

# NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

## Multiple events mark International Women's Day celebrations across Jammu Division



**JAMMU, MARCH 08:** A series of events were organised across Jammu Division to celebrate International Women's Day, highlighting women's empowerment, entrepreneurship, sports participation and social awareness.

At Doda, the Department of Agriculture, Sub Division Pranoo, celebrated International Women's Day at Dak Bungalow Bhaderwah by organising a gender sensitization and inclusive awareness workshop. Speakers delivered informative lectures on women's empowerment, gender sensitization and their participation in decision-making processes.

Participants were also acquainted with various flagship government initiatives offering entrepreneurship opportunities in agriculture and allied sectors.

At Samba, the Social Welfare Department organised a programme to mark International Women's Day. Deputy Commissioner Ayushi Sudan inaugurated the programme and emphasised the importance of gender equality and the need to ensure equal opportunities for women in all sectors.

The programme was held under the theme "Give to Gain," highlighting the importance of generosity, collaboration and collective efforts to accelerate gender equality. The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from officials, women entrepreneurs, college students and members of civil society.

At Kishtwar, the Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the District Administration, organised a training-cum-workshop on gender sensitization. Women and young girls from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) were aware about their rights and responsibilities to enable them to actively contribute to the development of society

and the nation.

Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Sharma graced the event as the Chief Guest, while daughter of the soil Dr Daisy Parihar, Principal Government ANMT School Gandhinagar, was the Guest of Honour. The programme witnessed participation of women farmers, SHGs, Krishi Sakhis and young girls from across the district.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted that the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is to empower women, who constitute nearly half of the country's population.

Meanwhile, the District Employment and Counselling Centre organised a Women Entrepreneurship and Self-Help Group (SHG) Mela for potential entrepreneurs at GHSS Bhatta, Block Palmar.

The event was graced by MLA Shagun Parihar as the Chief Guest and ADDC Vinod Kumar Behnal as the Guest of Honour. Around 100 potential entrepreneurs, along with representatives from various SHGs, participated in the event.

During the programme, the MLA distributed five sanction letters under Mission YUVA to eligible applicants, providing a significant boost to budding entrepreneurs.

At Poonch, the Department of Social Welfare celebrated International Women's Day 2026 at the Conference Hall of Government Degree College under the theme "Give to Gain." Deputy Commissioner Ashok Kumar Sharma graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

District Social Welfare Officer Khalil A. Bandy highlighted the importance of the day and reiterated the department's commitment to the welfare and empowerment of women. Three skits were presented by Anganwadi workers and inmates of Gujjar and Pahari hostels

highlighting various schemes, social issues and the important role of women in society.

Women achievers from different fields were felicitated in recognition of their contributions and achievements. School bags were also distributed among participants as part of the programme.

Meanwhile, Block Administration Mankote organised "Azmat-e-Khawateen Mela – Mankote" to commemorate International Women's Day. The event featured a women's awareness rally comprising SHG members, expectant mothers, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers and members of the local community.

Awareness sessions were also conducted focusing on maternal and child health, nutrition and various government welfare initiatives aimed at supporting women and children.

At Reasi, a one-day entrepreneurship mela under Mission YUVA was organised at Block Panthal to mark International Women's Day.

Various government departments set up stalls showcasing start-up opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, horticulture, handicrafts, handloom, cooperatives and allied fields. Successful entrepreneurs and Self-Help Group members associated with the National Rural Livelihood Mission and Mission POSHAN also displayed their products and shared their experiences to motivate aspiring youth.

A large number of women, SHG members and prospective entrepreneurs participated in the event and interacted with departmental officers and bank representatives to seek guidance regarding the establishment of enterprises under various government initiatives.

Assistant Director Employment San-

jay Kumar Bhat highlighted the importance of Mission YUVA in creating an enabling ecosystem for entrepreneurship and livelihood generation among youth. He called upon government departments, financial institutions and other stakeholders to work in coordination to facilitate aspiring entrepreneurs in establishing sustainable enterprises.

