

## NABARD organises 'Grameen Bharat Mahotsav - A Rural Fest for Agriculture, Looms & Crafts'

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS

JAMMU, MAR 06  
National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), J&K Regional Office organised "Grameen Bharat Mahotsav - A Rural Fest for Agriculture, Looms & Crafts" at Bahu Plaza, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

The 3 day Mela, which commenced today and will continue up to 8 March 2026.

The Mahotsav was inaugurated by Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Finance, Shailendra Kumar, in presence of Chandrashekhar Azad, Regional Director, RBI; Dr. Shubhra Sharma, MD, JKRLM, Vikas Mittal, General Manager/Officer In charge, NABARD J&K RO and Sanjay Gupta, Chairman, Jammu and Kashmir Gramin Bank.

Shailendra Kumar visited the stalls set up by FPOs, OFPOs, SHGs and artisans. He interacted with the primary producers, artisans and farmers and appreciated their diverse range of rural products. He offered valuable suggestions to the participating FPOs, OFPOs and SHGs.

The key attraction of the Mahotsav was the wide range of stalls set up by FPOs, OFPOs, SHGs and artisans promoted and supported by NABARD and JKRLM.

FPOs from Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh high-



lighted value added millets and rice products aligned with the modern nutrition trends. The exhibitors from Gujarat showcased GI tagged handicrafts with strong export potential while Himachal Pradesh brought its signature handloom products including the renowned Kullu woolens.

Adding a strong local flavour, the artisans from Jammu & Kashmir displayed Kani and Sozini Pashmina shawls, Basohli Pashmina, Chikri craft, saffron, walnut, almond, honey, lemongrass products and the celebrated GI tagged Mushkudji rice, offering the visitors a glimpse into the region's vibrant rural economy.

Speaking at the inaugural event, Vikas Mittal, GM/OIC, NABARD J&K, highlighted NABARD's initiatives to strengthen FPOs. He encouraged the

participants to utilise the Mahotsav as a learning opportunity to understand the consumer preferences and market dynamics. He emphasized that such events enable the farmers to connect directly with retail buyers and bulk purchasers, ensuring better price realization and quality assurance.

A Nukkad Natak was presented by Sargam Club Samba to promote awareness about financial literacy. The performers highlighted common types of online frauds occurring through various suspicious links. The act educated the viewers on recognizing such risks and staying cautious while using digital platforms. It effectively conveyed the importance of safe financial practices in daily life.

Dr. Shubhra Sharma, MD, JKRLM, appreciated NABARD's efforts in bring-

ing diverse rural primary producers/artisans/farmers onto a common platform, allowing the visitors to explore and purchase authentic products from farmers and artisans from across India. She also acknowledged NABARD's contributions towards livelihood promotion and skill development.

Chandrashekhar Azad, Regional Director, RBI, commended NABARD for promoting rural entrepreneurship through the Mahotsav. He highlighted the importance of digital financial inclusion, noting how UPI and Priority Sector are lending support to empower the FPOs, OFPOs and SHGs. He also spoke about the RBI's newly introduced Grameen Credit Score, emphasizing that it will significantly benefit the rural borrowers by improving their access to formal credit channels.

## Jammu Steps Closer to Hosting 9th National Master Games

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS

JAMMU, MAR 06  
The Jammu Kashmir Master Games Association today welcomed CEO Vinod Kumar and members of the Super Master Games Federation during their visit to Jammu to review preparations for the proposed 9th National Master Games.

The visiting delegation inspected several sports grounds across the city to assess the available infrastructure and facilities. The inspection was conducted in the presence of Association President Ranjit Singh, Secretary General Neete Kaur, Treasurer Romesh Sharma, Joint Secretary Praval Sharma, Executive Member Ashok Sharma and Shri Narendra Singh.

During the visit, the team reviewed stadiums and other sports venues being considered for the national



event. The delegation expressed satisfaction with the infrastructure and appreciated the efforts being made to prepare Jammu as a host city.

The Jammu Kashmir Master Games Association has already begun preparations and is making a strong bid to host the 9th National Master Games in

Jammu. Officials said the city's sports facilities, accessibility and enthusiastic sporting environment make it an ideal venue for the prestigious event.

## DC Kulgam reviews functioning of SWD, implementation of Welfare Schemes

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS

JAMMU, MAR 06

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, today chaired a meeting to review the implementation and progress of various schemes and programmes of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) in the district.

During the meeting, the DC reviewed the functioning of One Stop Centre, integrated Child protection scheme, SANKALP Hub for Women, Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), Drug De-addiction Centre and implementation of State Marriage Assistance Scheme, ISSS, scholarships and other welfare initiatives being implemented by the department.

