

CM inaugurates Jashn-e-Amad-e-Bahar in Anantnag

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, APR 14

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today inaugurated Jashn-e-Amad-e-Bahar, the Spring Festival on the occasion of Baisakhi, at Jablipora in Anantnag.

Addressing a large gathering on the occasion, the Chief Minister described spring as a symbol of renewal and hope, stating that the festival represents not just a seasonal transition but also a new phase of development and governance in Jammu & Kashmir.

"We always celebrate the arrival of spring because spring is a new beginning for us. These spring celebrations are not only to celebrate the beginning of this year's spring, but also to remind people that after the arrival of our government, there was not only an effort, but a path was made. There is a new spring, a new beginning," he said.

Highlighting recent policy initiatives, the Chief Minister referred to key decisions taken during the recent budget session, including provision of free six LPG cylinders to the poorest households and free electricity under the Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana.

He also emphasized the landmark decision to allow establishment of private universities in Jammu & Kashmir, aimed at expanding access to quality higher education within Jammu and Kashmir.

"Our children are struggling. In other states, to get admission in private universities, their expenses also increase and they have to face difficulties from time to time.

We have now opened the doors for those private universities to come to J&K. Now we will go to different states and invite these universities to come here, to come to J&K, to come to Kashmir, to establish their campuses in remote areas. And our children, who had to leave J&K to get educa-



tion, will now get education in those private universities here in J&K," he added.

Reaffirming his government's commitment to strengthening rural livelihoods, the Chief Minister said focused efforts are being made to boost farmers' incomes and build a sustainable, self-reliant agriculture sector in Jammu & Kashmir.

The Chief Minister highlighted a series of transformative and forward-looking initiatives undertaken by his government in the agriculture and allied sectors, describing them as pivotal to reshaping the rural economy of Jammu and Kashmir.

He underscored that these interventions are not only aimed at enhancing productivity and farmers' income but also at promoting sustainability, diversification, and value addition.

He further noted that several ambitious programmes are in the pipeline, including the expansion of high-density plantations, strengthening of cold storage and marketing infrastructure, and greater integration of technology in farming practices. "Our vision is to build a resilient and self-reliant agricultural economy that empowers farmers and contributes

significantly to the overall economic growth of J&K," he asserted.

Referring to the immense potential of South Kashmir, the Chief Minister remarked that the region is richly endowed with fertile land and a favourable climate, making it ideal for both agriculture and tourism. He said that South Kashmir offers a unique blend of natural beauty and agricultural diversity, which can be effectively leveraged to promote agro-tourism.

From the mesmerizing lavender or purple bloom to the vibrant mustard fields and lush green paddy landscapes during summer, the region presents a visual and experiential delight for visitors. He emphasized that such initiatives can create new livelihood opportunities for local communities while simultaneously showcasing the region's rich agrarian heritage to the world.

The Chief Minister said that the government is committed to transforming the region into a vibrant hub of the White Revolution through the promotion of modern and sustainable dairy farming. He emphasized that focused efforts are being made to strengthen dairy infrastruc-

ture, enhance milk production and improve the livelihood of farmers associated with the sector. Highlighting the immense potential of the region, he noted that initiatives such as the establishment of milk processing units, provision of high-yielding cattle, veterinary support, and better market linkages are being actively pursued.

"Our aim is to create a robust dairy ecosystem that not only ensures nutritional security but also generates employment and steady income for rural households," he added.

Minister for Health & Medical Education, Higher Education & Social Welfare, Sakeena Masood Itoo; Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Cooperatives and Election, Javid Ahmad Dar; Advisor to the Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani; and MLA Srigufwara-Bijbehara, Bashir Ahmad Shah Veeri, along with several other legislators, senior officers and officials, were present on the occasion.

The event, organized under the aegis of the Agriculture Production Department, J&K, aimed at promoting agro-tourism and showcasing the region's rich horticultural potential.

MLA Udhampur West inaugurates 3-day historic Devika Baisakhi mela

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JAMMU, APR 14

Member Legislative Assembly Udhampur West Pawan Kumar Gupta today inaugurated the three-day historic Devika Baisakhi Mela on the banks of the sacred Devika rivulet in Udhampur town.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Prem Singh; Assistant Commissioner Revenue Dr. Umesh Shan; Tehsildar Jai Singh along with officers from other departments, representatives of political and social organizations and prominent citizens were present on the occasion.

