

HC, JKLA, UT admin, KU organise mega event on Int'l Women Day

STATE TIMES NEWS
SRINAGAR: The High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, along with J&K Legal Services Authority (JKLA), in collaboration with administration of UT of Jammu & Kashmir and University of Kashmir; on Friday organized a mega event to mark celebration of International Women's Day at University of Kashmir.



Chief Justice of HC of J&K and Ladakh, Justice N Kotiswar Singh speaking at a event.

The speakers, while speaking on the occasion, advocated women empowerment and active participation in progress and prosperity of the nation for a flourished society.

Chief Justice of High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, and Patron-in-Chief of J&K Legal Services Authority, Justice N Kotiswar Singh, graced the occasion as chief guest while Vice Chancellor of University of Kashmir, Nilofer Khan, participated as guest of honor. The event was also attended by eminent personalities including Dr. Vijay Lakshmi Brara, Justice Moksha Kazmi Khajuria, Justice Waseem Sadiq Nargal, Principal Secretary to Chief Justice M.K. Sharma, Dr. Naseer Iqbal Registrar University of Kashmir, Farooq Ahmad Registrar Judicial,

Amit Gupta, Member Secretary JKLSA Abdul Bari, Joint Registrar Judicial, members of the Registry, Judicial Officers and Officers of J&K Legal Services Authority and High Court, officers of civil and police administration, officers and faculty members of University of Kashmir, front-line workers of Health and Social Welfare Department, DLSA staff members and Para Legal Volunteers, members of LADC and students. The event was virtually joined from Jammu by Shahzad Azeem Registrar General High Court of J&K and Ladakh.

The event highlighted the invaluable contributions of women achievers from various spheres of life, felicitating them for their outstanding endeavors. The women achievers

Mohsina Sibtain (JKPS), Advocate Masoodha Jan, Advocate Aarifa Jan, Afshaan, Neerja Mattoo and Soliha Bashir expressed their views on the occasion. They highlighted the importance of conducive environment for overall development of girl child. Additionally, ten success stories from ten districts of the Valley were screened during the event, shedding light on their remarkable achievements, inspiring others to strive for excellence.

Chief Justice also felicitated them for their hard work and dedication. The program featured special live performances by artists from Cultural Department and Roshni Production, addressing pertinent issues such as drug abuse and violence against women. Through artistic expression,

the audience was sensitized about these pressing concerns, fostering a collective resolve to combat them.

Chief Justice, in his special address, underscored the constitutional and statutory safe-

guards imperative for women's empowerment, reaffirming the commitment of judiciary towards gender equality and justice for all.

Earlier, Vice Chancellor of University of Kashmir, commenced the event with her opening remarks, emphasizing the importance of creating a conducive environment for women's growth and empowerment. The celebration of International Women's Day served as a poignant reminder of the collective responsibility to empower women, thereby accelerating progress and fostering a more equitable society.



Dr Jitendra given rousing welcome, hails Udhampur among most developed constituencies in 10 years

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said here on Friday that with the patronage and support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Udhampur-Kathua-Doda is among the country's most developed constituencies in last 10 years and now it is the time to devote the third 5-year term to consolidate the gains of last two terms and transform this region as among the most attractive destinations of the country.

Dr Jitendra was speaking soon after his arrival this morning for the first time after having been officially nominated the BJP candidate for Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency for the third consecutive term.

On his arrival, from the airport right upto his Parliamentary Constituency office at Gandhi Nagar, a massive gathering of BJP workers and supporters from his constituency were waiting for him.

As soon as Dr Jitendra Singh's cavalcade moved out of Jammu airport, there was a huge rush of supporters resulting in a traffic jam for over half an hour. People in thousands, particularly



Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh being given a rousing welcome on arrival at Jammu airport on Friday.

Bhartiya Janta Yuva Moreha (BJYM) members from all the districts of Udhampur, Kathua, Ramban, Kishtwar and Doda, burst crackers to celebrate the declaration of Dr Jitendra Singh as candidate and showered petals on him from all sides.

Addressing the workers at his Parliamentary office at Gandhi Nagar and later speaking to media, Dr Jitendra hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, National President J P Nadda and the Party High Command for having reposed faith on him for the third time to represent this prestigious Lok Sabha Constituency.

He also thanked the J&K BJP leadership for having proposed his name to the

Parliamentary Board and said that above all he was thankful to the grassroots workers and particularly the youth workers in far-flung areas of the constituency whose overwhelming support and love had contributed to the party decision.

