

Jammu University Celebrates 55th Foundation Day

**SHAFKAT WANI**

JAMMU: The University of Jammu buzzed with excitement and pride as it celebrated its 55th Foundation Day, a milestone that marked decades of academic excellence, growth, and community spirit. The campus, adorned with festive decorations, came alive with a series of events that showcased the institution's achievements and its vision for the future.

The day's celebrations were graced by distinguished guests, with Prof Dinesh Singh, former Vice Chancellor of Delhi University and Vice Chairman of the J&K Higher Education Council, as the chief guest. Joining him were Prof Manoj Singh Gaur, Director of IIT Jammu, Prof Bechan Lal, Vice Chancellor of Cluster University of Jammu, and Prof Pragiti Kumar, Vice Chancellor of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, whose presence added gravitas to the occasion.

In his keynote address, Prof Dinesh Singh struck a reflective tone, urging the university community to see the Foundation Day not just as a celebration but as an opportunity for introspection. "These milestones remind us to pause, evaluate, and strive for continuous improvement," he said, his words resonating with the gathered students, faculty, and staff. He spoke passionately

about the evolving role of educators in shaping not just minds but the future of society, inspiring many in the audience to reflect on their own contributions to the university's legacy.

Vice Chancellor, Prof Umesh Raie recounted the university's recent achievements. He highlighted Jammu University's impressive climb in the NIRF-2024 rankings, securing the 50th position among universities nationwide. The crowd erupted in applause when he announced that the University's Business School had earned a remarkable 18th rank in The Week's Government B-School category. "These accomplishments are a proof to the hard work and dedication of our students, faculty, and staff," Prof Rai said, his voice filled with gratitude.

The event also took a heartfelt turn as the university honored its past and present contributors. Former Vice-Chancellor Prof Y R Malhotra was felicitated, along with former employees Kulbushan Gupta, Raj Kumar, Punjab Singh, Dayal Chand, Kurku Ram, and Shakina, whose years of service had helped shape the institution. Serving employees Prof K S Charak and Vinod Bali were also recognized for their dedication, alongside students who excelled in sports, NCC, and NSS, embodying the university's commitment to holistic development.

Prof Rahul Gupta, Registrar of Jammu



University, delivered a warm vote of thanks, acknowledging the efforts of everyone who made the day memorable. Prof Garima Gupta, who

skillfully conducted the proceedings, ensured the event flowed seamlessly, leaving everyone with a sense of pride and unity.

Business School Clinches 5th Spot in India Today Rankings

JAMMU: In a moment of immense pride for the University of Jammu, The Business School (TBS) has soared to new heights, securing the 5th position in the "Value for Money" category and 28th in the overall Government B-School category in the prestigious India Today 2024 rankings of India's Best B-Schools. This achievement marks a significant leap from last year's 9th rank in the same category.

As the only B-School from Jammu & Kashmir to feature among the nation's top management institutions, TBS has once again proven its mettle. The India Today rankings, a gold standard in evaluating academic excellence, also follow closely on the heels of another accolade: the BT-MDRA Best B-School Survey Silver

Jubilee Edition, published in October 2024, which ranked TBS 8th in Return on Investment (ROI) and 28th in the Government B-School category. These consistent accolades highlight TBS's unwavering commitment to delivering world-class education and exceptional value to its students.

Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice-Chancellor congratulated the TBS team for their "continuous and stupendous efforts" in earning this national recognition. "This achievement is evidence of the hard work, dedication, and vision of our faculty, students, and staff," he said. "Participating in such rankings not only showcases our strengths but also sets a benchmark for continuous improvement, pushing us to strive for even greater heights."

Environmental Sustainability: University Bans Four-Wheelers on Campus

SUHANI GUPTA

JAMMU: Aiming to champion environmental sustainability, the University of Jammu has declared its campus a no-four-wheeler zone. The announcement marks a significant milestone in the university's ongoing green campus initiative, setting a new standard for eco-conscious academic institutions.

