

Shivratri Festival inaugurated with Devotional Fervour at Peerkho, Ransoo Shivkhori

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
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The Directorate of Tourism, Jammu, on Saturday inaugurated the Maha Shivratri Mela at the historic Peerkho Shrine and at Shivkhori Cave Shrine, Ransoo, Reasi, reflecting the deep-rooted spiritual traditions and rich cultural ethos of the region.

Shivratri, one of the most sacred festivals dedicated to Lord Shiva, holds immense religious significance in the Jammu region and is observed with devotion, fasting and special prayers.

The four-day mela at Peerkho was formally inaugurated by Yudhvir Sethi, Hon'ble MLA Jammu East, in the presence of Priya Sethi, Former Minister; Dr. Vikas Gupta, JKAS, Director Tourism, Jammu; Ms. Anusuya Jamwal, Additional Deputy Commissioner; Smt. Savita Chouhan, Deputy Director Tourism (Publicity); and Shri Vishal Sadhotra, Assistant Director Tourism, along with other distinguished guests.

The ceremonial lighting of the sacred Jyoti marked the formal commencement of the celebrations, followed by a symbolic balloon release. The evening featured



devotional and cultural performances reflecting the spiritual essence of the festival.

Meanwhile, the annual Shivratri Festival was also inaugurated with religious fervour at Ransoo, the base camp for pilgrims visiting the revered Shivkhori cave shrine.

The festival was formally inaugurated by Kuldeep Dubey, Hon'ble MLA Reasi, who lit the ceremonial lamp in the presence of Deputy Commissioner Reasi Ms. Nidhi Malik; DDC Member Pouni Shri Kewal; ADDC Reasi Shri Sukhdev Singh Sambyal; ADC Reasi Shri Rakesh Kumar; Deputy Director Tourism Ms. Mamta

Sharma; Ms. Annie Jamwal, Accounts Officer; and other officers of the Tourism Department and District Administration.

Earlier, a grand Shobha Yatra and cultural procession was taken out from Tridev Hotel to Darshani Deodi, drawing enthusiastic participation from devotees and creating a spiritually vibrant atmosphere. The inaugural day featured captivating cultural presentations, including Shiv Vivah and Shiv Tandav, along with melodious bhajans by renowned singers.

Speaking on the occasion at Peerkho, Dr. Vikas Gupta, Director Tourism, Jammu,

said that the department remains committed to promoting the scenic and spiritual destinations of the Jammu region, including pilgrimage tourism, adventure tourism and offbeat locations such as Bhaderwah, Sarthal, Bani, Basohli, Rajouri, Poonch and Reasi.

The twin celebrations at Peerkho and Ransoo witnessed enthusiastic participation from devotees, local residents and visitors, underscoring the enduring faith associated with Lord Shiva and reaffirming the Directorate of Tourism's continued commitment to promoting religious tourism across the Jammu region.

CM calls for tech-driven, organic farming to make J&K agri-produce globally competitive

CM inaugurates GON'GUL-2026 at SKUAST-Kashmir

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Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today inaugurated GON'GUL-2026, the 11th AgriTech Mela, at the Shalimar Campus of the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K).

Ministers Sakina Itoo and Javaid Ahmad Dar, Vice Chancellor SKUAST-K Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai, Registrar Prof. Azmat Alam Khan, Principal GMC Srinagar Dr Iffat Hassan, Director Extension Education, SKUAST-K Rehana Habib Kanth, along with university faculty members, scientists and experts participated in the inaugural session. A large number of growers, progressive farmers, youth innovators and agri-entrepreneurs from different parts of Kashmir also attended the event aimed at enhancing income, productivity and sustainability in agriculture. After inaugurating the three-day AgriTech Mela, the Chief Minister inspected over 100 stalls set up by agripreneurs, budding and established start-ups showcasing a wide range of innovative agricultural technologies at the university campus. On the occasion, the Chief Minister interacted with stall owners and enquired about their produce, start-ups, enterprises and technological interventions.



Speaking at the event, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah highlighted the significant progress and contributions made by progressive farmers, growers, agricultural scientists, faculty members and researchers in transforming the agrarian landscape of Jammu & Kashmir. He said their sustained efforts are shaping the future of agriculture in the region and driving innovation under various government programmes aimed at modernisation and economic growth. He emphasised that to compete at the global level, Jammu & Kashmir must enhance both the quality and quantity of its local agricultural produce.

