

# Inksight



JK Policy Institute

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## FEATURE

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## ‘NRLM empowering women through entrepreneurship’

### SHG member Nuzhat Jan showcases Kashmiri delights at Panchkula, Haryana

SRINAGAR: Nuzhat Jan, a member of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and part of Farhan Self Help Group (SHG) of Pulwama supported by NRLM, is breaking barriers and showcasing her entrepreneurial spirit.

Recently, Nuzhat established a stall featuring an array of dry fruits and other products crafted by her SHG at the Huda Parade Ground in Panchkula, Haryana. Her stall not only displayed the rich diversity of Kashmiri produce but also highlighted the skill and craftsmanship nurtured within her SHG.

Despite hailing from a rural area in Pulwama, Nuzhat's determination and commitment to her craft have transcended geographical boundaries.

Moreover, Nuzhat added a touch of Kashmiri warmth by serving the famous Kashmiri Kehwa in traditional Samovars. This cultural infusion not only refreshed taste buds but also provided a glimpse into the vibrant heritage of Kashmir.

Through her initiative, Nuzhat Jan is not just selling products but she is representing the community's resilience and the transformative power of SHGs in empowering women.

The presence of Nusrat at Huda Parade Ground serves

as a testament to the potential and capabilities of women entrepreneurs from rural areas, inspiring others to dream big and reach their goals.

Nuzhat Jan stands as a testament to the transformative power of dedication and support within the NRLM in Pulwama.

For the past four years, Nuzhat has been an integral part of NRLM, initiating her livelihood journey with the help of Mission. Not only has she thrived individually, but she has also actively engaged her husband in supporting and carrying out various initiatives, amplifying the impact of their efforts.

District Programme Manager (DPM), NRLM Pulwama, Arsheed Ahmad Bhat said that Nuzhat Jan's journey serves as a beacon of inspiration for other Self Help Group (SHG) members in the district. He remarked that her unwavering commitment and collaborative spirit have not only enabled her own growth but has also fostered a sense of empowerment among her peers.

The DPM highlighted that through her dedication and perseverance, Nuzhat exemplifies the core values of NRLM, uplifting not just herself, but also those around her in Pulwama.



Through her initiative, Nuzhat Jan is not just selling products but she is representing the community's resilience and the transformative power of SHGs in empowering women.

# I&C Deptt overshoots financial targets set by DPIIT for 2023-24

## NCSS registers 838 units in J&K, with 372 units receiving registrations in 2023-24; Over Rs. 160.88 cr incentives approved under the scheme

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

These initiatives, 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 sought-after destination for entrepreneurs.

The scheme has gained impressive momentum in just three years, with a total of 838 units registered under NCSS, a testament to its impact.

In FY 2023-24, a total of ten Secretary Level Committee (SLC) meetings were held, under the chairmanship of Vikramjeet Singh, Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce and facilitated by Dr. Arun Manhas, Director Industries & Commerce, Jammu, and Khalid Majeed, Director Industries & Commerce, Kashmir as its member secretaries. These meetings, till date, have approved the registration of 372 units, with 240 from the Jammu division and 132 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, the Department of Industries and Commerce has approved substantial incentives during the current financial year. In FY 2023-24, Rs. 85.15 crore stands approved under Capital Investment Incentive (CII), Rs. 27.45 crore under Working Capital Interest

Subvention (WCIS), and Rs.7.48 crore through Capital Interest Subvention (CIS).

It is pertinent to mention here that the Goods and Services Tax Linked incentive (GSTLI) is the most important incentive under the New Central Sector Scheme and in the current Financial year the approval for Rs 40.80 crore under GSTLI stands given. The disbursements are directly empowering businesses, enabling them to expand their operations and create new employment opportunities.

J&K has surpassed the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) target of Rs. 150 crore in incentive approval. This achievement is 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, and GST reimbursement.

In FY 2023-24, IDS SLCs approved incentives worth Rs. 22.44 crore for the Jammu division and Rs 3.92 crore for the Kashmir division. These additional incentives complement the support provided by NCSS, further strengthening the industrial ecosystem in the UT.

The combined efforts of NCSS and IDS 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 to J&K's overall economic development and prosperity.



# PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijlee Yojana: A Game changer scheme that will save Rs 15 thousand per household

## How You Can Apply for and Get Subsidy under the Roof Top Solar Scheme

### What is PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijlee Yojana about?

PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijlee Yojana is a Central Scheme that aims to provide free electricity to one crore households in India, who opt to install rooftop solar electricity units. The households will be able to get 300 units of electricity free every month. It is an ambitious scheme approved by the Union Cabinet on February 29th, with an outlay of Rs.75,021 crore.

### How does PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijlee Yojana work ?

The scheme provides for a subsidy of 60% of the solar unit cost for systems up to 2 kW capacity and 40 percent of additional system cost for systems between 2 to 3 kW capacity. The subsidy has been capped at 3 kW capacity.

At current benchmark prices, this will mean Rs 30,000 subsidy for 1 kW system, Rs 60,000 for 2 kW systems and Rs 78,000 for 3 kW systems or higher.

Who is eligible to apply for the Scheme?

1. The applicant must be an Indian citizen.
2. Must own a house with a roof that is suitable for installing solar panels.
3. The household must have a valid electricity connection.
4. The household must not have availed of any other subsidy for solar panels

How to apply for PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana?

First, the interested consumer has to register on the national portal [www.pmsuryaghar.gov.in](http://www.pmsuryaghar.gov.in). This has to be done by selecting the state and the electricity distribution company. The National Portal will assist the households by providing relevant information such as appropriate system sizes, benefits calculator, vendor rating etc. The consumers can choose the vendor and the make of the Roof Top Solar unit they wish to get installed.

### Can a consumer avail of loan facility to finance the solar unit?

Yes. Households will be able to access collateral-free low-interest loan products of around 7% at present for installation of residential RTS systems up to 3 kW. The interest rate has been pegged at 0.5% above the prevailing Repo Rate decided by the Reserve Bank of India from time to time. In the event of the Repo Rate, which is 6.5% at present, getting reduced to say 5.5%, the effective interest rate for consumers will become 6% instead of the current 7%.

### What is the step-by-step procedure for availing of a subsidy?

#### Step 1

- Register on the portal with the following
- Select your State & Electricity Distribution



Company

- Enter your Electricity Consumer Number, Mobile Number & Email.

#### Step 2

- Login with Consumer Number & Mobile Number
- Apply for the Rooftop Solar as per the form

#### Step 3

- Once you get the feasibility approval, get the plant installed by any of the registered vendors

#### Step 4

- Once installation is completed, submit the plant details and apply for a net meter.

#### Step 5

- A commissioning certificate will be generated from the portal, after the installation of the net meter and inspection by DISCOM.

#### Step 6

- Once you get the commissioning report. Submit the bank account details and a cancelled cheque through the portal. You will receive your subsidy in your bank account within 30 days.

### Why should a household opt for the Roof Top Solar Scheme?

Simple economics. The households will be able to save electricity bills as well as earn additional income through the sale of surplus power to DISCOMs.

PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijlee Yojana promises an assured saving of approximately Rs 15,000 in a year for a household consuming up to 300 units a month, by installing a Roof Top Solar unit of 3 kW capacity. Such a household, by generating its own electricity will save on electricity bills approximately Rs 1,800 – Rs 1875.

Even after deducting the EMI of Rs 610 on the loan availed for financing the solar unit, the savings would be around Rs 1,265 per month or approximately Rs 15,000 in a year. The savings for the households not availing of loans will be even higher. Furthermore, opting for renewable energy is an opportunity to contribute towards a greener planet.

*Issued by the Ministry of Power,  
Government of India*

# PM ADDRESSES VIKSIT BHARAT VIKSIT JAMMU KASHMIR PROGRAMME IN SRINAGAR

- Dedicates to nation Holistic Agriculture Development Programme worth about Rs 5000 crores
- Dedicates and launches 52 tourism sector projects worth more than Rs 1400 crores under Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD Scheme
- Dedicates to nation project for 'Integrated Development of Hazratbal Shrine' Srinagar
- Announces tourist destinations selected under Challenge Based Destination Development Scheme
- Launches 'Dekho Apna Desh People's Choice 2024' and 'Chalo India Global Diaspora Campaign'
- Distributes appointment orders to new Government recruits of J&K
- "Modi will not leave any stone unturned to repay this debt of affection. I am doing all this hard work to win your hearts and I believe that I am on the right path"
- "Power of development, potential of tourism, capabilities of farmers and leadership of the youth of Jammu and Kashmir will pave the way for Viksit Jammu Kashmir"
- "Jammu Kashmir is not just a place, Jammu Kashmir is the head of India. And a head held high is a symbol of development and respect. Therefore, Viksit Jammu and Kashmir is the priority of Viksit Bharat"
- "Today, Jammu and Kashmir are breaking all tourism records"
- "Jammu and Kashmir is a huge brand in itself"
- "Today Jammu and Kashmir is touching new heights of development because Jammu and Kashmir is breathing freely today. This freedom from restrictions has come after the abrogation of Article 370"





New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Viksit Bharat Viksit Jammu Kashmir program in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir on March 7th, 2024.

He dedicated to the nation Holistic Agriculture Development Programme worth about Rs 5000 crores and launched multiple projects related to the tourism sector worth more than Rs 1400 crore under Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD scheme including the project for 'Integrated Development of Hazratbal Shrine', Srinagar.

The Prime Minister also launched the 'Dekho Apna Desh People's Choice Tourist Destination Poll' and 'Chalo India Global Diaspora Campaign' and announced tourist destinations selected under the Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD) Scheme. distributed appointment orders to about 1000 new Government recruits of Jammu and Kashmir and will also interact with beneficiaries of various government schemes including women achievers, lakhpati didis, farmers, entrepreneurs etc.


Nazim Nazeer from Pulwama who is a beekeeper described his journey to the Prime Minister about expanding his business by availing benefits from the government where he bought 25 boxes for beekeeping at a 50 percent subsidy. He also threw light on his economic growth throughout the journey where he gradually expanded to 200 boxes for beekeeping by availing Rs 5 lakhs under Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme. This led to Mr Nazeer building a brand for himself and creating a website that further generated thousands of orders worth about 5000 kilograms across the nation, growing his business to almost 2000 beekeeping boxes and engaging about 100 youth from the region. He further informed the Prime Minister about receiving an FPO in 2023 which has only helped him grow his business. He also thanked the Prime Minister for launching the Digital India initiative that has transformed the fintech landscape in the country. The Prime Minister lauded Mr Nazim's effort for leading the way to a sweet revolution in Jammu & Kashmir and congratulated him on his success.

Upon the Prime Minister's enquiry about getting initial support from the government to establish the business, Mr Nazim said that even though he faced initial difficulty, the Department of Agriculture came forward and supported his cause. Noting that the business of beekeeping is a fairly new sector, the Prime Minister highlighted its benefits and said that bees, in a way, work like farm laborers making it beneficial for crops. Mr Nazim said that landowners are ready to offer land for beekeeping at no cost as the process is also beneficial for the farmers. The Prime Minister suggested Mr Nazim research the honey produced in Central Asia around the Hindu Kush mountains and also asked him to look towards crafting a new taste for honey by growing specific flowers around the boxes as it is a niche market. He also mentioned similar successful efforts in Uttarakhand.

Prime Minister Modi expressed delight at Acacia Honey's price going up to Rs 1000 per kg from Rs 400 per kg due to high demand across the world. The Prime Minister lauded the clarity of thought and vision, and the courage shown by Mr. Nazim in running his business and also congratulated his parents. He said that Mr Nazim is also giving direction to the youth of India and becoming an inspiration.

Ahtesham Majid Bhat of Srinagar is a bakery entrepreneur who through a food technology skill development programme brought in new innovations in the bakery. She was supported by the incubation center at Government Polytechnic for Women Skill Development. The government single window system helped her and her team in getting all the NoCs from various departments. The Prime Minister told her that in the last 10 years, the government has been providing all the support to the crores of youth in realizing their startup dreams.

The Prime Minister praised her for involving her friends from different districts in her entrepreneurial ventures. "It is our efforts that the ideas of our youth do not suffer from the deficiency of resources and finance. They should move with confidence. These



## Schemes for the entire nation have been launched today from Srinagar and Jammu & Kashmir is leading the way for tourism in the country.

daughters of Jammu and Kashmir are creating new inspiring examples for the youth of the entire nation," the Prime Minister said. He praised them for taking care of the underprivileged daughters.

Hamida Bano of Ganderbal is involved in the dairy business. She informed the Prime Minister that she benefited from the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and opened a processing unit for milk products. She employed other women also. She also informed the Prime Minister about the quality check, packaging and marketing of products. Her milk products are devoid of preservatives and she informed the Prime Minister about the elaborate way of marketing her fragile product. The Prime Minister praised her for her business acumen and also for carrying on the work of nutrition. He also complimented her for taking care of quality and doing her business in an environment-friendly way.

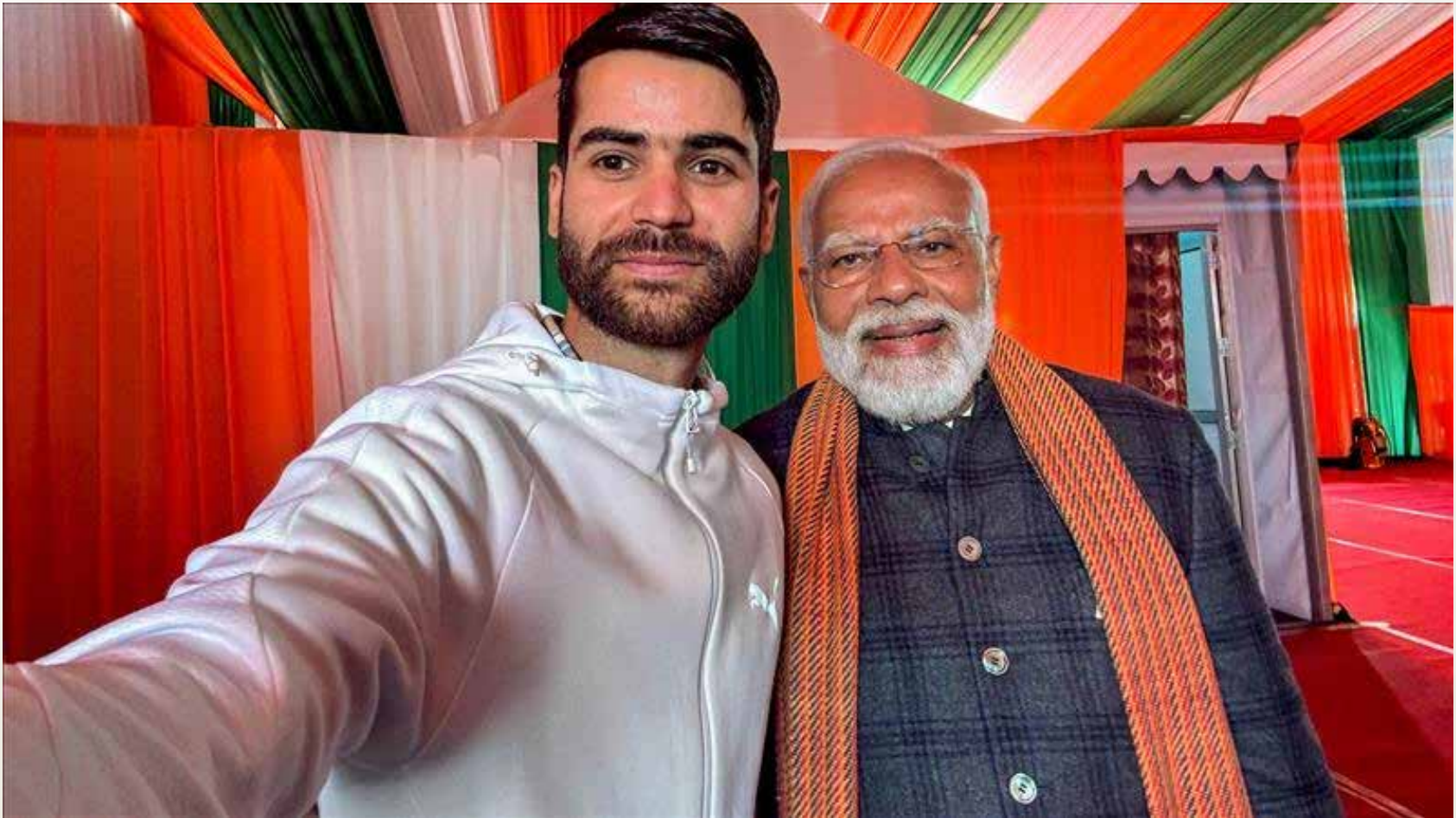
Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister said that the feeling of arriving in heaven on earth cannot be put into words. "This unparalleled form of nature, the air, the valley, the environment and the love and affection of Kashmiri brothers and sisters," he remarked. He also acknowledged the presence of citizens outside the venue, and more than 1 lakh people from 285 blocks connected to the event via video link. Underlining that the new Jammu & Kashmir is the one that has been awaited for decades, the Prime Minister said, "Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerji had sacrificed for this Jammu and Kashmir." He stated that the new Jammu and Kashmir has the sparkle for the future in its eyes and the determination to clear all obstacles. "140 crore citizens feel at peace when they see the smiling faces of the people of Jammu & Kashmir," PM Modi said.

Expressing his gratitude for the affection of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the Prime Minister said, "Modi will not leave any stone unturned to repay this debt of affection. I am doing all this hard work to win your hearts and I believe that I am on the right path. I will continue my efforts to win your hearts. This is Modi's guarantee and all of you know that Modi's Guarantee means the guarantee of fulfilment of the guarantee."

Recalling his recent visit to Jammu where he started infrastructure and education projects worth Rs 32,000 crores, PM Modi mentioned today's projects related to tourism and development, and agriculture along with appointment letters that were distributed today. "Power of development, potential of tourism, capabilities of farmers and leadership of the youth of Jammu and Kashmir will pave the way for Viksit Jammu Kashmir", the Prime Minister said. "Jammu Kashmir is not just a place, Jammu Kashmir is the head of India. A head held high is a symbol of development and respect. Therefore, Viksit Jammu and Kashmir is the priority of Viksit Bharat," the Prime Minister added.

The Prime Minister recalled the time when laws implemented in the country were not implemented in Jammu & Kashmir and mentioned schemes for the welfare of the poor that could not be availed by the deprived. Highlighting the change of fortunes, the Prime Minister said that schemes for the entire nation have been launched today from Srinagar and Jammu & Kashmir is leading the way for tourism in the country. Therefore, the Prime Minister said, people from more than 50 places in India have





joined the occasion. He touched upon the six projects that are being dedicated to the nation today under the Swadesh Darshan scheme as well as the initiation of its next phase.

He informed that around 30 projects have been launched for various cities in the country including Srinagar while 3 projects have been inaugurated and 14 others launched under the PRASAD scheme. He further stated that the development works being carried out in the holy Hazratbal Dargah for the convenience of the people have also been completed. The Prime Minister informed about the 'Dekho Apna Desh People's Choice' campaign where 40 places have been identified by the government to be developed as tourist destinations in the next 2 years.

Under the campaign, the Prime Minister explained that the government would develop the most preferred tourist destinations based on public opinion. He also mentioned the 'Chalo India' campaign to encourage NRIs to come to India. Congratulating the citizens of Jammu & Kashmir for the development works of today, the Prime Minister said that it will help in developing the tourism industry of the region and creating new employment opportunities.

The Prime Minister stated, "When intentions are noble and there is a determination to fulfil commitments, results are bound to follow." He highlighted the successful hosting of the G-20 summit in Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing the transformative growth in tourism, the Prime Minister noted, "There was a time when people questioned who would visit Jammu and Kashmir for tourism. Today, Jammu and Kashmir are breaking all tourism records."