The decision was unveiled by Prof Prakash Antahal, Chief Proctor, flanked by senior officials including Prof Meena Sharma, Dean of Planning and Development, and Neeraj Sharma, Registrar. With a shared vision of a cleaner, greener campus, the university is taking decisive action to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, and create a pedestrian-friendly environment.

"This is more than a policy—it's a

commitment to a healthier, sustainable future," Prof Antahal declared. "After extensive consultations with students, faculty, and staff, we're confident this step will inspire other insti-



tutions to follow suit." He explained that the initiative had been in the works for some time but was delayed due to the lack of a designated parking facility. With a new parking area now in place just outside the campus, the university is ready to embrace this transformative change.

The ban on four-wheelers reflects the university's dedication to fostering an eco-friendly environment. To ensure a smooth transition, two-wheelers will still be permitted, with dedicated parking spaces allocated near departmental areas. The university is also rolling out alternative transportation options, including e-vehicles and bicycles, strategically placed across campus to ensure accessibility and convenience for all.

In a powerful gesture of leadership, Vice Chancellor Prof Umesh Rai has pledged to lead by example, forgoing the use of his vehicle within the campus. "This is a collective effort," Prof Antahal shared, highlighting the Vice Chancellor's commitment. "We're all in this together—students, faculty, staff, and the broader community—to make our campus a beacon of sustainability." **CONTD ON PG 3**

Stay Curious, Think Critically, and Pursue Excellence: Dean Planning

JU POST

In this exclusive interview with JU Post, Prof. Meena Sharma, Dean Planning and Development, shares insights from her early life, her passion for science, her leadership experiences, and her vision for nurturing curiosity and excellence in today's students.

Excerpts from the interview...

JU POST: Please tell us about your early life and educational background.

PROF MEENA: I'm from Punjab, where education was a cornerstone of my upbringing. My father, a professor of chemistry at Punjab University, instilled a deep appreciation for learning in our household. I completed my schooling, college, and university education up to my M.Phil.-at Punjabi University, one of the finest institutes for my field. In 1986, when my father was appointed Vice-Chancellor, we moved to a new university. I began my Ph.D. in 1988 and joined the faculty here in 1992, where I have remained ever since.

JU POST: What inspired you to pursue a career in science, and why did you choose your specific field?

PROF MEENA: Growing up in an academic household, science was a natural calling. My father's work in chemistry and our family's emphasis on curiosity and inquiry shaped my path. The atmosphere at home was one of constant learning, which made it clear from a young age that I wanted to pursue a career in science, particularly in chemistry, where I could explore the "why" behind natural phenomena.

JU POST: You've had a remarkable career in STEM. What challenges and opportunities did you encounter, especially as a woman in science?

PROF MEENA: The challenges in science are universal, regardless of gender. When I was a student, the biggest hurdle was limited infrastructure. We lacked the facilities students enjoy today, but we compensated with determination

and hard work. Today, dedication remains the key for both men and women in science. While societal expectations may differ, the demands of the field are equal, and perseverance is what drives success.

JU POST: How do you see the role of science education for students and scholars today?

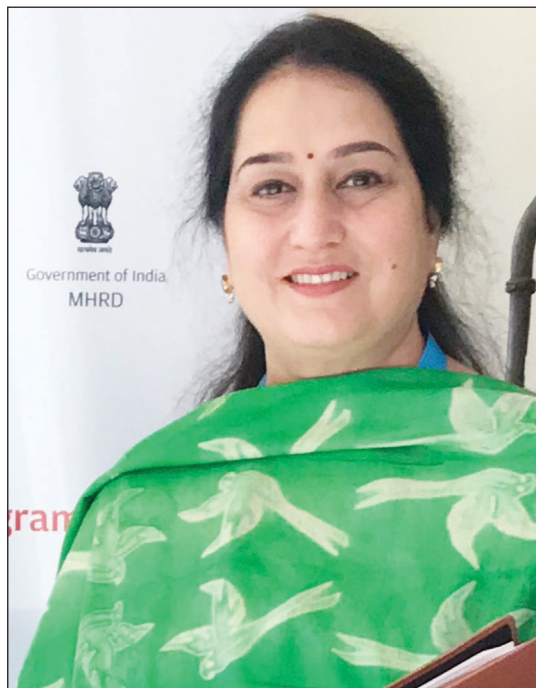
PROF MEENA: Science education is vital, not just for scientists but for everyone. It cultivates critical thinking and observation skills. I recall asking my father as a child, "Why does my hand feel hot near a light bulb?" That simple question sparked my scientific curiosity. Science teaches us to observe, hypothesize, experiment, and theorize—a process that's valuable in management, humanities, and daily life. A scientific temperament fosters rationality and inquisitiveness, which are essential in any field.

