

READY FOR PILGRIMAGE

With the annual Shri Amarnath Yatra set to commence shortly, the Jammu and Kashmir administration, in coordination with multiple security, health, and civil departments, has ramped up preparations to ensure the pilgrimage is conducted smoothly, securely, and efficiently. The sacred yatra to the Himalayan cave shrine of Lord Shiva is scheduled to begin on June 29, with lakhs of devotees expected to undertake the challenging trek through Pahalgam and Baltal routes.

In light of the heightened threat perception, a robust multi-tier security grid has been put in place across the yatra routes. Forces from the Army, CRPF, BSF, ITBP, and J&K Police have been deployed in large numbers. Quick Reaction Teams (QRTs), anti-drone systems, and CCTV surveillance have been activated to monitor movement in real-time. Special focus is being placed on vulnerable stretches, with Road Opening Parties (ROPs) deployed to ensure safety against potential threats.

Director General of Police (DGP) R.R. Swain assured that all security mechanisms are fully in place and coordinated response teams are stationed to act immediately in case of any untoward incident. Drone surveillance and high-tech monitoring equipment have been stationed along sensitive points on both traditional routes.

The Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) and district administrations of Anantnag and Ganderbal have upgraded base camps at Baltal and Nunwan (Pahalgam), ensuring availability of safe lodging, sanitation, drinking water, and power supply. Langars (community kitchens) have been set up with the help of registered volunteers and social organizations, offering free food and refreshments to pilgrims.

The Public Works Department (PWD) has repaired and widened key road sections, while BRO (Border Roads Organization) has ensured snow clearance and route maintenance at higher altitudes.

To regulate the flow and avoid overcrowding, RFID-based tracking has been introduced, allowing real-time monitoring of pilgrim movement. This also aids in emergency response coordination and missing person tracking.

To minimize the environmental impact, the Pollution Control Board and Forest Department have issued strict waste management guidelines. Biodegradable toilets, waste segregation, and eco-friendly packaging have been promoted. NGOs and volunteers are assisting with cleanliness drives along the route.

The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), and rescue teams have been deployed at key points. Weather monitoring systems have been enhanced to issue early warnings for landslides, flash floods, or cloudbursts.

More than 3 lakh pilgrims have registered so far through online and offline modes. Dedicated helplines, mobile apps, and information kiosks have been activated to guide pilgrims and address grievances instantly. The UT administration has repeatedly emphasized "Yatra Seva, Suraksha Pehla" (Pilgrim Service with Safety First) as the core philosophy behind this year's arrangements. With coordinated efforts from the civil administration, security agencies, and volunteers, the 2025 Amarnath Yatra is poised to offer a spiritually enriching and safe experience to the devotees.

■ BAIRAJ CHAWALGAMI

This is one of the most important processions/yatra taken out annually in PuriOdisha which begins on Ashadha Shukla Paksha Dwitiya and ends on Ashadha Shukla Dashmi. Lord Shree JagannathJi Chariot yatra is an annual procession which is mainly taken out in Puri. However JagannathJiRathayatras are taken in various cities of India including Jammu,though biggest procession is taken out in Puri Odessa for which the preparations begin months in advance. The Rathayatra of Puri, also rendered as the Rathayatra is the oldest and largest Hindu Chariot festival celebrated annually on the bright half of the lunar month of Ashada(June-July).The festival is held at the city Puri ,in the state of Odisha, India and is associated with the deity Jagannath-a form of Vishnu or Krishna. Rath Yatra processions have been historically common in Vishnu -related (Jagannath, Rama, Krishna) traditions in Hinduism across India. Western impressions of the Jagannath Rathayatra in Puri as a display of unstoppable force are the origin of the English word Juggernaut. Rath Yatra is derived from two Sanskrit words, Rathayatra, which means chariot or carriage, and Yatra which means journey or pilgrimage. In other Indian languages such as Odia, the phonetic equivalents are used, such as jatra. A stunning example of Kalinga architecture is the famous Jagannath Temple, which was constructed in the 12th century by king Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva. The goddesses Subhadra, Balabhadra ,and Lord Jagannath reside in this hallowed shrine. The festival of Rath Yatra, which draws pilgrims ,devotees and visitors from all over India and world, is closely linked to the history of Jagannath Temple. It is one of the biggest processions and congregation held in Puri Odisa and is famous throughout India and abroad. Preparations for Rath Yatra 2025 is being planned months in advance, with artisans building the enormous chariots for the gods. Every year ,each chariot is constructed from scratch utilizing particular wood

