

# JKPSA delegation meets CM, discusses key demands

## STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Private Schools Association Jammu, Kamal Gupta-led delegation on Thursday called on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at the Public Outreach Office, Raabita, Jammu, and discussed pressing issues faced by private schools in the UT.

Besides Kamal Gupta, the delegation comprised of Deepak Handa Senior Vice President, Sanjeev Luthra Treasurer, Naresh Kumar Executive member, Gourav Charak Publicity Secretary, and Lal Chand Gandotra Member.

The delegation congratulated the CM on forming a popular government in Jammu and Kashmir after a decade.

The JKPSA highlighted the challenges faced by private schools since 2019, citing irrational conditions that have impacted their operations.

The association requested the CM to prioritize the key points including to



JKPSA Chairman Kamal Gupta-led delegation calling on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday.

organize orientation programs for private school teachers at district headquarters through DIET to promote teacher proficiency and effective implementation of the National Education Policy 2020; ensure online delivery of NOCs from various

departments within specified time limits, as per the Jammu and Kashmir Public Services Guarantee Act, 2011; withdraw the provision of CID verification for management committee members, except in cases of school name/location changes, as

per Circular No. 02-SED of 2022; align management committee tenure with school affiliation/recognition; and to authorize the Chairperson of the Fee Fixation and Regulation Committee (FFRC) to regulate fees for schools charging up to Rs 2000/month tuition fee and Rs 8000/annual charges.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah patiently heard delegation's concerns, assuring prompt guidance to the Education Minister for a follow-up meeting.

Regarding CID verification, he clearly stated that it's unnecessary to involve CID in every issue, emphasizing that school management doesn't require such scrutiny. The CM assured consideration of this matter, promising a favourable review by the government.

The discussion underscored the commitment to addressing key issues, paving the way for improved education delivery and a brighter future for Jammu and Kashmir's students.



# Shrine Board, CGPWA collaborative green effort at Vaishnavi Vatika Jammu

## STATE TIMES NEWS

KATRA: In a significant step towards environmental conservation, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) and the Central Government Pensioners Welfare Association (CGPWA), Jammu had joined hands in 2024 to foster eco-protection and sustainable practices in the local community.



SMVDSB and CGPWA Jammu members planting sapling.

With the onset of the monsoon season this year, SMVDSB and CGPWA have once again come together to offer various plant species to public through the 'Vaishnavi Vatika' Plant Sale Counter at Vaishnavi Dham, Rail Head Complex, Jammu, inaugurated last year by the Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB. This initiative exemplifies a successful institutional partnership and community engagement in environmental conservation.

The Plant Sale Counter offers a diverse selection of around 28 indigenous plant species, meticulously nurtured and cultivated in the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board's high-tech nursery situated in village Kunia, Panthal near Katra. These native plant species, well-suited to the local climate, ecosystem and are available for purchase, enabling individuals to contribute to environmental conservation and sustainability efforts.

At the event, Additional CEO, SMVDSB, Alok Kumar Maurya, joined by prominent CGPWA members, including BR Sharma, Kuldeep Khoda, K.B Jandyal, Dr CM Seth, Ashwani Gupta, Opinder Pachanda, Subash Chander Sharma alongwith ACF and other Shrine Board officials, ceremoniously planted diverse saplings at Vaishnavi Dham.

The event also featured the distribution of various plant species to participants, encouraging community participation in sustainability initiatives. The Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB, Anshul Garg highlighted the Shrine Board's pioneering eco-friendly initiatives under the chairmanship of Lt. Governor JK-UT including encompassing greening efforts, waste and water management and solar power generation. He exhorted that the Board has leveraged drone technology for seed dispersal to preserve the Shrine's natural grandeur and planted over 1.7 million saplings under the Annual Green Plan. Furthermore, the collaboration with CGPWA has amplified awareness on eco-protection and promotes sustainable practices in the local community, leveraging their extensive network and outreach capabilities, he added.

Dr. Ashok Bhan, Member, SMVDSB and CGPWA, underscored the significance of environmental conservation, affirming the organization's commitment to supporting SMVDSB's eco-friendly initiatives. At the event, Additional CEO, SMVDSB, Alok Kumar Maurya, joined by prominent CGPWA members, including BR Sharma, Kuldeep Khoda, K.B Jandyal, Dr CM Seth, Ashwani Gupta, Opinder Pachanda, Subash Chander Sharma alongwith ACF and other Shrine Board officials, ceremoniously planted diverse saplings at Vaishnavi Dham. The event also featured the distribution of various plant species to participants, encouraging community participation in sustainability initiatives.

# Sham Lal conducts developmental tour of Janipur, Barnai areas

## STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: To take first-hand account of developmental works and civic conditions, MLA Jammu North Sham Lal Sharma conducted a tour of Ward No. 37 (Janipur Colony) and Ward No. 65 (Barnai) on Thursday.

The visit covered key locations including Janipur Colony, Shivalik Puram, Government Girls Middle School Janipur, Ram Leela Ground, Barnai Talab, and areas adjoining Shiv Mandir.