He further elaborated, "In 2023 alone, Jammu and Kashmir welcomed over 2 crore tourists, surpassing previous records. Over the past 10 years, the Amarnath Yatra has witnessed the highest number of pilgrims participating, and Vaishno Devi also recorded a significant increase in devotee footfall." Highlighting the surge in foreign tourist arrivals and the growing attraction for celebrities and international guests, the Prime Minister stated, "Now, even prominent celebrities and foreign guests visit the valleys of Jammu and Kashmir to explore and create videos and reels."

Moving on to agriculture, the Prime Minister emphasized the strength of Jammu and Kashmir's agricultural produce, including saffron, apples, dried fruits, and cherries, branding the region as a significant agricultural hub. He said that the Rs 5,000 crore agricultural development program will result in unprecedented growth in the agricultural sector of Jammu and Kashmir over the next 5 years, particularly focusing on horticulture and livestock

development. "This initiative will create thousands of new opportunities, especially in the fields of horticulture and animal husbandry," he said.

Additionally, he mentioned direct transfers of nearly ₹3,000 crore under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme to the accounts of farmers in Jammu and Kashmir. To enhance the storage capacity for fruits and vegetables and ensure their prolonged preservation, significant investments have been made to increase storage facilities in Jammu and Kashmir. Furthermore, the Prime Minister pointed out that the commencement of the 'world's largest warehousing scheme', will include the construction of numerous warehouses across Jammu and Kashmir.

Noting the rapid pace of development in Jammu and Kashmir, the Prime Minister mentioned 2 AIIMS as AIIMS Jammu has already been inaugurated and work is going on at AIIMS Kashmir. He talked about 7 new medical colleges, 2 cancer hospitals and institutes like IIT and IIM in the region. He said that 2 Vande Bharat trains are running in Jammu and Kashmir and rail services from Srinagar to Sangaldan and from Sangaldan to Baramul have started. This expansion of connectivity has given a push to economic activities. Referring to new projects to make Jammu and Srinagar smart cities, the Prime Minister said, "In the coming times, the success story of Jammu and Kashmir will become an example for the whole world."

Recalling his mentions of handicrafts and the cleanliness of the region in his Mann ki Baat programme, the Prime Minister underlined Jammu Kashmir's connection with lotus.

Highlighting the efforts of the government for the development of the youth of Jammu & Kashmir in every field, the Prime Minister said that new opportunities are being created ranging from skill development to sports and mentioned the modern sports facilities being built in every district of Jammu and Kashmir. He gave the example of multi-purpose indoor sports halls built in 17 districts and Jammu & Kashmir hosting many national sports tournaments. "Now Jammu and Kashmir is emerging as the winter sports capital of the country. Nearly 1000 players have participated in the recently held Khelo India Winter Games," the Prime Minister added.

"Jammu & Kashmir is breathing freely today, hence achieving new heights," the Prime Minister said noting the abrogation of Article 370 which has led to the respect of the youth's talent and equal rights and equal opportunities for everyone. He spoke about the refugees from Pakistan, the Valmiki community and sanitation workers getting voting rights, fulfilling the demand of the Valmiki community for SC category, reservation of seats





## The Prime Minister also launched about 43 projects that will develop a wide range of pilgrimage and tourist sites across the country.

in the assembly for Scheduled Tribes, Paddari tribe, and the inclusion of Paddari tribe, Pahari ethnic group, Gadda Brahmin and Koli communities in the Scheduled Tribes. The Prime Minister also pointed out that dynastic politics in Jammu & Kashmir deprived the right to reservation to other backward classes in Panchayat, Municipality and Municipal Corporation as provided in the government. “Today every class is being returned its rights,” PM Modi added.

Dwelling on the transformation of the J&K Bank the Prime Minister recalled the mismanagement of the past and called it a victim of dynasty politics and corruption. The Prime Minister listed the reforms to restore the health of the bank. He mentioned 1000 crore rupees in assistance to the bank and action against wrongful appointments. The Anti-Corruption Bureau is still investigating thousands of such appointments. He highlighted the transparent recruitments in the last 5 years.

As a result, the J&K Bank profit has reached Rs 1700 crores and business has reached Rs 2.25 lakh crores from Rs 1.25 crore rupees 5 years ago. Deposits also increased from Rs 80,000 crores to Rs 1.25 lakh crores. NPA that had crossed 11 percent 5 years ago has been brought down to below 5 percent. The share of the bank has also seen 12 fold rise to about Rs 140 from Rs 12 5 years ago. “When there is an honest government, the intention is for the welfare of the people, then the people can be brought out of every difficulty,” PM Modi added.

Pointing out that Jammu & Kashmir has been the biggest victim of dynastic politics since independence, the Prime Minister assured the people that the development campaign for Jammu & Kashmir will not stop at any cost and the region will develop more rapidly in the next 5 years.

The Prime Minister concluded his address by extending his best wishes to the entire nation on the holy month of Ramzan. “It is my wish that everyone should get the message of peace and harmony from the month of Ramadan. Tomorrow is Mahashivratri, I wish everyone the best of this holy festival,” PM Modi concluded.

Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Manoj Sinha and Union Minister of State, Dr Jitendra Singh were present on the occasion among others.

## BACKGROUND

In a step that will provide a major boost to the agri-economy of Jammu and Kashmir, the Prime Minister dedicated ‘Holistic Agriculture Development Programme’ (HADP) to the nation. HADP is an integrated program encompassing the full spectrum of activities in the three major domains of agri-economy viz Horticulture, Agriculture and Livestock husbandry in Jammu and Kashmir. The programme will equip about 2.5 lakh farmers with skill development via a dedicated Daksh Kisan portal. Under the programme, about 2000 Kisan Khidmat Ghars will be established and robust value chains will be put in place for the welfare of the farming community. The programme will lead to employment generation benefiting lakhs of marginal families in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Prime Minister’s vision is to improve the overall experience of tourists and pilgrims visiting prominent pilgrimage and tourism sites nationwide by building world-class infrastructure and amenities at these sites. In line with this, the

Prime Minister dedicated to the nation and launched multiple initiatives under the Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes worth more than Rs 1400 crore. The projects being dedicated to the nation by the Prime Minister include development of ‘Integrated Development of Hazratbal Shrine’ in Srinagar, J&K; tourism facilities developed in Northeast circuit in Meghalaya; Spiritual Circuit in Bihar and Rajasthan; Rural and Tirthankar Circuit in Bihar; development of Jogulamba Devi Temple, Jogulamba Gadwal District, Telangana; and development of Amarkantak Temple, Annapur District, Madhya Pradesh.

To create world-class infrastructure and amenities for pilgrims and tourists visiting the Hazratbal Shrine, and to enhance their holistic spiritual experience, the project ‘Integrated Development of Hazratbal Shrine’ has been executed. The key components of the project include site development of the entire area including the construction of boundary wall of the Shrine; illumination of Hazratbal shrines precinct; improvement of Ghats and Devri Paths around the Shrine; construction of Sufi interpretation center; construction of Tourist Facilitation Centre; installation of signages; multilevel storied car parking; construction of public convenience block and entrance Gateway of the Shrine among others.

The Prime Minister also launched about 43 projects that will develop a wide range of pilgrimage and tourist sites across the country. These include important religious sites like the Annavaram Temple in Kakinada district of Andhra Pradesh; Navagraha Temples in Thanjavur and Mayiladuthurai District of Tamilnadu and Karaikal district of Puducherry; Sri Chamundeshwari Devi Temple, Mysore District, Karnataka; Karni Mata Mandir, Bikaner District Rajasthan; Maa Chintpurni Temple, Una District, Himachal Pradesh; Basilica of Bom Jesus Church, Goa, among others. The projects also include development of various other sites and experience centers like Mechuka Adventure Park in Arunachal Pradesh; Rural Tourism Cluster Experience at Gunji, Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand; Ecotourism zone at Ananthagiri forest, Ananthagiri, Telangana; Meghalayan Age Cave Experience and Waterfall Trails Experience at Sohra, Meghalaya; Reimagining Cinnamara Tea Estate, Jorhat, Assam; Ecotourism experience at Kanjli Wetland, Kapurthala, Punjab; Julley Leh Biodiversity Park, Leh, among others.

During the programme, the Prime Minister announced 42 tourist destinations selected under Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD) Scheme. The innovative scheme, announced during Union Budget 2023-24, aims to provide end-to-end tourist experiences by catalyzing the development of tourist destinations while also promoting sustainability and ushering competitiveness in the tourism sector. The 42 destinations have been identified in four categories - 16 in Culture & Heritage Destination, 11 in spiritual destinations, 10 in Ecotourism and Amrit Dharohar and 5 in Vibrant Village.

The Prime Minister launched the first-ever nationwide initiative to identify the pulse of the nation on tourism, in the form of ‘Dekho Apna Desh People’s Choice 2024’. The nationwide poll aims to engage with citizens to identify the most preferred tourist attractions and understand tourist perceptions across 5 tourism categories - Spiritual, Cultural & Heritage, Nature & Wildlife, Adventure, and other categories. Besides the four main categories, the ‘other’ category is where one can vote for their personal favourites and help uncover hidden tourism gems in the form of unexplored tourism attractions and destinations like Vibrant Border Villages, Wellness Tourism, Wedding Tourism etc. This poll exercise is being hosted on the MyGov platform, the citizen engagement portal of the Government of India.

The Prime Minister launched the ‘Chalo India Global Diaspora Campaign’ to inspire the Indian diaspora to become Incredible India ambassadors and promote tourism to India. The campaign is being launched based on the clarion call of the Prime Minister, wherein he requested Indian diaspora members to encourage at least 5 non-Indian friends to travel to India. With more than 3 crore overseas Indians, the Indian diaspora can serve as a powerful catalyst for Indian tourism, acting as cultural Ambassadors.



# AFSPA REVOCATION AND TROOP WITHDRAWAL:

## Amit Shah signals a potential shift towards reconciliation in Jammu and Kashmir

**While the prospect of AFSPA revocation and troop withdrawal has elicited mixed responses, with opposition parties cautiously optimistic yet sceptical about practical implementation, Amit Shah's statements signify a potential shift towards reconciliation in Jammu and Kashmir. The developments since August 5, 2019, have undeniably altered the political landscape, neutralizing separatist influences and prompting a reassessment of governance strategies in the region.**



### JK POLICY INSTITUTE

**U**nion Home Minister Amit Shah recently announced that the Centre will consider revoking the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in Jammu and Kashmir. During an interview with JK Media Group, the minister further stated that the government is planning to withdraw troops from the Union Territory, entrusting law and order solely to the Jammu and Kashmir Police. “We have plans to pull back troops and leave law and order to the Jammu and Kashmir Police alone. Earlier Jammu and Kashmir Police were not trusted but today they are leading operations. We will also think of revoking AFSPA,” Shah added.

The AFSPA empowers the armed forces personnel who are operating in disturbed areas with powers to search, arrest and open fire if they deem it necessary for “the maintenance of public order”. An area or district is notified as disturbed under the AFSPA to facilitate the operations of the armed forces. Earlier, Shah had said that the AFSPA has been removed in 70 percent of areas in the North East even though it is in force in Jammu and Kashmir. Shah also attacked opposition leaders Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, saying they don't have any right to speak on terrorism. “The number of fake encounters that took place during their time has never been matched by any other regime. In the last five years, not a single fake encounter has taken place. Rather the FIRs have

been lodged against the people involved in fake encounters,” the minister added. “We will have a dialogue with the youths of Kashmir and not with the organisations that have roots in Pakistan. They are responsible for the deaths of 40,000 youths,” Shah said.

The minister said the Modi government has banned 12 organisations for their involvement in terror activities, designated 36 individuals as terrorists, registered more than 22 cases to stop terror finance and seized properties worth ₹150 crore. As many as 90 properties were also attached and 134 bank accounts have been frozen, he said. The assertions made by the Home Minister have elicited mixed responses from the two main opposition parties – the NC and PDP. While they welcome the possibility of revocation of AFSPA, they have also expressed doubts and scepticism about whether the assertion would translate into practical action on the ground. Obviously, considering that both of these parties share an antagonistic rapport with the ruling BJP, it makes perfect sense that they are not going to accept the Home Minister's statement without scrutinizing it closely.

Now, turning to the actual substance of the Home Minister's messaging, one cannot ignore the fact that perhaps for the first time since August 2019, Amit Shah's tone has been somewhat reconciliatory about Jammu and Kashmir. Regardless of how political opponents may interpret the developments post-August 2019, there has certainly been a significant shift in the overall situational dynamics in the Himalayan region since



the Centre chose to break the disconcerting impasse by revoking the erstwhile state's special status. Whether the Centre should have taken the actions it did on August 5, 2019, and thereafter, as well as the manner in which these changes were implemented, remains open to academic scrutiny and debate. Inferences drawn and conclusions reached will, of course, differ depending on the political beliefs and leanings of those analyzing the developments.

The same is more or less the case with the current situation in Jammu and Kashmir – depending on their political positions, various protagonists and analysts are drawing equally varied conclusions. That is okay, and encouraging as well. Considering that Amit Shah and the leaders of NC and PDP hold diametrically opposite positions and beliefs about the developments initiated by the August 5, 2019 decisions and carried forward since, their disagreements will certainly be discernible over nearly every claim, promise, or pledge that the government may make.

However, one point on which there should be no disagreement is that August 5, 2019, marked a watershed moment that undeniably altered the otherwise stagnant and impasse-ridden political situation in J&K, injecting it with fresh momentum. The debate over whether these developments were right or wrong can always persist, but prior to August 2019, the situation in J&K exemplified a classic case of a “hurting stalemate,” with the prolonged impasse detrimentally affecting all major stakeholders, particularly the common people of the former state, as well as New Delhi. However, those in control within the separatist-militant circles had developed a significant vested interest in maintaining the status quo, thereby obstructing any progress, whether forward or backward.

Undoubtedly, they acted upon the directives of their overseer, whose sole objective has been to perpetuate turmoil, implementing their ‘thousand cuts’ doctrine to weaken the adversary. The most significant outcome of the decisions made in August 2019 has been the dismantling of this deadlock. Subsequent developments have swiftly produced an unforeseen result – namely, neutralizing the separatists and rendering both them and their politics irrelevant.

Omar Abdullah, his father, Mehbooba Mufti, and her daughter possess every right to dissent against the actions taken by Narendra Modi and Amit Shah in J&K. However, they should also acknowledge the statesmanship exhibited by the Modi-Shah duo in freeing Kashmir from the grip of a monstrous creation – the separatist-militant alliance.

Needless to say, despite the local leaders pandering to them or attempting to keep them in good humour, the separatist-militant ecosystem regarded both these families as mortal enemies and would do everything to undermine and undercut their politics and influence. Given the opportunity, they wouldn't hesitate to physically harm them. Both families are well aware of this reality, as are all other political groups within the mainstream camp.

Admitting it publicly, though, maybe a bit worrisome for them! Striking off the separatists from Kashmir's political landscape has certainly been the biggest takeaway so far. Let them agree with it; maybe they won't, but it does not detract from reality. The fact of the matter is that today the situation in Kashmir has reached a point where Abdullahs and Muftis, Lones and Bukharis can conduct big and open public meetings and rallies in the valley's hills and dales – something they could not do when they held the reins of power. This, of course, is a remarkable accomplishment, even if one may choose not to give credit where it is due! All the developments that have followed August 2019 have been more or less centred around the administration and its decisions. Reorganization of the erstwhile state, redrawing of assembly and parliamentary constituencies (delimitation), infrastructural push, wooing investors for industrial development, etc., -- all these have been administrative decisions, offering very little for the public perception to alter itself. Love it or hate it, the fact remains that public opinions are very receptive to, and easily reworked by political initiatives and decisions. Administrative pronouncements do have an impact, but certainly not as profound as political declarations. So when Amit Shah says they have plans to revoke AFSPA, pull back troops, and leave law and order to the Jammu and Kashmir Police, this is certainly a significant development, indicative of the Centre's confidence that the situation in J&K has changed (read improved and normalized) for good. While the scepticism of opposition political circles is easily understood, the visible unconcern shown by ordinary people must be a cause for concern. If they too share similar doubts as those held by the NC and PDP and others, it is worrisome.

However, even more, annoying and troubling is when individuals refrain from expressing themselves because they believe their suspicions aren't shared or their views and opinions do not hold significance. Mr. Amit Shah is a wise individual who understands that effective communication occurs when others comprehend one's message. If they fail to grasp it, communication is ineffective, irrespective of the words, images, or other forms used. People comprehend things based on their experiences, necessitating one to align with their perspective to effectively communicate.

Furthermore, communication is a two-way process. If you attempt to convey your ideas to others without taking heed of their perspectives, the entire endeavour is futile. If Amit Shah's statement was intended solely for the political leaders of J&K, then they have voiced their responses. However, if his address was also aimed at the general populace, they have yet to react. It is now incumbent upon Shah and his team to draw suitable conclusions.



We have plans to pull back troops and leave law and order to the Jammu and Kashmir Police alone. Earlier Jammu and Kashmir Police were not trusted but today they are leading operations.

**We will also think of revoking AFSPA...**



**Amit Shah** | Minister of Home Affairs of India



# Efforts underway to ensure 100 pc smart metering in J&K by 2026: PDD

JAMMU: Stating that Jammu and Kashmir is the only Union Territory across the country where consumers are still provided electricity without meters, a Spokesperson of the Power Development Department (PDD) today asserted that the areas 'saturated with smart meters' are experiencing significantly reduced losses and improved power supply.

"Concerted efforts are underway to convert the entire consumer base of Jammu and Kashmir to the modern prepaid metering systems so as to ensure a better power supply," the spokesperson said while rebutting the misinformation being circulated across the social media platforms, featuring women protesting against electricity meters, stated that electricity is a commodity, similar to other goods available in the market.

As such, the Spokesperson said it is important to recognize that electricity isn't a free service; rather, it incurs costs at every stage of its journey, from generation at the source to transmission and ultimately distribution. "Often, consumers are only aware of the distribution agency, remaining unaware of the intermediate stages and entities involved in supplying electricity to them. At each juncture of the supply chain, accurate measurement of electricity is paramount to maintaining a supply-demand balance, ensuring the financial viability of the sector. Despite meticulous measurement throughout these stages, it's worth noting that accurate measurement and accounting of electricity consumption at the consumers' end remains a challenge in J&K."

"It is pertinent to mention that in J&K, the electricity tariff being charged from consumers stands as one of the lowest across the country," the spokesperson added.

Installing a smart electricity meter can help bear the load of shooting high energy prices and address the fundamental issues plaguing the distribution sector. Smart meters enable precise billing based on actual usage, eliminating the surprise of unexpectedly high bills due to inaccuracies. These tools can quickly detect power outages allowing for a faster response time to restore power. Customers can monitor their electricity usage in nearly real-time and make



changes to their consumption patterns leading to lower electricity bills.

He elaborated that the primary sufferers due to deficient metering systems are the consumers themselves, experiencing irregular and poor-quality power supply. As such, J&K has undertaken the smart meter installation in three phases under PMDP/RDSS schemes.

The first phase which started in the year 2022 stands completed with the installation of 1.5 lakh smart meters in Jammu & Srinagar cities. The second phase covering 5.50 Lakh smart meters is under implementation while the third phase, which comprises the remaining 14 Lakh smart meters, has also commenced, targeted for completion by 2026, thereby accomplishing 100% smart metering in J&K.

As regards the pricing/electricity tariff rates being charged from consumers, the said rates are determined and approved by independent Regulatory Commissions and not by the DISCOMs taking into account various factors such as cost





of power purchase from generating companies, transmission expenses, staffing, and maintenance costs etc., to ensure that consumers are charged fairly. For example, in J&K, the Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) is responsible for determining the electricity tariff.

