

Private sector's partnership with govt essential for J&K's economic growth: Dr Jitendra

STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh on Monday called upon the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) to actively facilitate private sector participation in Jammu and Kashmir, saying the Union Territory has the potential to emerge as a key driver of India's economic growth. But the private sector's partnership with the government is essential for J&K's economic growth, he hastened to add.

Speaking at the ICC Centenary Retreat in Srinagar, he emphasised that the Modi government has dismantled long-standing barriers between the public and private sectors and it is now for industry to step in.

"The government has become very forthcoming. We have even opened up the nuclear sector, but the private industry was not ready because it did not expect this change. Now is the time for industry to take the lead," Dr. Jitendra said.

Underscoring the importance of J&K in the new growth landscape, the minister cited the "purple revolution" of lavender cultivation as an



Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh addressing the Centenary Retreat celebrations of the 100 year old, Kolkata based Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) at SKICC, Srinagar on Monday. Also seen is ICC National President, Abhyuday Jindal.

example of successful public-private partnership. The initiative, which began in Bhandarwah and later spread to Gulmarg, drew investment from leading perfume manufacturers and enabled local farmers and youth to shift to high-value cultivation. Some professionals even left corporate jobs to join lavender farming after discovering its profitability.

Similarly, Dr. Jitendra noted that local self-help groups, including

women-led ones, are adopting advanced techniques in apple cultivation, leading to higher yields and longer shelf life for produce. "These are examples of how early industry linkage can transform livelihoods in the region," he said, urging the Chamber to connect entrepreneurs with government agencies and private players on a larger scale.

The Minister also highlighted the StartUp boom in the country, with

nearly 1.7 lakh ventures now registered, over 60 percent of them from tier-2 and tier-3 towns. He argued that cities like Srinagar were well-positioned to ride this wave. "The aspiration levels in smaller towns are higher, and with the right ecosystem, J&K can become a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship," he said.

Pointing to the government's policy shift, Dr. Jitendra said sectors once considered exclusive to the public sector—such as space and biotechnology—had been opened up to private investment, with frameworks already in place for collaboration. He added that India's next economic revolution is expected to be biotechnology-driven, and J&K must find its place in this transformation.

Calling the ICC retreat in Srinagar both timely and symbolic, he said it sent a clear message that the Union Territory is ready to be integrated into India's mainstream economic growth. "This is the best time for industry to engage with Jammu and Kashmir. What is needed is a clear plan and a timeline to make things happen," he concluded.



All India Barwala Sabha honours former Dy CM Tara Chand

STATE TIMES NEWS

CHHAMB: In a function organised by the All India Barwala Sabha at Gigrial village, located in the border area of Chhamb sector, the former Deputy Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Tara Chand, was felicitated for his recent induction into the National SC Advisory Council of the All India Congress Committee (AICC).

Hundreds of members from the Scheduled Caste (SC) community, particularly the Barwala Biradari, gathered to honour their leader, celebrating his recognition at the national level.

Tara Chand, a senior Congress leader, is now the sole representative from J&K in the Council, which is headed by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi.

The event began with a ceremonial welcome, traditional garlanding, and presentation of a shawl to Tara Chand as a mark of respect. Speakers from across the community expressed gratitude to the national Congress leadership for acknowledging the contributions of Tara Chand, describing the honour as a



Former Dy CM, Tara Chand speaking at a programme.

proud moment for the entire SC community of the region.

Leaders recalled the turning point in 1996, when Tara Chand, then a young and humble representative of the community, was given a

Congress mandate - a moment that changed the political landscape for SCs in J&K. Special appreciation was paid to Sonia Gandhi, who appointed Tara Chand as the youngest Speaker of the J&K Legislative Assembly, and later as Deputy Chief Minister in 2008.

Addressing the gathering, Tara Chand thanked his Biradari for their unwavering support and pledged to continue serving the people with dedication. "Development and employment for the youth have always remained my pri-

ority," he said.

He highlighted the implementation of the Reservation Act and inter-district recruitment policy during his tenure, which led to hundreds of SC youth securing jobs, including appointments as teachers in Kashmir Valley—a milestone in social justice and empowerment.

The event concluded with a unanimous pledge by the community to extend full support to the Congress Party under the leadership of Tara Chand.

Prominent speakers included Sham Lal Radha, Capt. Kalidass, Master Harnam Dass, Kiran Panjalia, Seema Devi, Capt. Parkash Chand, Dr. Kartar Chand, Capt. Harbans Lal, Suram Chand, and others.

Vijay Mahajan Charitable Trust leads relief efforts in Jasrota following devastating cloudburst

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: In the wake of the devastating cloudburst that struck Jasrota village in Kathua district, the Vijay Kumar Mahajan Charitable Trust (VMCT) has launched an immediate and impactful relief campaign to support affected families.

Mobilizing within hours of the disaster, VMCT has distributed essential relief materials including dry rations, safe drinking water, clothing, blankets, and first-aid kits. The operation is being carried out in close coordination with local administration and MLA Rajiv Jasrotia to ensure timely and equitable distribution of resources.