During the inspection, the MLA was briefed by the concerned departments about the ongoing sewerage work in Janipur, with approximately 40% completion reported. Updates were also provided regarding the status of drainage cleaning, road repairs, public sanitation, and water supply systems.

In Barnai, issues like leaking PIHE valves, water shortages, and pollution of the pond due to open drains



MLA Jammu North Sham Lal Sharma during visit to Ward No. 37 and Ward No. 65.

were raised, while in Janipur and Shivalik Puram, problems such as blocked drains, wild vegetation, damaged roads, and uncovered Nallahs were highlighted.

Taking serious note of these issues, Sham Lal issued on-spot directions to the concerned departments. He instructed for immediate cleaning of drains, removal of wild growth, concrete covering of open Nallahs, and repair of the steep, pothole-ridden lane near Shiv

Mandir. Directions were also given for the repair of water leakage in Barnai and ensuring regular water supply to affected areas.

The departments were asked to either divert or treat the wastewater entering the Barnai pond to preserve its hygiene and religious significance.

Additionally, the MLA asked the concerned agencies to realign tilted electric poles, address wire entanglement, and carry out structural repairs around the Shiv Mandir premises, including raising land levels and blacktopping.

At Government Girls Middle School Janipur, the MLA stressed on maintaining proper hygiene and assured the staff of a follow-up visit. He also took note of overgrown vegetation and general mismanagement around the Water Supply Station in Janipur, instructing the concerned departments to ensure cleanliness and strict compliance with

duty rosters. Sham Lal interacted with residents and local stakeholders, listened to their concerns, and assured them of swift redressal. He reiterated his commitment to transparent and result-oriented governance and emphasized that field inspections are essential to ensure the timely delivery of services. He also urged departments to maintain close coordination for better and lasting civic improvements. Sector officers from the concerned departments, including PHE, UEED, PDD, JMC, and R&B, were present during the visit and assured compliance with the instructions issued by the MLA. Also accompanying him were BJP District General Secretary Ravish Mengi, Former Councilor Ward 37 Sunita Gupta, Janipur Mandal President Sahil Gupta, Muthi-Paloura Mandal President Pankaj Pada, and Former Mandal President Suresh Khajuria.

# Dr Jitendra addresses Bhubaneswar National meet, proposes 'Governance Index' for States

## STATE TIMES NEWS

BHUBANESWAR: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh on Thursday underscored the sweeping governance reforms ushered in under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, calling them not only administrative milestones but socio-economic game-changers that have redefined citizen-government relations in India.

Speaking at the two-day National Conference on "Good Governance

Practices" organized by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) in collaboration with the Government of Odisha, Dr. Jitendra noted that 29 out of the 41 such conferences held since Independence had taken place in the last decade alone - a testimony to the Modi Government's "perform, reform, transform" mantra.

The Minister highlighted that the reforms since 2014 had impacted governance at four levels: administrative transformation, socio-



Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh addressing the inaugural session of the 2-day National Conference on "Good Governance Practices", at Bhubaneswar on Thursday.

economic upliftment, shift in public mindset, and creation of global best practices. "These reforms were not only overdue since Independence but also

reflect a bold departure from status-quoist governance," he said.

Recalling Odisha's resilience and academic heritage, Dr. Jitendra praised Bhubaneswar for blending cutting-edge technology with cultural continuity.

"You've made the citizen the master of his destiny," he remarked, citing the use of drones to map land ownership and reduce reliance on traditional patwari systems.

Drawing attention to the abolition of over 1,500 obsolete rules, many colonial in origin, Dr. Jitendra said the government today takes pride not in introducing

new laws but in scrapping redundant ones.

"We've removed laws that once allowed imprisonment for unsanitary toilets. They may have had context 200 years ago, but have no place in today's India," he said.

The Minister also credited DARPG Secretary V. Srinivas for turning the once-obscure department into a hub of innovation, citing successful experiments like the Swachhata Abhiyan e-scraper drives which raised over Rs 1,100 crore for the exchequer.

Dr. Jitendra proposed

introducing governance performance parameters for states on the lines of existing district-level rankings. "Healthy competition among states and a focus on aspirational blocks could be key to achieving the goals of Viksit Bharat by 2047," he said.

In a candid reflection, he emphasized the importance of involving newly recruited officers in this journey. "Many of our best-performing aspirational districts had collectors in their first postings - they bring drive, vision and will see India into 2047," he noted.

