Kavinder Gupta highlights role of Saints in preserving & promoting Vedic traditions

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KANGRA: The Governor Kavinder Gupta visited Ved Ashram at Yol during his two-day tour of Kangra district. On his arrival, the Governor was accorded a warm welcome by the district administration.

During the visit, the Governor met Swami Ram Swaroop Yogacharya and discussed the significance of Vedic teachings in contemporary society. He also performed Havan-Yagya and offered prayers for the peace, prosperity and well-being of the people. He also listened attentively to Swami Ji's discourses on Vedic knowledge and expressed deep appreciation for the spiritual environment of the Ashram.

Governor Kavinder Gupta meeting with Swami Ram Swaroop Yogacharya at Ved Ashram at Yol.

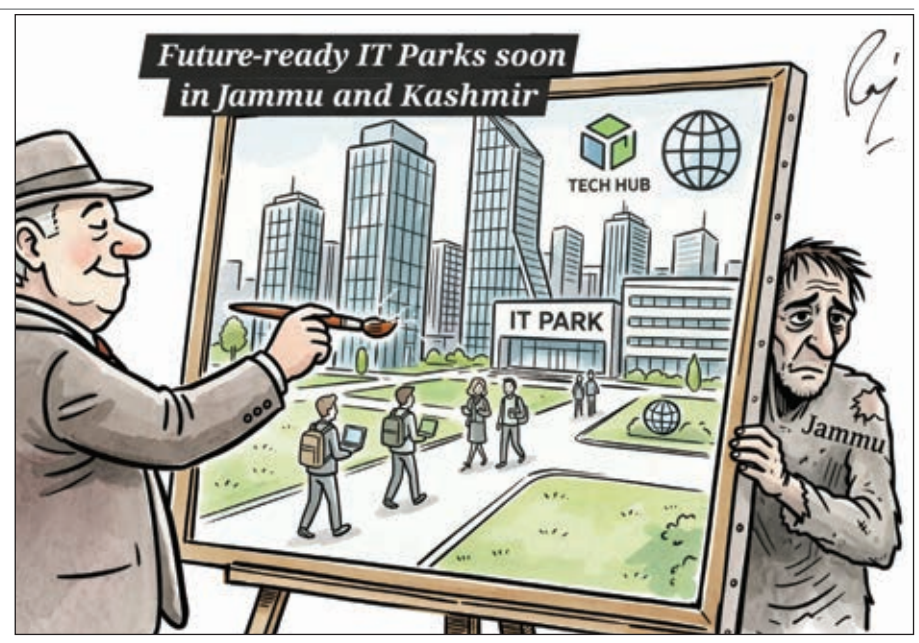
Appreciating his dedicated efforts, Kavinder Gupta said that Swami has been making significant contributions towards the propagation of the Vedas, both within India and abroad.

The Governor observed that saints and spiritual leaders are playing a vital role in preserving and promoting the timeless wisdom of the Vedas in the modern era. He said that while society is rapidly advancing in the modern era, it is equally important to remain rooted in India's ancient spiritual and cultural heritage.

Kavinder Gupta noted that saints serve as guiding lights by spreading the message of Vedic knowledge, moral values and spiritual discipline among the people. He added that their selfless efforts help society understand the enduring relevance of Vedic teachings in leading a balanced, ethical and harmonious life in today's fast-changing world.

The Governor urged the younger generation to stay connected with their roots and not lose sight of the rich cultural and spiritual legacy that India has gifted to the world. He said that embracing Vedic values does not mean turning away from modernity, but rather drawing strength and direction from ancient wisdom to navigate the challenges of contemporary life with clarity and purpose.

On the occasion, Rajiv Jasrotia, MLA Jasrota Constituency and former minister, Arun Manhas Director Industries, Jammu, Ansuya Jamwal ADC Jammu, Anoo Malhotra Director General Rural Sanitation, J and K were also present.



Khatana raises issue of irregularities in PMGSY Roads in J&K in RS

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader and Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) Gulam Ali Khatana on Friday raised serious concerns in the Rajya Sabha (RS) regarding alleged irregularities in the construction of roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in Jammu and Kashmir.

Raising the matter during Zero Hour, Khatana highlighted the deteriorating condition of several rural roads constructed under the flagship scheme and urged the Government of India to conduct a comprehensive audit and quality inspection. He said the PMGSY was launched with the objective of providing all-weather road connectivity to rural habitations across the country, including remote areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

According to information shared in Parliament in February 2026, Jammu and Kashmir has received around Rs 10,155 crore in central assistance under the PMGSY during the past ten years to strengthen rural road connectivity. However, Khatana alleged that despite the significant financial allocation, several roads built under the scheme have developed potholes, cracks and surface damage within a short period after construction.