JU POST: Ma'am, you've witnessed significant evolution at this university. How would you describe the changes in infrastructure and research facilities?

PROF MEENA: The transformation has been extraordinary! When I started, we faced a shortage of resources, but our talent and motivation drove us forward. Today, the university boasts state-of-the-art infrastructure, particularly for science. Enhanced facilities have empowered students and researchers to produce impactful work, marking a significant leap from the past.

JU POST: You've emphasized the importance of scientific temperament beyond science subjects. How do you mentor students to develop this mindset?

PROF MEENA: Scientific temperament is about curiosity and structured thinking, not just science. It involves observing, questioning "why," forming hypotheses, experimenting, and validating results. I encourage students to apply this approach in any discipline—whether it's journalism, management, or social sciences. My



first question to students is always, "Why do you want to study this?" Defining purpose sets the foundation for clear, credible outcomes.

JU POST: You've made significant contributions in leadership roles, such as Dean of Planning and Development. Could you share your experience?

PROF MEENA: Serving as Dean of Planning and Development was immensely fulfilling. It allowed me to blend analytical thinking with strategic vision, a natural extension of my scientific background. By observing departmental needs and engaging in discussions, we proposed and implemented development projects, including unprecedented government funding for innovation, journalism, sports, and more. A standout achievement is our BCCI-approved cricket stadium—the only one in a university setting in the region.

JU POST: You're also involved in the Utah Club and extracurricular activities.

How do you integrate scientific thinking there?

PROF MEENA: Even in extracurriculars, structure is key. I advocate for a systematic activity calendar to ensure inclusive participation. My goal is to instill a scientific outlook in club activities—setting clear goals, measuring outcomes, and encouraging thoughtful engagement.

JU POST: Balancing leadership roles and personal life can be challenging, especially for women. How have you managed this?

PROF MEENA: Balancing both is toughest when children are young. I was fortunate to focus on family during my children's early years before taking on administrative roles. My principle is simple: don't take work home. I complete tasks daily to avoid carrying stress into personal life. Fulfillment comes from giving your best to every task with honesty and dedication. I also believe in competing with your past self, not others, for true growth.

JU POST: You've highlighted the importance of journalism and media studies in shaping society. Can you elaborate?

PROF MEENA: Journalism and media are powerful—they document history as it happens. Newspapers and archives from colonial India, for example, are key historical sources. Today's journalism students are writing the first draft of history, a responsibility that demands truth, integrity, and balance. Their work could be referenced decades from now.

JU POST: Finally, what message would you like to give to today's students?

PROF MEENA: Stay curious and ask "Why?" often. Whether in science, journalism, or art, approach life with a questioning mind and clear purpose. Excellence comes from consistency and intent, not comparison.



DR. RAMIYAN BHARDWAJ

JAMMU: Journalism students at the University of Jammu are making their mark by venturing beyond the classroom to document real-life social concerns through their academic projects. These initiatives—ranging from field reports and documentaries to digital storytelling—are helping students understand society while sharpening their professional skills.

Under the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Professor Umesh Rai, the Department of Journalism and Media Studies has been fostering a culture

JU Journalism Students Capture Society through Campus Projects



of experiential learning. Head of the Department, Professor Garima Gupta, has emphasized that such

projects bridge the gap between theory and practice. "When students step into the field and interact with com-

munities, they learn the essence of responsible journalism," she noted. Faculty members including

Professor Dushyant Kumar Rai, Dr. Ramiyan Bhargadwaj, Dr. Pardeep Bali and Dr. Kumerjit Chajgotra have been actively mentoring students, encouraging them to explore issues such as environmental sustainability, digital culture, and gender dynamics. Their guidance ensures that projects not only meet academic standards but also reflect a sense of social responsibility.

