

# Northeast to be India's 'Saffron Hub' like J&K: Dr Jitendra

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**SHILLONG:** Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh, announced the expansion of the Mission Saffron initiative, which was launched by the Modi Government in 2021.

The initiative has successfully introduced saffron cultivation in Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, and Meghalaya, with large-scale farming now underway in Menchukha (Arunachal Pradesh) and Yuksom (Sikkim).

Plans are in place to extend cultivation to Nagaland and Manipur, positioning the Northeast as India's new "Saffron Hub", similar to Jammu & Kashmir. By utilizing previously uncultivated land, the initiative enhances agricul-



Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh laying the foundation stone of the new permanent campus of "North East Centre for Technology Application & Reach" (NECTAR) at Shillong.

of Science and Technology, has played a crucial role in technological innovation in the Northeast. Dr. Singh praised its initiatives, including saffron cultivation on the lines of lavender farming in J&K, drone technology for land mapping under the 'Swamitva' program, and advancements in bamboo and honey production. He stressed that NECTAR is bridging socio-economic gaps by applying indigenous technological solutions for sustainable development.

The newly planned NECTAR campus in New Shillong will serve as a collaborative centre of excellence for cutting-edge research, skill development, and technology demonstrations. Dr. Singh encouraged NECTAR to specialize in a dedicated scientific domain

to gain pan-India recognition, similar to IITs and premier research institutions.

He further underscored the Northeast's role in India's economic ascent and its contribution to the nation's goal of becoming a developed economy by 2047. As India moves toward becoming the world's third-largest economy, Dr. Singh asserted that value addition from previously underutilized regions like the Northeast will be instrumental in this growth journey.



## Dr Darakhshan visits Peer Baba Budan Ali Shah shrine

### Our Sufi Shrines are centers of Harmony & spirituality: Andrabi

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**JAMMU:** Chairperson J&K Waqf Board Dr. Syed Darakhshan Andrabi on Thursday paid obeisance at the shrine of Peer Baba Budan Ali Shah near Jammu Airport.

CEO of J&K Waqf Board Zaheer Ahmed Kaifi, Administrator Waqf Board Jammu Abid Hussain also accompanied Dr Darakhshan during the visit.

Waqf Chairperson took stock of the Eid preparation at the shrine. She led the process of Laying of Carpet & Mats at Baba Budhan Ali Shah Satwari in the shrine and in the mosque in the shrine complex.

Dr Andrabi said that the upgradation of facilities at



Chairperson J&K Waqf Board Dr. Syed Darakhshan Andrabi laying carpet & mats at Baba Budhan Ali Shah Shrine Satwari.

the shrines is a continuous process and Waqf Board is committed to provide required facilities to the pilgrims at all sufi shrines in J&K. Andrabi took stock of the Eid preparations at the shrine and asked the management to provide all facilities to the people which are required during special Ramazan congregations and on Eid day.

Dr Darakhshan Andrabi

led the Carpet Laying at the shrine and in the Mosque in the shrine complex.

Imam of the shrine Hafiz Mohd Azam Ali was also present. Speaking to media, Dr Andrabi said that a few months back Waqf Board upgraded infrastructural facilities here and now on the public demand, the new mat-laying process had been completed today.

"We have resolved to transform our Sufi shrines into very tidy and beautiful places so that the visitors feel good. We are fulfilling our duty towards these pious places. Our Sufi Shrines are centers of Harmony & spirituality", said Andrabi. She assured that such upgradations will continue in future too.

## Traffic Police Rural Jammu issues traffic advisory for Holi festival

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**JAMMU:** Traffic Police Rural on Thursday issued traffic advisory for the Holi festival being celebrated tomorrow.

"Festival will lead to increased movement of persons/vehicles on the road. Through this medium, people are requested to take precautionary measures to prevent interruption in the flow of traffic in their respective areas" a hand

out stated.

