

Villagers protest against land encroachment in Charathni, demand immediate action

STATE TIMES NEWS
SUNDERBANI: Residents of Charathni, Upper Bhajwal, have staged a protest against alleged land encroachment and the blocking of an old village pathway by land grabbers. The protest was led by local leaders, including Chaman Lal Sharma, Sushma Devi, Jeet Raj, Kewal Krishan Sharma, and Madan Lal Sharma.

The protestors claim that on March 8, 2025, a group of individuals arrived in Charathni (Ward No. 06, Panchayat Upper Bhajwal-A, Tehsil Sunderbani) and



Villagers staging protest at Charathni.

began leveling approximately two kanals of state-owned land. In addition, they blocked a vital pathway (B-

path) that has been traditionally used by villagers and their livestock to access drinking water.

The villagers expressed their deep concern over the increasing issue of illegal land encroachments in the Sunderbani region. They allege that the land mafia operates freely in the area, while the administration has turned a blind eye to these illegal activities. The blockage of the pathway, they say, has created severe hardships for the community, particularly for those who rely on the path to water their animals.

Frustrated by the lack of action, the protesters have called for an immediate investigation and legal action against the encroachers. They have warned that if the authorities fail to intervene, they will intensify their protest by taking their livestock to the main gates of the tehsil and the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) office to demand justice.

The villagers remain determined to secure their rights and ensure that such encroachments are prevented in the future.

Historic Mughal Road maintained by BRO, efforts underway for reopening: OC GREF

STATE TIMES NEWS
POONCH: The OC GREF, Ashish Ranjan has said the historic Mughal road spanning 43.600 km of double-lane connectivity between Poonch and Shopian districts, was officially handed over to Border Roads Organisation (BRO) 79 RCC on 31st December 2024.

Addressing the press conference regarding the historic Mughal Road, OC said the road remained operational for vehicular traffic until 18th January 2025, after which it was closed by the District

Administration due to heavy snow accumulation and icing, ensuring public safety in the challenging terrain.

During the operational period, the road was accessible up to Posana village, approximately 16 km from Pir Ki Gali Top towards Buzli, where an RR Unit is stationed. The Roads Organisation (BRO), in coordination with local authorities, ensured smooth movement despite the harsh winter conditions.

As per the directions of higher authorities within

the BRO, efforts are underway to reopen the strategically vital Mughal Road by 10th April 2025, subject to weather and road condition assessments.

The BRO remains committed to maintaining and restoring connectivity for civilians and security forces in the region.

The seasonal closure is a necessary precaution to prevent accidents due to snow slide and icy conditions.

Authorities urge travellers to adhere to advisories and plan their journeys accordingly.

MLA Kalakote visits various villages in sunderbani to listen to public grievances



STATE TIMES NEWS
SUNDERBANI: Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Kalakote, Thakur Randir Singh, visited several areas in Sunderbani to listen to the grievances of the local residents. The MLA commenced his visit with a visit to the Old Shiv Temple in Gandeh, where he offered prayers and paid homage.

Following his visit to the temple, Thakur Randir Singh traveled to various villages in the Bhajwal area. During his

tour, he met with numerous deputations, including individual residents, who brought up a range of issues. The main concerns raised included problems related to the Public Health Engineering (PHE) department, Power Development Department (PDD), water scarcity, revenue matters, road conditions, and other development-related issues. Some personal grievances were also presented.

The MLA took the time to patiently listen to all the deputations and assured the public that he would work closely with the concerned authorities to resolve their issues in a timely manner.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Randir Singh emphasized that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is committed to addressing the daily problems faced by the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He further added that the party is working tirelessly to bridge the gap between the administration and the people, ensuring that their concerns are heard and acted upon.

The MLA concluded by stating that only the BJP has the vision and capacity to fulfill the dreams and aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and it will continue to prioritize their issues.

KVK Reasi concludes five-day training programme on natural farming for Krishi Sakhis

STATE TIMES NEWS
REASI: Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Reasi, under Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology Jammu (SKUAST-J), successfully concluded a five-day training programme on natural farming for Krishi Sakhis under the National Mission on Natural Farming. The event, held at KVK Reasi, witnessed enthusiastic participation from numerous Krishi Sakhis of the district.

Organized under the dynamic leadership of Vice Chancellor Prof. B.N. Tripathi and the guidance of Director Extension Prof. Amrith Vaid, the programme aimed to educate and train farmers on adopting natural farming practices.



KVK officials along with participants.

Dr. Banarsi Lal, Chief Scientist & Head of KVK Reasi, inaugurated the session by emphasizing the importance of natural farming in today's era. He discussed the need to transition from conventional to natural farming to safeguard biodiversity and the environment. Highlighting the benefits, Dr. Lal elaborated on how natural farming reduces

farmers' dependence on external inputs, minimizes cultivation costs, and enhances income. He guided the participants on the preparation and use of various natural formulations like Jeevamrit, Beejamrit, Ghanjeevanrit, Agniasthra, Neemastra, Brahmastra, and Panchgavya, explaining their role in maintaining soil health, biodiversity, and pro-

ducing safe food.

