

LG attends Odisha Day 'Utkala Dibasa' celebration



Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha speaking at the Odisha Day 'Utkala Dibasa' celebrations at Raj Bhawan on Tuesday.

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha attended the Odisha Day 'Utkala Dibasa' celebration, on Tuesday.

Officials, Students, Faculty members from various educational institu-

tions and the people of Odisha living in J&K UT were the special invitees for the commemorative event hosted by Jammu Kashmir Raj Bhawan at Jammu.

While addressing the guests, the Lieutenant

Governor extended his felicitations and best wishes on the occasion of 'Utkala Dibasa'.

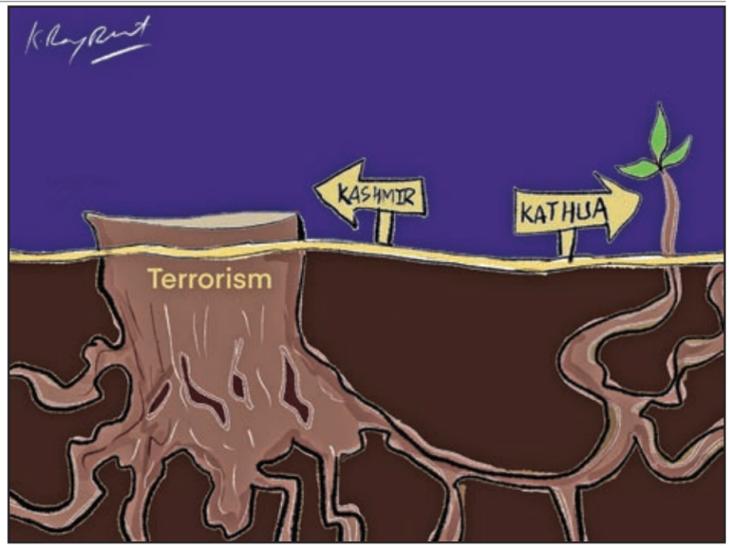
"Odisha's rich cultural heritage, ancient monuments, literature, visual, performing arts and rich tapestry of traditions are

contributing to the vibrant, unique and diverse culture of our country. I pray for good health, well-being and prosperity of the people of this blessed land," the Lieutenant Governor said. He paid tributes to the great luminaries from

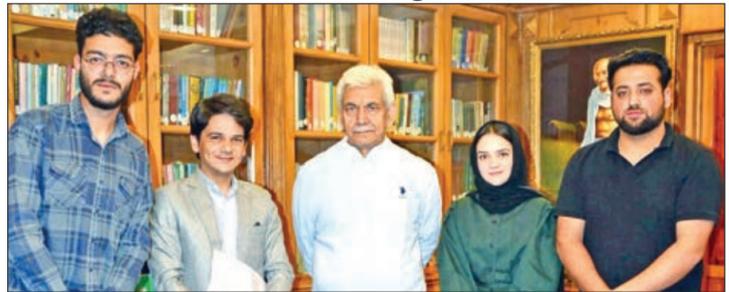
Odisha and spoke on the contributions of various communities of the state to the country's folk, literature, handicrafts, customs and traditions.

"Odisha boasts rich literary tradition, incredibly diverse cuisine, architectural heritage, handloom and handicrafts, sacred festivals like Rath Yatra and it has also contributed three distinct schools of dance to the rich culture of India.

The state is writing a new saga of progress. The people are contributing enthusiastically in this development journey. I am confident that Odisha will play a leading role in the journey towards developed India," the Lieutenant Governor said.



TNSPLBT, SYSFF delegations call on LG



Delegation of Kashmir Road Safety Foundation calling on LG Manoj Sinha.

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A delegation of Teerathraj Nagbal Sidh Lakshmi Peeth Lok Bhawan Trust (TNSPLBT) called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Tuesday.

Srinagar: Wajahat Farooq Bhat, Chairman, Save Youth Save Future Foundation (SYSFF), called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. He was accom-

panied by Mudasir Dar, Zonal President of the foundation.

Bhat apprised the Lieutenant Governor on various important issues pertaining to youth skill development, establishment of Youth Facilitation Centre, expansion of drug de-addiction and vocational training programs.