This is evident from the fact that the metering percentage in J&K is distressingly low with only 51% of consumers metered and as such, being charged on a flat-rate basis. The flat rate bills, based on rough estimates, do not reflect the actual usage and are hence considered flimsy or unsubstantial even during the time when electro-mechanical meters were in use. As such, in the present era, where energy measurements are digitally done right from the generating end, it is paramount to ensure accurate measurement at the consumers' end too.

Regarding power availability, there persists a misconception among consumers that J&K is a power surplus Union Territory due to its abundant water sources, however, the reality is that J&K relies solely on hydropower plants for electricity generation, which are subject to limitations due to seasonal dependence.

The hydropower plants generate at their maximum capacity only during 4-5 months of peak water flow in rivers, while their generation diminishes for the rest of the year. Quantitatively, out of the existing installed generation capacity of 3500 MW, 1140 MW is contributed by UT-owned plants, the main ones being 900 MW Baglihar, 110 MW Lower Jhelum, and 110 MW Upper Sindh, while the remaining 2300 MW comes from central sector plants such as Salal, Dul-Hasti, Uri, and Kishanganga. During winters, powerhouses in J&K, under both central and state sectors, can only generate a maximum of 600 MW against their rated capacity of 3500 MW due to reduced water levels in the rivers.

However, with peak demand reaching up to 3200 MW during winters; it's evident that J&K's power demand cannot be solely met by

hydroelectric power plants. So the remaining power requirement during winter is met through thermal-based Central Generating Stations (CGS) situated outside J&K.

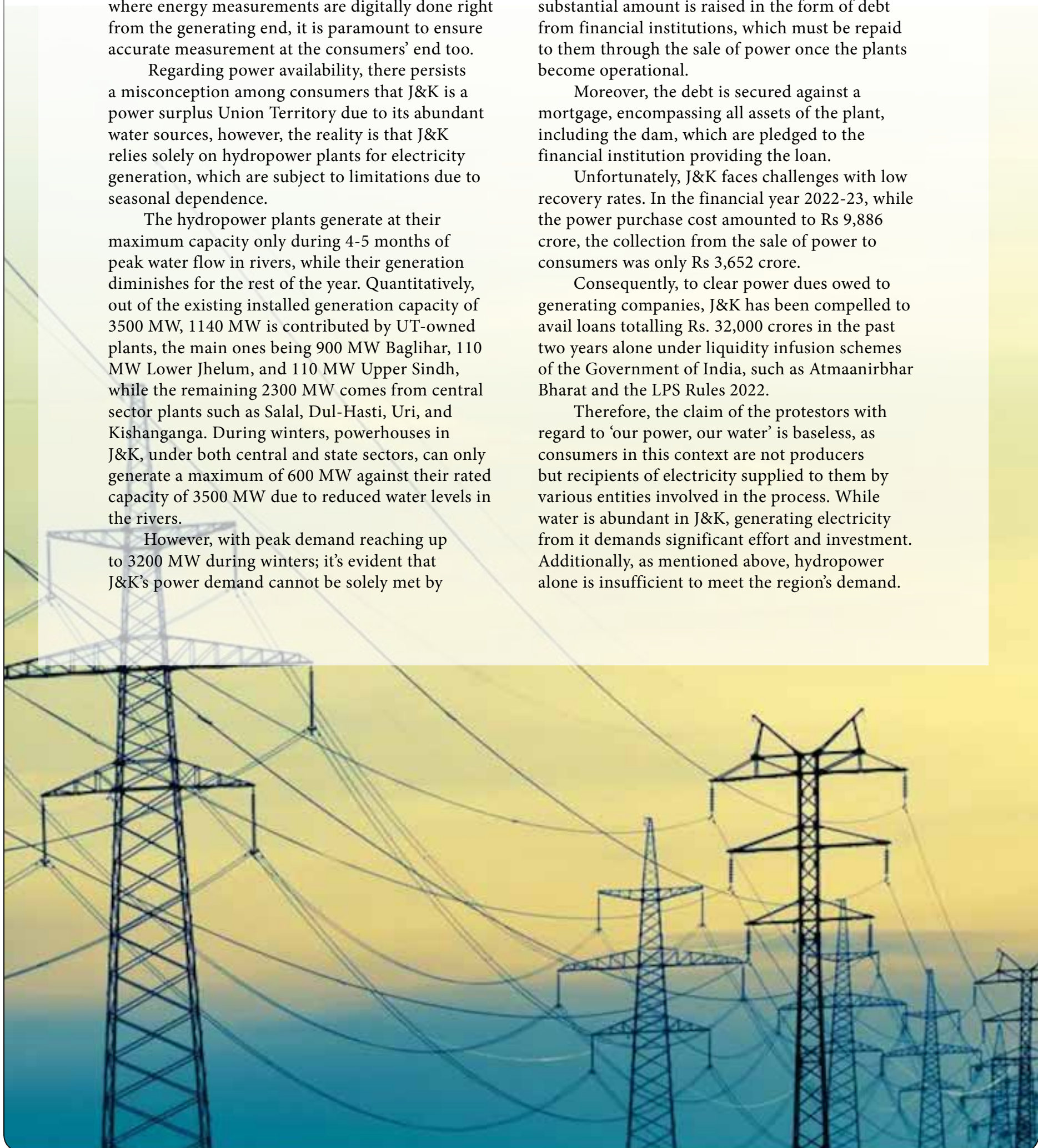
Moreover, it's crucial to acknowledge that the Government of J&K has indeed made significant investments in recent years to harness the maximum hydro potential, with four mega Hydel Projects worth Rs. 22,207 crores under development and agreements signed for four additional projects totalling Rs. 29,600 crore. It is evident that the development of hydropower plants entails huge investment. As such, the hydropower plants are developed on a debt-equity pattern, where a substantial amount is raised in the form of debt from financial institutions, which must be repaid to them through the sale of power once the plants become operational.

Moreover, the debt is secured against a mortgage, encompassing all assets of the plant, including the dam, which are pledged to the financial institution providing the loan.

Unfortunately, J&K faces challenges with low recovery rates. In the financial year 2022-23, while the power purchase cost amounted to Rs 9,886 crore, the collection from the sale of power to consumers was only Rs 3,652 crore.

Consequently, to clear power dues owed to generating companies, J&K has been compelled to avail loans totalling Rs. 32,000 crores in the past two years alone under liquidity infusion schemes of the Government of India, such as Atma Nirbhar Bharat and the LPS Rules 2022.

Therefore, the claim of the protestors with regard to 'our power, our water' is baseless, as consumers in this context are not producers but recipients of electricity supplied to them by various entities involved in the process. While water is abundant in J&K, generating electricity from it demands significant effort and investment. Additionally, as mentioned above, hydropower alone is insufficient to meet the region's demand.





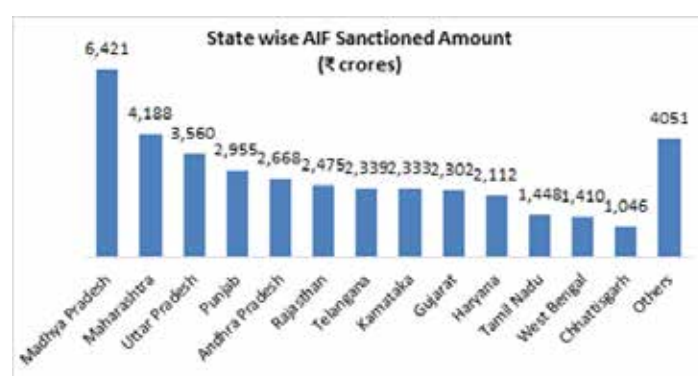
# If realised fully, India's agriculture sector holds immense potential



## KUCHIBHOTLA SRINIVAS

India's agriculture sector holds immense growth potential which could be realized incase critical bottleneck of inadequate farm-gate post-harvest infrastructure is addressed. The government of India (GOI) launched a forward-thinking initiative - the Agri-Infrastructure Fund (AIF) scheme in the year 2020 with an ambitious outlay of Rupees One lakh crores with an objective to eliminate the bottleneck of farm-gate infrastructure aimed to propel the growth of the agriculture sector and farmers prosperity. The objective of the AIF scheme is to ease the medium to long-term debt financing for investment in farm-gate infrastructure and community farming assets. The scheme provides interest subvention of 3% per annum on loan amounts up to ₹ 2.0 crores for a period of seven years.

The implementation of the scheme was successfully done by GOI with levers around ease of adaptability, flexibility, and sensitivity towards ground reality to evolving farm-gate infrastructure needs. The agile approach has resulted in a highly effective scheme unlocking value for farmers. The icing was the possibility of AIF to dovetail all other schemes which ensured significant traction in rapid scheme adoption along with enhanced viability of investments in farm-gate infrastructure.



The scheme has provided a boost to the agriculture sector with committed investments in farm-gate infrastructure to the tune of over ₹ 66,007 Crores covering over 55,600 applications. The loan sanctioned so far has been ~ ₹ 39,306 Crores with a disbursement of ~ ₹ 23,949 Crores. The scheme has accomplished positive responses from Agri-entrepreneurs, farmers, and PACS.

While all the states have embraced the scheme, Punjab leads in terms of applications received exceeding 10,000 followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. However, in terms of loan sanctioned, Madhya Pradesh takes the No. 1 position with Rs 6,421 crores, followed by Maharashtra (Rs 4,188 crores), Uttar Pradesh (Rs 3,560 crores) and Punjab (Rs 2,955 crores).

The scheme has been leveraged by states and implemented through various models:

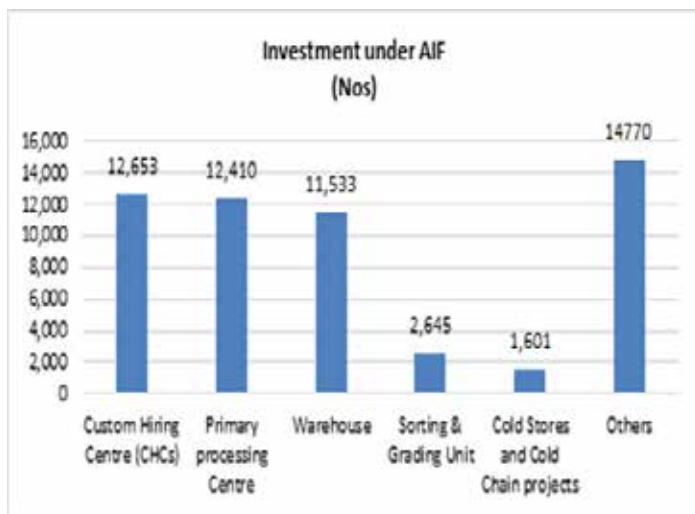
- **Agri-entrepreneurship:** This model leverages the strength of local entrepreneurship to build need-based farm-gate infrastructure across the entire agriculture value chain.
- **PACS-led:** This model leverages the extensive network of Primary Agricultural Cooperative Credit Societies (PACS) to understand the farmer's needs and build the farm gate infrastructure accordingly.
- **FPO-led:** This model leveraged the FPO ecosystem in enabling build requisite infrastructure bridging the gap also enabling develop additional lines of business for FPOs.
- **Cluster-based:** This model leveraged the collective strength of farmers or entrepreneurs having similar needs and challenges based on their geography/crop



type. This infrastructure development addressed the specific needs of each cluster more effectively.

GOI has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to build awareness and knowledge amongst the target groups about the scheme. The comprehensive approach to encourage participation in the scheme was possible by way of extensive campaigns through print, electronic, digital and social media attracting the attention of farmers, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders about objectives, benefits, and eligibility criteria. The application process was streamlined with an online platform ensuring minimal paperwork with dedicated helplines and resource centres. Past three years, the number of applications has seen remarkable growth with a CAGR of 91%. This achievement can be attributed to the government's strong commitment to ensure inclusivity.

### AIF: Step towards sustainable agriculture transformation enhancing farmer incomes



The impact of the scheme has been remarkable and one could witness the scale of participation from a diverse set of stakeholders, the width & depth of farm-gate infrastructure and the expansive geographical spread.

**Creation of Farmgate infrastructure:** Currently, over 55,600 post-harvest and community farming assets have been sanctioned, of which a significant 94% of infrastructure is in rural areas.

**Reduction in Post-harvest Losses:** Agri-value chain development is being witnessed with over 11,533 dry warehouses and 1,601 cold storage projects sanctioned. Completed projects have added approximately 312 LMT storage capacity, leading to a reduction in post-harvest losses of ~ 11 LMT of food grains and 2.9 LMT of horticulture produce.



*The scheme has already created more than 5.5 lakh employment opportunities and by 2025, the scheme is expected to generate over 8 lakh jobs, which will not only inject income into rural economies but also reduce migration to cities.*

### Value Addition and Better Price Realization:

The scheme is expected to leave an impact of value unlocking for farmers beyond storage as it encourages beneficiaries to set up primary processing units, grading facilities, and packaging units, adding value to their produce, and enabling them to fetch better prices. The scheme has supported e-marketing platforms to create alternate channels and improved market linkages, directly connecting farmers to consumers and eliminating middlemen.

### Job Creation and Rural Development:

The impact of the scheme will extend beyond income generation for farmers. The scheme has already created more than 5.5 lakh employment opportunities and by 2025, the scheme is expected to generate over 8 lakh jobs, which will not only inject income into rural economies but also reduce migration to cities.

The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund scheme stands as a great model for future initiatives, demonstrating the power of well-designed and well-implemented schemes to transform India's agricultural landscape. Current and future progress of the sanctioned farm-gate infrastructure under the AIF scheme will improve the much-needed post-harvest management, storage and logistics of farm produce, reduce food waste, increase farmers' incomes, and improve national food security. The scheme will also enable job creation in value addition of farm produce and diversify rural income cushioning the income divide between rural-urban geographies.



**Kuchibhotla Srinivas** is a seasoned professional in the agribusiness sector in India. With over 25 years of extensive experience spanning across the food & agribusiness enterprise-wide transformation. During his career, Srinivas has worked with leading agribusiness conglomerates and global consulting firms in senior leadership positions. He offers professional advisory services to various Private, Governments and Public sector enterprises with business interests in Agri, food and retail across India, Southeast Asia, and Middle East Asia geographies.

**Courtesy PIB, Srinagar**





# JKPI Reports



# Climate Change and Sustainable Livelihood for Camel Herders in Ladakh



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF  
**CAMELIDS**  
2024



Sustainable Development Goal 13:  
**CLIMATE ACTION**







The talk was a part of the ‘Expert Talk Series’ organized by the JK Policy Institute, a special initiative aimed at bringing together subject matter experts to provide insights and recommendations on various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through focused dialogue sessions. This particular session was centred around Sustainable Development Goal 13 - Climate Action, and the chosen topic of discussion was “Climate Change and Sustainable Livelihood for Camel Herders in Ladakh.”

## SPEAKER

The esteemed speaker for this session was Dr. Smruti, a highly accomplished and multifaceted figure in the field of veterinary science and climate change. With a PhD in Veterinary Physiology and extensive experience as a practitioner, educator, consultant, and researcher, Dr. Smruti’s expertise spans a diverse range of areas, including milk production, indigenous people, pastoralism, rural development, animal welfare, agriculture policies, and global climate change. Her credentials are further bolstered by her active involvement with organizations like the Resource Group for South Asian Pastoral Alliance and her recognition as a science writer with numerous awards.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND INSIGHTS

### 1. The Ecological and Economic Significance of Bactrian Camels:

Dr. Smruti shed light on the unique ecological and economic importance of the double-humped Bactrian camels found in the Nubra Valley of Ladakh, a region characterized by extreme cold desert conditions. These remarkable animals have evolved to survive and thrive in these harsh environments through their unique physiological and behavioral adaptations. Their products, including milk,

meat, fiber (wool), hides, and dung, contribute significantly to the food security, nutrition, and economic growth of the region, directly addressing Sustainable Development Goals 2 (Zero Hunger) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

One of the most significant economic drivers highlighted by Dr. Smruti is the flourishing camel safari tourism industry in the picturesque sand dunes of Nubra Valley. This industry has become a lifeline for numerous local families engaged in rearing these camels, with a single camel generating substantial income during the tourist season, often ranging from one lakh to 2.5 lakhs (approximately \$1,300 to \$3,300).

### 2. Conservation Efforts and Challenges:

Alarming, the population of Bactrian camels in Ladakh had dwindled to a mere 64 individuals in 2004, primarily due to various threats such as illegal poaching for meat, lack of access to water sources, predatory attacks by wolves, and hybridization with domestic Bactrian camels. However, concerted conservation efforts spearheaded by the Animal Husbandry Department of Ladakh, supported by government schemes and technical guidance from the National Research Centre on Camels (NRCC) in Bikaner, have played a crucial role in reviving the population, which now stands at 298 as of 2020.

Despite these commendable efforts, challenges persist in sustaining the growing population of Bactrian camels. One of the key challenges highlighted by Dr. Smruti is the task of providing sufficient feed, particularly during the harsh winter months when natural grazing is scarce. Additionally, there is a lack of commercialization and exploration of certain camel products, such as milk, which could serve as a valuable source of nutrition for the region.

### 3. Livelihood Opportunities and Sustainability:



Dr. Smruti emphasized the vast potential for commercialization of high-quality camel wool products through the promotion of cottage industries and entrepreneurship among local communities. This initiative not only provides an alternative source of income beyond the seasonal tourism industry but also incentivizes the conservation of these camels by creating economic value from their unique fiber. Self-help groups have been encouraged to manufacture and market products derived from camel wool, fostering grassroots economic development and empowerment.

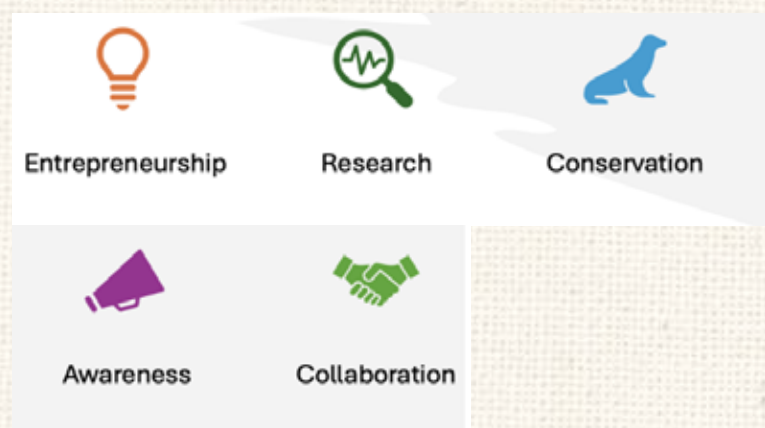
Furthermore, Dr. Smruti highlighted the need for conducting research on the milk production potential of Bactrian camels. Their milk, rich in nutrients and adaptogenic properties, could serve as a valuable source of nutrition for the region, contributing to food security and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Lastly, generating awareness about the ecological, economic, and cultural significance of Bactrian camels as the last remnants of the historic Silk Route trade was identified as a crucial factor in garnering support for their conservation. These camels represent a living link to the rich cultural heritage of the region and serve as sentinels of the delicate ecosystem they inhabit.

nutritious and climate-resilient food source.

