

Chenab bridge to be landmark monument, economic game changer: Dr Jitendra

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NEW DELHI: Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh on Tuesday described the Chenab Railway Bridge as a landmark monument and at the same time an economic game changer for India in general and for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir in particular.

In an interview to a leading media agency, the Minister described the bridge as an engineering marvel and a monument of India's technological prowess.

The bridge, part of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project, is set to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 6th of June.

Dr. Jitendra said "A rail connectivity to the Valley will transform the lives of people, promote employment, boost trade, and add substantial economic value. The Chenab Bridge will be a cornerstone of the J&K growth story and play a vital role in India's economic journey."

The railway line project is expected to connect Anantnag, Pulwama, Shopian, Budgam, Srinagar, and Baramulla districts to the national railway grid, thereby ensuring all-weather connectivity and integrating the region more deeply with the rest of the country.

Dr. Jitendra highlighted that the Chenab Bridge, the world's highest



railway bridge, is not only an infrastructural feat but also an engineering marvel that will attract tourists, engineering professionals, and scholars from around the world.

"It is much more than a connectivity project. It is an architectural landmark that reflects the technological prowess of India," he remarked.

The Minister credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the bridge's timely completion, noting that the project saw no progress until 2014. It was only after the direct intervention and prioritization by the Prime Minister that key infrastructure projects in the region were expedited and completed.

Responding to questions on Operation Sindoor, Dr. Jitendra said that India gave a befitting reply to its

adversaries and sent a clear message on its defence resolve. He also took a firm stance against those who doubted India's economic resilience.

"Contrary to the skepticism voiced by so-called intellectuals, India's economy rose to the 4th largest in the world from 5th post Operation Sindoor. This shows India's economic fundamentals are stronger than ever," Dr. Singh asserted.

Dr. Singh underscored the significance of administrative reforms carried out under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which have had a transformative impact on governance and socio-economic delivery over the past 11 years.

He recalled that one of the earliest reforms was the abolition of the attestation requirement by a gazetted officer, replacing it with self-attestation, thereby building trust in citizens and reducing red tape.

He praised the performance of CPGRAMS, calling it a model for neighboring countries in grievance redressal. He stated that In the pre-2014 period, only around 2 lakh public grievances were recorded annually. However, today, the number has significantly increased to nearly 25 lakh grievances registered each year, reflecting greater accessibility and public trust in the system. Notably, the average resolution time has improved remarkably to just 12-

13 days, with many grievances being addressed and resolved within a week.

Highlighting people-centric reforms, Dr. Singh noted that the introduction of Digital Life Certificates using facial recognition has greatly eased the lives of elderly pensioners. The Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare was among the first to roll out this technology.

He also emphasized several key initiatives aimed at ensuring justice and dignity for pensioners and their families. These include resolving pension-related grievances through dedicated Pension Adalats, granting pensions to divorced and widowed daughters of pensioners, and addressing long-pending cases to deliver long-overdue pension justice.

These measures, he said, go beyond economic reforms and represent a social justice framework that touches the lives of the most vulnerable.

In closing, Dr. Singh stated that the pace and scale of development in the last 11 years under PM Modi can clearly be distinguished from the pre-2014 period. He affirmed "Prime Minister Modi has laid out a clear roadmap for Viksit Bharat @2047. Every day, India is moving closer to its set targets with confidence and commitment."



BJP holds meet under 'Sankalp Se Siddhi' campaign marking 11 years of PM Modi's transformative governance



BJP National General Secretary Tarun Chugh speaking at a programme.

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SRINAGAR: Continuing its nationwide campaign to mark 11 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visionary leadership, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Jammu & Kashmir organized a crucial meeting under the 'Sankalp Se Siddhi' programme at Church Lane, Srinagar.

BJP National General Secretary and J&K Prabhari Tarun Chugh, J&K BJP President Sat Sharma, General Secretary (Organization) J&K Ashok Koul, Deputy LOP Surjeet Singh Slathia addressed the meeting.

Dr. Ali, Former MLC Shehnaz Ganai, Altaf Thakur, Arif Raja, and other senior leaders were also present in the meeting, which witnessed participation from senior BJP leaders, District Presidents, State and District team members, and office bearers who reaffirmed their commitment to the party's mission of good governance, development, and inclusive growth.

Tarun Chugh, while addressing the meeting, appreciated the dedication of the J&K cadre and emphasized the need for deeper grassroots outreach. He stated that under PM Modi's leadership, Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed historic transformation, moving away from the legacy of dynastic politics and corruption towards an era of transparency, development, and peace.

While speaking on 'Sankalp Se Siddhi' campaign, Tarun Chugh emphasized the importance of environmental awareness in party campaigns. He encouraged the cadre to take active part in plantation drives, promote water conservation, and support the reduction of plastic use as part of the party's broader vision for sustainable development.

Sat Sharma hailed the commitment of party work-

ers and highlighted the success of Operation Sindoor, describing it as a reflection of India's strategic and security strength. He called on the cadre to strengthen public connect and intensify local level engagement to ensure the central welfare schemes reach every household.

