

Grand Jagannath Rath Yatra organized by Jagannath Rath Yatra Sewa Sansthan Trust in Jammu

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The sacred festival of Jagannath Rath Yatra was celebrated with great devotion and enthusiasm across India today, including in Jammu where thousands of devotees participated in the grand Rath Yatra organized by the Jagannath Rath Yatra Sewa Sansthan Trust. The divine procession saw a huge turnout of devotees who came to witness the auspicious sight of Lord Jagannath riding the chariot, a sight believed to grant liberation from the cycle of birth and death and lead to salvation.

According to spiritual beliefs, those who witness



Devotees taking out Jagannath Rath Yatra in Jammu.

Bhagwan Jagannath seated on the chariot attain moksha (liberation) and are blessed with entry to Golok Dham, the divine

abode. The Yatra in Jammu was organized under the leadership of Ratikanta Swain, President of the Trust,

along with the support of his team and the local residents of Jammu.

The Rath Yatra commenced from Shiv Mandir Pul Tawi, proceeding through M.A.M. Stadium Out Gate, Vinayak Bazaar, St. Peter School, Resham Ghar Park, Maheshpura Chowk, Bhagat Singh Chowk, Gurudwara Road, Bakshi Nagar, Shakti Nagar Main Market, Kali Mata Mandir, Kamla Palace Road, Talab Tillo Road, and concluded at Siddheshwar Mandir, Vikas Lane.

The event also highlighted the mythological origin of the Jagannath tradition. As per legend, during the Treta Yuga, King Indradyumna of the Pandava lineage had a divine vision of Bhagwan Neel Madhav.

Driven by longing for another glimpse of the Bhagwan, the king searched extensively. Although he discovered the sacred form, he was

unable to see it again.

The Bhagwan later appeared in a dream and instructed him to construct the idols from a sacred log that would wash ashore. Bhagwan Vishwakarma, the celestial architect, took charge of the idol-making on the condition that no one would disturb him for 21 days.

However, when the king grew anxious and opened the door before completion, the idols were found in their present unique divine form.

Speaking on the occasion, Ratikanta Swain, President of the Trust, warmly welcomed all devotees and shared that it is the Trust's earnest effort to continue organizing the Yatra every year as long as Bhagwan Jagannath wills it.

He emphasized that such spiritual processions not only uplift the soul but also bring communities together in harmony and devotion.

LEAD, IIM-Jammu organize Food Safety Training Program for SHGs



LEAD and IIM Jammu officials at a programme.

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JAMMU: LEAD - LJK Economic Growth And Development Dialogue, in collaboration with IIM Jammu through its DST iTBI (IIMJ-FEISD), recently organized a one-day training workshop under the Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) program at the Spiritual Growth Centre, Katra. The workshop was attended by nearly 50 participants, including members of various Self-Help Groups and local street food vendors.

The objective of the workshop was to promote better hygiene practices, ensure food safety, and build awareness among grassroots entrepreneurs involved in food

preparation and distribution. The session focused on practical aspects of kitchen safety and maintaining cleanliness standards, which are crucial for both public health and improving the quality of local food-based businesses.

K.K. Sharma, Board Member, LEAD (Former Director, Directorate of Agriculture, Jammu) shared insights into the food industry and the challenges posed by adulteration, highlighting the long-term significance of quality in establishing a trusted brand.

He reiterated LEAD's commitment to work closely with SHGs to increase income levels and build sustainable, community-based livelihood

projects.

Pankaj Sharma, Deputy CEO, SMVDSB, appreciated the efforts of LEAD and IIM Jammu for organizing such a meaningful and relevant training program.

He emphasized the importance of such initiatives in enhancing the capacities of local entrepreneurs.

The training was conducted by Vinay K Stephen, a certified expert with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), who brings over 25 years of experience in the field. Ms. Pushpita Rana (Manager - FICSI), Dr. Vivek Sharma (Chief Innovation Officer, IIM Jammu), Rakesh Wazir and Virender Kesar, office bearers of PHDCCI and Katra Hotel Association were also present on the occasion.

LEAD added to its chapter under the guidance of LEAD Convenor, Harinder Gupta.

This workshop marks an important step towards capacity building at the grassroots level towards formation of community enterprises in Katra.

Balvinder urges Parliamentary Panel to address citizens' grievances over delayed appeals

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Noted RTI activist Balvinder Singh has formally appealed to the Anurag-led Parliamentary Panel, scheduled to visit the Union Territory from July 28, urging a critical review of the implementation of the Right to Information Act, 2005 in Jammu & Kashmir.

