

Navratra Festival concludes with grandeur in Katra

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, OCT 19

The Navratra Festival 2026 concluded on a grand note in the holy town of Katra, marked by vibrant cultural performances, religious fervour and enthusiastic public participation.

The festival was organised through the collaborative efforts of the Directorate of Tourism Jammu, Divisional Administration Jammu and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board.

The concluding day featured a grand Shobha Yatra inaugurated by Member of Parliament Jugal Kishore Sharma in the presence of other dignitaries. The procession featured colourful tableaux and captivating cultural presentations, showcasing the region's rich cultural heritage, traditions and themes drawn from Hindu mythology.

Addressing the gathering, MP Jugal Kishore Sharma highlighted the religious and cultural significance of Navratra Mahotsav, stating that the festival reflects the rich heritage, traditions and spiritual values of Sanatan Dharma. He appreciated the collaborative efforts of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, Tourism Department and the people of Katra in making the festival a grand success.

He urged people to welcome pilgrims and devotees with warmth and hospitality and encouraged families to involve children in religious and cultural activities to preserve the region's rich cultural heritage. He also called upon everyone to work collectively towards making Jammu and Kashmir and the entire country Nasha Mukht. The Shobha Yatra witnessed enthusiastic participation from devotees and visitors, creating an atmosphere of devotion, celebration and cultural vibrancy in Katra.

As part of the concluding celebrations, the All India Devotional Song Competition culminated at the Yog Ashram Complex. The event featured soulful devotional songs and bhajans by participants, captivating the audience and adding a spiritual touch to the festival's grand finale.

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On the eve of Navratras, Himachal Pradesh Governor Kavinder Gupta today paid obeisance at the highly revered Bawe Wali Mata (Mahakali) Temple here and prayed for the peace, prosperity and well-being of people.

He prayed for the progress & development of the country, and wished for peace, harmony and prosperity across the nation.

"Navratra is a festival of devotion, faith and spiritual renewal, which inspires people to uphold the values of righteousness, compassion and service to society,"

Secretary Planning reviews functioning of JKERA; advocates adoption of sustainable, end to end project formulation

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, OCT 19

Secretary, Planning Development and Monitoring Department, Dr. Owais Ahmad, today chaired a meeting to review the overall functioning of J&K Economic Reconstruction Agency (JKERA), nodal agency for implementation of all externally aided projects in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Chief Executive Officer JKERA Akriti Sagar informed that since its creation in 2004 the J&KERA has played a pivotal role in up gradation of basic infrastructure in the Union Territory of J&K. She apprised that the agency has successfully implemented three major Externally Aided Projects (EAPs) across Jammu and Kashmir. These included the Multisector Project for Infrastructure Reha-



the governor said.

"The blessings of Mata Bawe Wali continue to guide the nation on the path of progress and strengthen

the spirit of unity, harmony and collective welfare," he added.

The governor also conveyed his greetings and best

wishes to the people on the auspicious occasion of Navratras.

He was accompanied by his wife Bindu Gupta.

DC inspects Govt Boys Model Higher Secondary School Rajouri

RAJOURI, OCTOBER

19: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Dr. Divyansh Yadav visited Government Boys Model Higher Secondary School Rajouri today, an historic institution that has made a significant contribution to the educational development of the district. ADC Ravi Sihag accompanied the Deputy Commissioner during the visit.

He was warmly received by the School Principal Md. Muslim Wani and DEPO Sardari Lal Dutta along with staff members and students. During the visit, the



Deputy Commissioner went around the Principal's Room, Staff Room, smart classrooms, Computer Lab, Digital Learning Room, Library-cum-Reading Hall,

school ground and biodegradable waste pit. He also viewed the school's Proud Alumni Wall of Fame, which recognises the achievements of its former

students. Dr. Yadav interacted with students and teachers, encouraging them to explore diverse career pathways and make the most of emerging opportunities.

He also discussed the institution's academic progress, infrastructure, virtual classes and co-curricular activities.

The Deputy Commissioner appreciated the ongoing efforts of the institution to strengthen the quality of education and promote students' all-round development.