Ashok Koul laid out the roadmap for future party activities under the Sankalp Se Siddhi campaign, urging party units to actively organize Viksit Bharat Sankalp Sabhas, Choupals, and professional meets across the Valley. He stressed on effective public communication to counter misinformation and ensure citizens are informed about government initiatives.

Surjeet Singh Slathia underscored the importance of observing International Yoga Day at the grassroots level and commemorating June 25 as Black Day, remembering the dark days of the Emergency imposed by the Congress regime.

Dinesh Pant takes charge as MD, LIC of India

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MUMBAI: Dinesh Pant has been elevated to the rank of Managing Director (md) of LIC of India on 1st June 2025. He was appointed as Managing Director vide Government of India notification dated 14th May 2025. Dinesh Pant has been the Appointed Actuary and Executive Director (Actuarial) of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) prior to assuming the role of Managing Director.

He is a Fellow Member of the Institute of Actuaries of India and the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, UK. Additionally, he holds degrees in Engineering and Law, along with a Master's in Business Administration.

Before his appointment as Appointed Actuary in 2017, Pant gained nearly five years of experience as the Product Actuary and Actuary for International



Operations at LIC. During this period, he led the overall product and actuarial strategy, aligning them with the Corporation's business framework.

Notably, he is among the few LIC officers who transitioned into the specialized field of actuarial functions after a successful tenure leading marketing operations at prominent branches in India and a reputed overseas life insurance operation.

Earlier, after training by IIM-A in 2002, he joined LIC's Investment Research team, gaining extensive exposure across various

Investment Operations, including debt, equity, restructuring, venture funds, and project finance, before finally leading the important Treasury Desk of the Corporation.

As Appointed Actuary, Pant was part of the LIC's Key Management team and played a pivotal role in the successful planning and launch of LIC's mega IPO in 2022. He has been instrumental in steering LIC towards profitable and sustainable growth post-IPO, creating value for all stakeholders.

Earlier in his career, he had the distinction of heading the Life operations at KenIndia Assurance Company Ltd., Kenya, as the General Manager (Life), overseeing the marketing and overall operations of the life insurance business of this composite insurance company, for over five years.

Since joining LIC in 1989 as a direct recruit officer,

he had an extensive exposure in most of the operational areas followed by a short stint as one of the youngest Assistant Branch Manager (Sales) from his batch before being promoted to lead some of the most distinguished branches of LIC of India in Rajasthan and Delhi.

He subsequently took over the role of Manager (New Business & Actuarial) and Legal before joining the Investment Research Cell at the Corporate Office. Mr. Pant has been a permanent special invitee to the Board of LIC since 2017 and has served on several sub-committees, such as the Investment Committee, Risk Management Committee, and With-Profit Committee.

He advises top management and the Board on key functional areas, including products, valuation, and risk management practices and strategies.

A passionate advocate for education, Pant has contributed to academia as a visiting faculty member at various institutes, including the National Insurance Academy. He has also developed course materials for insurance professional bodies.

Furthermore, he has served on various committees of professional bodies and regulators, including the Health Committees of FICCI and the Pension Advisory Committee of PFRDA.

He has chaired and been a member of numerous committees and sub-committees formed by IRDAI, focusing on areas such as product regulations, index-linked products, investments, and risk-based capital. With over 35 years of rich experience in key and specialized areas of insurance and finance, Mr. Dinesh Pant continues to be a significant contributor to the industry.

Shaleen Kabra launches online services for Central Record Rooms

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Financial Commissioner Revenue, Shaleen Kabra, on Tuesday launched online services of Central Record Room Jammu and Kashmir aiming at improving the public access to government programs and enhancing citizen services.

These services have been integrated with the JK Revenue Portal and are part of a broader initiative to streamline government processes, reduce bureaucratic hurdles and provide more convenient, efficient access to essential services. These online services included access to important revenue-related documents which are available in the Central Record Rooms



of Jammu and Srinagar.

The key benefits for the citizens of this initiative will be greater convenience to access services without needing to visit government offices i.e. Central Record Room Jammu and Srinagar in person. Besides, this will ensure reduced wait times, improved efficiency by submission of

applications easily, faster responses, enhanced transparency and reduced paperwork.

The citizens can avail these services by visiting jkrevenue.nic.in via their computers, smart phones or tablets. The Revenue Department has affirmed its commitment to continually expand its digital offerings to meet the evolving needs of the public and further enhance government service delivery.

The launch event was attended by Kanta Devi, Regional Director Survey and Land records Jammu and Dr. Tahir Firdous, Additional Commissioner with Financial Commissioner Revenue J&K.

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JAMMU: Sangeeta Arun Jaitley, wife of former Union Finance Minister Late Arun Jaitley, recently met with Ashwini Vaishnav, Union Minister for Railways, Communications, and Electronics & Information Technology, to discuss key concerns affecting the people of Jammu and Kashmir; particularly in relation to transportation and cultural representation. During the meeting, Sangeeta Jaitley highlighted the limited frequency of the Jammu-Mumbai train service, which currently runs only four days a week. She emphasized that, given the substantial number of residents from Jammu & Kashmir working in



Sangeeta Arun Jaitley meeting with Railways Minister, Ashwini Vaishnav.

