

New Modern Jammu Assembly Complex to be ready by Oct 2027: Dy Chief Minister

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 16: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today said that the new Modern Assembly Complex in Jammu would be ready for functioning by October 2027.

The Deputy Chief Minister stated this while inspecting the progress of works on the under-construction Assembly Complex. He reviewed the pace and quality of execution and directed the concerned officers to expedite the remaining works to ensure timely completion.

He said that the multi-storyed Legislative Assembly Complex has been designed to provide state-of-the-art infrastructure, enhanced functionality and improved public convenience. The building has been thoughtfully planned to integrate administrative efficiency, public access, media facilitation, healthcare support and adequate parking infrastructure, thereby strengthening institutional functioning and ensuring smooth conduct of House proceedings.

Asserting the need for strict adherence to timelines, the Deputy Chief Minister said, "The project is expected to be completed by October 2027 and we are hopeful that the Budget Ses-



sion 2028 will be conducted in the new House."

He cautioned the officers and the contractor against any laxity or failure in meeting the set deadlines for completion of the project. "There is no scope for delay, and the quality of work must be ensured," he added.

During the inspection, the Deputy Chief Minister visited the Assembly Hall, Press and Guest Galleries, basements, and offices designated for dignitaries. He reviewed the seating capacity, meeting hall facilities and other arrangements essential for smooth functioning of the Legislative Assembly. He also directed that seating capacity in the

House besides the guest, Speaker's and press galleries be strengthened, keeping in view future requirements, including possible delimitation.

Briefing the Deputy Chief Minister on the progress and facilities, Chief Engineer, PWD Jammu, Er. Rakesh Kumar Agastam informed that the lower basement has been earmarked for parking and essential services. The upper basement will have two separate canteens, a 10-bedded Health & Wellness Centre, an Allied Services Block and additional parking space.

He further informed that the ground floor houses the main Assembly Hall with a seating capacity of 130 persons. It also accommodates the Office/Accommodation of the Speaker, the Office/Accommodation of the Law & Parliamentary Affairs functionary and the Office of the Secretary, Legislative Assembly.

The first floor comprises of a spacious Press/Visitors Gallery with a capacity of over 450 persons, a Committee Room and all allied offices of the Legislative Assembly Secretariat.

Among others present during the inspection were the Chief Engineer, PWD Jammu, concerned Superintending Engineer, Executive Engineer and other senior officers.

3 escape from observation home after attacking cops

JAMMU, FEB 16: Three inmates, including two Pakistani nationals, escaped from an observation home in R S Pura area near here on Monday evening after attacking and injuring two on-duty policemen.

The incident took place at around 5.15 pm when the inmates allegedly assaulted the police personnel and managed to flee from the premises, according to officials.

The escaped inmates were identified as Karanjeet Singh alias Gugga of Dablehar, R S Pura, and Mohammad Sunaullah & Ahsan Anwar, both Pakistani nationals.

Police had taken cognisance of the incident and registered a case.

Special teams were constituted to apprehend the accused. The teams were conducting raids at various locations to nab them, officials said.

SKUAST-K hosts high-level conclave to solve challenges faced by FOs



HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, FEB 16

Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir hosted a high-level Farmer Organisations (FOs) Conclave at Shalimar campus.

Organised by SKUAST-K under the Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project in Jammu & Kashmir (JKCIP), an initiative supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the event served as a critical platform for addressing the challenges and opportunities within the region's growing farmer collective ecosystem.

A major highlight of the day was an expansive panel discussion that brought together a diverse group of national and international experts to deliberate on in-

stitutional convergence financial inclusion, value chain development and market access.

The panel featured prominent figures including Vikas Mittal, General Manager, NABARD J&K, and Surinder Singh, Deputy General Manager, NABARD, Kashmir; Lalit Goel, Regional Director, National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), and Abhijeet Bose, US-based expert in crop insurance, alongside Director Research SKUAST-K, Prof Haroon R Naik. The panel was chaired by Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-K, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai and moderated by Head Division of Fruit Sciences, Dr Ashiq H Pandith.