The office has advised the general public of districts (Samba, Kathua, Rajouri, and Poonch) to avoid wrong parking, rash driving and follow M.V/rules while celebrating the Holi festival to prevent traffic jamming and congestion; Stunt driving which usually causes injuries and often proves to be fatal should be avoided to ensure safety;

Organizers of Holi events and Holi processions/DJ owners have been advised to desist from plying vulgar/Provocative songs/slogans using loudspeakers; People have been advised to desist from drunken driving during the festival to avert the apprehension of any mishap; maintaining lane discipline during religious processions have been stressed upon to minimise the inconvenience to

the general public.

If any person is found violating the MV Act, causing danger to the human life, people can share the information with Traffic Police Control Room Jammu (0191-2459048, 2740550, 9419147732, 103); Traffic Police Rural Jammu: (94984321021); Traffic Helpline Samba-Kathua: (8899041447) and Traffic Helpline Rajouri-Poonch: (9419324490).

## NABARD signs MoU with J&K Grameen Bank to finance JLGs

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**JAMMU:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the promotion and financing of 2000 Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) was on Thursday signed and exchanged between NABARD, J&K Regional Office, Jammu, and J&K Grameen Bank.

Deputy General Manager, NABARD Des Raj and Chairman, J&K Grameen Bank Sanjay Gupta signed the MoU on behalf of NABARD and J&K Grameen Bank, respectively.

The MoU signing ceremony was presided over by Chief General Manager NABARD Bhallamudi Sridhar who emphasized that the primary objective of the MoU is to enhance the flow of credit to tenant farmers, oral lessees, sharecroppers, landless

farmers, and others who may not have formal title to their land holdings. The initiative also aims to meet the credit requirements of the economically weaker sections of society by forming and credit-linking JLGs.

Bhallamudi Sridhar applauded J&K Grameen Bank for successfully financing more than 2500 JLGs under previous MoUs and encouraged the Bank to continue its efforts in financial inclusion.

He further stressed the need to focus on financing individual JLG members to strengthen their economic activities. Additionally, he emphasized that the renewal of JLG loans should be completed in a timely manner to ensure the smooth flow of credit operations.

Sanjay Gupta, Chairman, J&K Grameen Bank, appreciated NABARD's initiatives for promoting financial inclusion in the Union Territory and expressed gratitude for its continuous support to the Bank. He reaffirmed the Bank's commitment to playing a significant role in socio-economic development and ensuring that initiatives like social security schemes, SHIG and JLG credit linkages reach even the remotest areas.

Under this MoU, J&K Grameen Bank will form and finance 2000 JLGs across UT of J&K and UT of Ladakh. NABARD will provide a promotional grant support of ₹4000 per JLG to J&K Grameen Bank, further strengthening financial empowerment in the region.

## MLA Yudhvir exposes GMC Admin-Private Lab Nexus

### Demands free CT Scan facilities for poor patients

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**JAMMU:** BJP leader and MLA East Constituency, Yudhvir Sethi on Thursday raised serious concerns over the exploitation of patients at the Government Medical College (GMC) and Hospital, Jammu, alleging a nexus between the hospital administration and private diagnostic labs.

Speaking during the Assembly session, the MLA highlighted how GMC Administration has been repeatedly awarding the diagnostic services contract to a particular private firm, 'Krishna Diagnostics,' for the past seven years by revising tenders in its favor while also increasing test rates.

Sethi revealed that 'Krishna Diagnostics' is charging nearly Rs 1,500 for a CT scan, whereas the same test costs merely Rs 450 in neighboring states like Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. He criticized the GMC authorities for failing to regulate the exorbitant rates, causing immense financial distress to patients, particularly the under-

privileged.

"The GMC administration's deliberate inaction



suggests a deep-rooted nexus with private players. Instead of ensuring affordable healthcare, they are facilitating corporate profiteering at the cost of patients' well-being," he asserted.

The senior BJP leader strongly urged the government to intervene immediately and provide free CT scan facilities for economically weaker sections. He emphasized that in a welfare state, healthcare should not be a luxury but a fundamental right.

Calling for stringent measures, the senior BJP leader demanded a probe into the tendering process and pricing mechanisms at GMC Jammu. He warned that if corrective steps are not taken, the issue will be escalated further to ensure justice for the people of Jammu.