The reality is that international institutions like the UN can only be as effective as its members allow it to be.

-Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Lord Jagannath's Rath Yatra: Celebrating India's Spiritual Oneness



species and customary blueprints. The largest chariot belongs to Lord Jagannath and is named Nandighosa. Taladhwaaj belongs to Balabhadra and Darapadalana to Subhdra. On day one a custom known as Pahandi ,the gods are ceremoniously taken out of the Jagannath Temple on the day of the Rathayatra. Devotees are dancing and chanting in the streets during this colorful and joyful celebration. After that ,the gods are mounted on their appropriate chariots and prepared to travel to Gundicha Temple. On day one of the chariot festival Rstha Yatra, the atmosphere is electrifying with excitement and dedication as thousands of devotees pull the chariots. There is singing, dancing and nonstop hymn chanting during the three-kilometre trek to Gundicha Temple. The yearly pilgrimage of Lord Jagannath and his siblings to their birthplace is represented by this procession. Thereafter begins the nine - day Sojourn .Upon reaching Gundicha Temple ,the deities are welcomed with elaborate rituals. They stay at the Gundicha Temple for nine days, during which various religious ceremonies and cultural events take place. This period is known as the Gundicha Yatra ,where devotees can offer prayers and seek blessings from the deities. The return journey nine day later ,the gods set out on the Bahuda Yatra ,a trek back to back to the

Jagannath Temple. Devotees drag the chariots back to their original abode in this equally magnificent event. For the devotees ,the trip back is a time of great joy and celebration. The Golden attire at the RathYatra ,the Suna Besha ,where the gods are decked out in gold jewelry and decorations is one of the highlights .The day following the gods return to the Jagannath Temple is when this magnificent ceremony takes place. The finale of the Rathayatra celebrations is the stunning sight of the deities dressed in gold ,drawing thousands of devotees. Besides, Puri, Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath are taken out in various cities across the country with great devotion and dedication as well as enthusiasm. The taking out of the Lord Jagannath Rath Yatra at various places unites whole India and it attracts pilgrims from far and wide. The biggest procession of the Carrying the Chariots of Lord Jagannath, Subhdra and Balbhdra is a magnificent and marvellous sight to see and it attracts the devotees and people drag the chariots and thousands take part in the Yatra. Some dance, play music and others chant nonstop hymn in praise of the three deities.

This event is not only a religious and spiritual journey but it depicts our rich ,diverse and vibrant culture and thus we can say that Lord Jagannath Rathayatra

Yatra is the manifestation and reflection of unity in diversity as the people of various faiths and cultures take part in the yatra and this is a spectacle to see and it is fascinating and soothing to eyes. The Jagannath Yatra is taken at various places in the country and it unites the people of various faiths into one and it is a big and marvellous sight to see and watch and the devotees and visitors take great pride to be part of this yatra. Lord Jagannath Yatra has got religious, spiritual and cultural importance and it has economic significance as well. This Yatra transcends the religious barriers as the people of various faiths take part in this event of far reaching significance. Jagannath Yatra has the potential of uniting whole India and it is the best example of unity in diversity for which India is famous throughout the world. We should take part in such Yatras as they help not only in religious and spiritual awakening but also lead to national awakening and national integration .Jagannath Rath Yatra gives the message of love, brotherhood, communal harmony besides being a religious and spiritual sojourn. People of Odisa and other parts of the country eagerly and anxiously wait for this annual Yatra and they consider themselves very blissful and feel proud to be part of this Yatra. The people of India and the world watch Lord Jagannath Yatra in Televisions and radios. Such Yatras also brings the people of world together and it also makes the people of the world aware of the religious, spiritual ,cultural aspects of this annual event. The Rath Yatra festival has become a common sight in most major cities of the world since 1968 through the Hare Krishna movement. Local chapters put on the festival annually in over a hundred cities worldwide and this way the people of the world come closer and also come to know about the culture of India. May Lord Jagannath, goddess Subhdra and Balbhdra remove terrorism from the Jammu & Kashmir and bring peace, prosperity and happiness to India.

