

Dr Jitendra hails IIT Ropar for promoting Agri StartUps in smaller towns

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Union minister for Science & Technology with multiple other portfolios, Dr Jitendra Singh has hailed the IIT Ropar, which is relatively new compared to other IITs having been established only in 2008, for promoting Agri StartUps in smaller towns and expressed satisfaction at the fact that nearly 50% of India's StartUps are now from Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns.

Addressing the Pragati Founder Forum, hosted by IIT Ropar and supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Dr Jitendra Singh observed that India's StartUp revolution is no longer confined to metro cities.

In a compelling and forward-looking address, Dr. Jitendra Singh debunked the myth that only IT ventures can be StartUps and hailed IIT Ropar for promoting high-potential Agri-StartUps through transformation of traditional sectors. "This shift is a healthy sign of deep-rooted innovation," he said, crediting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for democratizing entrepreneurship across India through the clarion call "StandUp India, StartUp India" from the ramparts of Red Fort

Dr. Jitendra Singh underlined the role of StartUps as "enablers" propelling India from the 'Fragile Five' to a future among the world's top five economies by 2047. Highlighting India's meteoric rise from 81st to 39th in the Global Innovation Index, he pointed to the role of S&T startups, Agri-innovation, and deep tech in contributing to India's economic growth.

The S&T minister also emphasized that 70% of resource allocation under the upcoming Anusandhan



Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh, as chief guest, addressing a StartUp programme organised by IIT Ropar.

NRF (National Research Foundation) will come from non-government sectors, boosting public-private synergy.

Dr. Jitendra Singh showcased the Purple Revolution as a hallmark of grassroots innovation - lavender cultivation that began in hilly towns of Jammu & Kashmir, now flourishing in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, with over 3,000+ startups profiting in this niche.

"30% of these entrepreneurs are not even graduates," the Minister noted, highlighting how government technical and financial support - coupled with market linkages to perfumeries in Mumbai - is transforming rural India into an enterprise hub.

Dr. Jitendra Singh awarded under the Investment category shortlisted after an exhaustive process

These StartUps were namely the Blu Cocoon Digital Pvt. Ltd.; Rezovate Constructions Pvt. Ltd.; Wawe Technologies; Biofield Power Pvt. Ltd.; Karmath Engineering Pvt. Ltd.

Dr. Jitendra Singh also launched the 'SPRINT' - Haryana and Telangana Editions: Regional deep-tech innovation programs to support early-stage startups.

The Minister unveiled the PRAGATI Report: A strategic blueprint for inclusive

innovation and public-private partnership.

AWaDH Progress Report which marks the Milestones under the NM-ICPS initiative at IIT Ropar.

The Minister launched the "Farming on the Edge" Thematic Report: An in-depth study of challenges faced by small and marginal farmers.

And virtually inaugurated Office of Intellectual Property & Technology Commercialisation (OITC): A step forward in IP creation and commercialization for Indian startups.

Touching upon India's recent military-technological advancements, Dr. Jitendra Singh referred to Operation Sindoor, a showcase of India's leadership in tech-enabled warfare, underlining the indigenous development, technology transfer, and joint efforts of private and government sectors - with hubs in Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

"Early industry linkage is the key to StartUp success," Dr. Jitendra Singh advised, calling for awareness among students and parents alike. "Let us introspect - how many of those who joined expensive coaching centers over 25 years made it to the civil services!" he asked.

Dr. Jitendra Singh concluded by saying that "As India accelerates towards its vision for 2047, the message

is clear: Innovation, inclusion and intent are the pillars of India's ascent to global leadership."

Rekha Sharma, MP Rajya Sabha and former NCW Chairperson, who was also present for the programme emphasized the critical need for inclusive innovation and increased participation of women in startups. Prof. Abhay Karnadikar, Secretary, DST, highlighted India's rapid momentum in AI, Cyber-Physical Systems, and emerging technologies, reiterating the strategic role of the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS).