Highlighting the role of SKUAST-K and SKUAST Jammu, the Chief Minister said the universities have achieved remarkable mile-

stones in advancing agriculture and horticulture and have played a vital role in supporting and empowering local farmers through research, innovation and field outreach.

The Chief Minister stressed that technology-driven and organic farming solutions are essential prerequisites for boosting the rural economy. He underlined the importance of adopting modern agricultural practices, value addition, branding and market linkage strategies to ensure better returns for farmers.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah further noted that initiatives like GON'GUL provide a crucial platform for farmers to interact with experts, explore innovative tools and access new market opportunities, ultimately strengthening the agricultural ecosystem of Jammu & Kashmir.

He also lauded the innovative displays put up by budding agri-entrepreneurs and start-ups, particularly appreciating student-led technological solutions in farming and irrigation. He emphasised the vital role of universities in advancing agricultural innovation and nurturing the next generation of agri-entrepreneurs.

The three-day mega event, themed "NextGen Agriculture: My Produce-My Price," is showcasing cutting-edge agricultural innovations, sustainable farming practices and emerging entrepreneurial opportunities in the agriculture sector.

The AgriTech Mela is expected to witness participation from progressive farmers, start-ups, agribusiness firms, researchers and students over the next three days.

JKTPO hosts workshop on 'Penetration of MFIs, NBFCs, FinTechs for MSME Financing under RAMP'

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Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO), in collaboration with Jammu & Kashmir Bank, today organized a UT level workshop on "Penetration of MFIs, NBFCs and FinTech companies for MSME financing under RAMP at Jammu Tawi Golf Course, Sidhra.

The workshop is part of the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) Programme, a World Bank-supported Central Sector Scheme of the Government of India aimed at strengthening the MSME access to markets and credit while improving institutional governance and Centre-State collaboration.

The objective of the workshop was to set in motion the penetration of MFIs, NBFCs and FinTech companies for MSME financing under RAMP programme by introducing them to the MSME landscape of Jammu and Kashmir besides sensitizing them to the challenges faced by MSMEs in the Union Territory.

The workshop was aimed to digitally empower the MSMEs by connecting them to alternate sources of funding and fostering greater access to formal and technology-driven financial solutions. The Senior government officials from Industries & Commerce Department, representatives from RBI, NABARD, Banking Institutions, 15+ leading NBFCs, MFIs, FinTech companies, Industry Leaders and MSME stakeholders participated in the event to deliberate on practical, scalable and technology-driven solutions to deepen credit penetration across the UT.

Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce Department, Vikramjit Singh, graced the occasion as the chief guest. During his key address, the Commissioner Secretary underscored the pivotal role of MSMEs as engines of employment generation, regional equity and grassroots economic stability. He further stated that the J&K government is committed for building a resilient MSME credit ecosystem rooted in collaboration among the banks, NBFCs, MFIs and FinTech platforms under RAMP programme. He further advocated for strengthened district level outreach and development of a time bound action plan with measurable outcomes. He described the workshop as a significant milestone in reimagining credit delivery mechanisms in the Union Territory.

Addressing the work-



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Sudershan Kumar, Managing Director, JKTPO underscored the strategic importance of MSMEs as the backbone of J&K's economy, highlighting the predominance of micro enterprises and the corresponding need for flexible, doorstep-oriented credit models tailored to their realities. He emphasized that the workshop aims to move beyond deliberations and foster actionable collaboration frameworks among the stakeholders.

Addressing the work-

shop, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Regional Director, Reserve Bank of India, emphasized the pivotal role of a robust and inclusive financial system in driving sustainable MSME growth in J&K.

Addressing the gathering, Vikas Mittal, General Manager/ Officer-in-Charge, NABARD, underscored the critical importance of strengthening the MSME credit ecosystem in J&K through district-focused interventions. He commended the Jammu & Kashmir administration and Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation for organizing a forward looking workshop under the RAMP Programme. He also stressed the importance of digital onboarding and district-level awareness drives to ensure that entrepreneurs are not only credit-linked but also digitally empowered.

Sunit Kumar, Chief General Manager, J&K Bank, highlighted the evolving MSME credit landscape in Jammu & Kashmir. He stressed for encouraging growth in formal credit penetration over recent years while acknowledging persistent structural gaps, particularly among micro and first-generation enterprises.