While addressing the gathering, the MLA extended warm greetings and best wishes to the people on the auspicious occasion of Baisakhi. He appreciated the tireless efforts and meticulous arrangements made by the District Administration Udhampur. He expressed hope that the festival would usher in peace, prosperity and harmony across the Union Territory.

Highlighting the cultural and spiritual significance of the Mela, he said that the sacred Devika Ghat holds a special place in the hearts of the people, attracting devotees from all walks of life who visit to take a holy



dip in the Devika rivulet during the festivities.

He further emphasized that such traditional Melas foster communal harmony by bringing together people from diverse religions, communities and regions, thereby strengthening the social fabric.

To ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the Mela, the District Administration has made elaborate arrangements, including uninterrupted power supply, safe drinking water, sanitation, medical facilities and comprehensive security arrangements. A joint control room and assistance booths have also been set up to help visitors.

The Government depart-

ments have also set up stalls to generate public awareness about different government welfare schemes and initiatives.

Adding to the festive spirit, local and outside vendors have set up temporary sweet shops, toy stalls and food corners which became a major attraction for visitors. The MLA, accompanied by the Additional Deputy Commissioner, took a detailed round of the venue and inspected the departmental stalls established for public awareness. Later, the MLA and other senior officers participated in a signature campaign, reaffirming their commitment to building a drug-free Udhampur.

The participants took a pledge to support the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan and remain committed to fostering a drug-free and healthy society. A theme-based skit on the campaign was presented by Prashant Khajuria, which was witnessed and appreciated by the MLA and other dignitaries. District Information Centre Udhampur organized a vibrant cultural programme to mark the first day of the historic Mela. A large number of people enjoyed the cultural extravaganza, featuring Dogri music and folk dance performances by local artists and students from various educational institutions.

Shri Machail Mata Ji Temple reopens: Div Com, IGP Jammu pay obeisance at Revered Shrine

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JAMMU, APR 14

The sacred Shri Machail Mata Temple, nestled in the spiritual expanse of Machail Valley in District Kishtwar, was reopened for pilgrims on the auspicious occasion of Baisakhi, today, heralding the commencement of the annual Shri Machail Mata Yatra 2026.

The religious event also marked the shifting of the idol (Murti) of Goddess Machail Mata (Durga) from the house of local priest Pehalwan Singh to the Main temple amid a huge rush of devotees amid religious rituals and a grand fair.

The reopening of the revered temple was attended by Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar, IGP Jammu Zone, Bhim Singh Tutti, Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Pankaj Kumar Sharma and SSP Kishtwar, Naresh Singh, who paid their obeisance at the sacred shrine.

After paying the obeisance, the Divisional Commissioner and IGP Jammu took a comprehensive review of the arrangements put in place for the smooth and safe conduct of the Shri Machail Mata Yatra 2026.

The review included an assessment of security protocols, provision of electricity, water supply, sanitation, langar sewa, accommodation and healthcare facilities for the devotees.

The Divisional Commissioner directed for effective implementation and en-



forcement of RFID registration, with counters to be established for on-the-spot registration at Gauri Shankar Mandir Sarkoot and Gulabgarh. He emphasized that no entry shall be permitted without the registration.

He issued instructions for the strict implementation of sanitation measures, including the deployment of sanitation workers and proper management of plastic waste to make the Yatra 100% plastic-free. Further, directions were issued to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity to Machail and adjoining areas.

The Divisional Commissioner also directed for adequate water supply and provision of accommodation facilities in educational institutions (schools and colleges) in the event of adverse weather conditions

and emergencies along the Yatra route from Gulabgarh to Machail.

It was informed that helicopter services shall also be initiated after obtaining permission. "There shall be no movement of pilgrims, nor any establishment at the cloudburst-affected site at Chishoti," the Divisional Commissioner directed.

The Divisional Commissioner directed the concerned executing agencies to assess the feasibility and undertake necessary measures to increase the height of the bridge at Chishoti.

Underscoring the cultural and religious significance of the Shri Machail Mata Yatra, the Divisional Commissioner said the shrine has emerged as major attraction for promoting spiritual tourism in the region. He assured full support from the administration for the successful con-

duct of the Yatra and emphasized the importance of providing a secure and comfortable environment for the pilgrims. The Divisional Commissioner announced that the Gulabgarh to Machail road would soon be handed over to the BRO to build a Bailey Bridge at Chishoti within one fortnight. Earlier at the Shrine, the Divisional Commissioner also interacted with the devotees and the locals and listened to their demands and issues. He assured that the issues would be addressed soon.