A delegation of Kashmir Road Safety Foundation also

called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

The members of the delegation led by its Chairman Nasir Ali Khan briefed the Lieutenant Governor about the road safety measures and motorsports initiatives of their foundation including National Road Safety Rally - Mission Save Lives India, Road Safety Magazine and Autocross Championship in Kashmir.

Dr Jitendra hails India-Chile Antarctic agreement, its 'polar' impact

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Union Minister, Dr. Jitendra Singh has hailed India-Chile Antarctic agreement and its positive impact for polar regions, with the signing today of "Letter of Intent" (LoI) between the two countries, which promises transformative impact on Antarctic research and international scientific collaboration.

Signed during the ongoing state visit of Chilean President Gabriel Boric to India, the agreement marks a significant step in strengthening scientific and policy-oriented ties between the two nations in the polar region.

The partnership, to be executed through India's National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) and Chilean Antarctic Institute (INACH), will foster deeper cooperation in Antarctic affairs, scientific research, and environmental conservation. It will also enhance



Dr. Jitendra Singh speaking at a podium during the signing of the India-Chile Antarctic agreement.

collaboration under the Antarctic Treaty System, reinforcing the commitment of both nations to the sustainable management of Antarctic resources and ecosystems.

Dr. Jitendra highlighted that the agreement aligns with India's growing role in global scientific advancements, particularly in climate research and polar exploration.

"This LoI is a testament to India's commitment to advancing our understanding of the Antarctic region. By working closely with Chile, we are expanding our research capabilities and contributing to global efforts in environmental sustainability," he stated.

As part of the agreement, India and Chile will engage in regular bilateral dialogues on Antarctic policy, facilitate joint initiatives under the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), and promote scientific research in climate change, geosciences, microbiology, and innovation. The exchange of researchers and participation in joint expeditions will further advance mutual expertise and exploration capabilities.

The agreement builds on the existing scientific engagements between

the two countries.

With both nations operating scientific bases in different parts of Antarctica-Chile in the Western Antarctic Peninsula and India in Eastern Antarctica-this partnership is expected to lead to enhanced data sharing and joint efforts in addressing climate change challenges. Additionally, cultural and academic exchanges related to Antarctic studies will be promoted to deepen mutual understanding.

Dr. Jitendra reiterated that the LoI reflects India's vision for international scientific cooperation and sustainable research practices. "This agreement strengthens our long-standing ties with Chile and underscores India's leadership in Antarctic research. By pooling resources and expertise, we will make significant strides in understanding the changing dynamics of the polar environment and its global impact," he added.

CS delineates sector-wise reforms to ensure EODB across J&K



Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo chairing a meeting in Jammu on Tuesday.

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today emphasised the significance of reducing compliance burdens and enhancing Ease of Doing Business (EODB) in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Chief Secretary, while reviewing the steps to be taken in this regard, exhorted upon the departments to streamline the processes and services making them readily available. This must be the primary task of all the departments to make the region more attractive to the investors and citizens alike, he added.

ACS, Jal Shakti Department; Principal Secretary, Home; Principal Secretary, PDD; Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD; Commissioner Secretary, I&C; Secretary, RDD; Director I&C, Jammu besides other concerned officers attended the meeting.

On the occasion, the Chief Secretary urged the concerned to ensure digitisation of records, creation of a land bank, formulation of relevant bye laws

for each of the authorities responsible for different purposes in a mission mode. He also asked for creation of Master Plans focusing the systematic development of our urban Centres that is in sync with future needs and sustainable in nature.

Dulloo enquired about the identified areas and the relevant government departments responsible for implementation of the same. He enjoined upon them to take up their task as a time-bound exercise with its implementation regularly monitored at the highest level.

Commissioner Secretary, I&C Department, Vikramjit Singh, informed that a bundle of 23 key priority areas had been identified to drive economic growth, improve regulatory efficiency and promote ease of doing business as per the guidelines. He revealed that these reforms focus on urban development, labor laws, environmental clearances and industrial facilitation. He also provided an in-depth analysis of these priorities and

their implications to be obtained on ground.

Regarding flexible zoning framework, it was given out that the Housing and Urban Development and the Revenue Departments had to implement a flexible zoning system, allowing mixed-use of land for developments to enhance urban planning.