# Most of Summer/Rainy Season Guava fruit crop in Jammu Region remains worm infested & problem is there since decades

In this era of advanced technologies why have not the Horticulture Experts & SKAUST Scientist been able to make Guava free from 'worms'? Government needs to sanction a special project for study & control of the 'cause' like 'fruit fly' that is said to be 'culprit' of Guava

## DAYA SAGAR

The damage being done to the Guava fruit orchard during the summer/rainy season in Jammu Region where most of the crop that



## A Look through the Mist

may outwardly appear healthy is found spoiled by worms is a well accepted fact and in a way people appear to have taken that as a rule of nature. The growth of orchards in Jammu region is already very poor but as regards Guava which are more discouraged due to loss of one season of crop. The problem is known to even a kid but the way no progress for control of the disease / worms has been there for years can make one to think that the experts / researchers in the field of horticulture have remained very less occupied with the problem where almost all crop of one season is lost. The issue has been brought to the notice of the concerned at times and recently in July Aug 2024 but unfortunately no any indications about taking on the issue heavily could be sensed.

Directorate of Horticulture Jammu ( Divn) mentions Guava (Amrood), Orange / Kinoo (citrus), Mango among the 'fruit crops' grown/ that can be grown in Districts of Jammu (sub tropical), Kathua (sub tropical, intermediate temperate), Samba (sub tropical, no mention of mango), Udhampur (sub tropical, intermediate temperate), Reasi (sub tropical, temperate), Ramban (sub tropical, intermediate temperate, no mention of mango), Poonch (sub tropical, intermediate temperate , no mention of mango ) and Rajouri (sub tropical, intermediate temper-

ate).But in reference to these fruits it will not be wrong to mention here that bulk of these fruits consumed in Jammu Division ( particularly improved commercial varieties ) are imported from other states (even Punjab and also from Himachal Pradesh).

Guava is imported to J&K in very large quantities and during this July month it is being sold in retail atleast from Rs.70 to 120 per Kg. Not only that whatever indigenous varieties / others varieties of Guava are grown in Jammu Division it is a common acknowledged fact that the fruit that matures ( July/ August) is infested with worms (commonly named as Fruit Fly) at places even more than 75% fruit of rainy season crop is lost and common advice is that summer flowering of guava should be better shed off.

On the one hand the development of Horticulture in Jammu Division has been very poor ( could well be assessed from the quantities imported even of Guava / Mango/ Orange) and to add to that whatever plantation is there that too is not well protected from worms/ insects of which Guava fruit plantation is the worst victim even nearly after 7 decades of Independence and there being a separate Directorate of Horticulture for Jammu Division as well as a University of Agriculture & Technology (Sher e Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology Jammu - SKAUST).

Actual data for 2023- 2024 on production and export / import of fruits to / from



Jammu Division could not be obtained therefore for idea sake , particularly for Guava , some data on area ( hectares) under Guava and production ( metric tons) for 2015 -16 (Area: 2463.84 Hect and Production :3275.50 Mt ) and 2016-17 ( Area :2478.99 Hect and Production : 3495 Mt ) as could be obtained from some earlier publications can be taken to get the likely status of Guava as Horticulture crop of Jammu Division of J&K. So that way production per hectare ( 20 Kanals) orchard could be around 1,3Mt (13 Quintal ) to 1.4 Mt (14 Quintal) or in other words just 65 kg to 70 Kg per Kanal ( data is subject to correction on availability .of actual data on date from departmental sources for which request has been made ). At one place Jammu Division Guava area and production for 2019 -20 has been mention as 2541 Hect and 8391 Mt i.e around 165 kg per kanal which show some increase over 2016-17 but is still very low. No doubt

the data for 2022-23 could be even higher but going by the status of the quantity of rainy season crop available in the Jammu market from local production there may not be a status worth appreciation better than the one assessed here in.

To be brief there is utmost need for raising the priority level of approach towards development of commercial horticulture in Jammu Division for fruits like Guava and in the modern era of technologies the problem of the rainy season guava crop infestation should not have been so acute that almost whole rainy season crop is lost in most of the cases and some where some crop is sent to the market before it matures. People in J&K have not been that much motivated or encouraged over the years for taking to commercial fruit production like even in neighboring states and above that there has been under rated support / initiatives from the government agencies and less targeted

approach from research departments of the Agriculture University like that for even disease/ insect control for cultivation of fruits like Guava otherwise may be even if 75% of rainy season Guava fruit would have been saved from worms some cultivators on their own might have taken for commercial guava farming. Let no one quote here pleading that may be Guava suffers similarly in some other state too, the subject matter is how to eradicate the decades old curse.

It is not out of place to refer here that Agriculture Colleges in public sector / Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agriculture Sciences & Technologies is there since 1960s , they are often in news for issuing releases for the pioneering works done in the field of Agriculture / Horticulture but how have these institutions overlooked the damage done to the farm economy though the sufferings of Guava as discussed here for decades is not understandable.

Should not & SKAUST Jammu take on the issue on their own so that easy & direct ways and means are found out to save atleast 85 percent of the summer Guava crop without heavy cost and more farmers feel encouraged to go for such orchards since looking on the import of Guava fruit to J&K there exist lot of scope for commercial farming of Guava in Jammu region.

Hope next season ( 2026) Guava Horticulturists listen of some relieving story from Agri Sector / Horti sector from .....

(The writer is a Sr Journalist, analyst J&K affairs and Social Activist)