3. Ensure continued conservation support, funding, and technical guidance from government agencies and research bodies. This includes the allocation of resources for habitat preservation, veterinary care, and capacity-building programs for local communities involved in camel rearing.
4. Initiate awareness campaigns and educational programs to highlight the ecological, economic, and cultural importance of Bactrian camels. This can be achieved through targeted outreach efforts, community engagement, and the incorporation of local knowledge and traditions into conservation strategies.
5. Adopt a multi-stakeholder approach involving local communities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, and private sector entities. This collaborative approach will foster a shared sense of responsibility and ownership, ensuring the long-term sustainability of conservation efforts and the integration of Bactrian camel-based livelihoods into broader economic and development strategies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS



**Based on the insights shared during the talk, the following recommendations were outlined:**

1. Explore avenues to commercialize and promote camel wool products through the establishment of cottage industries and the fostering of local entrepreneurship. This can be achieved through initiatives such as skill development programs, access to microfinance, and the creation of market linkages.
2. Conduct comprehensive research on the milk production potential of Bactrian camels, including their nutritional profile, yield, and suitability for various dairy products. This research can pave the way for the establishment of sustainable dairy cooperatives and the promotion of camel milk as a

## TO CONCLUDE :

The talk by Dr. Smruti shed light on the intricate relationship between the conservation of Bactrian camels and the sustainable livelihoods of camel-rearing communities in Ladakh's Nubra Valley. Through her comprehensive presentation, Dr. Smruti underscored the ecological, economic, and cultural significance of these extraordinary animals, highlighting their role in addressing various Sustainable Development Goals, such as climate action, food security, and economic growth. The insights shared during the talk emphasized the need for a multifaceted approach that combines conservation efforts, policy support, research, and awareness-raising initiatives. By highlighting the potential for commercialization of camel products, particularly wool and milk, Dr. Smruti offered a pathway towards diversifying income streams and empowering local communities while simultaneously incentivizing the preservation of this unique natural and cultural heritage.

The recommendations outlined in the talk serve as a roadmap for policymakers, researchers, and local stakeholders to work together towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals while ensuring the sustainable coexistence of indigenous communities with their natural environment and cultural heritage. By fostering a collaborative and inclusive approach, the conservation of Bactrian camels can not only safeguard a remarkable species but also contribute to the overall resilience and well-being of the communities that have coexisted with these animals for centuries.



This research can pave the way for the establishment of sustainable dairy cooperatives and the promotion of camel milk as a nutritious and climate-resilient food source.



# CLIMATE JUSTICE IN INDIA

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL AND  
ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



Sustainable Development Goal 13:  
**CLIMATE ACTION**







The JK Policy Institute organized a thought-provoking Expert Talk on the critical issue of “Climate Justice in India”, part of our SDG-13 series. The esteemed speaker for this event was Professor Prakash Kashwan, an academic and author deeply involved in research on climate change, inequality, and environmental governance.

Professor Kashwan commenced his talk by highlighting the significance of the phrase “climate justice in India” versus “climate justice for India”, underscoring the importance of understanding the nuances and implications of these distinct perspectives. He delved into the local context, citing the unprecedented snowless winter in Kashmir this year as a stark reminder of the climate crisis’s tangible impact on communities.

**Three key themes emerged as the central thrust of Professor Kashwan’s insightful presentation:**

## 1. Global Inequalities in Climate Crisis

Professor Kashwan extensively highlighted the stark global inequalities inherent in the climate crisis. He presented compelling data to demonstrate how historically accumulated greenhouse gas emissions from rich, industrialized nations like the United States have disproportionately caused climate change. In contrast, poor and developing countries that have contributed minimally to emissions face the worst consequences of the crisis.

Through visualizations, Kashwan showed that the U.S. alone is responsible for around 30-45% of cumulative emissions since 1850. Meanwhile, the remaining carbon budget for the world is a mere 14% as of 2021. He argued that these lopsided emissions represent a violation of the “polluter pays” principle of climate justice.

Kashwan further elaborated on how colonialism exacerbated emissions inequities, with European powers extracting resources and conducting emissions-intensive activities in their colonies to fuel industrial growth at home. Accounting for these colonial emissions makes the West’s responsibility even starker. Moreover, he presented models indicating how developing nations like India face severe GDP losses due to climate impacts, while many rich nations may economically benefit from climatic changes like crop patterns. This double inequity of bearing lower responsibility but higher consequences underpins calls for climate justice from the Global South.

## 2. Domestic Inequalities in India

While unpacking climate injustices within India, Kashwan pointed out the nation’s stark income inequalities that shape emission patterns. He noted how the top 1% population has consumption levels comparable to or exceeding the global North average. In contrast, around 75% of Indians live climate-friendly subsistence lifestyles relying on sustainable use of natural resources like agriculture, forestry and pastoralism. However, this majority faces the gravest impacts of climate disasters like floods, heat waves and disrupted rainfall patterns.

Kashwan spotlighted how this divide stems from inequitable policymaking processes dominated by elite interests, leading to urban-centric climate policies that neglect rural realities. He illustrated this through case studies of diverse sectors like renewable energy expansion prioritizing corporate interests over community needs.

## 3. Policy Injustices and Way Forward

A major theme was the critique of climate policies in India being unjust and inequitable. Kashwan argued they disproportionately benefit the urban middle/upper classes and corporate lobbies while overlooking marginalized rural populations who face the brunt of impacts. He attributed this injustice to exclusionary policymaking processes shaped by vested interests, perpetuating social inequalities of caste, gender, and class. The solutions advocated by powerful actors like pushing for emission offsets through tree-planting often undermine local ecological realities.

The way forward, as per Kashwan, lies in radically transformative bottom-up change driven by grassroots movements across different scales - local, regional and national. He emphasized giving voice to indigenous and rural communities while decentralizing governance for context-specific solutions.

Overarchingly, Kashwan powerfully argued for reframing climate action through the lens of social justice and equity - ensuring fair sharing of responsibilities, sustainable community exploitation of resources, and inclusive policymaking centring marginalized voices.

### Recommendations:

1. Reform policymaking processes to ensure inclusive representation and amplification of marginalized voices, including indigenous communities and rural populations.
2. Implement decentralized, locally relevant climate adaptation plans that account for the unique challenges and ecological contexts of different regions and communities within India.



3. Prioritize the concept of human security over the militaristic securitization narratives often propagated by industrialized nations, which can lead to harmful interventions in the name of climate action.
4. Tackle the intersecting inequalities of caste, gender, and class through climate policies, recognizing the disproportionate impact of climate change on marginalized groups and their unique vulnerabilities.
5. Protect community rights over natural resources from corporate exploitation, ensuring that the benefits of resource extraction and utilization accrue to local populations.
6. Promote collective ownership models and community-driven initiatives for climate resilience, drawing on traditional ecological knowledge and practices.
7. Spread public awareness of the intricate intersections of ecology, inequality, and the climate crisis, fostering a deeper understanding of the complex socio-

environmental dynamics at play.

In summation, Professor Prakash Kashwan's illuminating talk series on "Climate Justice in India" offered a compelling perspective on the urgent need to reframe climate action through the lens of social and environmental justice. By highlighting the stark global and domestic inequalities exacerbated by climate change, he underscored the imperative of centring equity, inclusivity, and grassroots empowerment in climate policies and programs. His recommendations emphasize the crucial role of decentralized governance, the protection of community rights, and the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge in crafting holistic, locally relevant solutions. Ultimately, the talk served as a clarion call to confront the intersecting challenges of climate change, social injustice, and ecological degradation through a transformative, inclusive, and bottom-up approach rooted in the principles of climate justice.



...around 75% of Indians live climate-friendly subsistence lifestyles relying on sustainable use of natural resources like agriculture, forestry and pastoralism. However, this majority faces the gravest impacts of climate disasters like floods, heat waves and disrupted rainfall patterns.





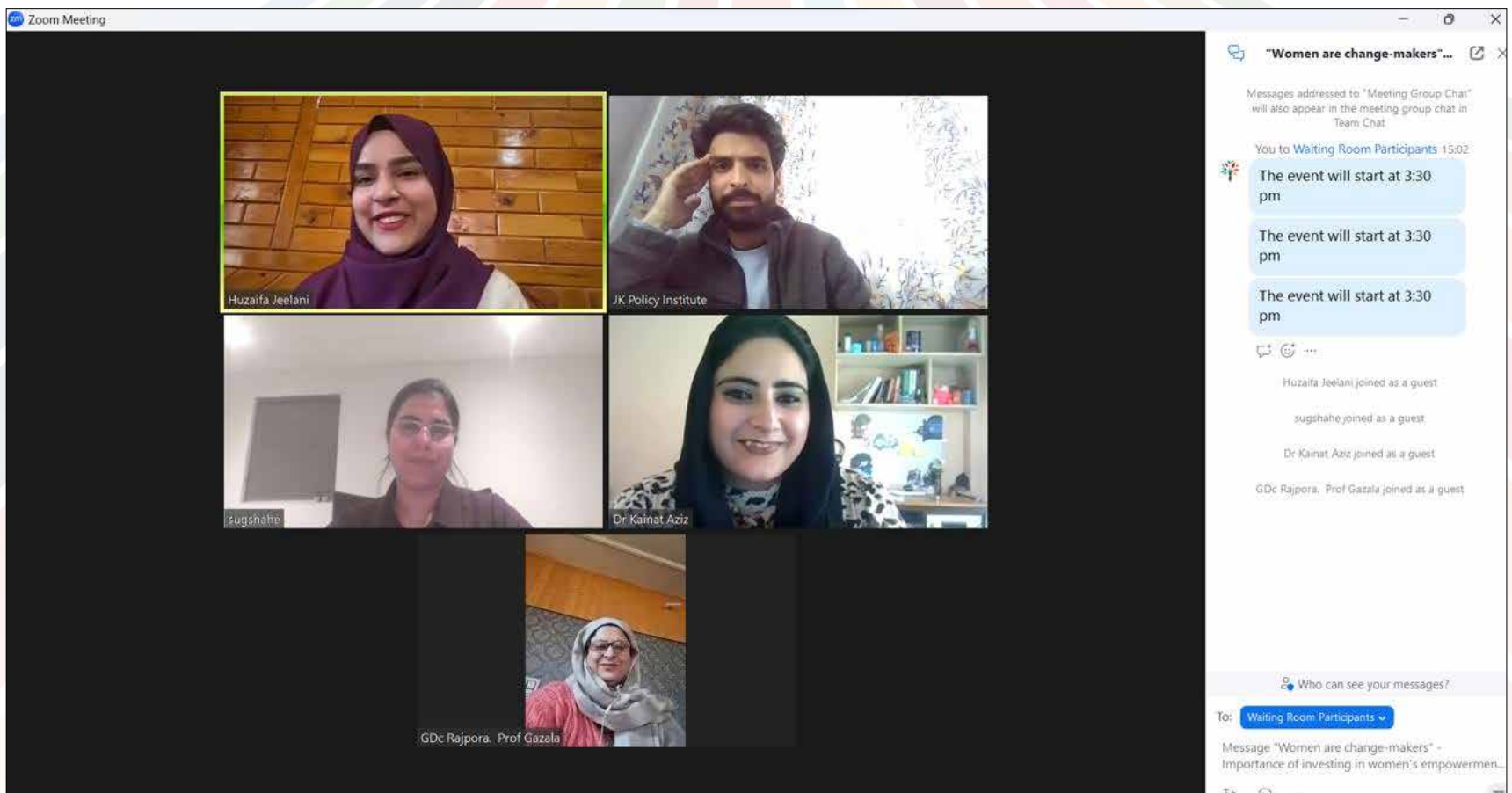
INTERNATIONAL  
**Women's Day**

8 MARCH 2024

#InvestInWomen

#IWD2024

**SUPPORTING WOMEN  
CHANGE-MAKERS**



Sustainable Development Goal 5:  
**GENDER EQUALITY**





**T**he Women are Changemakers event, held virtually on International Women's Day, served as a platform to celebrate the remarkable contributions of women in Jammu and Kashmir while addressing the challenges hindering their empowerment. Esteemed speakers shared personal narratives, insights, and recommendations to envision pathways towards gender equality and justice in the region.

During the event, we had the privilege of hearing from three remarkable individuals whose diverse backgrounds and experiences shed light on the multifaceted nature of women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir. First, Sugra, a seasoned Lead Platform Developer at Publicis Sapient in Australia, shared her journey of breaking barriers in the tech industry while advocating for quality education and opportunities for women. With a passion for empowering women in tech, Sugra's involvement in organizations like Women In Tech, Sydney, reflects her commitment to fostering inclusivity and diversity in the field.

Additionally, Dr. Gazala Gayas, currently serving as the Principal at Government Degree College, Rajpora, captivated the audience with her insights into academia and literary pursuits. A distinguished author, poet, and academic researcher, Dr. Gaya's extensive contributions to literature and education exemplify her dedication to intellectual excellence and creative expression. Her presence at the event underscored the importance of amplifying women's voices in both scholarly and artistic domains, enriching academic and literary communities alike.

Furthermore, Ms Kainat Aziz, hailing from Sopore town in Jammu and Kashmir, brought a unique perspective rooted in environmental sciences and socio-environmental activism. With a background in Environmental Sciences and a strong commitment to nature conservation, Ms Aziz's research and advocacy work has garnered recognition at national and international levels. Her interdisciplinary approach and dedication to addressing environmental issues reflect her aspiration to create positive change through academia and activism. Together, these three individuals offered invaluable insights and inspiration, contributing to a meaningful discussion on women's empowerment in the region.

## KEY DISCUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS:

### Personal Narratives of Struggle and Triumph

The personal narratives shared by Dr. Gazala Gayas, Miss Sugra, and Dr. Kainat resonated deeply with the audience, offering poignant glimpses into the challenges and triumphs faced by women in Jammu and Kashmir. Dr. Gayas recounted her journey as an academician and author, navigating societal expectations while pursuing her passion for literature. Her story exemplified the resilience and determination required to overcome familial and societal pressures, highlighting the transformative power of education and self-belief. Similarly, Miss Sugra's narrative shed light on the hurdles encountered in the male-dominated field of technology, where gender biases

often hinder women's progress. Her journey underscored the importance of perseverance and self-advocacy in challenging stereotypes and carving out a space for women in STEM fields. Additionally, Dr. Kainat's perspective as a medical professional provided valuable insights into the intersectionality of gender and healthcare, emphasizing the need for equitable access to healthcare services and advocacy for women's health rights. Her story resonated with many, highlighting the critical role of women in promoting health and well-being within their communities.

### Gender Bias in Professional Settings

The discussion on gender bias in professional settings, led by Miss Sugra and Dr. Kainat, provided a sobering reflection on the persistent challenges faced by women in advancing their careers. Miss Sugra's firsthand experiences in the tech industry underscored the prevalence of unconscious biases and stereotypes that often disadvantage women in male-dominated fields. Her narrative illuminated the need for proactive measures to address systemic inequities and create inclusive work environments that value diversity and gender equality. Similarly, Dr. Kainat's insights from the healthcare sector highlighted the barriers faced by women in accessing leadership positions and advocating for gender-responsive healthcare policies. Her call for greater representation of women in healthcare leadership resonated with the audience, emphasizing the transformative potential of diverse perspectives in driving positive change. Together, these discussions underscored the urgency of dismantling gender biases and creating pathways for women to thrive in their chosen professions, ultimately contributing to greater gender equality and social justice in Jammu and Kashmir.

### Societal Norms and Cultural Expectations

Dr. Gazala Gayas provided a nuanced exploration of the societal norms and cultural expectations that shape women's experiences in Jammu and Kashmir. Drawing from her own journey, Dr. Gayas highlighted the pervasive influence of patriarchal attitudes on women's autonomy and agency. She eloquently articulated the challenges faced by women who defy traditional gender roles, emphasizing the importance of challenging entrenched norms to create space for women's aspirations and achievements. Furthermore, Dr. Kainat echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the critical role of community engagement and education in challenging harmful practices such as child marriage and promoting gender equality. Her advocacy for grassroots initiatives underscored the importance of empowering women at the local level to effect meaningful change within their communities. These discussions illuminated the complex interplay between culture, tradition, and women's empowerment, highlighting the need for multi-faceted approaches that address structural inequalities while respecting diverse cultural contexts.

### Leadership and Representation

The panellists' reflections on leadership and representation underscored the transformative potential of wom-



en's leadership in driving social change. Miss Sugra's advocacy for inclusive workplaces and mentorship programs highlighted the importance of fostering environments where women can thrive and advance into leadership roles. Dr. Kainat's emphasis on mentorship and networking further underscored the importance of building supportive ecosystems that empower women to lead and effect change within their respective fields. Moreover, Dr. Gazala Gayas' call for greater representation of women in academia and literature resonated with the audience, emphasizing the need for diverse voices and perspectives to enrich scholarly discourse and cultural production. Together, these discussions underscored the importance of amplifying women's voices and experiences in decision-making processes and leadership positions, ultimately advancing gender equality and social justice in Jammu and Kashmir and beyond.

In conclusion, the Women are Changemakers event catalyzed meaningful dialogue and reflection on the complexities of women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir. The personal narratives shared by the panellists illuminated the myriad challenges faced by women in navigating societal expectations and systemic barriers to advancement. Through their stories of resilience and triumph, Dr. Gazala Gayas, Miss Sugra, and Dr. Kainat inspired attendees to recognize the transformative power of education, advocacy, and self-belief in overcoming adversity.

Furthermore, the discussions on gender bias in professional settings, societal norms, and leadership representation highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address systemic inequalities and create more inclusive and equitable societies. By amplifying diverse voices and perspectives, fostering inclusive workplaces, and promoting mentorship and community engagement, stakeholders can collectively work towards dismantling barriers to women's empowerment and advancing gender equality in Jammu and Kashmir. Ultimately, the event underscored the importance of collaborative action and solidarity in building a more just and equitable future for all women in the region.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The panellists offered several key recommendations aimed at advancing women's empowerment and gender justice in Jammu and Kashmir:

**Promoting Education and Skill Development:** Dr. Gazala Gayas emphasized the transformative power of education in empowering women and breaking down societal barriers. Recommendations included expanding access to quality education for girls and women, providing vocational training and skill development programs, and promoting literacy initiatives to enhance women's economic opportunities and social mobility.

**Creating Inclusive Work Environments:** Miss Sugra highlighted the importance of fostering inclusive workplaces that value diversity and promote gender equality. Recommendations included implementing gender-sensitive policies and practices, providing



Women are Changemakers event catalyzed meaningful dialogue and reflection on the complexities of women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir. The personal narratives shared by the panellists illuminated the myriad challenges faced by women in navigating societal expectations and systemic barriers to advancement.

mentorship and leadership development programs for women, and addressing unconscious biases and stereotypes in professional settings to create pathways for women's advancement.

**Community Engagement and Advocacy:** Dr. Kainat underscored the critical role of community engagement and advocacy in challenging harmful practices and promoting gender equality. Recommendations included strengthening grassroots initiatives to raise awareness about women's rights, advocating for gender-responsive healthcare policies, and empowering women to become agents of change within their communities through education and leadership development.

**Representation in Decision-Making:** The panellists emphasized the importance of increasing women's representation in decision-making processes across sectors. Recommendations included promoting women's leadership in academia, literature, healthcare, and other fields, advocating for gender-balanced representation in governance and policymaking bodies, and fostering mentorship and networking opportunities to support women's career advancement and leadership aspirations.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work towards creating an enabling environment where women can fully participate, contribute, and lead in all aspects of society, ultimately advancing women's empowerment and gender justice in Jammu and Kashmir.



BEFORE YOU CONCLUDE LECTURE SERIES

# The political economy of war and peace in Afghanistan



Sustainable Development Goal 16:  
**PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**







## BACKGROUND

The “Before You Conclude” lecture series, hosted by the JK Policy Institute, delved into the intricate dynamics of Sustainable Development Goal 16, focusing on peace, justice, and strong institutions. In the latest session, held on the 25th of March 2024, the discussion revolved around the political economy of war and peace in Afghanistan. Dr. Dhananjay Tripathi, an esteemed scholar in international relations and South Asian politics, graced the event with his insightful perspectives.

Afghanistan, situated at the crossroads of Central and South Asia, has historically been characterized by political turbulence and external interventions. Decades of conflict, including Soviet occupation, civil war, and the US-led intervention following the 9/11 attacks, have left the country grappling with instability and insecurity. Despite efforts to establish democratic governance and rebuild infrastructure, Afghanistan continues to face challenges related to governance, security, and economic development.

