

Cultural exchange vital tool for bridging different cultures: LG Kavinder

Praises IPAF for offering a meaningful platform to artists

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

LEH: Cultural exchange is a vital medium for bridging different cultures by fostering understanding, promoting harmony, reducing prejudices, and preserving diverse traditions. By sharing ideas, values, and practices, communities can build stronger connections and nurture global citizenship.

This was stated by the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta, while addressing the International Performing Arts Festival 2025 at Arya Nagarjuna Auditorium, Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS), Choglamsar. The event was attended by Vice-Chancellor CIBS, Prof Rajesh Ranjan, school principals, teachers and students.

The Lt Governor said art and culture transcend language barriers, create empathy, and offer shared experiences through storytelling, performances, and visual arts. Such expressions, he noted, highlight common human experiences while celebrating diversity, thereby promoting intercultural dialogue and social cohesion. He stressed that art builds inclusive societies by promoting peace and countering ethnocentric attitudes.



LG Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta speaking at International Performing Arts Festival 2025.

Underseering Ladakh's unique identity, the Lt Governor said the region is not only known for its breathtaking landscapes but also for its vibrant festivals, unique traditions, and historical role as a cultural crossroads. These attributes, he added, strengthen the unity

of the people of Ladakh.

Quoting the message of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam-"the world is one family"-often propagated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shri Kavinder Gupta emphasised the need to spread this philosophy across the globe as a reflection of India's deep-rooted cultural values.

Kavinder Gupta praised the International Performing Arts Festival (IPAF), founded in Ahmedabad in 2015 by social entrepreneur Shyam Pandey, for offering a mean-

ingful platform to artists, including differently-abled performers and young talent, to showcase traditional and contemporary art forms nationally and internationally.

Highlighting tourism as a beneficiary of Ladakh's cultural richness, the Lt Governor said lakhs of tourists visit the region every year to witness its heritage, and it is the responsibility of the people to ensure visitors return with happy memories. He added that the UT

Administration is committed to preserving Ladakh's cultural traditions through various initiatives to keep younger generations connected to their roots.

The event featured soulful performances by Pandit Indu Prakash Trivedi, who presented classical ragas, thumri, dadra and ghazals. Kathak exponent Aditi Vashistha, Konchok Sopari Group and artists from CIBS also enthralled the audience with their presentations.



Next-Gen GST Reform a Diwali gift, big relief for middle class, farmers, common man: Gaurav

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir BJP Spokesperson Gaurav Gupta said that the Modi Government has once again delivered on its promise of 'Ease of Living' by announcing the Next-Gen GST Reform, a landmark Diwali gift that will directly benefit households, farmers, students, and businesses across the nation.

He said this reform is not just a tax adjustment but a people-first initiative designed to ease family budgets, reduce agricultural costs, make healthcare affordable, support education, and empower small entrepreneurs.

He expressed these views while addressing a press conference along with party spokesperson Balbir Ram Rattan and Media Incharge Dr. Pardeep Mahotra, at party headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

Gupta explained that household essentials such as hair oil, shampoo, toothpaste, soap, tooth brushes, shaving cream, butter, ghee, cheese, namkeens, utensils, feeding



Jammu and Kashmir BJP Spokesperson Gaurav Gupta talking to reporters.

bottles, clinical diapers, and sewing machines, will now attract only 5% GST. This will bring immediate relief to every family by reducing monthly household expenditure.

Highlighting the importance of rural prosperity, Gaurav Gupta said tractors, tyres, bio-pesticides, micro-nutrients, drip irrigation systems, and cultivation and harvesting machinery have all been reduced to just 5% GST. This bold move will cut down input costs and directly raise farmers' incomes, strengthening the rural economy.