A Step towards transparency and good governance

■ VIVEK KOUL

In an era when governance is often scrutinized for lack of transparency and responsiveness, the recent initiative undertaken by the office of the Relief Commissioner (Migrants), Jammu, along with the Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (DMRRR), shines as a beacon of administrative integrity and fairness. The allotment of transit accommodations to PM Package migrant employees, based on a clear and unbiased criterion, marks a watershed moment in the long-standing issue of employee housing among displaced Kashmiri Pandits.

This move comes as a breath of fresh air for thousands of employees who have waited patiently and often helplessly for a just and fair resolution to their housing challenges. For the first time in years, the allotment process was guided not by vague or manipulable parameters, but by a straightforward and merit-based criterion - the first place of posting of the employee. By adopting this approach, the administration has demonstrated that fairness, transparency, and accountability are not mere words in policy manuals but are indeed

possible in action when the will and intent are strong. The recent allotment of transit accommodations to PM Package employees at Z e e w a n (S r i n a g a r) , Lethpora (Pulwama), Ranbirpora (Anantnag), Machbhawan (Anantnag), Mirhama (Kulgam) and Chowgam(Kulgam) by the Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (DMRRR) and the Relief Commissioner (Migrants), Jammu, is a commendable initiative. By adopting the "First Place of Posting" as the sole criterion for allotment, the administration has ensured fairness, transparency, and merit-based allocation. This decision is a bold and welcome step that reflects the spirit of good governance. It addresses long-standing concerns regarding partiality in the allotment process and instills confidence among employees awaiting accommodation. The move not only upholds the principles of justice but also reaffirms the administration's commitment to equitable treatment of all PM Package employees. Such efforts by the administration deserve recognition and appreciation for promoting transparency, fairness, and trust in public institu-

tions.

The decision to use "first place of posting" as the basis for allotment has emerged as a masterstroke in eliminating nepotism, favoritism, and manipulation that were often alleged in previous allotment drives. This objective standard has allowed for clarity in execution, giving rightful preference to those who have served in challenging areas and remained committed to their roles in the valley's rebuilding process. It acknowledges the dedication of employees who braved difficult circumstances at their initial postings and gives them the recognition they deserve. It is particularly laudable that the Relief Commissioner (Migrants), Jammu, and the DMRRR have worked in tandem to ensure this process was not only executed flawlessly but also communicated transparently. No backdoor dealings, no ambiguous priority lists, and no last-minute changes - everything was conducted in the open, leaving little room for doubts or grievances. This clarity has helped restore the faith of migrant employees in the administrative machinery, which had for long been strained by inefficiency and selective implementation.

What sets this initiative apart is its uncompromising commitment to justice. It has given voice to the voiceless and dignity to those who have silently endured displacement and uncertainty. This is not merely a housing allotment - it is an act of administrative empathy that reaffirms the government's commitment to the PM package employees who play a pivotal role in the Valley's governance and social cohesion. Of course, no good deed goes unchallenged. It is unfortunate that certain mischievous elements, unable to digest the fairness of the system, are reportedly attempting to derail the process. By submitting misleading representations and applications to the office of the Relief Commissioner, these individuals are trying to influence the impartial mechanism for their personal gains. Such acts are not just condemnable - they are an affront to the very values of justice and equality that this allotment system seeks to uphold. The government must take a firm stand against these forces. The authorities at the helm must be vigilant and continue to uphold the integrity of the process. There should be no space for manipulation, and any attempts to sub-

vert the system must be strongly dealt with. Ensuring the sanctity of such processes will serve as a deterrent to such disruptive elements in future government initiatives.

