

SKUAST-K hosts 37 IFS Officers from 18 States for National Ecotourism Capacity-Building Programme

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, SEP 01

Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-Kashmir) has brought together 37 Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers from 18 States for a three-day national capacity-building programme on “Ecotourism in Forest and Wildlife Realms: Prospects & Challenges”, being held from September 01 to 03 at the Shalimar Campus.

Organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India, the programme brings together senior forestry professionals, university leaders, researchers and subject experts to deliberate on emerging opportunities and challenges in sustainable ecotourism, forest and wildlife management.

Addressing the participants, Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-Kashmir, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai, stressed that tourism in ecologically fragile regions must be guided by sustainability, conservation and community participation. He said the objective should not be to maximize tourist numbers but to maximise the positive value of tourism while minimising its ecological footprint.

Emphasising the vul-



nerability of Himalayan ecosystems, Prof. Ganai called for a calibrated approach in which tourism becomes an instrument for conservation rather than ecological degradation. The Vice Chancellor also underlined the growing role of GIS, remote sensing, Artificial Intelligence and digital monitoring in protected-area management, biodiversity assessment, visitor management, ecosystem monitoring and evidence-based decision-making. He said SKUAST-K has an important role in generating scientific evidence, building professional capacities and providing technology-driven solutions to emerging environmental challenges.

Former Chief Secretary, Ramesh Negi, Guest of Honour, emphasised the need to shift ecotourism from a tourism-centric to a conservation-centric model, keeping ecological carrying ca-

capacity, biodiversity protection, local livelihoods and responsible visitor behaviour at the centre of planning and management.

Dr. Javeed Iqbal, Course Director, said the programme has been designed to go beyond conventional classroom-based training by providing participants with a field-oriented, interdisciplinary and technology-enabled learning experience. He noted that participation from 18 States would facilitate cross-state learning and exchange of experiences from diverse forest and ecological landscapes.

The programme covers key themes including Himalayan biodiversity, protected-area management, ecosystem carrying capacity, legal and institutional frameworks, Eco-Development Committees, participatory planning, gender integration, overtourism mitigation, sustainable liveli-

hoods, GIS, remote sensing and AI-based conservation monitoring.

As part of the experiential component, the participating officers will visit important ecological and tourism landscapes including Wular Lake, Gulmarg, Zabarwan landscape, Chandaji Eco-Restoration Site and Hokersar Wetland. They will also be exposed to technological innovations at SKIIE and the Centre for Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning, SKUAST-Kashmir.

The programme builds upon SKUAST-Kashmir's continuing engagement with MoEFCC through capacity-building initiatives focused on smart conservation, forest landscape restoration, climate mitigation and biodiversity conservation. The University has also been advancing multidisciplinary, technology-driven solutions involving AI, IoT, CRISPR and precision systems.

J&K Bank Bids Warm Farewell to 2 General Managers

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JAMMU, SEP 01

J&K Bank today accorded a warm farewell to General Managers Rakesh Koul and Syed Rais Maqbool, who superannuated after rendering nearly 37 years of dedicated service to the institution.

The farewell meeting was chaired by J&K Bank MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee at the Bank's Corporate Headquarters and attended by Executive Director Sudhir Gupta, Chief General Managers, General Managers, Deputy General Managers and other senior officers.

Speaking on the occasion, Amitava Chatterjee commended the retiring executives for their long and valuable service, appreciating their compe-



tence, integrity and commitment. He said the retirement of senior leaders entails a loss of accumulated experience, institutional memory and professional wisdom, while expressing confidence in the emerging leadership to carry forward their legacy.

The MD & CEO also highlighted the importance of leadership continuity and said that with a well-defined succession plan in place, the emerging leader-

ship would have the responsibility of building upon the contributions of the outgoing officers. He wished both retirees good health, happiness and a fulfilling post-retirement life.

Rakesh Koul, who joined the Bank on October 25, 1989, was appreciated for his gentle disposition and professionalism. Expressing gratitude, he thanked the Bank's leadership and colleagues for their trust, guidance and support

throughout his career, saying it had been an honour to serve J&K Bank and be part of Jammu and Kashmir's leading financial institution.

Syed Rais Maqbool, who joined the Bank on October 18, 1989, was also acknowledged for his contribution and professional conduct. Recalling his long association with the institution, he described J&K Bank as a defining part of his life and identity. He expressed gratitude to the Bank's leadership, colleagues, stakeholders and customers for their trust, encouragement and support.

The attending officers recalled their professional association with the retiring executives and acknowledged their valuable contribution to the Bank's growth and institutional development.

DC Kulgam visits faculty of Agriculture, South Campus SKUAST-K Khudwani

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JAMMU, SEP 01

Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Shahzad Alam today visited Mountain Research Centre for Field Crops (MRCFC), Khudwani, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K).

The DC was accompanied by senior district officers and university officials and was briefed on the centre's work across seed production, crop improvement, agronomy, plant protection, and soil health.

The DC also took note of the centre's pivotal role in developing rice, rapeseed, and wheat varieties suited to Kashmir's diverse agro-climatic conditions — from temperate valley plains to cold, high-altitude areas exceeding 2,000 metres — and its germplasm conservation programme, a living repository of indigenous rice landraces and exotic introductions safeguarding Kashmir's agricultural biodiversity for future breeding and climate adaptation. He lauded the institution's sustained contribu-



tions and its standing as a model research facility over more than eight decades of dedicated service.

He was further apprised that MRCFC Khudwani has been upgraded to the Faculty of Agriculture, South Campus (FoASC), marking the first dedicated agricultural faculty in South Kashmir, a development long in the making. The upgraded campus will offer MSc and PhD courses in agronomy, plant breeding, plant pathology, entomology, and soil sciences.

