

Dr Jitendra reviews indigenously developed Cervical Cancer screening facility

STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Earth Sciences, MoS PMO, Department of Atomic Energy and Department of Space, MoS Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh today convened a joint meeting of NITI Aayog, Department of Biotechnology, AIIMS New Delhi, BIRAC, ICMR and Industry partners here to review the indigenously developed HPV test kits for Cervical Cancer screening in India and described it as another milestone in preventive healthcare achieved by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under the Ministry of Science & Technology.

Dr. Jitendra Singh emphasized that the ultimate goal is to position India as a global leader in preventive healthcare. He said it is now the right time to acknowledge a series of significant milestones accomplished by the team at DBT and BIRAC, including the development of the first-ever DNA vaccine, which brought India international recognition and restored esteem to Indian science in the field of healthcare. "The DNA vaccine has projected India as a country capable of leading in preventive healthcare—a stark contrast to the outdated perception that India neither prioritized preventive, nor even curative healthcare," said Dr. Jitendra Singh. He also referred to



Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh chairing a joint review meeting of NITI Aayog, Department of Biotechnology, AIIMS New Delhi, BIRAC, ICMR and Industry partners at New Delhi on Wednesday.

Nafthromycin, India's first indigenous antibiotic, which has received encouraging feedback. Dr. Jitendra Singh reiterated that the involvement of the private sector is integral to these success stories, highlighting a "whole-of-science and whole-of-government approach." Another breakthrough cited was the successful gene therapy trial in hemophilia, which earned a spot in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM). Notably, both the British Medical Journal and NEJM, among the world's oldest medical journals, have acknowledged India's pioneering healthcare research. Dr. Jitendra Singh outlined four pillars of focus namely 1. Preventive Healthcare - As the future of healthcare lies in prevention, this will be the government's primary focus moving forward. 2. Youth-Centric Preventive Measures - Recognizing the prevalence of cervical cancer among adolescents and young women,

emphasis will be on early-age interventions. 3. Women's Health - Strengthening government initiatives across ministries, including Health and Women & Child Development. 4. Private Sector Involvement - Building an ecosystem where government and private players collaborate domestically and globally. Dr. Jitendra Singh coined the term "PPP plus PPP", referring to Public-Private Partnerships both within and beyond national borders, a model successfully adopted by several European nations, particularly in life sciences and healthcare. Dr. Jitendra Singh drew attention to India ranking fourth globally in cervical cancer-related morbidity, underscoring the urgent need for action. He cautioned, however, that HPV is not the sole cause of cervical cancer; but studies have shown a 90% correlation, supporting the case for targeted prevention. The Minister said that the ultimate objective is to enable affordable, accessible, and ide-

ally mass screening for cervical cancer. He cited his own example from 1996 of providing free insulin treatment for Type 1 diabetes through charitable collaboration with Novo Nordisk, illustrating how private companies can contribute meaningfully.

Dr. Jitendra Singh also remarked that discussions around vaccines have surged post-COVID, but emphasized the need for holistic prevention, including social, cultural, and hygienic habits—the traditional pillars of public health education. The GCI-BIRAC-DBT program titled "Validating Indigenous Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Tests for Cervical Cancer Screening in India" successfully validated rapid, point-of-care, RT-PCR-based HPV diagnostic test kits. These kits were tested at premier R&D laboratories across the country. According to WHO data, 1 in every 5 women globally suffering from cervical cancer is from India. With 25% of global cervical cancer deaths occurring in India—often due to late diagnosis—Dr. Jitendra Singh stressed the critical need for preventive screening strategies. The Minister pointed out that current screening methods, including VIA/VILI, Pap smears, and HPV DNA testing, are costly, resource-intensive, and moderately sensitive. The new indigenous kits are expected to significantly reduce the cost and improve accessibility for widespread use.

