

DG Rural Sanitation inaugurates plastic recycling unit in Samba, promises cash reward for waste collection

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SAMBA: Rural households in Jammu & Kashmir will now earn ₹10 per kilogram for clean plastic waste as the Directorate of Rural Sanitation on Friday launched a plastic recycling facility in Samba to strengthen waste management under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen.

Director General Rural Sanitation Anoo Malhotra inaugurated the facility, set up with support from the Indian Pollution Control Association and SBI Cards through its corporate social responsibility initiative. Officials said the project aims to draw low-value plastics such as polybags,



wrappers and multi-layered packaging into the recycling stream rather than letting them pile up in villages.

Malhotra said improper disposal of plastics was posing a direct threat to soil health, water bodies and public safety. Calling

the Samba unit a model for the Union Territory, she urged entrepreneurs to utilise locally available waste as raw material and set up

similar ventures in Kashmir. She also sought more corporate partnerships to strengthen collection and market linkages for recycled products. IPCA Director Ashish Jain underlined the operational challenges in the region, noting that the terrain and heavy tourist footfall increase waste loads while raising transportation costs. He said the facility is designed to create a viable demand for plastics that usually end up in dumps.

Block Development Officer Samba, Saqib Sharief Khan, said the district has already adopted door-to-door segregated collection and grassroots models such as the “10 kg Plastic Mod-

el,” and the new unit will ensure these efforts lead to actual recycling outcomes. He assured continued administrative backing for uninterrupted operations.

Deputy Director Rural Sanitation Jammu Zaheer Abbas Bhat, district Rural Development officials, SBI representatives and field staff from the Directorate’s project management unit were present at the launch.

Officials maintained that the recycling unit will expand Jammu & Kashmir’s ability to scientifically process plastic and prevent it from becoming a public and environmental hazard, reinforcing the objectives of the national cleanliness campaign in rural areas.

SMVDU Scholar’s Research Paper featured in Q1 Journal

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

KATRA: A research scholar from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University has earned international recognition with the publication of a paper in Ceramics International, a Q1 category journal with an impact factor of 5.6. The work has been authored by Meniak Khajuria from the School of Physics under the guidance of Dr. Pankaj Biswas, Assistant Professor.

The paper titled “Up-conversion Luminescence and Judd-Ofelt Study of NaCaVO₄:Er³ Phosphor for Optoelectronic Applications” explores the synthesis and

optical evaluation of Er³ doped NaCaVO₄ phosphor materials.

The study investigates upconversion luminescence properties and employs Judd-Ofelt analysis to assess their behavior.

According to the university, the findings indicate promising prospects for the material in optoelectronic and photonic devices, strengthening ongoing research into advanced luminescent materials.

University authorities stated that the achievement underscores the School of Physics’ focus on impactful scientific innovation in functional and optical materials.

Shiv Sena seeks clarity on SMVD Medical College Admissions Row

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Shiv Sena (UBT) on Friday urged authorities in Jammu and Kashmir to swiftly resolve the admissions dispute at the Shri Mata Vaishnodevi Institute of Medical Excellence, warning that prolonged uncertainty is taking a toll on students’ morale and academic future.

Addressing reporters at the party’s state headquarters, Shiv Sena (UBT) J&K chief Manish Sahni said ongoing protests and political friction

have caused fear among students, who are unsure whether they will secure placements in the medical institute. He asserted that anxiety among aspirants is rising as the situation drags on without a clear response from the government.

Sahni argued that Hindu organizations were justified in voicing anger over what he claimed was the allocation of nearly 85 to 90 per cent of seats to students belonging to other communities in a college governed by a revered Hindu shrine. He

insisted that Hindu students should be given precedence, citing religious sentiment associated with the institution.

The Shiv Sena leader criticised what he described as a combative stance by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and silence from the Lieutenant Governor, saying both have contributed to deepening doubt. “The sharp tone and silence deepen confusion,” Sahni remarked, adding that students remain anxious as authorities fail to clarify the admission policy.

World Soil Day observed; Director Agri Gupta urges stronger Soil care

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Director Agriculture Jammu Anil Gupta on Friday called for heightened focus on soil health to secure agricultural sustainability, while addressing an awareness programme organised to mark World Soil Day at Krishi Bhawan, Talab Tillo. Interacting with farmers, he underscored the need for regular soil testing and scientific nutrient application to ensure healthy crops and conserve natural resources.

Gupta urged cultivators to make full use of Soil Health Cards and departmental advisory services, noting that informed decisions on fertiliser use can improve yields while preventing soil degradation. He reiterated that the future of farming rests on how responsibly



the soil is managed today.

