

DST Charts Futuristic Biotechnology Roadmap, Policy for J&K

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The Department of Science and Technology is endeavouring to chart out futuristic roadmap for biotechnology, including the UT Policy for Biotechnology.

In this regard, Commissioner Secretary, Science and Technology, Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting wherein senior officers presented findings from their extensive study visits to India's premier biotechnology clusters including Genome Valley (Hyderabad), Guwahati Biotech Park and facilities at Lucknow, Vizag and Chandigarh.

The delegation comprising Special Secretary Reyaz Ahmed Beigh, Director Finance Madan Lal, Additional Secretary JKSTIC Neelam Khajuria, Additional Director Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed, Deputy Secretary Asif Chandel and others studied operational models, technology incubation frameworks and industry-academia linkages at these established biotech hubs.

Deputy Secretary Dr. Abdul Khabir made a detailed presentation highlighting the globally best practices and sector-specific opportunities for Jammu and Kashmir.

Dr. Shahid Iqbal directed for immediate formulation of a comprehensive J&K Biotechnology Policy, recognizing that the Union Territory sits at the confluence of extraordinary natural wealth and untapped



scientific potential.

With over 6,500 plant species including 200+ high-value medicinal and aromatic plants including saffron, lavender, wild mushrooms, rare herbs and unique climatic zones from subtropical Jammu to alpine Kashmir, J&K possesses inherent advantages that remain underexploited in India's rapidly expanding \$130 billion bio economy, projected to reach \$300 billion by 2030 under the national BioE3 Policy.

The Secretary emphasized that the proposed policy will strategically target the agriculture biotechnology for crop improvement and climate resilience; pharmaceutical manufacturing leveraging J&K's rich phytochemical biodiversity; food processing and nutraceuticals from horticulture produce; dairy biotechnology for probiotic innovations; industrial enzyme production and environmental bioremediation for water bodies like Dal and Wular lakes.

The policy framework will align with J&K's existing strengths while creating new value chains in bio-

manufacturing, moving beyond raw material export to high-margin biotech products.

Critically addressing the youth employment challenge, Dr. Shahid Iqbal suggested a structured internship programme for biotechnology graduates from J&K institutions, creating direct pathways from academic training to industrial application. This initiative responds to the gap between qualified graduates and sector-relevant opportunities within the UT.

The Department is operationalizing two DBT-funded Industrial Biotech Parks at Kathua (Jammu region) and Handwara (Kashmir region)—representing a combined Government of India investment of ₹84.66 crore—as Centres of Excellence in Industrial Biotechnology. These facilities will transition from infrastructure assets to active innovation hubs supporting startup incubation, technology commercialization and R&D in fermentation, enzyme technology, herbal extraction and analytical testing.

The recently announced

budget outlay will activate these parks as magnets for scientific talent and entrepreneurial capital.

Drawing lessons from Genome Valley's public-private partnership model and Guwahati Biotech Park's incubation success with 26 lab facilities and NABL accreditation pathways, the DST vision positions J&K's biotech ecosystem within a larger convergence framework. Strategic partnerships with SKUAST-Jammu (NIRF Rank 7) and SKUAST-Kashmir (Rank 3 among state agricultural universities), along with CSIR-IIIM's pharmaceutical R&D capabilities, will provide the intellectual infrastructure for translating indigenous knowledge into patents, products, and prosperity.

The Secretary emphasized that biotechnology represents not merely a policy sector but a transformative pathway—converting J&K's biodiversity into biowealth, its scientific institutions into innovation engines and youth into a skilled biotech workforce ready for India's bio-manufacturing century.

Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' observed by MY Bharat at SIS Birpur

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'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' initiative was observed at Srijan International School, Birpur, District Samba, organized by MY Bharat Jammu in collaboration with the Nations Development Association (NDA) registered with NITI Aayog and affiliated with MY Bharat under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India. The programme saw active participation from teachers and community members.

The welcome address was delivered by Sushil Singh Charak, Chief Functionary, NDA, who briefly highlighted youth and environmental programmes in District Samba and spoke about the campaign launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aimed at large-scale plantation and environmental conservation. Most saplings planted during the first phase were



essential species and are being carefully nurtured to ensure healthy growth.

