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LG advises universities...

many decades will no longer exist in the future", Sinha said while addressing the 20th Foundation Day celebration of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU), at Matrika Auditorium.

At the event, the Lt Governor laid foundation stones for the infrastructural projects worth Rs 70 Crore.

He observed that in the technology driven world, the recalibration in education will liberate students from conventional academic content, disciplines and train them with skills and ability to succeed in the uncharted future.

The Lt Governor congratulated the students, faculty and the staff members of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University and commended the significant contribution of the university in the education sector.

"In the last two decades, SMVDU has nurtured students, served the knowledge economy of the country with great distinction and aspires to empower young generation," the Lt Governor said.

Education awakens the mind. It offers the ability to question the status quo and the questions sow the seeds of growth. It is the responsibility of our Universities and teaching community to prepare enlightened citizens through research, inquiry, creativity, innovation and contribute to realize the vision of 'Viksit Bharat', he said.

He Lt Governor talked about the emergence of new technologies and its impact on the society.

"Cutting-Edge tools of Artificial Intelligence and the explosion of new technologies have brought social equality. It is changing the way we collect, process and utilize the knowledge for a better world. This change also presents vast opportunities to every individual to grow and prosper," the Lt Governor said.

Today, scientists, academicians and thinkers both from Global North and Global South are redefining education and its objectives, the Lt Governor said. He asked the higher educational institutions and universities to aim for global excellence and competitive advantage.

We are living in the world of surprises where the only constant in life is change. But, the biggest challenge is to prepare students for the jobs that don't yet exist. We need to provide them with skills that will remain relevant and complement the growing pace of change, he added.

He said there has been a tectonic shift from what we were producing as an agriculture society to now as a knowledge society.

Journey from raw materials to knowledge products has been phenomenal. Innovation and research will now become the soul and integral pillar of the Universities, he added.

Highlighting the significant features of the National Education Policy 2020, the Lt Governor said , under the guidance of Prime Minister; the progressive education policy offers the key to unlock the vast potential of basic knowledge, applied skills,

critical thinking, collaboration, leadership, creativity, innovation, lifelong learning and career skills like flexibility, adaptability as well as social and cross cultural skill.

The Lt Governor also emphasized on the stronger industry-academic relationship. He said, in the next 5 years the manufacturing will shift towards automation which means innovation and digital transformation will play a significant role.

India has already formulated action plan for 12 identified champion sectors that include IT, ITeS, Tourism, Legal Services, Communication Services, Environment and the Education Sector. I am confident by 2030 India will become unique emerging Services market and a global manufacturing hub, he added.

The Lt Governor also shared the unique endeavour of the Jammu University to prepare students for future jobs through Design your Degree program. Such reforms will empower the students to take ownership of their own career paths and make the changes they want in their careers rather than waiting to react to changes imposed on them, he added.

On the occasion, the Lt Governor felicitated the students who excelled in various competitions.

Prof. (Dr.) Pragati Kumar, Vice Chancellor, SMVDU presented the achievements of the University and gave an overview of the key initiatives taken by the university for the holistic development of the students.

Mahamandleshwar Shri Swami Vishveshvaranand Giriiji Maharaj and other board members of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board; Dr Mandeep Kumar Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor; Anshul Garg, Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB; Babila Rakwal, Deputy Commissioner, Reasi; senior officials, faculty members of the university and students were present on the occasion.

Decks cleared for...

Dr Neelam Sareen; K K Sharma; Suresh Kumar Sharma and Raghu K. Mehta.

Dr Mandeep Kumar Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor and Anshul Garg, Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB were also present.

The Board concurred with the projected need for expansion of the operational base of SMVDNSH (Hospital of the Board) to cater to a larger number of patients requiring specialized treatment. After extensive deliberations, the Board accorded in-principle approval to addition of 200 to 220 beds to the existing capacity of Hospital at an approximate cost of Rs. 120 crore.

The Board took note of reported position, held extensive deliberations, ratified and gave in-principle approvals to as many as 36 agenda items having varied implications for the functioning of Board and augmenting of pilgrim services.

The Board asked the CEO SMVDSB to strive for creating best of facilities in sync with the emerging requirements, for making pilgrimage a memorable experience. In line with the same, the Board granted in-principle approval to construction of a new Yatri-cum-Staff accommodation at Bhawan at an approximate cost of Rs. 31.51 crore.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of various pilgrim-centric mega infra-

structure projects such as Skywalk, retrofitting and remodeling of Parvati Bhawan, expansion of Atka area etc.

The CEO, SMVDSB informed the Board that the prestigious projects underway at Bhawan are being expedited and are likely to be completed prior to the Shardiya Navratras. He also apprised the Board about various steps initiated for averting crisscross movement of pilgrims for a hassle free Darshan experience.