The DC assured the university authorities of district administration's full developmental backing, assuring that macadamisation of roads, installation of street-lighting, and all other civic amenities needed to create a conducive environment for students and faculty would be taken up on priority.

The DC also stressed that research must travel beyond experimental plots to reach all the farmers across Kashmir.

He called for wider dissemination of modern technologies in field crops where improved varieties, precision input management, nano fertilisers, and resource-conservation practices, and value addition hold real potential to raise farm incomes.

Director Agriculture Kashmir reviews expenditure status of Shopian, Anantnag

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, SEP 01

Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj Ahmad Shah, today undertook a comprehensive review of the expenditure status and implementation of various departmental schemes in the districts of Shopian and Anantnag.

During his visit, the Director inspected the Soil Testing Laboratory at Bibehara, where he took detailed stock of its function-

ing, infrastructure and facilities available for soil analysis. He emphasized the significance of soil testing in promoting scientific and balanced use of fertilizers, improving soil health and enhancing agricultural productivity. He directed the concerned officers to ensure that farmers are provided timely soil testing services and appropriate technical advisories based on soil health parameters.

The Director also inspected the site identified

for establishment of the Centre of Excellence at Kulgam and reviewed the suitability of the site and the proposed facilities. He underscored that the Centre of Excellence should serve as a state-of-the-art platform for demonstration and promotion of modern agricultural technologies, climate-resilient farming practices, quality planting material and advanced production techniques.

While reviewing the expenditure status of Shopian

and Anantnag districts, Sartaj Ahmad Shah stressed upon the officers to ensure timely and judicious utilization of allocated funds and expedite the implementation of approved interventions. He called for close monitoring of both physical and financial progress and directed the field functionaries to ensure that the benefits of various schemes and programmes reach the farming community in a timely and transparent manner.

95 FM Tadka in Association with HDFC Bank Organises ‘Nasha Mukh Bharat’ Awareness Programme at JP World School



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As part of its 20th Anniversary celebrations, 95 FM Tadka organised “20 Ka Dum, 20 Kadam – Nasha Mukh Bharat Ki Aur”, a Drug Addiction Awareness and Talent Hunt programme at JP World School, Jammu, to sensitise students about the harmful effects of drug abuse and encourage them to adopt a healthy, positive and drug-free lifestyle.

The programme was presented by HDFC Bank, supported by the Excise Department J&K and powered by Wheelocity Motors – Skoda Jammu. Team Ideation was the Event Partner, Bharati Lok Sangeet Kala Sanasthan the Cultural Partner, and The Himalayan Mail the Print Partner.

The programme was attended by PSI Fasel Muneer and PSI Pankaj K. Sharma from Police Station Channi Himmat, Coun-

selling Psychologist Manpreet Kour Sodhi, Judge and renowned musician Sahil Sharma, along with representatives of HDFC Bank.

Principal JP World School Ms. Aparana Kohli and the school staff actively participated in the programme. Addressing the students, Ms. Kohli highlighted the serious consequences of drug abuse and appreciated 95 FM Tadka for undertaking the awareness initiative. She encour-

aged the team to continue organising similar programmes for students.

PSI Fasel Muneer interacted with the students and apprised them of the harmful effects of drug abuse. He stressed the importance of cooperation among the police, students, parents and the public in preventing substance abuse and urged students to stay away from drugs. Counselling Psychologist Manpreet Kour Sodhi conducted an engaging awareness session, highlighting the physical, emotional and social impact of drug addiction. She encouraged students to make healthy choices and advocated the message, “Say No to Drugs, Yes to Life.”

The initiative also featured a talent showcase, providing students an opportunity to express themselves creatively while reinforcing the message of a healthy and drug-free lifestyle. From 95 FM Tadka, Jammu Head Sandeep Koul, RJ Nitish Sharma and Kailash Kerni coordinated and hosted the programme. The event received an enthusiastic response from the students and highlighted the importance of collective efforts towards building a drug-free society and ensuring a healthier, safer and brighter future for the youth.

Farmer Field School Programme inaugurated at Ganderbal

GANDERBAL, SEPTEMBER 01: The Central Integrated Pest Management Centre (CIPMC), Srinagar, in collaboration with the State Agriculture Department, Ganderbal, inaugurated a “Farmer Field School Programme” at Village Khanpora, Ganderbal, today.

The programme was chaired by Dr. Vageesh Pandey, Deputy Director (E), CIPMC Srinagar and Ghulam Ahmad Rather, SMS (DL), Ganderbal, who was accompanied by Mushtaq Bhat, AEO, Wakoora.

At the outset, Ghulam Ahmad Rather, provided a brief introduction

to the programme, along with an overview of the activities and schedule planned for the day.

Dr. Haroon Rashid Hakla, Assistant Plant Protection Officer (PP), delivered an informative introductory lecture and highlighted the importance of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and its various benefits to farmers. He provided valuable insights into seed treatment, need-based application of chemicals, National Pest Surveillance System, and safe and judicious use of pesticides. He emphasized that the adoption of IPM practices can help farmers re-

duce unnecessary pesticide use while promoting sustainable and economically viable crop production.

Kawal Nain Singh, Scientific Assistant, shared his field experience with the participating farmers and explained the significance of adopting integrated pest management strategies for effective and sustainable pest control. Abir Shankhari, Assistant Plant Protection Officer (WS), briefed the farmers on the objectives and scope of Integrated Pest Management, emphasizing its role in promoting environmentally safe and farmer-friendly crop protection practices.

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95 FM TADKA
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