Dr. Arvinder Kumar emphasized the potential of natural farming in Reasi, highlighting its ability to produce safe and healthy food while improving farmers' income. He delved into organic seed production and effective farm management practices.

Dr. Rakesh Sharma, Agriculture Extension Officer, Reasi, stressed the importance of natural farming in ensuring quality food for a healthy society. He spoke on utilizing indigenous seeds and bioinoculants as catalysts for sustainable farming practices.

Sunil Kumar, Agriculture Extension Officer, Reasi, informed the farmers about various ongoing agricultural schemes and programs in the district, encouraging

them to take full advantage of these opportunities. Sarpanch Sukhdev Singh appreciated KVK Reasi's efforts in promoting natural farming in the area.

The Krishi Sakhis actively engaged in the sessions and expressed interest in adopting the techniques discussed by the experts. Certificates of participation were awarded to all attendees, recognizing their commitment to learning and implementing natural farming practices.

The program concluded with a formal vote of thanks by Manohar Lal, assisted by Mohd. Iqbal. The event marked a significant step toward the widespread adoption of natural farming practices in the Reasi district, promising a sustainable future for farmers and the environment.

SMVDU students, faculty visited small scale industries at Bhandarwah



SMVDU students during visit to small scale industries at Bhandarwah.

STATE TIMES NEWS
KATRA: A group of B.Sc., B.Tech, and PhD students with faculty members from the School of Biotechnology (SoBT), Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU), recently embarked on an educational visit to Bhandarwah. The tour was aimed at providing students with practical exposure to small-scale industrial setups involved in essential oil production and cleaning product manufacturing.

During their visit, the students and faculty had the opportunity to explore the Himalayan Essential Oils Producer Company Ltd., a renowned enterprise in the region known for its high-quality essential oils, particularly lavender oil. The visit

was facilitated by Bharat Bhushan, the owner of the Himalayan Essential Oils Producer Company Ltd., who briefed the students about the extraction process, quality control measures, and the growing importance of the essential oil industry in Bhandarwah.

Bhushan has been instrumental in promoting aromatic plant cultivation and essential oil production, significantly contributing to the economic development of the region.

In addition, the students also visited Centwin, a unit of JKRLM Umeed Bhandarwah, which specializes in the manufacturing of various cleaning products, including laundry soap and handmade soap. They were given insights

into the production process and the entrepreneurial initiatives supported under the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM) scheme. The visit was coordinated by Pancham Singh and Praveen, both serving as Cluster Coordinators under JKRLM Umeed Bhandarwah. A highlight of the visit was the exploration of the expansive lavender fields, where students learned about the cultivation, harvesting, and processing of lavender, a key component in essential oil production.

The faculty members provided valuable academic perspectives on the biotechnological aspects of essential oil extraction and its applications in various industries.

This educational tour provided an enriching experience, bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical industry exposure. The students expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to witness real-world applications of biotechnology, and the faculty members acknowledged the support extended by the industrial partners in making the visit successful. The trip was a well-coordinated effort, showcasing the synergy between academia and industry, and paving the way for future collaborations in research and development.

The visit was organized under the guidance of the Head and faculty of the School of Biotechnology, Dr.

One week MSME skill training programme conducted by SKUAST-K in collaboration with KVK Samba

STATE TIMES NEWS
SAMBHA: SKUAST Kashmir in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Samba has conducted one week MSME skill training programme "Livelihood and entrepreneurial opportunities through Beekeeping" Under the entrepreneurship and skill development program of the Union Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), SKUAST-K at village Katera in District Samba.

This programme was conducted with the overall supervision of Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-K, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai, and Nodal Officer (MSME)/Director Research SKUAST-K, Prof. Haroon Rashid Naik. The programme was attended by twenty five participants.

Dr. Sushil Kumar, Professor (Entomology) at DPMO, SKUAST-K, and Course Coordinator of the training program, enlightened participants on the potential of beekeeping as a supplementary source of income.

He guided them on how to establish their own beekeeping enterprises, empowering them to become entrepreneurs and enhance their livelihoods.

Dr. Saurav Gupta, Associate Professor (Entomology), and Dr. Shalini also delivered insightful lectures during the training programme highlighting how beekeeping can provide livelihood and entrepreneurial opportunities to the rural masses.

SKUAST-K has been entrusted with skill development of youth and promotion of entre-



The programme was inaugurated by Chief Scientist and Head of KVK Samba, Prof. Sanjay Khajuria. He highlighted the significance of beekeeping as a livelihood and entrepreneurial opportunity in Jammu and Kashmir and emphasized the importance of beekeeping in generating income and employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas.

preneurial ecosystem in J&K and Ladakh UTs by the Union Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, New Delhi under the stewardship of Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai Vice Chancellor SKUAST Kashmir. Pritam Chand, Ex-sarpanch of Panchayat Halqa Samlah thanked both the universities for organizing the programme.