According to a recent media report, the Panel among other engagements is also expected to assess the functioning of the RTI framework during its visit.

In this context, Singh has drawn attention to the stark contrast between the erstwhile J&K RTI Act, 2009 and the Central RTI Act, 2005, emphasizing that the former was widely acknowledged as more robust and citizen-friendly, particularly due to its clearly defined timelines and stronger enforcement provisions.

Singh emphasized that Section 16(4) of the J&K RTI Act, 2009 mandated a fixed 90-day timeframe for the disposal of second appeals by the State Information Commission. This statutory certainty, he noted, empowered citi-



zens by ensuring predictability and timely access to information.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Central Right to Information Act, citizens within the territorial jurisdiction of the Union Territory have been subjected to inordinate delays in the adjudication of second appeals by the Central Information Commission, New Delhi where the statutory disposal period extends to not less than one year and three months.

Singh articulated serious concerns that such protracted pendency effectively frustrates the legislative intent and object of the RTI framework, which is to guarantee prompt, efficacious, and meaningful access to information in furtherance of the principles of transparency and accountability in govern-

nance. He further pointed out that while the Central Act provides a 45-day timeline for first appeals, it lacks any statutory limit for the disposal of second appeals. This gap, he argued, weakens the accountability mechanism and discourages citizens from pursuing their right to information.

Importantly, Singh cited the observations of several High Courts including those of Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and J&K which have previously underscored the need for a structured and time-bound roadmap for the disposal of second appeals.

In light of these concerns, Mr. Singh has earnestly urged the visiting Panel to take cognizance of this systemic deficiency and consider recommending the reintroduction of fixed timelines for second appeals, akin to the provisions of the J&K RTI Act, 2009. Such a measure, he believes, would help restore public confidence and uphold the foundational spirit of transparency and accountability in governance.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Bajrang Dal's National Convener Neeraj Dooneria, while addressing a press conference in Jammu today, announced that the annual Baba Budha Amarnath Yatra will commence on July 27, 2025, and culminate on August 7, 2025, following the tradition of past years.

He said that there is tremendous enthusiasm among Bajrang Dal activists and the general public along the yatra route, from Lakhampur to Poonch.

The Yatra will begin from the Jammu base camp at Bhagwati Nagar, proceed to Poonch, and after the Darshan of Shudhmahadev, pilgrims will return to the base camp.

Highlighting the importance of the pilgrimage, Dooneria said that in 2005, when Bajrang Dal



Bajrang Dal's National Convener Neeraj Dooneria talking to reporters.

Div Com Jammu to inaugurate Langar Sewa on July 1: Kohli

JAMMU: Baba Amarnath & Buda Amarnath Yatri Nyas on Friday held a meeting under the chairmanship of its President Pawan Kumar Kohli to review the arrangements for coming Shri Amarnath ji yatra starting from 3rd July, 2025.

The first batch of Yatris will be flagged off from Jammu on 2nd July, 2025. Therefore Langar Sewa of Nyas at Shri Geeta Bhawan, Jammu will start functioning from 1st July, 2025 and remains in service till the yatra culminates, Kohli said adding that Ramesh Kumar Divisional Commissioner, Jammu to inaugurate the Langar Sewa. Kohli appealed to the pilgrims from all across the country and abroad to come without any fear to perform this holy Yatra. He said all religious, social and trade organizations are ready to welcome all. It was also decided that Sudershan Khajuria General Secretary and Shakti Dutt Sharma Vice President Nyas will have the round of all the lodgement centres to access the facilities to be provided to the pilgrims and if any short fall found may immediately be brought to the notice of the administration. Among others present in the meeting were Anoop Mittal, Deepak Dhawan Vice Presidents, Treasurer Bal Krishan Sharma, all Secretaries Suresh Sharma, Deepak Sharma, Deepak Kumar, Sat Pal Sharma, Rajesh Bhasin and Rakesh Sharma.

restarted the Baba Budha Amarnath Yatra, the Hindu community in Poonch had nearly vanished due to migration. However, the revival of the Yatra played a vital role in encouraging the community to resettle in their native land.

He further demanded that the Jammu & Kashmir Government should construct perma-

nent base camps between Jammu and Poonch to facilitate the growing number of pilgrims and ensure they do not face any difficulties.

He also emphasized the need to improve the road connectivity between Rajouri and Poonch for the safety and smooth passage of the devotees.

The press conference was also attended by Rajesh Gupta, President of VHP J&K, Sudarshan Khajuria, General Secretary of Baba Amarnath and Budha Amarnath Yatri Nyas, and Kartik Soodan, Provincial Convener of Bajrang Dal.