Recent student works have spotlighted topics like the role of social media in shaping youth identity, the challenges of urban waste management in Jammu, and stories of resilience in rural communities. Some documentaries have even been showcased at local cultural festivals, while research-based projects have drawn appreciation from NGOs.

Students describe the experience as transformative. "We realized journalism is more than reporting—it's about amplifying unheard voices and driving dialogue," shared a final-year student.

With the support of its visionary leadership and dedicated faculty, the University of Jammu's Journalism and Media Studies Department is nurturing socially aware storytellers ready to take journalism beyond campus walls.

Hindi Diwas Shines Bright at University of Jammu with Literary Fervor



SHUBHAM CHOWDHARY

The air was filled with the rhythm of Hindi literature as the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Dhanvantri Library, and Translation Club at the University of Jammu came together to celebrate Hindi Diwas. Organized under the auspices of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) Jammu, the event was a heartfelt tribute to the richness of Hindi language and its literary heritage, marked by thoughtful discussions and vibrant student participation.

The day unfolded with a symposium that saw 14 students from the Departments of Journalism and Media Studies and English take the stage to share their insights on iconic Hindi writers. From the time-

less storytelling of Premchand to the poetic brilliance of Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, Bhawani Prasad Mishra, and Harivansh Rai Bachchan, the students' presentations brought the essence of Hindi literature to life. Aryan, a first-semester student from the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, stole the show with his eloquent presentation, earning first place. Suhani Gupta and Sakshi Shawney followed closely, securing second and third places, respectively, with their compelling analyses.

The highlight of the celebration was a panel discussion featuring distinguished scholars and faculty members. Prof. Sham Narayan Lal from the History Department, Prof. Dushyant Kumar Rai from the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Dr.

Shruti Awasti, Regional Director of IGNCA, and Dr. Vikram Sahi, Incharge Librarian at the University of Jammu, delved into the contributions of literary giants like Bhartendu Harishchandra, Jaishankar Prasad, Mahadevi Verma, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, and HSV Agyeya. Their discussions painted a vivid picture of Hindi's evolution as a language of resilience, creativity, and cultural identity.

Swati, with her impeccable organizational skills, ensured the event ran seamlessly, creating a warm and engaging atmosphere for all attendees. Dr. Vikram Sahi closed the event with a heartfelt vote of thanks, acknowledging the enthusiasm of participants and the shared love for Hindi literature.

India's Golden Gem: The Elusive Gucci Mushrooms of Jammu & Kashmir

SUHANI GUPTA

JAMMU: Nestled in the conifer forests of Jammu & Kashmir, a culinary treasure flourishes in secrecy: the Gucci mushroom, also known as the Morel. Renowned as one of the world's most expensive fungi, with prices soaring up to Rs 30,000 per kilogram.

Each spring, people embark on an annual treasure hunt, scouring the forests for these golden gems that have captivated chefs, health enthusiasts, and exporters worldwide.

Gucci mushrooms stand out with their distinctive honeycomb-like structure and delicate pale yellow or orange hues. Their earthy, nutty flavor and meaty texture make them a prized ingredient in gourmet kitchens, from Michelin-starred restaurants in Europe to high-end eateries in the United States. Yet, their allure extends beyond taste. Packed with antioxidants, protein, fiber, vitamin D, and B vitamins, Gucci mushrooms are a superfood with remarkable health benefits, including anti-cancer properties, bone-strengthening effects, and immunity-boosting capabilities.

What makes Gucci mushrooms so exclusive and expensive is their resistance to commercial cultivation. Unlike other fungi, they thrive only in the wild, favoring the temperate conifer forests of Jammu &



Kashmir. Their growth depends on precise environmental conditions, including the right balance of moisture, temperature, and soil composition, making their harvest a labor-intensive and unpredictable endeavor.

