Page-1_Page-1.qxd 03/08/2026 2:21 PM Page 1

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PAGE 2 :
Guru Purnima Unites Udaipur in Celebration of India's Timeless

PAGE 3 :
Udaipur Honors Mohanlal Sukhadia Legacy

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Drug-Free Youth: Building the Foundation of a Developed India

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma's Udaipur Visit Reinforces a National Movement for Youth Empowerment, Social Responsibility and Grassroots Development

As India accelerates towards its ambitious vision of becoming a Developed Nation (Viksit Bharat) by 2047, the country's greatest strength continues to be its youth. With one of the world's youngest populations, India's demographic advantage offers unprecedented opportunities for innovation, economic growth, and global leadership. However, this potential can only be realized if the nation's young citizens remain healthy, disciplined, and free from the growing menace of substance abuse.

Recognizing this challenge, the Government of India has launched the "Drug-Free Youth – Developed India Pledge Campaign," transforming the fight against addiction into a nationwide people's movement. The campaign is not limited to awareness alone; it promotes prevention, rehabilitation, education, and community participation while encouraging every young Indian to become an active partner in nation-building.

Udaipur Becomes the Voice of a National Campaign

Udaipur emerged as one of the country's key centres for this nationwide initiative when Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology (MPUAT) hosted the state-level programme at the Rajasthan College of Agriculture auditorium.

The event brought together students, researchers, scientists, teachers, government officials, youth volunteers, and public representatives under one roof to participate in the live nationwide address by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The atmosphere reflected both enthusiasm and responsibility as hundreds of young participants pledged to remain drug-free and contribute towards building a stronger, healthier India. The programme was designed not merely as an official event but as a platform to inspire behavioural change among young people through awareness, education, and collective commitment.

Prime Minister's Message: Compassion Over Condemnation

In his nationwide address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a powerful message that addiction must be addressed with sensitivity rather than social rejection.

He described drug-free youth as the greatest strength of a developed India, emphasizing that teachers, educational institutions, families, and society all have a shared responsibility to guide young people away from addiction.

Importantly, the Prime Minister urged society not to stigmatize young people who become victims of substance abuse. Instead, he called for treatment, counselling, rehabilitation, and emotional support, enabling recovering individuals to return to mainstream society with dignity and confidence.

His message reinforced the idea that preventing addiction is not simply a law enforcement issue but a collective social responsibility requiring compassion, awareness, and sustained public participation.

Chief Minister Calls for a People's Movement

Addressing the gathering, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma described the campaign as a national movement rather than a routine government programme.

Administering the "Drug-Free Youth – Developed India" pledge to students, teachers, scientists, and university officials, he declared that drug-free youth are the foundation of both a developed Rajasthan and a developed India.

The Chief Minister highlighted Rajasthan Government's continuous efforts to strengthen de-addiction centres, conduct awareness campaigns, and enforce strict action against illegal narcotics. He encouraged young people to become innovators and entrepreneurs instead of merely seeking employment, emphasizing that India's future depends upon youth leadership, creativity, and responsibility.

He also appealed to parents to maintain regular communication with their children, understand their emotional well-being, and positively monitor their social environment so that early signs of substance abuse can be identified and addressed in time.

Universities Leading Social Transformation

Educational institutions today play a role far beyond academic excellence. They are centres for character building, leadership development, and social transformation.

During the programme, the Prime Minister's message found strong resonance among students and educators alike. The university also organized a thought-provoking street play depicting the devastating impact of addiction on individuals, families, and society.

The performance highlighted how substance abuse destroys dreams, careers, relationships, and mental health while also presenting hope through family support, counselling, sports, yoga, and rehabilitation. The emotional presentation left a lasting impression on the audience and reinforced the campaign's central message that every individual deserves a second chance.

Hundreds of Young Volunteers Join the Mission

More than 500 students representing the National Service Scheme (NSS), National Cadet Corps (NCC), Scouts and Guides, sports units, My Bharat volunteers, research scholars, faculty members, and university staff participated in the programme.

Before attending the event, participants registered on the My Bharat Portal and took the online anti-drug pledge, symbolizing their commitment to becoming ambassadors of a healthier society.

The campaign will continue across India for the next 100 weeks, involving schools, colleges, universities, youth clubs, social organizations, and spiritual institutions in continuous awareness programmes and community participation.

Distinguished Leaders Join the Initiative

The significance of the programme was reflected in the presence of senior political leaders, administrators, and academicians from across Rajasthan.