The Shri Machail Mata Yatra holds profound religious importance and attracts lakhs of devotees from across the country every year. The Divisional Commissioner appealed to all pilgrims to adhere to the guidelines and safety instructions that are issued by the administration.

Satish leads Baisakhi Milan celebrations at Akhnoor; pushes for preserving cultural legacy

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Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, IT, Transport, Youth Services & Sports, Science & Technology, Satish Sharma, today participated in the grand Baisakhi Milan celebrations at Pambadwan Akhnoor, Jammu.

He extended warm greetings to the people and highlighted deep-rooted cultural, historical and social significance of celebrating Baisakhi. He emphasized that the festival plays a vital role in upholding the rich traditions, agrarian ethos and composite cultural fabric of the region.

The event witnessed an impressive public turnout, including the community leaders, youth and local residents, who gathered to



celebrate the vibrant festival of Baisakhi, reflecting the spirit of unity and cultural pride.

Addressing the gathering, the Minister reiterated the importance of preserving the cultural heritage and strengthening communal harmony through such celebrations.

"Baisakhi is not merely a

harvest festival but a reflection of our identity and heritage. It symbolizes prosperity, hard work, and unity, and reminds us of our responsibility to preserve and promote our cultural values," the Minister said.

Reiterating the government's commitment to inclusive development, he

stressed the importance of maintaining a balance between progress and preservation of cultural traditions.

The program also witnessed active interaction between the Minister and the public, with several participants putting forth their concerns and suggestions. Satish Sharma assured timely redressal of their genuine issues, reaffirming his commitment to responsive and people-centric governance.

The Minister appreciated the overwhelming participation and enthusiasm of the people, stating that such gatherings reflect the strong cultural fabric and unity of the region.

The venue remained vibrant with festive enthusiasm, showcasing the essence of togetherness and cultural legacy.

Seerbagh-Sempora bridge nearing completion, to be opened soon: Deputy Chief Minister

SRINAGAR, APR 14: The Chief Minister said that these vital infrastructure projects will significantly strengthen connectivity, ensure all-weather access, and accelerate economic growth across the Chenab Valley and adjoining regions.

The Government of India has approved the construction of the uni-directional twin-tube Sudhmahadev-Dranga Tunnel (12.85 km, including 2-lane plus paved shoulder approaches) and the twin-tube Singhpora-Vailoo Tunnel (38.61 km, including 2-lane plus paved shoulder approaches) on NH-244 in Jammu & Kashmir, at an estimated total cost of 79,779.42 crore.



Recalling his earlier intervention, the Chief Minister said that in June last year, he had written to the Prime Minister and the Union Minister high-

lighting delays in the projects and seeking their urgent consideration. He had urged that the projects be taken up under the NH (O) scheme of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways on priority to ensure their timely completion in line with the broader vision for the development of Jammu & Kashmir and the nation.

In his communication, the Chief Minister had also expressed concern that while other NH projects on NH-244 were progressing under NHIDCL, delays in these two critical tunnels were impeding the expected socio-economic benefits for the Chenab region and hindering its efforts to overcome economic backwardness.

KU Law students engage in lively seminar on women's reservation

SRINAGAR, APRIL 14: University of Kashmir's (KU) School of Law organised a one-day seminar on 'Implementation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023' at the Main Campus.

The seminar aimed to examine the constitutional and practical dimensions of the 106th Constitutional Amendment, which provides for one-third reservation for women in legislative bodies. The students, which included

mostly girls from KU's school of law, engaged themselves in a thought-provoking academic exchange.

Vice-Chancellor KU, Prof. Nilofer Khan, said, in her message, "Such academic platforms encourage critical thinking among students and help them engage meaningfully with contemporary constitutional developments and issues of social importance."

Dean and Head, School

of Law, KU, Prof. Shahnaz, in her welcome address, highlighted the importance of inclusive participation and gender justice in democratic institutions.

The event featured enthusiastic participation from students, who delivered insightful speeches on women's political representation, challenges in implementation, and the broader idea of meaningful empowerment beyond numerical representation. They were evaluated by a

panel including Prof. Tabassum Firdous, faculty at CCAS KU, Prof. Iffat Yasmin, Head, Economics Department KU, Prof. Towseef Rizvi, Head, Psychology Department KU.

The winners of the speech competition included Sanjeeda Amin (Winner), Sayana Warsi (1st Runner-up), and Kainaat Amin and Noha Balkhi (2nd Runner-ups). Certificates were also distributed among the participants.