

Neglect on flood mitigation exposes BJP's hollow claims: Sadhotra

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: National Conference Additional General Secretary and former minister Ajay Kumar Sadhotra on Friday expressed grave concern over the continued neglect of flood mitigation measures in Jammu and Kashmir, calling out the "double engine" BJP government for failing to deliver on its decade-long promises. During an extensive tour of flood-affected Azad Nagar, Gadigarh in the Jammu South Constituency, Sadhotra said, "Despite the lessons from the 2014 floods, very little has been implemented on the ground. The situation today is a grim reminder of the govern-



NC Additional General Secretary Ajay Sadhotra at Azad Nagar Gadigarh flood hit village in Jammu South.

ment's lack of preparedness and foresight." He pointed out that the recent incessant rains have caused widespread devastation, exposing the vulnera-

bility of basic infrastructure. "Roads have collapsed, bridges have become unsafe, and power and utility services have suffered repeated breakdowns," he said,

adding that this was not just due to heavy rainfall but due to long-standing failures in planning and execution. "Development is not about slogans and photo-ops," Sadhotra stated. "It requires vision, planning, and sustained action. The BJP government has excelled in creating hype but failed in delivering meaningful solutions to people's genuine problems."

He strongly criticized the state of the Jammu Smart City Project, terming it a "missed opportunity."

"The project raised expectations for modern infrastructure, efficient services, and better civic amenities, but it has failed to meet even basic needs," he said. "Instead of becoming a model city, Jammu has become a case study in mismanagement and misplaced priorities."

Sadhotra also praised the ongoing efforts by the Omar

Abdullah-led National Conference, saying it is actively working on infrastructure upgrades and course correction to bring relief to the people. He stressed the need for transparent, accountable, and people-centric governance, especially in a region with unique geographical and environmental challenges.

"The people of Jammu and Kashmir deserve reliable infrastructure, efficient services, and development that is sustainable and inclusive. The National Conference has always stood for planned, long-term growth," he added.

He was accompanied by Naresh Bittu, Raghubir Singh, Rakesh Kumar Sharma, Amit Kumar, Jatinder Singh Lucky, Mohd Aslam, Gurmeet Singh, Pinky Khalsa, Ashraf Ali, Sewak Singh, and other party workers during his visit.

Bharat Sevashram Sangha Jammu provides relief to rain-affected families

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: In the wake of heavy rainfall that wreaked havoc in several areas of Jammu, the Bharat Sevashram Sangha, Jammu branch, stepped forward to provide emergency relief to affected families.

Jugal Kishore Sharma, Member of Parliament and Chander Mohan Gupta, former Mayor of Jammu were the special invitees of the occasion. Ration kits and tarpaulins were distributed among the most impacted residents of Kishanpur, Kanha Pota, Kanyala, Chhurta, Jhajjar Kotli, Mand, Dansal, and Bajalta villages.

Srimat Swami Satyamitranandaji Maharaj, Secretary of Bharat Sevashram Sangha Jammu and Kashmir Branch, expressed his concern for the affected families and empha-



Bharat Sevashram Sangha, Jammu branch providing relief to affected families on Friday.

sized the importance of timely humanitarian aid.

"Our mission is to stand by the people in times of distress. These relief kits and essential supplies are a small token of support, but they will help families meet immediate needs and recover from this calamity," he said.

Jugal Kishore Sharma lauded the Sangha's efforts and urged citizens to come forward and help the victims. "Heavy rains have caused

significant hardship in these villages. I appeal to fellow citizens and organizations to contribute generously so that the affected families can regain stability. The Sangha's swift action demonstrates how community efforts can bring relief where it is needed most," he stated.

Chander Mohan Gupta praised the relief drive and highlighted the need for collective responsibility in such times.

Bhalla visits flood-hit Jammu, demands relief, compensation, accountability

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Working President of the Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) and former Cabinet Minister, Raman Bhalla, on Friday visited flood-affected areas of Jammu and interacted with distressed families, urging the administration to expedite relief and rehabilitation measures with seriousness and accountability.

Bhalla, accompanied by Amrit Bali, Pawan Bhagat, Gurcharan Singh Happy, and Bittu, toured Ward 73 and adjoining areas of the Floriculture Garden, as well as the Bhour Camp cremation ground, where he directly witnessed the challenges faced by locals.

Expressing concern over the slow response, Bhalla demanded immediate action to resolve the ration card crisis, stating that many families are being denied government aid due to non-bifurcation of ration cards.

"If a family has four separate households but only one card, the rest are excluded from relief and benefits," he said. He called for special



JKPCC Working President Raman Bhalla interacting with rain hit residents.

camp at the panchayat level to address the issue urgently.