He said the condition of these roads has raised serious concerns about the quality of construction and monitoring mechanisms. The MP also pointed out that many roads lack proper signboards and grading standards, while timely repair and maintenance often remain confined to official records rather than actual implementation on the ground.

Khatana further alleged that since Omar Abdullah assumed office as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in October 2024, the administration has adopted a "pick-and-choose" approach in executing road infrastructure projects. According to him, development works are allegedly being concentrated in areas considered political strongholds of the ruling party, while tribal regions and remote habitations continue to remain neglected.

He also expressed concern over what he described as a growing nexus between politicians, contractors and engineers, alleging that contractors with questionable track records are repeatedly awarded road construction projects, resulting in poor-quality work, delays and financial losses to the public exchequer.

Khatana urged the Government of India to conduct a comprehensive audit and third-party quality inspection of PMGSY roads in Jammu and Kashmir. He also called for fixing accountability of contractors and implementing agencies responsible for substandard work, ensuring timely repairs and maintenance, and establishing a mechanism to appoint alternate contractors if existing ones fail to complete projects.

He stressed that durable rural road connectivity is vital for economic development, accessibility and livelihood opportunities for people living in remote and mountainous regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

Congress defaming India, Modi Govt driving India's global leadership: Sat

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Jammu & Kashmir held a day-long organizational meeting at the party headquarters in Trikuta Nagar, Jammu, to further strengthen the party structure across the Union Territory.

The meeting was chaired by BJP J&K President and Member of Parliament Sat Sharma and was chiefly addressed by BJP General Secretary (Organization) Ashok Koul and senior BJP leader Shrikant Sharma. The meeting was also addressed by Member of Parliament Jugal Kishore Sharma and former Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Singh, while BJP Vice-President Rakesh Mahajan conducted the proceedings.

The meeting was attended by state office bearers, district prabharis, district presidents, and other senior party leaders.

BJP J&K President Sat Sharma and others at meeting.

Addressing the meeting, Sat Sharma said that the BJP stands firmly committed to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for transparent, accountable, and development-oriented governance across the country. He asserted that India is moving decisively towards becoming a global leader in governance, economy, technology, and diplomacy, while the BJP remains committed to strengthening national pride, democracy, and development. Slamming the Congress party for shaming the nation on national and international platforms, he said that for decades Congress governments failed to address the real needs of the people and instead focused on policies that served their own political interests. He remarked that many schemes introduced during the Congress regime were conceived with corruption at their core and were often named after a single political family to promote dynastic politics rather than public welfare.

Ashok Koul emphasized the importance of strengthening the party organization from the leadership level to the booth level. He directed party leaders to ensure the formation and effective functioning of teams and committees at every organizational tier, particularly at the booth level, which forms the backbone of the party structure. He asked senior leaders to share detailed reports on ongoing party programmes and training workshops and stressed the need for regular meetings and Pravas in their designated areas to maintain continuous engagement with party workers and the public.

Shrikant Sharma stressed the need for continuous strengthening and expansion of the party organization at the grassroots level. He said that BJP's strength lies in its committed cadre and emphasized capacity building of workers through regular trainings, workshops, and ideological programmes so that they remain well-equipped to serve society and the nation. He added that the BJP has consistently worked to strengthen democratic institutions in India and remains committed to upholding the true principles of democracy and the Constitution.

Jugal Kishore Sharma called upon party leaders to intensify their public outreach and ensure that the benefits of Central Government welfare schemes reach every eligible citizen. Dr. Nirmal Singh emphasized that the BJP has always maintained a firm stand against corruption and remains committed to transparent governance and inclusive development.

IIM Jammu concludes Nurturing Future Leadership Program (Batch-17) under MMTTP

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Indian Institute of Management Jammu successfully concluded the Nurturing Future Leadership Program (NFLP) - Batch 17 under the Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP) with a valedictory ceremony held at the Vedanta MDP Centre, Academic Block, Jagti Campus.

The five-day programme, conducted from March 9 to 13, brought together faculty members and academic professionals from various higher education institutions across the country. The initiative aimed to strengthen leadership capabilities, encourage pedagogical innovation, and promote academic excellence among educators. The sessions were designed to equip participants with contemporary management insights, effective leadership strategies, and transformative teaching practices to enhance the overall quality of higher education in India.