On the occasion, District Social Welfare Officer



(DSWO) Kulgam, Snovbar Altaf, briefed the chair about the number of beneficiaries enrolled under various pension schemes and other social welfare programmes in the district.

The DC directed the concerned officers to ensure that all eligible beneficiaries are covered under dif-

ferent social welfare schemes so that the intended support reaches every deserving person.

He further instructed the department to formulate a comprehensive calendar of awareness programmes under the SANKALP Hub for Women to enhance public awareness about the

schemes and services available for women and other vulnerable sections of society.

The DC emphasized effective implementation, regular monitoring, and greater outreach to ensure that the benefits of social welfare schemes reach the grassroots level.

## Chief Secy reviews Mission YUVA progress across J&K districts

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS

JAMMU, MAR 06

Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo today chaired a meeting to review the district-wise performance of Mission YUVA across Jammu and Kashmir, assessing progress on key parameters of Culture, Capital, Capacity and Connectivity aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and employment generation among the youth.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Tourism; Vice Chancellors of Universities; Director, IIM Jammu; Commissioner Secretary, Planning; Secretary, Labour & Employment; DG, Codes; Managing Director, JKRLM; Director, Employment; Director, Colleges; Convenor, UTLCB and other concerned officers.

Deputy Commissioners participated in the meeting through video conferencing from their respective districts.

The meeting reviewed the status of awareness initiatives under Udyam Jagriti 4.0, establishment of institutional mechanisms including Project Management Units (PMUs), Small Business Development Units (SBDUs), Business Help Desks (BHDs) and engagement of Motivators and Yuva Doots. Progress regarding application processing, loan sanctioning, enterprise incubation and ecosystem development under the Mission was also assessed.

Taking note of the progress achieved so far, the Chief Secretary impressed upon the Deputy Commissioners to take earnest steps towards completing the institutional framework in their districts. He directed them to ensure that SBDUs and BHDs become fully functional at the earliest and that Motivators and Yuva Doots are onboarded in a time-bound manner to ensure effective implementation of the Mission across the Union Territory.

Emphasising the need to expand outreach, the Chief Secretary asked the concerned departments to further intensify Udyam Jagriti initiatives in colleges and among Self Help Groups (SHGs). He stressed that aspiring entrepreneurs should receive proper mentoring, counselling and handholding support so that they are able to translate their ideas into viable enterprises.

Reviewing the role of financial institutions in supporting the Mission, the Chief Secretary observed that loan sanctions



amounting to around Rs 1,200 crore and disbursements of nearly Rs 964 crore indicate encouraging progress. However, he advised the banks to maintain a steady pace of 150-200 loan disbursements per day so that legacy pendencies are cleared and annual targets under the Mission are achieved in a timely manner.

He also emphasised the importance of periodic review and output tracking of enterprises established through these loans, so that their progress is closely monitored and necessary guidance is provided to ensure the sustainability and success of these ventures.

The Chief Secretary further underscored the need to address gaps identified in incubation centres established in higher educational institutions. He asked the concerned department to share the detailed assessment criteria used for evaluating these institutions so that corrective measures can be taken to strengthen the incubation ecosystem and ensure optimal utilisation of the facilities.

Additionally, he advised the Deputy Commissioners to encourage local businesses and enterprises to onboard themselves on the ONDC seller platform, enabling them to expand market access, promote their products and strengthen their businesses through digital commerce.

Earlier, Secretary, Labour & Employment, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan, in his detailed presentation, highlighted the district-wise status of Mission YUVA implementation across Jammu and Kashmir. He apprised the meeting of the progress achieved under the four pillars of Culture, Capital, Capacity and Connectivity, while also identifying areas requiring greater focus by the respective districts.

He also outlined the gaps observed in incubation centres established in higher educational institutions, particularly in terms of governance structure, start-up success, infrastructure, networking and funding patterns, while highlighting the strengths and best-performing institutions.

Further, he demon-

strated the weak-performing blocks and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in certain districts where greater efforts are required in capacity building of applicants to enable them to effectively utilise bank credit and establish sustainable enterprises.

The Chief Secretary was informed by Director, Employment, Harvinder Singh, that the ongoing Udyam Jagriti 4.0 awareness campaign has achieved substantial outreach across the Union Territory, covering 95 percent of Panchayats and reaching 2,51,352 individuals so far. He added that the Mission YUVA mobile application has recorded 2,20,928 downloads, reflecting a 47 percent increase during the last one month.

The meeting was further informed that the campaign's focused outreach initiatives have yielded encouraging results. Around 47,672 students have been covered through college-level engagements, while 1,97,400 women associated with Self Help Groups (SHGs) have been reached through targeted awareness programmes.

