

India's Bioeconomy grew 10 times in 10 years, J&K still underexplored: Dr Jitendra

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Union Minister, Dr. Jitendra Singh said here on Thursday that while India's Bioeconomy grew more than 10 times in last 10 years, the biotech potential of Himalayan territories including Jammu & Kashmir, particularly their agri-biotech potential remains still underexplored.

India's biotech economy, which soared from a \$10 billion valuation in 2014 to over \$130 billion in 2024, is set to reach a massive \$300 billion by 2030, according to Dr. Jitendra Singh's projections.

He highlighted the ongoing Bio-revolution in India, comparing it to the IT revolution in the West and underscoring the importance of India's rich natural and biodiversity resources in fueling this transformation. He underscored the rise in DBT's Budget from 1,485 crores in 2013-14 to 3,447 crores in 2025-26 almost marking 130% increase.

The Minister underscored the transformative potential of Agri-Biotechnology J&K, with a special focus on the success of initiatives like the Aroma Mission and the floriculture revolution. He further highlighted India's remarkable growth in biotechnology, positioning the country as a global leader in the field.

Dr. Jitendra Singh was delivering inaugural address at the PBBCON-2025, 2-day International and



Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh delivering inaugural address at Conference at SKUAST Jammu on Thursday.

National Conference on "Emerging Innovations in Biochemistry and Biotechnology for Holistic Development of Agriculture" conference, in Jammu coinciding with the celebrations of India's scientific achievements.

The Union Minister emphasized how Agri-Biotech initiatives such as the Aroma Mission and the floriculture revolution have been instrumental in boosting J&K's agricultural economy. These programs have helped local farmers cultivate aromatic plants and flowers, creating a thriving industry for essential oils and floriculture products.

Dr. Jitendra also shared some key highlights from India's biotech sector in 2024, including the development of the world's first HPV vaccine, a break-

through indigenous antibiotic 'Nafthromycin', and the pioneering gene therapy experiment for Hemophilia.

He attributed these achievements to the Mission Suraksha initiative, which facilitated the creation of indigenous DNA-based vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic. The world's largest vaccination drive was one of India's proudest moments.

Reflecting on the past decade of India's scientific journey, Dr. Singh noted the rise of India as the third-largest startup ecosystem globally, driven by youth-led innovation. He mentioned that 5352 Indian Scientific Minds now feature in the Top 2% globally, underscoring India's rise as a global hub for talent and innovation.

India's progress in the Global Innovation Index has been remarkable, jumping from 80th in 2014 to 39th in 2024, further solidifying its place among the world's most innovative nations.

In addition to biotechnology, Dr. Singh also touched upon India's growing prominence in nuclear energy. Once met with skepticism, India's nuclear energy program is now recognized globally for its peaceful and sustainable ambitions. India has set an ambitious target of 100 gigawatts of nuclear energy by 2047.

This vision is reshaping global climate strategies, with India's nuclear policy, envisioned by Homi Bhabha, now seen as a model for responsible energy development.

Dr. Jitendra concluded by urging the youth of J&K to prepare for the region's crucial role in India's growth story, emphasizing that J&K, with institutions like SKUAST University, can be at the forefront of driving innovation in Agri-Biotech and other emerging sectors. He encouraged young minds to leverage the opportunities created by India's expanding biotech sector and global scientific leadership.

Earlier Vice Chancellor SKUAST Prof B.N. Tripathi and President National Society of Biochemistry & Biotechnology in Agriculture Dr Sharma also addressed the audience.



IGP Jammu chairs border security meeting, emphasizes enhanced inter-agency coordination



IGP Jammu Zone, Bhim Sen Tuti chairing a meeting.

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A high-level meeting on border security was chaired by the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Jammu Zone, Bhim Sen Tuti, IPS, at the Conference Hall, Zonal Police Headquarters (ZPHQ), Jammu. The meeting was attended by the senior officers from various security and intelligence agencies, including IG CRPF Jammu sector; R Gopala Krishna Rao, IPS; IG BSF Jammu frontier; Shashank Anand, DD IB Jammu, Kartik Kashyap, IPS, DIG JSK Range, DISG BSF Jammu frontier; SSP PCR Jammu, DC Special Bureau, District SSSP JKP of Jammu, Samba and Kathua, SSP Special Operations & Trainings, SP Operations Jammu, and SO to the IG Jammu Zone were also present on the occasion.

The primary objective of the meeting was to assess the prevailing security situation along the border and devise measures to further strengthen the border protection grid. The discussions centred on addressing vulnerabilities in areas adjoining the border, ensuring swift deployment of resources, and reinforcing intelligence inputs. The officers also explored ways to improve interoperability and joint operations, ensuring a cohesive and effective security apparatus. Further, emphasis was placed on refining response mechanisms to emerging threats, streamlining communication, and ensuring rapid mobilization of forces when needed.

