhushan Kumar Pathak, and the Principal, DIET Doda, Rajesh Kumar, who interacted with the participants and appreciated their active involvement. They emphasized the

growing relevance of digital literacy in the evolving educational landscape and underscored the vital role of teachers in promoting safe, ethical, and responsible online behaviour among students. They further encouraged the participants to effectively implement the knowledge and skills gained during the training in their respective schools. The programme concluded on a positive note, with participants expressing satisfaction and sharing constructive feedback. The training proved to be highly informative and beneficial, reaffirming the commitment of the education department to strengthen digital literacy and ensure online safety in schools across District Doda.

BMS holds protests across J&K over labour issues

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), Jammu & Kashmir unit, on Wednesday organised protest demonstrations at several district headquarters as part of a nationwide dharna-pradarshan programme to press for various labour-related demands. The protests were staged outside the offices of Deputy Commissioners and SDMs in Jammu, Kathua, Billaوار, Reasi, Nowshera, Udhampur, Doda, Ramban and Kishtwar. BMS leaders and workers raised slogans in support of labour rights and later submitted memorandums addressed to the Chief Minister on state-level issues and to the Prime Minister and Union Labour Minister concerning central labour laws. The union voiced concerns over the implementation of the Labour Codes, particularly the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020. Addressing the gather-



ing, senior BMS leader Harbans Choudhary demanded universal enforcement of labour laws across all sectors, asserting that no category of workers should be left without legal protection. He also called for rectification of workers' concerns in the new labour codes, revival of the tripartite mechanism and immediate convening of the Indian Labour Conference. Additionally, he sought an increase in the threshold limit for coverage under ESI and EPF schemes. State General Secretary Neelam Sharma highlighted issues faced by Anganwadi, Mid-Day Meal and ASHA

workers, alleging that the state share for Anganwadi workers had not been revised since 2010. She claimed gratuity benefits remained pending despite court orders and sought urgent intervention. Other speakers, including Ashok Choudhary, Ravi Haans, Rinku Gill, Sachin Bali and Harman Singh, raised concerns about employment opportunities for locals, regularisation of daily wagers and municipal workers, and strengthening labour protections. The protests concluded with submission of memorandums to district authorities.

PHE Land Donors, Employees' leaders demand regularisation and release of Pending Wages

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: A joint press conference was addressed by Babu Hussain Malik, State President of the J&K Government Employees Joint Action Committee (R), along with Mohd. Akram Shah, State President of the Jammu & Kashmir Land Donors/NBCLs Union, highlighting the long-pending issues of PHE land donors across the Union Territory. The press interaction followed an emergency meeting of the J&K PHE Land Donors Association held under the chairmanship of Akram Shah, in the presence of several senior trade union leaders including Girdhari Lal Chanda, Madan Sangral, Pawan Kumar, Kamla Sharma, Ramesh Sharma, Maenakshi Sharma, Ranjeet Kumar, Shabir Ahmad Sheikh, Abdul



PHE Land Donors, Employees' leaders during a meeting at Jammu on Wednesday.

Rashid Gorsi and Bharat Singh. During the meeting, representatives discussed the grievances of land donors who had provided land to the government under agreements that promised engagement of a family member in return. Speakers alleged that many land donors continue to face hardships due to non-payment of wages and lack of regularisation, despite rendering services

for years. They demanded regularisation without conditions related to length of service or educational qualifications, along with the immediate release of pending wages, including 45 months and 25 months' dues in Jammu and Kashmir respectively. The leaders also sought clearance of salaries for 3,156

PHE land donors across the UT and 117 workers from Rajouri district. The union further demanded financial assistance and fresh engagement for land donors who were injured or lost their lives during duty, including cases involving wild animal attacks and accidents. Addressing the media,

Malik and Akram Shah urged the government to consider the demands on priority, warning that continued neglect could lead to protests. They appealed to the Chief Minister and Lieutenant Governor to intervene and resolve the issues to ensure justice for land donors and NBCL employees.

Training Session on NPS & UPS highlights structural reforms at NZATI Jammu



Director Finance and Principal NZATI, Rajesh Talwar along with others at a meeting in Jammu on Wednesday.

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: A training session on the theme "National Pension System (NPS) & Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) in J&K - Structural Bottlenecks and Corrective Strategy" was organised at the Northern Zonal Accountancy Training Institute (NZATI), Muthi, Jammu, to strengthen

the implementation framework of pension schemes in the Union Territory. The programme was presided over by Director Finance and Principal NZATI, Rajesh Talwar, and attended by Yasir Sharief, Sadder Treasury Officer, Jammu; Dheeraj Jandial, Treasury Officer, Udhampur; Altaf Hussain,

Treasury Officer, Rajouri; Zafar Iqbal, Treasury Officer, Gandhi Nagar; Kuldeep Kumar, Treasury Officer, TalabTillo; Sonam Singh, Treasury Officer Samba and other senior officers and officials from the District Treasuries, Sub-Treasuries, and Additional Treasuries, Drawing and Disbursing

Officers (DDOs) and staff dealing with NPS, were present in person as well as virtually from across the Union Territory. Technical sessions were conducted by experts Akik Desai and Suryakant Tare from Protean CRA (NSDL), Mumbai. They guided participants through operational, reconciliation, migration and compliance-related aspects of NPS and UPS, while also discussing revised withdrawal limits and procedures. Key deliberations focused on contribution remittance, accounting practices, compliance challenges and systemic issues affecting pension administration. An interactive troubleshooting session allowed participants to raise field-level concerns, which were addressed with detailed clarifications by the resource persons. The training concluded with a collective commitment to enhance coordination, streamline procedures and adopt corrective strategies to ensure smoother implementation of pension schemes and improved services for subscribers across Jammu and Kashmir.