At Ramban, the District Administration organised a Women Entrepreneurship Mela at Government Higher Secondary School Banihal. Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Alys Khan attended the programme as the Chief Guest.

Women entrepreneurs, members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), unemployed youth and representatives from various government departments participated in the event.

The Deputy Commissioner highlighted the importance of empowering women through entrepreneurship and self-employment initiatives. The stalls set up by the Departments of Agriculture, Horticulture, Handicrafts & Handloom, Cooperatives and Employment disseminated information regarding self-employment schemes and livelihood opportunities available for women.

The DC also distributed Mission YUVA sanction letters to five beneficiaries to support them in establishing their own enterprises. In addition, five women achievers associated with SHGs under the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM) were felicitated for their inspiring success stories and outstanding contribution towards promoting self-reliance and community development.

Similar programmes and awareness activities were also organised across sub-divisions and tehsils of the district.

At Udhampur, MY Bharat Udhampur

celebrated International Women's Day with great enthusiasm at Subhash Stadium by organising an athletic event for girls and women. Hundreds of women participants showcased their sporting spirit and enthusiasm.

The competitions included 100-metres, 200-metres and 400-metres races along with tug-of-war events making the event vibrant and energetic.

MLA Chenani Balwant Singh Mankote graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and appreciated MY Bharat for organising such a meaningful event.

The programme was organised as a joint initiative of MY Bharat, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and Khelo India with the objective of empowering women through sports and community participation.

The Health and ICDS departments also set up stalls at the venue to disseminate information regarding health, nutrition and welfare schemes for women.

The programme concluded with the distribution of mementos, medals and certificates among the winners in different categories.

At Rajouri, the District Administration in collaboration with MY Bharat, the Sports Authority of India and Khelo India Centres celebrated International Women's Day 2026 by organising a series of sports and fitness activities under the ASMITA League.

Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma, DIG Rajouri-Poonch Range Tejinder Singh and SSP Gaurav Sikarwar attended the event and appreciated the enthusiastic participation of women and girls.

Several competitions including tug-of-war, fun games and 100-metres, 200-metres and 400-metres races were conducted at the District Police Lines.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the impor-

importance of creating platforms which empower women and encourage their active participation. He said that such initiatives help build confidence and promote a culture of equality and empowerment in society.

Various government departments set up awareness and service stalls to disseminate information regarding government schemes and services. A special health camp was also organised to provide basic health check-ups and medical consultation to participants.

Under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative, the Social Welfare Department distributed sports items among girls from Gujjar and Bakerwal Hostel, Parisha Rajouri, EMRS Gurdan Bala and EMRS Kotranka to promote sports participation.

A skill centre for training girls in making Gogri caps was also inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner.

Certificates of appreciation were presented to fifty ASHA workers for their contribution towards improving the girl child sex ratio and achieving zero maternal mortality during the year 2025-26 under the BBBP scheme.

Women achievers from different fields, women officers from the civil administration and police department and SHG members were also felicitated on the occasion.

Meanwhile, a day-long Women Entrepreneurship Mela under Mission YUVA was organised at the venue. Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma inaugurated the programme and interacted with participants and stall holders.

The Deputy Director DE&CC gave a detailed presentation on the objectives and scope of Mission YUVA, highlighting its eligibility criteria and support mechanisms available for aspiring entrepreneurs.

## 'Grew up in family where women were bosses': Rahul

**NEW DELHI, MAR 8:**

"I grew up in a family where the women were the bosses," Congress leader Rahul Gandhi told students during an interaction in Kerala recently, while asserting that women are generally more intelligent than men.

On International Women's Day, Gandhi posted a video of his interaction with the students on his YouTube channel on Sunday and said that a few days ago, he met some young women students in Kerala during a lunch interaction and had a very interesting conversation with them.

"I was deeply impressed by each student's dreams, curiosity, and confidence. Such conversations remind us that when women recognise their potential and move forward with an open mind, they can bring about extraordinary change," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

"Every woman is unique. Their sensitivity, understanding, and emotional intelligence provide balance and direction to society. Women also wield power in their own unique ways – with patience, long-term vision, and empathy," Gandhi asserted in his post in Hindi, accompanying the video.