For the people, the Gucci season is a time of adventure and opportunity. Entire communities, from seasoned foragers to young enthusiasts, venture into the forests, armed with knowledge passed down through generations. The hunt is no easy feat—Gucci mushrooms often blend seamlessly with their surroundings, requiring a keen eye and patience to spot. For many families, the harvest supplements their income, with the mushrooms fetching premium prices in local and international markets.

The cultural significance of

Gucci mushrooms runs deep. They are a symbol of resilience and harmony with nature, reflecting the region's rich biodiversity. Local cuisines celebrate their unique flavor in dishes like Guccipulao, where the mushrooms lend an aromatic depth that elevates the humble rice dish to a gourmet experience.

India holds a monopoly on Gucci mushrooms, as Jammu & Kashmir is their primary global habitat. The country exports these delicacies to discerning markets in the United States and Europe, where they are sought after by top chefs and food connoisseurs. Major export hubs, including Delhi Air Cargo, Mundra, Nhava Sheva Seaport, and Pune (JNPT), facilitate the global journey of these forest treasures, ensuring they reach international tables in pristine condition.

Bahu Fort: Jammu's Timeless Sentinel of History and Faith

VAISHALI DEVI

JAMMU: Perched majestically on the banks of the Tawi River, Bahu Fort stands as a proud symbol of Jammu's rich heritage and enduring spirit. This ancient stronghold, believed to have been built over 3,000 years ago by Raja Bahulochan, is more than just a historical monument—it's a living heritage to the city's cultural and spiritual legacy.

The fort's weathered stone walls whisper tales of Dogra valor and resilience. Originally constructed to defend the region, it was later renovated by the Dogra rulers in the 19th century, blending strategic architecture with regal charm. Its strategic location offers panoramic views of Jammu, with the serene Tawi River flowing below and the lush greenery of Bahu Garden enveloping its base.

At the heart of the fort lies the revered Bawe



Wali Mata Temple, dedicated to Goddess Kali. This sacred shrine draws thousands of devotees, especially during Navratri, when the fort comes alive with prayers and festivities. The temple's spiritual aura, coupled with the fort's historical significance, makes Bahu Fort a unique blend of faith and heritage.

Visitors are captivated by the fort's robust ramparts, intricate frescoes, and the tranquil Mahakali Temple courtyard. The adjacent Baghe-Bahu, a sprawling Mughal-style garden, adds to the charm, offering a peaceful retreat for families and tourists. Together, they create a harmonious blend of history, spirituality, and natural beauty.

Bahu Fort is more than a landmark—it's the heartbeat of Jammu, where the past meets the present, inviting all to explore its timeless stories.

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Environmental Sustainability: University...

The University of Jammu is no stranger to environmental innovation. An official spokesperson proudly highlighted the institution's green credentials, including a 1095 KW grid-based solar power plant, solar streetlights, LED lighting,

rooftop rainwater harvesting systems, vermicomposting, biogas plants, and robust solid waste management systems. These efforts have earned the university prestigious accolades, such as the District Green Champion Award from the Ministry of Education and the coveted ISO 14001-2015 certification for environmental management.

The spokesperson added, "Our campus is already a hub for pollution-free alternatives like bicycles and e-vehicles.

This new initiative builds on that legacy, ensuring our students and faculty thrive in a cleaner, healthier environment."

As the university embarks on this bold journey, it has called on its vibrant community of stakeholders to rally behind the initiative. "Together, we can make this vision a reality," Prof. Antahal urged, inviting everyone to embrace the change with enthusiasm.

Girls' Hostels Organise Anti-Drug Campaign

JOGINDER SINGH

JAMMU: Boarders and management of the Girls' Hostels at the University of Jammu united under the banner of the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan, a flagship national campaign to combat substance abuse. The program, aimed at engaging youth and promoting community awareness, brought together students, staff, and faculty in a collective effort to create a drug-free India.