Over ten days after the floods, Bhalla noted that debris and mud still block lanes and homes, while the shortage of manpower and machinery continues.

He demanded the diversion of heavy equipment from highways or involvement of allied agencies to restore normalcy. Bhalla also highlighted the submerged cremation grounds, forcing families to perform last rites in distant villages - a situation he termed "tragic and undignified."

Calling for immediate restoration of roads, deployment of medical teams, sani-

tation drives, and distribution of essentials, he warned of potential outbreaks of waterborne diseases.

Criticizing the BJP-led government, Bhalla mocked Jammu's "Smart City" tag. "If this is a smart city, what does failure look like?" he asked.

He demanded financial compensation for affected families and farmers who lost crops and land, and expressed disappointment that flood-hit areas have not yet been declared a National Disaster Zone.

Bhalla said, "The government must act beyond optics. The people deserve real action and accountability."

Rekha Mahajan inaugurates Shikha's 'Numaish-2025' Exhibition

Highlights Modi Govt's focus on women entrepreneurship

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Rekha Mahajan, Vice President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) J&K, has underlined the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's commitment to promoting women entrepreneurship, stating that various schemes launched specifically for women have boosted their confidence and enabled financial independence across the nation, including in the Union Territory.

Adv. Rekha Mahajan, Vice President of BJP J&K, who graced the chief guest, made these remarks while addressing an audience after inaugurating the two-day 'Numaish - Karwachauth & Diwali Edition' exhibition, held at Zone By The Park near Jammu Tawi Railway Station, showcasing an impressive collection of fashion, lifestyle, and home décor.

The exhibition, curated by Shikha Soi, aims to offer visitors a blend of classy and contemporary designs with a creative touch. Speaking on the occasion, Mahajan appreciated the initiative, highlighting how such exhibitions not only showcase innovative designs but also provide opportunities for women entrepreneurs and local talent to promote their work. Mahajan emphasized



BJP J&K Vice President, Rekha Mahajan visiting exhibition after inauguration at Jammu.

that women are increasingly visible in India's startup ecosystem. Many are leaving high-profile jobs or stepping out of traditional domestic roles to venture into entrepreneurship. "Women-owned enterprises are playing a crucial role in society, inspiring others and generating more employment opportunities," she said, stressing the need for sustainable growth to ensure balanced economic development. She noted that women are currently among the major beneficiaries of government-backed schemes, which provide financial support to start and expand businesses. Mahajan added that the increasing presence of women entre-

preneurs is transforming the demographic characteristics of business and contributing significantly to the country's economic growth. She expressed confidence that with adequate support and determination, women entrepreneurs would continue to play a vital role in shaping India's economic and social landscape. The exhibition will run for two days, on September 5 and 6, with free entry for all visitors. It features a diverse array of products ranging from traditional and modern fashion to home décor and lifestyle accessories, attracting shoppers and enthusiasts from across the region.

Shikha Soi, the curator of the event, described Numaish as a platform that combines creativity with commerce, allowing artists and designers to reach a wider audience while offering visitors a unique shopping experience. The exhibition emphasizes supporting local talent and fostering entrepreneurship, especially among women.

Shikha expressed her excitement, saying, "This is my first exhibition, organized ahead of the festival season, and I am thrilled to share it with the community." She added that since the opening day coincided with Teachers' Day, she wanted to honor educators in a special way. "To show my gratitude and respect, I am offering exclusive discounts and free gifts to all teachers visiting the exhibition today. It is my small gesture to recognize their tireless efforts in shaping young minds and inspiring the next generation," Shikha said.

The grand opening drew a large crowd, with attendees appreciating the range of exhibits and the opportunity to explore new trends in fashion and lifestyle. Visitors were encouraged to experience the curated collections and take inspiration from the artistic displays, making the exhibition both a cultural and commercial success.

J.D. Singh gets greetings on appointment as Convenor BJP Senior Citizens Cell



■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: BJP Spokesperson for Jammu and Kashmir, Balbir Ram Rattan, and Media Incharge Dr. Pardeep Mahotra extended warm greetings to J.D. Singh on his appointment as Convenor of the Senior Citizens Cell of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir for third consecutive term.

Both senior leaders appreciated J.D. Singh's previous tenures within the party, lauding his dedicated service, leadership qualities, and commitment to the party's ideology.

They highlighted how his earlier contributions demonstrated his capabilities and earned him further responsibility within the organization.

His appointment as Convenor, they said, is a recognition of his continued commitment and experience, which will serve as a valuable asset in strengthening the party's outreach among senior citizens.

"I am confident that J.D. Singh will continue to devote his time and utilize his past experience to further empower the Senior Citizens Cell and contribute meaningfully to the party's objectives," said Balbir Ram Rattan.