VMCT volunteers are working tirelessly on the ground, providing not only physical relief but also emotional support to those who have lost homes and loved ones.

Chhavi Bharat Choudhary, President of the Trust, emphasized the Trust's commitment, "In moments like these, humanity must come



Vijay Kumar Mahajan Charitable Trust members at distribution of essential relief materials.

first. Our mission is to stand with the people of Jasrota and help them rebuild their lives with dignity and strength."

Shri Gangadhar Ji Maharaj, spiritual guide of the Trust, said, "Let us transform pain into prayer and despair into determination. This is the time to come together in compassion and service."

Mahant Rajesh Bittu, who is leading field operations in Jasrota, stated, "Our efforts may seem small compared to the loss, but they are driven

by love, unity, and the spirit of seva (selfless service). We are committed to helping these families find hope again."

Bharat Choudhary, trustee of the Trust, shared, "The suffering of even a single village is the concern of us all. The Trust stands with Jasrota not just today, but for as long as it takes to bring normalcy back to their lives. This is our collective responsibility."

Former Minister Sukhnandan Choudhary praised the initiative, say-

ing, "The swift and compassionate action taken by the Vijay Kumar Mahajan Charitable Trust is commendable. Their service is not just timely, but deeply humane. Others should take inspiration from their example."

With a legacy of selfless service across Jammu & Kashmir, the Vijay Mahajan Charitable Trust continues to be a pillar of strength and compassion during times of crisis.

Also present and actively supporting the relief efforts

were Mahant Mohan Bharti Ji, Swami Somanand Ji Maharaj, Mahant Rajeshwar Giri Ji, and Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma Ji, who offered their blessings and solidarity with the affected families. Their spiritual presence brought comfort and courage to those in distress.

BJP MLAs call on Div Com, DC Jammu, JMC Commissioner; seek immediate relief, long-term flood management

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: In response to the recent flash floods that caused widespread disruption across Jammu district, a delegation of BJP MLAs met with Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar; Deputy Commissioner Jammu, Rakesh Minhas (IAS), and JMC Commissioner Devansh Yadav to review the situation and press for both urgent relief and long-term flood management strategies.

The delegation included senior party legislators Sham Lal Sharma (Jammu North), Prof. Gharu Ram Bhagat (Suchetgarh), Vikram Randhawa (Bahu), Yudhvir Sethi (Jammu East), Mohan Lal Bhagat (Akhnoor), and Surinder Kumar (Marh).

They collectively conveyed the growing distress among citizens in their constituencies and stressed the need for swift administrative response.

The MLAs expressed serious concern over the damage caused by torrential rains and flash floods on 24th August, which resulted in waterlogging, inundation of homes, and significant infrastructure damage. Residents



BJP MLAs calling on Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar.

lost household items, and movement was disrupted due to washed-away lanes, broken drains, and damaged flood protection walls.

They urged the administration to conduct immediate and comprehensive damage assessments covering households, small traders, and farmers, with an aim to deliver timely compensation. Restoration of civic amenities, including drinking water, electricity, and road connectivity, was highlighted as a top priority.

The delegation also pressed for long-term solutions, proposing structural upgrades such as modern drainage systems, flood channels, and regular de-silting of Nallahs. They called for identification of flood-prone zones and implementation of preventive infrastructure to reduce vul-

nerability in the future. The need for medical teams in flood-affected areas was also raised to prevent outbreaks of waterborne diseases.

The administrative heads assured the delegation that surveys and assessments were already underway. Divisional Commissioner Ramesh Kumar informed that a high-level meeting of sectoral officers would be convened, and nodal officers deputed for field assessment

7-day training programme on Scientific Beekeeping concludes

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Department of Agriculture Production & Farmers Welfare Jammu, under its Apiculture Development Scheme, organized a Seven-Day Divisional Level Training Programme on Scientific Beekeeping integrated with Oil Seed Mission for beekeepers and farmers of NMEO-OS. The session, held under the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM), commenced on August 18, 2025.

The programme concluded on Monday with a valedictory session held at Kisan Kendra, Talab Tillo with Director Agriculture Jammu Anil Gupta as the Chief Guest. Among others present were Joint Director Inputs, Dr. Ashwani Kumar; Assistant Entomologist, Rajesh Verma; Agriculture Economist Tilak Raj Sharma; Agronomist (VIS) Vikas Padha; Agriculture Information Officer (PTC) Guldev Raj; District Agriculture Officer Neeraj Rajwal. A group of 25 prospective beekeepers from Oil Seed

and restoration work.

He further assured that road, water, and electricity services would be restored within 48 hours, and detailed reports would be submitted to the Government for further action.

The BJP MLAs appreciated the proactive approach and reaffirmed their support in monitoring the relief efforts and ensuring long-term resilience for the people of Jammu.