The valedictory ceremony was presided over by Prof. Jabir Ali, Dean, Faculty and Research at IIM Jammu, and was attended by programme directors Prof. Prashant Mishra and Dr. Ateeque Shaikh. Addressing the participants, Prof. Jabir Ali remarked that the programme should not be viewed as a conclusion but rather as the beginning of a new journey of collaboration and continued learning. He emphasized that the initiative was not based on a conventional teaching model but was designed through the collective inputs of several faculty members to provide diverse perspectives and meaningful insights. Highlighting the significance of such initiatives, he noted that the programme represented a blend of academic exposure and institutional learning. Referring to institutional development initiatives like Staff Colleges and exposure visits to premier institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management, he stressed that these experiences help educators understand the key elements that shape strong and dynamic academic institutions.

A participant being honoured at IIM Jammu.

Prof. Jabir Ali also spoke about the rapid growth of IIM Jammu, stating that despite being a relatively young institution, it has already secured two prestigious international recognitions-Business Graduates Association (BGA) Accreditation for the institute and EFMD Programme Accreditation for its MBA programme. Achieving these global accreditations within a short span reflects the institute's commitment to quality and excellence. He further shared that the institute is now progressing towards the prestigious AACSB Accreditation, aiming to attain the globally recognized "triple crown" status while continuing to focus on meaningful societal impact.

He also highlighted that the programme incorporated the theme of happiness and well-being, encouraging participants to introduce positive changes within their institutions.

Earlier, Prof. Prashant Mishra presented the programme report and outlined the key outcomes of the five-day training. During the ceremony, participants shared their reflections, describing the programme as a transformative learning experience. They appreciated the diverse sessions conducted by the faculty of IIM Jammu and highlighted the strong sense of camaraderie among the 16-member cohort. Participants noted that case-based discussions, interactive activities, and group engagements helped broaden their perspectives and turned initial apprehensions into positive learning outcomes. They also praised the warm hospitality and professionalism of the institute, stating that the programme exceeded their expectations and inspired them to implement the learnings in their respective institutions. The ceremony concluded with the distribution of certificates to participants in recognition of their successful completion of the programme. The event ended with a vote of thanks delivered by Dr. Ateeque Shaikh.

Managing Committee of J&K Branch of NIRC of ICAI meets Commissioner of IT (Exemptions) at Chandigarh

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The newly elected Managing Committee of the Jammu & Kashmir Branch of NIRC of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India met Jaishree Sharma, Commissioner of Income Tax (Exemptions), at her office in Chandigarh as part of a formal courtesy visit.

The delegation was led by Chairman CA Amit Gupta and included Vice Chairman CA Jatin Malhotra, Treasurer CA Ayush Mahajan, Immediate Past Chairman CA Sourav Pargal, and Executive Member CA Ayush Sawhney. During the interaction, the Committee discussed matters relating to the taxation and regulatory framework governing charitable trusts, institutions, and non-profit organizations.

Managing Committee members of J&K Branch of NIRC of ICAI calling on IT (Exemptions) Commissioner at Chandigarh.

The delegation also shared the initiatives being undertaken by the Branch for professional development, knowledge sharing, and capacity building for members and students. The meeting provided an opportunity for a constructive exchange of views on improving awareness, ensuring smoother compliance, and strengthening coordination between the Income Tax Department and the professional fraternity.

The Managing Committee reaffirmed its commitment to continued engagement with regulatory authorities and to contributing positively towards strengthening the tax ecosystem while upholding the highest standards of the profession.

Javid Dar attends virtual event for release of 22nd instalment of PM-KISAN

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, on Friday attended the virtual event marking release of the 22nd instalment of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) from the Civil Secretariat here.

The installment was released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who transferred Rs 18,640 crore directly into the bank accounts of 9.32 crore farmers across the country through Direct Benefit Transfer with a single click. In connection with the nationwide programme, the Union Territory level function was organised at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Jammu (SKUAST-Jammu), where "PM-KISAN Utsav Diwas" was celebrated at Krishi Vigyan Kendra, R.S. Pura Campus. MLA, Suchetgarh, Gharu Ram Bhagat; SKUAST-J Vice Chancellor, Professor B N Tripathi; Secretary in APD, Nitu Gupta; Director Extension, Dr Amrish Vaid; Director Animal Husbandry Jammu, Dr Sanjay Gupta; Director Horticulture Jammu, Gul Sayed and Director Agriculture Jammu, Anil Gupta besides scientists, officials of the Agriculture Production Department and other stakeholders were present on the occasion.