The discussion focused on bridging infrastructure gaps, enhancing financial inclusion, and creating robust branding frameworks to ensure local produce can

compete on a global scale.

The session witnessed a direct interactive session where approximately 100 FPO CEOs and Directors voiced their grassroots-level concerns directly to policymakers and financial heads.

These leaders highlighted the pestering problems of credit access and the need for sophisticated value-addition facilities within the Kashmir Valley. In response, the Vice-Chancellor, delivered a compelling session, where he underscored the role of FPOs as engines of rural transformation and stressed that technology integration must remain at the heart of their operations to ensure farmers receive a fair price for their produce. He also directed for creating an FPO data portal.

Earlier, Prof Raihana Habib Kanth, Director Extension and Chairperson of Upscaling Collectivization

under JKCIP, spoke on the vital importance of upscaling collective farming models to build economic resilience among local farmers.

A technical presentation by Dr Mohammad Iqbal Bhat, Coordinator of Upscaling Collectivization of JKCIP, provided a detailed analysis of the current scenario and future strategies required to strengthen Farmer Producer Organizations in Jammu & Kashmir.

The event concluded with a felicitation ceremony recognizing newly formed and high-performing FPOs, followed by a formal vote of thanks delivered by the project's co-coordinators, signifying a unified commitment from SKUAST-K, NABARD, and other government partners to sustain the growth of rural entrepreneurship in the region.

Mega Youth Engagement Drive to engage over 80,000 students

CS assesses the plans of the Culture and Education Deptts

JAMMU, FEBRUARY

16: In a significant move to institutionalize structured youth engagement and promote holistic development among students, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo today chaired a high-level meeting of key stakeholders, during which the School Education Department and the Department of Culture unveiled a comprehensive and integrated Youth Engagement Drive across the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

The ambitious initiatives lay out a structured roadmap to engage more than 80,000 students and youth annually through school-based platforms, grassroots cultural institutions and national-level exchange programmes, thereby strengthening experiential learning, cultural preservation and talent development across J&K.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Culture; Commissioner Secretary, Youth Services & Sports; Commissioner Secretary, School Education; Secretary, Culture; Managing Director, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan; Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages; and other senior officers.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Secretary emphasized that co-curricular and cultural initiatives are as vital as academic curricula in shaping well-rounded individuals. He underscored the need for inter-departmental convergence, structured implementation and continuous monitoring at every level to ensure effective stakeholder engagement and measurable outcomes.

Detailing the Department of Culture's roadmap, Principal Secretary, Culture, Brij Mohan Sharma informed the meeting that a comprehensive Youth Engagement and Empowerment Plan has been formulated to extend structured cultural activities to schools while revitalizing grassroots cultural ecosystems.



As part of this plan,

School Cultural Clubs will be established in 2,530 Government High and Higher Secondary Schools, engaging over 63,000 students annually. Each club, comprising 25 students, will function under the mentorship of the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages and serve as a platform for skill development, cultural training and nurturing of young cultural ambassadors.

To ensure deeper outreach at district and tehsil levels, District Cultural Committees will be constituted under the chairmanship of respective Additional District Development Commissioners, while Tehsil Cultural Clubs will be set up across 207 tehsils, engaging more than 10,000 youth annually. These bodies will curate structured cultural calendars and organize workshops, exhibitions and heritage exposure visits to foster sustained participation and community involvement.

A major highlight of the initiative is the "One District – One Traditional Art Form" programme, under which 27 district-specific traditional art forms have been identified for revival through a structured Guru-Shishya model. Master trainers will mentor selected youth trainees for a period of one year, ensuring preservation of endangered traditions while creating professional pathways for emerging artists.

Further strengthening social outreach, the Department will organize 200 Nukkad Natak (street play

programmes annually—100 each in Jammu and Srinagar—addressing critical social issues such as drug abuse prevention, mental health awareness, gender sensitivity and civic responsibility. Nearly 4,000 youth artists are expected to participate in these grassroots awareness campaigns across schools, colleges and community spaces.