The event, hosted by the Directorate of Agriculture Jammu, drew around 50 farmers from various parts of the district. Agriculture Chemist Vinod Kumar Sharma opened the programme, reminding participants that soil forms the base of the food system and requires collective efforts for its preservation. He encouraged farmers

to avail soil testing facilities offered by the department.

Subject experts Assistant Soil Chemist Chander Shekhar Sharma, Assistant Bio Chemist Deepak Singh and Assistant Agriculture Chemist Ravinder Gupta briefed participants on balanced soil nutrition, eco-friendly farm practices and the benefits of periodic soil assessment.

Soil Health Cards were distributed to the farmers to assist them in nutrient management at field level. Certificates of appreciation were also presented to laboratory staff for their dedicated service in delivering accurate soil analysis to the farming community.

A guided tour of the soil testing laboratory was arranged, where officials demonstrated testing procedures, equipment handling and interpretation of analytical findings, giving farmers a closer understanding of how soil quality affects crop performance.

Senior officers, research assistants, JAEs, AEAs and departmental staff attended the programme, contributing to farmer outreach and ensuring the smooth conduct of the observance.



World AIDS Day observed at SMVDU with Youth-Focused Awareness Drive

KATRA: Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU) marked World AIDS Day with an awareness programme aimed at educating students on HIV prevention and encouraging youth participation in community outreach. The event, hosted by the university’s Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) Cell, featured a speech competition, a thematic address, and a poster-making contest.

The programme opened with a briefing on the objectives of World AIDS Day and the role of UBA in linking higher educational institutions with rural communities. Speaker Anoooshi Wangoo connected the global campaign against HIV/AIDS with the mission of social upliftment, urging students to combat stigma, advocate accessible healthcare, and contribute proactively to public health awareness.

In the speech contest, participants highlighted prevention strategies and compassion for people living with HIV, while calling for an informed and responsible society. Leonn secured first place, followed by Tanvi and Abhishek, who were commended for strong presentation and clarity of message.

Students also displayed creative outreach through a poster competition centered on prevention, testing and empathy. The entries were evaluated by UBA volunteers under the supervision of UBA Coordinator Dr. Bharat Bhushan Jindal. Anant Yadav was declared the winner, with Navya and Preeti placed second and third respectively.

Organized by volunteers including Akarshan Sanmotra, Bhavana, Saloni Singh, Rydhm Bhau and Anoooshi Wangoo, the event underscored the role of informed youth in strengthening awareness campaigns. SMVDU officials said the initiative blended education with social responsibility while reaffirming continued efforts to support national and global health observances.

4-Day AgriTech AI Workshop concludes at SKUAST-J, calls for digital leap in farming

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: A four-day workshop on artificial intelligence-driven agriculture concluded on Friday at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Jammu (SKUAST-Jammu), reinforcing the institution’s thrust on emerging technologies in farming under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme.

Organised from Decem-

ber 2 to 5 under the Sensor-Based Smart Agriculture project, the training aimed at boosting digital adoption in Jammu and Kashmir’s agricultural sector. Eminent scientists, including Dr. Pawanesh Abrol of the University of Jammu and experts from Central University of Jammu, joined SKUAST faculty to deliver 14 technical sessions on the role of AI and machine learning in fruit science, engineering and

statistics.

A group of 23 participants drawn from horticulture, agriculture, engineering and basic sciences — among them 12 women and international attendees — underwent practical exposure to GIS mapping, remote sensing, data analytics and big-data tools using R and Python platforms.

Lectures highlighted the expanding use of machine vision for crop management, sensor-based field

monitoring and drone-enabled farming, presenting AI as a driver of efficiency and climate-smart solutions. Speakers also discussed research linkages and future collaboration with SKUAST-Jammu to scale technological advancements in the region’s fields.

During the valedictory session, Co-Principal Investigator Dr. Manish Kr. Sharma presented an overview of the programme along

with participant feedback. Dean Faculty of Agricultural Engineering and Principal Investigator Dr. Sushil Sharma called for swift integration of advanced tools to ensure sustainability and resilience in farming systems and pledged continued practical training for scholars and field officers.

Co-PI Dr. Parshant Bakshi urged participants to promote digital agriculture among farmers while pursuing AI-based research.

Dr. Vinay Kumar moderated the closing function and acknowledged the contribution of experts and organizers, as hands-on modules led by Organizing Secretary Dr. Nishant Jasrotia drew appreciation from trainees.

The workshop, held under the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Prof. B. N. Tripathi, concluded with a resolve to accelerate smart agricultural practices across Jammu and Kashmir.

JKPCC leaders felicitate Jammu’s Kuldeep Sharma, Daughter for message of harmony

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: A high-level Congress delegation on Friday visited the Krishna Nagar residence of Kuldeep Sharma to commend him and his daughter, Tania Sharma, for promoting peace and communal harmony in the aftermath of the Jammu Development Authority’s demolition of journalist Arfaz Daing’s house.