Silent Siege-Unraveling link between hypertension and cardiovascular diseases: Dr Sushil

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JAMMU: While spearheading his campaign towards the prevention of cardiac ailments Head Department of Cardiology GMCH Jammu Dr Sushil Sharma held a day long cardiac Awareness cum health check up camp at Gurudwara Singh Sabha village Chak Salaria block Rangarh, Samba with main focus on enlightening rural masses about the increasing prevalence of hypertension and related cardiovascular ailments.

While interacting with the people Dr Sushil Stated that Hypertension, often termed the "silent killer," is a chronic medical condition that frequently progresses unnoticed until it causes irreversible damage to the body, particularly to the cardiovascular system. Defined as a sustained increase in the force of blood against the walls of arteries, hypertension exerts continuous pressure on blood vessels and the heart. This excessive force gradually damages the endothelium, the delicate inner lining of arteries, triggering a cascade of harmful effects such as inflammation, narrowing of blood vessels, and the buildup of fatty deposits known as atherosclerotic plaques.

Over time, this can severely restrict blood flow to vital



HoD Cardiology GMCH Jammu Dr Sushil Sharma with his team examining patients.

organs, most notably the heart and brain, leading to serious cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) like myocardial infarction (heart attack), stroke, heart failure, and peripheral artery disease. These conditions account for a significant portion of global morbidity and mortality, making hypertension a primary focus in preventive medicine, Dr Sushil said.

He elaborated that The connection between hypertension and cardiovascular diseases is deeply rooted in pathophysiology. As blood pressure rises, the heart must work harder to circulate blood, often resulting in left ventricular hypertrophy, a condition where the heart muscle thickens and becomes less efficient. Simultaneously, chronic high pressure damages the vascular system, causing arterial stiffness and reducing the vessels' ability to dilate appropriately.

The consequences are far-

reaching, as restricted blood flow increases the likelihood of clot formation, which can block arteries entirely, triggering events such as strokes and heart attacks, Dr Sushil said.

He stressed that fortunately, hypertension is both preventable and manageable with early intervention and consistent effort. Lifestyle modifications remain the first line of defense. Adopting a balanced diet, such as the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet, which emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy while reducing salt and red meat intake, has proven effective in lowering blood pressure. Incorporating regular physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, quitting smoking, moderating alcohol consumption, and managing stress are equally important. For those with more severe or persistent hypertension, pharmacologi-

cal treatment becomes necessary. However, the success of any treatment hinges largely on patient adherence and education. Non-compliance with medication, lack of awareness about the seriousness of hypertension, and insufficient healthcare access remain significant barriers. Therefore, a multifaceted approach is crucial-one that includes public health campaigns, community-based screening programs, personalized medical care, and supportive healthcare policies aimed at reducing the global burden of cardiovascular disease. Prevention should not be seen solely as a medical issue but as a societal responsibility, requiring coordinated efforts from healthcare providers, policymakers, educators, and individuals alike.

He added that hypertension represents more than just high numbers on a blood pressure monitor-it is a formidable and silent threat that

undermines cardiovascular health over time. Left unchecked, it opens the door to a spectrum of life-threatening diseases that strain individuals, families, and healthcare systems. Yet, it is not an unbeatable enemy. With awareness, education, timely diagnosis, and a proactive approach to lifestyle and treatment, hypertension can be controlled, and its devastating consequences averted. Protecting our heart starts with understanding and managing our blood pressure because in this silent siege, knowledge and action are our strongest defenses, He said

Prominent members of the area Capt. Amarjeet Singh, Avtar Singh, Yuvraj Singh, Goutam Goswami and Kartik Sharma appreciated the efforts of Dr Sushil and his team for conducting cardiac awareness cum health check up camp in their area and shows their heartfelt gratitude. Others who were part of this camp includes Dr Venkatesh Yellupu and Dr Aditya Sharma. Paramedics and volunteers include Ranjeet Singh, Rajkumar, Gourav Sharma, Vikas Kumar, Rahul Vaid, Makhhan Sharma, Paramveer Singh, Shubham Sharma, Rajinder Singh, Mukesh Sharma, Sanjay Ganpatya and Nirvair Singh Bali.