Among those present were Chief Secretary V. Srinivasan, Tribal Area Development Minister Babulal Kharadi, Revenue Minister Hemant Meena, Members of Parliament Mannalal Rawat and Chunnilal Garasia, MLAs Phool Singh Meena, Pratap Lal Bheel, Uday Lal Dangi, and Tarachand Jain.

Representing MPUAT were Vice-Chancellor Dr. Pratap Singh, Registrar Ashok Kumar, Dean of Student Welfare Dr. Vikramaditya Dave, Director of Research Dr. Manoj Kumar Mahla, Dean Dr. Lokesh Gupta, Dean Dr. L. N. Mahawar, Dean Dr. Siddharth Mishra, Dean Dr. Vinod Yadav, Controller of Examinations Dr. Ram Hari Meena, senior scientists, faculty members, researchers, and university officials.

Their collective presence reflected a united commitment towards youth welfare, education, tribal development, and social reform.

Governance Beyond Conference Halls

While the university programme highlighted the importance of youth development, another significant chapter of the Chief Minister's Udaipur visit unfolded deep in the tribal belt of Bida village in Jhadol tehsil.

Instead of limiting his visit to official meetings, Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma chose to spend the night in the village, reinforcing his government's commitment to participatory governance and direct public engagement.

During the Gram Vikas Chaupal, villagers openly shared concerns related to drinking water, roads, drainage, dairy infrastructure, playgrounds, and other civic facilities.

Responding immediately, the Chief Minister announced the construction of a drinking water well, approved a Saras Dairy Centre, sanctioned a village playground, and directed officials to expedite several pending development works.

The prompt decisions transformed the public interaction into a practical example of responsive governance, bringing immediate relief and renewed confidence among local residents.

Walking Through the Village

The following morning, instead of returning directly to official engagements, the Chief Minister walked through the narrow lanes of Bida village, interacting with schoolchildren, farmers, livestock rearers, women, youth, and elderly residents.

He discussed agricultural practices, livestock management, education, rural livelihoods, and government welfare schemes while listening patiently to suggestions from villagers over informal conversations.

After receiving feedback regarding drainage and civic infrastructure, he instructed officials to take immediate corrective measures.

His visit demonstrated that effective governance is built through dialogue, trust, and continuous interaction with citizens rather than remaining confined to administrative offices.

The Chief Minister also offered prayers at the revered Awra Mata Temple before planting a sapling under the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign, symbolizing environmental conservation and community participation.

Towards a Drug-Free and Developed India

The "Drug-Free Youth – Developed India Pledge Campaign" is much more than a government initiative. It is a nationwide social movement that calls upon every citizen to become a partner in protecting India's future.

Governments can formulate policies, educational institutions can spread awareness, and healthcare systems can provide treatment—but lasting change can only come when families, communities, teachers, and young people themselves embrace responsibility.

As India marches towards Viksit Bharat 2047, the nation's future will be shaped not merely by economic growth or technological progress, but by the character, health, and aspirations of its young generation.

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma's visit to Udaipur perfectly reflected this vision—combining youth empowerment at a leading university with grassroots governance in a remote tribal village. It demonstrated that true development begins simultaneously in classrooms, communities, and villages, where informed citizens and responsive leadership work together to build a healthier, stronger, and more inclusive India.

The message from Udaipur was clear: a drug-free youth population is not only a social necessity but the strongest foundation for a developed Rajasthan and a developed India.

- Dr. Munesh Arora

Shravan in Mewar: Where Faith Blossoms with the Monsoon

From the sacred chants of "Har Har Mahadev" to the vibrant fairs of SukhiyaSomwar and Hariyali Amavasya, the holy month of Shravan transforms Mewar into a celebration of faith, nature, family, and timeless traditions.

The arrival of Shravan, the holiest month in the Hindu calendar, marks much more than the onset of the monsoon in Mewar. As rain clouds embrace the Aravalli hills and the lakes of Udaipur overflow with fresh waters, the region awakens to a season where spirituality, culture, and nature blend seamlessly. Temple bells echo through the morning mist, devotees dressed in saffron carry sacred water for Lord Shiva, women sing traditional Sawan melodies, and families come together to celebrate age-old customs. In Mewar, Shravan is not merely observed—it is experienced with devotion and joy.