Dr Jitendra said, the people of this country have made up their mind to return Narendra Modi as Prime Minister for the third term with a majority of more than 400 seats and it is now our responsibility to discharge our duty and prove ourselves by recording a victory margin of more than 4 Lakh in Udhampur Constituency, which will beat the previous record of 3.58 Lakh.

Speaking on the occasion, J&K Gen Secretary (Org)

Ashek Kaul assured Prime Minister Narendra Modi of returning the NDA government with more than 400 seats and also assured that Dr Jitendra from Udhampur constituency will beat the earlier record.

Dr Singh said, the first five-year term was spent in making up for the negligence and losses of the earlier years during which this constituency suffered discrimination and lack of development for vote bank consideration. For example, Shahpur-Kandi Project was revived after three decades, Rattle Power Project was revived after one and a half decade, the work on the rail line beyond Reasi was resumed whereas the first train up to Jammu arrived way back in 1972, the railway station in Katra was completed, the long delayed pending work on Atal Setu in Basohli and Asia's longest tunnel between Chenani and Nasri was resumed.

In the second five-year term, Dr Jitendra Singh said, the attempt was made to introduce the projects which had feasibility to be introduced in the Constituency. These includ-

ed the Devika project in Udhampur; first Industrial Biotech Park in Kathua, three centrally funded Medical Colleges at Udhampur and Kathua and Doda respectively, two Passport offices in Kathua and Udhampur respectively, Khilani-Sudhahadev National Highway 244 and most importantly Aroma mission cum Purple revolution in Baderwah which received nationwide acclaim.

Like the earlier two terms, said Dr Jitendra Singh, the third term will be dedicated to the priorities of the youth and developing the constituency's major towns, destinations as national attraction in terms of education, tourism and trade.

Like in the earlier 10 years, philanthropic human services above Party lines, for example facilitating admission of needy patients in hospitals outside J&K will continue for which a separate cell has been constituted, he said. Free Tele mobile clinic services like "Doctor on wheels" and free distribution of clothes and school books to the needy will also continue, he added.

IIM Jammu welcomes Solo Cyclist Captain (IN) DK Jena



IIM Jammu faculty with solo cycling Captain (IN) DK Jena, Indian Naval Officer.

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu welcomed Captain (IN) DK Jena, Indian Naval Officer, at the main gate of its campus.

Captain Jena is currently undertaking an extraordinary solo cycling expedition from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, covering a remarkable distance of approximately 3900 kilometers.

As an Institution of National Importance dedicated to excellence, IIM Jammu is deeply honored to welcome and celebrate the remarkable achievements of Captain Jena. His courage, determination, and spirit exemplify the values of resilience and perseverance that our institution strives to instill in its community. A short video showcasing the journey of Captain D.K. Jena was also showcased on this occasion by the students of IIM Jammu.

Captain D.K. Jena, in his address, extended wishes for Happy Shivratri and International Women's Day, expressing his desire for a safer planet for women. He commended Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director of IIM Jammu, for his gracious welcome and praised the institution's journey towards becoming a world-class institute within a year. He emphasized that his expedition is not just about covering kilometers, but about experiencing the rich diversity of India, including its food, culture, and linguistic variety. Advocating the theme of "Shakari Bhojan, Behtaar Jeevan," he highlighted the benefits of vegetarianism in building both body and mind while reducing pollution. He underscored the detrimental effects of non-vegetarian food and emphasized the advantages of cycling for health and the environment, advocating "Burn Fat, Not Fuel." He urged the audience, particularly students, to prioritize serving the nation and encouraged them to consider joining the Armed Forces if they aspire to contribute to the country's welfare effectively.

Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu, warmly

ly welcomed Capt. D.K. Jena and reminisced about hosting Dr. Kiran Seth, Founder of SPIC Macay, who embarked on a similar expedition from Kanyakumari to Srinagar at the age of 75. He expressed confidence in India's potential to achieve this goal by taking everyone along. Urging students to embrace their role as future leaders, he commended Capt. D.K. Jena for accepting the invitation and serving as a role model for the IIM Jammu community, encouraging all to contribute to the nation's growth and development.

Prof. Jabir Ali, Dean Academics of IIM Jammu, also shared his thoughts, expressing that Captain Jena's journey embodies the spirit of adventure, determination, and commitment to a cause. He conveyed the institution's honor in hosting Captain Jena at IIM Jammu.