Terrorism is state policy of Pakistan, they don't trust their army, they trust terror proxies: Dr Darakhshan

Distributes cash assistance to victims

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SRINAGAR: Chairperson of J&K Waqf Board & BJP National Executive Member Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi as a part of the BJP delegation comprising of Genereal Secretary Organization Ashok Koul, MLAs Shakti Parihar, Balwant Singh Mankotia & others visited border villages near the LoC & met the people affected by cross border shelling on civilian areas here creating a lot of destruction.

Waqf Board Chairperson handed over on the spot cash assistance to the families who have suffered due to Pakistani firing on civilian population. After Uri, this was the second day visit of the delegation in border areas in Kupwara.

While speaking to the people the delegation assured of all help from the central government which has already begun.



Chairperson JKWB Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi handing over cash assistance to victims.

Dr Andrabi while speaking to the press during the tour said that the people of J&K are the worst hit by the anti people policies of Pakistan for decades now.

"Terrorism is the state Policy of Pakistan. They don't trust their army, they trust terror groups", said Andrabi.

She said that they planned the killing of our youth for decades as a part of their so called Kashmir policy.

"Pakistan's terrorism

machinery has hurt us a lot, and now our brave army destroyed their centers of evil. Prime Minister Modiji has made it clear that if any terror attack is made again, Pakistan will have to face the consequences. Steps are being taken to protect the people near the borders.", said Darakhshan.

Other BJP leaders Anwar Khan, Mudasir Wani, Sajid Yousuf Shah, MM War & Sahil Bashir Bhat were also part of the delegation.

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SAMBA: J&K Pradesh BJP Vice President and former Minister Surjeet Singh Slathia on Sunday led a spirited Tiranga Rally in Samba, organized to honor the nation's victory in Operation Sindoor, launched to avenge the Pahalgam massacre.

Addressing the enthusiastic rally, Slathia, who is also MLA Samba, lauded the bravery and precision of India's armed forces, saying that Operation Sindoor was a decisive and righteous response to the heinous massacre of innocent civilians in Pahalgam, carried out by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists.

"India has made it clear that the blood of its citizens will not go unavenged. The enemies of peace and humanity have been given a fitting lesson," he declared to thunderous applause.

Slathia emphasized that the rally was not just an event, but a symbol of national resur-



J&K Pradesh BJP Vice President Surjeet Singh Slathia leading Tiranga Rally in Samba.

gence and collective resolve to stand united against the forces of terror.

He underscored the fact that India is no longer a passive observer in the face of terror:

"The time of restraint is over. The time of provocation is over. Pakistan, the epicenter of global terrorism, has served a strong message. Our forces are not just responding-they are eradicating the very roots of terror from our soil," Slathia said.

Speaking on the occasion, MLA Vijaypur Chander

Parkash Ganga said that India's response to terrorism, both diplomatically and militarily, is now being recognized globally as a firm and moral stand against forces that threaten civilised societies worldwide. "Terrorism is a crime against humanity. What happened in Pahalgam was not just an attack on India-it was an attack on the values of peace, tolerance, and coexistence that define the modern world," Ganga added.

MLA Rangarh Davinder Kumar Manyal, while address-

ing the rally highlighted the achievements of security forces, saying that India's bold and decisive action against the cult of terrorism has dismantled terror networks, neutralized top terror commanders, and restored a sense of safety and confidence among the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"India has demonstrated that no act of terror will go unanswered, and the world must take inspiration from the resolute stand taken by our government and our brave forces," he added.

Holding the Tricolour high, participants marched through the streets of Samba in a show of strength, patriotism, and unwavering support for the security forces.

The Tiranga Rally culminated with the chanting of patriotic slogans, ceremonial hoisting of the National Flag, and a collective pledge to support national unity and fight terrorism in all its forms.

The rally witnessed participation from senior BJP leaders, youth activists, ex-servicemen, local residents, Sarpanches, Panches Corporators and civil society members, united in their respect for the nation and admiration for the armed forces.

Prominent among those also present in the Rally included President BJP Samba Asha Rani National Secretary OBC Rashpal Verma DDC Ramesh Chander Suresh Kumar Subhash Bhagat Shilpa Dubey Avtar Singh and Anita Choudhary.