The recent withdrawal of US forces and the return of the Taliban to power have raised concerns about the country’s future trajectory. The Taliban, ousted from power in 2001 by the US-led coalition, have regained control over significant portions of Afghanistan, prompting fears of a return to repressive governance and curtailment of civil liberties, particularly for women and minorities. The international community is closely monitoring the situation, with questions surrounding the Taliban’s commitment to peace and stability and the implications for regional security and stability.

## SPEAKER

Dr. Tripathi, the keynote speaker at the event, is a renowned expert on South Asian affairs, specializing in Afghanistan. With a distinguished academic background and extensive field experience, Dr. Tripathi brings a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding

Afghanistan’s political, social, and economic landscape. Having conducted research and engaged in diplomatic efforts in the region, Dr. Tripathi is uniquely positioned to offer insights into the challenges and opportunities facing Afghanistan in its quest for stability and development.

## KEY DISCUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

### 1. Resistance and Negotiations:

Dr. Tripathi highlighted the history of resistance in Afghanistan, emphasizing the resilience of Afghan communities in the face of foreign intervention. He discussed the evolution of US-Taliban negotiations and the exclusion of certain stakeholders, such as the Afghan government, from the peace process, raising concerns about the legitimacy and inclusivity of the agreements reached.

### 2. Evolution of the Taliban:

The discussion delved into the complexities of the Taliban’s resurgence and their attempts to present a more moderate image to the international community. While acknowledging some positive developments, such as disavowing support for terrorist organizations and reducing reliance on external actors like Pakistan, Dr. Tripathi expressed skepticism about the Taliban’s commitment to fundamental human rights, particularly concerning women’s education and ethnic inclusion.

### 3. International Recognition:

Despite lacking official recognition from many countries, the Taliban have sought to gain informal legitimacy on the international stage. However, concerns persist regarding the treatment of women and minorities under Taliban rule, highlighting the importance of addressing human rights issues for broader international acceptance and support.



#### **4. Impact on Women and Education:**

Dr. Tripathi underscored the alarming reversal of gains in women's education and civil liberties over the past two decades, noting the profound implications for Afghanistan's youth and its potential for development. Restrictions on women's access to education beyond a certain level were identified as a significant setback for gender equality and social progress.

#### **5. Economic Opportunities and Aid Dependence:**

The discussion explored Afghanistan's rich mineral resources and their potential role in driving economic growth and self-sustainability. However, the country remains heavily dependent on international aid, necessitating initiatives for economic diversification and investment in infrastructure, education, and entrepreneurship to create sustainable livelihoods for Afghan citizens.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **1. Inclusive Governance:**

Dr. Tripathi stressed the importance of inclusive governance that respects the rights of all citizens, particularly women and ethnic minorities. The Taliban should prioritize dialogue and reconciliation with diverse stakeholders to build a more stable and inclusive society, fostering trust and cooperation among different segments of Afghan society.

#### **2. Economic Development:**

Efforts should be made to harness Afghanistan's natural resources and promote economic growth beyond aid dependence. This requires investment in infrastructure, education, and entrepreneurship to create sustainable livelihoods and reduce reliance on external assistance.

#### **3. International Engagement:**

The international community, including neighbouring countries and global powers, should remain actively engaged in supporting Afghanistan's development trajectory. This includes providing diplomatic support, and humanitarian assistance, and promoting regional cooperation to address common challenges and promote peace and stability in the region.

#### **4. Women's Empowerment:**

Ensuring women's rights and access to education and economic opportunities is crucial for Afghanistan's long-term stability and prosperity. International donors and Afghan authorities should prioritize policies and programs that empower women and girls to participate fully in society, fostering gender equality and social progress.

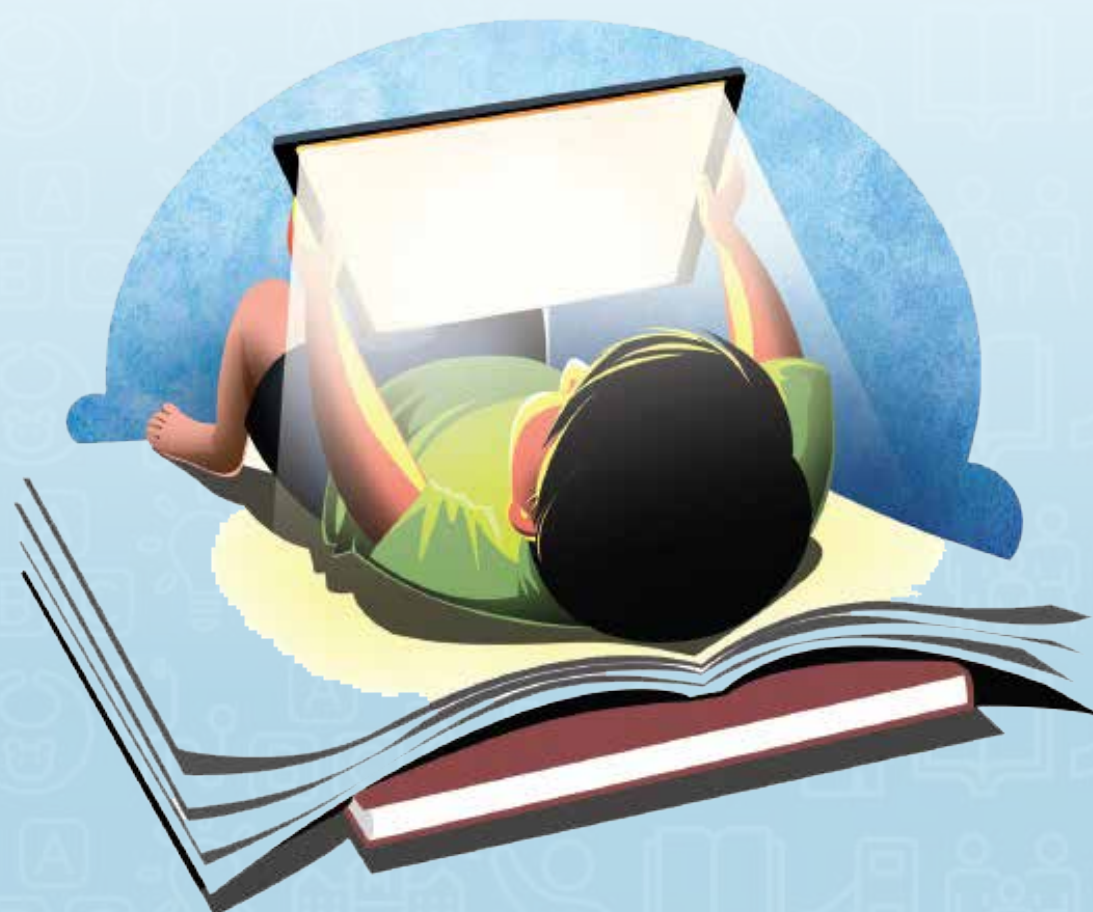
In conclusion, the event provided valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges facing Afghanistan and highlighted the need for concerted efforts by domestic and international stakeholders to address these challenges and pave the way for a more stable, inclusive, and prosperous future for the Afghan people. By prioritizing inclusive governance, economic development, and women's empowerment, Afghanistan can overcome its current challenges and realize its full potential as a nation.





EXPERT TALK SERIES

**Impact of excessive screen time on children's health in the context of virtual autism**



Sustainable Development Goal 3:  
**GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**







## BACKGROUND

The JK Policy Institute, a think tank dedicated to sustainable development, organized the 'Expert Talk Series' as a special initiative. The aim was to foster dialogue and gather inputs from subject matter experts across various fields pertaining to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This particular session was part of the series focused on **SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-Being**, with the specific topic of *"Impact of Excessive Screen Time on Children's Health in the Context of Virtual Autism."*

The choice of this theme underscores the growing concern surrounding the potential adverse effects of prolonged digital media exposure on the physical and mental well-being of children, especially in the context of an emerging phenomenon known as 'virtual autism.' The event provided a platform for the guest expert to share their insights, research findings, and recommendations to address this critical issue effectively.

## SPEAKER

**Dr. Shikha Goyal**, the esteemed guest speaker, brought nearly two decades of invaluable expertise to the discussion. As a compassionate advocate for children with disabilities, she has dedicated her career to improving the lives of these young individuals through her work as a paediatric disabilities consultant and occupational therapist.

Currently serving as a senior paediatric occupational therapist at Vasant Valley School, Dr. Goyal plays a pivotal role in providing tailored therapeutic interventions to children with diverse needs. Her ability to independently assess, plan, and track progress ensures that each child receives personalized care and support. Prior to her current position, Dr. Goyal held a paediatric role and served as a professor at the Indian Spinal Injury Center, where she provided rehabilitation services for patients with spinal cord injuries and other neurological conditions.

With her wealth of knowledge, empathy, and

unwavering dedication, Dr. Goyal was an ideal choice to shed light on the complex issue of virtual autism and its implications for children's health and well-being.

## KEY DISCUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

**Virtual Autism:** The term 'virtual autism' was introduced to describe a condition observed in children under the age of 3 who are excessively exposed to screens, typically for 3-4 hours daily. The symptoms of virtual autism closely resemble those of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), including behavioural issues, attention deficits, social interaction problems, and a reluctance to engage in physical activities.

**Root Causes:** While the research is ongoing, several potential factors have been identified as contributing to the development of virtual autism. These include a decline in the levels of the neurotransmitter GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid), which can lead to abnormal behavior, and disruptions in the functioning of melatonin-expressing neurons, which play a role in regulating circadian rhythms and sleep patterns. Furthermore, excessive screen time can lead to sensory-motor deprivation, as children fail to experience and integrate all five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell) essential for brain development. Socio-affective deprivation, or a lack of real-world social interactions and emotional connections, is another potential factor contributing to the manifestation of virtual autism symptoms.

**Impact:** The impact of virtual autism on children's health and well-being is multifaceted. It can lead to disruptions in sleep cycles, emotional dysregulation (difficulty controlling emotions), cognitive deficits (impairments in thinking and understanding), and withdrawal symptoms, such as a reluctance to engage in social interactions or outdoor activities.



**Difference from Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):**

While virtual autism shares some symptoms with ASD, it is essential to differentiate between the two conditions. ASD is a complex neurodevelopmental disorder with persistent deficits in social communication and interaction, as well as restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities. Unlike virtual autism, which is primarily linked to excessive screen exposure, ASD has genetic, environmental, and neurological factors contributing to its development.

**Parental Role:** Parents play a crucial role in recognizing the early signs of virtual autism and implementing preventive measures. As the first teachers for their children, parents must limit screen time gradually, promote outdoor activities and non-digital hobbies, and serve as role models for healthy technology habits. If necessary, seeking professional intervention is also recommended to address any persisting behavioral or developmental issues.

**Practical Strategies:** Dr. Goyal provided several practical strategies for parents to mitigate the effects of excessive screen time and promote their children's overall well-being: a. Setting screen time limits: Establishing daily limits for screen time and gradually decreasing it if necessary. b. Dedicated quality time: Engaging in face-to-face interactions, listening to children, and understanding their needs through meaningful conversations.

**Encouraging Sensory Exploration:** Promoting outdoor activities, nature scavenger hunts, water play, music/dance, and other hands-on experiences that stimulate the senses. d. Non-digital hobbies: Introducing children to non-digital hobbies and activities that foster imagination, creativity, and physical activity. e. Modeling healthy technology habits: Creating screen-free zones in the home, limiting personal screen time, and demonstrating responsible technology use.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Increased Collaboration:** To address the challenges posed by excessive screen time and virtual autism, Dr. Goyal emphasized the need for collaboration between technology companies and policymakers. This could involve creating awareness campaigns, imposing age-appropriate restrictions on certain types of content or applications, and developing educational apps with built-in time limits for young children.

**Institutional Interventions:** Educational institutions and government agencies have a vital role to play in raising awareness and providing guidance on responsible technology use. Dr. Goyal recommended organizing more seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns to educate parents and children on the potential risks and strategies for mitigating them.

**Multi-Stakeholder Approach:** Tackling the emerging challenge of virtual autism effectively requires a collective effort involving multiple stakeholders. This includes parents, educators, experts, policymakers, and technology companies, each contributing their unique perspectives and expertise to develop comprehensive solutions.

**Early Intervention:** Recognizing the early signs of virtual autism and implementing preventive measures or seeking professional help is crucial for ensuring children's healthy development in the digital age. Early intervention can help mitigate the potential long-term impacts of excessive screen time and promote overall well-being.

In conclusion, the expert talk by Dr. Shikha Goyal shed light on the pressing issue of virtual autism and its connection to excessive screen time in children. By providing insights into the root causes, impacts, and practical strategies, Dr. Goyal empowered parents and caregivers with valuable knowledge and tools to navigate the digital landscape responsibly. Her recommendations for increased collaboration, institutional interventions, a multi-stakeholder approach, and early intervention underscore the need for a concerted effort to safeguard children's health and well-being in an increasingly digital world.



...excessive screen time can lead to sensory-motor deprivation, as children fail to experience and integrate all five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell) essential for brain development. Socio-affective deprivation, or a lack of real-world social interactions and emotional connections, is another potential factor contributing to the manifestation of virtual autism symptoms.







**JKPI Publications**



# The rise of solar energy in Jammu and Kashmir



**ZAHOOR AHMAD DAR**

**R**esources are invaluable assets that sustain life on Earth, differing in their utility. They can be broadly categorized as renewable and non-renewable resources. Renewable resources are inexhaustible and capable of replenishing themselves, such as wind and solar energy. Conversely, non-renewable resources, such as gas and coal, are finite and limited in supply. The relentless over-exploitation of non-renewable resources at an unprecedented rate poses a significant threat to both humanity and the environment. With a heavy reliance on conventional sources of energy, non-renewable resources are being depleted at an alarming pace. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritize the harnessing of alternative energy sources, such as solar power, to meet our current needs and ensure sustainability.

To mitigate the effects of climate change and the escalating emissions, governments worldwide recognize the pivotal role of non-conventional energy sources and applications. By 2030, the Indian government has committed to increasing the installed capacity of renewable energy in the country to 500 GW. Moreover, it aims to derive at least 60% of its renewable energy from solar power. With this objective in mind, the government of India launched the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM) to address the growing needs and consumption demands. A significant endeavor to promote solar energy is the National Solar Mission, a collaborative initiative between the Indian government and state governments.

The National Action Plan on Climate Change incorporates

the mission as one of its core policies. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh launched the program on January 11, 2010, naming it the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission, with an objective of 20 GW by 2022. Later, in the 2015 Indian Union budget, Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised this target to 100 GW. India's utility solar power generation capacity increased from 2,650 MW on May 26, 2014, to 12,288.83 MW on March 31, 2017, representing an almost five-fold increase. In 2017–18, the nation added 9,362.65 MW, the highest ever. Considering only utility installed capacity, the initial goal of 20 GW was surpassed in 2018, four years ahead of schedule.

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission aims to position India as a global leader in solar energy by establishing the necessary legislative framework for its widespread adoption nationwide. It has set a target of 20,000 MW and mandates that this target be achieved in three phases for various components, including grid-connected solar power. The first phase spans from 2012 to 2013, the second from 2013 to 2017, and the third from 2017 to 2022. By 2022, the government committed to reaching 20 GW of installed solar capacity. It was proposed that this be accomplished in three stages. The first year of the 12th five-year plan, 2013, marked the beginning of the first phase. While the 13th five-year plan (2017–22) was intended to constitute the third phase, the second phase concluded in 2017.

The targets for the first phase were set at 1.4 GW, those for the second phase ranged from 11 to 15 GW, and those for the third phase were set at 22 GW by 2022. On July 1, 2015, the government revised the target from 20 GW to 100 GW. The yearly targets from 2015 to 2016 were also increased to achieve the 100 GW target by 2022. Approximately two and a half months after the mission's launch on January 11, 2010, India had installed a solar capacity of 161 MW. Three months before the targets were revised, on March 31, 2015, India had reached 3,744 MW of installed solar capacity. As of June 30, 2021, India now has 6.1 GW of installed rooftop solar capacity. The MNRE has proposed utilizing 40 GW of rooftop solar projects and 60 GW of large- and medium-scale solar projects to achieve the expanded target of 100,000 MW.



| YEAR-WISE TARGETS (IN MW)     |              |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Category                      | 2015–16      | 2016–17       | 2017–18       | 2018–19       | 2019–20       | 2020–21       | 2021–22       | Total         |
| Rooftop Solar                 | 200          | 4,800         | 5,000         | 6,000         | 7,000         | 8,000         | 9,000         | 40,000        |
| Ground Mounted Solar projects | 1,800        | 7,200         | 10,000        | 10,000        | 10,000        | 9,500         | 8,500         | 57,000        |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>2,000</b> | <b>12,000</b> | <b>15,000</b> | <b>16,000</b> | <b>17,000</b> | <b>17,500</b> | <b>17,500</b> | <b>97,000</b> |

## Contextualizing Kashmir

At present, the solar industry in Jammu and Kashmir generates approximately Rs 50 crore in revenue annually. The Association of Solar Power Equipment Dealers of Kashmir reports that 70% of Srinagar's gas pumps are now powered by solar energy. The Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) spearheaded this initiative by requesting all of its pump owners to install solar power installations. Starting in 2011, there was a significant increase in the installation of home lighting systems in Kashmir, comprising a battery, an inverter, and a module (solar panel), particularly in non-electrified homes.

Approximately 140,000 houses in the private sector have installed Home Lighting Systems, with over 65% of these installations occurring in non-electrified homes. Based on this data, it is estimated that around 7 lakh individuals in Kashmir are solar power users, assuming an average household size of five people. Regarding products owned by rural residents, solar lanterns have surpassed home lighting systems as the most sought-after item on the market. A major solar equipment seller in Kashmir, Star Valley, sold almost 30,000 lanterns in 2022. Over the previous four years, the firm has sold an average of 25,000 lanterns annually, bringing the total number of lanterns sold in the last five years to approximately 130,000. The combined output of these lanterns, each with a 3-watt capacity, is around 390,000 watts (390 Kilowatts or 0.39 Megawatts).

According to another solar power vendor based in Sher-e-Khaas, his company has been selling solar power equipment with a 1 MW capacity in various forms since 2012. Over the past three years, his company has sold 50,000 9-watt lanterns to both government and non-governmental organizations. These lanterns were distributed to residents in rural Jammu and Kashmir, where access to electricity is limited to a few hours per season.

Indus Lights, another company offering solar technology, sold 10,000 Mini-Home Lighting Systems in 2022 alone. Each of these systems comes with two 5-watt bulbs. During the same period, the company also sold 20,000 lamps.

## Initiatives

On February 29, the central government authorized the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijlee Yojana, with an estimated cost of Rs. 75,021 crore. The program aims to promote the nationwide installation of solar rooftop panels and provides free electricity to one crore families. For systems with a capacity of up to 2 kW, the program offers a subsidy of 60% of the solar unit cost; for systems with capacities between 2 and 3 kW, it provides a subsidy of 40% of the additional system cost.

Every month, homes will receive 300 units of free electricity. A household of this type can save between Rs. 1,800 and Rs. 1,875 on electricity bills by producing its own energy. Over the course of the 25-year lifespan of the rooftop system, the planned scheme will add 30 GW of solar capacity to the residential sector's supply of solar energy, resulting in the production of 1000 BUs of electricity and a reduction of 720 million tonnes of

## JAWAHARLAL NEHRU NATIONAL SOLAR MISSION

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission aims to position India as a global leader in solar energy by establishing the necessary legislative framework for its widespread adoption nationwide. It has set a target of 20,000 MW and mandates that this target be achieved in three phases for various components, including grid-connected solar power. The first phase spans from 2012 to 2013, the second from 2013 to 2017, and the third from 2017 to 2022. By 2022, the government committed to reaching 20 GW of installed solar capacity. It was proposed that this be accomplished in three stages. The first year of the 12th five-year plan, 2013, marked the beginning of the first phase. While the 13th five-year plan (2017–22) was intended to constitute the third phase, the second phase concluded in 2017.

