

"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence."

—Helen Keller



Inking the Truth

Mata's offerings to be sourced 'locally' to drive community growth

Shrine Board clears initiatives to posit Shri Mata

Vaishno Devi shrine as chief spiritual destination



EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board on Sunday approved a series of initiatives aimed at transforming the revered pilgrimage site and the surrounding region into one of India's most prominent spiritual destinations.

The decisions were taken in a meeting chaired by the

NEET coaching centres approved to support local youth

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, who is also the Chairman of the Shrine Board. The Shrine Board has approved three key initiatives: an international museum dedicated

to Maa Shakti's spiritual heritage, a sound-and-light spectacle modeled on global pilgrimage sites, and a documentary on the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. In another important initiative, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board has decided to fill vacant positions, with recruitment process set to begin shortly.

The SMVDSB ► P11

KEY DECISIONS TAKEN

- Shrine board doubles pilgrim insurance to Rs 10 lakh, approves major infra projects
- Shrine Board rolls out reforms to transform Shrine into a world-class spiritual destination
- Mata's offerings to be sourced locally to directly support community livelihoods
- Board clears 3 projects-Maa Shakti Int'l Museum, global-style sound-& light show, documentary
- Decision taken to fill posts; speedy recruitment
- Free NEET coaching for youth from nearby areas
- Phased rehabilitation plan cleared for Ponywallas and 'Pithu' operators, in line with NGT directions
- Committee formed to boost pilgrim footfall, and enhance pilgrimage experience
- Board to prioritise procurement from SHGs, women and young local entrepreneurs
- Direct contribution planned for Katra's transformation as a global pilgrimage city
- Focus on making Katra clean, vibrant and equipped with modern infrastructure
- Board to lead sports devp in Jammu region to nurture talent, promote youth fitness

INKING THE TRUTH



Shivang Satya Gupta
Editor-in-Chief

citizen who believes democracy must function at every level and not just selectively.

I would stand up and say it loud and clear. Democracy does not begin in Delhi. It begins in the village. And in parts of our region (including Ladakh also) today, that democratic foundation is worryingly weak. Panchayat elections remain overdue. Terms have ended. Expectations have been raised repeatedly. Yet clarity is missing. This delay is not a routine administrative matter. It directly affects representation, development and public trust.

And it goes against India's own civilisational instinct. Allow me to explain this. There is a mistaken belief that local self-government is a Western democratic idea India adopted after independence. History tells a different story.

Long before the word democracy entered India's political lexicon, its villages were already practicing a form of self-governance that the world now recognises as one of the oldest traditions of local rule. Ancient Indian society was deeply decentralised. Village communities functioned through councils of elders, community representatives and locally respected administrators.

The village sabha and panchayat were embedded in India's own civilisational grammar. Texts refer to assemblies like the Sabha and Samiti, where collective decisions were discussed. From the Vedic assemblies to Kautilya's detailed account of councils that managed revenue, justice, and public works, to the temple inscriptions of South India that record elected village committees, local self rule was the default, not the exception.

Even powerful kings governed through lay-erded systems such as ministers, diwans, local

Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have remained at the shorter end of the empowering wand for longer periods of time. Even when these amendments did make their way to erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir, the benefits remained few.

In Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, after a long delay, the last panchayat elections were held in 2018 and their terms expired in 2023-24, and no fresh polls have been conducted since. The result is a democratic vacuum at the village level, where people are governed not by representatives they elect but by officials they did not choose. ► P11

Communist ideology should end: HM Shah

'RSS role vital in country's evolution'

RAIPUR: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the country needs to get rid of the "destructive" communist ideology at the earliest and appealed to Naxalites to lay down their arms, assuring them a red carpet from the government.

Addressing a conclave titled 'Chhattisgarh@25 Shifting The Lens of Organiser Weekly' in Naya Raipur, Shah said the Maoist problem cannot be linked to the lack of development or considered merely as a law-and-order issue.

"Left-Wing Extremism is an ideology-driven challenge," he added.

Shah said the people of India should understand the

truth of this ideology. "Wherever communists remained in power, they could not bring development. Communist ideology is an ideology indicative of destruction, and the country is required to get rid of it immediately," he added.

Shah said the communist ideology is no longer present in democratic politics.

"It does not exist in Tripura and Bengal (both of which had several communist governments in the past). In Kerala (currently ruled by the CPM-led LDF), it is surviving to an extent; however, people have started the change from Thiruvananthapuram (referring to BJP winning civic polls in the Kerala ► P11

Modi: No compromise, no double standards on terror

Malaysia supports India's bid for permanent UNSC seat



ments to expand cooperation in a range of key areas, including a framework pact

for deeper engagement in the semiconductor sector.

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