The CEO Shrine Board was directed to expedite construction / redevelopment of Shankaracharya Temple along with the creation of track and allied facilities and emphasized the need to engage all stakeholders for satisfactory resolution of all pending issues in this regard.

The CEO apprised the chair about the action taken on several fronts such as employees' welfare (including re-structuring of various cadres, institution of Award Scheme to recognize outstanding performers etc), the amendment in Administrative, Financial and other powers to be exercised by various officers, the disaster management initiatives undertaken in the recent past and as to how these have helped in improving the employee's level of preparedness to face any disaster like situation. The Board also approved the required Grant-in-Aid for the FY 2023-24 in favour of SMVD Charitable Society for strengthening the functioning of Board's peripheral institutions like Gurukul, Hospital, Sports Complex and College of Nursing (being managed under the SMVD Society).

The Lt Governor reiterated that the facilities for pilgrims are topmost priority of the Board and all steps must be taken for their hassle-free pilgrimage.

He directed the CEO Shrine Board to ensure online bookings for passenger ropeway for easy access and comfort of devotees. The safety of passengers must be ensured, he added. On the sidelines of the meeting, the Lt Governor, who is the Chairman of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, laid e-foundation stones for Cottages and a mess Block near SMVD Sports Complex Katra for the devotees and Staff accommodation at Banganga to be developed at a cost of Rs. 14 crore. He also launched the revamped website of Shrine Board and released the Dogri translation of Panchtantra by Dr Neelam Sareen.

Nine soldiers martyred...

said he received the news of "extremely heart-wrenching news" about the incident in Ladakh. "I pray to God to grant peace to the departed souls and strength to the bereaved family members to bear this immense pain. Your life devoted to the service of the nation is a source of inspiration for all the countrymen," he said in a post.

Sachin is new...

Avny Lavasa while Saloni Rai, IAS (AGMUT: 2016) has been posted as the new Deputy Commissioner, Udhampur.

Meanwhile, Ajay Bharti, JKAS, Deputy Director, Estates, Jammu, has been transferred and posted as Assistant Commissioner (Central) with Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, against an available vacancy, with immediate effect.

Tulip Garden Srinagar enters World Book of Records as Asia's Largest

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The exquisite Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden, nestled in the foothills of the Zabarwan mountain range, on Saturday earned a prestigious spot in the World Book of Records (London).

This coveted recognition hails the garden as Asia's largest tulip paradise, adorned with breath-taking array of 1.5 million tulip bulbs, representing a stunning ensemble of 68 distinctive tulip varieties.

In a formal ceremony held today at the Tulip Garden, Commissioner Secretary Floriculture, Gardens & Parks, Sheikh Fayaz Ahmad was honoured with the certification by President and CEO of World Book of Records (London), Santosh Shukla.

Editor of World Book of Records (London), Dilip N Pandit, Director Floriculture



Commissioner Secretary Floriculture, Gardens & Parks, Sheikh Fayaz Ahmad being honoured with certification by President and CEO of World Book of Records (London), Santosh Shukla.

Kashmir, other officers and gardening staff were also present on the occasion.

Speaking about this remarkable accolade, the Commissioner Secretary, expressed his profound gratitude to the World Book of Records(London) team for acknowledging the magnificence of Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden.

He deemed this recognition as a monumental achievement, one that would not only elevate the stature of

Srinagar's floral treasure but also contribute to the growth of the local economy in the serene valleys of Kashmir.

He said the inclusion in the World Book of Records is not only a recognition of Srinagar's blossoming gem but also a celebration of the enchanting bond between humanity and nature.

President and CEO of World Book of Records, Santosh Shukla, extended his heartfelt congratulations to the Central Working

Committee of the organization for the feat. He added that this recognition underscores the unparalleled beauty and magnificence of Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden, positioning it as a symbol of nature's splendour and human ingenuity.

Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden, affectionately known for its breathtaking vista, not only boasts a splendid collection of tulips but also serves as a haven for a myriad of flower species. Delicate Daffodils, fragrant Hyacinths, resplendent Roses, charming Ranunculi, vibrant Muscaria, and enchanting Iris blooms flourish alongside the iconic tulips, creating an enchanting tapestry of colors and fragrances.

JKSSB to conduct driving test from Aug 21

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) will conduct driving test of candidates who have applied for the posts of Drivers, Driver Grade-II and Tractor Driver from 21st August, 2023. A notification issued by JKSSB in this regard on Saturday reads that the driving test of the candidates who have applied for the posts of Drivers, Driver Grade-II and Tractor Driver shall be conducted from 21st August, 2023 in Kashmir and Jammu. The notification also reads that for Jammu based candidates, the test shall be conducted at State Motor Garages, New Plot, Jammu and for Kashmir based candidates the venue of the test shall be State Motor Garages Bemina, Srinagar. The reporting time for the Driving Test shall be 09:00 AM in both venues. The candidates are advised to visit Board website www.jkssb.nic.in for further information in this regard.

