

JAMMU & KASHMIR

J&K Agriculture holds immense potential for new startups, CM Omar

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
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Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today highlighted the immense potential of agriculture and allied sectors in Jammu and Kashmir, stating that initiatives such as the Jammu & Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project (JKCIP) are playing a crucial role in nurturing a vibrant startup ecosystem and promoting innovation-driven enterprises in Jammu and Kashmir. The Chief Minister was addressing the Startup Outreach Programme organised under JKCIIP at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology Jammu (SKUAST-Jammu), jointly organised by the University and the Agriculture Production Department, Government of Jammu and Kashmir. The programme witnessed participation from Minister for Agriculture Javid Ahmed Dar, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Vice Chancellor SKUAST-Jammu Dr. B. N. Tripathi, Mission Director Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) Sandeep Kumar, Director Research SKUAST-Jammu Dr. S. K. Gupta and Registrar & Dean Faculty of Agriculture Dr. Amit Kumar. The event was also attended by university faculty and staff, entrepreneurs, industrialists, startup founders and students from several colleges across the Jammu division.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister emphasized that the youth must transition from being job-seekers to job-creators by harnessing innovation and entrepreneurship in agriculture and allied sectors. Emphasizing the scope of Agriculture, CM said, "When we come to deciding what industry should be set up? What is the potential in it? and if there is great possibility of success, then it is agriculture. And with agriculture, we decide we have to set up this type of industry."

He noted that there exists a widespread misconception



tion that Jammu and Kashmir's economy is driven solely by tourism. "When I tell people that in our SGDP, agriculture and horticulture are equally significant along with tourism, they get surprised. They have no idea how strong our agricultural ecosystem is. Agriculture and allied sectors like horticulture, fisheries and apiculture together form a vast economic network," he said, adding that students today stand at a crucial juncture where they must take important decisions about their future careers.

Highlighting the limitations of government employment, the Chief Minister candidly told the students that not everyone could secure government jobs. "You all know that if I stand up and say that every one of you will get a government job, within a year I will prove myself wrong. Because the truth is that all of you cannot get government jobs. Some will, but many will not. So what will the rest do?" he asked. Explaining the region's economic realities, he said that unlike areas endowed with resources such as coal, iron ore or oil, Jammu and Kashmir must build industries based on its existing strengths. "If we had coal under the ground or iron ore or oil like some other regions, perhaps we could have set up big factories here. But that is not our reality. We will have to build industries based on what we already have," he said, stressing that agriculture and allied activities offer the most viable path for sustainable economic growth in the region.

The Chief Minister observed that traditional agricultural practices alone may not be sufficient to sustain livelihoods and called for a shift towards value addition and modern agricultural entrepreneurship. "There

was a time when our youth were deeply connected with traditional farming, but gradually their focus shifted away because agriculture appeared uncertain. Weather disruptions, difficulties in reaching markets and other challenges discouraged many," he said. He noted that programmes such as the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), JKCIIP and Mission YUVA have been designed to transform agriculture into a modern, value-added and technology-driven sector. "The land that we have will remain limited. In fact, agricultural land is shrinking compared to what existed twenty or thirty years ago. So the question is how do we keep agriculture viable? The answer lies in value addition, innovation and entrepreneurship," he added.

Referring to dairy production as an example, the Chief Minister highlighted the immense scope for value addition in Jammu and Kashmir. "In Jammu and Kashmir, we process only about six to seven percent of the milk we produce. Compare that with Gujarat, where nearly ninety-three percent of milk undergoes processing and value addition. When you convert milk into products like paneer, khoya or other dairy items, you increase its value manifold," he said. He also cited opportunities in sectors such as meat production, fisheries, honey, fruits, vegetables and floriculture. Referring to one of the award-winning young innovators, he said, "The young girl whom we felicitated today noticed that the shelf life of flowers in our region was only about three days. She simply worked on better packaging techniques, and the same flowers could now last for fifteen days. Jammu is a city of temples, and flowers will always be in demand here.

This is how a small innovation can create a business opportunity."