The meeting aimed at ironing out operational challenges, resolving inter-agency differences, and fostering bet-

ter coordination among security forces. Additionally, discussions were held on improving the quality and effectiveness of joint operations and intelligence-sharing mechanisms to bolster security measures.

IGP Jammu highlighted the critical role of close cooperation between security agencies in safeguarding the region from cross-border threats and maintaining peace and stability. He urged all officers to adopt a proactive approach and ensure a foolproof security setup to counter any potential challenges.

The meeting concluded with a unanimous resolution to further strengthen coordination, intelligence sharing, and operational preparedness to bolster border security in the Jammu region.

Govt to develop Bungus as an off-beat tourist destination: CM

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said that the government is planning to develop Bungus as an off-beat destination and that funds for providing some basic facilities for tourists have been allocated but the utilization of funds is linked to the forest clearance being granted, which is important for planned development of the area.

The Chief Minister was responding to a question by Member Sheikh Khurshid regarding the funds utilized for the development of Bungus Valley over the last two years.

As the in-charge Minister of the Tourism Department,



he informed the Legislative Assembly that the approved allocation for the current financial year 2024-25 is Rs. 30 lakh, with Rs. 24 lakh already released.

Replying during the Question Hour of the ongoing Budget Session, the Chief Minister stated that

the entire land in Bungus Valley falls under the Forest Department.

Accordingly, the matter has been taken up with the Deputy Commissioner of Kupwara for intervention in identifying land parcels for the proposed works in consultation with the Forest

department.

"Once the land parcels are identified by the Forest Department, the necessary permissions and NOCs shall be sought on the Parivesh Portal for Forest Clearance," he informed. To maintain ecological balance, the Chief Minister said the department has focused on avoiding the construction of massive buildings and hotels. "The aim would be to develop the area as an eco-tourism destination. The department would focus on creating basic recreation facilities, rain shelters, public conveniences, signage, lighting, and waste disposal facilities for visitors," he told the House. Additionally, he stated that

to safeguard the livelihood of local shepherds, nomads, and other inhabitants of Bungus Valley, the J&K Tourism Department has initiated the process of registering Paying Guest Houses in the area. "This will help to preserve and promote local culture, traditions, and cuisine and would be an immersive travel experience for tourists. The house was informed that 19 paying guest houses in the proximity of Bungus Valley are registered with the Department of Tourism, Kashmir."

The Chief Minister also stated that the Bungus Festival would be organized to provide wider publicity to this scenic destination.

President KCCI, delegations meet LG



Delegation of JKPICCA calling on LG Manoj Sinha in Jammu on Thursday.

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Javid Ahmed Tenga, President, Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj

Sinha, on Thursday. Representatives of Management Committee Gurudwara Shri Guru Singh Sabha Bhatta, Nowshera, Rajouri and a delegation of

Jammu Kashmir Fruits & Vegetable Processing and Integrated Cold Chain Association (JKPICCA) also called on the Lieutenant Governor.

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, on Thursday chaired a meeting of Tourism Department attended by the MD J&K Bank and other concerned officers to take appraisal of measures being taken by the Department for identifying the gaps, policy updates and scope for improvements to strengthen the homestays for overall promotion of tourism sector in J&K.

The Chief Secretary impressed upon the department to come-up with a comprehensive policy for development of Homestays across districts of the UT. He called upon them to prepare the document in next one month after having consultations with all the stakeholders.

He underscored the need for developing a new loan product by the financial institutions which would encompass every activity that could be done to promote the homestays in the region. He advised for exploring option for increasing the number of rooms that could be converted into homestay besides the quantum of



Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo chairing a meeting in Jammu.

finance that could be secured for the construction and upgradation of homestays.

Dulloo emphasized that the ambit of this scheme should be widened to accommodate the concerns of the people associated with this tourism practice.

The Chief Secretary also urged the Department to make provision for convergence with other schemes like PMEGP, PM Surya Ghar Yojana or other such schemes in the policy for accrual of multiple benefits to the people at grassroots level.

MD and CEO J&K Bank, Amitava Chatterjee, while speaking in the meeting, agreed that there is still scope

for refining this loan product to make it more inclusive and attractive for the aspiring population. He also observed that an additional attraction of 1% rebate on the loan could be extended to the customers on prompt repayment of the credit amount.

On the occasion, Commissioner Secretary, Tourism, Yasha Mudgal, reaffirmed that the policy is in its final phase of constitution. She gave out that many of the concerns of the stakeholders had been addressed after consulting them at both Jammu and Srinagar.

She further said that collaboration with SIDBI, IITM, and other agencies for capaci-

ty building of the homestay owners would be carried out under the new policy. It also envisages training on social media branding, digital marketing and geo-tagging besides listing on google maps and travel portals like booking.com, airbnb, NIDHI etc.