Amarnath Yatra: 'Chhari-Sthapana' ceremony performed amid Vedic chants in Srinagar



'Chhari-Sthapana' ceremony for 'Chhari Mubarak' being performed amidst Vedic chants on Saturday.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The 'Chhari-Sthapana' ceremony for 'Chhari Mubarak' - the saffron-robed holy mace of Lord Shiva - was performed amidst Vedic chants at a temple here on Saturday.

Led by Mahant Deependra Giri, a group of sadhus chanting Vedic hymn per-

formed the ceremony at Shri Amareshwar Temple Akhara Building in Budshah Chowk here this morning in connection with the annual pilgrimage of Chhari Mubarak Swami Amarnath Ji.

Giri, the custodian of the holy mace, in a statement said that the puja lasted for about two hours.

'Chhari Mubarak', one depicting Lord Shiva and another Goddess Parvati, shall be kept in the temple at Akhara building here for "darshan" till it leaves on the pilgrimage on August 26.

The traditional 'Chhari-Pujan' will be performed at Dashnami Akhara on Monday.

'Chhari Mubarak' will leave for the holy shrine of Amarnath situated at an altitude of 13,500 feet in south Kashmir on August 26.

The True Trust, founded by the mahant in 2004, has made all necessary arrangements for food, tented accommodation and transportation for the sadhus during the annual pilgrimage.

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Rahul Gandhi rides motorcycle from Leh to Pangong Lake

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

LEH: Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday rode a motorcycle from Leh to Pangong Lake in the Union Territory of Ladakh on the eve of his father Rajiv Gandhi's birth anniversary, a party spokesman said.

The former Congress president is currently on a tour of Ladakh -- his first since the region was made a Union territory after being carved out of Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019 -- and is likely to visit Kargil next week.

The erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was also turned into a Union territory and its special status under Article 370 of the Constitution was revoked. Gandhi reached Leh on a



two-day visit on Thursday, later deciding to extend his stay in the region by four more days to cover Pangong Lake, Nubra Valley and Kargil district, Congress spokesperson and leader of opposition in Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council

(LAHDC), Leh, Tsering Namgyal told PTI on phone.

After covering more than 130 km on motorcycle, Gandhi will stay overnight at Pangong Lake where a token celebration will be organised in connection with the birth anniversary of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi on

Sunday, he said.

Rahul Gandhi shared several pictures of his motorcycle expedition from Leh to Pangong on his social media account with a caption "On our way to Pangong lake, which my father used to say, is one of the most beautiful places in the world."

"On Sunday, he is leaving for Nubra Valley on the motorcycle for a night stay there. En route, he is likely to meet commoners including shopkeepers and farmers," Namgyal said, adding he will be back in Leh on Monday.

Though the trip was described by his party colleagues in Leh as "non-political" with no consideration of next year's parliamentary elections, Gandhi was given

a warm welcome by party workers on his arrival on Thursday.

He also had a meeting with party colleagues and interacted with the youth besides watching a football match between two local clubs.

Gandhi will be visiting Kargil district either on Monday or Tuesday, the Congress spokesperson said, adding he is likely to interact with party workers and people, especially the youth, there.

The visit of Gandhi to the district assumes significance as LAHDC, Kargil is going to polls on September 10. The National Conference and the Congress have already announced a pre-poll alliance for the hill council elections.

Record 36.85 lakh people participated in I-Day celebrations

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: In what could be termed as a historic milestone in J&K, a record number of 36,85,106 persons participated in the celebrations held across the districts of the UT displaying patriotic fervor.

A total of 42,879 events were conducted right from the Panchayat level with large number of people participating in each such function. Similar events were carried out in the educational institutions, Patwar Khanas, Municipalities, Tehsils and Block offices with enthusiastic participation from large number of students, elected representatives and government employees.

Apart from the usual events which were conducted at the twin capitals and district headquarters of the UT where common people were given free entry, the celebrations were made in scores of

villages and towns raising the participation to new levels. Flag hoisting ceremonies were also held at all the Directorates, Divisional and District offices of the UT where thousands of employees participated with national fervor.

Many of the private institutions like industrial units, educational institutions and hospitals also participated in the national celebrations by conducting events at their own level. People from all walks of life including PRI members, civil society, SHGs, Ex-Servicemen, youth and other citizens also took part in great numbers.

Overall in Jammu Division 19,76,255 individuals participated in 23,163 celebrations and in Kashmir Division 17,08,851 persons took part in 19,716 functions held across the districts of the valley. Both the number of participants and the events are itself historic.

People of J&K availed the opportunity to showcase their devotion and love towards the nation.