According to Hindu mythology, the significance of Shravan is closely linked to the Samudra Manthan, the churning of the cosmic ocean by the gods and demons. During this event, the deadly poison Halahala emerged, threatening all creation. To save the universe, Lord Shiva consumed the poison and held it in his throat, which turned blue, earning him the name Neelkanth. Since then, devotees have offered water, milk, honey, curd, and sacred bel leaves to the Shiva Lingam during Shravan, symbolising gratitude for the Lord's sacrifice and seeking his blessings for peace, prosperity, and spiritual well-being. The Mondays of Shravan, known as Shravan Somwar, are regarded as especially auspicious for fasting, prayer, and Rudrabhishek.

Mewar's association with Lord Shiva is centuries old. The magnificent Eklingji Temple, located just north of Udaipur, has been the spiritual heart of the region for over a thousand years. The Maharanas of Mewar regarded Lord Ekling Mahadev as the true ruler of the kingdom and governed merely as His representatives. Even today, thousands of devotees visit Eklingji, Mahakaleshwar, Ubeshwar Mahadev, Gupteshwar Mahadev, and countless village temples throughout Shravan to offer prayers and perform Jalabhishek. Groups of Kanwariyas, carrying holy water from sacred rivers and lakes, walk barefoot chanting "Bol Bam" and "Har Har Mahadev," adding to the spiritual atmosphere across the region.

Yet Shravan in Mewar is not confined to temples alone. It is a season when nature itself becomes an expression of devotion. The rain-washed Aravallis, emerald fields, blooming gardens, and overflowing lakes create a breathtaking landscape that has inspired Mewar's folk songs, miniature paintings, and poetry for generations. Women dress in green, apply mehendi, decorate swings beneath banyan and neem trees, and sing traditional Sawan songs celebrating love, devotion, and the beauty of the monsoon. Homes prepare special fasting delicacies, while temples remain filled with devotees from dawn until late evening.

As devotion flows through the month, it naturally blends with celebration in one of Udaipur's most cherished traditions—the SukhiyaSomwar Mela. Held on every Monday of Shravan at the historic Saheliyon Ki Bari and its surrounding gardens, the fair has delighted generations of families. After offering prayers at nearby Shiva temples, people gather to enjoy colourful markets, traditional handicrafts, bangles, toys, pottery, folk music, amusement rides, and seasonal delicacies. Children eagerly await the fair, while elders relish the nostalgic atmosphere that has remained largely unchanged for decades. The final Monday of Shravan witnesses the largest gathering, as thousands of devotees and visitors celebrate the concluding Somwar of the sacred month in an atmosphere filled with faith and festivity.

As Shravan draws towards its close, Mewar celebrates another magnificent tradition—Hariyali Amavasya. Observed on the new moon day of Shravan, the festival marks the abundance brought by the monsoon and reflects the region's deep respect for nature. The grand Hariyali Amavasya Fair at Gulab Bagh, Udaipur's historic public garden, is among the city's oldest and most popular cultural events. The sprawling gardens come alive with amusement rides, folk dances, puppet shows, handicraft stalls, rural markets, and authentic Rajasthani cuisine. Families from across Mewar and neighbouring districts gather to spend the day together, while local artisans showcase the rich craftsmanship that has long defined the cultural identity of the region. The fair beautifully combines recreation with tradition, reminding visitors that protecting nature and celebrating its bounty have always been integral to Rajasthan's heritage.

Shravan also brings the heartfelt celebration of Raksha Bandhan, symbolising the enduring bond between brothers and sisters. Sisters tie the sacred thread of Rakhi while praying for their brothers' happiness, prosperity, and long life, and brothers reaffirm their promise of lifelong protection and affection. Across Mewar, families reunite for the festival, strengthening relationships and celebrating the values of trust, love, and togetherness that form the foundation of Indian culture.

In Mewar, Shravan is far more than a religious observance—it is a celebration of life itself. It is a month where mythology meets history, where temples resonate with devotion, where gardens bloom with laughter, and where every raindrop seems to carry a blessing. From the sacred rituals at Eklingji to the joyful gatherings at Saheliyon Ki Bari and Gulab Bagh, the season reflects the unique cultural soul of the region.

As modern lifestyles continue to evolve, these traditions remain living symbols of Mewar's enduring heritage. They remind us that faith is strengthened through community, culture flourishes through celebration, and nature is honoured through gratitude. In the Land of Lakes, Shravan is not simply a month on the calendar—it is the season when faith truly blossoms with the monsoon.