Encouraging students to pursue entrepreneurship without fear of failure, the Chief Minister stressed that innovation often involves risks and setbacks. "You don't necessarily need a government job to succeed. What you need is intention, an idea and the passion to do something meaningful. After that, we, whether as a government or as institutions like this university, are here to support you," he said. Drawing inspiration from global entrepreneurs, he remarked, "Some people get ideas even while sleeping at night. You might be inspired by entrepreneurs like Elon Musk. His rockets worth billions sometimes explode in the sky, but he does not see that as failure. He says he learns as much from the explosion as from success." Urging the youth to overcome fear, he added, "Do not be afraid of failure. Be afraid of not trying. If you fail, we will help you rise again. Try, innovate and move forward—we are here to help you achieve success. This is my promise to all of you."

On the occasion, the Chief Minister released four publications and felicitated two startups and two Farmers' Producer Organisations for their achievements. He also launched 808 new Kisan Khidmat Ghars (KKGs) aimed at strengthening grassroots-level agricultural services across Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier, the Chief Minister inspected an exhibition set up within the university premises, where he interacted with students, young entrepreneurs and representatives of Farmers' Producer Organisations, appreciating their innovative ideas and encouraging them to transform agriculture into a modern, enterprise-driven sector.

Women's Week Celebrations: Sports Day draws huge participation in Kathua

Women, girls from all age groups join district-wide competitions

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
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In continuation to Women's Week campaign, a dedicated multi-faceted celebration of International Women's Day organized by the District Administration Kathua, the Day 4, today, was observed as the Sports Day amid enthusiastic participation from women and girls.

At the district headquarters, multiple sports events were organized at the Sports Stadium and the Indoor Sports Complex. Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma presided over the event and appreciated the participants for turning up in large numbers and contributing to the success of the programme.

CPO Ranjeet Thakur; DSWO Varun Chaudhary; DYSSO Sunil Singh Sambhal and other concerned officers were also present.

"The week-long campaign has been designed to celebrate the achievements, resilience and contributions of women while also providing them a platform to come together, express themselves and inspire fellow women to actively participate in social, cultural and sporting activities," the Deputy Commissioner said. He emphasized that such



initiatives not only recognise the role of women in society but also encourage greater participation in public life, thereby fostering confidence, leadership and a spirit of healthy competition.

A cricket match between Kathua and Marheer teams was held at Sports Stadium, while other sports competitions, including tug of war, volleyball, badminton, table

tennis, judo and taekwondo were held in the Indoor Sports Complex. Girls and women from different age groups turned up at the venue and actively participated in the games.

Tehsildar Nagri Aana Jamwal, who was the special guest, interacted with the participants and encouraged them to seize every opportunity to stay active and empowered in

the society. She called upon the young athletes to adopt sports as an integral part of life, stating that participation in sports helps build discipline, confidence, teamwork and physical as well as mental well-being.

Similar sports events involving young girls and women were also organized at the sub-division level under the supervision of respective ADCs and SDMs.

DHJ reviews progress of horticulture development initiatives in Samba district

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, MAR 05

Director Horticulture Jammu (DHJ) Gul Syed today conducted an extensive tour of Samba district to review the progress of the Horticulture Development initiatives being implemented in the district.

The Director was accompanied by the Chief Horticulture Officer Jammu Anil Gorkha; Horticulture Development Officer Samba Varinder Sharma; Horticulture Development Officer Purmandal Rakesh Kumar and Horticulture Development Officer Vijaypur Manmohan Kumar, besides other functionaries of the department.

A review meeting was also held at the Government Fruit Plants Nursery Vijaypur where the Director assessed the overall perfor-



mance and implementation of different horticulture schemes, including Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MID),

Jammu and Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project, Holistic Agriculture Development

Programme (HADP) and Revised Modified High Density Plantation Scheme. He stressed upon field officers to ensure effective outreach of government programmes among the farming community.

Later, the Director inspected the strawberry plantations at Nanga in the Ramgarh area, belonging to the beneficiary Sanjay Verma. He expressed satisfaction and appreciation over the bumper crop of strawberries and encouraged the farmer to continue adopting modern horticulture practices for higher productivity and income.

The Director emphasized that diversification towards high-value crops like strawberries can significantly enhance farmers' income and further strengthen the horticulture sector in the region.

Javed Rana reviews functioning of Tribal Hostels in Jammu Division

JAMMU, MARCH 05:

Minister for Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the functioning of tribal hostels across the Jammu division, with a focus on improving living facilities, strengthening nutritional standards, ensuring quality education and expediting the construction of new hostel infrastructure for tribal students.