CO2 equivalent emissions.

To serve as an example for the adoption of rooftop solar in rural regions, the project also calls for the development of a Solar Village example in each district of the nation. According to the official release, the program is expected to directly create about 17 lakh jobs in manufacturing, supply chain, logistics, sales, installation, O&M, and other services.

With a total capacity of 27.61 MW, 1,900 buildings in Jammu and Kashmir currently have rooftop solar power plants installed, either by the Jammu and Kashmir Energy Development Agency (JAKEDA) or other authorities. By the end of 2025, rooftop solar power plants should be installed on the remaining 20,000 buildings, potentially adding another 300 MW to the total capacity. According to the CEO of JAKEDA, Saurabh



Bhagat, government offices in the Union Territory have 22,494 registrations, with a sanctioned load of about 486 megawatts.

The installation of rooftop solar plants on private homes in Jammu and Kashmir has received approval from the Administrative Council, led by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. In Jammu and Kashmir, the central government's Grid Connected Solar Rooftop scheme was already in place. Under this program, the Union Ministry for Renewable Energy offers a 40% subsidy for the installation of solar plants with a maximum capacity of 3 KW. Since the government entered the market, an additional 25% of the cost of a solar plant up to 10 KW in capacity has been subsidized, bringing the effective cost to the customer of a 3 KW solar plant down from Rs 157,881 to just Rs 5,525. Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha's Administrative Council of the government pays any of its 20 registered vendors the remaining sum of Rs 102,622.65 so they can install the plant on a residential property.

Even though the equipment's anticipated lifetime is 25 years from the date of installation, the government is nevertheless offering a 5-year replacement warranty. In addition to supplying homes with electricity, a grid-connected rooftop solar plant can sell the energy it generates to the traditional electricity grid to which it is linked. Unlike home lighting systems, which charge batteries for later use, rooftop solar plants are used directly for energy production. According to official data, about 400 Grid Connected Solar Rooftop Plants have already been erected in Jammu & Kashmir.

Another government program currently in place in Jammu and Kashmir is the Solar Pumping Scheme for Farmers, which subsidizes irrigation pumps with a capacity of two to ten horsepower by 30% from the J&K government and 50% from the Union government, reducing the total cost of the program to only 30,000. The program aims to transition farmers from irrigation pumps powered by kerosene, diesel, and gasoline to those driven by solar energy, which will save money and improve the environment.

In line with this initiative is another flagship program known as The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthaan Mahabhayan (PM-KUSUM). This project allows individuals to

construct solar power plants with a capacity of 0.5 MW to 2 MW on their vacant land. A 1 MW solar power plant would require 40 kanals of land for construction, and it would generate 15 lakh units of electricity annually.

When the Discom purchases from a solar plant, the State Electricity Regulatory Commission has set the rate at Rs 4 per unit, on which the Discom additionally receives a subsidy of about Rs 0.35. Official records show that under the PM-KUSUM project in Jammu and Kashmir, three individuals in the Kathua district, one in Doda, and one in Samba have donated land for the construction of solar power plants.

## Major Issues

J&K continues to experience power outages, and aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses persist despite power reforms. The debt owed by the Power Development Corporation Limited (JKPDCL) is substantial. The Power Evacuation Infrastructure project has stalled due to a lack of finance. Due to a lack of payment security measures, larger private companies have been hesitant to invest in either of the Union Territories. Switching to solar energy systems, which require less upkeep and operation than traditional power plants, can potentially alleviate the financial burden on the power company.

## Conclusion

It is becoming increasingly imperative to comprehend the efficiency, viability, and dependability of renewable energy sources as they gain traction in the power sector. Rooftop solar panels have played a significant role in meeting power demands by lowering transmission losses and stabilizing the power situation, providing a decentralized and dependable energy supply. Rooftop solar panels offer an additional, sustainable energy source to help close the energy gap. Adopting solar electricity aligns with international initiatives to promote sustainable development.



The relentless over-exploitation of non-renewable resources at an unprecedented rate poses a significant threat to both humanity and the environment. With a heavy reliance on conventional sources of energy, non-renewable resources are being depleted at an alarming pace. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritize the harnessing of alternative energy sources, such as solar power, to meet our current needs and ensure sustainability.





# Learning deficit in Kashmir's education system: Insights from ASER Reports



**NEHA AGGARWAL**

Education stands as the cornerstone of human progress. It is a gateway to opportunity, the catalyst for innovation, and the engine driving social transformation. It is a transformative journey that empowers individuals to reach their fullest potential. In the realm of education, enrollment rates are often seen as a beacon of progress, signalling increased access to learning opportunities for all. Yet, beneath the surface of high enrollment rates lies a pressing concern: the persistent challenge of low learning outcomes. Despite the efforts to expand access to education, every region grapples with the stark reality that enrollment alone does not guarantee quality learning. Kashmir is no exception. In this article, an attempt has been made to unravel the complexities of this vexing issue by scrutinizing the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) reports. The article discusses the underlying challenges contributing to the gap between enrollment and learning outcomes and explores potential solutions to bridge this divide for the betterment of individuals and societies alike.

## A Learning Deficit: Insights from ASER Reports

The latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023, titled "Beyond Basics" reveals that more than 86.8% of individuals in the age group of 14-18 are enrolled in educational institutions. While commendable strides have been made towards achieving the national goal of attaining 100% GER, concerns persist regarding the learning deficit among students. Despite high enrolment rates, there doesn't seem to be much change in their foundational literacy and numeracy skills. According to the report, one-fourth of children enrolled struggle to read a Class 2-level text fluently in their regional languages. Comparing data from 2017 to 2023, the percentage of 14-18-year-olds proficient in reading Class-2 text has slightly declined from 76.3% to 73.6%.

Moreover, as per the data from the ASER 2023 report, a staggering 56.7% cannot perform simple division. Children in India continue to struggle with basic arithmetic skills even after reaching class 10 and higher levels of education. The disheartening trends for students who can do at least a 3-digit by 1-digit numerical division calculation are shown in the chart below.

**Chart 1: Basic math trends over time: Std V-VIII: % Children enrolled in government schools who can do at least division: ASER All India (rural) 2014-2022**

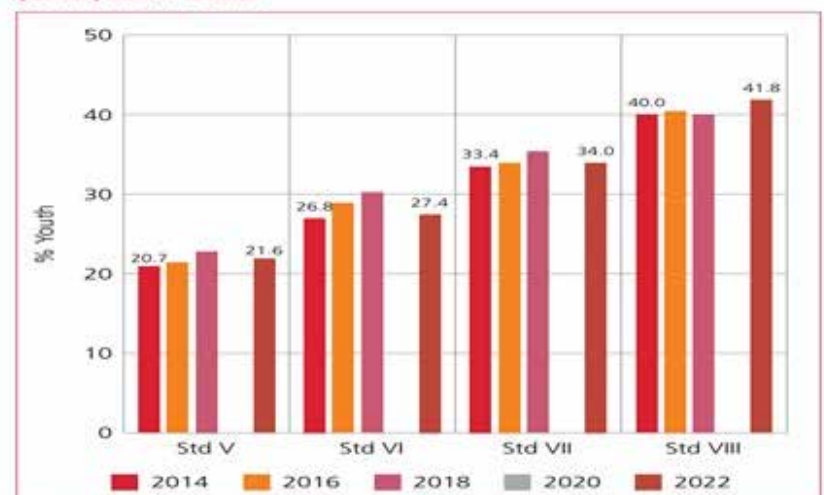


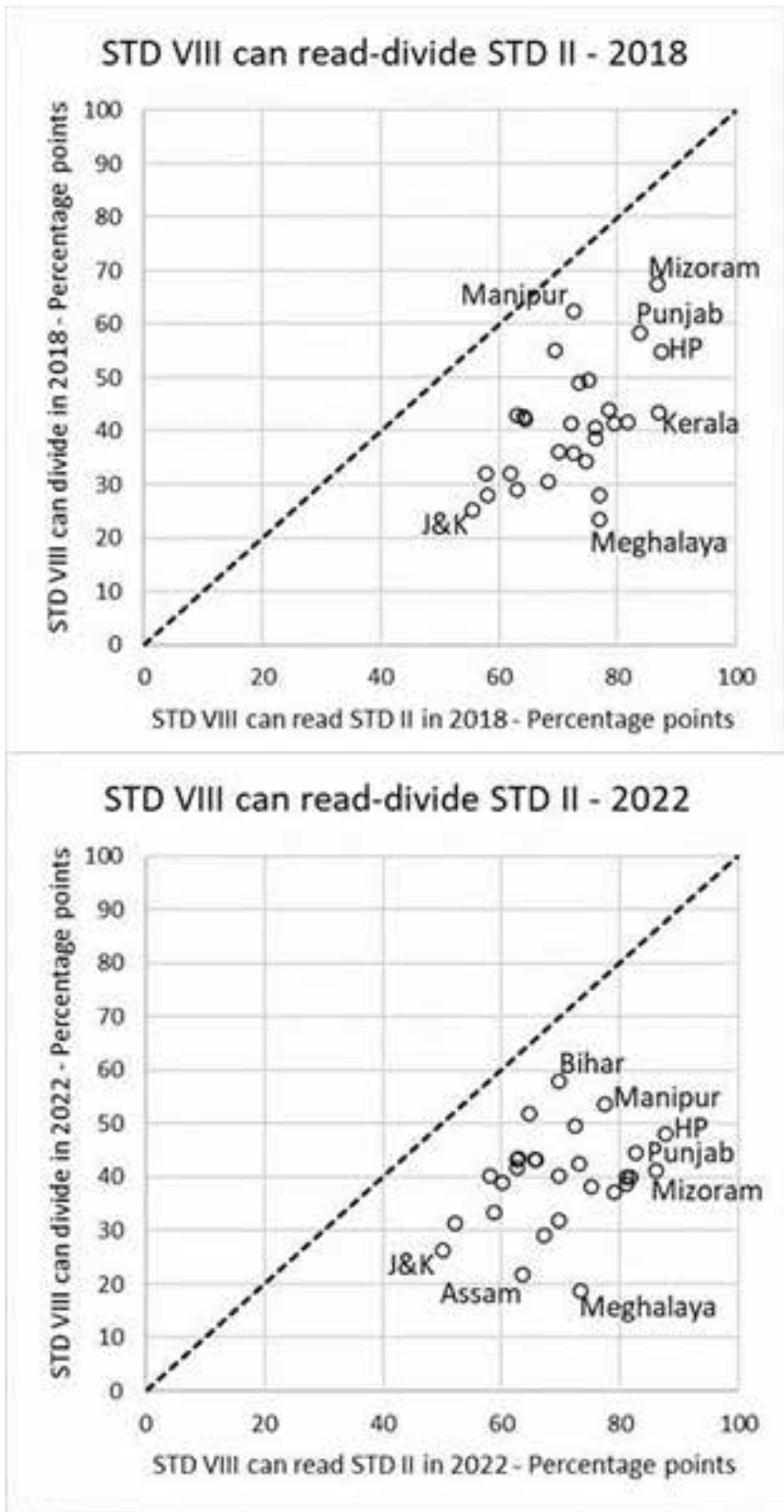
Image source: ASER survey titled 'Beyond Basics', 2023

ASER report 2023 presents comprehensive insights into the educational landscape in the Anantnag district of South Kashmir. It reveals that in terms of the enrollment and work status of youth in the age group of 14-16 years of age in Anantnag, 3.9% of youth-male 1.7%, and female 5.5% are not enrolled in schools. While 61% of youth in the same age group (male: 59.5% and female: 62.1%) are enrolled in government institutions, a meagre 0.4% are enrolled in vocational training or other courses. The report further states that around 76.5 percent of youth in the age group of 14-16 years can read at least standard 2nd-level text whereas it stands at 79% for youth in the age group of 17-19 years. In the age group 14-16 years, 39.3 percent of youth can divide and 87.2% of youth can read sentences in English. While in the age group of 17-18 years, 30.5% of students can do division and 86% of students can read sentences in English.

Since ASER 2023 is limited to surveying only the Anantnag district of Jammu & Kashmir, ASER 2022 is also scrutinized to get a holistic understanding of the educational landscape of Jammu & Kashmir. As per the ASER report 2022, the enrolment number



of children in the 6-14 age group stands at 55.5 percent in 2022. This achievement seems a little laudable because the trends in basic learning have remained relatively unchanged over the years in J&K. The graph below represents the state-wise percentage points of government school children in Std VIII who can read Std II level text and who can do division. The closer the point to the origin, the lower the overall reading-arithmetic performance. The graph clearly shows that Jammu and Kashmir is the closest point to the origin thus, reflecting the lowest overall reading-arithmetic performance. The forthcoming section will now delve into the specific challenges faced by the education system of the territory.



### Challenges facing the education system of Jammu & Kashmir

Before we delve into the discussion of policy recommendations for improving the educational landscape, it becomes imperative to examine the challenges faced by the region's educational system. Despite children being enrolled in school, poor learning outcomes have emerged as a stark reality. A significant contributing factor to this issue is the lack of engagement in many classrooms. Student engagement is widely recognized as a key driver to better learning, yet it remains conspicuously absent in numerous educational settings. The many problems that plague the prevailing education system, including, inadequate teacher allocation, poor systemic governance, lack of teacher training, and outdated teaching practices, all make student engagement a tough task. Notably, the 'JK Vision document 2047' underscores the critical need for skilled human resources in teaching, revealing that over 36,000 ReTs or RReTs lacked the desired level of qualification.

In addition to the shortage of trained and qualified teachers, financial constraints have severely impacted the educational infrastructure in the region. ASER report 2022 presents a grim

picture of infrastructure and sanitation facilities in educational institutions. The report highlighted that 30 percent of schools in Jammu and Kashmir lack water facilities while around half of schools in Jammu and Kashmir have a shortage of girls' toilets. Furthermore, another study reveals that until October 02, 2023, at least 61% of government-run schools in Jammu and Kashmir, cast doubts on the education department's commitment to infrastructural developments. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that at least 51 government schools operate from rented accommodations across four education zones in north Kashmir's Bandipora district.

Gender disparities persist in Kashmir, resulting in higher dropout rates among girls, particularly between the age of 15-16 years. Socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and ignorance of parents serve as major obstacles to achieving gender equality in education. Moreover, the region's education system grapples with unique challenges deeply rooted in its history of political instability. Decades of political unrest and tensions have disrupted normal life, including educational institutions, leading to frequent closures, curfews, and disruptions in academic calendars. To sum up, the educational landscape of Jammu & Kashmir faces multifaceted challenges, ranging from longstanding conflicts to infrastructural deficiencies, inadequacy of trained teachers, and gender disparities. Addressing these challenges demands concerted attention and effort. The last section will now outline several recommendations aimed at addressing these issues and improving the educational scenario.

### Policy recommendations

Urgent measures are required to ensure quality education for every child and to meet the goals and targets of Agenda 2030. "Catch-up" initiatives for foundational literacy and numeracy are the need of the hour for a significant portion of the 14-18 population. Structured lessons, high-quality teacher-student relationships, and student autonomy, including allowing students choices in the classroom should be the immediate step. Now is the time to shift from a one-size-fits-all approach to creating multiple paths for students to achieve their goals. The curriculum must be aligned with the evolving requirements of the job market and global trends. Additionally, digital literacy should be integrated into the curriculum at the earliest to ensure that students are proficient in using technology responsibly and effectively.

In addition to endeavours to enhance learning outcomes, the government must tackle the financial constraints for adequate infrastructure. Adequate resources must be allocated for the construction and renovation of schools, especially in rural and urban areas. Furthermore, skill development programs are crucial to equip the region's youth with the necessary vocational skills and training to enhance their employability and entrepreneurship opportunities. Harnessing the potential of technology holds the key to unlocking new horizons of opportunity and progress. Interactive learning platforms, e-learning courses, digital classrooms, and online assessment and feedback mechanisms are some examples of using technology to improve the quality of education.

Integrating technology into the education system will cater to the needs of different types of learners, allowing them to move away from rote learning and tackle real-world challenges. However, no advancement in technology can overshadow the pivotal role played by teachers in improving learning outcomes. Therefore, the government must prioritize teacher recruitment and training. Teachers should be trained in new competencies and skills to facilitate 21st-century education by combining curriculum and technology. Technology must complement teaching, and enhance engagement rather than replace teachers.

Lastly, it should be kept in mind that ensuring quality education is not just a duty of government rather it is a collaborative and collective endeavour. To develop a vibrant educational ecosystem, it's essential to involve parents, community leaders, and local NGOs. Awareness campaigns and school committees must be established to engage these stakeholders actively. Community involvement remains at the heart of enhancing student engagement. It's time to work collectively to pave the path for a robust, inclusive, and sustainable education system.



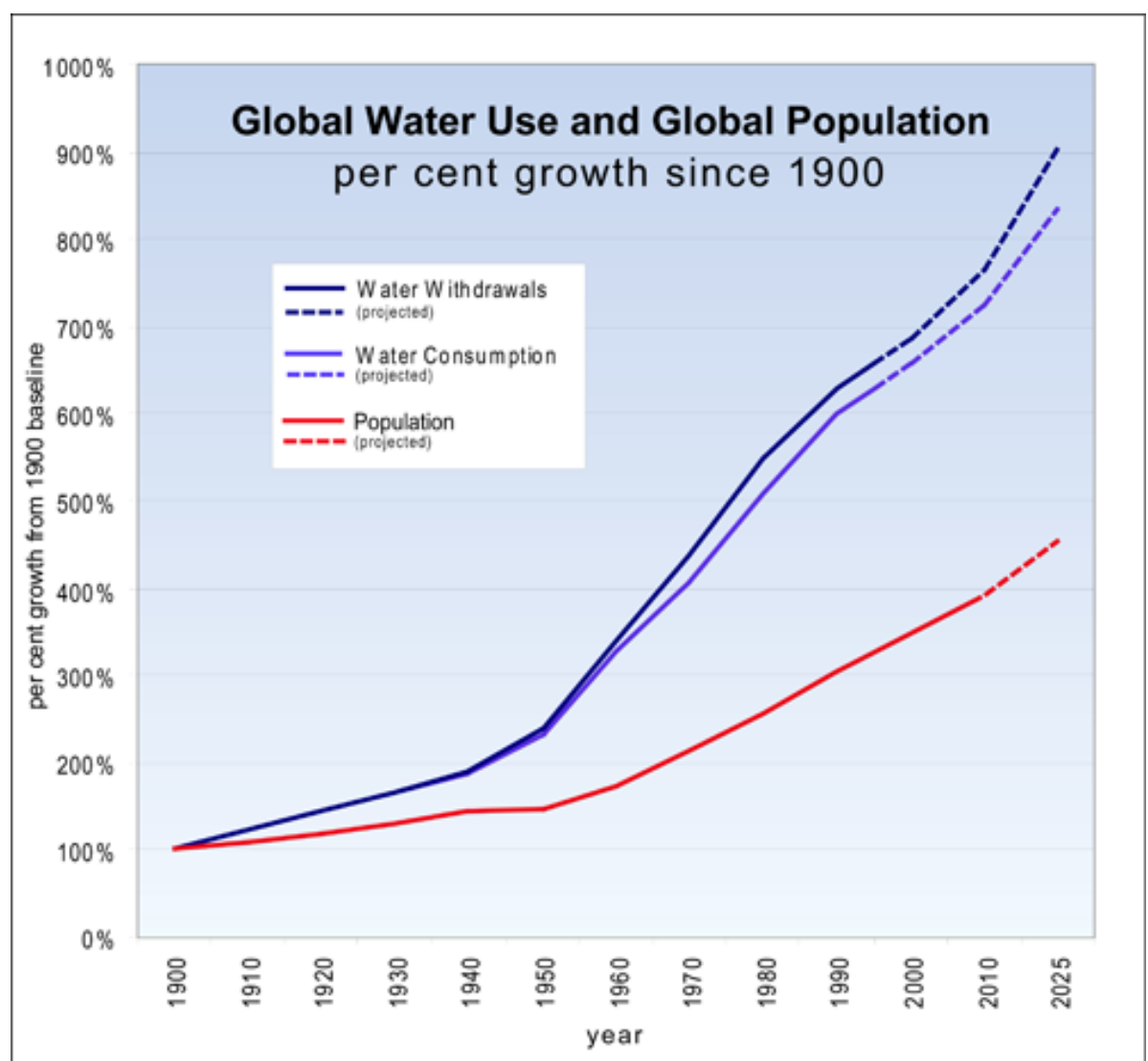
# Impact of delayed winter storms on North India's water security

- Four billion people — almost two thirds of the world's population — experience severe water scarcity for at least one month each year.
- Over two billion people live in countries where water supply is inadequate.
- Half of the world's population could be living in areas facing water scarcity by as early as 2025.
- Some 700 million people could be displaced by intense water scarcity by 2030.
- By 2040, roughly 1 in 4 children worldwide will be living in areas of extremely high water stress.