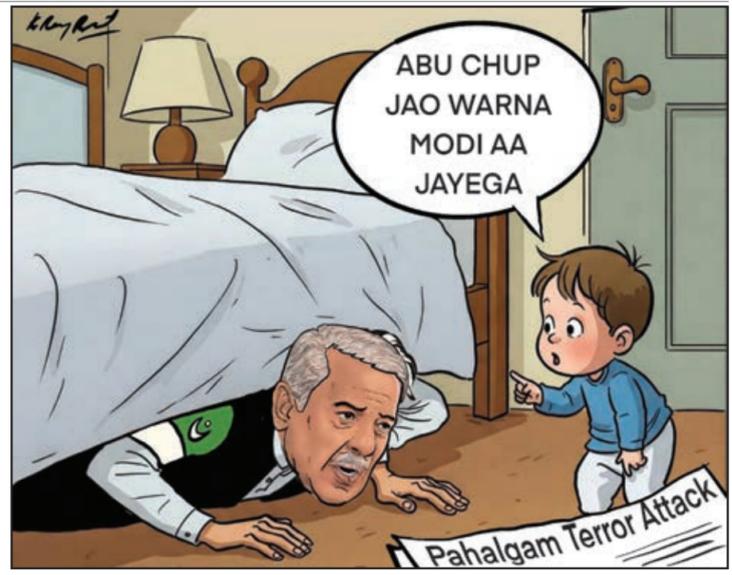
Tying the initiative to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, Dr. Jitendra Singh said India is now addressing multiple challenges simultaneously. With over 70% of India's population below the age of 40, Dr. Singh raised concerns about rising non-communicable diseases, including early-onset Type 2 diabetes, once considered a disease of the middle-aged. "It becomes a national responsibility to safeguard our youth and offer them timely prevention if we truly aim to harness their energy for building the India of 2047," Dr. Jitendra Singh asserted.

The Minister concluded by urging continued cross-sector collaboration to ensure that the benefits of science reach the common public, making healthcare not just accessible, but affordable and proactive.

The review meeting was attended by several key dignitaries and domain experts. Dr. V.K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog; Dr. Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology (DBT); Jitendra Kumar, Managing Director, BIRAC; and Padma Shri Dr. Neerja Bhatla, a renowned expert in gynecologic oncology, were present and contributed valuable insights to the review proceedings.

Prior to the commencement of the scientific review, a two-minute silence was observed to pay solemn tribute to the lives lost in yesterday's terror attack in Pahalgam. The gathering expressed deep condolences and solidarity with the families of the victims.



CM announces ex-gratia relief for victims of Pahalgam terror attack

STATE TIMES NEWS
SRINAGAR: As a gesture of solidarity and to provide some succour to the grieving families and those injured in the Pahalgam terror attack, the Chief Minister on Wednesday announced an ex-gratia relief package for victims of Pahalgam terror attack. The Jammu and Kashmir Government will provide Rs 10 lakh each to the families of those who lost their lives in the attack. Further, Rs 2 lakh will be given to those who sustained serious injuries, and Rs 1 lakh to those with minor injuries. The Chief Minister also

expressed profound shock and anguish over the heinous terrorist attack that took place in Pahalgam yesterday, terming it a barbaric and senseless act of brutality against innocent civilians.

In a strong condemnation, the Chief Minister said, "This despicable act of terror has no place in our society. We mourn the precious lives lost and extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved families. Our hearts go out to them in this dark hour."

The Chief Minister assured that all necessary arrangements have been

made for the dignified transportation of the mortal remains to the victims' native places. Additionally, the injured are being provided with the best possible medical treatment.

"Our hearts go out to the bereaved families. We share your grief and stand by you in this dark hour," he said.

Reiterating the Government's firm resolve to combat terrorism, the Chief Minister asserted, "Terror will never break our resolve. We will not rest until those behind this barbarity are brought to justice".

Revenue official in Jammu held for taking Rs 50,000 bribe

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Wednesday arrested a revenue official for accepting a bribe of Rs 50,000 for facilitating the issuance of land documents in Jammu district.

Naveed Ahmed, who was posted as Patwari in the Arnia area, initially demanded Rs 1,00,000 from the complainant for processing the required documents, but later settled on an advance payment of Rs 50,000, with the remainder to be paid during his visit to the site, they said. Refusing to comply with the demand, the complainant promptly reported the matter to the ACB. Upon receiving the complaint, the ACB initiated a discreet verification, which confirmed the illegal demand by Ahmed, they said. Subsequently, an FIR was registered at the ACB Police Station in Jammu, marking the beginning of a formal investigation, they added. In a well-coordinated operation, a team led by an officer set up a trap and successfully caught Ahmed red-handed while accepting the agreed bribe amount of Rs 50,000 from the complainant, they said.

A search operation is underway at Ahmed's residence as part of the ongoing investigation into the case.