Gaurav Gupta further stated that the government has taken a giant step to make healthcare affordable. Health and life insurance premiums, earlier taxed at 18%, are now exempt from GST, while essential items like oxygen, diagnostic kits, corrective spectacles, and glucometer strips have been brought down to 5%. Similarly, education has been made completely tax-free with GST removed from notebooks, maps, charts, pencils, crayons, and erasers, ensuring that children's learning is free from financial burden.

Gupta emphasized that the Modi Government had already provided massive relief to the middle class by exempting annual income up to ₹12 lakh from income tax. Now, with the Next-Gen GST Reform, the middle class enjoys a double benefit - savings through income tax relief and reduced costs on everyday essentials, electronics, and vehicles. Hybrid and CNG cars, motorcycles, and transport vehicles have been reduced from 28% to 18%, while air conditioners, televisions, projectors, and dishwashers have also been low-

ered to 18%. This will allow middle-class families to save more, live better, and improve their quality of life.

Gupta also highlighted that the reform is not limited to tax cuts but also simplifies compliance for businesses. With automatic GST registration in just three working days, faster refunds, and a simplified tax structure, small enterprises and MSMEs will be able to focus on growth and innovation instead of paperwork and procedural hurdles.

Concluding, Gaurav said that the Next-Gen GST Reform reflects Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji's vision of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas. It ensures real savings in every household, greater prosperity for farmers, accessible healthcare, affordable education, and an enabling environment for businesses.

"This Diwali, while diyas will brighten homes, Modi Sarkar's reforms will brighten lives. This is not just a policy announcement - this is Modi's guarantee," he said.

Rana reviews water supply restoration measures across Jammu



Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana chairing a meeting on Thursday.

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JAMMU: In a move to ensure safe and reliable drinking water for the people of Jammu province, Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment, and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana on Thursday chaired a meeting to review the progress of water supply restoration measures.

The meeting focused on assessing the ongoing restoration of essential water infrastructure severely impacted by recent flash floods, incessant rainfall and widespread landslides.

During the meeting, the Minister reviewed the status of key water supply installations in Jammu city and appreciated the tireless efforts of the Jal Shakti Department staff and engineers.

He specially commended their work in successfully restoring operations at Tawi Filtration Plant at Dhouthly, which resumed functioning late last night. He emphasized that potable water from the plant be supplied to Panjthirhi, Mubarak Mandi, Ustad Mohalla, Kachi Chowani, Jain

Bazar, Zulaka Mohalla and other areas.

The meeting also reviewed the status of the 600 mm diameter rising main from Sitlee to Lohar, which had been significantly damaged.

The Minister instructed the concerned engineers to expedite restoration work and ensure full resumption of water supply.

Assurances were also extended to residents in localities such as Janipur, Roopnagar, Bantalab, Keran Swarn Vihar, Muthi, and Indra Colony, who have faced intermittent water supply in the wake of the natural calamity.

The Minister instructed the concerned engineers to expedite restoration work and ensure full resumption of water supply. He also called for fully restoring water supply to Janipur, Roopnagar, Bantalab, Keran Swarn Vihar, Muthi, and Indra Colony, which faced intermittent water supply in the wake of the natural calamity. Taking note of the situation concerning the Sitlee-Manda rising main, the Minister issued firm instructions to engineering teams to work

round the clock to restore this vital supply line that provides water to localities, including Old City, New Plot Rehari, Bakshi Nagar, and adjoining areas.

The Minister was also briefed on the status of tube wells across Jammu, where 240 out of 255 installations are currently functional.

He was informed that restoration of the remaining 15 tube wells is being prioritized and will be completed within the next two days.

To address the immediate water needs of residents in severely affected zones, the Minister directed the deployment of a fleet of 90 water tankers.

He also instructed the department to establish a dedicated 24/7 control room to respond to public grievances and complaints in a timely and efficient manner.

Rana reiterated Government's commitment to ensuring that all efforts are directed toward mitigating the hardships faced by the people of Jammu and restoring normalcy at the earliest.