Dr. Pardeep Mahotra expressed similar views, adding that the Senior Citizens Cell plays a vital role in connecting with one of the most experienced segments of society, and under Singh's leadership, it is

expected to grow more vibrant and effective.

In response, J.D. Singh expressed heartfelt thanks to both leaders for their trust and support. He assured the party leadership of his continued dedication and tireless efforts to engage senior citizens across the region.

He said that he feels humbled by this responsibility and will work diligently to expand the cell's reach and strengthen the party at the grassroots level.

Withdrawal fee hike policy: ABVP to JU

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) Jammu University Unit has strongly condemned the recent decision by the University authorities to implement a 10 per cent annual fee hike across all departments. The hike affects postgraduate (PG) and undergraduate (UG) courses, hostel accommodations, and examination fees, sparking outrage among students.

Talking to reporters, ABVP leader Chaitanya Magotra said, "We strongly oppose the 10 per cent annual fee hike for PG admissions. This move places an undue financial burden on students and hampers their right to quality education. We demand its immediate rollback."

Shivam Jasrotia, President of ABVP Law School, termed the policy regressive and said, "A 10 per cent hike for UG admissions will discourage talented students from eco-



ABVP Jammu University Unit members talking to reporters.

nomic weaker sections from pursuing higher education. The University must prioritize student welfare over profit."

Amit Sadotra, Vice President of ABVP Jammu University, criticized the hike in hostel and examination fees, stating, "Basic facilities like hostels and exams are becoming unaffordable. The administration must stop commercializing education and rethink its priorities."

ABVP Jammu University

has demanded the immediate withdrawal of the fee hike policy and urged the administration to adopt student-friendly measures focusing on accessibility, affordability, and academic excellence.

The student body has warned that if the administration fails to act, they will initiate a campus-wide agitation. ABVP reaffirmed its commitment to stand by students and fight against any policy that undermines equitable access to education.

Public awareness, timely help, administrative support crucial for saving lives in road accidents: Dr. Pardeep

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir BJP Media Incharge Dr. Pardeep Mahotra has stressed the urgent need for massive public awareness and proactive administrative support, including the police, hospitals, and allied departments, to save precious lives in the crucial golden hours after road accidents. He welcomed the recent bold decision of Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari to increase the cash reward for Good Samaritans from ₹5,000 to ₹25,000 as part of a larger road safety campaign aimed at reducing fatalities and encouraging active public participation during emergencies.

Dr. Pardeep Mahotra termed the move courageous and compassionate, noting that it places humanity at the center of governance. He said this step will not only motivate citizens to extend timely help to accident



victims but also remove the long-standing fear of police, courts, and harassment that has held back many potential saviours in critical moments.

He emphasized that countless lives can be saved if timely help is extended without hesitation. "This decision breaks the mental barrier that has cost us so many lives. Now, it is the responsibility of local administrations, police, and hospitals to ensure smooth implementation of this policy and guarantee the rights and protection of those who come forward to help," he said. Dr. Pardeep Mahotra fur-

ther praised the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, under whose guidance several progressive reforms have been undertaken to safeguard the lives of citizens and ensure dignity in governance. From stricter road safety laws to nationwide awareness campaigns, the Modi government has consistently demonstrated its commitment to transforming India into a safer and more responsible society. This decision on Good Samaritans is another example of people-centric governance where compassion, courage, and humanity are given the highest priority. Calling upon civil society, NGOs, and youth organizations, Dr. Pardeep urged for a strong and continuous awareness campaign to inform citizens not only about the increased reward but also about the legal protections available under the Good Samaritan Law.

Ashoka emblem at Hazratbal shrine sparks row; official demands action against vandalisation of plaque

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Engraving the national emblem on the renovation plaque of the Hazratbal mosque here has sparked a controversy as locals and political leaders have lashed out at the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board, with its chairperson calling for registering FIRs against those opposing it.

The plaque was vandalised by unidentified people and the national emblem removed with stones. Hours later, Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board Chairperson Darakshan Andrabi called for arresting and booking the "hooligans" under the Public Safety Act (PSA), terming them "terrorists". In a statement posted on X, the ruling National Conference (NC) said it has always upheld the guiding principle of "Sher-i-Kashmir" Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. "Sher-i-Kashmir ka kya irshaad -- Hindu, Muslim, Sikh Ittihaad. Unity, mutual respect, and dignity for all faiths remain central to our ideology. It is therefore a matter of grave concern that practices contrary to the fundamental principles of Islam, such as the use of pictorial or symbolic depictions of living beings, are being introduced inside the sacred Hazratbal shrine -- the spiritual heart of our people where thousands gather every day for prayers. In Islam, the principle of Tawheed clearly prohibits such representations. For devotees, this is not a small matter but a direct affront to their