Yudhvir Sethi reaffirmed the BJP's commitment to ensuring transparency in governance and protecting the rights of the common people. He appealed to the GMC administration to take corrective action at the earliest, ensuring affordable and accessible healthcare for all.

## CPCB recognises Agro Tech Aromatics Pvt. Ltd for environmental testing

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**JAMMU:** Agro Tech Aromatics Pvt. Ltd., a first private commercial testing lab in J&K, is engaged in testing of Drugs & Pharmaceuticals, Food, Water, Soil and Environmental parameters.

The lab has already attained coveted accreditation from the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL), a significant milestone demonstrating its commitment to the quality and reliability of test results.

This accreditation confirms the laboratory's competence in performing accurate and reliable tests, ensuring the highest standards of quality & ethics for all its clients.

This lab is now officially recognised by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for Environmental testing under the Environment Protection Act 1986.

This recognition underlines the lab's commitment to maintain the highest levels of standards in Environmental testing.

Agro Tech Aromatics provides a comprehensive

range of Air and Water quality testing including Air Quality Index (AQI) monitoring, Soil and Sediment analysis, Noise monitoring and Environmental Impact Assessments.

It has the capability for carrying out complex tests like heavy metals, pesticides, contaminants, along with the complete testing of waste water generated from ETP's & STP's, Air Emissions, Stack Gas Emissions, Hazardous waste, Soil/Sludge/Solid Waste, Noise, etc.

It is pertinent to mention that the lab has become the first lab in J&K to get this recognition. This development will help strengthen the region's environmental protection efforts.

Agro Tech Aromatics' state of the art facilities with cutting edge technology and team of experienced scientists and technicians is focussed in delivering exceptional results with precision and accuracy.

With a strong focus on Research and Development, the laboratory boasts an impressive array of the most advanced equipment including GC-MSMS, LC-

MSMS, ICP-MS, Gas chromatography with head space, HPLCs with DAD/RI/FL detectors, Ion chromatography, Discrete analyzer, TOC analyzer, FTIR, AAS systems.

One of the key strengths of Agro Tech Aromatics Pvt. Ltd. is its commitment to using the most advanced chromatographic, spectrophotometric, and microbiological techniques available in the market.

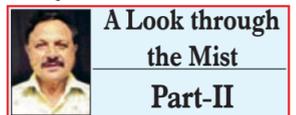
Agro Tech Aromatics Pvt. Ltd. is poised to become a trusted partner for industries, institutes and government bodies seeking comprehensive and reliable testing services.

With a team of experienced professionals and a commitment to excellence, the laboratory is well-positioned to drive innovation and set new benchmarks in the field of testing, analysis and research.

By leveraging its expertise and state-of-the-art infrastructure, the company is set to make a lasting impact on various industries and contribute to the advancement of quality standards in drug, environment, food, water testing and research & development.

### DAYA SAGAR

A common concern that the politicians have been showing over last four to five decades has been for the unemployed and under employed youth, the 'below poverty line' subjects, the backward classes, the dependent senior citizens, the woman and like could possibly be looking for some immediate economic inputs for the minimum surviving needs and accordingly make promises to of direct economic



benefits during elections. So a valued question is what can the voter citizen do in case the direct benefit economic promises made during the election campaign are not fulfilled?

As a test check let us specifically look at the direct benefit promises made by the National Conference in its election-2024 manifesto and what have reflected upon presentation of Budget-2025-26 for UT of J&K on 07-03-2025 and Chief Minister address in Assembly on 11-03-2025.

Not only that the common voter citizen must question the promising politicians to make public in clear understandable terms (i) what is the level of BPL (below poverty line) or the beneficiary who would be offered cost less benefits? (ii) When the Ayushman health card is to benefit all residents in one state then why is the same card benefiting only BPL families in some states? Why not also appoint an audit agency dedicated only for checking the validity of those holding status cards like BPL (below poverty line) and drawing various economic supports from exchequer since in India even a beggar is paying taxes (indirect taxes

## What can voter citizen do in case vote seeker does not deliver direct economic benefit promises in election manifesto?