The event, held at the university's Girls' Hostels, featured a series of engaging activities designed to highlight the dangers of substance abuse and promote healthier lifestyles. Prof. Shashi Manhas, Provost of Girls' Hostels underscored the importance of early prevention and community involvement. "Only through collective effort and awareness can we build a healthier, happier society free from the grip of substance abuse," she said, rallying participants to join the fight for a drug-free nation.

Dr. Chinmoyee Maharana, Warden of Sarojini Naidu Hostel, provided valuable insights into the science of addiction, explaining the mechanisms by which the brain becomes dependent on harmful substances. She emphasized the critical role of rehabilitation programs in supporting individuals struggling with addiction. Meanwhile, Dr. Sonia M, Resident Warden of CBGH, highlighted the transformative power of meditation as a tool to overcome addiction, encouraging mindfulness as a path to recovery.

The event included slogan writing, poster making, and a lively Nukkad Natak (street play) performed by the hostel boarders. These activities captivated participants and effectively conveyed the campaign's message to young students and staff across the four Girls' Hostels. The slogans and posters, crafted with creativity and passion, were displayed prominently, showcasing the boarders' talent and dedication to the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan. The Nukkad Natak brought the issue to life, sparking conversations and inspiring action among attendees.



University Celebrates Talent and Teamwork at Inter-Collegiate Championship



SUHANI GUPTA

JAMMU: The Gymnasium Hall at the University of Jammu buzzed with energy as the Inter-Collegiate Badminton and Kickboxing Championship 2024-25 drew to a spirited close. Organized by the Directorate of Sports and Physical Education, the event showcased the grit, grace, and sportsmanship of young athletes from colleges across the region, leaving spectators inspired and proud.

In the women's badminton category, the PG Department of Jammu University delivered a stellar performance, defeating MIER College Jammu with a commanding 2-0 victory to secure their spot in the final. The excitement peaked as GCW Parade edged out MIER College

Jammu in a thrilling 2-1 match, earning their place in the championship showdown. The players' agility and precision on the court captivated the audience, turning every rally into a moment of anticipation.

The championship was steered with finesse under the leadership of Dr. Arun Kumar, Director of the Directorate of Sports and Physical Education, with Dr. Daud Iqbal Baba gracing the event as the chief guest. Their presence, alongside officials Malik Aijaz, Raj Kumar Bakshi, Ravish Vaid, Vikas Karlopiya, and Jai Bharat, added warmth and encouragement to the atmosphere. The matches were expertly officiated by a dedicated team including Ravish Vaid, Vinay Manhas, Jeevan Lal, Arjun Sharma, and

Hrithik Jandial, ensuring fair play and seamless execution.

Beyond the scores, the championship was a celebration of camaraderie and determination. Teams from various colleges displayed exceptional talent, their passion for the game shining through every serve, smash, and defensive play. The event not only highlighted athletic prowess but also fostered a sense of unity among students, as cheers from the stands echoed the spirit of teamwork.

As the final shuttlecocks landed and medals were awarded, the Inter-Collegiate Badminton and Kickboxing Championship left an indelible mark on Jammu University's vibrant sports culture, inspiring future athletes to chase their dreams with heart and hustle.

Stray Dogs: Unseen Companions of the Campus

JANVI SHARMA

JAMMU: Amid the bustling pathways and serene greenery of the University of Jammu, a group of quiet companions roams freely:

stray dogs. These furry residents, with their wagging tails and soulful eyes, have become an endearing part of the university's vibrant ecosystem, weaving themselves into the daily lives of students and staff.

Scattered across the sprawling campus, from the shade of the Dhanvantri Library to the edges of the Tawi River, these strays are more than just passers-by. Often seen lounging

near canteens or playfully chasing each other by the hostels, they bring a touch of warmth to the academic hustle. Students affectionately share snacks, while some faculty members and staff ensure bowls of water and leftovers are left out, developing a silent bond of care.



The stray dogs of Jammu University are more than just campus fixtures; they're unofficial mascots. As they nap under trees or trot alongside students, they add a unique heartbeat to the campus, reminding everyone that even the smallest souls leave pawprints on the heart of this academic haven.

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