These efforts have resulted in 1,937 SHG credit applications and facilitated handholding support to 6,281 sanctioned applicants, registering significant growth over the previous month.

Regarding institutional strengthening, the meeting was apprised that 187 posts have been filled out of 367 sanctioned positions under SBDU/BHD recruitment, while 180 posts remain vacant. Officials informed that 28 percent of these posts have been filled since the last Apex Committee meeting, increasing the number from 90 to 187.

Similarly, under Motivator empanelment, 582 motivators have been empanelled out of 1,000 sanctioned positions, including 65 Lakhpati Didis, while 418 positions are yet to be filled.

It was also informed that 13 out of 20 districts have completed the establishment of SBDU centres, while the remaining centres in Jammu, Kishtwar, Rajouri, Reasi, Samba, Udhampur and Anantnag are at various stages of completion. All 20 SBDU centres

are expected to become operational by March 20, 2026.

The meeting was further informed that Mission YUVA has recorded steady growth in registrations, applications and loan disbursements over the past months. As of March 6, 2026, the number of registrations has reached 1,83,306, while 72,037 applications have been received under the scheme.

Out of these, 56,167 applications have been verified by SBDUs, while 50,743 have been approved by District Level Implementation Committees (DLICs). Banks have sanctioned 18,093 loans, out of which 15,192 loans have been disbursed, resulting in the establishment of 3,187 enterprises, with 2,053 more currently under implementation.

The meeting was also informed that applications for neo-innovative enterprises have witnessed significant growth, increasing from 119 on January 19, 2026 to 364 by February 4, 2026, marking nearly a threefold increase within a short span.

Under the Mission's five-year incubation target of 500 innovative enterprises, all 14 incubation centres have been onboarded, while 80 percent of these centres have already conducted InnovateX 1.0 awareness events. In addition, three evaluation committees have been empanelled for the Innovation and Sustainability Challenge.

Out of the 364 applications received, 86 have been shortlisted by the expert panel, while 30 applications have progressed to the final selection stage. The Selection Committee is expected to finalise the ventures for incubation by March 25, 2026.

While reviewing the overall progress, the Chief Secretary emphasised that Mission YUVA is a transformative initiative aimed at fostering entrepreneurship, generating employment opportunities and building a vibrant start-up ecosystem for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir. He called upon all stakeholders to work in close coordination to achieve the objectives of the Mission in a time-bound manner.

## SKUAST-K issues advisory for combating dry weather

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS

JAMMU, MAR 06

In response to the persistent dry weather across the Kashmir Valley, experts from Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir have issued an urgent advisory.

Farmers are strongly urged to prioritize soil moisture conservation and immediate crop protection measures to mitigate the impact of rising temperatures and lack of precipitation.

The university has strongly urged farmers across the Valley to adopt timely crop management practices, emphasising that the primary goal during this period must be to pro-

tect crops from heat stress and soil desiccation. For fruit growers, the most critical recommendation is the application of 4-6 inches of organic mulch, such as paddy straw or grass clippings, to tree basins to retain moisture. Experts from SKUAST-K's Division of Agrometeorology have specifically warned against the use of inorganic mulches like polythene sheets, which can inadvertently increase soil temperature and damage root systems. In orchards lacking irrigation, the university advises delaying all fertilizer applications until sufficient soil moisture is available and cautions against excessive hoeing or heavy tractor movement that could further dry out the land.

The advisory extends to field crops where growers of wheat, mustard, and peas are encouraged to monitor their fields regularly and prioritize the removal of weeds through inter-cultural operations to eliminate competition for limited water. Urea application in these crops should be strictly limited to 2.5 kg per kanal and only performed when adequate moisture is present.

For vegetable and floriculture sectors, particularly tulip cultivation, the university recommends light and frequent irrigation during the early morning or late evening hours. Nursery beds for sensitive crops like tomato, chili, capsicum, and cabbage should be protected with shade nets or straw cover-

ings to mitigate heat stress.

Additionally, raking the soil in orchards can help expose dormant pupae and grubs to sunlight, while the installation of 8-10 pheromone traps per hectare is recommended to monitor for apple leaf blotch and fruit borer.

The advisory also covers the fisheries sector, where maintaining dissolved oxygen levels above 6 mg/L via aeration systems is vital. Fish farmers should maintain a water depth of 1.5-2 meters and reduce feeding rates to 1-1.5 percent of body weight during low oxygen conditions, utilizing high-protein floating pellets supplemented with Vitamin C and probiotics to ensure fish health during this challenging climatic phase.