



# Inksight

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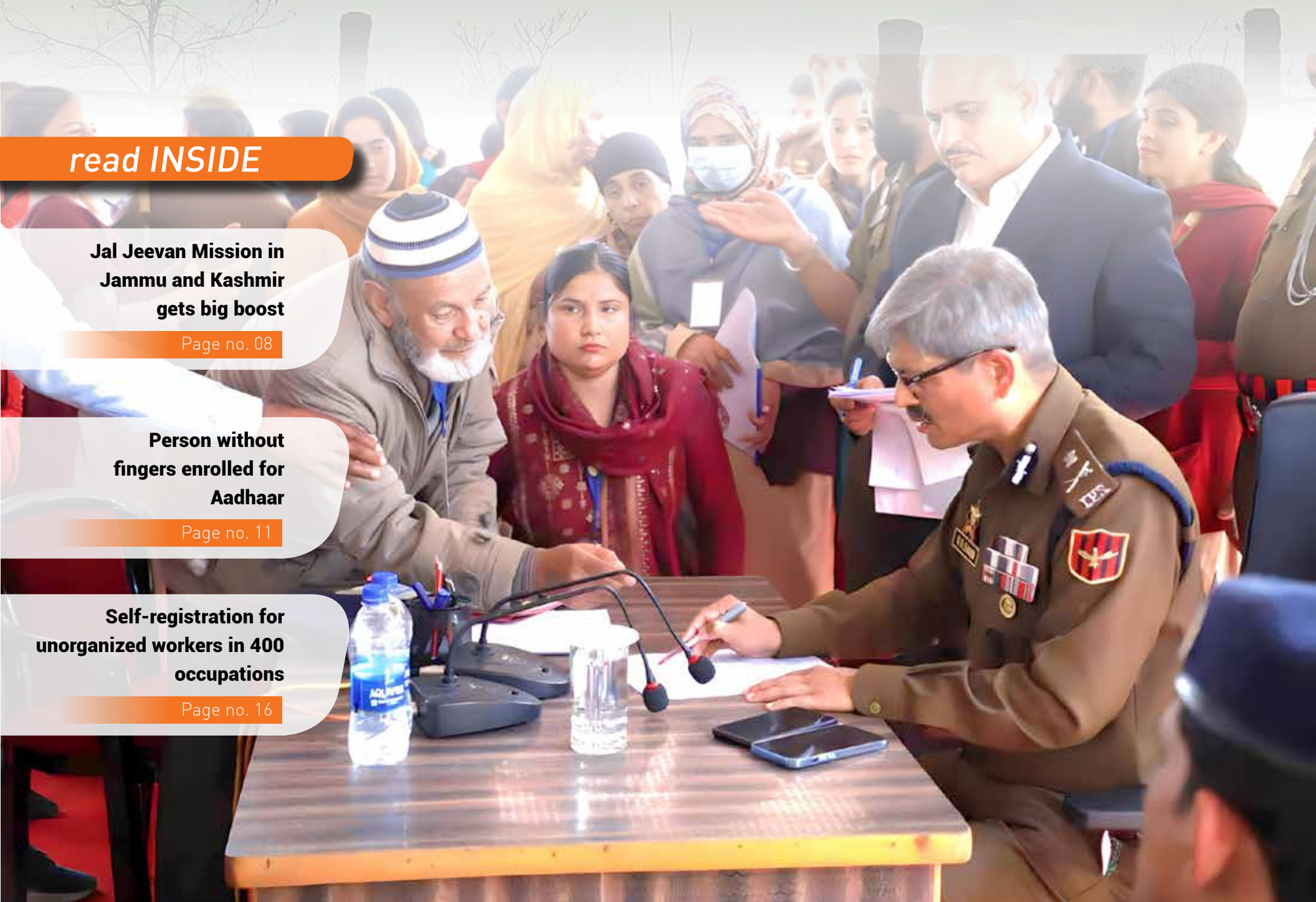
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# Union Power Minister assures adequate power for J&K during winter

## *Lauds UT govt's initiatives toward energy conservation, launches 4E Wave, a student-led National Movement for Energy Conservation*

NEW DELHI: Union Minister of Power, New and Renewable Energy, R. K. Singh and Lieutenant Governor of J&K, Manoj Sinha co-chaired a high-level meeting to review the power sector of Jammu and Kashmir.

During the meeting, Principal Secretary of the Power Development Department, H. Rajesh Prasad, presented a detailed overview of the department's recent achievements.

It was informed that J&K has taken several proactive steps to ensure sufficient availability of power as a part of both short-term and medium-term measures. In this direction, PPAs for 2500 MW have been signed during the current year, aiming to double the existing power availability in the UT in the coming years.

The Union Minister, while addressing the meeting, said that a senior officer from the Ministry would act as the Nodal Officer, responsible for continuous monitoring of the power situation and addressing any gaps from the Central Pool to ensure adequate power supply to J&K.

The Union Minister directed the project implementing agency, RECPDCL to expeditiously implement smart metering, ensuring end-to-end solutions including integration with MDM, enabling pre-paid functionality and other smart features so that benefits of the technology are effectively passed on to the consumers.

He directed the CPSUs engaged in RDSS implementation to promptly award and initiate execution of all projects entrusted to them, recognizing the intended impact of RDSS works in transforming J&K's power sector.

The Lieutenant Governor apprised the Union Minister of the continuance of obsolete wires and other network elements especially in rural areas which cause undue power interruptions.

The Union Minister called for a comprehensive proposal for the same and assured sufficient funding for system re-vamping.

Apart from the technical matters, a notable highlight of the meeting was the launching of 4E Wave - A Student-led National Movement for Energy Conservation by the Union Minister and Lieutenant Governor of J&K.

While launching the 4E Wave -a student-lead National Movement for Energy Conservation, the Union Minister was elated to know that the youth of J&K has taken the initiative to launch a national movement on energy conservation, which holds the potential to make a substantial impact on the nation's energy conservation efforts.

The 4E Wave movement, the first of its kind, encapsulates four key elements including eco-friendliness; promoting energy-saving practices that are environmentally friendly, economy; emphasizing energy-saving solutions that lead to economic benefits for individuals and communities, education; focusing on educating the public about energy-saving methods and their importance and empowerment; empowering individuals and communities to take active roles in conserving energy.

The movement strives to promote sustainable practices and instil a sense of responsibility in individuals and communities to save energy.

Originating from the students of Government College of Engineering & Technology (GCET), Jammu, this youth-led movement, launched with the support of J&K Power Development Department and Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Union Ministry of Power, invites individuals across the nation



to contribute to the vital cause of energy conservation.

During the launching ceremony of the 4E wave, a web portal viz. [www.4ewave.com](http://www.4ewave.com) was also unveiled by the dignitaries, which will provide an interactive platform to citizens nationwide for information and resource sharing related to energy conservation.

The user-friendly portal requires a simple registration process for onboarding in the movement and the participants are provided with certificates of acknowledgement on registration. Any Indian citizen can be a part of this campaign. Beyond this recognition, participants enjoy a wealth of benefits, including personalized energy-saving tips tailored to their consumption patterns, regular updates on the latest developments in energy conservation, and a dynamic platform for sharing articles on energy conservation for publication in the e-magazine named 'e-kshitij' to be published quarterly. Additionally, the portal will host contests focusing on energy conservation, providing an interactive experience for users.

Union Minister emphasized that the 4E Wave movement marks a resolute commitment to mitigate the impact of harmful carbon emissions, and paving the way for a sustainable energy future. By actively engaging in the 4E Wave campaign, individuals are not only taking steps toward reducing carbon footprints but are also fostering collective responsibility for a more sustainable and eco-friendly future. He invited all Indian citizens to be part of this impactful journey toward energy conservation and a sustainable future.

Lieutenant Governor, appreciated the active participation of J&K youth in this noble cause. He commended the efforts of the State Designated Agency for Energy Conservation, J&K Power Development Department, Principal GCET Jammu and Director General BEE, MoP for supporting the campaign.

The Lieutenant Governor mentioned that this initiative will significantly contribute towards promoting the National Cause of Energy Conservation and play a crucial role in safeguarding the planet.

Besides, a real-time portal, [www.dtreportjk.com](http://www.dtreportjk.com), for tracking the Distribution Transformer's damage status and replacement time was also launched by the dignitaries during the occasion. The portal provides citizens with up-to-date information concerning the damage status of Distribution Transformers in their respective areas. The portal aligns with the concern of the Lieutenant Governor of J&K, who consistently emphasizes for minimizing the replacement time of damaged DTs in both urban and rural areas, to avoid inconvenience to the public.



# ‘Modi ki Guarantee ki Gadi’ welcomed with auspicious rituals in Kashmir



*PM interacts with milk vendor Nazia Nazir, a VBSY beneficiary from Sheikh Pura J&K, says enthusiasm for VBSY in Jammu & Kashmir sends a positive message to the rest of the country*

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with beneficiaries of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY) via video conferencing on December 09, 2023.

Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra is being undertaken across the country to attain saturation of flagship schemes of the government by ensuring that the benefits of these schemes reach all targeted beneficiaries in a time-bound manner.

Interacting with Nazia Nazir, a milk vendor and VBSY beneficiary from Sheikh Pura, Jammu & Kashmir, the Prime Minister asked about her family members. She replied that her husband is an auto driver and her two children attain education from government schools in the UT.

Upon the Prime Minister's enquiry about the apparent changes in her village compared to previous years, Nazia Nazir replied that the Jal Jeevan Mission proved to be a game changer with clean and safe tapped water supply reaching their homes where water issues once prevailed.

She also thanked the Prime Minister for the benefits of gas connections under the Ujjwala Yojana, education in government schools and extending PMGKAY for another 5 years. Modi also enquired about the experience and impact of the VBSY van in her village. She replied that the people welcomed it by rituals performed on auspicious occasions according to the Kashmiri culture.

Prime Minister Modi expressed delight upon interaction with Nazia Nazir. He also expressed confidence in the women's power of Kashmir, who by availing the benefits of the government are educating their children and moving forward with the intention of the development of the nation. "Your enthusiasm is a source of strength for me," he said, noting the enthusiasm for VBSY in Jammu & Kashmir sends a positive message to the rest of the country. He further added that it is a guarantee of the bright future of the new generations. He expressed satisfaction that people from around the country are joining the bandwagon of development and lauded the contributions of the people of Jammu & Kashmir.



# Tribal seasonal migration from highland pastures ends with onset of snowfall

- 12,497 families, 1.56 lakh livestock provided transport facilities from Kashmir
- Rs 74.18 Cr direct saving for migratory tribal families

SRINAGAR: In a significant achievement, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir under its initiative for supporting biannual migration (transhumance) of tribal communities provided transport service to 12,497 families and transported 1,56,215 livestock.

The scheme initiated by the Tribal Affairs Department in 2021 is being implemented through District Administrations under the supervision of Deputy Commissioners and a transport fleet provided by the J&K Road Transport Corporation. More than 12,000 families and around 70,000 people benefited under the initiative this year which is highest since the launch of the initiative.

These include 86,192 from Anantnag, 22,221 from Ramban, 12,714 from Kulgam, 10,223 from Pulwama, 9758 from Ganderbal, 6897 from Shopian, 3593 from Srinagar, 17,48 from Budgam, 1717 from Bandipora and 1152 from Baramulla. The arrangements at the district level were supervised by the respective Deputy Commissioners.

The concept of transport service was introduced after the 1st International Conference on Transhumance held in Albania in 2021 shared International best practices for sustaining transhumance and supporting the pastoral communities in migration to avoid conflict, mitigate losses and establish institutional mechanisms.

Secretary of Tribal Affairs Department, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary informed that as per the 2021 survey conducted by the department tribal families possess an average livestock of 12.48 and family size is 5.8. This year total livestock numbering 1.56 Lakh was transported along with the families from various districts of Kashmir to Jammu. An evidence-based approach to public

policy has been introduced to acknowledge the rangeland management and environmental conservation services provided by the migratory tribal families based on which transport service is being provided as an incentive.

Dr Choudhary informed that on average each family saves 20 days of transit and taking into account man-days and prevailing wage rates there is a saving of Rs 20,380 per family of 3 adults and additional saving of transport costs upto Rs 40,000. He said that the notional savings of these families during the current migration season is Rs 25.46 Cr for days saved and Rs 48.72 Cr for transportation and other expenses. These initiatives lead to poverty reduction and also safeguard the livestock against losses related to accidents, exhaustion deaths and climatic conditions.

He added that the United Nations has declared 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) to create awareness about the role of pastoralists in sustainability and drive public policies for their inclusion and empowerment. Jammu and Kashmir, over the last two years, have taken substantial steps to promote sustainable transhumance and economic growth of the migratory tribal pastoral families.

Secretary Tribal Affairs appreciated the coordinated role played by the Deputy Commissioners, J&K Road Transport Corporation, Planning Department, Sheep Husbandry Deptt, Traffic Police and other departments to support and facilitate the migration of families through National Highway -44 and the Mughal road over more than 10 weeks which also benefited the smooth export of Kashmir's horticulture produce and traffic management.





# The transformative power of police-community relations – A case study of Jammu and Kashmir



**JAVAID TRALI**



## Introduction

In a region plagued by conflict and turmoil, the importance of strong police-community relations cannot be overstated. Mr. R R Swain, the newly appointed police chief of Jammu and Kashmir, has initiated a remarkable process by opening communication channels with the common people. During his regular weekend meetings, he engages with individuals from different walks of life, listens to their concerns, and, if possible, addresses their issues. This article highlights two powerful encounters, demonstrating the profound impact of such engagement on the community and the police force.

## Background

Before delving into the two specific cases, a brief background seems appropriate.

Similar to conflict situations elsewhere, in Kashmir, civilians have faced greater risks of violent death or serious injury. This is not necessarily due to their involvement in combat (although it has been the case for some). Instead, they have often been caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, or their harm has been orchestrated to serve someone's political or military design and game-plan. Consequently, overall public confidence in the government is heavily determined, more than anything else, by its ability to provide general public security in this highly fluid situation.