Cluster Bhalwal attended the seven-day training programme. The participants also visited the Apiculture Demonstration-cum-Training Centre, Chimney Chak, Jammu, where they received practical hands-on training on the operation of bee hives and management of bee colonies. The Director highlighted the vast potential of apiculture in enhancing farmers' income and emphasized the importance of adopting scientific techniques in beekeeping. He also elaborated on various apiculture-based schemes being implemented by the department to promote beekeeping as a sustainable and profitable livelihood option for farming communities. Joint Director Inputs encouraged farmers to avail departmental support and adopt innovative practices to strengthen beekeeping as an allied agricultural enterprise. Earlier, the programme began with a welcome address by Assistant Entomologist, Rajesh Verma. Later, Certificates, tool kits and Bee flora saplings were distributed among the participants.

J&K Bank organises Financial Inclusion, Re-KYC Awareness Camp in Samba, Jammu

STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Continuing its mission to promote financial inclusion across Jammu & Kashmir, J&K Bank today organized an awareness camp on Re-KYC and Social Security Schemes at Village Nandpur in Samba district of Jammu.

Amid a large gathering people, the event was inaugurated by the Regional Director (RBI -Jammu) Chandrashekhar Azad, who was also the Chief Guest. The Bank's General Manager & Divisional Head (Jammu) Ashok Gupta attended the event along with Zonal Head (Kathua) Suresh Kumar Choudhary, DGM RBI Jammu Ram Saroop, and other senior officers from RBI and the Bank.

Regional Director (RBI) Chandrashekhar Azad commended the Bank's outreach efforts, emphasizing the importance of bringing banking services to every



Regional Director (RBI-Jammu) Chandrashekhar Azad with J&K Bank officers at a meeting.

part of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. "Camps like these play a vital role in ensuring that the benefits of financial inclusion and social security reach even the remotest sections of our society", he said.

On the occasion, he also highlighted the need for timely completion of Re-KYC, which ensures continuous banking services, and warned people to be cautious of digital frauds while adopting safe banking practices. He also spoke about the role of social security schemes in providing financial protection to vulnerable

groups. Earlier, while welcoming the participants, Divisional Head Ashok Gupta underlined the Bank's commitment to empowering communities through financial inclusion. He said, "Re-KYC is a mandatory process where banks update customer information regularly to secure data and prevent financial crimes like money laundering."

He asserted that banks play a crucial role in expanding the reach of social security schemes, ensuring that more and more people gain access to

financial protection and welfare benefits.

During the camp, the Bank officials gave presentations on Re-KYC and various social security schemes. A special play performed by the Bank's team helped raise awareness on financial literacy and responsible banking in an engaging way. On the occasion, RBI officials also shared their insights on the significance of Re-KYC and inclusive banking.

The camp saw active participation from the local community, with many residents enrolling in through-

Ex Minister Sukhnandan slams Omar-led Govt for neglect of nallahs, canals in Jammu rural

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Former Minister and senior BJP leader, Choudhary Sukhnandan Kumar, has strongly criticized the Omar Abdullah-led government for its failure to undertake timely dredging and desilting of nallahs and canals in the rural belt of Jammu, which has now resulted in heavy floods and damage to both residential areas and agricultural land.

During his visit to several flood-affected areas in Jammu Rural constituency, including Talab Tillo, Udaiwala, Marh, and adjoining villages, Kumar said that repeated appeals had been made to the administration to take up dredging of the water channels and nallahs, but the demands were consistently ignored.

"Without raising the issue of statehood every now and then, Omar Abdullah could



have at least ensured basic preventive measures such as dredging of the canals and nallahs in Jammu's rural areas. Today, the negligence has resulted in accumulated silt and

blockage of water flow, which has aggravated the flood situation," Kumar remarked.

The senior BJP leader pointed out that almost all nallahs of Jammu city eventually converge towards the low-lying areas of Talab Tillo, Marh, Patyalichak, Akalpur, Sarora, Suhzadpur, Chouhani Chak, Tikri khani, Tikri Dyala, Tikri Rakwala, Nagrota (Nagrota), Chak Lal Din, Ghoumanasa, Rathua, Taru chak and surrounding plain belts, making these regions highly vulnerable during heavy rains. He said the silting of water tributaries has reached alarming levels, leading to waterlogging and overflowing into fields and residential colonies.

Kumar noted with concern that while houses have suffered extensive damage, it is the farming community that has faced the worst brunt, with large portions of standing crops

destroyed in the floods.

"The government's inaction has dealt a double blow to the farmers—first by destroying their homes and then by wiping out their crops. It is shameful that even routine works like dredging are ignored, leaving poor villagers at the mercy of floods every monsoon," he added.

Kumar urged the administration to immediately start restoration and desilting drives of all major nallahs and canals across Jammu rural areas, and also demanded adequate compensation for the affected farmers and households.

Reiterating BJP's commitment to safeguard the interests of the rural population, the former minister said that Omar-led government's failure to act on basic civic requirements is proof of its misplaced priorities.