J&K Bank holds condolence meet, condemns tourist killings at Pahalgam

Staff observes two-minute silence to pay homage to victims

STATE TIMES NEWS
SRINAGAR: J&K Bank on Wednesday strongly condemned the heinous cowardly terrorist attack on innocent tourists at Baisaran near Pahalgam.

Led by MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee and Executive Director Sudhir Gupta, all General Managers, Deputy General Managers, and staff posted at the Bank's Corporate Headquarters today gathered in the CHQ lawns for the condolence meet. The staff observed a two-minute silence to pay homage to the victims of the tragic inci-



MD & CEO of J&K Bank, Amitava Chatterjee & others officials paying tributes to Pahalgam victims.

dent. The gathering also expressed solidarity with the bereaved families while praying for the speedy recovery of the injured and reaffirmed their collective hope for

peace and harmony, which lie at the heart of beauty and spirit of Jammu and Kashmir.

Expressing the pain and sympathies with the bereaved

families, MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee said, "The brutal killing of 26 innocent civilians is an inhuman and condemnable act that has not only devastated

families but shaken the entire nation." "Let us pray for the eternal peace of the departed souls and strength for the bereaved families. Our thoughts are

also with those injured - we wish them a swift and complete recovery. And as a society, we must continue to pray for a future free of terrorism and violence," he added.

DIPR observes two minute silence in solidarity with Pahalgam victims



Director Information, Nitish Rajora & others officials paying tributes to Pahalgam victims.

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: All the Officers and officials of the Directorate of Information & Public

Relations, led by Director Information, Nitish Rajora, observed a two-minute silence at the DIPR Complex, Jammu,

in the memory of victims of the #Pahalgam terror attack. A solemn tribute to the innocent lives lost.

2-day CBP for electoral field functionaries from Bihar begins

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The Election Commission is organising a 2-day training and capacity building of Booth Level Officers (BLOs) at the India International Institute of Democracy & Election Management (IIDEM), New Delhi.

This is the third such batch of BLOs to be trained from the poll-bound state of Bihar. 229 BLOs, 12 EROs and 2 DEOs from the State are participating in the 2-day training programme. A specialised one-day training programme for the State Police Nodal Officer (SPNO) and Police Officers from Bihar also commenced on Wednesday.



Chief Election Commissioner of India, Gyanesh Kumar speaking at a programme.

The training programme was inaugurated by Chief Election Commissioner of India Gyanesh Kumar in the presence of Election Commissioner Dr. Vivek Joshi at IIDEM, New Delhi

and was followed by an interaction with the participants. The training is planned to familiarise the BLOs with their roles and responsibilities as per statutory framework and equip them to

ensure errorfree electoral rolls. They will also be trained in the IT applications designed to support their roles.

This is the latest in the first phase of the ongoing physical training programmes at IIDEM in which 555 BLOs from poll-bound states of Bihar, West Bengal and Assam and 279 Booth Level Agents (BLA-1s) of 10 recognised national and state political parties from Bihar have already been trained.

These well-trained BLOs will form a corps of Assembly Level Master Trainers (ALMTs) to strengthen the entire network of BLOs nationwide. The training of SPNOs and Police Officers

from Bihar aims to improve coordination between election authorities and the police for enhanced electoral management, especially in the areas of law and order, vulnerability assessment, Paramilitary forces (CAPF) deployment, and model code of conduct (MCC) enforcement.

Till date over 3000 participants from 141 countries including large democracies such as Australia, United Kingdom, USA, Brazil, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Israel, Russia and South Africa have benefited from training programmes from India's globally acclaimed election management practices at IIDEM.

Ladakh safe for tourism; stakeholders demand removal of 'misleading' travel advisories

STATE TIMES NEWS
LEH: Concerned over the cancellations of bookings in the aftermath of a terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir, the tourism stakeholders in the neighbouring Ladakh on Wednesday assured the foreign and domestic tourists of safe travel in the Union Territory (UT).

They also demanded the removal of "misleading" travel advisories.

Terrorists opened fire in Pahalgam on Tuesday afternoon, killing 26 people, mostly tourists, in what is the deadliest attack in the valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019.

Ladakh observed a shutdown against the terror attack. The UT is also holding a candlelight vigil, jointly being organised by all religious groups representing Buddhist, Muslim and Christian communities besides trade and tourism associations here later in the day to express solidarity with the bereaved families.