It is at this juncture that the police play a crucial role because no political institution or leader is going to stand guard on behalf of the common people. The police perform this function for the state and the government. Hence, citizens are more likely to interact

daily with the police than with other branches of the government. People have more frequent interactions with a police officer manning the street corner than they do with a senior bureaucrat in the civil secretariat or with ministers and legislators when such structures are in place.

Therefore, the nature of people's interactions with policemen in the neighborhood, such as a local 'thana' (police station) and elsewhere, particularly the fairness of police conduct regarding both individual and group rights, and the police's moderation in the use of its legal mandate, including the monopoly over the use of force, has a significant effect on whether the public trusts and supports the government or not.

## First Case: A Mother's Plea

The police chief was approached by a woman, the wife of a police constable serving in the Jammu region for the past five years. With tears in her eyes, she pleaded for her husband's transfer from Jammu to Kashmir. According to his wife, the cop has been serving in the Jammu region for the last five years. In the absence of her husband, taking care of his elderly parents, besides two kids, including a mentally challenged child, had become an overwhelming burden for her.

The police chief, visibly moved by her distress, quickly asked for her husband's file and assured her that her plea would be acted upon. This heartwarming gesture showcased his empathetic approach and commitment to supporting the welfare of not only his men but also their families.

## Second Case: The Strength of Perseverance

In the same meeting, another woman bravely approached the police chief. Supported by a standing





The Women for Startups workshops have so far been conducted across 16 states and 18 districts across the country. We are delighted to have received such a tremendous response from Jammu and Kashmir. On behalf of Startup India, I express our gratitu...

frame (walker), she shared her story. Her request echoed a similar sentiment—she sought assistance and intervention in a matter relating to the police department. The police chief, recognizing her strength and determination, listened attentively and pledged to address her concern.

This encounter again showed the chief’s dedication to inclusivity and his commitment to ensuring that every individual, regardless of their physical abilities, receives equal support and access to justice.

### Policing — Evolving Roles

Having witnessed excessive levels of violence during the past few decades, Jammu and Kashmir has, over the years, evolved to experience high rates of violent crime due to factors such as the easy availability of weapons and the absence of socio-political and other institutions that could tame and provide cushioning to those who vent out their frustrations violently. Add to this the lack of meaningful opportunities and the general hopelessness about “unfortunate realities changing for good,” as well as the ease with which clandestine military structures have adapted to become self-sustaining criminal enterprises—the situation is certainly not as one would ideally like it to be.

The examples of El Salvador and South Africa, where civilians faced a greater risk of violent death or serious injury after the end of conflict than during it, are grave pointers to the volatility of the situation here even today when, visibly, the actual violence, as well as provocation and abetment for it, have dropped considerably with the change in political circumstances. As the situation openly testifies, there still exist structures within society as well as in the electromagnetic worldwide web that somehow influence people’s thinking and behaviors to make them perceive more “political violence” that is occurring.

While governments use figurative data to quantify violence, common people have neither access to nor the intellectual capital to decipher that data likewise. They understand the situation as it appears to them on the ground.

Seen against this backdrop, policing too has to be alive to these complexities shaped by ongoing

societal dialogues and negotiations, and evolve while being guided by the principles of security, justice, and legitimate authority. The police have to be a dynamic institution reflecting the diverse needs and aspirations of all communities. The strength of policing lies in its ability to adapt and respond to the ever-evolving challenges that communities face. Whether it’s combating organized crime, addressing socio-economic inequalities, or safeguarding public safety during times of crises, the collaboration and coordination among various actors contribute to the overall effectiveness of policing.

### Significance of Police - Community Engagement

The decision by the police chief to meet with common people and actively engage with their concerns is a welcome move. In a conflict-ridden area like Kashmir, the role of the police is critical in maintaining peace and addressing security challenges. However, building trust and fostering good relations between the police and the community is no easy task. It requires an approach that goes beyond enforcing law and order and surveillance. Recognizing this, the police chief’s efforts to create open lines of communication are crucial in bridging the gap between the police and the people they serve.

### Enhancing Security Through Collaboration

Crime and violence have a detrimental impact on daily life and undermine the social fabric of any community. It is the responsibility of the police to prevent and investigate criminal activities, prosecute delinquents, and provide justice to the victims. To achieve this effectively, the police must gain the trust and support of the general public. By striving to be community-oriented, fair, and responsive, the police can foster a sense of security and cooperation within the community. This, in turn, contributes to the overall effectiveness of the police force in maintaining law and order.

### Conclusion

Mr. Swain’s decision to actively engage with the common people of Jammu and Kashmir demonstrates his commitment to bridging the gap between the police and the community. By recognizing the importance of police-community relations, he has taken a significant step toward building trust, understanding, and collaboration.

It is important to mention here that more than 70 percent of all civil war situations during the past four decades throughout the world have been followed by some provisions of police reform. Almost all these cases called for a fundamental reorientation of policing along with new models emphasizing citizen service.

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# Public hearings by senior govt functionaries gain momentum across J&K

Focus on VBSY, service delivery at the grassroots level

JAMMU: The visits of senior government functionaries across Jammu and Kashmir to ensure the redressal of public grievances at the grassroots level are gaining momentum.

Under the public outreach campaign, the Administrative Secretaries, Deputy Commissioners and Heads of Departments are undertaking extensive tours and holding public hearings regularly.

According to a communication, the Administrative Secretaries have been asked to undertake at least one tour per fortnight while the Deputy Commissioners and HoDs have been ordered to undertake one tour per week.

Similarly, all Administrative Secretaries, Deputy Commissioners and HoDs have been asked to remain available for the general public and conduct public hearings daily between 03:00 PM and 04:00 PM, except

for Wednesdays and Tour Days, to have a first-hand idea of the issues and problems being faced by the public at large and ensure their prompt disposal.

The Government has outlined the focus areas of these tours and public hearings which included review and inspection of projects and project sites, review and redressal of public grievances and any issue of public importance.

It has further been directed that all officers shall endeavour to adhere to the schedule and no official meetings and engagements shall be scheduled on the tour days and during public hearing hours. In case of non-availability of these officers in their respective offices, appropriate arrangements by way of nominating the next senior available officer for conducting public hearings, are to be put in place. These tour programmes have been structured rotationally, ensuring coverage of all districts

by Administrative Secretaries and Heads of Departments.

To monitor the outcome of these tours and public hearings, all these senior officers have been asked to submit detailed reports directly to the Office of the Chief Secretary, J&K.

In a separate order, issued by the General Administration Department, the Administrative Secretaries have been asked to review the progress of ongoing Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY) in the districts assigned to them.

A detailed roster notifying 50 district tours for 25 Administrative Secretaries, to be undertaken by them in the first and second fortnight of December to January 2023-24, has been issued. However, it has also been stated that other ongoing activities like Block Diwas, public Darbar, Thane Diwas etc. shall not be affected and shall be carried out as per the already notified schedule.

## Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission calls for facilitating digital payments in hospitals

SRINAGAR: To enhance the healthcare experience for patients in hospitals across Jammu and Kashmir, the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) has directed hospital administrators to implement QR code facilities for seamless digital payments.

A formal communication has been issued to Medical Superintendents, Associated Hospitals, GMCs, Dental Colleges, as well as Medical Superintendents of District Hospitals, Sub-District Hospitals, and Block Medical Officers across J&K, advising them to adopt these digital payment solutions.

Despite the availability of interventions to simplify the payment process, officials have observed that people still opt for cash transactions in hospitals.

The ABDM, aligned with the Digital India platform, aims to make all payments digital within citizen-centric services provided by the government.

Dr Shafqat Khan, Additional Mission Director, ABDM, J&K, emphasized the need for hospitals to facilitate this transition.

“In this context, it is advised to create digital payment facilities for patients in all hospitals/healthcare institutions by providing QR codes of the respective banks for making UPI payments, along with provisions for Debit Card/Credit Card payments through Point of Sale (PoS) machines,” the communication issued in this regard reads.

Officials believe that these measures will reduce the waiting time for payment processes.

Bhupinder Kumar, the Secretary of the Health & Medical Education (H&ME) Department, stated, “We have already taken steps to decrease wait times in OPDs, particularly through the initiation of the Scan and Share Queue Management system. Ensuring hospitals facilitate digital payments is aimed at providing people with a seamless experience.”

Dr. Shafqat Khan remarked, “After the successful implementation of a queue-less OPD ticketing facility, the next step is the introduction of digital payment gateways for the convenience of patients and their attendants.”

He also mentioned that steps are being taken for software upgrading, which will enable patients to book consultations with doctors remotely.



# Jal Jeevan Mission in Jammu and Kashmir gets big boost



## *Centre approves new 102 Water Supply Schemes worth Rs 476.71 cr*

SRINAGAR: As a major boost to Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in J&K, the Centre has approved new 102 Water Supply Schemes worth Rs 476.71 crore for coverage of additional 54752 rural households in the UT for which the provision for Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) had not been planned at the start of the mission.

The identification of these areas/ households was done, by the public, during various public outreach programmes like 'Back to village', Block Divas, JJM Fortnight, Gram Sabhas and JJM awareness camps conducted by the Department, where the public had raised the demands for inclusion of these left out areas in the Jal Jeevan Mission.

With the approval of these new 102 schemes by the Centre, it shall be ensured that no household is left without a tap connection within its premises.

The UT administration has thanked the Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, for the timely approval of the new schemes for coverage of an additional 54752 households.

Additional Chief Secretary, Jal Shakti, Shaleen Kabra, has impressed upon the engineers to expedite the execution of these schemes to meet the agreed timelines for the completion of the Mission. He further emphasized upon that field functionaries maintain the highest degree of transparency, accountability and accessibility to the general public for the effective implementation of the mission.

It may be recalled that like other States/UTs of the country, Jal Jeevan Mission is being implemented in J&K with the involvement of various stakeholders like the Central Government's Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Jal Shakti Department, J&K, District Administrations and the local communities for providing access to safe and adequate drinking water supply facility through tap connections within the premises of rural households. Pani Samitis representing the local communities are playing a very critical role in the implementation of the Mission by partnering with the Department in planning, implementation and monitoring of the Mission activities.

The Department has been continuously reviewing its planning and implementation for achieving 100% coverage with FHTCs in the most economical, transparent and technically feasible manner. As on date, J&K has achieved more than 75% coverage of tap water connections, thereby entering into the 'High Achievers' category at the National Level. The FHTCs being provided are reported on the IMIS portal of JJM with Aadhar linkage of the beneficiaries.

So far, about 3300 schemes have been planned under the Jal Jeevan Mission at an estimated cost of Rs 12975.00 crore which is at different stages of execution. The contracts of more than 98% of works under these schemes have been awarded through e-tendering in a transparent manner and out of which around 87% of works have been started on the ground. The allotment orders issued have been placed on the websites of the respective PHE Directorates in both provinces.

In this regard, the UT has already covered more than 1000 villages, among which are some of the remotest areas like Batlan, Taraiyan and Chanbra villages in Sub Division Tangdar of District Kupwara which are located near the LoC and received piped water for the first time. In these villages, people would fetch water from springs and nearby streams by travelling long distances. Similarly, Nilfan village with about 285 households got 100% tap water connectivity for the first time and the women and children of the area were relieved of the drudgery of fetching water by travelling long distances on hill slopes.

By completing and commissioning Water Supply schemes in Rampura and Sujwan at an estimated cost of Rs 6.67 crore, in district Samba, about 1100 households have benefited by getting Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) within the premises. The people of these villages were mostly using the water from shallow hand pumps which were quality affected and through the newly commissioned schemes under Jal Jeevan Mission, deep tube wells have been drilled and required storages created for supplying the water of adequate quantity and prescribed quality as per BIS 10500, regularly.

To ensure transparency in work done and households covered, the process of Har Ghar Jal Certification by the Gram Panchayats has been put in place where the villages reported as Har Ghar Jal by the PHE Department are subsequently certified through a Special Gram Sabha resolution. This not only creates the awareness about provision of tap water connectivity in the village but also promotes community ownership.



# PMAY (G) providing not just houses but hope, resilience in J&K



Srinagar: The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) in Jammu and Kashmir mirrors the government's steadfast commitment to ensuring that every family, irrespective of the challenges posed by the region, has access to dignified housing. This initiative aligns seamlessly with the broader vision of fostering development and prosperity in the Union Territory.

As the PMAY(G) continues to etch success stories against the backdrop of the breathtaking Jammu and Kashmir, it stands as a powerful testament to the government's dedication to improving the lives of residents in this culturally rich and geographically diverse region.

Recently Union Ministry of Rural Development allotted an additional 1,99,550 houses under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojna-Gramin (PMAY-G) to UT of Jammu Kashmir to saturate the AwaasPlus permanent Waiting List during the year 2023-24.

An official said the massive allocation for J&K, under the flagship scheme, was also the highest across all UTs in India.

In a commendable effort to uplift the lives of families in the stunning landscapes of Jammu and Kashmir, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) is making waves, providing not just houses but hope and resilience to the J&K's residents.

Under the ambitious PMAY(G), the challenging topography of Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed a transformative housing revolution.

The construction of sturdy homes is replacing vulnerable structures, ensuring families are safeguarded against unique adversities, including severe weather conditions and difficult terrains.

In a Kupwara village, Lal Din Khatana story epitomizes the impact of PMAY(G). Formerly enduring the biting winters in a fragile dwelling, Khatana now resides in a robust pucca house. The initiative not only shields her family from the elements but also instils a renewed sense of

In a commendable effort to uplift the lives of families in the stunning landscapes of Jammu and Kashmir, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) is making waves, providing not just houses but hope and resilience to the J&K's residents.

optimism for a brighter future.

Similarly, Abdul Rehman of Khovripora, Anantnag, shares his remarkable experience of receiving a house through PMAY. He credits the Govt's unwavering commitment to grassroots level development which turned his dream into a reality.

Rehman says he faced numerous challenges in a vulnerable structure.

"Now PMAY(G), provided a lifeline in the form of a resilient home that stands up to the severe cold. It has changed the quality of life for my family," he said.

Similarly, Rakia Begum of Block Manjakote Rajouri says, "Earlier I had faced many problems while living in a dilapidated mud wall house with my children and family, particularly during a thunderstorm and rainy season. But now with the help of the government, I have got a new house under PMAY-G." She thanked the LG administration and district administration for providing them with Pucca house.



# Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra surpasses one crore participants



New Delhi: The Vikasit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 15 from Khunti, Jharkhand, has emerged as a transformative expedition fostering connections with citizens nationwide.

As of December 7, 2023, the Yatra has reached over 36,000 Gram Panchayats and witnessed the participation of over 1 crore citizens, as per the data captured on the customized portal developed by MEITY. India’s most populous state Uttar Pradesh leads with over 37 lakh people participating, followed by Maharashtra 12.07 lakhs and Gujarat 11.58 lakhs. The Yatra has received an encouraging reception in Jammu & Kashmir as well, with over 9 lakh people participating till date.

The people’s participation has gathered further momentum with each passing day. The first week of the Sankalp Yatra saw the participation of 500,000 citizens, and over 77 lakh people across the country, participated in the Yatra during the last 10 days. Within a short span, the urban segment of the Yatra has reached over 700 locations and a total of 79 lakh individuals have taken the



Pledge to strive to make India a developed nation by 2047.

In an unprecedented outreach effort, the Yatra strives to cover over 2.60 Gram Panchayats and 3600+ urban local bodies using Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) vans that call upon people to utilise government schemes for their benefit.

A focal point of the Yatra has been raising awareness about women-centric schemes, leading to over 46,000 beneficiaries enrolling for the PM Ujjwala scheme. Health Camps have also proved to be a big draw and till

date 22 lakh individuals have been screened.

Drone demonstration for farmers showcased as part of the Vikasit Bharat Sankalp Yatra has attracted great curiosity. With the launch of the ‘Drone Didi Scheme’ under which 15,000 Women’s Self Help Groups will be provided with Drones, along with necessary training for two members of the women, a large number of women are also coming forward to witness the drone flights. The SHGs shall rent out the drone services for a fee, which will serve as another stream of revenue for the Self-Help Group members.





# Person without fingers enrolled for Aadhaar

**UIDAI sensitizes enrolment agencies to assist such persons in enrolling for Aadhaar**

New Delhi: Learning that a person in Kerala was unable to enrol for Aadhaar for the reason that she did not have fingers, Union Minister of State for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Electronics & IT and Jal Shakti Rajeev Chandrasekhar directed that immediate steps be taken to ensure her enrolment.

Pursuant to the same, a team from the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) visited Ms Josymol P Jose at her home in Kumarakam, Kottayam District in Kerala, the same day and got her Aadhaar number generated. Her mother thanked the authorities for their support and assistance and said that with the help of Aadhaar, her daughter will now be able to easily avail of various benefits and services, including Social Security Pension and Kaivalya, a rehabilitation scheme for Divyangjan.

Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said, “Standard advisory has been sent to all Aadhaar Service Kendras giving instructions that Aadhaar should be issued to people like Ms Josymol P Jose or others having blurred fingerprints or similar disability, by taking alternate biometrics.” In line with the Government of India’s commitment to ensure inclusion for digitally enabled access to benefits and services, UIDAI has made special provisions in its regulations and has issued Biometric Exception Enrolment Guidelines dated 1st August 2014 laying down the procedure for enrolling persons who have missing fingers, the biometrics of whose fingers cannot be captured due to any reason (such as a cut, bruise, bandage, worn-out or bent fingers due to old age or leprosy), or the biometrics of whose irises or both fingers and irises cannot be captured due to any reason.

A person who is eligible for an Aadhaar but unable to provide fingerprints may enrol using only an iris scan. Similarly, an eligible person whose irises cannot be captured due to any reason may enrol

using only her/his fingerprint. Further, an eligible person who is unable to provide both finger and iris biometrics may enrol without submitting any of the two.

For such persons, under the Biometric Exception Enrolment Guidelines, the name, gender, address and date/year of birth are to be captured along with the available biometrics while highlighting the missing ones in the enrolment software, a photograph is to be taken in the manner specified in the Guidelines to highlight the unavailability of the finger(s) or iris(es) or both and the Supervisor of the Aadhaar enrolment centre is to validate such enrolment as an exceptional enrolment. Thus, every eligible person who undergoes the enrolment process by submitting the required information may be issued an Aadhaar number, irrespective of any inability to provide biometrics.

The UIDAI enrolls about one thousand persons every day under exceptional enrollment as above. Till date, UIDAI has issued Aadhaar numbers to nearly 29 lakh persons who had missing fingers or were otherwise unable to provide finger or iris or both biometrics. UIDAI also inquired into the reasons why an Aadhaar number did not get issued to Ms Josymolin when she enrolled earlier and learnt that this happened since the Aadhaar enrolment operator did not follow the exceptional enrolment procedure.

Therefore, UIDAI has issued an advisory to enrolment Registrars and agencies to take all necessary steps, including dissemination of knowledge and awareness and sensitisation through training, to ensure that all Aadhaar enrolment operators are made aware of the exceptional enrolment procedure, follow the same, and render the persons undergoing such enrolment necessary assistance. Further, an informative poster in this regard has been prepared to display the Aadhaar enrolment centres.



# Startup India initiative to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation, startups and encouraging investments in the country

Govt recognizes 1,14,902 entities as startups as on Oct 31st, 2023



New Delhi: The Startup India initiative was launched by the Government on 16th January 2016 to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation, and startups and encouraging investments in the startup ecosystem of the country. This information was provided by the Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Som Parkash, in a written reply in the Lok Sabha today.

To meet these objectives, the Government unveiled an Action Plan for startups comprising schemes and incentives envisaged to create a vibrant startup ecosystem in the country. The Action Plan comprises 19 action items spanning areas such as “Simplification and hand holding”, “Funding support and incentives” and “Industry-academia partnership and incubation”.

To attain specific objectives, various programs are implemented by the Government under the Startup India initiative. As a result of sustained efforts, the Government has recognised 1,14,902 entities as startups as on 31st October 2023.

Realising the action items of the Startup India Action Plan, the Government is implementing flagship Schemes under the Startup India initiative namely, the Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS), Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) and Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS) to support startups at various stages of their business cycle to enable startups to graduate to a level where they can raise investments or seek loans. The brief of each of these three Schemes is placed in Annexure I.

#### ANNEXURE-I

The brief of each of the three flagship Schemes implemented under the Startup India initiative:

**Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS):** The Startup India Seed Fund Scheme has been approved for 4 years starting from 2021-22 with a corpus of Rs 945 crores. The Scheme aims to provide financial assistance to startups for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry and commercialization. The Scheme will be implemented from 1st April 2021. The Experts Advisory

Committee (EAC), under SISFS, is responsible for the overall execution and monitoring of SISFS. The EAC evaluates and selects incubators for allocation of funds under the Scheme. As per provisions of the Scheme, the selected incubators shortlist startups based on parameters outlined in Scheme guidelines.

**Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) Scheme:** The Fund of Funds for Startups Scheme was approved and established in June 2016 with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore, with contributions spread over the 14th and 15th Finance Commission cycle based on the progress of implementation, to provide a much-needed boost to the Indian startup ecosystem and enable access to domestic capital. The Scheme is operationalized by the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). Under FFS, the Scheme does not directly invest in startups, instead provides capital to SEBI-registered Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), known as daughter funds, who in turn invest money in growing Indian startups through equity and equity-linked instruments. SIDBI has been given the mandate of operating this Fund through a selection of suitable daughter funds and overseeing the disbursement of committed capital. AIFs supported under FFS are required to invest at least 2 times the amount committed under FFS in startups.

**Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS):** The Government has established the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups to provide credit guarantees to loans extended to DPIIT-recognized startups by Scheduled Commercial Banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and Venture Debt Funds (VDFs) under SEBI registered Alternative Investment Funds. CGSS is aimed at providing credit guarantees up to a specified limit against loans extended by Member Institutions (MIs) to finance eligible borrowers viz. DPIIT recognised startups. CGSS is operationalized by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC).



# J&K's first Purple Fest inspires inclusivity, recognises resilience of Divyangjan

## Inclusive festival paints J&K in hues of purple

JAMMU: The inaugural two-day Purple Fest, a pioneering initiative in Jammu and Kashmir, organised by the Social Welfare Department brought boundless joy to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

Inaugurated by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Dr Virendra Kumar, this inclusive festival celebrated the diverse talents and resilience of Divyangjan and served as a platform for a myriad of activities aimed at showcasing their abilities.

During the two-day event, Persons with Disabilities engaged in a spectrum of 15 sports events – both indoor and outdoor - exhibitions, live demonstrations, cultural shows, movie screenings, disability dialogue, a talent hunt, and a fashion show.

During the event, the Lieutenant Governor felicitated the Divyangjan ambassadors, particularly para-athletes and individuals who have brought honour to the UT and the nation on national and international platforms.

More than 1000 beneficiaries from all the districts of Jammu division were also provided motorised scooties, wheelchairs, hearing aids, smartphones, and other assistive devices targeting the saturation of individual beneficial schemes.

Awards were also conferred upon Divyangjan who emerged winners and runners-up at the event. Various NGOs were also acknowledged and appreciated for their commendable work in the field.

Inaugurating J&K's first Purple Fest, the Lieutenant Governor observed that in many areas of life, be it music, films, sports, art, or literature, persons with disabilities have achieved success and greater goals and today they are inspiring the entire society. He said many such great personalities have proved that they have no less capability than anyone else but they have special abilities to contribute in nation building.

This Festival of Inclusion will be a milestone in the journey of empowerment of Divyangjan in J&K UT. It will inspire every citizen to work unitedly for the empowerment and rehabilitation of Divyangjan and to build an inclusive society, he added.

The Lt Governor reiterated the commitment of the J&K Administration to create an environment that provides equal opportunities and protects the rights of Divyangjan.

"We have achieved saturation in the distribution of motorized scooties. The administration has taken over Abhinandan Home for specially-abled students," he said.

In the last financial year, 384 Divyangjans were provided government jobs. Reservation has increased from 3 percent to 4 percent. The posts whether under PSC or JKSSB will be filled within 6 months. We will prepare a legal framework to ensure employment opportunities to Divyangjan in the private sector, the Lt Governor said.

He said, there is a need for all the stakeholders,



society, and NGOs to adopt a multi-dimensional approach and collaborative efforts to enable persons with disabilities to realize their full individual potential.

"Private companies and individual innovators have made impressive strides in new technology in the last few years. I urge them to develop user-friendly instruments for Divyangjan which will help in their rehabilitation process and empowerment," the Lt Governor said.

Member of Parliament, Sh Jugal Kishore Sharma also spoke at the event and laid emphasis on how the government has widened the social space for the Divyangjan.

Joint Secretary Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Rajeev Sharma visited all the stalls and events.

Twelve Commissioners for Persons with Disabilities from other states apart from 16 other departments from the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development from all over the country participated in the fest.

Participating in the event, the Divyangjans said that this was the first time that they had felt included at such a scale and been part of such a massive programme.

Rouf dance by hearing and speech impaired children of Kashmir and Dogri folk dance by hearing and speech impaired children of Jammu mesmerized the audience.

The dignitaries also visited the stalls set up by Divyangjan at the event which showcased their entrepreneurial skills and contribution to the local economy.

Commissioner Secretary Social Welfare, Sheetal Nanda welcomed the dignitaries for attending the event and boosting the morale of the Divyangjan as well as the department working for their welfare.

Advisor to Lieutenant Governor Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar was the chief guest at the valedictory function and prize distribution ceremony. He appreciated the role of Divyangjan and lauded the Social Welfare Department for conducting such an exercise.

The event witnessed the participation of more than 5000 individuals including around 2000 students, reflecting a strong call to action for a more inclusive society that acknowledges the remarkable courage, resilience, and determination of those with special abilities.



# Over 1 crore Ayushman cards created during Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra



New Delhi: In a significant milestone demonstrating the strengthening of the country's health infrastructure and propelling healthcare excellence in India, India has achieved a commendable landmark. 1,02,23,619 Ayushman cards have been created during Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra.

Under the ongoing Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, the cumulative footfall has reached 1,31,66,365 in 79,487 Health camps conducted in 3,462 Gram Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies, till date.

**The following activities are being carried out in the Health Camps:**

**AYUSHMAN BHARAT** - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY): Under the flagship scheme of MoHFW for the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, Ayushman cards are being created using the Ayushman app and physical cards are being distributed to the beneficiaries. Till date, more than 23,83,473 physical cards have been distributed.

A total of 6,34,168 Ayushman cards have been created at the health camps held yesterday.

**TUBERCULOSIS (TB):** Screening of patients for TB is carried out by screening for symptoms, sputum testing, and using NAAT machines wherever available. Cases suspected to have TB are referred to higher facilities. By the end of Day 36, more than 49,17,356 people had been screened out of which more than 3,41,499 were referred to higher Public Health Facilities.

Under Pradhan Mantri TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (PMTBMA), consent is being taken for patients suffering from TB to receive assistance from Nikshay Mitras. Attendees willing to be Nikshay Mitras are also being provided on-spot registration. More than 1,17,734 patients have given consent under PMTBMA and more than 39,819 new Nikshay Mitras were

registered.

Under the Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY), monetary assistance is provided to TB patients through Direct Benefit Transfer. For this purpose, details of the bank accounts of the pending beneficiaries are being collected and accounts are being Aadhaar seeded. Details of 30,093 such beneficiaries have been collected.

**SICKLE CELL DISEASE:** In areas with a predominant tribal population, screening of eligible population (up to 40 years of age) is being done for the detection of Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) through the Point of Care (PoC) tests for SCD or through Solubility Test. Cases testing positive are being referred to higher centres for management. More than 5,08,701 people have been screened so far, out of which 21,793 were found to be positive and referred to higher public health facilities.

**NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDS):** Screening of eligible population (30 years and above) is being done for Hypertension and Diabetes and cases suspected to be positive are being referred to higher centres. Around 10,297,809 people have been screened for Hypertension and Diabetes. More than 4,82,667 people were suspected to be positive for Hypertension and more than 3,45,898 were suspected to have Diabetes and more than 7,59,451 people were referred to higher public health facilities.

**BACKGROUND:** The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on November 15 from Khunti, Jharkhand to saturate the benefits of central government schemes across the nation. As a part of on-spot services under the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, Health Camps are being organized at the places of the halt of the IEC Van in the Gram Panchayats.