PARVAIZ YOUSUF

KEY FACTS BY  
UN-Water





The effects of climate change are causing water to become increasingly unpredictable. The storage of terrestrial water, including that in soil, snow, and ice, is decreasing. Consequently, this leads to heightened water scarcity, disrupting various societal activities.

## India's Looming Water Crisis

According to the National Commission for Integrated Water Resource Development of MoWR, the projected water requirement by 2050 under high usage conditions is estimated to be 1,180 BCM, while the current availability stands at 695 BCM. Although the total potential water availability in the country is slightly lower than this projected demand, at 1,137 BCM. Hence, there's an urgent need to enhance our comprehension of water resources and usage patterns and implement measures to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of water usage.

India is currently facing its most severe water crisis in history, with over 600 million people already experiencing significant water shortages. The depletion of critical groundwater resources, which contribute 40% to our water supply, is occurring at unsustainable rates.

The frequency of droughts is increasing, posing significant challenges for the country's rain-dependent farmers, who account for 53% of agricultural activity. Furthermore, the available water is often contaminated, with up to 70% of our water supply affected, resulting in nearly 200,000 deaths annually. Interstate water disputes are also escalating, with seven major conflicts currently ongoing, highlighting the inadequacy of existing frameworks and institutions for national water governance.

If no significant changes are made soon, the situation will deteriorate further. Estimates suggest that by 2030, India's water demand will surpass supply by a factor of two, leading to severe water scarcity affecting hundreds of millions of people.

## Impact of Shifting Winter Patterns on North India

At the end of last year, we saw a long dry spell in the most densely populated North Indian region. What's left of that dry spell in 2023–24 is sad proof of the changing climate leading to more drought and floods, making weather patterns unpredictable. Indeed, this is especially true now that winter is slowly ending in North India. One of the changes observed with it is the shift of winter storms to later parts of winter.

Previously, these storms were a part of a natural cycle and would occur on time. However, they are becoming a double-edged sword that has the capability of worsening things. It not only means having less water available at the right time but also increases the chances of terrible floods. Both ways, its impact on the environment is huge, and that's what is scaring the scientists. Let's discuss more about the issue and see how it can impact the states of North India.

## Understanding Western Disturbances

The way these western disturbances behave has changed clearly over the past few years. These disturbances play a big part in the winter rain that falls in the Himalayas. Many years ago, these wet winds would always show up on time. But these days, they're known for being late. Because of this delay, the area becomes disturbed, which throws off the natural balance of how water is distributed and how it rains. These delays not only change the timing of weather trends but also make it harder for societies that depend on regular climate cycles to deal with problems.

## Research Reveals a Disturbing Trend

A new study published in the journal *Weather and Climate Dynamics* has raised the worries of common masses and scientists

alike. The study suggests big changes in the climate of north India which tends to affect millions of people.

According to the statistics, there has been an alarming rise: the number of western disturbances that have happened in the 2023 summer, from April to July, has grown by an amazing 60%. This surge not only messes up the expected snowfall that is needed for water reservoirs but also signals the start of a heavy rainstorm. Because of this, there is either no rain on time or there are heavy flood rains which damage both property and human lives. Recently, the events that occurred in Uttarakhand and Delhi are prime examples of such events that we can focus on. Such events not only affect the local regions or populations but can alter the natural cycles of many other surrounding areas.

## The Reasons for this Trend

This change in the weather is causing a lot of different problems, which are caused by a number of different factors. The changes in the subtropical jet stream are some of the most important things that cause these changes. Because the Tibetan Plateau is getting warmer, this high-altitude airflow is changing in big ways. In the past, it was this high-altitude airflow that directed disturbances in the western area. The rising of this plateau, which is a real basis of how the world's climate works, is getting worse because of climate change. Because of this, the jet stream gets stronger, which sends more and stronger storms into North India.

When these things come together, they make a perfect storm that changes the weather. The way air currents move is changing because of global warming, and the effects can be felt all over the world. At the moment, this is showing up in places like North India, where risks and weaknesses are growing. Having a deep knowledge of these mechanisms is very important for coming up with effective ways to adapt to and lessen the effects of a climate that is becoming less stable.

## The Role of Global Warming

The impact of global warming is huge in the complicated web of climate dynamics, and it can affect every single person on Earth. Not being able to follow the normal movement patterns of the jet stream is one of the most important effects of this event. A high-altitude airflow called the jet stream stays at latitudes further to the south for long periods in the spring and summer. This happens when temperatures keep going up and the gap in temperature between the equator and the poles keeps getting smaller.

As a result of this extended stay, late-season storms are more likely to get stronger and more severe, which goes against the usual rules of yearly weather cycles. Because of this, the once-reliable cycle of winter storms in North India changes dramatically. This brings about a new era of climate instability and unpredictability which is a very interesting development.

Remember, climate change isn't just a threat because it changes when weather events happen; it's also a threat because it changes the way rain and snow fall. North India is being hit hard by heavy rain now that the snow is melting fast. People will be flooded by this sudden change in rainfall, and it will also destroy the basic structures that societies and ecosystems are built on. Floods are replacing the steady and gradual pattern of spring, which was once an important resource for river networks and farming systems. They are causing damage with their sudden appearance. A delicate balance in the water balance has been altered, which is making things very hard for both plants and animals. The dangers of flooding and not having enough water are linked, making the problem more difficult and wide-ranging.

## Increased Water Security

Climate change and water security are interconnected issues with





significant implications. This has impacts on the environment, societies, and sustainable development. The repercussions are palpable throughout North India, painting a disquieting picture of what the future holds. Residents of North India are apprehensive that decreased snowfall and an increase in late-season storms will become more frequent occurrences, with far-reaching effects across the region. The delicate equilibrium between available water resources and the growing demands of the populace is on the verge of collapse.

This poses a threat to the very essence of life and livelihoods in the region, carrying existential significance. With each passing season, the looming spectre of water scarcity and perilous floods looms large over communities already grappling with the multifaceted challenges of climate change.

To confront these pressing issues head-on and chart a course towards a more stable future, immediate action is imperative.

## What Next?

By 2060, North India is expected to experience severe and permanent shortages of freshwater because climate change is reducing its availability. Referred to as the “water tower” of Asia, the Tibetan Plateau, which plays a critical role in determining water availability and is highly susceptible to the impacts of climate

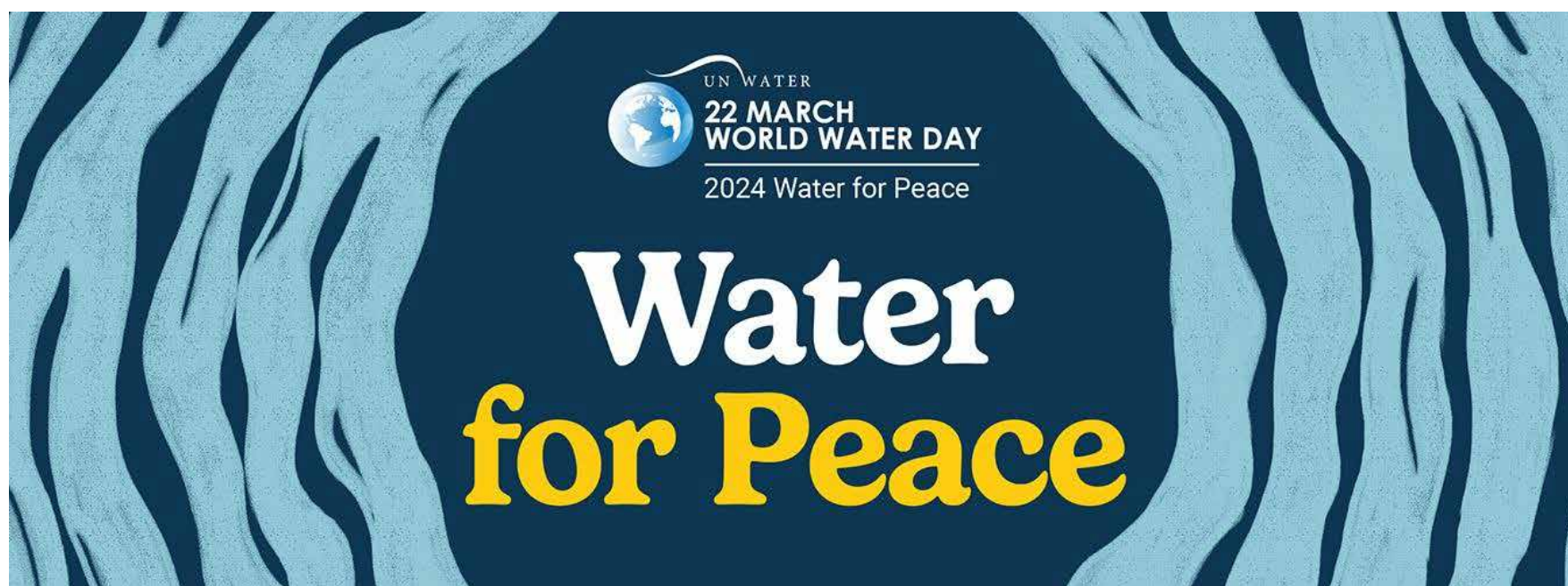
sustainability can we safeguard vulnerable areas like North India from the severe impacts of climate change.

## Conclusion

When confronted with challenges, we are allowed to collaborate and innovate. Embracing a comprehensive strategy to both adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change will facilitate our navigation through the turbulent waters ahead, fostering a more stable and sustainable future for generations to come. The time for action is now. A closer examination of India’s climate challenges, such as delayed winter storms and their implications for water security, underscores the imperative to combat climate change and bolster the resilience of vulnerable regions. Only through collective effort and coordinated action can we confront the daunting realities of a shifting climate and chart a course towards a more sustainable future.

## Water for peace

*Water can create peace or spark conflict.*



change, situated at the “Roof of the World”, provides freshwater for nearly 2 billion people downstream, as highlighted by an international team of researchers.

According to the researchers, the effects of climate change on both historical and projected terrestrial water storage (TWS) in the Tibetan Plateau have not received sufficient attention, despite their profound importance.

A study, published in the journal ‘Nature Climate Change’ under the title ‘Climate change threatens terrestrial water storage over the Tibetan Plateau’, warns of irreversible declines in freshwater storage in the region due to the combined effects of climate change and inadequate climate policies. The study foresees a complete collapse in water supply for Central Asia and Afghanistan, along with a near-total collapse for Northern India and Pakistan by the middle of the century.

In these challenging times, the imperative for action is more pressing than ever. Greater efforts must be devoted to enhancing the resilience of environments against climate change. This can be achieved through an approach encompassing long-term water management, the construction of resilient infrastructure, and the initiation of community-based adaptation programs. It necessitates concerted efforts from lawmakers, stakeholders, and communities to devise innovative solutions and implement them swiftly and decisively.

Moreover, it cannot be overstated how crucial it is for people worldwide to take robust action on climate change. Only by addressing the root causes and fostering global environmental

- When water is scarce or polluted, or when people have unequal, or no access, tensions can rise between communities and countries.
- More than 3 billion people worldwide depend on water that crosses national borders. Yet, only 24 countries have cooperation agreements for all their shared water.
- As climate change impacts increase, and populations grow, there is an urgent need, within and between countries, to unite around protecting and conserving our most precious resource.
- Public health and prosperity, food and energy systems, economic productivity and environmental integrity all rely on a well-functioning and equitably managed water cycle.

## Creating a positive ripple effect

- The theme of World Water Day 2024 is ‘Water for Peace’.
- When we cooperate on water, we create a positive ripple effect – fostering harmony, generating prosperity and building resilience to shared challenges.
- We must act upon the realization that water is not only a resource to be used and competed over – it is a human right, intrinsic to every aspect of life.
- This World Water Day, we all need to unite around water and use water for peace, laying the foundations of a more stable and prosperous tomorrow.



# 90% Himalayas at risk of facing year-long droughts due to climate change



## PARVAIZ YOUSUF

**T**he Himalayas comprise a vast mountainous range that borders several countries and are renowned worldwide for their immense biodiversity and towering peaks. Over time, people have been captivated by the natural beauty of the Himalayas, which stands as one of the most diverse ecosystems on Earth, supporting a significant human population through its ecological services.

In recent history, the increase in temperatures threatens ecosystems globally. A recent study has concluded that even a modest rise of 3 degrees Celsius in the Himalayas could trigger a year-long drought across the entire region. This revelation is alarming, considering the substantial human population that relies on the Himalayas. In this article, we will discuss in detail how climate change jeopardizes the well-being of the Himalayas and, consequently, human populations.

The study, published in the journal *Climatic Change*, warns about potential outcomes if the temperature goals outlined in the Paris Agreement are not achieved. Researchers from the University of East Anglia have discovered that health and environmental risks escalate as the world warms. Surprisingly, eighty percent of the additional issues resulting from rising temperatures in India

could be mitigated if global warming were limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The prospect of averting 80% of such a significant problem is remarkable! This revelation is more than just news; it resembles a character warning us of impending danger. At this juncture, it is evident that immediate action is necessary to prevent further deterioration.

Consider Earth as a vast jigsaw puzzle; each piece fits into place, and any alteration or omission affects the entire picture. While the study primarily focused on the Himalayas, there is more to the narrative. It's akin to discovering an error in one puzzle piece that could ruin the entire picture! The researchers didn't solely concentrate on the Himalayas; they also investigated potential risks in Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Brazil, and China. Their findings suggest that changes in one region will undoubtedly impact other global areas, regardless of their distance. Thus, a 3-degree rise in the temperature of the Himalayas would reverberate in other countries as well, with dire consequences for human populations, potentially resulting in millions of deaths.

In recent years, prolonged droughts have been observed in various parts of the Himalayas, such as the Kashmir valley, while heavy rainfall has damaged crops elsewhere. These anomalies in the regular climate patterns across the entire Himalayan belt signify that something is amiss. This study has only heightened concerns about the potential consequences of continued temperature increases.

### **Agriculture at Risk**

One of the primary areas poised to be affected by rising temperatures is agriculture. The majority of people in the Himalayas depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Consequently, any alterations in rainfall patterns will have dire consequences for agriculture. The aforementioned study serves as an alarm, forewarning us about the impending decrease in food resources in



the Himalayas due to rising temperatures. Given that the Himalayas harbour a sensitive ecosystem wherein specific types of plants and animals thrive, any changes could lead to the disappearance of numerous species from the region.

The study delves into the impact on pollination, which is crucial for both farming and wildlife. At 3–4 degrees Celsius, pollination decreases by 50%, whereas at 1.5 degrees Celsius, it diminishes by only 25%. This underscores the importance of limiting temperature rise. Additionally, the prediction of severe droughts lasting over a year striking agricultural land raises a red flag for food security. The statistics paint a stark picture: more than half of the farmland in each of the countries examined would be at risk in a world warmed by 3 degrees Celsius. However, adhering to the 1.5-degree Celsius limit could significantly reduce this risk, safeguarding farming systems already facing jeopardy.

As we grapple with the economic repercussions of climate change, this study illustrates how policies aligned with the Paris Agreement could benefit the economy. Reduced damage from river flooding and slower economic impacts from rising sea levels in coastal nations adhering to the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold highlights the wisdom in making environmentally sound decisions. Economic and environmental considerations are intertwined, underscoring the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach that preserves both our financial prosperity and the integrity of natural systems.

### **Biodiversity Conservation**

The study advocates for the establishment of more protected areas and emphasizes the need for enhanced biodiversity conservation. It's akin to providing safe havens for wildlife. The study underscores how climate change is jeopardizing numerous species and urges immediate action to protect them. It's not solely about preserving plants and animals; it's also about safeguarding ourselves because we rely on these species.

Consider the repercussions on our food and air if some of the animals or plants we depend on were to go extinct. This highlights the study's emphasis on the urgency of addressing these threats. The objective is to create a more robust and expansive network of protected areas resembling nature sanctuaries. In doing so, we erect a barrier against the perils posed by climate change.

### **Global Commitment is Needed**

Although the study focused on six countries, it illustrates how climate change affects the entire world. The interconnection of climate systems and the vulnerability of all countries to climate change make it imperative for everyone to collaborate in combating it. One cannot overstate the importance of global dedication, transcending individual countries' interests or borders. The study's warning that similar challenges are likely to arise in other countries

should serve as a wake-up call, compelling the world to accord equal attention to both adapting to and mitigating climate change.

In an article, the study's main author, Professor Rachel Warren, expressed the need for climate policies aligned with the Paris Agreement. This call to action isn't merely a suggestion; it's imperative if we intend to mitigate the escalating risks associated with climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2022 report also underscores the urgency of swift action, and the study demonstrates how the effects exacerbate with even minor increases in global temperatures.

### **More Actions are Needed**

Combatting global change is a collective responsibility. The research article unequivocally indicates that immediate collaborative efforts are imperative because our current policies fall short. Symbolically, the Himalayas represent more than just picturesque landscapes; they serve as a lens through which to gauge the Earth's condition. It is crucial that we, as global citizens, comprehend our duty and unite to curb global warming promptly, as emphasized by the study. All countries must convene at the same table and wholeheartedly address the issue. What affects the Himalayas today could easily affect their backyard tomorrow.

Furthermore, we must reassess our objectives and strategies to ensure a healthy future for the Himalayan Region and beyond, as elucidated by the study's findings. Responding to climate change isn't merely an option when threats loom large; it's imperative for safeguarding our planet and its inhabitants. Action needs to be swift, and we must make informed choices in our daily lives to contribute to environmental preservation. As inhabitants of this Earth, we bear responsibility for our actions that jeopardize Mother Earth's delicate equilibrium.

### **Conclusion**

Awareness of how rising temperatures are impacting ecosystems globally is widespread. No corner of the Earth will be spared by global warming, and this realization must be ingrained. We trust that the study's findings reach policymakers' ears. Timely decisions can potentially save millions of lives worldwide. Concurrently, further studies are warranted to uncover the effects of rising temperatures on other aspects of the ecosystem, such as plant and animal diversity.

A prolonged drought can significantly alter the ecosystem's morphology. The study outlines the steps necessary to forge a resilient and sustainable future. We must heed this call and collaborate to tackle the intricate challenge of climate change for the sake of our world and future generations. The time to act is now, and by working together, we can forge a safer and more stable future for all.