Javid Dar stated that the PM-KISAN scheme has emerged as a landmark initiative in providing assured financial support to farmers and strengthening the rural economy. He said that the timely release of instalments plays an important role in helping the farmers meet agricultural input costs and undertake allied farming activities.

The Minister reiterated that under the PM-KISAN Samman Nidhi Yojana, eligible farmers receive Rs 6,000 per year, which is provided in three equal installments of Rs 2,000 each, directly credited to their bank accounts through Direct Benefit Transfer.

Meanwhile MLA, Gharu Ram Bhagat lauded the Government of India's continued commitment towards farmers' welfare and appreciated the role of SKUAST-Jammu in bridging the gap between agricultural research and farmers' fields. He encouraged farmers to adopt modern technologies and avail themselves of various government support schemes aimed at enhancing the farm productivity and income.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Punit Choudhary, Chief Scientist and Head, KVK Jammu, who expressed gratitude to the dignitaries, officials, scientists and farmers for their participation.

Jambu Zoo welcomes pair of Hippos

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jambu Zoo welcomes its new residents, a pair of hippopotamuses brought from Aringar Anna Zoological Park, Chennai, Tamil Nadu in exchange of a pair of Himalayan Black Bear, approved by the Central Zoo Authority.

The move of add Hippopotamuses in the family of the Jambu Zoo was the brainchild of Sarvesh Rai, PCCF/Head of Forest Force, J&K (the then Chief Wildlife Warden, J&K Govt.). The hippopotamus often referred as hippo, is a large semi-aquatic mammal native to sub-Saharan Africa. Its name comes from the Ancient Greek word for "river horse".

After elephants and rhinoceroses, the hippopotamus is the next largest land mammal. Despite their physical resemblance to pigs and other terrestrial even-toed ungulates, the closest living relatives of the hippos are cetaceans (whales, dolphins, porpoises, etc.), from which they evolved about 55 million years ago.

The team of the officers deputed for transportation of the animals included Noor ul Amin (I/C Range Officer), Sudesh Kotwal (FPF Guard), Anwar and Mukhtiar (Animal keepers). The Team was assisted by Dr. Ranjit Katoch, Veterinary Assistant Surgeon.

The transportation of the animal from Chennai to Jammu through train was critical as the body temperature of the animal was to be maintained with the help of water sprinklers which were customized for the train journey. The animal arrived at Jambu Zoo on 13th of March 2026 and will be kept under quarantine period of 15 days, before it is open to public display.

Chaturbhuja Behera, Chief Wildlife Warden, J&K Govt. has welcomed the pair of Hippos, which is going to be a great attraction for the people of J&K. He has urged the students, tourists and locals to visit the Jambu Zoo to see Lions, Tigers, Crocodiles, Gharials, Snakes, Bears etc and the new addition i.e. Hippopotamus.

According to the Chief Wildlife Warden, Chaturbhuja Behera many other animal species will be added to the Jambu Zoo in the coming months and efforts are underway to enhance facilities for the visitors.

Railways extend new Delhi-Katra Special Train for Chaitra Navratri

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Taking into account the surge in passenger traffic and the convenience of devotees, the Jammu Division of Northern Railway has decided to extend the operational period of the special reserved train No. 04081/04082 (New Delhi-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra).

The decision has been taken in view of the large number of pilgrims expected to visit the shrine for Darshan of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi during the auspicious occasion of Chaitra Navratri.

The details of the extended train services are as follows: Train No. 04081 running from New Delhi to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra, which was earlier scheduled to operate from February 21 to March 8, 2026, will now run for an extended period from March 17 to March 30, 2026, with a total of 14 trips. Similarly, Train No. 04082 operating from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra to New Delhi, previously scheduled from February 22 to March 9, 2026, has also been extended and will run from March 18 to March 31, 2026, completing 14 trips during the extended period. Speaking on the extension of the service, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Jammu Division, Uchit Singhal said the Railways remains committed to meeting the growing travel needs of passengers. He stated that the decision to extend the operation of the New Delhi-Katra Special train was taken in view of its immense popularity among passengers and the 100 percent occupancy recorded during earlier trips. Passengers have been advised to check the updated train schedule through Railway enquiry number 139 or the National Train Enquiry System (NTES) before commencing their journey.