The Bajrang Dal leadership assured that all arrangements are being made to ensure a smooth, safe, and spiritually enriching pilgrimage for all devotees participating in this sacred journey.

Sukesh challenges unlawful appointment of IRCS Gen Secy, calls for judicial intervention

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Eminent Senior social and health activist Sukesh C. Khajuria, a staunch advocate for transparency and accountability in the health and medical sectors for over four decades, has raised serious objections to the appointment of Rohit Khajuria as General Secretary of the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), Jammu & Kashmir UT Branch.

Labelling the appointment as "ultra vires" and a violation of the IRCS constitution, Khajuria has announced his intention to approach the Chief Justice of India (CJI) to seek redress and ensure compliance with legal and procedural norms.

In a Comprehensive letter/Representation addressed to Droupadi Murmu, President of India and President of the Indian

Red Cross Society on world Health Day April 7, 2025. The official theme for World Health Day "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures" and J.P. Nadda, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare and Chairman of the IRCS on World Red Cross Day May 08, 2025 The Official Theme For World Red Cross Day 2025 is "Keeping Humanity Alive". This Theme Emphasizes the dedication of Red Cross.

Sukesh C. Khajuria highlighted critical concerns regarding the malfunctioning of the IRCS J&K UT Branch. He specifically challenged the appointment of Rohit Khajuria, former Vice Chairman of the Jammu Development Authority (JDA), as General Secretary. The appointment, effective from June 1, 2023, for a term of three years or until



the Managing Committee appoints a General Secretary, was formalized through an order (No. GS-53/IRCS/23/1661-66) issued by the Lieutenant Governor's Secretariat, Raj Bhavan Jammu, on May 23, 2023. Signed by Dr. Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to the Lt. Governor, the copy of order

was circulated to senior officials, including the Chief Secretary, Divisional Commissioners of Jammu and Kashmir, Health Secretary, Deputy Commissioners, and all members of the IRCS J&K Managing Committee.

Khajuria argues that the appointment is procedurally flawed and legally invalid, as it contravenes the Indian Red Cross Society Act, 1920, and the IRCS rules adopted by the J&K UT Branch on May 27, 2022. According to the Act, the authority to appoint the General Secretary lies solely with the State Managing Committee (SMC), not the branch President, regardless of their constitutional position.

"No one is above the law," Khajuria asserted, demanding that the pay and emoluments drawn by Mr. Rohit Khajuria that too with 750%

monthly increase from his immediate Predecessor without the approval of the SMC be recovered from the Lt. Governor's office. He further called for a legally valid appointment to be made by the Managing Committee in accordance with the IRCS constitution and rules. "The Indian Red Cross Society is a vital institution dedicated to humanitarian service, and its operations must adhere to the highest standards of transparency and legality," he stated.

Khajuria's challenge underscores his long-standing commitment to ensuring accountability in public institutions, particularly in the health and medical sectors. His decision to escalate the matter to the CJI reflects his determination to uphold the rule of law and protect the integrity of the IRCS in Jammu & Kashmir.

Dr. Kuldeep Gupta appointed Competition Manager in Youth National Kabaddi Championship

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: General Secretary Jammu & Kashmir Amateur Kabaddi Association and Technical Director Asian Kabaddi Federation Dr. Kuldeep Kumar Gupta appointed Competition Manager in 1st youth National Kabaddi Championship in Boys & Girls Section to be held at Haridwar



as Technical Delegate in 3rd Asian youth Games to be held

in the month of Oct 2025 at Bahrain and also performed as Technical Delegate in 19th Asian Games at Hangzhou China-2023, 16th Asian Games at Guangzhou, China- 2010, 14th Asian Games at Busan, Korea 2002 and number of times as Technical official and Jury member in National Games also.

DDC Chairman, MLA Udhampur West lay foundation stone of Dabrah to Chak-Partada PMGSY road

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

UDHAMPUR: Marking a significant development in the region, Chairman District Development Council (DDC) Udhampur Lal Chand and Member Legislative Assembly Udhampur-West Pawan Kumar Gupta laid the foundation stone for the construction of a PMGSY road from Dabrah to Chak-Partada under the State Sector. The project is estimated to cost Rs 1.50 crore and it would greatly benefit the local community. The dignitaries congratulated the local residents on this much-awaited development, emphasizing that the new road will enhance connectivity, boost economic activities and improve the overall quality of life in the area. They directed the concerned authorities to ensure the highest quality work and adhere to the timeline set for the completion of the project. The locals expressed gratitude to the DDC Chairman and the MLA Udhampur-West for their visionary leadership and commitment to the region's development. The initiative has been widely welcomed, and the community is eagerly looking forward to the completion of the project. The event highlighted the government's focus on infrastructure development and its dedication to improving the lives of the people.