# UPI transactions grew from 1 lakh crore in FY 2017-18 to 139 lakh crore in FY 2022-23 in value, at a CAGR of 168%

Year-on-year growth in the value of banknotes in circulation decreases from 9.9% in FY 2021-22 to 7.8% in FY 2022-23



New Delhi: Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions have grown from 92 crore in FY 2017-18 to 8,375 crore in FY 2022-23 at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 147% in terms of volume. Similarly, the value of UPI transactions has grown from ₹ 1 lakh crore in FY 2017-18 to ₹ 139 lakh crore in FY 2022-23 at a CAGR of 168%.

UPI has achieved 8,572 crore transactions during the current financial year till 11th December 2023. UPI has been the major driving force in the overall growth of digital payment transactions in the country accounting for 62% of digital payment transactions in FY 2022-23. The Year-on-Year growth in the value of banknotes in circulation has decreased from 9.9% in FY 2021-22 to 7.8% in FY 2022-23.

The initiatives undertaken by the Government to promote digital transactions include, inter alia; an incentive scheme for the promotion of RuPay Debit cards and low-value BHIM UPI transactions (P2M), advisories by the Government of India to various stakeholders to improve payment acceptance infrastructure,

allocation and monitoring year-wise digital payment transaction & merchant acquisition targets to the Public and Private Sector Banks

Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan (PMGDISHA) to augment digital literacy in rural India, and,

other promotion activities conducted with digital payment stakeholders and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs).

To encourage customers to adopt digital banking, RBI has also been conducting

Electronic Banking Awareness and Training (e-BAAT) programmes across the country thrust on awareness about Digital Payment Products, Frauds and Risk Mitigation and grievance redressal

Digital Payments Awareness Week

The mission 'Har Payment Digital' is to make every person in India aware of digital payments. RBI has also launched the '75 Digital Villages' programme in observance of 75 years of Independence and also conducts multimedia channel/platform-based public awareness campaigns under the tag of 'RBI Says' or 'RBI Kehta Hai' to create awareness among members of the public about various digital payment initiatives that cover customer's safety, security and convenience.

Reserve Bank of India has permitted the linking of RuPay credit cards to UPI. The benefits to the consumers are:

Once the RuPay credit card is linked to UPI, there is no need to carry the physical plastic card for use through UPI QR, and,

Enable customers to spend using credit cards even at small merchant outlets with QR codes.



## E-SHRAM PORTAL

# Self-registration for unorganized workers in 400 occupations



New Delhi: The Ministry of Labour & Employment has launched the e-SHRAM portal, a National Database of the Unorganised Workers on 26th August 2021.

It has been made available to the States/UTs for registration of unorganised workers including migrant workers and domestic workers on the e-SHRAM portal. It allows an unorganised worker to register himself or herself on the portal on a self-declaration basis, under 400 occupations in 30 broad occupation sectors. The main objective of the e-SHRAM portal is to create a national database of unorganised workers seeded with Aadhaar.

It is also to facilitate the delivery of Social Security and welfare Schemes to such workers. As of 15.12.2023, more than 29.23 Crore unorganized workers have been registered on this portal.

The Labour Bureau, an attached office of the Ministry of Labour and Employment has conducted an All India Survey on Migrant Workers and Domestic Workers by selecting the sample households based on a multi-stage sampling design. Data on various socio-economic aspects of domestic workers have been collected which, inter-alia, include size of household, social group, economic activity etc.. The fieldwork of the survey has been completed. For the finalization of the schedule, sampling and all other technical details, an Expert Group was constituted to oversee the survey.

The Government is also implementing various social security and welfare schemes for unorganized workers including migrant workers and Domestic Workers. Some of the prominent schemes are as follows:

The PM Vishwakarma Scheme envisages providing end-to-end holistic support to artisans and craftspeople who work with their hands, using tools, in the 18 trades covered. Through the implementation of the Scheme, the beneficiaries of the unorganized sector will be able to scale up their operations, modernize/upgrade their tools and business, enter the formal economy as entrepreneurs and contribute towards the larger goal of nation-building. The objective of the Scheme is also to provide a platform for brand promotion and market linkages to help them access new opportunities for growth to the eligible beneficiaries.

Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) launched in 2015 provide for life & disability cover due to natural or accidental death.

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Man Dhan Pension Scheme (PM-SYM) launched in 2019 provides for old age social security in the form of a monthly pension.

The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PM-JAY) provides health cover of Rs.5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization to vulnerable families. These families include unorganized workers including migrant workers with their families as per the defined eligibility.

PM-SVANidhi Scheme facilitates collateral-free working capital loans of upto Rs.10,000/- for one-year tenure to street vendors.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana caters to the housing needs of all eligible beneficiaries.



# TRANSFORMATIVE TALE

## Insha Shabir's journey from modest beginnings to boutique owner with govt support



Srinagar: In the beautiful valley of Jammu & Kashmir's Pulwama district, lives a young woman who has become a symbol of independence, resilience, and transformation. Born into a modest family in Pulwama's Aarigam, Insha Shabir, today has become a business owner and manages her boutique.

She is among the many beneficiaries of the Central Government's Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission, which is giving wings to fly to many girls and women like Insha.

In an interview with the media during the ongoing Vikasit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, Insha said she first heard about the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihood Mission in 2017 and immediately registered for it. The scheme was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2011. It aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms for the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.

Insha sharing her story revealed that she has been interested in designing and making clothes since she was a child. But the turning point came in her life when she enrolled herself at the local tailoring school under DAY-NRLM. Her talent and interest transformed into a business opportunity and a way to earn a livelihood.

After completing the design course at the institute, Insha realized she wanted to set up her boutique. She got a PMEGP Umeed loan and in this endeavour too, DAY-NRLM helped her by providing financial support.



Finally, she was able to set up her boutique.

Sometimes, with limited resources and few opportunities, dreams often seem like distant stars in the night sky. But for Insha, DAY-NRLM enabled her to live her dream. Insha shared that had she not received the subsidized loan under the scheme, she might not have been able to start her business.

Insha hailed the government's business schemes that are helping the youth and creating a new, developed India. She added, that today, it's not just the rich people who are succeeding but individuals from poor backgrounds and villages are also starting successful businesses. She added she is grateful to the government for coming up with schemes that have allowed her to be financially independent. Today, Insha not only manages her finances but also employs other women at her boutique. Albeit small, the boutique has become a synonym for Vikas and Aatmanirbharta.



# J&K's industrial landscape thrives under New Central Sector Scheme



## 672 units registered in just 2 years, around Rs 100 cr incentives approved under NCSS, IDS in 2023-24, UT on track to achieve DPIIT target of Rs 150 cr in incentive disbursal

JAMMU: Jammu & Kashmir's industrial sector is witnessing a remarkable transformation, fueled by the success of the New Central Sector Scheme (NCSS).

As per a communique received here today in this regard by the Industries and Commerce department, these initiatives, being implemented by the Government of India and the UT government, are providing impetus to investment, job creation, and overall economic growth in the region.

Launched in February 2021 with a substantial outlay of Rs. 28,400 crore, NCSS offers a comprehensive package of incentives to attract businesses to Jammu & Kashmir. These incentives included capital investment subsidy, interest subvention, and GST-linked benefits, making the UT a lucrative destination for entrepreneurs.

The scheme has gained impressive momentum in just two years, with a total of 672 units registered under NCSS, a testament to its impact.

In 2023-24, a total of seven Secretary Level Committee (SLC) meetings were held, under the chairmanship of Vikramjeet Singh, Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce Department and facilitated by Dr. Arun Kumar Manhas, Director Industries & Commerce, Jammu, and Khalid Majeed, Director Industries & Commerce, Kashmir as its Member Secretary for their respective Directorates.

These meetings approved the registration of 304 units, with 218 from the Jammu Division and 86 from the Kashmir Division. These units represent a diverse range of sectors, including manufacturing and services, indicating the scheme's broad reach and impact.

Furthermore, NCSS has already started disbursing

substantial incentives. In 2023-24, Rs. 62.5 crore were approved through Capital Investment Incentive (CII), Rs. 19 crore through Working Capital Interest Subvention (WCIS), and Rs. 1.44 crore through Capital Interest Subvention (CIS). These approvals and subsequent disbursement are directly empowering businesses, enabling them to expand their operations and create new employment opportunities.

With 6 more SLC meetings planned in the remaining quarter of FY 2023-24, J&K is well on track to surpass the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) target of Rs. 150 crore in incentive disbursal. This achievement will be a significant milestone in the UT's industrial journey.

While NCSS marks a new chapter in J&K's industrial development, the Industrial Development Scheme (IDS) 2017 continues to play a crucial role. Launched as a precursor to NCSS, IDS offers its own set of incentives, including central capital investment support, interest subsidy, GST reimbursement, Insurance etc.

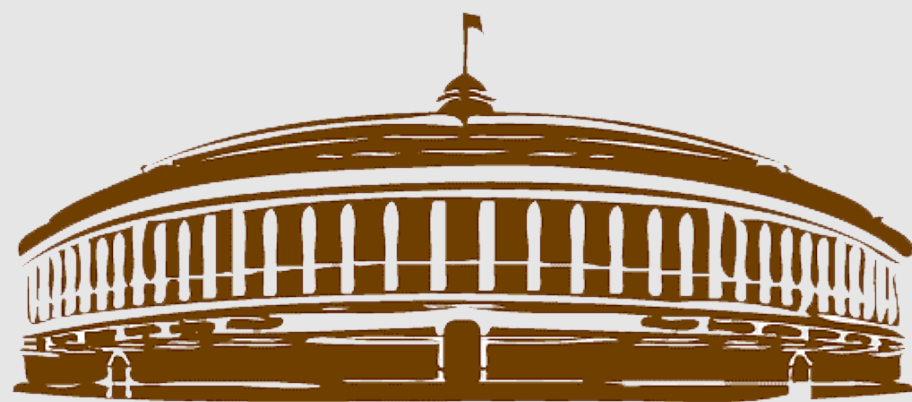
In 2023-24, IDS SLCs approved incentives worth Rs. 13 crore for J&K. These additional incentives complement the support provided by NCSS, further strengthening the industrial ecosystem in the UT. Besides, Rs 4 crore has also been approved by the State level committee under Central Package I & II to the Unitholders of J&K.

Moreover, besides the central incentives UT Government also supports the Industries through different incentives viz DG Set, Pollution Control Devices etc provided under the J&K Industrial Policy. Till date, more than Rs 10 crore have been approved under the State package excluding GST Reimbursement which is granted by the State Taxes Deptt, J&K.

The efforts of the Industries & Commerce Department are paving the way for a vibrant and robust industrial landscape in Jammu & Kashmir. With a focus on attracting investment, fostering innovation, and creating a conducive business environment, the UT is poised for sustained industrial growth in the years to come.

This transformation will not only generate employment opportunities but also contribute significantly towards J&K's overall economic development and prosperity.





# FROM THE PARLIAMENT





# EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

The Government of Jammu & Kashmir has taken several measures for the creation of employment opportunities for the unemployed youth, which include:

i. Implementation of self-employment schemes across various sectors to establish sustainable income-generating ventures for unemployed youth. A total of 7.4 lakh self-employment/livelihood opportunities generated/strengthened since the year 2021-22 till date.

ii. Launch of new schemes like Mumkin, Tejaswani, and Spurring Entrepreneurship under Mission Youth to support the establishment of business units and sustainable livelihood projects, including in the transport sector.

iii. Conducting job fairs and placement drives at divisional and district levels to provide a platform for unemployed youth and potential employers, enhancing job placement opportunities. Several job fairs conducted in the last two years are 151 and a total of 1631 companies participated.

iv. Introduction of skill development programs organized in FY 2023-24 to bridge the skill gaps among the youth.

v. During the period 2020 to 2023 (upto October) a total of 4,74,464 candidates participated in career counselling sessions and a total of 2,12,109 candidates participated in the awareness campus for career guidance.

vi. Implementation of governance reforms, including transparent large-scale recruitment drives has been carried out post reorganization. The Accelerated Recruitment Committee was constituted in 2020 to oversee public-sector recruitment.

vii. Under the “YOGYATA SE ROZGAR” drive, emphasis has been placed on merit-based selections in a transparent, equitable, and fair manner.

viii. To infuse an element of transparency and to speed up the recruitment process, interviews for all the posts up to and including Pay Level 5 and some in Pay Level 6 have been dispensed with.

ix. A total of 31,830 vacancies (including J&K Bank)

in the Government sector have been filled from August 2019 to till date.

The Government of India has notified a New Central Sector Scheme for Industrial Development of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on 19.02.2021 with an outlay of Rs 28,400 crore to boost industrial development.

Various policy initiatives have been taken by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir and the following policies are notified for making the UT an investor-friendly destination:

i. J&K Industrial Policy, 2021-30

ii. J&K Industrial Land Allotment Policy, 2021-30

iii. J&K Private Industrial Estate Development Policy, 2021-30.

iv. Policy for Promotion of Foreign Investment in Industrial Sector in J&K, 2022.

v. J&K Single Window Rules, 2021.

vi. Turnover Incentive Scheme, 2021.

vii. J&K Wool Processing Handicrafts and Handloom Policy, 2020.

viii. Financial Support Scheme for Cooperatives/Self Help Groups, 2020.

ix. Credit Card Scheme for Artisans and Weavers.

x. Karkhandar Scheme for Development of Craft Sector in J&K.

xi. Revised Education Scheme 2022 for Artisans/Weavers of Handicrafts and Handloom Department.

xii. Export Subsidy Scheme.

These initiatives have led to the receipt of investment proposals worth Rs 88,915 crore with employment generation potential of more than 3.98 lakh.

Since 2019 -20 (till October 2023), an investment of Rs 5,319 Crore has been materialized. This has boosted the local economy and employment opportunities by increasing investment.