In Kashmir valley Baramulla reported highest level of participation of about 5,05,909 persons in 3353 events followed by Anantnag with 2,45,618 people in 2676 events. Kupwara organized highest number of 4993 events providing opportunity to 2,34,146 persons and Pulwama organized 1140 events participated by 1,81,195 persons in the district. In Jammu Division the highest participation of people were seen in Rajouri district where 3,95,916 persons took part in 7756 functions followed by Kathua having 3,06,801 people taking part in 1317 events. Similarly in Poonch 2,87,719 persons took part in 4060 celebrations and Udhampur had 2,58,830 persons celebrating the Independence Day at 889

places.

In the capital cities of Srinagar and Jammu, 91,504 persons in 2052 functions and 1,45,663 in 2515 functions participated respectively. At the marquee events held at Bakshi Stadium, Srinagar where Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha hoisted the tricolor around 10,000 people were present and at M.A Stadium, Jammu attendance of about 11,000 persons was recorded.

In addition to these, as part of the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign dozens of 'Tiranga Rallies' were taken out by thousands of PRI members, government employees, students and civil society members presenting a spectacular views across the districts of the UT. The celebrations under the theme are going to culminate on 31st of August and many more events are lined-up for the days to come.

Govt imposes 40 pc export duty on onion to increase local supply, check price rise

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The government on Saturday imposed a 40 per cent duty on the export of onions to increase domestic availability amid signs of increasing prices.

The export duty, which is the first time ever on onion, has been imposed as the retail sale price of the kitchen staple, according to government data, touched Rs 37/kg on Saturday in Delhi.

The Finance Ministry through a Customs notification imposed a 40 per cent export duty on onions till December 31, 2023.

Between April 1 and August 4 this fiscal, 9.75 lakh tonne of onions have been exported from the country. The top three importing countries in value terms are Bangladesh, Malaysia and the UAE.

Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh said in order to increase the availability of onions in the domestic market especially in view of the upcoming festival season, the government has decided

to impose a 40 per cent duty on the export of onions.

"It was also being noticed that there was a sharp rise in exports in the recent past," Singh said.

The government had always used a minimum export price tool to curb onion exports. However, for the first time this year, export duty has been slapped for effective control of the outward shipment.

As per the data maintained by the consumer affairs ministry, the all-India average retail price of onion was ruling at Rs 30.72 per kg on Saturday, with a maximum price at Rs 63 per kg and a minimum at Rs 10 per kg.

In Delhi, onion was ruling at Rs 37 per kg on Saturday, as per the data. The trade data showed onion prices ruling at Rs 50 per kg in the national capital.

Onion prices have started inching up amid reports of lag in onion coverage in the ongoing kharif season.

According to the wholesale price index (WPI) data for July, onion inflation spi-

ralled to 7.13 per cent, against (-)4.31 per cent in June.

The annual retail or consumer price inflation has touched a 15-month high of 7.44 per cent in July, against 4.87 per cent in June, amid a sharp spike in food prices.

The government has maintained 3 lakh tonnes of buffer onion this year. It has started disposing of it in the wholesale market since last week in key locations.

So far, 2,000 tonnes of buffer onion has been sold in wholesale mandis of Delhi, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the Secretary said.

The buffer onion is usually used for market intervention during the lean period between August and September till the arrival of the fresh crop from October onwards.

Onion is a politically-sensitive commodity. The restriction comes ahead of assembly elections in key states like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana due at year-end.

Indian economy shining as beacon of hope in challenging times: Modi

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Saturday that India's economy is shining as a beacon of hope in these challenging times.

"With robust growth and resilient spirit, the future looks promising. Let us keep this momentum and ensure prosperity for 140 crore Indians," he said on X, reacting to news portal Moneycontrol's 'Bullish on India' campaign.

The portal, which specialises in reporting on markets and financial sector, had posted on X that the country's economy has not just withstood challenges, but thrived setting the stage

for optimism.

The 'Bullish on India' campaign showcases India's economic resilience and growth potential in various critical sectors, it said.

It aims to analyse the key drivers of India's economic growth while fostering awareness about the unparalleled potential the nation offers at a time of a global economic slowdown, the portal said in a separate statement.

"With detailed analysis of macroeconomic factors such as manufacturing, demography, economy, markets and India's rising stand in the global leadership, 'Bullish on India' has been presented as a data backed

campaign that underlines India's resilient economic growth," it said.

The campaign seeks to analyse key drivers of India's economic growth while fostering awareness about the "unparalleled potential" the nation offers at a time of a global economic slowdown, it added.

"There are various adversities that have shaken economies worldwide in the past few years. However, India is standing tall, retaining its stature as the 'world's fastest-growing major economy'," it said, noting that the country is set to become the third largest economy in the coming years.