DC Pulwama holds stakeholder interaction on Public issues, Development, Social Welfare

PULWAMA, OCTOBER

19: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Kuldeep Krishan Sidha, today held an interactive meeting with representatives of the Traders Federation Pulwama, Pharmaceutical Association, District Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Markazi Auqaaf Committee Pulwama, Fruit Growers and Dealers Association Pulwama, Senior Citizens, religious leaders and other stakeholders at the Circuit House, Pulwama, to listen to the issues and suggestions concerning the people, traders and various communities of the district.

At the outset, the representatives welcomed the Deputy Commissioner and placed before him a range of issues concerning Pulwama town and the district, including traffic congestion, encroachment of footpaths, waste management, healthcare facilities, market regulation, infrastructure, employment generation, education, mining, water bodies, public utilities and other developmental concerns.

The Deputy Commissioner gave a patient hearing to the representatives and stated that the concerns raised would be examined and addressed in a coordinated and time-bound manner within the ambit of rules and available resources.

During the interaction, the Deputy Commissioner stressed the need for collective participation of all sections of society in addressing social challenges and improving the quality of life of the people. He sought the support of civil society, various associations and community representatives in preventing drug abuse, stressing that the objective should not merely be to eliminate drugs from society but also to ensure that the evil does not return. He urged the representatives to act as messengers of awareness and positive change within their respective communities and extend full support to the administration in this endeavour. Referring to the misuse of medicines, he stated that the administration has already issued directions to prevent the

sale of medicines to children and emphasised that ensuring compliance is a shared responsibility.

The Deputy Commissioner also sought active participation of the stakeholders in promoting road safety and preventing accidents. He urged the representatives to make helmet use mandatory among their members and requested them to form groups within their organisations to spread awareness and ensure compliance whenever members travel. He called upon all stakeholders to contribute towards making Pulwama a safer and more responsible society.

The issue of employment and livelihood generation for local youth was also discussed in detail. The Deputy Commissioner informed that the District Administration, in coordination with the Skill Development Department, will undertake skill mapping of persons in the age group of 18 to 40 years to identify their skills, interests and livelihood requirements. He said that suitable youth would be facilitated with skill training and, wherever eligible and willing, connected with financial institutions and relevant schemes for setting up self-employment ventures such as beauty parlours, driving services, mobile repair shops and other income-generating activities.

Seeking suggestions from the stakeholders regarding the education sector, the Deputy Commissioner stated that the District Administration would facilitate and strengthen Government schools and work towards ensuring adequate facilities for students. He emphasised the importance of quality education and necessary infrastructure in Government schools.

The representatives highlighted various concerns concerning the healthcare sector, including shortage of staff at District Hospital Pulwama, inadequate availability of ultrasound services among others. The need for a dedicated maternity hospital, better availability of doctors and improvement in healthcare services was also raised. A de-



mand was also put forth for improved availability of ultrasound facilities in the market area. The Deputy Commissioner stated that the administration would make all possible efforts to improve healthcare facilities and ensure that the general public receives accessible and quality services.

The Traders Federation raised concerns regarding traffic congestion, footpath encroachment, waste disposal and inadequate parking arrangements.

The Deputy Commissioner requested traders to undertake loading and unloading activities during early morning hours or late evening instead of peak office hours to minimise traffic congestion. He also stressed the need for keeping footpaths free from encroachments to facilitate smooth pedestrian movement and make the town more organised and congestion-free. The installation of CCTV cameras in all business establishments, provision of dustbins near shops and regular lifting of waste were also discussed. The Deputy Commissioner informed the stakeholders

that directions for mandatory installation and operationalisation of CCTV surveillance systems have been issued for all business establishments, hotels, restaurants, shops, educational institutions, hospitals and other public-facing establishments across District Pulwama. The Deputy Commissioner called upon every shopkeeper to maintain proper cleanliness around their establishment and stated that the District Administration would facilitate regular waste collection, including collection twice a week, as part of efforts to ensure a cleaner Pulwama.

The Fruit Growers and Dealers Association highlighted issues relating to the horticulture sector, including subsidy support for conversion of traditional orchards into high-density orchards through J&K Bank, assistance for anti-hail nets, availability of additional land and other requirements for strengthening the fruit industry. The representatives also expressed concern over the gradual decline of karewa areas and sought appropriate measures for their protec-

tion and conservation.

