

Thousands throng picturesque Sarthal to enjoy second edition of Winter Festival

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
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To promote tourism and showcase the pristine natural and cultural wealth of the region, the Tourism Department, in collaboration with the District Administration Kathua and Bani-Basohli Development Authority, organized the second edition of the Winter Festival at the picturesque Sarthal Valley in Bani Subdivision.

The festival was inaugurated by MLA Bani, Dr. Rameshwar Singh in the presence of an enthusiastic gathering of thousands of visitors, who thronged the snow-clad valley to be part of the celebrations.

The highlight of the festival was the mesmerizing performance by internationally acclaimed singer Sonali Dogra and popular artist Bishan Dass, who enthralled the audience with a soulful blend of Dogri, Hindi and Punjabi folk songs. Their captivating performances set an energetic and festive tone for the event.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Bani Dr. Rameshwar Singh said that the Sarthal Winter Festival has been a long-cherished dream of the people of Bani, as the area possesses immense untapped tourism potential. "Sarthal has all the attributes to emerge as another Gulmarg, matching the finest scenic profiles of the country," he maintained. The MLA stated that the District Administration Kathua and Bani Subdivision have taken comprehensive steps to ensure proper logistics



and arrangements to elevate the festival to a new scale.

He lauded the performances of renowned artists Sonali Dogra and Bishan Dass, along with local performers, for adding diversity and vibrancy to the mela and making it engaging for visitors.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Rajesh Sharma described Sarthal as a unique and iconic destination, blending pristine natural landscapes with the joy of snow, making it one of the most promising winter tourism locations in Jammu and Kashmir. He said that the Winter Festival is an effort to reconnect people with their heritage in

the lap of nature while promoting sustainable tourism. The Deputy Commissioner emphasized that such initiatives aim to bring people closer to the region's culture and natural beauty, while generating livelihood opportunities for the local population.

The Deputy Commissioner also appreciated the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders and assured that the administration remains committed to organizing more such events to promote Sarthal Valley as a prominent winter tourism destination.

The festival also featured a series of cultural performances by local youth, providing them a valuable platform to showcase their

talent. Traditional Pahadi cuisine stalls offered visitors an authentic taste of the region's culinary heritage, while fun-filled activities against the scenic backdrop of snow-covered mountains further enhanced the festive ambience.

ADDC Surinder Mohan Sharma, CEO BBDA Babu Ram, CPO Ranjeet Thakur, Dy. Director Tourism Savita Chouhan, Dy. Director Tourism Mamta Sharma, SDM Bani Sandeep Kumar, Tehsildar Pradhyman Attri, Asst Director Samba-Kathua Dr. Rajesh Raina, Asst Director Jammu Vishal Sadotra, Accounts Officer Dr. Annie Jamwal and other senior officers and dignitaries were present on the occasion.

DC Poonch holds interaction with media persons, assures redressal of genuine demands

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Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Ashok Kumar Sharma on Sunday held an interaction with the media fraternity in the Conference Hall of Dak Bungalow, Poonch. The meeting was organized to enhance coordination and strengthen constructive engagement between the district administration and the media.

The Deputy Commissioner was welcomed by District Information Officer, Asaf Ali, who expressed gratitude to the media persons for their continued support and responsible role in disseminating information.

During the interaction, the media representatives projected various demands seeking establishment of a Press Club and the provision of safety kits for journalists.

The Deputy Commissioner gave a patient and empathetic hearing to all concerns and assured pos-



itive consideration along with necessary follow-up. He emphasized that all genuine issues would be addressed in a time-bound and appropriate manner.

Highlighting the importance of responsible journalism, the Deputy Com-

missioner reiterated the administration's commitment to maintaining open and transparent communication channels with the press for the benefit of the public.

The media fraternity thanked the Deputy Commissioner Poonch for the

meaningful interaction, attentive listening and assurance of redressal of their genuine issues.

Among those present on the occasion were Tehsildar Haveli, Azhar Majid; District Information Officer, Asaf Ali and DySP DAR, Shashi Kant.

Horticulture Planning & Marketing department holds awareness camp at Aghar Jitto- Reasi

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An awareness camp for members of Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) Katra and Self Help Groups (SHGs) was organised at Aghar Jitto in Reasi district.

The camp aimed at sensitising participants to the government schemes related to agriculture development and livelihood enhancement of farmers.



During the programme, Field Officer, HADP/MI, Vijay Atri briefed the participants about different Holistic Agriculture Development

Programme (HADP) projects and the subsidies available under the Support for Grading and Packaging Scheme of

the department. Awareness regarding the PMFME scheme was also imparted.

Rahul Kumar from the State Bank of India highlighted training programmes and loan assistance available under various skill development initiatives of SBI RSETI, Reasi.

The officers / officials from J&K Bank, NRLM and the Agriculture Department were also present on the occasion.

Girl child from cut-off Gurez airlifted after serious injury

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In a swift demonstration of effective administrative coordination and emergency preparedness, a girl child from the cut-off Bagtore area of Gurez in district Bandipora was timely airlifted on Sunday after sustaining injuries in a fall from a height of approximately 16 feet, ensuring her immediate access to advanced medical care.