Mumbai and surrounding regions, there is an urgent need to extend this service to operate daily. She also advocated for the introduction of a low-cost express train, similar to the 'Garib Rath', to ensure affordable and accessible travel for economically disadvantaged

sections of society.

Referring to the recent challenges during Operation Sindoor, she pointed out that the cancellation of flights and restricted train operations left many families in Jammu deeply anxious, particularly those with relatives residing in

other parts of the country. "The people of Jammu were distressed during that period, and there is a need for reliable transport alternatives and crisis preparedness in such situations," she said. In a significant cultural appeal, Sangeeta Jaitley reminded the Minister that her late husband, Arun Jaitley, had sanctioned a satellite channel dedicated to the Dogri language during his tenure. She urged the government to fulfill this commitment by taking immediate steps to launch the long-awaited channel, calling it an important initiative to preserve and promote Dogri culture and identity.

Meanwhile, Sangeeta Arun Jaitley also presented a memorandum to the Minister on

behalf of Nidhi Dogra, Patrona of the Dogra Samaj Trust, Mumbai. The memorandum outlined community concerns and reinforced the call for improved connectivity and cultural representation for the Dogra community living outside Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister acknowledged the issues raised and assured that the demands would be given due attention and referred to the concerned departments for appropriate action. Sangeeta Jaitley's engagement reflects a continued commitment to the interests of the Jammu and Kashmir region and its people, especially in areas of connectivity, culture, and inclusion at the national level.

Faith more powerful than fear, say KP at Kheer Bhawani Mela

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

TULMULLA: Faith will always trump fear - this was exemplified by scores of members of the Kashmiri Pandit community who gathered here on Tuesday for the annual Kheer Bhawani Mela, held in the shadow of the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack and heightened border tensions.

The revered temple of Ragnya Devi, nestled in the shade of mighty chinar trees in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, was decked up for festivities with thousands of devotees from across the country offering prayers on the occasion of 'Zyeth Atham' also known as 'Jyeshtha Ashtami'.

A multi-layer security ring was thrown around the temple complex, situated around 25 km north-east of

Srinagar, and along the routes for the Mela in the Valley, which is still reeling from the aftermath of the horrific Pahalgam attack in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were gunned down by terrorists.

"There is some impact (of the Pahalgam attack)," Nanna Ji, a Kashmiri Pandit, said.

He said the attack was a ploy by Pakistan to destroy the age-old Hindu-Muslim brotherhood.

"But, I want to say this that a Kashmiri Pandit is incomplete without a Kashmiri Muslim, and Kashmiri Muslim is incomplete without a Kashmiri Pandit," he said, adding such conspiracies will never be allowed to succeed.

The atmosphere brimmed with religious fervour and communal amity between



Devotees paying obeisance at Kheer Bhawani Temple at Tulmulla.

Hindus and Muslims as locals opened not just their homes but their hearts as well for the people.

Among the pilgrims were many whose families were forced to leave the Kashmir Valley after the outbreak of militancy. Many said they prayed for peace in the

Valley and for their dignified return, putting an end to their 'banwaas' (exile).

Bharat Bhushan, a Kashmiri Pandit currently living in Jammu, said the large attendance of the devotees at the Mela was a befitting reply to the Pahalgam attackers.

"This is a befitting reply to them. We want to tell them - faith is more powerful than fear and faith will always trump fear. We will respond to terror and fear through faith," Bhushan said.

He also appealed to the tourists to visit the

Kashmir Valley.

"There are some bad elements who want to destroy the Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. They tried to do that (in Pahalgam). But, today, on this occasion, we want to respond to them and say that the brotherhood will continue to exist.

"We appeal to our tourist brothers to come and visit Kashmir - 'the paradise on earth'. Bad elements are in every community, they should be identified and dealt with according to the law of the land," he said.

Muktesh Yogi, a young Kashmiri Pandit whose family migrated from Mattan area of Anantnag district, said the presence of a large number of devotees at the Mela will send a good message.

"I think the people deserve to be congratulated the way

they have come here and there is such a fervour. The large attendance of the devotees here is a good message for the country that there is no threat perception and people of Kashmir are welcoming," he said.

Yogi said faith is always more powerful than fear.

As devotees jostled with each other to move closer to the main temple, walking barefoot and carrying rose petals, the chants of hymns echoed through the temple compound.

Men took a dip in the stream close to the shrine. The devotees paid obeisance to the deity while offering milk and kheer (pudding) at the sacred spring within the complex.

It is believed that the colour of the sacred spring water which flows below the temple indicates the situa-

tion in the Valley.

While most of the colours do not have any particular significance, black or darkish colour of the water is believed to be an indication of inauspicious times for Kashmir. The water in the spring was clean and milky white this year.

"We want to return. It is a good thing. A dialogue process should start. But it should not end at mere statements. Something concrete should be done," Yogi said.

Nanna Ji said Kashmiri Pandits, who have waited for over three decades to return to the Valley, prayed for their return and rehabilitation to take place sooner than later.

"The Mata should call us sooner. I want the Kashmiri Muslims to come out and call us back home," he said.