Additionally, two seven-day Youth Cultural Summits will be organized annually in Jammu and Srinagar under the banner of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, providing a national platform for cultural exchange and creative collaboration among young artists.

In a landmark academic intervention, a two-year Diploma Course in Calligraphy has been formalized in collaboration with the University of Kashmir, offering structured training in multiple classical scripts along with stipendiary support to enrolled students.

Complementing these efforts, the School Education Department, through the Jammu and Kashmir State Council of Educational Research and Training, will launch a flagship programme titled "Display Your Talent – Excellence in Culture, Sports, Education & Learning," aligned with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020.

The initiative as elaborated by the Commissioner Secretary, School Education, Ram Niwas Sharma envisions holistic student development by integrating academics with arts, sports, skills and cultural learning. Covering more

than 24,000 schools across 20 districts and 188 educational zones, the programme follows a five-tier progression model—from school level to a grand UT-level finale—ensuring systematic talent identification and advancement.

The engagement framework, he added, has been carefully structured according to age groups. At the foundational stage, activities will focus on storytelling, rhymes and fun-based sports. Preparatory classes will participate in spell bee competitions, junior logic exercises, folk dance and mini-games.

Middle-stage students will engage in science exhibitions, STEM challenges, kabaddi and classical or folk music competitions.

It was revealed that at the secondary level, students will participate in policy parliament simulations, coding competitions, pro-league sports and theatre activities, fostering leadership, innovation and civic awareness.

To ensure inclusivity, a dedicated 'Samarth' Inclusive Framework has been incorporated to facilitate meaningful participation of Children With Special Needs through Braille support, sign language interpretation, inclusive sports and tactile arts.

The integrated framework marks a transformative step toward positioning Jammu & Kashmir as a vibrant hub of educational excellence and cultural renaissance, while ensuring that the youth of the Union Territory are equipped with creativity, confidence and character to shape a progressive future.

Satish meets delegations; reaffirms efforts for public welfare, sports empowerment in J&K

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, FEB 16

Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Youth Services and Sports, and Science and Technology, Satish Sharma, today met several delegations and individuals who called on him to apprise him of various public and sector-specific concerns.

Among those who met the Minister were NYC volunteers and delegations from different areas, who projected a wide range of issues relating to the Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department, transport services and promotion and development of sports infrastructure.

The delegations raised matters concerning strengthening public distribution mechanisms, improving transport facilities, enhancing accessibility and efficiency of services, and expanding opportunities for youth engagement in sports and allied activities.

The Minister gave a patient hearing to all delegations and assured them that their genuine concerns would be examined in detail and addressed in a time-bound manner.

He reiterated that responsive governance and effective public service delivery remain top priorities and emphasized that departments under his charge are committed to ensure transparency, efficiency, and accountability in their functioning.

A group of prominent athletes and sportspersons also called on the Min-



ister and expressed their happiness and appreciation over the recent notification of the order providing for appointment of outstanding sportspersons in Government service.

They described the decision as a progressive and motivating step that would encourage young talent to pursue excellence in sports while ensuring recognition and career security for achievers.

Interacting with the sportspersons, the Minister said that the Government is committed to creating a conducive environment for nurturing sporting talent and strengthening sports infrastructure across regions. He highlighted that sustained efforts are underway to promote grassroots participation, provide modern facil-

ties, and support athletes through structured policies and initiatives.

Reaffirming his commitment to youth empowerment and inclusive development, the Minister stated that regular interactions with stakeholders and public representatives will continue to ensure that policies remain responsive to people's needs. He assured that necessary directions would be issued to the concerned departments for prompt follow-up on the issues raised during the meetings.

The Minister emphasized that collective participation of citizens, youth, and stakeholders plays a vital role in shaping effective governance, and reiterated the Government's resolve to work tirelessly for the welfare and progress of the people.