CTTIK pushes for Jammu as premier travel destination

STATE TIMES NEWS
KATRA: The Chamber of Tourism Trade and Industry Katra (CTTIK), represented by its President Raj Kumar Padma and Secretary Atul Sharma, presented a comprehensive representation to Mugda Sinha, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in the presence of Yasha Mudgal, Secretary Tourism J&K, and Vikas Gupta, Director Tourism Jammu, on the sidelines of a brainstorming session and workshop for the promotion

of tourism held at IIM Jammu.

The representation highlighted the pressing challenges faced in promoting Jammu as a top-tier tourism destination and proposed strategic solutions to overcome these hurdles.

One of the major challenges discussed was the acute shortage of skilled tourism professionals, which affects tourism planning, marketing effectiveness, and visitor experience management.

The lack of trained personnel in destination management, tourism marketing, and hospitality services has resulted in weak policy formulation and an unstructured approach to tourism development. Additionally, the delegation pointed out that key government roles related to tourism are often managed by general administrators instead of tourism specialists, leading to ineffective tourism planning and implementation. Poor coordination among government



CTTIK delegation calling on Mugda Sinha, Director General, Ministry of Tourism.

bodies, tourism stakeholders, and private investors further exacerbates the issue, preventing long-term investment and sustainable growth in the sector.

Another significant concern raised was the ineffective promotion and branding of Jammu as a tourist destination. The absence of professionals in digital marketing, event planning, and international tourism outreach has led to inconsistent branding and low visibility on the global tourism map. The region also faces a shortage of certified tour

guides, adventure tourism experts, and heritage interpreters, which negatively impacts the visitor experience. Additionally, the hospitality sector is struggling due to a lack of well-trained professionals to ensure high standards of customer service. The representation also addressed the lack of stakeholder and community engagement in tourism-related activities. Local communities are not fully integrated into the tourism economy due to insufficient training programs for homestay owners, transport oper-

ators, and tour guides. Furthermore, regulatory challenges such as complex licensing procedures and the absence of a single-window clearance system make it difficult for new tourism ventures to establish and grow.

To address these issues, president Raj Kumar Padma proposed several strategic measures, including the recruitment of tourism professionals in key government roles and the establishment of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to bring in corporate expertise and industry best practices. Strengthening training and capacity-building initiatives was emphasized, with a recommendation to set up tourism skill development centers in Jammu, Katra, and Patnitop, along with certification courses for adventure tourism, eco-tourism, and cultural tourism guides. The representation also stressed the importance of collaboration with universities and tourism institutes to create a skilled workforce,

suggesting the introduction of practical training programs, internships, and fellowships for students pursuing tourism-related degrees.

Additionally, the development of a professional tourist guide network was proposed, with the establishment of certified training programs for multilingual and thematic tour guides. Special provisions should be made for ex-servicemen and local youth to be trained as professional guides, particularly in adventure tourism, with a focus on mountaineering, trekking, and river rafting. Another key suggestion was enhancing Jammu's global visibility through improved digital and international marketing strategies. Hiring professionals skilled in social media marketing, travel branding, and content creation was recommended, along with the formation of a dedicated tourism marketing team responsible for international promotions, influencer collaborations, and participa-

tion in travel expos. Virtual tourism campaigns were also suggested as an innovative way to showcase Jammu's diverse attractions to a global audience.

The representation further emphasized the need to encourage tourism entrepreneurship by providing financial incentives, subsidies, and loans to young professionals interested in launching tourism ventures. Startups focusing on adventure tourism, rural tourism, and eco-tourism should be actively supported, while grants should be introduced to help locals develop homestays and community-based tourism projects. Additionally, simplifying regulatory procedures by introducing a single-window clearance system for tourism projects was recommended to facilitate ease of doing business in the sector. Regular stakeholder meetings involving industry leaders, hoteliers, and tour operators were also proposed to ensure that tourism policies

align with industry needs and emerging market trends.

Mugda Sinha positively assured CTTIK that she would thoroughly examine the representation containing all the challenges and suggestions. She also assured that she would adopt a proactive approach in corroborating and addressing the concerns raised, working towards viable solutions to promote Jammu's tourism sector effectively.

In conclusion, the Chamber of Tourism Trade and Industry Katra reiterated its commitment to working closely with government authorities and stakeholders to transform Jammu into a world-class tourist destination. By investing in skilled manpower, strengthening tourism policies, and fostering strategic partnerships, the region has the potential to significantly enhance visitor experiences, boost tourism revenue, and contribute to the economic and cultural prosperity of Jammu.

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