To streamline land use conversions, it was added that a comprehensive digital system will be developed for document submission and approval. It was also revealed that the Public Works and the Rural Development Departments (RDD) will revise minimum road width requirements for rural industries to improve the infrastructure accessibility.

The meeting was further informed that an integrated GIS database will be created for industrial land in the UT, linked with the India Industrial Land Bank (ILB). This will improve the land availability and bring in transparency in its judicious use and allotment for different purposes.

The meeting also discussed amendments to building regulations for reducing land loss in industrial and commercial plots, facilitating better utilization of space.

Other significant priority areas discussed in the meeting included gender-inclusive labour reforms that will remove prohibitions on women working in hazardous industries and permit night-time employment across sectors.

CSIR-IIIM, Pharmanza Herbal enter into collaboration to develop new Phytopharmaceutical, Nutraceutical



Dr. Zabeer Ahmed, from CSIR-IIIM and Dr. Lal Hingorani of M/S Pharmanza Herbal Pvt Ltd signing MoU.

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM), Jammu, led by Director Dr. Zabeer Ahmed and M/S Pharmanza Herbal Pvt Ltd, headed by Director Dr. Lal Hingorani, have entered into a strategic partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaboratively advance the research and development in the areas of phytopharmaceutical and Nutraceutical Products for global positioning.

The MoU was formally signed by Dr. Zabeer Ahmed, from CSIR-IIIM side and Dr. Lal Hingorani for and on behalf of M/S Pharmanza Herbal Pvt Ltd in the presence of Er. Abdul Rahim, Head RMBD & IST Division, Dr. P.P. Singh, Senior Principal Scientist, NPMC division, Dr. Dipti Hingorani, Dr. Ajay Kumar, Principal Scientist,

Pharmacology division and Dr. Asrar Ahmad, Sr. Scientist, RMBD & IS.

Giving the detail of the research and development both the partners were doing, a spokesperson said that the current MoU is aimed to develop phytopharmaceutical drug from *Boswellia serrata* and nutraceutical from *Collard green*, *Brassica oleracea var. viridis* and will launch them in the national and international market.

This initiative aims to combine traditional knowledge with modern scientific techniques to develop innovative health solutions.

Under the agreement, CSIR-IIIM will conduct comprehensive phytochemical analyses such as High-Performance Thin Layer Chromatography (HPTLC), High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC), and Liquid Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS) and in-vitro

and in-vivo anti-inflammatory studies.

Dr. Zabeer Ahmed stated that the partnership between CSIR-IIIM and Pharmanza Herbal Pvt. Ltd. is set to deliver major advantages, such as creating new botanical drugs at affordable prices. He further said that this collaboration showcases the fusion of various expertise while emphasizing a mutual dedication to sustainability and community health, and the partnership represents a significant step forward in their efforts to integrate traditional herbal knowledge with modern scientific research.

Dr. Lal Hingorani, Director of Pharmanza Herbal noted that working with CSIR-IIIM allows them to explore the rich biodiversity of Jammu and Kashmir and to utilise these natural resources for health solutions that can make a difference in people's lives.

In 2012 Centre decided to list long pending Jammu-Poonch Rail Link as National Project entitled for priority with special financial provisions

Jammu-Poonch Rail Link project first approved during the UPA-1 for which Lalu Prasad Yadav also got survey conducted

DAYA SAGAR

The proposed railway line connecting Jammu with Poonch via Akhnoor and Rajouri has been estimated to cost of Rs 22,771 crore, according to information provided by the Minister for Railways in response to Rajay Sabha unstarred question No.3314 on 28 Mar 2025. However, the project faces uncertainty due to low traffic projections, raising concerns over its viability. The minister confirmed that a survey for the 223-km railway line was conducted, but its implementation is subject to multiple factors, including economic viability, last-mile connectivity, and overall funding availability. The government did not specify a timeline for the project's approval or completion. No doubt the projects in general are undertaken based on their economic viability / remunerative status but it cannot be overlooked that the socio-economic needs too are of utmost importance in a democratic / socialist economy and that too considering linking the hilly & border areas like Rajouri & Poonch which have enough of commercial / pilgrim/ adventure tourism poten-