On the Occasion, Senior citizens and religious leaders also highlighted various social concerns, particularly drug abuse, employment opportunities for local youth and the need for greater community participation in addressing issues affecting society. The Deputy Commissioner appreciated their suggestions and called upon them to actively support the administration in addressing these challenges through coordinated efforts.

Various infrastructure and developmental issues were also brought to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner. They highlighted issues relating to the roads and the issue of the bus stand, requirement of street lights in the main market, utility poles, availability of Patwari Khana facilities for the district were also raised.

The stakeholders also raised concerns regarding mining activities and sought proper regulation and scientific extraction of minerals, besides protection of water bodies and other natural resources. The DC stated that

mining activities must strictly adhere to the prescribed norms. He also called for measures to protect water bodies and other environmentally sensitive areas.

Representatives of various religious organisations also raised their concerns. The DC assured the representatives that their genuine concerns would be examined and necessary action taken as per rules.

The meeting also discussed the need for strengthening social protection mechanisms. The Deputy Commissioner informed that a toll-free helpline, "Kas Van," is proposed to be made operational in the coming days to provide assistance in cases relating to social, physical and mental abuse within households. He also emphasised the need to extend appropriate support to transgender persons and other vulnerable sections of society. He requested all associations and community representatives to immediately bring cases of child labour to the notice of the administration so that necessary intervention can be made and such children can be facilitated towards education and rehabilitation.

The Deputy Commissioner also outlined the winter preparedness measures being planned by the District Administration to minimise hardships to the public during the approaching winter. He said that transformers would be advanced to far-flung areas ahead of predicted snowfall, wherever required, to ensure timely restoration and continuity of power supply. He further stated that students appearing in examinations or interviews would, wherever necessary, be facilitated to reach the district headquarters in advance in case snowfall is forecast so that adverse weather does not affect their participation. Similarly, expectant mothers residing in vulnerable and snow-bound areas would be shifted to hospitals around two days in advance whenever significant snowfall is predicted, ensuring timely access to medical care. The participants appreciated

these proactive measures aimed at safeguarding vulnerable sections of society.

The Deputy Commissioner further stated that frontline workers, including linemen and sanitation workers, would be provided proper safety kits to ensure their safety while performing duties during adverse weather conditions. Measures for insulating exposed PHE pipes vulnerable to freezing during winter were also discussed.

Emphasising the importance of a clean and well-managed Pulwama, the Deputy Commissioner said that he wants to see a "Saaf Pulwama" and called upon all associations, traders and citizens to make cleanliness a shared responsibility. He urged the stakeholders to work alongside the District Administration in maintaining public spaces, keeping footpaths clear, ensuring proper waste disposal and creating greater civic discipline.

The Deputy Commissioner also called upon all stakeholders to share the moral and social responsibility of addressing issues concerning the district with the administration. He said that trade bodies, community organisations and civil society representatives have an important role in communicating government initiatives to the public, generating awareness and helping the administration in resolving matters at the grassroots level.

The representatives appreciated the initiative of the Deputy Commissioner in convening the interactive meeting and providing an opportunity to place their concerns and suggestions before the District Administration. They expressed gratitude for the patient hearing accorded to their issues and appreciated the measures outlined for improving public services, civic amenities and winter preparedness.

The Deputy Commissioner thanked the participants for their constructive suggestions and active participation, stating that such interactions help the administration understand issues at the grassroots level and formulate responsive interventions.

gaseous chlorination, trenchless drainage and restoration using devar stone and dhajji-dewari designs.

Under the World Bank-funded JTFRP, the agency has completed 225 sub-projects covering major roads, bridges, health and education infrastructure, oxygen plants in remote areas, medical equipment, ambulances, modern fire tenders, rescue gear and IT systems for disaster management including DSS, IOFS and disaster risk database besides flood mitigation studies for Jhelum and Tawi basins.

Dr Owais directed the JKERA to prepare a sustainable pan-J&K roadmap with a shelf of innovative, fund-ready projects and proactively explore external funding through Central schemes and other agencies to accelerate UT's infrastructure development.