SMVDSB provides relief material for second consecutive day

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KATRA: The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) commenced its relief efforts on Wednesday as per the directions of Chairman, Manoj Sinha (Lt. Governor; J&K UT) for the second consecutive day. Continuing with humanitarian approach, the Shrine Board provided essential relief material, extending support to both Reasi and Udhampur District Administrations.

These materials include dry ration kits, utensils, blankets, tarpaulins, tents, and other necessary items for immediate assistance to families affected by the recent floods and landslides in the region.

Notably, recent heavy rains and landslides in Reasi and



Udhampur districts have severely impacted several villages. In response to this crisis, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board has pledged to actively participate in relief and rehabilitation measures. So far, the Shrine Board has successfully reached out to

over 1,200 affected families. Continuing with the endeavor, relief materials were formally handed over to the Reasi and Udhampur district administrations, who are distributing them on a priority basis to those affected by the calamity. The Board is exceeding its ini-

tial target in terms of the number of families being assisted.

Teams from the Shrine Board visited the affected areas and with the support of local administration, ensured distribution of relief supplies across dozens of villages in and around Katra. These teams assessed the ground realities and provided immediate assistance based on the needs of the affected families.

In addition, the Board has set up temporary shelter facilities at Shakti Bhawan, Niharika for displaced families from the village of Purana Daroor. Free meals are also being provided at these shelters, ensuring a safe and secure environment for those who have been severely affected.

Local residents expressed deep gratitude for this humanitarian effort by the Shrine Board. They remarked that the Board has not only fulfilled its social responsibilities during this difficult time but has also demonstrated genuine compassion and a strong spirit of service.

It is pertinent to mention that the Shrine Board is not only committed in facilitating the pilgrimage experience for millions of devotees, but also places equal importance on addressing the needs of the local communities. This ongoing relief campaign stands as a testimony to the fact that the Shrine Board is deeply rooted in the values of social service and humanitarian commitment.

Grant of Statehood to UT of J&K or UT of Ladakh is for Parliament to decide unless SC holds invalid use of Art-3 for reducing State to UT

Some myths about J&K State related issues cultivated over years had also been dismantled by Constitution Bench Judgement of Dec 11, 2023

Dec 11, 2023 Constitution Bench Judgement In Re: Article 370 of the Constitution: Validity of C.O 272 & C.O 273 of Aug 2019 :: Act 34 of 2019

■ DAYA SAGAR

With due respects for the Supreme Court of India, it is also worth taking note here that in the December 11, 2023 judgement of the 5 judge constitution bench in the case of 'Original Writ / Appellate Jurisdiction Writ Petition (Civil) No. 1099 of 2019 In RE: Article 370 of the Constitution' it is also said in Analysis-Part E (Para-503 page 342 of December 11, 2023 of Judgement <"503. The Solicitor General (for the Union of India) submitted that statehood will be restored to Jammu and Kashmir and that its status as a Union Territory is temporary. The Solicitor General submitted that the status of the Union Territory of Ladakh will not be affected by the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. In view of the submission made by the Solicitor General that statehood would be restored of Jammu and Kashmir; we do not find it necessary to determine whether the reorganisation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir is permissible under Article 3. The status of Ladakh as a Union Territory is upheld because Article 3(a) read with Explanation I permits forming a Union Territory by separation of a

territory from any State. This Court is alive to the security concerns in the territory. Direct elections to the Legislative Assemblies which is one of the paramount features of representative democracy in India cannot be put on hold until statehood is restored. We direct that steps shall be taken by the Election Commission of India to conduct elections to the Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir constituted under Section 14 of the Reorganisation Act by 30th September 2024. Restoration of statehood shall take place at the earliest and as soon as possible".