# DEVELOPMENT IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

The Government has a policy of zero tolerance against terrorism. The approach of the Government is to dismantle the terror ecosystem. Security measures are being strengthened to sustain peace and stability in J&K. The strategies adopted and actions taken for containing acts of terror incidents in Jammu and Kashmir include:

- i. Round-the-clock nakas at strategic points.
- ii. Group security in the form of static guards.
- iii. Intensified Cordon and Search Operations (CASO) to effectively deal with the challenges posed by terrorist organizations.
- iv. Sharing of intelligence inputs on a real-time basis, amongst all security forces, operating in Jammu and Kashmir.
- v. Day & night area domination.
- vi. Security arrangements through appropriate deployment.
- vii. Preventive operations involve identifying the strategic supporters of terrorism and initiating investigations to expose their mechanisms of aiding and abetting terrorism.
- viii. Identifications of vulnerable spots to prevent terrorist attacks on civilians. Besides, sensitizing men on the ground about the issue and initiation of measures to defeat the machination of terrorists or their mentors.

The above-mentioned strategies and actions have led to a decline in the number of terror incidents in J&K. Details are as under

Description	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 (upto 15th November)
Terrorist Initiated Incidents	228	153	126	129	125	41
Encounters	189	102	118	100	117	44
Civilians killed	55	44	38	41	31	13
Security personnel killed in action	91	80	63	42	32	20

The Government is fully committed to the overall development of Jammu and Kashmir and has taken several measures that have significantly boosted the development of Jammu & Kashmir. Details are under

- 1. 53 projects are being implemented for Rs 58,477 crores by 15 Ministries/Departments in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir under the Prime Minister’s Development Package-2015 in sectors such as Roads, Power, Health, Education, Tourism, Agriculture, Skill Development etc. has been accelerated. 32 projects have been completed/substantially completed.
- 2. 7 New Government Medical Colleges have been operationalized. 28 B.Sc. Nursing Colleges and 19 B.Sc. Paramedic Colleges have been added. 800 more MBBS Seats have been added totaling 1300. Presently 664 PG Medical Seats are available out of which 297

PG Seats were added after 2019. 1870 B.Sc. Nursing Seats and 125 M.Sc. Nursing Seats added in Nursing Colleges.

3. The academic session of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Jammu has been made operational while the work of AIIMS, Kashmir is going on at optimum speed. IIT Jammu/IIM Jammu institutes are functional. 50 new degree colleges have also been established.

4. Under Hydro Power generation, MoUs signed for the development of 05 Mega Projects, namely Sawlakote (1856 MW), Dul Hasti stage-II (258 MW), URI -I stage -II (240 MW), Kirthai (930 MW), and Rattle (850 MW) with a total capacity of 4134 MW. Investment worth Rs 34,882 Cr to flow in J&K.

5. Smart Pre-paid metering is under implementation in three phases in J&K. 4.21 lakh smart meters have already been installed.

6. Under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), 6,912 Km. road length constructed during the last three years.

7. A new milestone has been achieved by the up-gradation of the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway by way of constructing an 8.45 Km long twin tube Qazigund-Banihal tunnel at an estimated cost of Rs 3,127 crore thereby reducing the average time from Jammu to Srinagar from 8-10 hours to 5-6 hours, reducing logistic cost of goods and services to the valley.

8. The Air Traffic to and from J&K has been doubled post-2019. Night landing facilities have been provided in Jammu and Srinagar.

9. Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, about 13.54 Lakh rural households covering all villages provided with Tap Water Connections since the start of the Mission i.e., August 2019 including 5.75 lakh covered before 2019.

10. During 2022-23, an investment of Rs 2153.45 crore has been realized in the industrial sector. In the current financial year, Rs 2079.76 Crore investment has been realized upto October 2023.

11. Handloom and Handicraft Exports doubled from Rs 563 Crore in 2021-22 to Rs 1116.37 Crore in 2022-23.

12. Around 2900 hectares of area covered high-density plantations which include 320 hectares for apples and 2400 for sub-tropical fruits which will substantially increase the income of apple growers besides providing a suitable market.

13. PM Kisan saturated to eligible farmers of J&K. An amount of Rs 2,517.08 crore was credited directly into the bank accounts of 12.55 lakh eligible farmers. 12.83 lakh farmers benefitted under the KCC.

14. Kashmiri saffron got GI Tagging for its uniqueness, which is being promoted on national and international platforms. Saffron Park has been established at Dusoo Pampore as a one-stop centre for saffron-related linkages.

15. Tourism Development: The 3rd Tourism Working meeting of G20 was held from 22nd May to 24th May at Srinagar. This event has placed the UT of J&K on the Global stage and served as a significant milestone in the progress and development of tourism in UT of J&K.





16.

In the recent past, the Tourism Sector in J&K has done exceptionally well and witnessed unprecedented growth in the year 2022, as more than 1.88 crore tourists have visited the UT of Jammu and Kashmir. This positive trend has continued during the current calendar year as 1.85 crore tourist arrivals till October 23 have been witnessed.
17.

Health Sector: “AB-PMJAY-SEHAT SCHEME” a universal health insurance scheme provides free-of-cost insurance coverage to all the residents of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir upto Rs 5.00 lakh per family on a floater basis. 82.22 lakh beneficiaries have been registered under this scheme. A total of 8.87 lakh beneficiaries availed benefits under the scheme and claims paid amounting to ₹1,325 Cr.
18.

Under Pre, Post and Merit cum Means Minority Scholarship Schemes, the Govt. has been able to register a 210% increase in coverage from 1,43,154 (2018-19) to 3,00,651 students in 2022-23. Similarly, a 169% increase in coverage of Scheduled Cast Scholarships has been realized with coverage of 63,550 students in 2022-23 as against 8250 in 2018-19.
19.

The Tribal Affairs Department has done significant work in various sectors related to tribals including Health, Education, art & culture, lifestyle, literature, infrastructure development, livelihood etc. 8 new hostel buildings, 200 smart schools, coaching facilities, 6 Eklavya Model Residential Schools, skill development to 2000 tribal and scholarship to 46,000 students provided by the Tribal Affairs Department.
20.

Employment Generation and Recruitment: The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has taken concrete steps to fill all the vacancies available across various departments in the UT of J&K. 31,830 selections (Gazetted and Non-Gazetted) have been finalized by the recruiting agencies after the year 2019 till date. The remarkable aspects of these recruitments have been transparency and fairness.
21.

Implementation of self-employment schemes across various sectors to establish sustainable income-generating ventures for unemployed youth. A total of 7.4 lakh self-employment/livelihood opportunities generated/strengthened since the year

- 2021-22 till date.
22.

Youth: More than 62 lakh participation was witnessed in different sports activities in the year 2022-23 compared to less than two lakhs during 2018-19.
23.

More than 5 lakh youth are associated with Mission Youth. Mission Youth initiative was awarded the PM Award for Innovation recently.
24.

Art and Culture: The Government of J&K is continuously realigning resources and strategizing efforts to promote long-term sustainable preservation, conservation and restoration of cultural, architectural, ethnic, linguistic and artistic values of J&K.
25.

The Government of J&K has taken various IT initiatives such as M-Seva, digital Village Centre, e-UNNAT portal etc. to provide various G2C online services at the doorstep without visiting the Government offices in person and dealing with public officials in public places.
26.

100% saturation of various schemes being implemented in UT of J&K. The Government has been working to provide access to the basic amenities of life such as portable water, affordable health care, road connectivity, and financial support to vulnerable groups, to realize equality of opportunity and equity of life outcomes through various flagship schemes. Innovative use of technology has become a non for targeted intervention to ensure demographic dividends do not leave out the marginalized and vulnerable sections of society.
- The Government of India has notified a New Central Sector Scheme for Industrial Development of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on 19.02.2021 with an outlay of Rs 28,400 Cr to boost industrial development. In addition, J&K Industrial Policy 2021-30, J&K Industrial Land Allotment Policy 2021-30, J&K Private Industrial Estate Development Policy 2021-30, J&K Wool Processing, Handicrafts and Handloom Policy 2020 have also been notified and various initiatives have been taken by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir for making the UT an investor-friendly destination. Year-wise details of the investments are as under:

Year	Amount of investment (Rs In Crores)
2019-20	296.64
2020-21	412.74
2021-22	376.76
2022-23	2153.00
2023-24 (upto 31st October 2023)	2079.76
Total	5319.35



# STEPS BY GOVERNMENT FOR PROMOTING GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY IN URBAN SECTOR

As per the 12th Schedule of the Constitution of India, urban planning is a State subject. The government of India supplements the efforts of the States through schematic interventions/advisories. It provides financial and technical support to the States. State Town Planning Departments and Urban Development Authorities act as city and state-level urban anchors.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India has been taking several initiatives to promote growth and sustainability in the urban sector.

Swachh Bharat Mission is accelerating change for safe sanitation, and waste management with a focus on door-to-door collection/segregation, waste processing etc.

Smart Cities Mission aims at promoting cities that provide core infrastructure, clean and sustainable environment and give a decent quality of life to their citizens through the application of 'smart solutions'. The focus is on sustainable and inclusive development through the creation of replicable models which act as lighthouses to other aspiring cities.

National Urban Livelihood Mission aims to reduce poverty and vulnerability of the urban poor households by enabling them to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities. The mission also aims at providing shelters equipped with essential services to the urban homeless in a phased manner and would also address the livelihood concerns of the urban street vendors.

PM SVANidhi scheme is a special micro-credit facility launched by the ministry for providing affordable loans to street vendors.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Mission intends to provide housing in urban areas. The Mission addresses urban housing shortage among EWS/ LIG and MIG categories including slum dwellers by ensuring pucca houses. It provides Central Assistance to the implementing agencies through States/Union Territories (UTs) and Central Nodal Agencies (CNAs) for providing houses to all eligible families/beneficiaries.

AMRUT Mission, Under Sub-Scheme on

'Formulation of GIS-based Master Plan for 461 AMRUT Cities selected, final GIS Database Creation has been created for 443 towns, Draft GIS based Master Plan has been prepared 330 towns out of that final GIS based Master Plans have been notified for 180 towns. 77 Training programs were organised and 2900 officers were trained. Under AMRUT 2.0, a Sub Scheme for Formulation of GIS-based Master Plans of Class-II Towns with a population of 50,000 - 99,999' was also launched for 675 towns with a total outlay of Rs 631.13 Cr. This Sub- Scheme is in the initial stage of implementation. A Pilot Scheme for the preparation of Town Planning Scheme (TPS) and Local Area Plans (LAP) was launched under AMRUT for 25 cities. The total allocation was 50 Cr. All 25 cities have completed the preliminary stage.

To incentivize States to undertake urban planning reforms, two schemes were launched:

Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment 2022-23 – Part – VI (Urban Planning Reforms) (allocation - Rs 6000 Cr): The reform components include Modernization of Building Bylaws, Adoption of Transferrable Development Rights (TDR), Implementation of Local Area Plans (LAP) and Town Planning Schemes (TPS), Implementation of Transit-oriented Development (ToD), Creation of Sponge Cities, Removing Taxation for running the Buses for Public Transport. Funds amounting to Rs 4093.16 Cr were released by the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance to 12 States.

Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment 2023-24 – Part – III (Urban Planning Reforms) (allocation – Rs 15000 Cr) The reform components include the Augmentation of human resources for strengthening the urban planning ecosystem, Implementation of the Town Planning Scheme (TPS)/Land Pooling Scheme, Modernization of Building Bylaws, Promoting in-situ slum rehabilitation, Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), Transferable Development Rights as planning tool, Strengthening natural ecosystems of urban areas through urban planning.





# SURVEY ON LABOUR POPULATION IN THE COUNTRY

The data on Employment and Unemployment is collected through the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) which is conducted by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI). As per the latest available Annual PLFS Reports, the estimated Worker Population Ratio (WPR) on usual status for persons of age 15 years & above (State-wise) is annexed.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment launched the eShram portal on 26.08.2021 for registration and creation of a comprehensive National Database of Unorganized Workers. It allows an unorganised worker to register himself or herself on the portal on a self-declaration basis in about 400 occupations. As on 30th July, 2023, more than 28.98 crore unorganized workers have registered on the eShram portal.

Employment generation coupled with improving employability is the priority of the Government. Accordingly, the Government of India has taken various steps for generating employment in the country.

Investments in Infrastructure and productive capacity have a large multiplier impact on growth and employment. The budget of 2023-24 proposed to increase capital investment outlay steeply for the third year in a row by 33 per cent to Rs 10 lakh crore, which would be 3.3 per cent of GDP. This substantial increase in recent years is central to the government's efforts to enhance growth potential and job creation.

The Government of India has announced the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package to provide stimulus to businesses and to mitigate the adverse impact of Covid 19. Under this package, the Government has provided fiscal stimulus of more than Rupees Twenty-Seven lakh crore. This package comprises various long-term schemes/programmes/policies for making the country self-reliant and creating employment opportunities.

The Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) was launched with effect from 1st October 2020 to incentivize employers for the creation of new employment and restoration of loss of employment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The terminal date for the registration of beneficiaries was 31.03.2022. Since the inception of the scheme, till 18.07.2023, benefits have been provided to 60.44 lakh beneficiaries under the scheme.

The government has been implementing Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbharNidhi (PM SVANidhi Scheme) since June 01, 2020, to facilitate collateral-free working capital loans to street vendors to restart their businesses, which were adversely impacted during the Covid-19 pandemic. As on July 13, 2023, 38.30 lakh beneficiaries have availed of loans under the PM SVANidhi scheme.

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) was launched by the Government to facilitate self-employment. Under PMMY, collateral-free loans upto Rs 10 lakh, are extended to micro/small business enterprises and to individuals to enable them to set up or expand their business activities. As on 07.07.2023, more than 42.29 crore loan accounts have



been sanctioned under the scheme.

The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme is being implemented by the Government with an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore, for 5 years starting from 2021-22 which has the potential to create 60 lakh new jobs.

PM GatiShakti is a transformative approach to economic growth and sustainable development. The approach is driven by seven engines, namely, Roads, Railways, Airports, Ports, Mass Transport, Waterways and Logistics Infrastructure. This approach is powered by Clean Energy and Sabka Prayas leading to huge job and entrepreneurial opportunities for all.

The Government of India is encouraging various projects involving substantial investment and public expenditure on schemes like the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) and Deen Dayal Antodaya Yojana - National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) etc. for employment generation.

Further, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is implementing the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) to enhance the employability of youth.