It is equally important to recognize and appreciate the officials involved in implementing this process. Their dedication, attention to detail, and unwavering commitment to fairness have been instrumental in the smooth execution of the allotment. From data verification to field assessments and publication of lists, every stage reflected a well-organized and transparent mechanism. This is governance at its best - efficient, people-centric, and just. The DMRRR's leadership deserves special appreciation for not only backing this transparent process but also for laying down a clear administrative roadmap that can be replicated in future schemes involving displaced communities. This collaboration between departments exemplifies what good governance can achieve when departments coordinate effectively with shared values and common purpose.

Moreover, this development sends a broader message to all government employees - merit and fairness are the

new norm, not the exception. It boosts the morale of those who may have otherwise felt marginalized in past processes and serves as a strong reminder that justice, though delayed at times, will eventually be served when the right people are in charge. For displaced families and employees, having a place to live is more than a logistical need - it is a foundation for dignity, stability, and emotional well-being. By ensuring a fair roof over their heads, the Relief Commissioner and DMRRR have not just resolved a practical issue - they have restored hope and trust. In conclusion, this allotment initiative must be seen not just as an administrative success but as a model for future governance. The Relief Commissioner (Migrants), Jammu, and DMRRR have set a high standard of accountability, impartiality, and effectiveness. Their actions are a testament to what responsive governance can achieve when it places people at the heart of policy. As citizens, it is our duty to acknowledge and appreciate such efforts and stand united against those who seek to undermine them. This is a moment worth celebrating - for justice delivered, and for trust restored.

Enhancing Agricultural Extension Services for Rural Development

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Agricultural extension is one of the most significant agencies for rural development. Although the term "Extension" is often connected with the agricultural and rural development, it is a non formal educational role that applies in various institutions and disseminates information and guidance to enhance knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations. Agricultural extension is an efficient and systematic process that helps rural farmers to help themselves by informing them and improving their knowledge, attitude and skills on how to increase their production in terms of applying useful information and technologies in their farming practices. Moreover, extension personnel's work with the farmers to convince them to adopt the technologies through the managed extension programmes. Agricultural extension has played a significant role in achieving increasing crops yields through green revolution. Agricultural extension is known to offer technical guidance, provide information, transfer new technologies, help farmers to determine their problems and unify themselves into the farmers groups. Extension and research are the cardinal pillars of agricultural development of any nation. Agricultural extension as a profession has completed more than five decades of its existence. Substantial contribution has been made by this profession for the development of farmers. In order to get the true potential, the country need to go a long way to meet

the challenges to increase the agricultural and animal production from the available resources, keeping in mind the ecological and environmental sustainability. There is need to tune our technology transfer system in line with the national and international level. Farmer is backed with many sources of extension services. The extension services are provided to the farmers by the government institutes, directorates, research centers, input companies, NGOs, agro-processors, cooperatives etc. The agricultural extension and supported extension services are unique in structure and function. Interestingly, agricultural extension is not restricted to single fixed programme rather it adjusts according to the changing needs of the society. Now the time has come to assess as to how the effectiveness of this profession could be increased to achieve our cherished goal of developing agriculture. To mitigate the challenges in the new millennium, there is an urgent need to redefine the structure and functions of agricultural extension. Also to make agricultural extension more viable and efficient tool of technology transfer, several issues must be addressed so that it can be further meaningful to accommodate with the changing scenario of agricultural research and development in coming years.