He strongly advocated for structured co-origination and co-lending partnerships between banks, NBFCs and MFIs to opti-

mize risk-sharing, improve last-mile outreach and enhance the credit delivery efficiency. He reiterated J&K Bank's commitment to spearhead such collaborative frameworks under the RAMP programme and assured stakeholders that the Bank would actively facilitate ecosystem partnerships, support district-level outreach initiatives to build a sustainable, inclusive and technology-enabled MSME credit architecture in Jammu & Kashmir.

The workshop featured a series of focused deliberations on strengthening MSME financing in Jammu & Kashmir, culminating in a forward-looking roadmap to deepen credit penetration, enhance digital enablement and foster structured collaboration among Banks, NBFCs, MFIs, and FinTechs.

Key outcomes included identifying priority sectors and districts, promoting collaborative lending, district-level awareness and capacity-building initiatives, and forming a Joint Working Group under RAMP, formalized via a workshop Resolution/Action Charter.

The JKTPO remains committed towards supporting and empowering the MSMEs in all possible ways, through sustained policy facilitation, capacity building, market linkages and improved access to finance.

DIPR organises day-long workshop on 'Ethical Journalism and Evolving Landscape of Journalism' at Jammu



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Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) today organised a day-long workshop on 'Ethical Journalism and the Evolving Landscape of Journalism', for Mediapersons of Jammu at Media Complex here.

The objective of the workshop was to sensitise the media professionals and communication practitioners about the changing dynamics of journalism and the critical importance of ethical standards in the present digital age.

During the workshop, Regional Director IIMC Jammu, Dr. Dilip Kumar and Assistant Professor, Vishav were the resource persons.

The Resource persons enlightened the partici-

pants on emerging trends in journalism, challenges posed by misinformation, and the growing influence of digital platforms on news consumption and dissemination. They also spoke in length about the ethics in journalism and importance of ethical journalism in view of rising AI use in Journalism as well as digital journalism.

Speaking on the occasion, Director Information, Nitish Rajora highlighted the vital responsibility of journalists in the present scenario, stressing that the role of the media extends beyond reporting facts to shaping informed, balanced and responsible public opinion.

"Journalists today operate in a fast-paced environment where information travels instantly. This makes adherence to ethical

principles like accuracy, fairness, objectivity and accountability more important than ever", he said.

He also underscored the need for continuous capacity building to keep pace with technological advancements and evolving audience expectations.

The Director underlined the need for constant interaction between DIPR and Mediapersons, adding that the department will make it a regular feature to organise get togethers for Journalists.

In his welcome address, Joint Director Information (hqr), Dr. Zahoor Ahmad Raina spoke about the role of media in present scenario. He also highlighted about the importance of fairness and credibility in the media.

Joint Director Information Jammu, Deepak

Dubey in his concluding remarks emphasized on the role of Mediapersons in present scenario of evolving digital age. He also said such workshops will be conducted in coming times also to strengthen collaborations between media institutions and government departments to promote professional excellence, transparency and responsible journalism.

During the workshop, an interactive session was also held between the participants and resource persons, sharing experiences and seeking guidance on ethical dilemmas faced in professional practice.

Deputy Director Information (PR), Javid Ahmad Rather; Information Officer Alka Misra alongwith other officers and officials of DIPR were present on the occasion.

Deputy Chief Minister inspects govt offices in Satwari, Akhnoor, Sunderbani

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Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today conducted surprise inspection of various government offices in Satwari, Akhnoor and Sunderbani to review administrative functioning and public service delivery.

During his visit to the SDM Office Akhnoor, the Deputy Chief Minister took stock of the overall functioning there.

He emphasized the need for greater efficiency, transparency and prompt grievance redressal to ensure better governance and responsive administration.

He also undertook a surprise inspection of the PWD (R&B) Division and



Sub-Division offices in Akhnoor. He evaluated the performance standards and functioning of the departments.

He directed the officers to maintain transparency in works execution and ensure time-bound completion of the projects.

Later, at the PWD Guest House in Sunderbani, the Deputy Chief Minister in-

teracted with several delegations and individuals who apprised him of various issues and development concerns.

Senior PWD officers were also present during the interaction who had detailed discussion on addressing the grievances raised by the public.

While reviewing the functioning of offices

across the inspected areas, the Deputy Chief Minister laid special emphasis on seamless service delivery to the general public. He called for strict adherence to duty rosters and timely execution of official responsibilities.

Cautioning the officials against dereliction of duty and unauthorized absence, he warned that strict action would be initiated against those found neglecting their responsibilities.

Reiterating the government's commitment towards accountable and people-centric governance, the Deputy Chief Minister directed the officers to work with dedication to ensure that public services are delivered efficiently and without delay.