The "terrorism-free" region of Ladakh was separated from the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state in 2019 following the abrogation of Article 370. The two were made separate UTs.

All Ladakh Hotel and Guest House Association president Rigzin Wangmo Lachic said the latest travel advisories issued by the United States and the United Kingdom in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack categorised Ladakh under J-K, creating confusion and concern among the foreign and domestic tourists planning to visit the region.

"We have written a letter to Ladakh Chief Secretary Pawan Kotwal, requesting him to take up the matter with the Union Ministry of External Affairs to save the region from the negative impact of the travel advisories at the start of the tourism season," Lachic told PTI. The association strongly condemned the "unfortunate terrorist attack" in J-K and said it supported all efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The letter highlighted that the inclusion of Ladakh in such advisories appears to be based on "outdated or misrepresented information" and did not reflect the current reality of the region.

"Ladakh remains peaceful, safe and hospitable for all travellers," she said, expressing concern over the repercussions of the

Pahalgam incident.

"We have already started witnessing multiple cancellations by guests who are mistakenly associating Ladakh with areas of unrest," Lachic said.

"We believe that a formal communication from the UT Administration affirming that Ladakh remains a safe and welcoming destination will go a long way in restoring confidence among both foreign and domestic tourists," she said.

Both Leh and Kargil observed a strike with all shops and business establishments closed against the terror attack with groups of people staging peaceful protests demanding stern action against the culprits. "Such attacks are a threat to humanity and must be condemned by all, regardless of region and religion," Jamiat-ul-Ulama Isna Asharia Kargil president Sheikh Nazir Mehdi Mohammadi said.

He said terrorism, whether in Kashmir or anywhere else, is a menace that primarily targets innocent lives.

"It is the responsibility of all peace-loving people to come together and reject such acts of violence," he said, calling for justice for the victims of the deadly attack.

Terrorism, violent extremism remain gravest threats to humanity: Modi, Saudi crown prince

STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have stressed that terrorism and violent extremism remain among the gravest threats to humanity and there cannot be any justification for any act of terror for any reason whatsoever, according to a joint statement issued on Wednesday.

The two leaders have stressed the need to prevent access to weapons, including missiles and drones, to commit terror acts against other countries.

Modi decided to cut short his two-day visit to Saudi Arabia and departed for New Delhi on Tuesday night following a terror attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam, where 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed. He was originally scheduled to return to India on Wednesday night. "Both sides strongly condemned the gruesome terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir on 22 April, 2025, which claimed the lives of innocent civilians. In this context, the two sides condemned terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, and emphasised that this remains one of the gravest threats to humanity.

They agreed that there cannot be any justification for any act of terror for any reason whatsoever," the statement said.

"They rejected any attempt to link terrorism to any particular race, religion or culture. They welcomed the excellent cooperation between the two sides in counter-terrorism and terror financing," it added.

The two leaders condemned cross-border terrorism and called on all countries to reject the use of terrorism against others, dismantle terror infrastructure where it exists and bring perpetrators of terrorism to justice swiftly. "Both sides stressed the need to prevent access to weapons including missiles and drones to commit terrorist acts against other countries," the statement said. On Tuesday, Modi delayed his scheduled meeting with the Saudi crown prince by at least two hours to assess the situation in Kashmir: The prime minister, who held bilateral talks with the Saudi crown prince, skipped an official dinner before returning home on Tuesday night.

During the talks, the two sides appreciated the deepening of the defence ties as a key pillar of the strategic partnership and welcomed the creation of a Ministerial

Committee on Defence Cooperation under the Strategic Partnership Council.

"They noted with satisfaction the growth of their joint defence cooperation including numerous 'firsts; like the first ever Land Forces exercise SADA TANSEEBQ, two rounds of the Naval Exercises AL MOHED AL HINDI, many high-level visits, and training exchanges, towards ensuring the security and stability of the region," the statement said.

"They welcomed the outcomes of the 6th meeting of the Joint Committee on Defence Cooperation held in Riyadh in September 2024, noting the initiation of staff-level talks between all three services. Both sides also agreed to enhance defence industry collaboration," it added.

Noting the continuing cooperation achieved in security fields, both sides highlighted the importance of this for better security and stability.

"They also emphasised the importance of furthering cooperation between both sides in the areas of cybersecurity, maritime border security, combating transnational crime, narcotics and drug trafficking," the statement said.

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