An emergency case involving a minor girl was received at NTPHC Bagtore and on clinical evaluation, the child was found to have swelling in the temporal region of the head accompanied by drowsiness, indicating a possible serious head injury.

Recognizing the gravity of the situation, the attending doctor administered immediate first aid and referred the patient for higher medical intervention.

Given the region's challenging terrain and limited surface connectivity, the



matter was immediately taken up with the District Administration Bandipora, which acted swiftly to facilitate helicopter evacuation.

Through coordinated efforts of the District Administration, Health Department, and allied agencies,

the airlift was arranged without delay, enabling the patient to be evacuated within two hours of reporting and shifted to District Hospital Bandipora, from where she was further referred to SKIMS Srinagar

for advanced treatment.

The timely medical response, backed by proactive administrative support, underscores the district administration's commitment to ensuring critical healthcare access for residents of remote and cut-off areas.

Winter Festival-2026 organised at Lal Daman

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The District Administration Doda in collaboration with the Tourism Department, Jammu & Kashmir, NGO Tejas Ek Pahal and the Indian Army, successfully organized the Winter Mega Festival-2026 at the picturesque tourist destination Lal Daman, attracting a massive gathering of visitors and locals alike.

The grand event was organized under the visionary guidance of the Deputy Commissioner, Harvinder Singh and witnessed overwhelming public participation.

The success of the festival was attributed to the dedicated efforts of the District Administration Doda, Tourism Department, Indian Army and the exceptional commitment of Chairman, NGO Tejas Ek Pahal, Akash Parihar along with his devoted team.

Chairman District Development Council, Dhananter Singh Kotwal was the Chief Guest, while ADC, Anil Kumar Thakur graced the event as Guest of Honour.

The event commenced with the lighting of the traditional lamp by the Chief Guest, marking the auspicious beginning of the festival.

The festival showcased vibrant departmental stalls, local food stalls and colorful cultural performances by local artists featuring rich folk traditions including



Gojri, Dogri, Sarazi, Bhaderwahi and Kashmiri songs and dances. A spectacular Tiranga Rally consisting of students of the government and private schools, carrying a 50-metre-long Tricolour, added patriotic fervour to the event. The mesmerizing snow-capped landscape was further beautified by colorful rangoli decorations, captivating the audience.

A large number of people from all age groups participated enthusiastically, making the event a grand success.

The programme was also attended by DDC Member Yudhvir Singh, ASP Head-

quarters Doda Mohd Aslam, ACD Doda Din Mohd Afaqi, SDM Phellail Singh, DySP Headquarters Krishan Rattan, officers of the Indian Army, political dignitaries, NGO representatives and members of civil society.

The Chief Guest and Guest of Honour were warmly welcomed by NCC cadets, who also participated in the Tiranga Rally. A traditional turban-wearing ceremony, featuring beautiful Kesari-coloured turbans, emerged as one of the major highlights of the event.

The welcome address was delivered by ACD Din Mohammad Afaqi, who also

served as the Nodal Officer for all event arrangements.

The programme featured captivating folk-dance performances by student groups and local artists. The Sarazi folk dance and song, performed in traditional attire, was highly appreciated, with the renowned Sarazi artist Surinder Parihar presenting the iconic Sarazi Kud, which remained the main attraction of the festival.

The Winter Mega Festival-2026 at Lal Daman successfully promoted local culture, tourism and community participation, reinforcing Doda's identity as a vibrant cultural and tourism hub.

NCC Cadets of SMVDU Shine at Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat Camp in Udaipur

Jammu

The NCC cadets of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU) participated in the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat (EBSB-II) Camp held at Udaipur, Rajasthan, where they represented the university with distinction. Three cadets—Cadet Vansh Parihar, Cadet Avantika Gupta, and Cadet Arshia Anand—actively took part in various academic, cultural, and sports activities during the camp. Throughout the camp, the cadets showcased confidence, discipline, and teamwork by participating in cultural programmes, extempore speeches, debates, and



multiple sports events. A special cultural exchange activity was organised in which traditional food was prepared and shared with cadets from other NCC directorates, fostering mutual bonding and appreciation of India's rich cultural diversity. The cadets also actively participated in

sports events such as tug of war, volleyball, and kho-kho, promoting physical fitness and sportsmanship. The SMVDU cadets delivered commendable performances and brought laurels to the university. Cadet Vansh Parihar secured third position in debate, second position in tug

of war, and was awarded a certificate for anchoring. Cadet Arshia Anand achieved second position in volleyball and first position in group dance, while Cadet Avantika Gupta also secured first position in group dance. In addition to competitive events, the cadets visited prominent cultural and heritage sites in and around Udaipur, gaining valuable insights into the historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage of Rajasthan.

The camp proved to be an enriching and memorable experience, significantly enhancing the cadets' leadership qualities, cultural understanding, and sense of national integration.