Besides these initiatives, various flagship programmes of the Government such as Make in India, Start-up India, Stand-up India, Digital India, Housing for All etc. are also oriented towards generating employment opportunities.





**JKPI Publications**



# E-Governance in India: Digital transformation for transparent and inclusive governance



**NEHA AGGARWAL**

**T**echnology is the art of revealing the latent potentialities and unimaginable possibilities that were incomprehensible at some point in human history. It has always existed in some form and has since been an ever-changing phenomenon. This act of revelation is a process of transforming ideas into a comprehensible form. One of the attributes of technology is its power to transcend the physical, social, economic, or other forms of barriers. Going beyond those barriers with the aid of technology has fostered freedom and a spirit of inquiry in humans. A variety of technological tools and techniques have shaped, facilitated, and governed human societies or political communities. One such revelation is the interception of digital technology, changing the social networking pattern of societies, physical interaction among people and governance agencies, and global interdependence among economies and cultures. This digital transformation is in itself a paradigm shift in the way individuals, societies, states, and global actors interact and engage.

With digital interception, e-governance has heralded a transition in societies, changing the culture and attitude of governance, functioning, and democratizing information networking. Digital transformation has revolutionized the way governments perform

different functions.

Globalization, digitalization, and ICT (information, communication, and technology) are the buzzwords of the 21st century. In the era of fast-paced digital age, governments cannot afford to stay in isolationism. Both global and domestic factors constrain the choice of governments to undertake digital transformation to enhance public service delivery, improve transparency, and streamline the over-bureaucratized administrative processes. E-governance harnesses the newly emerging technologies and develops the potential to governance better. To make that happen, the policy must be designed in a manner that includes e-governance strategies. These strategies ought to support the needs of the people they serve and be in line with national objectives. Digital transformation describes how digital technology is integrated into different areas of a business, changing its operations and the value it provides to its stakeholders. For governments, this implies implementing state-of-the-art technologies to satisfy citizens changing needs.

The key components of e-governance are online services, open data, digital identity, blockchain, and data analytics while the key drivers of digital transformation in governance are expectations of citizens, cost efficiency, transparency, accountability, data, and analytics. Even the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) sought to reform and restructure the existing public governance institutions. Formed in 2005, the second ARC developed a comprehensive blueprint to overhaul the public administrative system. It presented 15 reports to the government of India, addressing some of the important areas such as RTI, governance ethics, local governance, terrorism, public administration, e-governance, financial management, and more. This was a major landmark report, however, e-governance as a new form of governance had been long underway.



Deepening and Strengthening e-governance

E-governance in India has come a long way since its inception. The establishment of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) played a pivotal role in providing the necessary technical infrastructure. The early focus was on the computerization of government data, but the real turning point came with the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006. The NeGP was a comprehensive framework that aimed to provide e-governance services to citizens, businesses, and government employees. It categorized projects into Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) covering various sectors, including land records, public distribution systems, and income tax. This plan set the stage for the rapid expansion of e-governance initiatives across the country.

The ‘Digital India’ program, launched in 2015, aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge-based economy by ensuring digital access, digital inclusion, digital empowerment, and bridging the digital divide. Its key objectives include strengthening digital infrastructure, delivering services digitally, and promoting digital financial inclusion. As a result of dedicated digital drives across the country, internet subscriptions have increased by 150% in both rural and urban areas. As per the data, 95.76 million internet subscribers were added in rural areas, while 92.81 million were added in urban areas between 2019-2021. Digilocker which was launched under this programme has witnessed over 16 crore registrations. Users can share and access any documents and certificates digitally since its launch.

Pradhan Mantri Grameen Digital Sakshata Abhiyan (PMGDSA) was launched in 2017 and intended and designed to promote digital literacy in rural India. Unambiguously, the PMGDSA has improvised accessibility, connectivity, affordability, and inclusivity at the pan-India level. PMGDSA has trained 5.96 crore candidates and certified 4.44 crore students in digital literacy which makes it world’s the largest digital literacy programme. So far 6.92 crore candidates have been registered under this programme. What cannot be ignored or underestimated is that it was the digital technology that accelerated and helped run the world’s largest and most efficient COVID-19 vaccination program initiatives in the country. To count

here is the role of the National Digital Health Mission and National Digital Health Blueprint which have played an instrumental role in strengthening the healthcare delivery mechanism. Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission-like initiatives have further given propulsion to the digitization of Health systems in India. Now what we are witnessing is India leading the world in digital payments with 89.5 million transactions in 2022 with UPI. The data suggests that India accounted for 46% of global real-time payments in the year. While the Latin American country i.e. Brazil was second on the list followed by China, Thailand, and South Korea. This is the advantage of the e-governance. In addition to this accessibility, efficiency, transparency, accountability, and cost-savings are some of the major benefits of e-governance. No one can deny the fact that India is the world’s undisputed largest digitally connected democracy with 830 million Internet users. Digital transactions have grown manifold in recent years. India is leading in real-time digital payments. Initiatives such as the Digital India program, Pradhan Mantri Grameen Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDSA), and Unified Payments Interface (UPI), etc. have played an instrumental role in transforming India into a major player in the digital economy.

Programs such as aspirational district schemes and telecom development plans have enhanced accessibility, affordability, connectivity, and inclusivity throughout India. Underprivileged communities in rural areas have benefited from programs like the Common Service Centers (CSCs), which have offered services including banking, e-governance, education, and healthcare. CSCs are offering government and business services in digital mode in rural areas through Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs). Over 400 digital services are being offered by these CSCs. So far, 5.31 Lakh CSCs are functional (including urban & rural areas) across the country, out of which, 4.20 Lakh CSCs are functional at the Gram Panchayat level. A new initiative was launched by the government called Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG). It is meant to provide government services to citizens through mobile. More than 1,570 government services and over 22,000 bill payment services are made available at UMANG. A National Single Sign-on platform called Meri Pehchaan was launched to provide citizens ease of access to government portals. At the same time under Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), Rs 24.3

Table 1: Pace of digitalization: a cross country perspective (% CAGR in the ICT sector)

Country	2001 to 2010	2011 to 2019	2001 to 2019
China	18.00	11.00	14.70
India	11.20	10.60	10.80
South Korea	6.10	2.50	4.70
Taiwan	5.70	3.30	4.40
Brazil	9.70	-2.10	4.30
Germany	2.00	4.10	3.10
EU	2.60	3.20	2.80
France	1.80	3.00	2.20
United States	-3.30	6.80	1.20
United Kingdom	-1.30	3.90	1.20
Japan	-0.70	-0.30	-0.40

Source (basic data) : European Commission, PREDICT database



lakh crore has been disbursed through the DBT platform. In the sector of education, we find the Diksha platform. It is a national-level educational platform. It helps both teachers and students to participate, contribute, and leverage a common platform to achieve learning goals at the national level. Today 7,633 courses are available and more than 15 crore enrolments have been done as of 27th July 2022.

As per the European Commission, the pace of digitalization in India was the fastest among most major economies between 2011 and 2019. According to them between 2011 and 2019, digitalization in India grew neck to neck with China at 11%. While comparing it with developed countries, India's pace of digitalization has been very high in the recent past. It was more pronounced over the period from 2011 to 2019 (Table 1). The pace of digitalization as measured by CAGR in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector during this period has been as high as 10.6% with only China exceeding India's growth marginally.

### Challenges to E-Governance

E-governance capabilities of a nation are measured the world over by the UN e-government survey rankings. In the year 2022, India ranked 105 out of 193 countries. Its E-Government Development Index (EGDI) composite score was 0.59 in the same year. India slipped down from 100th place in the year 2020. Despite the numerous benefits, digital transformation and e-governance come with challenges. India still faces a significant digital divide, with many citizens lacking access to the internet and digital devices. Bridging this gap is crucial for the success of e-governance initiatives. Furthermore, another challenge is the issue of data security. Ensuring the security and privacy of citizens' data is a paramount concern. The government must invest in robust cybersecurity measures to protect sensitive information. Coupled with this challenge is the issue of creating and supporting technological infrastructure. Maintaining and upgrading the necessary technological infrastructure in a vast and diverse country like India is a continuous challenge. Albeit all this we cannot undermine the culture that organizations and individuals have been routinized and internalized. That is

one of the primary reasons why there is consistent resistance to change. The transition to e-governance can face resistance from government employees and citizens who are accustomed to traditional methods. Training and awareness programs are essential interventions.

While these challenges will of course impede the deepening of e-governance, the future of e-governance in India looks promising. With the increasing availability of affordable smartphones and expanding internet connectivity, more citizens will be able to access digital government services. As artificial intelligence and blockchain technologies mature, they can further enhance the efficiency and security of e-governance initiatives. Today age is the age of Artificial Intelligence and is driven by data. The newly emerging technologies can be used to create automation of mundane administrative work. The success of such initiatives would rely on the ability of governments to create inclusion.

### Conclusion

Digital transformation and e-governance represent a critical shift in the way governments operate and deliver services. As technology continues to advance, governments must adapt to meet the growing expectations of their citizens. By embracing digital transformation and e-governance, governments can not only improve their efficiency but also foster transparency, accountability, and citizen-centric governance. It's a path towards a brighter, more connected future where public services are just a click away. Digitization of government processes can reduce operational costs, allowing governments to allocate resources more effectively. Furthermore, digital systems make it easier to monitor government activities, ensuring greater transparency and accountability. Finally, the ability to collect, analyze, and leverage data effectively is crucial for informed decision-making in government. Digital transformation enables the efficient management of vast datasets. In this regard, India has shown phenomenal growth in digital technology in the recent past. However, the need for digital literacy is still a distant dream that needs collective efforts from the government and a diverse set of stakeholders.



No one can deny the fact that India is the world's undisputed largest digitally connected democracy with 830 million Internet users. Digital transactions have grown manifold in recent years. India is leading in real-time digital payments. Initiatives such as the Digital India program, Pradhan Mantri Grameen Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDSA), and Unified Payments Interface (UPI), etc. have played an instrumental role in transforming India into a major player in the digital economy.





# Sustainability education in Kashmir: A path to environmental resilience



SEMRAN PARVAIZ

Climate change is an unprecedented global threat that requires immediate attention and coordinated action worldwide. Rising temperatures, sea-level rise, and adverse weather conditions are all effects of climate change that profoundly impact our world and its inhabitants. In these challenging times, it is impossible to overstate how important it is to teach sustainability to promote natural solutions to climate change.

Nature-based solutions, or NbS, offer hope to those striving to counteract climate change. Nature’s power is harnessed in various ways to address environmental problems such as storing carbon, restoring habitats, and managing resources in a manner that does not harm the environment. When it comes to Kashmir, a region with its unique environmental challenges, teaching about sustainability becomes crucial in supporting NbS as a practical and effective strategy to combat climate change.

### Kashmir’s Environmental Challenges

Known as the “Paradise on Earth,” Kashmir boasts some of the most beautiful scenery globally. Nevertheless, it grapples with numerous natural problems that jeopardize the health of its people and the purity of its landscapes. Kashmir’s environmental issues, including deforestation, changing weather patterns, water scarcity, and loss of

species, signify a broader global climate problem. The melting of the Himalayan glaciers stands out as one of the most critical challenges in the region, impacting millions of nearby residents. The diminishing glaciers reduce the available water and elevate the risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), posing a severe threat to the local population and their means of survival.

Unregulated tree cutting in Kashmir has led to soil erosion and the loss of wildlife refuges. Additionally, it has resulted in a decline in the area’s ability to store carbon. The Kashmir valley urgently needs to embrace eco-friendly methods and solutions, as these environmental issues trigger a chain reaction effect on local businesses and the health of the populace.

### Sustainability Education: A Global Perspective

Teaching people about sustainability serves as an effective means to draw attention to Kashmir’s environmental problems. This is because sustainability embodies a global perspective rather than a local one. By integrating sustainability into school curricula, we can equip the next generation with the knowledge and skills necessary to care for the planet.

A primary goal of sustainability education is to cultivate students’ sense of duty and awareness of the world. To achieve this, individuals must learn about the effects of climate change, the significance of biodiversity, and the interconnectedness of ecosystems. Sharing this information with teachers in Kashmir may inspire a new group of individuals to prioritize environmental concerns.

Students can also delve into Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and comprehend its crucial role in mitigating climate change through environmental education. They can gain insights into methods like sustainable farming, restoring marsh areas, and planting trees, which prove especially beneficial in addressing environmental issues in the region. Through the proper application of NbS, education



becomes a bridge between theory and practice, encouraging students to actively engage in environmental protection.

While the primary goal of sustainability education in Kashmir is to address local environmental problems, it is equally essential to consider its implications for global climate action. The far-reaching impacts of climate change transcend boundaries, emphasizing the need for collective action.

An increasing number of individuals are recognizing the utility of NbS in the fight against climate change. Nature-based solutions have the potential to foster biodiversity, store carbon, and shield vulnerable populations from the adverse effects of climate change. Examples of NbS include reforestation, wetland restoration, and the creation of public green spaces.

## How to Implement Sustainability Education in Kashmir

A well-thought-out plan is necessary for green education in Kashmir to fully realize its potential. Several actions can be taken to implement it, including:

- **Integrating Sustainability Education in School Curriculum:** Sustainability should be a fundamental part of the formal curriculum at all education levels, from elementary school to college. Instead of sporadically mentioning sustainability, this integration should involve specific classes and modules.
- **Government Should Train Teachers:** Teachers need training in sustainable knowledge to effectively communicate tough environmental issues to their students. Teachers play a pivotal role in students' lives, and their ability to inspire is crucial.
- **Engagement with the Community:** The community should be involved in learning about sustainability, both within and outside the school. Students can apply their knowledge by participating in neighborhood clean-ups, tree planting campaigns, and other environmental projects.
- **Focus on Developing Partnerships:** Sustainability education programs can be enhanced by collaborating with authorities, governmental organizations, and environmental groups. Through these partnerships, students can gain access to tools, information, and opportunities to contribute to meaningful projects.
- **Continuous Monitoring of Programs:** It is essential to regularly assess the effectiveness of sustainability education programs. This involves tracking changes in students' knowledge, feelings, and actions regarding sustainability and Nature-based Solutions (NbS). Regular evaluations ensure ongoing improvement and adaptation.