In case toll plaza has to have no cessation period then why not NHAI run the same with government staff?

■ DAYA SAGAR

The GoI/ as well as the state governments already collect taxes / levies like Toll Tax for use of Highways/ Bridges/ Tunnels from the common man in direct or indirect manners. In a democratic / social republic the use of the levies / taxes collected has to be for common cause to be consumed with high money use efficiency and not even with policies like keeping official government vehicles exempted from paying at toll plazas. Why should government departments also pay at Toll Plazas out of their allocated grants which will also reveal the unofficial use of government vehicles. No doubt in very exceptional cases a particular project specific taxes & duties could be additionally levied but that too should not appear over burdening the common man. Such exceptional compulsive levies in some cases could too be for payment of foreign / local loans a government / government owned body may raise to create special unavoidable greater socio-economic interest provisions beyond the capacity of State exchequer. But such levies too are required to be removed or reduced with the passage of time looking at the costs recovered. After cost are recovered only left over liability could be maintenance and that would be only a portion of initial fee as fixed. But it appears from the policies being followed on ground that the right course is not being followed. To quote Ministry of Road Transport and Highways w.e.f 01-04-2019 (0800 Hrs) on Jammu Udhampur Section of NH44 (earlier NH 1A) Toll plaza located near village Ban in Jammu District increased the one way toll on Cars/ Vans/Jeep or LMV from Rs. 85 (in 2015) to Rs.135. Whereas over the period with the better efficiency / "claimed checks on corrupt activities" / increase in the number of vehicles the rates should have been even reduced. But the process goes unchanged in policy.

Going by the present style of working of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways GOI levy of 'fee' for use of highway appears to be becoming a regular / permanent feature with no cessation period (which should also be subject to civic society review) linked with recovery of cost.

Where ever collection of Toll Tax is made through a Service Agency / Contractor the rates and the policies for concession depending upon nature of journey are decided by the Government / NHAI/ Ministry of Road Transport and Highways or may be in some cases by State Government but at occasions often unnecessary disputes arise between the 'service



A Look through the Mist

provider' (Contractor) and Commuters. Government policies must be communicated in clear and simple manner to the users so that the contractors also do not at occasions face undue public wrath.

So in addition tolaying a fair policy & basis for setting a Toll Plaza and 'Fee' to be paid by commuters for using the facility Government / Ministry concerned/ NHAI , as the case maybe, may have to have the review of (A) The National Highways Act, 1956 Act and (B)The National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008 (as amended from time to time) keeping in view also the references like (1).In case all the new highways / bridges/ Tunnels and even the already laid roads when improved are to be thrown open for use of commuters only on payment of fee

not linked with full cost recovery then why manage the Toll Plaza through a Contractor , why not NHAI / State Authority run the same with NHAI or government staff ? (2) is system of Toll Plaza Contractor for government funded Highways / Roads/ Bridges/ Tunnels unavoidable ?(3) should not only privately funded projects be operated by private parties and that too under government supervision ? (4) should not all staff posted at toll plazas presently / future must be only after proper verification (5) should not duty staff appointed by the contractors must bear with zero tolerance the Identity Badges on uniform ? (6) should not the toll plaza fee must be linked with the exit point distance before the other next Plaza (7) the national Highways where there is no alternative conventional road retained for the commuters (from areas around) they must have toll fee rate less than

the Highways constructed on new alignments (8) Government must make public the names of toll plazas where first cost has been nearly recovered but Plaza is still there not and that too not with a reasonably maintenance 'fee' (9) No vehicle should be exempted except Defence forces and Para M forces and movement fee not paid on spot must be taken as recovery of cost while determining the fee . The other government vehicles must pay the fee on spot so that also gets accounted towards revenue recovered while working the fee for private commuters . Ofcourse this will also help in checking misuse of official vehicles.(10) Should not it be enforced with zero tolerance that at nowhere extra fee is collected in case someone returns within 12 Hours to the Toll Plaza concerned.

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