"Therefore, they should have every right to move forward according to their identity, personality, and aspirations, rather than being bound by society's restrictive norms," he said.

"Heartiest greetings to all



women on International Women's Day. May your strength, courage, and dreams continue to propel society toward a positive future," Gandhi said.

Posting the video on X, Gandhi said interacting with some young students in Kerala was incredibly inspiring. "Their confidence and belief in their dreams demonstrate that women are the ultimate force for change," he said.

In the video, Gandhi is seen having a free-wheeling chat with the women students.

"I grew up in a family where the women were the bosses. So the boss of my family was my grandmother and I have always in my fam-

ily, like on this table, been outnumbered by women," Gandhi tells the students.

"Women are generally more intelligent than men for the most part. Men are in a hurry and men get blinded by silly things. Women think longer term, they don't apply direct power they apply indirect power, it is more effective," he says.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge shared on X a quote by BR Ambedkar on gender equality – "You are not born to suffer. You are born to rise"

"Women are not merely participants in development. They are its driving force. Through their wisdom, resilience, compassion, and determination,

women strengthen communities, and build stronger nations," Kharge said on X.

"On International Women's Day 2026, we celebrate the courage, leadership, and countless contributions of women everywhere. True progress will come when equality is not an aspiration, but a lived reality for every woman," the Congress chief said.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also greeted women on International Women's Day.

"On this Women's Day, may every woman realise her strength, her rights and her power to shape the future. You matter. Your voice matters. Your dreams matter," she said on X. (PTI)

## Colombians are electing new Congress, choosing presidential candidates

**GOGOTA (Colombia), Mar 8:** Colombians head to the polls on Sunday to elect a new Congress and select candidates from three major coalitions in a primary-style contest ahead of a presidential election this May.

The election unfolds under high alert for political violence across the South American country, particularly in rural regions dominated by illegal armed groups.

At the same time, President Gustavo Petro – the nation's first left-leaning leader – has cast doubt on the country's election software, pointing to the 2022 legislative elections, when his Historic Pact movement gained over 390,000 votes following a recount. He attributed this shift to the presence of election observers.

The European Union deployed 40 election observers in early February and said it intended to increase the size of the delegation for the upcoming congressional vote.

More than 3,000 candidates are vying for 285 legislative positions – 102 in the Senate and 183 in the House of Representatives – with 41.2 million citizens eligible to cast their ballots.

Sunday's election is set to define the political landscape for Colombia's next head of state.

Petro is ineligible for reelection because the constitution bars a sitting



president from running for a consecutive second term.

Colombia's current Congress approved Petro's pension and labour overhaul, but rejected his proposed reforms to the health care and tax reforms, and there were often tensions between him and lawmakers.

Meanwhile, the right-wing opposition is looking to reclaim its status as a dominant political force.

The Democratic Centre, the nation's primary opposition party, continues to be guided by the influence of former President Alvaro Uribe, who is mobilising his base to secure a strong legislative presence ahead of the presidential vote.

Alongside the congres-

sional vote, Colombians will vote to choose presidential candidates for the country's three major political blocs: the centre, the centre-left, and the right.

The winners of the three "inter-party consultations," similar to American primary elections, will go on to compete in the presidential election, whose first round is set for May 31.

Presidential hopefuls have long used the primaries to gauge their support before entering the first round of voting. This strategy proved successful four years ago for Petro, who consolidated his base by winning the left-wing primary alongside Francia Marquez, who became his

vice president.

However, the two candidates currently leading in the polls – leftist Ivan Cepeda, from Petro's party, and far-right Abelardo de la Espriella – are not participating in the primaries, which are optional.

Political analyst Gabriel Cifuentes said the primaries are a high-stakes gamble for the participants, noting that a victory on Sunday is only meaningful if it demonstrates enough strength to compete with the leading candidates, such as Cepeda and de la Espriella.

More than 126,000 law enforcement officers are expected to be deployed across the country on Election Day. (AP)