And in the context of reorganisations- Art-3 of COI at in Part -E Para 504 page 343 the judgement also says <"The question of whether Parliament can extinguish the character of statehood by converting a State into one or more Union Territories in exercise of power under Article - 3 is left open. In an appropriate case, this Court must construe the scope of powers under Article 3 in light of the consequences highlighted above, the historical context for the creation of federating units, and its impact on the principles of federalism and representative democracy"> .

That means that constitutional technicality for use of Art- 3 for reducing the status of a State to a UT had not been

examined by the SC and SC had opined that in an appropriate case, this Court must construe the scope of powers under Article 3 in light of the consequences highlighted above, the historical context for the creation of federating units, and its impact on the principles of federalism and representative democracy.

So it could be inferred that the constitution bench had given a lead to the present 'Government' to apply a correction by according the status of a State to UT of J&K as soon as possible . In common thinking one could ask (i) reverting the UT status for J&K to Statehood can be done by Parliament and not by government (Executive could present a bill and Parliament may or may not endorse that) and (ii) SC (directing) Restoration of statehood to UT of J&K shall take place at the earliest and as soon as possible but directing so without a time limit leaves the subject in air for unlimited time. Should not the Apex court have atleast fixed some time date as had been directed for the elections to Legislative Assembly (by 30th September 2024). No doubt the order of the Apex Court is a law and has to be



A Look through the Mist Part-III

since only after that one can if required go for prayer / request for review if felt necessary to the Hon'ble court but that too subject to availability of social & economic means available to a common citizen.

A petition with Title: In RE Article 370 of the Constitution and in the matter of (Application): Zahoor Ahmad Bhat and Anr. vs. Union of India in Oct 2024 with the prayer something like that 'the results of the said elections 'are' to be pronounced on October 8, 2024. It is submitted that the formation of the Legislative Assembly before the restoration of Statehood would cause serious reduction of democratically elected government in Jammu and Kashmir causing grave violation of the idea of federalism which forms part of the basic structure of the Constitution of India and so restoration of statehood to J&K should be within a specific time frame, preferably within two months'. The said case was said to be listed on 8th Aug 2025 but was not listed on August 8, 2025 and J&K Statehood

case was fixed for hearing by Supreme Court on August 14, 2025 Supreme Court bench comprising Chief Justice of India BR Gavai and Justice K Vinod Chandran heard the petition where Solicitor General of India G Tushar Mehta said <"We assured statehood after elections. There is a peculiar position of this part of our country. I don't know why this issue this agitated now. This particular State is not the correct State to muddy the water. I will still seek instructions. 8 weeks may be given," and the Supreme Court asked the central government to respond within 8 weeks regarding the statehood petition for Jammu and Kashmir, emphasising the recent Pahalgam terrorist attack. The court is said to have noted the need to consider the ground situation for restoring statehood. It has also been reported that on August 25, 2025 SC refused an urgent hearing on the J&K Statehood petition and instead listed the matter for 10th October 2025. It has to be acknowledged that SC cannot issue directions to Government or Parliament for according the status of State to a UT as is the present case with in the provisions of the prevailing constitutional law and the present reference made to the government on August 14, 2025 can be taken w.r.t the

Solicitor General of India quoted to have said on August 14, 2025 that "we" assured to grant statehood after elections but the suitable occasion/time has to be set by the government for referring to Parliament and the parliament to take appropriate decision. Yes in case the SC finds it an appropriate occasion to take to examination the question that can Art-3 be used by Parliament for changing the status of a State of India Union to a UT or more UTs then surely the SC can if judged otherwise (Judgement of December 11, 2023 Part -E Para 504 page 343 the judgement also says <"The question of whether Parliament can extinguish the character of statehood by converting a State into one or more Union Territories in exercise of power under Article - 3 is left open. In an appropriate case, this Court must construe the scope of powers under Article 3 in light of the consequences highlighted above, the historical context for the creation of federating units, and its impact on the principles of federalism and representative democracy">).

(The writer is Sr Journalist & analyst of J&K affairs dayasagar45@yahoo.com 09419796096)