During the meeting, the Minister reviewed the overall functioning of hostels operating under the Tribal Affairs Department and took stock of the progress of hostel buildings currently under construction in various districts of the Jammu division. He directed the concerned officers to immediately identify and remove all bottlenecks hampering the pace of construction so that the works are completed within the stipulated timelines.

Emphasizing the importance of adequate accommodation facilities for students belonging to tribal communities, the Minister stated that the construction and upgradation of tribal hostels must be treated as a



priority by the department. He observed that these hostels play a crucial role in enabling students from remote and tribal areas to pursue education in urban and semi-urban centres. He also instructed the concerned authorities to resolve issues related to land identification and allotment on priority so that no delay occurs in the execution of approved projects.

The Minister stressed that hostel facilities should not only provide accommodation but also create a supportive and enabling environment for students to focus on their studies and overall development. He underscored the need to strengthen academic support mechanisms within hostels and ensure that students receive a conducive atmosphere for quality education and personal

growth.

Taking serious notice of complaints received from certain areas regarding the quality and availability of food and dietary supplements provided to students, the Minister directed the department to ensure strict monitoring of food supplies. He instructed that hostel menus should be of optimum quality and must be designed to meet the nutritional requirements of students. He also called for the introduction of a standardised and balanced menu across tribal hostels in Jammu and Kashmir to ensure uniformity in dietary standards and proper nutrition for all students.

The Minister further directed the wardens of hostels to submit detailed requirements of their respective institutions, including repair and renova-

tion works, furnishing needs, maintenance requirements and other infrastructural gaps. He said that the preparation of such requirement reports will enable the department to plan timely interventions and allocate resources for improving hostel facilities in a systematic manner.

Highlighting the importance of holistic development, the Minister emphasised that hostels should actively promote sports, cultural and extracurricular activities among students. He observed that such activities play an important role in nurturing talent, building confidence and ensuring the overall personality development of students from tribal communities.

During the meeting, the Minister also reviewed the staffing position in hostels, including the availability of wardens and supporting staff, and sought details regarding vacancies and the requirement of additional manpower wherever necessary. He emphasised the need to strengthen safety and welfare measures in hostels by ensuring adequate security arrange-

Mission Director reviews physical, financial progress of HADP

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, MAR 05

Mission Director HADP/JKCIP Sandeep Kumar today chaired a review meeting in the Conference Hall, Directorate of Agriculture, Talab Tillo to assess the physical and financial progress and expenditure status under different projects of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP).

The meeting was attended by Director Agriculture Jammu, Director Horticulture Jammu, Director Animal Husbandry Jammu, besides technical officers and representatives from SKUAST-Jammu. HoDs, technical officers and representatives from SKUAST-Kashmir also participated in the meeting through video conferencing.

The Mission Director emphasized the need for close coordination among the stakeholder departments



and executing agencies to ensure effective implementation and timely completion of the projects under HADP. He stressed that strong inter-departmental collaboration is essential for achieving the intended outcomes of the programme.

Highlighting the growing popularity of millet-based food, he asked for promoting Millet Restaurants to enhance awareness and consumption of millets. He also directed the concerned officers to achieve the targets of Millet Mills in a time-bound manner, ensuring that these mills are established in areas where millet

cultivation is already taking place or where area expansion has been undertaken.

Reviewing the beekeeping component, Sandeep Kumar took note of the issues related to unit tracking. He directed the officials to resolve the bottlenecks at the earliest to ensure smooth monitoring and implementation. The Mission Director also emphasized the importance of strengthening Seed Village and Village Seed Bank activities to enhance the availability of quality seeds at the grassroots level.

The MD conducted district-wise and project-wise

review of financial expenditure and physical progress. He reviewed the expenditure status of SKUAST-Jammu and SKUAST-Kashmir under the HADP, while directing for completion of works within the stipulated framework. He further emphasized the need to strengthen research, extension support and field-level interventions for the successful implementation of HADP initiatives across the Union Territory. He also reviewed the status of public sector activities and directed the concerned departments to ensure their timely progress.

While reviewing the Animal Husbandry sector, Sandeep Kumar stressed the need for close coordination with allied sectors, particularly under the Rainfed Area Development (RAD) component. He directed the concerned officials to ensure timely execution and effective implementation of the activities.