

Wattal conferred Lifetime Achievement Award at Int'l Excellence Awards

NEW DELHI, AUG 25: Former JMC Commissioner Kiran Wattal was conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award at the International Excellence Awards 2026, organized by Kiteskraft Productions, in recognition of his over four decades of exemplary public service in urban governance, sports development, community welfare and humanitarian initiatives.

The award was presented by celebrated badminton champion Saina Nehwal on behalf of the organization at a ceremony held at Hyatt, New Delhi.

A civil engineering graduate from Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology, Patiala (1978), Er. Wattal has held several key leadership positions in Jammu & Kashmir, including Chief Engineer, J&K Urban Environmental Engineering Department; J&K Housing Board; and Secretary, J&K State Sports Council.

As Municipal Commissioner, Jammu, he led a series of transformative initiatives that strengthened the city's civic infrastructure and services. These included the construction of 336 residential units for economically weaker sections under the BSUP scheme at Sunjwan, establishment of a citywide Municipal Helpline, and the 'Clean Up Jammu' campaign across all 71 municipal wards.

His hands-on leadership during the 1992 sanitation strike remains widely remembered. In the midst of severe winter conditions and an unprecedented sanitation crisis, Er. Wattal



personally operated excavators to ensure essential services were restored. Er. Wattal is well known for facilitating myriad activities towards the promotion of gymnastics in J&K. He currently serves as Vice-President, Gymnastics Federation of India, and President, Gymnastics Association of J&K.

He has also served as Chef-de-Mission for the Indian squad at various international gymnastics championships.

Commitment to community and humanitarian causes

Beyond administration, Er. Wattal has been deeply

involved in community service and cultural preservation. He is Convener of Vishwa Kashmiri Samaj and President of the Shri Amarnath Yatra Welfare Society, leading initiatives for the welfare of pilgrims and the preservation of Kashmiri cultural heritage.

His humanitarian efforts include organizing three mega multi-specialty medical camps in Jammu & Kashmir. Furthermore, he was actively involved in leading COVID 19 relief and healthcare operations through Humane Jammu-including development of oxygen flow meters to sup-

port critical care needs in Jammu city.

He also organized a two-month community langar in Ayodhya, providing meals to around 15,000 devotees every day.

A record of recognition

The Lifetime Achievement Award at International Excellence Awards 2026 adds to the many honours bestowed on Er. Wattal, including the Bharat Shreshtha Sewa Sanstha Puraskar (2023), Kashmir Peace Lovers Recognition (2023), and Mahatma Gandhi Rashtriya Seva Medal (2025).

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, AUG 25

As part of its 20th anniversary celebrations, 95 FM Tadka organised '20 Ka Dum, 20 Kadam - Nasha Mukht Bharat Ki Aur', a drug addiction awareness and talent hunt programme at MIER College of Education, B.C. Road, Jammu.

The event, aimed at creating awareness among youth about the harmful effects of drug addiction while providing them a platform to showcase their talent, received an enthusiastic response from students.

The programme was presented by HDFC Bank and powered by Wheelocity Motors - Skoda Jammu. Team Ideation was the Event Partner, Bharati Lok Sangeet Kala Sanasthan the Cultural Partner, while The Himalayan Mail, a



leading English daily of Jammu and Kashmir, was the Print Partner of the event.

The programme was graced by Dr. Satish Bhardwaj, SDPO (West); Manpreet Kour Sodhi, Counselling Psychologist; Sahil Sharma, renowned musician and judge; and Kamal Manhas, Cluster Head, HDFC Bank.

Representing MIER College, Prof. Nishita Rana, Prof. Monika Bajaj and Dr.

Reeta Dwivedi were present on the occasion.

From 95 FM Tadka, Jammu Head Sandeep Koul, RJ Nitish Sharma and Kailash Kerni coordinated and hosted the programme.

The speakers and participants underlined the need for collective efforts to steer the younger generation away from substance abuse and encourage them to adopt a healthy, positive and drug-free lifestyle.

The event combined awareness with entertainment and talent, providing students an engaging platform to express themselves while carrying forward the message of a Nasha Mukht Bharat.

The enthusiastic participation of students added to the success of the programme, which marked another significant initiative by 95 FM Tadka during its 20th anniversary celebrations.

DDC reviews progress of JJM Schemes in Doda District

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, AUG 25

District Development Commissioner Doda Krishan Lal (Chairman District Jal Jeevan Mission) today chaired a meeting to review the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) (District Water & Sanitation Mission) in the District. He assessed the progress of the ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening rural drinking water supply and ensuring tap water connectivity to households across the district.