Cmdr. Kesavan Baskkaran, CAO of IIM Jammu, reflected on the remarkable journey of Capt. D.K. Jena, highlighting his dedication to societal causes and nation-building. He stressed that Captain Jena's mission aims to propagate his ideas for nation-building and invites everyone to be a part of this transformative journey.

The IIM Jammu community, comprising faculty, staff, and students, extended a warm welcome to Captain Jena upon his arrival at the main gate of the campus. A felicitation program was organized at the Vivekananda Classroom to honor Captain Jena's extraordinary achievement.

The entire IIM Jammu community participated in the felicitation program, showing their support for Captain Jena's remarkable feat. Following the felicitation, a Q&A session took place.

Let us unite to celebrate his exceptional accomplishment and reaffirm our commitment to promoting a healthy and environmentally conscious lifestyle. The event was meticulously coordinated by the Sports Committee and Student Affairs Office.

The festival marked with hundreds of devotees from the Kashmir Pandit community paying obeisance at various temples and offering Puja on the occasion. The biggest gathering was held at Shankaracharya Temple, overlooking the Dal Lake in Srinagar. Puja and other religious activities started at 4 am followed by Hawan and other religious activities. The festival holds an important place among the Pandits, who celebrate it to mark the wedding of lord Shiva with

Herath celebrated with religious fervour across Kashmir

MASROOR AHMAD

SRINAGAR: The festival of Maha Shivratri, locally known as Herath, was celebrated with religious fervour in Kashmir with devotees thronging religious places across the Valley.

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Parvati.

Special prayers were also held at Ganpatyar and Hanuman Temple at Amira Kadal in Srinagar throughout the day. Large number of devotees thronged Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple at Tullamulla in district Ganderbal and other temples

across Kashmir. Hundreds of devotees were seen thronging the temple early in the morning and participated in special prayers which were held there on the occasion. The atmosphere was filled with the recitation of devotional bhajans and the fragrance of incense as devo-

tees performed traditional rituals and offered holy water, milk, and flowers to the sacred Lingam.

Meanwhile, many tourists thronged the temples in Srinagar like Shankaracharya to celebrate the festival.

"All arrangements were good, and we loved interacting with locals across faiths. Everyone should visit the place at least once in their life," said a tourist from Mumbai.

Many local Pandits had gathered at the temple to celebrate the event. They said that it was the most important festival of Kashmiri Pandits and was uniquely observed for more than a day in Kashmiri Pandit homes. "We offer special prayers,

visit our holy sites. Many Kashmir Pandits cook traditional Kashmiri food and dishes, especially fish. We also distribute walnuts as a mark of respect to the deities. We pray that the festival brings peace and prosperity to Kashmir and across the entire world," said Rajinder, a local Kashmiri Pandit. Many locals from Muslim, Sikh, and other religious communities in Kashmir took to social media to wish their Kashmiri Pandit brothers on the festival.

Meanwhile, district administration Srinagar had made special arrangements for the celebration of the festival and senior officials had taken stock of the arrangement days before the festival.

Why there is need for legally dedicated Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Agri Produce in India?

Under present system only Government is obliged to buy Farm Produce on MSP but Trader is Not

DAYA SAGAR

Let us have a brief look at the socio economic status of the farmer community in India and the policy on Minimum Support Price (MSP) that we have and may need in India. India is the seventh largest country in the world with an area of 3.288 million sq kms. As per Report of committee on Doubling Farmers income Part II 2017 absolute number of households engaged in agriculture by 2011 had risen to 11.9 Cr from just 7 Cr in 1951 and number of the landless agricultural labour had increased to 14.43 cr from just 2.73 cr in 1951. As per Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy 2023 area under food grains cultivation in India in 1966-67 was 1153 Lakh Hectares and that in 2022-23 (advance estimates) it was 1322 Lakh Hectares. Similarly there has been very significant increase in crop yield which was for Food Grains just 644 Kg / Hect in 1966-67 and per third advance estimates increased in 2022-23 to 2500 kg / Hect. Similarly Total Food Grain Production for 2003-04 was 213189.0 thousand metric tons where as in 2022-23 Total Food Grain Production was 330.5 million metric tons. In year 2023, India's estimated production of rice was over 130 million metric tons and that of Wheat was estimated to be over 112 million metric tons. In 1950s Agriculture sector's contribution to Indian economy was more than 50% of GDP where as in 2015-16 it was 15.4% (at constant prices) which was ofcourse due proportionately larger growth in other sectors of economy and not due to

bad state of overall growth in agri sector although the condition of large bulk of agri community did not become economically that secure due to very small individual holdings. But 'Agriculture' still in 2024 remains the mainstay of Indian economy and major source of livelihood of rural household, predominantly for small, marginal farmers, landless cultivators as also farm labour. No doubt for securing the food and 'health' security for self a very large farmer community, dependent particularly on food grain cultivation, face several problems related to, farm input supplies, proper & fair marketing cover.