ICAI, FICCI FLO host MSME Day Mahotsav to empower small businesses

Minister Satish calls for synergy to strengthen MSME Ecosystem in J&K

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jammu & Kashmir Branch of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) in collaboration with the FICCI FLO, Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh Chapter, organized the MSME Day Mahotsav on Friday at ICai Bhawan, Canal Road, Jammu.

The event aimed to celebrate and empower the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector - the backbone of India's economic growth.

The event was graced by Satish Sharma, Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs; Transport; Science & Technology; Information Technology; Youth Services & Sports; and ARI & Trainings Departments, as the Chief Guest.

Guests of Honour included

Naser Ali, Joint Director (Jammu), Industries & Commerce Department.

Special Guests present were Venu Ji Koul, IEDS, Assistant Director, MSME Jammu, and Ashutosh Abrol, JKAS, Accounts Officer at the Directorate of Accounts and Treasuries, Jammu.

In his welcome address, CA Sourav Pargal, Chairman of the J&K Branch of ICAI, emphasized the pivotal role MSMEs play in shaping the nation's economy and generating employment at the grassroots level.

He highlighted that Chartered Accountants, with their financial expertise and advisory skills, are natural partners in guiding MSMEs toward structured growth and compliance.

In his keynote address, the

Minister Satish Sharma commended FICCI FLO JKL and ICAI for their proactive role in engaging with the MSME sector and emphasized the government's unwavering support for entrepreneurship, digital innovation, and self-reliance.

He stressed the need for synergy between policymakers, professionals, and MSMEs to build a robust ecosystem for sustainable economic development, particularly in emerging regions like Jammu & Kashmir.

Varsha Bansal, Senior Vice Chairperson of FICCI FLO (JKL Chapter), highlighted the vital role women entrepreneurs play in driving inclusive economic growth. She encouraged greater participation of women in MSME ventures and called for collective efforts to ensure access to finance and mentorship for aspiring business-



Sports Minister Satish Sharma with FICCI FLO members and others at a programme.

women. The proceedings were moderated by CA Jatin Malhotra, Secretary of the Branch.

The event featured expert knowledge sessions, including an insightful talk by CA Vishal Thappa, MSME Consultant, on emerging opportunities, access to finance, and the strategic role Chartered Accountants can play in sup-

porting MSMEs.

Venu Ji Koul also addressed the gathering, offering a detailed overview of central government schemes for MSME development and their regional implementation.

A key highlight of the Mahotsav was the exhibition zone, which featured stalls from the MSME Department, District Industries Centre

(DIC), ICICI Bank, and incubation centres at IIT and IIM Jammu. These stalls provided information on schemes, incentives, and services available for MSMEs, enabling attendees to engage directly with institutional representatives and gain practical insights into business support.

The Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) who

joined the occasion included, The Bishnah Border Basmati Producers Cooperative Limited, The Arnia Potato and Agro Producers Cooperative Limited, The Chowki Choura Farmers Producers Cooperative Limited, The Koushal Jammu Milk Producers Co Ltd , The SIBA Events Management and Innovation Cooperative Limited, The Vijaypur Fruits and Vegetables Producers Cooperative Limited and The Rajpura Wheat and Paddy Producers Cooperative.

The event concluded with a felicitation ceremony, followed by a formal Vote of Thanks delivered by CA Amit Gupta, Vice Chairman of the Branch, who acknowledged the dignitaries, participants, and the organizing team for their contributions. The Mahotsav wit-

nessed enthusiastic participation from ICAI members and students, FICCI FLO members, industry representatives, and entrepreneurs, all of whom appreciated the initiative as a significant step toward strengthening Jammu & Kashmir's MSME ecosystem.

FICCI FLO JKL members who graced the occasion included: Varuna Anand (National Head, Partnership and Collaboration), Varsha Bansal (Sr. Vice Chairperson), Rupika Sahai (Vice Chairperson), Sona Mehta (Treasurer), Nandita Bajaj (Secretary), Pooja Devan (Joint Secretary), Archana Nanda, Geetika Amla, Minu Chawla, Iruvantiika, Shweta Choudhary, Navneet Kukreja, Aekta Gupta, Shally Kaur, Tanisha Pallan, Sarika Sachdev, Ritika Mahajan, and Nimisha Dubey.