S.N O	Election Manifesto PROMISE directly affecting individuals	Actions taken so far
1	We will provide free drinking water to each household.	Budget speech Para 134 > No mention of free drinking water to each household.
2	Provide 200 units of electricity free	Budget speech Para 124> Mentions providing 200 units of electricity free not to all but only to Antyodaya families i.e some BPL or so.
3	To fill-up all vacancies in government departments within 180 days	No appointments yet. Budget speech PARA says > Of the 10,616 positions referred to JKPSC and JKSSB, notifications for 7,376 have been issued, and exams for 6,090 have been conducted.
4	Women shall be entitled to travel free in all public Transport-	Budget speech Para 112 says> I propose - Starting 1st April 2025, all women in Jammu & Kashmir will be granted free ridership on government-owned public transport, including eBuses.
5	We will enhance the old age and widow pension to 3000.	Not done as promised . Budget speech Para 109> . says propose an enhancement in pension amounts, benefitting 10,07,324, only ₹1,250 per month for persons below 60 years of age. Rs 1,500 per month for persons aged between 60 and below 80 years. Rs 2,000 per month for persons aged 80 years and above.
6	Increasing FREE rice allocation to 10 kg per person per month.	Budget speech Para says 101 > I propose free ration of 10 kg per person to all AAY beneficiaries only starting April 1, 2025
7	Enhance the marriage assistance from 50000 to 75000 to EWS	Budget speech Para 113 says > I propose an enhancement of financial assistance under the Marriage Assistance Scheme from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000 for AAY category girls.
8	The Job Application will be made free for all the examinations.	No direct confirmation yet
9	Within first 3 months of forming Government we shall pass a Jammu and Kashmir Youth Employment Generation Act.	No act passed yet
10	We shall provide Rs. 5000 per month to female heads of households of EWS (page 29)	No reference made yet
11	Will implement a one-time settlement for pending electricity bill arrears in both rural and urban areas.	No direct confirmation yet
12	Provide 12 cylinders free of cost per year to EWS	No reference made yet
13	The general public will also be entitled to 10 kg rice/Atta per person per month.	No confirmation yet
14	Free education for all upto University level	No any action yet
15	We shall make all efforts for all engineering and medical examinations to be conducted locally including NEET and other exams.	No any reference yet
16	Casual labours. Daily wagers. Contractual Employees	No any immediate redressal yet . But on 11-03-2025 J&K CM during his reply following general discussion on budget for the 2025-26 in the legislative assembly did say that as per old estimates there are about 61000 such employees/ workers and his government will be constituting a committee/ panel head by Chief Secretary possibly same day which will be given six months to prepare a framework after getting their numbers via the general administration department and then exploring a roadmap for their regularisation, so that before the next budget his government can tell the House that this is what they are doing for them.
17	Land Laws and Right to Employment: We will protect land laws and employment rights exclusively for the residents of Jammu and Kashmir and review all decisions made without the approval of the people.	No reference yet
18	We will address all farmer-related issues, including waiving Kisan Credit Card loans to support the agricultural community.	No reference yet
19	We also promise to increase the medical allowance of pensioners and family pensioners from existing Rs 300 to Rs 1000 per month	No reference yet
20	We will resolve land lease policy and ensure all genuine leases are renewed	No referenc yet

on what he consumes / uses) and it is often quoted in private that on check one would surely get some BPL card holder in the Qs before the wine shops? .

Times demand that the political parties be debarred from making any promises during election campaign

of direct or indirect cash/ material benefit to individual voters / group of voters / segments of society only if voted to power . Not only that all those holding power in center and in a state where election is to be held in near future should be prohibited from making announcement for any

new projects or direct economic benefit for individuals 3 months before the date the term of the Assembly / Lok Sabha is going to end even if ECI has not till then announced the election schedule.

(The writer is a Sr Journalist & a known analyst of J&K affairs)