In India, above 70 per cent of the farmers are resource poor, comprising marginal and small farmers. They do not fully adopt the technologies recommended by extension workers because of

many reasons. Mostly it is found that these recommendations are not compatible with the farming system of the farmers. Much emphasis is not given to this section of farmers while designing and developing the agricultural technologies. It has been observed that the developed technologies must be tuned with the requirements of the farmers in his farming situations. The existing extension approach is questioned for being mainly push type.The extension workers took the developed technologies to the farmers irrespective of their applicability and suitability of the farming system. There is a need to identify and delineate the specific farming situation or recommendation domain to which the specific intervention could suit. There is a dire need to develop the appropriate, location specific, ecological sustainable and economically viable technologies that could be compatible and suitable for the resource poor farmers inevitable. Several methods such as farming systems research and extension, broad based approach, technology assessment and refinement (TAR) through institution -village linkage programme etc. have been initiated in this direction. The matching of the technology with the farming systems characteristics are operationalised through such methods. Moreover the traditional system of the farmers need to be appreciated, documented and validated in order to bring them under the domain of appropriate technology.

Technology transfer is a process for

creating the awareness among the farmers about the new technologies, then generating interest about the given technology, creating conviction so that they can evaluate it within their own agro climatic conditions and finally adopt it to increase the production. It has been observed that there are five factors which mainly limit the process of technology transfer. These include the limited availability of location specific technology and the low degree of ability to understand risk and uncertainty, lack of strong support systems, weak economic base of the households and farm resources, weak infrastructure and market structure have increased the bottlenecks in technology transfer process. Many models have been developed in India and in abroad for developing effective and functional linkages between researchers and farmers. There is no single extension system which can be described as the best model in all the countries for all the farmers. The extension models need to be drawn, modified and adopted according to the farming system of the farmers. The technology transfer paradigm is mainly of two types namely-i)TOT (transfer of technology),which is simple and indicate the linear relationship between research, extension and farmers. The technologies are transferred through a pipeline.ii) Circular model of TOT (transfer of technology),which helps to bring researchers and farmers much closer through much emphasis on adaptive researches in farmer's field. It helps for

the two-way communication and development of multiple options for innovations. Both the models of TOT suggest evolving a paradigm of TOT which could be most appropriately considered by the extension wing. Any agricultural extension system is related to its ability to build and maintain the linkages of various types. A research-Extension-Farmers linkage acts as a backbone for implementing participatory methodologies at the field level. Emphasis is also required for developing linkages with the systems such as NGOs, farmers' organizations, input agencies and other formal and informal knowledge and information systems. It has been observed by many studies that there exists weak linkage between research, extension and farmers. In order to strengthen linkage between research, extension and farmers, there is a need to institutionalize more number of structural mechanisms and simultaneously there frequency of activities has to be kept regular as well as contingent.

The female population of India constitutes about 48 per cent of the total population. It has been reported that 79.40 per cent of all economically active women are engaged in agriculture as compared to 63.33 per cent of men. Women role in agriculture and livestock farming is very important. The technology related to agriculture and livestock farming must reach to the women farmers. It has been observed that the limited impact of new technologies on rural women is due to the factors viz. their

neglect by the extension workers who are mostly men, lack of authorities to them, lack of their participation in development process and lack of gender-based technology. This is a global issue and needs more attention as women play an important role in agriculture.

For an effective extension system there is a need to have well defined objectives and priorities of extension programmes, effective linkages with the other organizations such as research, financial institutions, marketing systems, input suppliers etc.Also there is a need of adequate financial support and adequate number and well trained and motivated staff. The provision of regular in-service refresher trainings for the extension workers cannot be ruled out. There is a need of privatization of agricultural extension services at national level. Also there is a need to identify area and type of farmers, geographic locations to whom private extension system can suit. In Indian system of farming there is a need to mix up public, private, voluntary and cooperative extension efforts. The existing extension system of our country mostly operates on the basis of selected contact farmers, whereas, the resource poor farmers are neglected in the process of technology development and dissemination process. Thus, redefinition in such approach should be in terms of involvement of representatives of all groups of farmers' classified on the basis of resources.

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