Dr. Sanjolly Gupta, Project Research Scientist, ICMR-AIIMS Jammu, lauded the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' initiative, highlighting its role in inspiring students and the community to plant, nurture, and protect trees, fostering environmental responsibility and awareness across Jammu & Kash-

mir. She also mentioned that Charak has been conferred the Parayanam Ratna Award in the South Asian region, a recognition bringing pride to the state.

Dr. Romesh Kumar, Head of Department, DIET Jammu, author of Happy Schools, emphasized that the initiative instills values of responsibility, care, and sustainability among students.

Kiranjit Kour, Vice President, Srijan International School, encouraged students to become responsible, nature-conscious citizens and highlighted the importance of environmental awareness.

Present were Ms. Sushma Choudhary (Headmistress), Ms. Sakshi Sharma (PR), school faculty, volunteers of My Bharat Jammu, and NDA representatives.

Army organizes Tree Plantation Drive at Kalal

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The Indian Army organized a tree plantation drive at Kalal on 15 Feb 2026. The campaign aimed at promoting tree plantation, environmental conservation, improving air quality and supporting biodiversity. With a vision to create a greener and healthier nation, the campaign engaged local volunteers and government entities to work collectively towards safeguarding the environment for future generations.

The locals showed keen interest and actively participated in the tree plantation event. This campaign serves as a call to action for



every individual to become a custodian of our environment. By planting trees today, we are securing a vibrant and sustainable future for generations to come and sowing the seeds of change for a better tomorrow. As we embark on

this journey toward a greener and healthier future, the tree plantation campaign invites everyone to come together and take ownership of our environment.

During the campaign, a total of 46 saplings were

planted by the Indian Army with the aim of increasing the 'Green Cover' in the region and persuading people to curb deforestation and promote a clean and green future. A total of 21 locals actively participated in the event.

US military reports series of airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Syria

WASHINGTON, Feb 15: The US military today reported a series of strikes against Islamic State group targets in Syria in retaliation for the December ambush that killed two US soldiers and one American civilian interpreter.

US Central Command said in a statement that American aircraft had conducted 10 strikes against more than 30 IS targets between February 3 and Thursday, hitting weapons storage facilities and other



infrastructure.

At least 50 members of IS have been killed or captured, while more than 100 IS targets have been struck since the United States began its strikes after the De-

cember 13 ambush, according to Central Command. That attack killed Sgt. Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, Sgt. William Nathaniel Howard, and Ayad Mansoor Sakat, the civilian interpreter.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Defence Ministry said Thursday that government forces took control of a base in the east of the country that was run for years by US troops as part of the

fight against IS. The Al-Tanf base played a major role after IS declared a caliphate in large parts of Syria and Iraq in 2014.

The US military on Friday completed the transfer of thousands of IS detainees from Syria to Iraq, where they are expected to stand trial. The prisoners were sent to Iraq at the request of Baghdad, in a move welcomed by the US-led coalition that had for years fought against IS. (AP)

Natrang presents Hindi play 'Aakhiri Boond'

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Natrang presented a new Hindi play 'Aakhiri Boond', written and directed by Neeraj Kant, here today at Rani Park, Jammu. The play highlighted the importance of water conservation, community responsibility, and sustainable water management in rural India. The play Aakhri Boond beautifully and creatively portrayed the vision of the Jal Jeevan Mission, Jammu & Kashmir, using the powerful and engaging medium of theatre. Through compelling performances, thought-provoking storytelling, and impactful visuals, the production effectively highlighted the mission's core objective of ensuring safe and adequate drinking water for every household. The play not only entertained the audience but also sensitized them to the importance of water conservation and sustainable water management.

On the occasion, Director Balwant Thakur of Natrang informed that the theatre group had recently produced ten theatrical "quickies" dedicated to the Jal Jeevan Mission. These short yet powerful performances were showcased in a series of six shows and received an overwhelming response from audiences across the region. Encouraged by this



appreciation and public engagement, Natrang decided to dedicate one of its Sunday theatre performances exclusively to Jal Jeevan Mission J&K, reaffirming its commitment to supporting socially relevant initiatives through the transformative power of theatre.