The leaders conveyed greetings on behalf of the party high command and Pradesh Congress Committee President Tariq Hameed Karra, underscoring that the Sharmas’ response had delivered a strong message against hate. The team was headed by JKPCC Working President Raman Bhalala and included Chief

Spokesperson Ravinder Sharma, former minister Yogesh Sawhney, DCC President Mannohan Singh, PCC Secretary Sanjeev Panda, former corporator Balbir Balli, RTI Cell Convener Bhavishya Sudan, Block President Pawan Sharma, Ashok Sharma and others.

In a telephonic inter-

action with the family, Karra applauded their stance, describing their approach as a demonstration of “Mahabat Ki Dukan in the marketplace of hate.” He said their gesture resonated with the spirit of Rahul Gandhi’s Bharat Jodo Yatra, which advocated unity and compassion across the country.

Staff, students felicitate MHAC Principal for 30 yrs of service

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: In a warm display of appreciation and respect, Maharaja Hari Singh Agricultural Collegiate School, Nagbani on Wednesday organised a special assembly to felicitate its newly appointed Principal, elevated to the post after a distinguished 30-year career in the education sector.

The event, held on 03.12.25, was coordinated by the school staff to honour the Principal’s exemplary administrative skills, dedicated service, and unwavering commitment to the academic and institutional progress of MHAC School, Nagbani. The ceremony saw the participation of faculty members, students and administrative staff.

During the programme, staff members lauded the Principal’s effective leadership and the constructive initiatives im-



plemented during the tenure as Incharge Principal. Students also extended their admiration through a dignified cultural presentation, showcasing their respect and support.

In her address, Principal Sonia Anand expressed heartfelt gratitude to the School Management and the entire MHAC Nagbani fraternity for the trust bestowed upon her.

She reaffirmed her commitment to strengthening the academic ecosystem, enhancing student welfare, and upholding the school’s distinguished legacy.

The ceremony concluded with formal greetings and best wishes from the staff, marking the beginning of a new chapter of progressive leadership at MHAC School, Nagbani.

NC denounces ‘Communalised Governance’ in J&K, urges Centre to restore Statehood

Tributes paid to Sheikh Abdullah on 120th Birth Anniversary

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference on Friday invoked the legacy of Sher-e-Kashmir Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah on his 120th birth anniversary to call for restoration of statehood and to caution against what its leaders termed as attempts to communalise governance in the Union Territory. Senior party figures assembled at Sher-e-Kashmir Bhawan, Jammu, offering floral tributes to the iconic political figure who shaped the region’s modern democratic narrative.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, serving as Chief Guest, said Sheikh Abdullah uplifted the marginalised through bold land re-

forms and stood as a steadfast emblem of secular values. He accused the BJP of “polluting the atmosphere” in Jammu and Kashmir by communalising the seat allotment at Vaishno Devi Medical College. Any attempt to add religious filters to merit-based selections under NEET, he said, risks sowing division and mistrust. “We will not allow hatred to replace harmony,” he asserted, reiterating that the National Conference remains committed to equal opportunities.

Hon’ble Minister Satish Sharma spotlighted achievements under the Omar Abdullah-led elected government, recalling how it presented the first full budget after the dilution of statehood and earmarked ₹815



crore for agriculture to stabilise rural incomes. He said the administra-

tion initiated the establishment of a Skill and Entrepreneurship Univer-

sity to equip the youth for evolving markets, revived the traditional Darbar Move, granted one-time age relaxation for JKCCCE-2025 aspirants and revised the reservation policy now awaiting approval from the Lieutenant Governor. Initiatives such as free transport for women and improved ration entitlements reflected, he said, a governance framework prioritising public welfare and social justice.

Additional General Secretary Ajay Kumar Sadhotra described Sheikh Abdullah as the architect of a political awakening that empowered citizens with dignity and the right to speak. His legacy, Sadhotra said, continues to guide generations seeking justice and equality.

Provincial President Rattan Lal Gupta said Sheikh Abdullah re-

placed “fear with hope and inequality with opportunity,” laying the foundations of a modern Jammu and Kashmir. He urged the Union government to table a bill restoring statehood to the region in the ongoing Parliament session, calling it essential for democratic representation and constitutional rights.

A Quran Khawani was organised by senior leader G H Malik as part of the ceremony. District units across Jammu province simultaneously observed the anniversary at their respective headquarters, reaffirming the party’s historical connect with the grassroots.

The gathering witnessed attendance from a wide spectrum of senior leaders, former ministers, MLAs, MLCs, office bearers, youth and women wing representatives.