The meeting focused on reviewing the physical and financial progress of JJM schemes, along with the status of their implementation and completion.

Detailed discussions were held on the Har Ghar Jal (HGG) certification, particularly the gap between villages reported as Har Ghar Jal and those formally certified. The meeting also reviewed the status of Rural Piped Water Supply



Scheme (RPWSS) ID creation and geo-tagging of water sources.

The status of water quality testing and monitoring was also reviewed, with emphasis on regular testing to ensure the supply of safe and potable drinking water to rural households.

The meeting further assessed the status of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) under the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA) and discussed issues requiring timely resolution for effective implementation.

The concerned officers were directed to closely monitor the progress of JJM works, ensure timely completion of pending activities and maintain proper documentation and reporting. Emphasis was laid on strengthening inter-departmental coordination to achieve the objectives of the Jal Jeevan Mission and ensure sustainable and quality drinking water supply in rural areas of the district.

The DDC directed the concerned officers to accord priority to schools, Anganwadi Centres and health institutions while ensuring reliable and adequate water supply under the Jal Jeevan Mission. He stressed that these essential institutions should receive uninterrupted access to safe drinking water.

The DDC further emphasized the timely implementation and completion of JJM schemes, directing the concerned departments to closely monitor the progress of works, address bottlenecks promptly and ensure that projects are executed within the stipulated timelines.

Horticulture Department hosts Awareness Camp, Farmers' Exposure Tour



HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, AUG 25

The Department of Horticulture Jammu organised an Awareness Camp at the Government Fruit Plant Nursery, Gandharwan to familiarise farmers with modern horticultural techniques, departmental schemes and opportunities to diversify into high-value fruit crops.

The programme was attended by Member Legislative Assembly Akhnoor Mohan Lal Bhagat as the chief guest, while the Director Horticulture Jammu Gul sayeed was the guest of honour.

Speaking at the event, the Chief Guest appreciated the efforts of the Department of Horticulture

towards promoting modern farming practices and improving farmers' incomes. He encouraged farmers to use scientific cultivation methods, diversify their orchards and make the most of the schemes and technical support available from the Government.

He lauded the Department's efforts to organise farmer-focused awareness programmes and exposure visits. He also stressed the need for better coordination among farmers, technical institutions and government departments.

The Director spoke about the Department's efforts to improve horticultural infrastructure, promote quality planting material, introduce new and profitable fruit

crops and provide technical support to farmers. He emphasised the important role of horticulture in strengthening the rural economy and improving the livelihood of farming families. He called upon farmers to move beyond traditional horticultural practices and adopt scientific, technology-driven and market-oriented production systems.

Earlier, the Chief Horticulture Officer R. K Kotwal gave a detailed presentation on the different schemes and programmes being run by the Department of Horticulture. He especially spoke about the potential of dragon fruit cultivation in the Jammu region as a profitable diversification crop.

Farmers were briefed

on important aspects of dragon fruit cultivation, including choosing quality planting material, site selection, trellis systems, irrigation, plant spacing, orchard care, nutrient management and income potential.

Later, as part of the programme, a one-day farmers' exposure tour within the UT of J&K was flagged off to impart participants practical knowledge and first-hand experience of modern horticultural technologies and successful farming models.

During the tour, the farmers visited the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Jammu (SKUAST-Jammu). They learned about the latest developments, technologies and scientific practices in horticulture, interacted with experts and gained practical knowledge that they can use in the fields. The farmers also visited the Government Fruit Plant Nursery, Vijaypur, where they learned about nursery management, the production and maintenance of quality fruit planting material and modern nursery technologies. The visit highlighted the importance of using quality planting material to establish healthy and productive orchards. The programme and exposure tour gave farmers useful information on modern fruit production technologies, dragon fruit cultivation, nursery management, irrigation management, departmental schemes and other horticulture-related initiatives.

DC Shopian calls for strict COTPA compliance

SHOPIAN, AUGUST 25: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta, today chaired a meeting of the COTPA District Level Coordination Committee (DLCC) to review measures for effective implementation of tobacco control laws and curbing tobacco use in the district.

The meeting held detailed discussions on the enforcement of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), prevention of tobacco use among youth and strengthening awareness regarding the harmful effects of tobacco consumption.

He stressed upon the concerned departments to constitute market-checking committees headed by the respective Tehsildars for regular inspections and strict enforcement of tobacco control provisions.

He further directed that the sale of tobacco products within 100 metres of educational institutions be strictly prohibited, with regular inspections to ensure compliance. The concerned officers were asked to take necessary action against violators as per the provisions of law.

The DC called for coordinated efforts by all stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of COTPA and create a tobacco-free and healthier environment for children and youth.