The story revolves around a village celebrating the successful implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission, under which clean tap water has reached every household. The play opens with a festive atmosphere as villagers celebrate "Jal Arpan Divas" and "Jal Mahotsav", expressing their joy that water now flows directly into their homes.

Women in the village share how they no longer need to walk miles to fetch water, saving both time and effort. Children, especially young girls who previously spent hours collecting water, can now attend school regularly. Farmers and

youth pledge their support for maintaining the system through active participation in Gram Sabha meetings and collective responsibility.

The narrative takes a critical turn when a villager is seen wasting water while washing his car. Through engaging dialogues, the characters emphasize responsible water usage and highlight simple conservation practices such as turning off taps while brushing, fixing leakages, reusing kitchen water, and utilizing purifier wastewater.

The play further addresses the looming threat of drought and depleting groundwater levels. Villagers discuss the need for rainwater harvesting, building ponds, recharging groundwater, planting trees, and ensuring that every drop of rain is conserved. The slogan "Save Water Today-Secure Life Tomorrow" reinforces the

urgency of collective action. The final segment, women take the lead by testing water quality using field test kits and promoting laboratory testing through certified labs. They proudly call themselves "Water Guardians," symbolising empowerment and community ownership of water resources.

The play delivers a powerful message that government initiatives alone are not enough; sustainable water management requires active public participation, awareness, and responsibility at every level.

The artists who performed in the play included Neeraj Kant, Pawan Verma, Kananpreet Kaur, Vishal Sharma, and Kushal Bhat, who captivated the audience with their impactful performances and meaningful presentation.

The presentation of the play was coordinated by Mohd. Yaseen.

Awareness drive against Single-Use Plastics held at PALAASH & PAREESHA CCI Bandipora

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Under the Swachhata Action Plan, a series of awareness activities were conducted at PALAASH and PAREESHA CCI for Boys and Girls, Bandipora, to promote environmental responsibility and reduce the use of Single Use Plastics (SUP).

The programme focused on encouraging students to adopt sustainable alternatives in their daily lives. They were motivated to use cloth bags instead of polythene carry bags, carry steel bottles in place of plastic bottles, and use steel glasses instead of disposable plastic cups. The initiative aimed to highlight the harmful effects of plastic waste on the environment and the importance of switching to reusable, eco-friendly options.

Interactive activities such as drawing and chart-making



competitions were organized to reinforce the message. Students actively participated and creatively expressed their thoughts through posters and charts emphasizing the need to say no to Single Use Plastics. The activities helped in effectively spreading awareness and strengthening their understanding of environmental conservation.

As part of the programme, students also took a collective pledge to avoid the use of SUP and to spread awareness among their peers and the wider community.

The pledge reflected their commitment towards building a cleaner and greener environment.

All the activities were

conducted under the supervision of officials from DCPU and CWC, along with the staff members of both the institutions.

The programme concluded with appreciation for the enthusiastic participation of students and the continued efforts of the institutions in promoting cleanliness and sustainable living practices.

SANKALP-HEW Bandipora organises awareness programme on Skill Development at Athwato

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 15: An awareness programme on Skill Development was organized by SANKALP-HEW Bandipora at Athwato, Block Bonakoot with the objective of educating youth and women about various vocational training opportunities and government initiatives aimed at enhancing employability and self-reliance.

During the session, participants were informed about the importance of ac-



quiring practical skills in today's competitive job market. Gender Specialist and Specialist in Financial Literacy, highlighted various

short-term and long-term training courses available in trades such as tailoring, computer applications, beauty & wellness, electrical

work, handicrafts, and entrepreneurship development.

Participants were encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities to become financially independent and contribute positively to society. An interactive session was also held to address queries and guide interested candidates.

The programme concluded with distribution of Pamphlets containing information about the Role of SANKALP-HEW.