tial that has remained totally neglected by the governments even after 1947. The Jammu-Poonch rail link has been under discussion with the politicians 'sloganing' its potential benefits for local economy, particularly FOR the tourism sector too. Had even half the concern shown by the politicians been taken to grounds after 1947 there would have been enough development in the tourism infrastructure & local economy including even horticulture, cereals like local sweet rice variety and cultivation of pulse like Rajmaash (kidneybean). It is worth noting that the 272-km Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project beyond Jammu has been completed passing through districts of Udhampur, Reasi, Ramban, Anantnag, Pulwama, Budgam, and Baramulla has been completed (On 13 April 2005 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Railway minister Lalu Prasad Yadav along with UPA Chairperson Smt Sonia Gandhi inaugurated the 53 km Jammu -- Udhampur line . Train from Katra to Valley will be flagged off in April 2025 of which Prime Minister PV Narsimharao

Cabinet with CK Jaffer Shreiffas Rail Minister had decided in 1994 to extend rail line from Udhampur to Baramulla via Srinagar).

The rail project from Jammu to Baramulla had faced my hurdles and challenges . Kashmir Valley already had developed tourist infrastructure and many new additions have been made before the train from Jammu to Valley would be flagged off in 2025. So enough time(atleast 10 to 15) years is there for government to develop/ promote other needed infrastructure for exploitation of already existing natural commercial tourism potential in the Twin Districts of Rajouri and Poonch before the rail line (223 km as estimated) will be finally laid which would even remove the financial commercial limitations w.r.t to anticipated passenger load which otherwise also should not come in the way of the feasibility norms.

It is not out of place to mention here that in was as far back as 2012 (22-03-2012) that the then the then Railway



A Look through the Mist

Minister Mukul Roy while replying to the Railway Budget in Lok Sabha had said the Jammu-Poonch rail link that will pass through treacherous hilly areas was first approved during the UPA-1 when Lalu Prasad Yadav was the Minister and a survey was also conducted by him which was a long pending project of a railway line via historic township of Akhnoor which will finally see light of the day with Centre deciding to include it in the list of national projects which are under this category are taken up on priority with special financial provisions.

The then Jammu-Poonch MP, Madan Lal Sharma had that in the earlier year's Budget it had been decided to include the project in the 12th five year plan as it was an important rail link that would I connect strategic areas all along the Line of Control. Shri Madan Lal Sharma had about 13 years earlier in 2012 welcoming the announcement had informed the Lok Sabha that Jammu-Poonch rail line will also help in the economic development of large number of backward and hill areas in the

region and open up new vistas of tourism in the historic Poonch and Rajouri districts. Mr Sharma had in 2012 speaking on the Railway Budget also demanded in 2012 itself that Jammu should be made the Divisional Headquarter of the Railways instead of Ferozepur suggesting that he felt that necessary as with the growing railway network in J&K it will not be feasible to control the area from Ferozepur.

It may shock many to learn that the present Union Railway Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw has in a written reply to unstarred Rajay Sabha question 3314 by 7BJP MP Ghulam Ali has informed on 28 March 2025 the Survey for new line between Jammu and Poonch via Akhoo and Rajouri (223km) was carried out of which the cost was assessed as Rs 22,771 crore with low traffic projections adding that these projects are taken up on the basis of remunerativeness, last mile connectivity, missing links and alternate routes including connectivity to hilly and border areas, augmentation of congested/saturated lines, socio-economic considerations and the likes which further depend upon liabilities of

ongoing projects, overall availability of funds and competing demands which may sound that government may be thinking of putting the project on hold. Government of India need to assure people of these backward and neglected areas of J&K over last more than 7 decades that the said project will not be put on hold and would instead will be taken ahead with special pace keeping in view that it was as far back as 2012 (22-03-2012) that the then Railway Minister Shri Mukul Roy while replying to the Railway Budget in Lok Sabha had said that the Jammu- Poonch rail link that will pass through treacherous hilly areas was first approved during the UPA-1 when Lalu Prasad Yadav was the Minister and a survey was also conducted by him which was a long pending project of a railway line via historic township of Akhnoor will finally see light of the day with Centre deciding to include it in the list of national projects which are under this category are taken up on priority with special financial provisions.

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