## Benefits of Sustainability Education in Kashmir

Sustainability education in Kashmir yields numerous advantages for the environment, the economy, and society as a whole. Firstly, it is imperative for environmental conservation. Sustainability education has the potential to transform individuals into proactive citizens engaged in conservation efforts. As they gain knowledge about the significance of biodiversity and ecosystem services, they are more likely to support actions preserving natural habitats and species.

Furthermore, understanding the role of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in climate resilience can invigorate communities in Kashmir. This is particularly crucial as the region is highly susceptible to weather hazards such as Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) and unpredictable weather patterns.

Likewise, imparting knowledge about sustainability can open up new business opportunities in Kashmir. By educating individuals about ecotourism, farming practices, and sustainable forestry, students can contribute to the growth of environmentally friendly businesses in the area. Presently, hundreds of people in Kashmir are generating substantial income through eco-tourism activities like bird watching and hiking.

Additionally, teaching people about sustainability serves as a means to foster a sense of global citizenship among students.

Educating them about the interconnectedness of environmental problems and global perspectives enables students in Kashmir to actively participate in the global effort to combat climate change and protect the Earth.

## Challenges and Potential Solutions

There are many compelling reasons to teach sustainability in Kashmir, but several challenges must be addressed before successful implementation. Some of these problems that may be encountered during the process include:

- **Lack of Sufficient Funding:**

Kashmir faces significant challenges in teaching sustainability due to a lack of resources. Many schools in the area encounter major issues such as inadequate teaching materials, technology, infrastructure, and a shortage of teachers. The execution of sustainability education programs is hindered because essential teaching tools are not readily available.

To resolve this issue, a collaborative effort is necessary to secure additional funding for Kashmir's school buildings. This involves ensuring that classes have the necessary tools and providing schools with access to the latest teaching aids. Collaboration with both government and non-government groups can significantly aid in organizing resources to address these gaps. Various initiatives, such as offering teacher training programs and creating textbooks specifically designed for teaching sustainability, can enhance the overall quality of education in the region.

- **Cultural Sensitivity:**

Kashmir boasts a rich cultural history deeply rooted in its traditions, beliefs, and traditional knowledge. For sustainability education to succeed and gain acceptance within the community, it must be sensitive to cultural differences and local values. Striking a balance between local information and ideas about making the world more sustainable is of paramount importance.

Education programs should incorporate input from local communities and elders, who have accumulated extensive knowledge about sustainable practices over many generations. Combining traditional methods with new ideas about sustainability can make sustainability education more beneficial for both students and the community.

Language is also a critical factor in accounting for cultural differences. Focusing on teaching sustainability in Kashmiri dialects eliminates language barriers, making it easier for more people to connect with and understand the concepts.

- **Resistance to Change:**

Resistance to adopting new teaching methods is a common obstacle, and environmental education is no exception. Administrators and teachers within the school system may resist new teaching approaches and lessons, while parents and community members may question the usefulness and value of environmental education.

To overcome this barrier, it's essential to raise awareness of the significance of sustainability education in addressing Kashmir's urgent environmental issues. Involving religious leaders and other influential figures in the community can help build trust and authority in these educational initiatives.

- **Government Support:**

For sustainability education programs to succeed, they require robust support and commitment from the government. Rules and regulations supporting sustainability education should be established in Kashmir's colleges, universities, and schools. These guidelines should outline clear objectives, curriculum standards, and recommendations for implementation.

Ensuring that these projects have adequate financial support and



resources is equally crucial. Collaboration between government agencies, non-government organizations, environmental experts, and schools is vital for planning and executing effective sustainability education programs. Government support can also be demonstrated through funding, prizes, and programs that acknowledge and reward schools and teachers dedicated to promoting sustainability.

• **Long-Term Commitment Challenges:**

Teaching sustainability is an ongoing process that demands dedication from all stakeholders; it is not a quick fix. Building a society that prioritizes environmental concerns and endures over time requires sustained effort and determination. Changing people’s attitudes and behaviors to be more environmentally friendly can take years or even generations.

To maintain long-term commitment, it is imperative to regularly evaluate the progress of sustainability education programs and implement any necessary changes. Including sustainability in the overall ideas and philosophies of schools and Kashmiri society as a whole is crucial for fostering enduring commitment to environmental education.

**Conclusion**

As a response to the global climate crisis, sustainability education has emerged as a potent tool to advocate for nature-based solutions and heighten awareness about the imperative to safeguard the environment. In Kashmir, where environmental issues are intricately linked to complex social and political circumstances, the inclusion of sustainability education represents a beacon of hope.

If schools in Kashmir integrate sustainability into their curriculum, students may evolve into catalysts for change, actively engaged in protecting the environment and enhancing global resilience to climate change. Sustainability education not only fosters economic growth but also safeguards the environment, cultivating individuals into global citizens.

For Kashmir to secure a robust and enduring future, education is paramount. The region can address the pressing challenges posed by climate change and harness the potential of natural solutions by taking proactive measures and increasing awareness. Teaching sustainability transcends being merely a means to achieve another objective; it stands as the key to a more prosperous and stable future for Kashmir and the entire world.

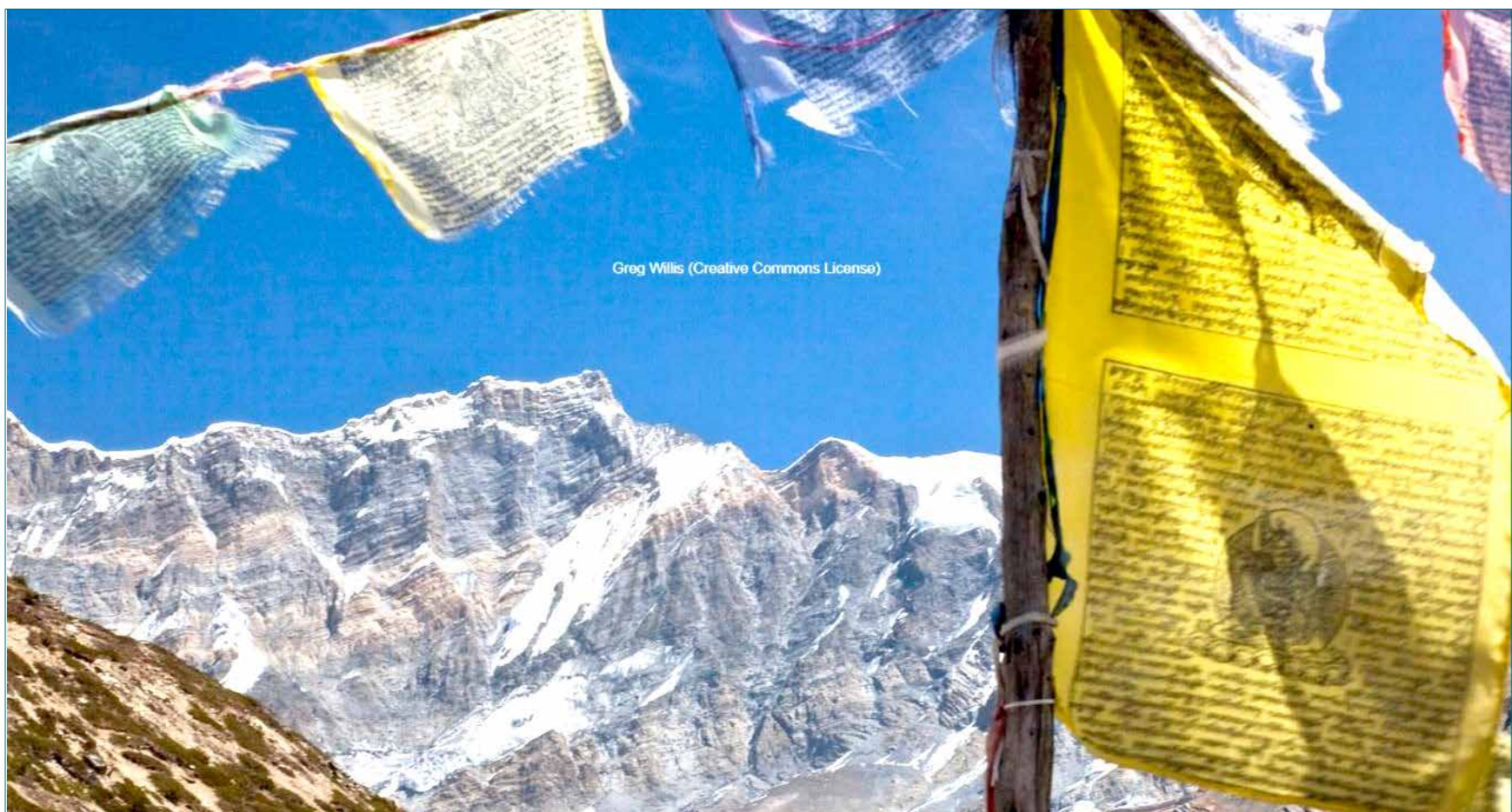


Unregulated tree cutting in Kashmir has led to soil erosion and the loss of wildlife refuges. Additionally, it has resulted in a decline in the area’s ability to store carbon. The Kashmir valley urgently needs to embrace eco-friendly methods and solutions, as these environmental issues trigger a chain reaction effect on local businesses and the health of the populace.





# Balancing progress and preservation: Environmental crisis in the Himalayas and Char Dham project



## PARVAIZ YOUSUF

**T**he Himalayan mountain range is known for its mountains and wildlife worldwide. However, this beautiful mountain range is often affected by humans in one way or another, be it in Kashmir or any other part of the Himalayas. They have been impacted in one way or another. One example that can be given is the collapse of a tunnel in Uttarakhand.

Recently, upon the collapse of the tunnel, many people were stuck. From the sinking of Joshimath to storms and landslides, the area has to deal with a story that shows how dangerous it is to alter the Himalayas. Experts believe that the Char Dham National Highway Project is at the heart of this problem. It represents a more significant problem, which is how an unsustainable model of growth is hurting the Himalayan ecosystem. Let's discuss more on the topic here.

### **Understanding the Char Dham National Highway Project**

The Char Dham National Highway Project was started in 2016 with the good intention of making it easier to get to Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri, all of which are important religious sites. Sadly, it has turned into a huge environmental disaster. There have been a lot of shocking mistakes, legal

mismanagement, and a shocking lack of concern for established environmental standards in this huge project, which cost 12 billion rupees and covered 889 kilometers.

The project, which started as a way to make it easier for many pilgrims to go on their spiritual trips, has turned into a story of careless development that is doing terrible things to the Himalayan ecosystem. There have been a lot of mistakes in this project, which was supposed to bring people together. These mistakes started at the lawhouses where this was allowed. Although the Char Dham National Highway Project was planned with the best of intentions, it has now become a terrible example of what happens when growth doesn't take environmental responsibility into account.

### **The Associated Legal and Environmental Norms**

Concerns are raised about the project's complicated legal path, as changes and uses of existing laws are seen to be easing its progress. Notably, the Supreme Court, which is supposed to protect environmental standards, was involved in letting people get around the need for environmental effect assessments for projects that go beyond 100 km. The clear lack of enforcement for following environmental rules shows a troubling truth: growth is valued more than preservation. Once more, the Char Dham National Highway Project shows a systemic flaw in which the need to protect the environment gives way to the economic growth rush.

### **How Forests Were Affected**

The Char Dham National Highway Project has done a terrible amount of damage to the environment in the Himalayas. A huge area of about 600 hectares of valuable forest land has been cut down without any care. Moreover, the Lesser Himalayan Range has seen the cutting of over 56,000 trees. This living mountain range was already prone to collapse, but now that its natural defenses have been taken away, it is more vulnerable than ever. The Char Dham



project's ruthless growth, driven by an unwavering desire for progress, has turned once-forests into barren landscapes. This has created landslide zones that can cause huge human losses. Uttarakhand is known for its biodiversity, but this unchecked growth has left scars that can't be fixed. The woods that have been cut down and lost their diverse wildlife are proof of environmental destruction done in the name of progress.

The constant throwing of trash into the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda rivers, which are thought to be the sources of the Ganga and the Yamuna, is also very bad for the environment. Getting rid of debris without thinking causes natural blockages. This changes the paths of these big rivers and poses a threat to northern India's water security. The government's silence clearly shows a lack of concern for the delicate balance that keeps these important river ecosystems alive. As these waterways cut through the Himalayas, their health is very important for both the areas they flow through and the millions of people who live downstream. Not addressing the effects of dumping trash shows a narrow-mindedness that threatens not only the balance of these rivers' ecosystems but also the people who live along their banks.

## Char Dham Railway Project Adding Fuel to the Fire

Along with the environmental problem that the Char Dham National Highway Project has caused, there is also the Rs.75,000 crore Char Dham Railway Project, which is also very big. With its large-scale building of many tunnels, this railway project worsens the already serious environmental problem in the Himalayas. What is most disturbing is that the unique geology of the area doesn't seem to be taken into account—the tubes are still being built even though the ground is unstable.

Experts say that the constant tunnelling and the presence of hydroelectric power plants in the area caused Joshimath to sink terribly. This is a sad example of the environmental damage that has been caused. Unfortunately, the recent tunnel collapse near Barkot is not an isolated event. Instead, it is a sign of a more significant problem: unplanned growth in the unstable Himalayan terrain. The fact that both road and train projects are attacking the area in different ways shows how important it is to rethink development strategies. This happens when conservation is kept aside, and more priority is given to development.

## Silkyara Tunnel Collapse and an Engineering Mess

The recent failure of the Silkyara tunnel is a powerful example of the systemic engineering chaos that comes with such huge projects. The fact that fragile rock forms were not considered during excavation shows that geologists have a lot to learn. This fundamental lack of knowledge not only highlights a major flaw in the planning stages but also makes us question the government's dedication to managing the Himalayas' complex geological landscape.

Over 70% of the job is already done, which is shockingly high. The damage is nothing short of extensive. This collapse is a scary sign of how the government is trying to control the dangerous Himalayan landscape. What started as an ambitious plan to improve connections has, unfortunately, turned into a monument to recklessness that needs to be looked at right away and fixed.