PNB Divisional Office Jammu receives Official Language Shield Award



Vishesh Kumar Srivastava, CGM along with Pooja Devi, Manager (Official Language), Divisional Office Jammu receiving award.

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Punjab National Bank (PNB), Divisional Office Jammu, has been honoured with the First Official Language Shield Award in Region 'C' by the Department of Official Language, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, for its outstanding performance in promoting the use of Hindi in

official work. The award was presented by Union Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation Amit Shah during the Joint Regional Language Conference held in Agartala, Tripura, on February 20, 2026. The prestigious recognition was received by Vishesh Kumar Srivastava,

Chief General Manager, along with Pooja Devi, Manager (Official Language), Divisional Office Jammu. Punjab National Bank Executive Director Bibhu Prasad Mahapatra and other senior officials from the Head Office were also present during the ceremony, applauding the achievement.

SCERT J&K inks MOU with Bharti Airtel Foundation for Life Skills Curriculum Development and Implementation

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: In a significant move to future-proof the region's youth, the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Jammu & Kashmir, has entered into a strategic partnership with the Bharti Airtel Foundation. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Wednesday to co-create and implement a robust Life Skills Curriculum across the Union Territory, marking a pivotal step toward nurturing holistic and resilient learners.



Dr. Naseem Javed Chowdhary, Director, SCERT J&K; Prof (Dr.) Sindhu Kapoor, Joint Director, SCERT J&K along with Binu Nair, Chief Operating Officer, Anil Bhatt, Regional Head and Sourab Sharma, Project Head from BhartiAirtel Foundation signing MoU.

solving, and sound decision-making. The formal signing ceremony was attended by key dignitaries from both organizations, underscoring the shared commitment to this educational transformation. The signatories included Dr. Naseem Javed Chowdhary, Director, SCERT J&K; Prof (Dr.) Sindhu Kapoor, Joint Director, SCERT J&K along with Binu Nair, Chief Operating Officer, Anil

Bhatt, Regional Head and Sourab Sharma, Project Head from BhartiAirtel Foundation. Dr. Naseem Javed Chowdhary highlighted the transformative potential of the initiative. "This partnership is a cornerstone in our mission to redefine educational excellence in Jammu & Kashmir. By integrating a structured life skills framework, we are not just educating students, but empow-

ering them with the emotional and cognitive resilience required to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. It is a holistic approach to building character and capability." The collaboration will focus on a multi-pronged strategy, including the joint development of age-appropriate curriculum modules, extensive capacity-building programs for teachers and master trainers, and system-

atic, phased implementation across schools in the Union Territory. The goal is to ensure a sustainable and measurable impact on student development. Binu Nair, COO of BhartiAirtel Foundation, reiterated the organization's dedication to educational innovation. "We are proud to collaborate with SCERT J&K on this vital initiative. At the BhartiAirtel Foundation, we believe that education is the foundation for a thriving society. This curriculum is designed to foster a growth mindset in students, preparing them to be not just academically proficient, but also emotionally intelligent and socially responsible citizens." Prof. (Dr.) Sindhu Kapoor, Joint Director while thanking BhartiAirtel Foundation reiterated that MoU signifies a shared vision to empower the next generation of Jammu & Kashmir with the essential skills to achieve personal well-being, academic success, and professional readiness.

MBSCT organises Blood Donation Camp in collaboration with J&K Thalassemia Welfare Society



MBSCT faculty and society members at Blood Donation Camp.

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The NSS Unit and Red Ribbon Club of Mahant Bachittar Singh College of Engineering & Technology (MBSCT) organised a blood donation camp on the college campus in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Thalassemia Welfare Society. The initiative witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, faculty, staff and management, reflecting a strong commitment to social responsibility and humanitarian service. The camp was coordinated by the NSS Unit under the leadership of Ripudaman Singh, Assistant Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering. A medical team led by Dr. Rajat Kumar from Government Medical College Jammu supervised the donation process and ensured that all procedures were conducted safely and efficiently. A large number of volunteers, including many first-year students, came forward to donate blood. The faculty of the Applied Sciences and Humanities Department,

headed by Ms. Sarbjeeet Kour, actively assisted in mobilising donors, managing registrations and providing logistical support throughout the event. Er. Sudhir Sethi, President of the J&K Thalassemia Welfare Society, expressed gratitude to the college authorities for their continued support towards patients suffering from thalassemia who require regular blood transfusions. S. Gurnam Singh, Chairman of the institution, appreciated the organising team for their dedicated efforts. Prof. Praveen Singh, Dean Academics and convener of the event, also donated blood, setting an inspiring example. Dr. Amrik Singh, In-charge Principal, along with Mr. H.S. Gill (DSW) and Heads of various departments, lauded the donors for their compassion and commitment. The event concluded with a message encouraging continued participation in such noble initiatives, reaffirming the institution's dedication to community service and nation-building.