deeply held religious sentiments. "The Waqf is not the personal estate of any individual. It is a trust run on the contributions and donations of ordinary Muslims, and it must be managed in line with their faith and traditions. Yet we now witness an unelected individual, with no mandate from the people of Jammu and Kashmir, crowning herself inside holi shrines -- the very places where Dastaar Bandi, a long held religious cultural practice was banned. This act not only disrespects the sanctity of our shrines but also mocks the very principles of accountability and humility that Islam upholds," it said. The party added that even more disturbing is that "instead of offering an apology to the people for hurting their religious sentiments -- which under Indian law itself constitutes an offence -- threats are being issued of arrests under the PSA". "Is this the future of Waqf management in Jammu and Kashmir -- run not with respect for faith and community, but with arrogance, spectacle, and fear?" it asked. "Our shrines are places of faith, humility, and unity. They cannot be turned into platforms for personal glorification," the NC said. Devotees who visited the shrine that houses the relic of the Prophet Muhammad slammed the Waqf Board for inscribing the Ashoka emblem on the inauguration stone inside the sacred place and maintained that the presence of any figure or shape at Muslim religious places is against the

Islamic concept of monotheism. The mosque underwent renovation recently, and the reconstruction and redevelopment project was inaugurated by Andrabi. The inauguration plaque placed inside the shrine had the national emblem etched in the stone, drawing sharp criticism from various quarters. Devotees said it was "shameful" on the part of the Waqf Board to be "insensitive" to the religious sentiments of the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir. Chief spokesperson of the NC and Dadiab MLA Tanvir Sadiq said placing a sculpted figure at the shrine goes against Islam, which forbids idol worship. "I'm not a religious scholar but in Islam, idol worship is strictly forbidden -- the gravest of sins. The foundation of our faith is Tawheed. Placing a sculpted figure at the revered Hazratbal Dargah goes against this very belief. Sacred spaces must reflect only the purity of Tawheed, nothing else," Sadiq said in a post on X. After the congregational prayers on Friday, some people broke the inauguration plaque with stones and removed the national emblem. Addressing a press conference at Hazratbal, a visibly angry Andrabi termed the incident "unfortunate" and said some people are playing politics over the issue. The Waqf Board chairperson called for the registration of FIRs against those opposed to the placing of the national emblem at the mosque. "This (incident) is not a scar on the stone, this is a

scar on my heart. This is a scar on the Constitution, which the elected leaders here raise. Do the leaders here not use the emblem? Does our elected chief minister not take the emblem along?" she asked. Labelling those who removed the emblem as militants, Andrabi said ultras are not found in the forests of Jammu and Kashmir only. "I want to tell police, security forces, the prime minister and the home Minister that militants are not limited to jungles, they are not coming from across (the border), these hooligans are (militants), who broke the emblem with stones. They should be found and booked under the PSA. They are trying to vitiate the atmosphere here," she said. She called for registering FIRs against those involved in vandalising the plaque. "I appeal to the home minister, LG and DGP to not let anyone of them go away. They are roaming freely like they used to. They have vitiated the atmosphere. They cannot bear happiness. I appeal to the DGP, IGP and security forces to register FIRs against all of them, book (them) under the PSA and arrest them. Otherwise, I will sit on a hunger strike," the Waqf Board chairperson said. She also called for the registration of an FIR against Sadiq. "The Assembly member who tweeted this, an FIR against him is necessary, because it looks like that these (people who vandalised the plaque) were his hooligans," she said. Andrabi also asked police and

Waqf Board officials to bodily search the MLA if and when he visits the shrine, "so that there are no currency notes in his pocket. Otherwise, if he has, then that will be 'makroh' (detestable) to be taken inside". She said those who have a problem with the use of the national emblem should not carry currency notes, which feature the emblem, while visiting the shrine. "Had there been (Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister) Omar Abdullah's name, would they have done the same thing? They cannot bear that anyone other than them can work -- work that is appreciated across the country," she said. NC's Srinagar MP and Shia leader Ruhullah Mehdi said attempts to "monumentalise egos inside Hazratbal are not acts of devotion but of arrogance". "A sacred place that has stood for centuries needs no one's nameplate for legitimacy. People were rightly offended by this dangerous attempt to play with religious sensitivities for self-glorification," Mehdi said in a post on his official X handle. He said the Hazratbal shrine has seen reconstructions before, but never were such means used to claim credit.

Referring to the Waqf Board chairperson's call for lodging FIRs against those who vandalised the plaque, he said "any talk of using PSA in the case only adds insult to injury".

"It is foolish, unacceptable, and an assault on people's attachment with their beloved shrine," Mehdi said.