## Preserving Uttarakhand's Delicate Ecosystem

As the workers stuck in the Silkyara tunnel were successfully evacuated, it is important to think carefully about what the Char Dham projects mean for society as a whole. The linked disasters, exemplified by the tunnel collapse, tell a story that calls for a major reevaluation of current development policies. The long list of mistakes, the complicated web of legal manipulations, and the harsh environmental effects paint a clear picture of how important it is to grow these fragile areas sustainably. As the rescue operation went on, it provided a sombre background to the bigger story of

unchecked progress in the Himalayas.

Uttarakhand's fragile environment is often compared to a jewel in the Himalayas' crown. We are now at a turning point that requires quick and strong actions to protect it. Even though the current Char Dham projects are causing damage to the environment, they should not just be seen as building projects. Instead, they should be seen as a key way to help people live in harmony with nature and technology. The same can be done in the Kashmir valley, which is also a part of the Himalayas and where similar projects have recently been completed. All future projects in the area should be guided by the lessons learned from the damage to the environment and the imbalances in the ecosystem.

It is very important to take a careful method where protecting Uttarakhand's natural beauty comes before ease of access. This Himalayan state, with its unique biodiversity and fragile landscapes, calls for a big change in the way we think about growth. Because the Char Dham projects had bad effects, they should be the start of a new age of responsible development that protects Uttarakhand's fragile ecosystems and keeps them alive for future generations. This way, this Himalayan gem will continue to shine brightly.

## What Can Be Done to Avoid Such Problems?

A lot is needed to make sure that development in the fragile Himalayan region is environmentally responsible. Comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) must be used first and foremost. These require a careful examination of all projects, no matter how big they are or how they fit into bigger plans. This all-encompassing evaluation includes the combined effects of projects that are linked, which helps us fully understand how they affect the environment.

Getting rid of legal flaws becomes another important part. Tough rules need to be put in place to close the gaps that allow projects to break environmental rules. This will make sure that the best environmental standards are always followed. Local groups and environmental experts need to be involved in the decision-making process. This is called "community engagement." Their deep knowledge of the area's ecosystem is a key part of promoting long-lasting and regionally appropriate growth.

Also, adaptive engineering methods must be used to make sure that solutions fit the Himalayas' unique geological features. To do this, slope vulnerability analyses must be done carefully, and engineering methods must be used that take into account natural elements that protect against landslides. Preservation efforts, such as reforestation programs and strong laws against illegal logging, are very important for reducing the damage caused by deforestation.

Similarly, river protection has become very important, and strict rules are needed to stop people from throwing trash into waterways without thinking. Complete plans must be made for getting rid of trash and protecting rivers. We also need to take into account how these actions will affect the region's important water sources further down the line. At the same time, it is very important to make people aware of how fragile the environment is in the Himalayas.

## Conclusion

In the face of the problems that climate change is causing around the world, the Himalayas need our attention. The unchecked ambitions for growth have already taken a toll on this beautiful piece of Himalayan land. A peaceful coexistence between development and nature should not just be a lofty goal but a guiding concept that is built into the future of the Himalayas. As we talk about the Himalayas, we must change the story of growth so that progress and protecting the Himalayan ecosystem are seen as the same thing. In this time of climate uncertainty, the Himalayas always remind us of responsible growth. Understanding and managing them properly would mean understanding Mother Nature and its core principles.



# The rising trend of Spot Admissions in Higher Education in Kashmir



## ZAHOOR AHMAD DAR

Education is a pivotal human resource that broadens human faculties and prepares an individual for life. It is a dream for those who want to excel in life. To realize this dream, one needs to attend a college or a university. Admission into a university is a crucial milestone in one's educational journey, marking the metamorphosis from a social and psychological being to higher emotional and cognitive abilities. Taking admission is the first formal process of transitioning from high school or a previous academic stage to higher education, setting the stage for personal and professional growth. The benefits of education are infinite provided it is a meaningful and transformational activity, extending beyond the classroom. Education is revered and taken seriously in Kashmir, like in any other progressive society. However, there is no denying the fact that the standard, quality, and value of education have eroded over time due to the commercialization of education, outdated curriculum, lack of teacher training and motivation, educational infrastructure, a lack of connection between knowledge and industry, and a bookish-centric approach. In this article, we will attempt to understand a new rising trend of 'On Spot Admission' in the educational sector, especially in higher education.

The gradual decline in admissions across several universities in the valley has raised legitimate questions about the existing education system, the types of courses offered, institutional perception, and the changing aspirations of the youth. The relevance

of offered courses is essential in determining how the course is evolving and adapting to the ever-changing world. The lack of relevance of a course can be a possible reason for the decline in admissions. Furthermore, institutional perception does impact the reputation of the institution. The present scenario offers a lens to understand the gravity of the matter, with diminishing institutional perception due to the fact that other universities are faring better, gaining recognition and prestige. This could severely impact local institutions, which need to evolve and upgrade their academic standards to remain an attractive destination for students. If desired revamping does not happen on time, it could accentuate the negative perception among students and parents.

What is also imperative to focus on here is the availability rather than the condensation of jobs in the market. With severely constrained job opportunities, a great number of youth in J&K are turning towards self-employment and entrepreneurship. The uncertainty of job placements also deepens the disillusionment among students from pursuing higher education, which is why they are turning towards entrepreneurship. Spot admissions could undermine the fundamental goals of higher education by compromising merit and the quality of education. Prospective students who are ailing due to the absence of hostel facilities and expensive course fees will see their anxieties exacerbate further. It also raises concerns about these entities' accountability. Universities that are unable to draw in students may have internal problems that require attention, hindering higher education in its ability to generate talented professionals and researchers, as well as in its ability to flourish, by a shortage of futuristic leaders, managers, and thinkers.

It is very important to underline the fact that UGC has mooted standard operating procedures to all central universities to fill up the vacant seats. UGC has instructed all central universities to avoid wasting seats. The Central University of Kashmir (CUK) has, for the second consecutive year, chosen the "spot admission" route to fill the vacant post-graduation (PG) seats in various departments.





In 2022, CUK filled many vacant seats for PG courses via the spot admission route. Again, this year (2023) saw the repetition of this trend, in fact, numbers are surging high, indicating concern and throwing questions on the credibility of the university. Recently, since a huge number of seats remained vacant, CUK issued a notice which read, “The candidates, who have either appeared or not appeared in the CUET-2023, can register for the available seats.” The notice further read that admission may be given to the students in the absence of a Common University Entrance Test (CUET) score. This is startling to see how a university is failing to attract students even from its catchment area. Therefore, the spot admission notice throws numerous questions and challenges for the realization of objectives in higher education.

The pertinent question is what implies a spot admission and how does it function. Spot admission means anyone can come and get admission. In this context, for instance, the Central University of Kashmir notification says that the candidates who have appeared or not appeared in the entrance test can apply for spot admissions, which means it is free for all. This move obviously compromises merit, and quality, and breeds academic mediocrity. CUK has issued a notification for the second consecutive year for spot admissions, indicating that the varsity has no takers, particularly in the department of convergent journalism. The situation came to the limelight last year (2022) when the university invited spot admissions from candidates who had not even applied for admissions or entrance examinations. It has been argued that the lack of availability of hostels for students, is a major reason for the decline in admissions. Similarly, Kashmir University (KU), which was once a cradle for higher learning, is plagued with an unprecedented crisis as hundreds of seats remain vacant in various postgraduate (PG) departments across its campuses for admission in the academic session 2023-23. In light of this emergent scenario, the university has kept the admission process open for 5 months as the seats have remained vacant, deciding to keep the admission process for the 2023 session open and have called students for counselling to fill these vacant seats.

The eligible students not seeking admission to other departments of Kashmir University are inflating. In fact, the Directorate of Admissions and Competitive Examinations at KU on October 25 floated a call for ‘spot admissions’ to fill up vacant seats for various engineering programs in the Institute of Technology (IOT), Zakura Campus and North Campus Baramulla. Data suggests that vacant seats are almost 70% to 80% in branches, including Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electronics and Communication Engineering at the IOT, in addition to Computer Science Engineering at North Campus Baramulla. Further, it is dismal to say that it is for the first time in the University’s history that the admission strength has drastically come down, from around 30,000 applications to just 11,000 this year.

What is worrisome is the fact that the valley’s Premier University for post-graduation has generally been Kashmir University. It would not be unfair to say that its academic standards have come down like anything. It no longer holds back to its past legacy. However, the year 2023 is witnessing a significant decline in admissions, despite the fact that the university’s A+ grade recognition and NIRF ranking within the top 50 institutions are not attracting students. Official statistics reveal that earlier the university used to receive applications 30,000 to 35,000 for various courses. The number of applications has drastically reduced. In response to the ongoing admission crisis, the Directorate of Admission and Competitive Examination (DACE) at Kashmir University has issued a notification stating that the admission process for the 2023 session is now closed, but vacant seats in various programs necessitate additional counselling. This statement demands caution owing to the fact that officially this is the second time such a crisis has emerged.

What is surprising is the steep fall in admissions across colleges in the valley. In 2022, Government Degree College Ganderbal had 1700 admissions, which fell to around 700 in 2023. Similarly, the number in Beerwa College recorded a fall from 493 to 311. In Sogam (Kupwara), the college got 513 in 2023 as compared to 689

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in 2022. The trend continues unabated in other colleges. Take, for instance, the case of Khanshab College in Budgam; its enrollment fell from 300 to 167. In Handwara College, the numbers had a steep downward spiral from 963 to 577. The job market has also undergone a dynamic shift. Now it is the skill development that attracts demands in the market. Students prefer online courses and studies, a norm that was forced upon them by the Covid-19 pandemic. What we are witnessing also is the institutions imparting training online. By availing of such online courses, students are actively seeking avenues that are not readily available through traditional educational channels.

Education is generally linked with the source of livelihood and a means of a job. This is also true about Kashmir. However, what we are seeing is an unprecedented rise in joblessness in the valley. The drying up of jobs in the public and private sectors has disillusioned a huge chunk of the population. As per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), by March 2023, J&K had 23.1% unemployment, which placed it at the 3rd spot in India. Data suggests that around 6,00,000 educated youth in the region remain unemployed, which exacerbates their social and economic distress. As per a survey by the Department of Employment in collaboration with district administrations, there were 663,511 unemployed youth in J&K as of May 31, 2022. It raises multi-dimensional questions on the state of educational affairs in the valley and seeks urgent intervention from multi-stakeholders.

### Spot admission implications signify

**Lower Academic Standards:** The basic necessity for any university to start spot admission is indicative of the fact that students are not attracted to the university due to several causes such as lack of academic rigour, lack of good academic training and guidance to growing students. Those who seriously want to pursue academics will be discouraged. Institutions may admit students who are not adequately prepared for university or college-level work.

**Affecting Meritocracy:** Relative discrimination among



students will spike. This will accentuate the binary of merit versus non-merit admission. Due to this, the academic standards and outcomes will suffer.

**Deepening Dependency:** The issues of dependency among students will increase through open entry, and this will enhance a lack of enterprise among students.

**Corrupt Practices:** Highly impregnated to favouritism, nepotism, and corrupt practices if transparency and fair practices are not strictly adhered to.

**Positives of spot admission**

However, saying all this does not mean that spot admission is brimmed with lacunas. It has its own set of advantages. For instance, it can save and avoid the wastage of time of those students who cannot otherwise prepare or appear in the examinations owing to multiple factors. The primary objective of spot admission entry in universities is to increase access to higher education by removing or lowering traditional admission barriers, such as strict academic requirements or standardized test scores. This approach aims to provide educational opportunities to a broader and more diverse range of students, including those who may have faced disadvantages or challenges in their academic journey. Ultimately, spot admission seeks to promote inclusivity and equal access to higher education, allowing individuals from various backgrounds to pursue their educational and career goals.

Spot admission thus can foster and enhance diversity and inclusivity on campus. It can save those seats which otherwise go to waste. Some of the advantages can be mentioned as follows:

**Accessibility:** Spot admission policies make education more accessible to a broader range of students, including those who may not have had the opportunity otherwise.

**Diversity:** Spot admission can lead to a more diverse student body, fostering a rich learning environment where students from various backgrounds can interact and learn from one another.

**Reduced Discrimination:** It helps reduce discrimination in the admissions process, as students are admitted regardless of standardized test scores or previous academic performance.

**Opportunity for Improvement:** It allows students who may have struggled in the past to have a chance at higher education and the opportunity to improve their academic skills.

**Community Engagement:** Educational institutions with Spot admission policies often play a significant role in their communities by offering educational opportunities to a wide range of individuals.

Noted educationalist, visionary, and retired headmaster from Anantnag’s Qazigund (Wanpora-Panzeth) Abdul Salam Dar has inspired a generation of young minds in the field of education. Abdul Salam Dar is a down-to-earth, honest, dedicated, and ideal teacher one can say mostly served in remote, inaccessible, and socially and economically marginalized areas. For him, education implies accessibility, affordability, and equity, transcending social and economic barriers. According to him, KU has unambiguously played an important role in the field of education. However, the recent rising trend of spot admission is indicative of the fact that academic standards have suffered, and the reasons must be examined and rectified. He called for the need to strike the balance between accessibility and maintaining academic standards while implementing spot admission policies. Thus, he emphasized that accessibility, diversity, and equal opportunity should be promoted but not at the cost of compromising quality and excellence in education.

**Way forward**

Even though UGC has given guidelines to the universities, reversing this riding trend of filling seats through on-spot admissions requires updating the curriculum, maintaining a balance between academics and extracurricular activities, improving the existing infrastructure, and addressing internal issues. As a policy intervention, an academic audit of programs needs to assess their viability and their contemporary relevance. There is a need to revamp the poor pedagogic engagement and unprofessional attitudes of professors.

**Conclusion**

Spot admission is fraught with so many challenges, but it does offer a window when it comes to inclusion and improvement in opportunity. The need is to take prompt intervention in terms of redeeming the quality of education and maintaining fairness and accountability. Also, efforts should be mobilized to promote higher education to enhance employability and contribute to the inclusive development of the region. Only through these measures can the universities in J&K regain their appeal and provide a brighter future for the youth of the region.



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CHILLAI-KALAN: 40-day harsh winter begins in Kashmir