It is not out of place to mention here that although world food production has increased over the years but still almost 800 million people have insufficient food in South and Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and Sub Saharan Africa (FAO,2015) where as India has sufficient production of food grains (ofcourse fruits and vegetables too) worth local needs. Whereas but due to poor economic conditions may be over 50 percent population does not have adequate buying capacity for minimal food / nutrition and a large population in that also comprises of farm labour/ landless farmers/small & marginal farmers owning no agri land or land less than 2 hectares (India's foodgrains production touched a record 315.7 million tonnes in 2021-22 despite climate change challenges says the Economic Survey 2022-



A Look through the Mist Part-II

23 tabled in the Parliament by the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman on 31st Jan 2023 who further said that The production of pulses has also been notably higher than the average of 23.8 million tonnes in the last five years and According to third advance estimates (2021-22). A production of 342.3 million tonnes in an area of 28.0 million hectares was achievable. To remove the financial burden of the poor, the government will spend more than Rs 2 lakh crore in this period on food subsidies under NFSA and other welfare schemes said the Survey (2022-2023). The Indian Finance Minister told Lok Sabha on 31 Jan 2023 that Government has decided to provide free foodgrains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 for one year from 1 January 2023 (any how after that govt has decided to go with it for five yrs).

It has been on 14 March 2023 that Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shri Narendra Singh Tomar speaking after launching the Kisan Tak channel and its website of the India Today Group in New Delhi said that Small Farmers constitute 85% of the farming community who face challenge of lack of private investment and that Rs.2,40,000 crore has been disbursed through PM Kisan Samman to 11.5 crore farmers @ INR 6000per family per year since 2018. As per some estimates in India small and marginal

land holding farmers cultivate around 44 per cent of the area, and they produce around 49% of rice, 40% of wheat, 29% of coarse cereals & 27% of pulses and over half of the country's fruits and vegetables production (Agricultural census, 2014). As per India's Agriculture Census 2015-16, 86.1 percent of Indian farmers are small and marginal (SMF) and more than half of these live in five Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh where most of them cultivate the classic combination of cereals i.e., paddy in Kharif (and even in Rabi in some cases) and wheat in Rabi. Cotton is the third most preferred crop, followed by maize and gram (NSO 2018-19).

As per PIB report of March 2024 National Sample Survey Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) study on Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of Agricultural Households during (January 2019- December 2019) in the rural areas of the country the percentage distribution of agricultural house holds (small & marginal farmers) owning less than two hectares of land was as large as 89.4%.

The agriculture censuses show that number of India's landholdings grew from about 71 million in 1970-71 to 146 million in 2015-16 with average landholding sizes shrinking from 2.3 hect to 1.1 hectares in 2015-16 with only 47.3 percent of India's operational agricultural land with India's SMF where as land with SMF's was about 21 percent in 1970-71. As per another quote only 45 percent of the total

cultivable land is held by small & marginal farmers. Government of India extended PM Samaan Nidhi of Rs.6000 per year w.e.f 01 Dec 2018 (with cutoff date as 01.02.2019 for 5 years), since 1-6-2019 its benefits were extended to all farmer families irrespective of the size of their landholdings (nearly 11 Cr) except tenant farmers who cultivate land owned by others as also some families where one or more members come in particular categories. To Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 192 answered on 03/02/2023 from Irrana Kadadi in reply the Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (Narendra Singh Tomar) had told that no specific census/survey of landless agricultural farmers and migrant landless agricultural farmers has been conducted and as such the exact number of landless agricultural farmers and migrant landless agricultural farmers in the country is not available. These categories of 'farmers' too are economically the poorest.

All these indicators which well speak of the likely weak /poor economic status of a large bulk of Agri community in India who are compelled by their family needs for rushing to market for immediate recovery of sales and are exploited by traders to sell their produce much below even MSP declared by government for purchase by government nominated agencies. So is felt the need for a legally dedicated Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Agri Produce in India.

To be continued (The writer is a Sr Journalist and Social Activist).