It was also given out that the policy envisions lessening the compliance burden on the people interested in taking advantage of homestay scheme. The policy would further promote this scheme provisioning registration of secondary properties under a structured Bed and Breakfast model with many other novel benefits for the effective implementation of this homestay policy across the UT. Later, the Chief Secretary reviewed the progress on development of an extensive app for better user interface, wholesome information and extension of all facilities at one-stop.

He asked for making it a single stop solution for availing different benefits and bringing various services related to both tourists and service providers under one umbrella app. He further advised to

make this app more comprehensive and less confusing arranging services related to different stakeholders separately with timely updation of contents reflecting the changes on ground.

Regarding its development through BISAG-N, Yasha Mudgal demonstrated the phases of its development and the progress achieved so far with the help of several slides. She apprised the meeting that this app would be one of the novel ways to promote J&K tourism for it would be more user-friendly and beneficial for both the tourists and tourism players as well.

MD, JKTDC, Fazlul Haseeb, while throwing light on different features of this application made out that the main objectives to be achieved through its launch would be easy content management, accessibility across all platforms, handy information and better user experience.

This web portal in addition to providing the wholesome information on all the tourist destinations and availability of amenities would also inform the users about the upcoming events. It would also ask about the experiences of visitors too about their specific feedback related to different seasons, festivals, cuisines, customs and colourful events here.

The gallery would offer photos, videos and e-brochures giving the tourists panoramic idea about the air and aura of each destination. The app would host a burger tab assisting the tourists to customize their trip as per available time and interests. The app is also going to be a boon in giving insights to tourists based upon their interests in trekking, hiking, angling, wildlife and other adventure and leisure activities. It would host the accurate information about nearby shopping places, medical facilities, transportation and tourist service providers so that tourists do not have to look elsewhere to avail different services.

Union Tourism Minister Shekhawat, LG Sinha to attend Amar Mahal Museum's Golden Jubilee Celebrations

Mela on March 9 set to win hearts by unveiling 'treasure trove' of local folk & food

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Union Tourism Minister, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir Manoj Sinha are scheduled to attend the Golden Jubilee celebrations commemorating 50 years of the Amar Mahal Museum in Jammu.

Established in 1975 by Dr. Karan Singh and inaugurated by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the museum has been a beacon of J&K's rich cultural heritage.

This year's festivities, scheduled from March 7 to 9, 2025, will feature the third edition of the Tawi

Festival and Mela, organized by the Hari Tara Charitable Trust (HITCT) and the erstwhile Dogra Royal Family of Jammu & Kashmir.

Hosted at the historic Amar Mahal Palace, the event promises to offer an immersive experience into the art, culture, and traditions of the region.

Martand Singh, Trustee of HITCT and grandson of Dr. Karan Singh, informed that LG Manoj Singh will mark his presence on the first day of Festival while the Union Minister Union Tourism Minister, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat will inaugurate the Mela on the third day i.e.,

March 9, 2025 at Amar Mahal Jammu.

He highlighted the significance of this year's festival, noting that it coincides with the museum's Golden Jubilee. He expressed pride in Amar Mahal's evolution over the past five decades into a symbol of tourism, art, culture, heritage, history, and the Dogra legacy of Jammu & Kashmir.

He informed that the three-day festival will encompass seminars, workshops, and talks, providing a platform for intellectuals, artists, and entrepreneurs to engage and celebrate the region's cultural wealth. Attendees can anticipate mesmerizing folk music, dance

performances, and satirical local acts that reflect the unique storytelling traditions of Jammu & Kashmir. Live performances by local bands will further energize the atmosphere, showcasing the dynamic spirit of the region's performing arts.

Culinary enthusiasts will have the opportunity to indulge in authentic local delicacies and popular street foods at a bustling food court, offering a taste of the region's rich culinary heritage. Additionally, the Mela will feature stalls selling special Golden Jubilee commemorative items, books, and paintings celebrating the vibrant culture of Jammu &

Kashmir. Organizations like the Dogri Sanstha and J&K's Cultural Academy will also showcase their extensive collections of books, providing deeper insights into the region's literature and arts.

The core team orchestrating the Tawi Festival 3 includes esteemed individuals such as Prof. Lalit Gupta, Sarishti Sawhney (INTACH Jammu), Arvind Kotwal (INTACH Jammu), Suman Gupta, Jyoti Gupta, Abhinay Gupta (HOD Architecture, SMVDU), Rajinder Tikoo, Lalit Magotra, Rakesh Sharma (IMFA), Sumeet Sharma (Cultural Academy), Sohan Dharma Mayavat,

Shimona Bhadwal, and Tapaswi Slathia.

The festival has garnered support from various sponsors, including the J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages, Luthra Group, Pal Kia, Pal Infra, Pal SVAM, and NIIT, underscoring the community's commitment to preserving and promoting the region's cultural legacy.

Martand Singh said that this Golden Jubilee celebration not only marks a significant milestone for the Amar Mahal Museum but also serves as a testament to the enduring spirit and cultural richness of Jammu & Kashmir.