# Role of Bactrian camels in conservation, tourism, and economic growth in Ladakh



**DR SMRUTI SMITA MOHAPATRA**

## Introduction

The United Nations declared 2024 as the International Year of Camelids. Camelids are key to the livelihoods of millions of households in hostile environments across over 90 countries, particularly indigenous peoples, and local communities. Camelids include alpacas, camels, dromedaries, guanacos, llamas, and vicuñas. Camelids contribute to food security, nutrition and economic growth and hold a strong cultural and social significance for communities worldwide. Camelids play an important role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals related to the fight against hunger, eradicating extreme poverty, empowering women, and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. Camelids provide milk, meat, and fibre for communities to transport for products and people, as organic fertilizer. Camelids thrive where other livestock species cannot survive. Camelids play a key role in the culture, economy, food security and livelihoods of communities in Andean highlands and the arid and semi-arid lands in Africa and Asia, including indigenous peoples and pastoralists. Even in extreme climatic conditions, they continue to produce fibre and nutritious food. International Year of Camelids 2024 presents a unique

opportunity to raise awareness of the role of camelids in building resilience to climate change in mountains and arid and semi-arid lands.

## Bactrian camels in Ladakh

There are only two species of camels in the world – Dromedary Camels (single hump) and Bactrian camels (double humps). They are found in the cold desert areas of Nubra Valley in India, China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan. Ladakh is the cold desert of India in the Himalayan range. The Bactrian camel is categorized into domesticated and wild. While the domesticated population is believed to be more than 1 million, those found in the wild are listed as critically endangered in the IUCN Red List with their population being reduced to less than 1500. The wild Bactrian camel is the only mammal on land that can survive on salty water. The name ‘Bactrian’ originates from the Hindu Kush Mountain range, rooted in the historical ancient site of Bactria on the banks of the river Amu Daria. This region of Central Asia is now divided into Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

## Physical attributes of double-humped camels

Depending upon age, the average annual hair production per camel ranges from 2.5 to 4 kg. Hair quality attributes suggested very fine quality fibres. Hair is used for the preparation of various items viz. shawls, pullovers, sweaters, winter garments, coats, and caps. The high staple length and quality of wool fibre indicated its usefulness in fibre processing for the village cottage industry. Genetic polymorphism between two species of camel (*Camelus dromedarius* and *Camelus bactrianus*) has been found by the Polymerase Chain Reaction-Random Amplification of Polymorphic DNA technique. A comparative study on the haematological and mineral profile of



dromedary and Bactrian camel showed higher concentrations of haemoglobin, iron, phosphorus, calcium, zinc, and copper.

### **Maintenance of Bactrian camels**

Bactrian camels move at about 5 km/hr, producing 5 kg of hair/year, 600 litres of milk /year and 250 kg of dung/year (Shergojry et al., 2017). The humps are plump and pliable. During the late winter when pastures are scanty, the humps collapse. The skull bone is comparatively shorter and wider than the dromedary camel. The body of the Bactrian camel is short and stout. The body colour varies from light brown to dark brown. Long hairs grow on the top of the head, along the lower part of the neck, humps, and legs. The adult body weight varies – from 450 to 550 kg. The males are heavier than the females. These camels oscillate between -40°C during winter and 40°C during summer. A shaggy winter coat protects these exotic animals during winter which falls out gradually when the temperature rises only to grow back when there is a drop in the temperature. Just like dromedary camels, they hardly sweat which helps them sustain several weeks without water. When thirsty they can drink up to 30 gallons of water in just 13 minutes that is 113 litres of water. A camel's hump is used for storing fats which get converted into water and energy when enough food is not available. When there is enough food available, the double-humps of a Bactrian camel appear strong and erect. An empty sack cannot stand upright in Bactrian camels. When out of food for weeks, their humps become flabby and lean sideways.

### **Hardships of Bactrian camels**

The diseases prevalent in Bactrian camels are actinobacillosis, pneumonia, eye diseases associated with corneal opacity, hydropericardium, UTIs and ectopic pregnancies. The timid Bactrian camels are attacked by wildlife predators. Commonly available feed/fodder plants utilized by the camels have been evaluated for various nutritional parameters. The highest crude protein content was found in the leaves of the Chhowk tree followed by Alfa-alfa, Changama and Beecho. However, crude fibre was higher in Alfa-alfa grass followed by Longtol. The Bactrian camels are seasonal breeders and the breeding season extends from January to March. Reproductive behaviour in the males during rutting indicated biting, active secretion from the poll glands and frothing. Bactrian camel can carry a load of up to one quintal as baggage and can work for 6-8 hours daily. Wild Sea Buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) are available during the April to August months of summer (Vyas et al., 2014). The lifespan is 50 years. Most of the Bactrian camels feed on Seabuckthorn, a prominent shrub found commonly in community grazing fields in the region. However, the shrub is only available during a few months of summer. They are omnivores but are primarily herbivores that constantly graze on grasses. The women collect alfalfa hay from the wild to feed the animals during the winter season. But as the number of animals has increased, one does not get sufficient hay for the animals. So, every winter the fodder for the camel becomes unaffordable. During winters, the camel spends a good amount to feeding them. The double-humped camel can propagate naturally, roaming and grazing in the rangeland all year round without any supplementary feed. They are the only land animals that can eat snow. Bactrian camels are naturally equipped to live in the harshest environment without the need for human caretakers.

### **Bactrian Camel Safari**

Double-hump camels, found in Ladakh, are a major attraction for domestic as well as international tourists. While the one-hump camel is found in hot deserts, the double-hump camels are inhabitants of cold desert regions. For centuries, the double-hump Bactrian camels have been a significant mode of transportation in Ladakh. The best time to take the safari is from July to September. If tourist influx is good, a single camel can generate an income of about 1-2.5 lakhs INR during the summer season (Vyas and Bissa, 2019).

### **Draught purposes**

Defence Institute of High-Altitude Research (DIHAR) conducted performance tests on Bactrian camels and found them capable of bearing 200-250 kgs of load and travelling up to 50 km/day at an altitude of 12,000-15,550 feet above sea level (Lamo, 2023). The 14 Corps of the Indian Army is deploying these camels in the Depsang and Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) for carrying luggage and ration and mountain patrolling. The Air Force Station at Thoise in the Nubra Valley adopted a double-humped camel as a mascot in 1999. DRDO reared these camels at their facility in Leh. Central Asia Camel Safari, a registered cooperative society, was formed in 2009. The neighbouring villages – Sumur (situated on the other side of Nubra valley near Siachin base), Tigger, and Diskit also formed their own Bactrian Camel Cooperatives and Unions.

### **Wool production**

The tourist-riding camels of Nubra Valley make it through the severe winters in this way only to work again for their owners during the summers. The department is also working on the wool of Bactrian camels to create income for the breeders during the off-season of tourism. The breeders are encouraged to manufacture products from camel wool by forming self-help groups. Under skill development, the department is working on its two types of fur.

### **Possible milk production**

The optimum use of Bactrian camel milk could generate employment and good income. A litre of Bactrian camel milk could cost anything between Rs 2500/- and Rs 3000/- and has an international market already. The milk products could also become popular among tourists, especially the cheese made from it. The cheese produced from the camel has low levels of cholesterol and is easy to digest for the lactose intolerants. The price of the Bactrian camel cheese could fetch anything between Rs 25,000/- and Rs 45,000/- per kg. The lactation period of Bactrian camel is 14 to 16 months.

### **Policy interventions**

With the intervention of the Animal Husbandry Department, it is now a treasure for breeders as it is one of the main tourist attractions for camel safari on the dunes of Nubra. The Conservation efforts by Animal Husbandry with the financial support of the Centre and Technical guidance of the National Research Centre on Camels, Bikaner have paved the way for growth in its population from mere 64 in 2004 to 298 in 2020. The Department is also running a farm for its research studies at Chushot in Leh. As per the latest census, there are 298 Bactrian camels in Leh district and India. To preserve it, some activities are being carried out. It is commercial now for camel riding at Sand Dune, Nubra. 8 to 10 camels are kept for research studies at the farm.

### **Conclusion**

The use of Bactrian camels in tourism is presented in the light of a method to conserve the endangered species, a means of sustenance for local families and a novel tourist attraction of Ladakh. Fodder processing units for the lean season are a dire need. The Bactrian camels of Ladakh have the real capability of changing the economics of Nubra Valley making the stakeholders prosperous. It is high time policy intervention should be done and a roadmap is prepared so that it can be beneficial to the local population as well as the army. The International Year of Camelids 2024 aims to build awareness of the untapped potential of camelids and to call for increased investment in the camelid sector, advocating for greater research, capacity development and the use of innovative practices and technologies.



# Disparities in access and equity: A study of higher education in J&K



AIJAZ AHMAD DAR

Education serves as a cornerstone in fostering social and economic transformation within societies and nations. From empowering women to combating social marginalization, education holds significant potential in mitigating gender disparity and social inequality. It plays a crucial role in promoting social and economic development by equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge. However, in India, the documented disparity in access to education has historically placed women and scheduled groups in unfavorable positions. This gap becomes particularly evident in access to higher education due to the trade-off between entering the labor market and pursuing further education. This article aims to examine access and equity in higher education within the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. To accomplish this, we will utilize data from the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) for the 2021-22 period, the latest year for which data is available.

The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) defines higher education as “education obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or its equivalent, with a duration of at least nine months (full time), or after completing 10 years of schooling with a duration of at least 3 years. This education may encompass General, Vocational, Professional, or Technical education.” In India, higher education comprises eight levels: Integrated, Certificate, Diploma, PG Diploma, Undergraduate, Postgraduate, M.Phil., and Ph.D.

## Indicators for analysis

To assess access to higher education, we will utilize the renowned indicator, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), as defined by UNESCO. It is calculated as the total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to that level of education. In India, the official age group for higher education is 18-23 years. Therefore, GER is determined by enrolments across all eight levels of education, expressed as a percentage of the population aged 18-23. An increase in GER signifies a higher participation rate in higher education.

We will employ GER across social groups of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe to analyze the disparity in access to higher education among these groups. Additionally, to examine gender disparity, we will use another indicator known as the Gender Parity Index (GPI), calculated as GER for females divided by GER for males. A GPI close to 1 indicates parity between the two sexes; if it is less than one, it suggests disparity against women, and if it is greater than one, it implies disparity against men in enrolment.

Furthermore, we will compare the GER of the Union Territory with the national average to gauge the status of higher education in Jammu and Kashmir. Additionally, we will compare the GER of social groups in the UT with the national average GER of social groups and the average GER of the UT itself. These comparisons will provide insights as we proceed with the analysis.

## Analysis

We commence by comparing the GER of the Union Territory (UT) with the national average GER. In 2021-22, the GER of the UT stood at 24.8%, while the national average was 28.4%. Therefore, the difference between the GER of the UT and the all-India level is 3.6 percentage points, which is quite substantial. When compared to states with GER close to 50%, such as Delhi (49%), Tamil Nadu (47%), Himachal Pradesh (43%), Uttarakhand (41.8%), and Kerala (41.3%), it clearly underscores the inadequate



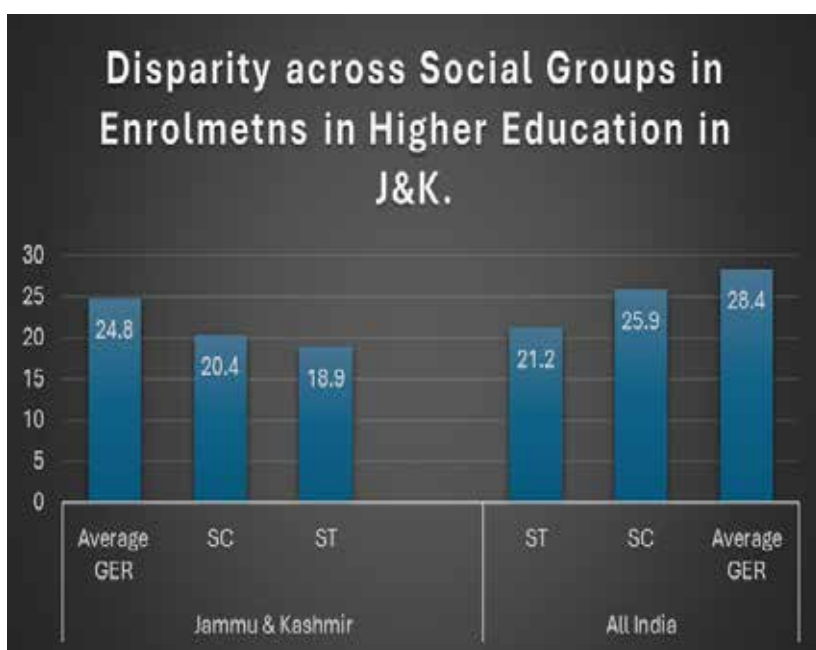
state of enrolments in the UT.

Moving on to the GER of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the UT, both groups exhibit lower GER percentages compared to the average GER of the UT (24.8%) by 4.4 and 5.9 percentage points, respectively. This indicates a significant disparity among social groups in Jammu and Kashmir. Notably, the UT lags behind the national average in enrolments, with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes trailing even further behind the aggregate GER level of the UT.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes face unfavorable positions at the national level as well, with both categories falling well behind the country-level average GER. However, when comparing the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of Jammu and Kashmir with those of India as a whole, they also lag behind by 5.5 and 2.3 percentage points, respectively.

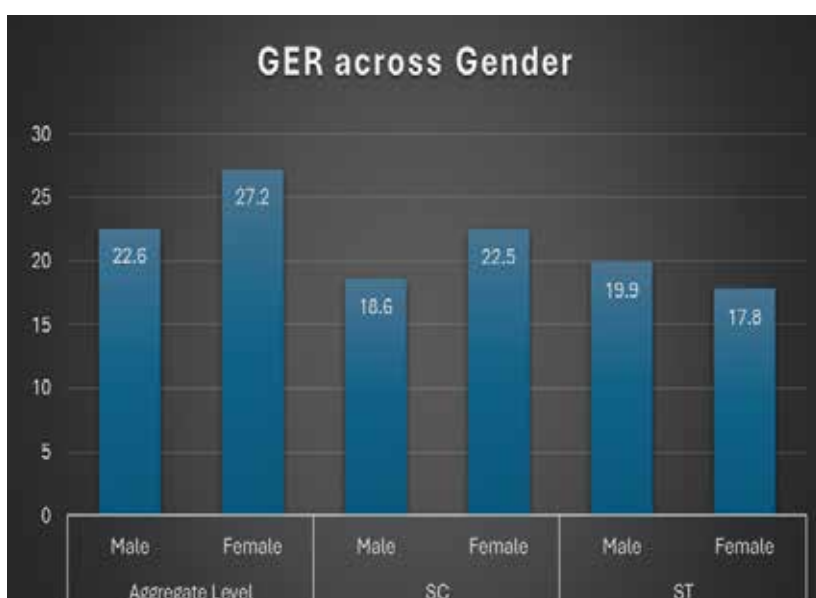
Hence, the position of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes appears dismal when compared to the aggregate GER level of the UT and the GER of SC and ST at the national level.

**The graph below illustrates the aforementioned points.**



When comparing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) across genders, we observe a mixed picture. The Gender Parity Index is greater than one at the aggregate level (1.20) and in the Scheduled Caste (SC) category (1.21), while it is less than 1 in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category (0.89). This indicates that the GER of females surpasses that of males at the aggregate and SC levels, but not in the ST category. Specifically, at the aggregate level, the GER of females (27.2%) exceeds that of males (22.6%) by 4.6 percentage points, and in the SC category, the GER of females (22.5%) surpasses that of males (18.6%) by 3.9 percentage points. However, in the case of Scheduled Tribes, the GER of males (19.9%) is higher than that of females (17.8%) by 2.1 percentage points.

Therefore, there is no disparity in enrolment against women in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. However, men are in an unfavourable position at the aggregate level and in the SC category regarding enrolments in the UT.



Using data from the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), this study highlights the disparities in access to higher education within the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. From analyzing Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) across social groups to examining Gender Parity Index (GPI), the findings shed light on the challenges faced by marginalized communities and genders.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of access and equity in higher education in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir reveals significant disparities across social groups and genders. Despite education being recognized as a crucial driver for social and economic development, the data indicates a considerable gap between the UT and the national average in terms of Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), with marginalized groups such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes facing even greater challenges.

The disparity becomes more evident when comparing GER across social groups within the UT, with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes lagging behind the aggregate level GER. Moreover, when compared to national averages, these marginalized groups in Jammu and Kashmir are even further disadvantaged.

Gender disparity presents a mixed picture, with females generally having higher GER than males at the aggregate level and among Scheduled Castes, while the opposite is observed among Scheduled Tribes. This suggests that while there is no overall disparity against women in enrollment, men face challenges in accessing higher education, particularly at the aggregate level and within Scheduled Castes in the Union Territory.

Addressing these disparities requires concerted efforts from policymakers, educational institutions, and society at large. Initiatives aimed at improving access to education, particularly for marginalized groups, must be prioritized to ensure equitable opportunities for all individuals. Additionally, strategies to address the specific needs of different social groups and genders should be implemented to create a more inclusive higher education system in Jammu and Kashmir. Ultimately, fostering a more equitable educational landscape is essential for the overall development and prosperity of the region.

### Future study

The author intends to conduct a comprehensive study in the future by disaggregating the data at various levels of education, such as Undergraduate, Postgraduate, and Ph.D. levels, to examine access to higher education across different social groups.



# VIHI District: A geologically ignificant but largely unknown area in Kashmir



**PARVAIZ YOUSUF**

People know the Kashmir Valley for numerous reasons. Some are drawn to its lakes, while others are captivated by its mountains. Despite its fame for various reasons, there's something about it that many people are unaware of. There exists a geographical district called the VIHI district, about which most people, even within Kashmir, are ignorant. This geologically significant and apolitical district holds immense ecological, geological, and historical importance.

The VIHI district holds great potential for improving both the ecological and economic status of its inhabitants. However, before any progress can be made, people must become acquainted with what this place entails. Currently, there is a dearth of literature available on the topic, exacerbating the issue. Therefore, in this article, we go into everything concerning the VIHI district, including its composition and significance.

## **What is the VIHI District?**

Geologically speaking, the VIHI District encompasses the area beginning from Athwajan and extending along a mountainous range that includes Pantha Chowk, Zewan, Khanmoh, Wuyan, Khrew, Mandakpal, Shar-Shali, Ladhu, and culminates at Letpora. Synonymous with Pampore, approximately 90 percent of the villages or areas within it fall under the Pampore tehsil.

Each area within the VIHI district is renowned for distinct reasons and holds its own significance. Although these villages and areas are situated within two different political districts (Srinagar and Pulwama), they are referred to as the VIHI district from a geological and historical perspective. Collectively, the mountainous range in the VIHI district forms a horseshoe-shaped structure that encircles the plains and plateaus of the region. Abundant in natural resources, the VIHI district boasts beautiful saffron fields, wetlands, and mountain ranges, all of which greatly contribute to its geographical value. Moreover, the area sustains a sizable human population and provides them with natural resources, including stones, cement, etc., for their livelihoods.

## **What makes the VIHI District so significant?**

Usually, it is very hard to find a place with huge ecological diversity in a small area, but the VIHI district is an exception to that rule. This is because it encompasses a wide variety of features that collectively represent a microcosm of the entirety of Kashmir. Firstly, the district holds significant geological importance due to its resource-rich mountainous range, where fossils dating back thousands of years can be found. Additionally, the VIHI district serves as a crucial source of raw materials for cement production, which is distributed across every corner of the Kashmir valley, thereby contributing to the local economy and supporting many livelihoods within the district.

Furthermore, the VIHI district is renowned for being home to Kashmir's famous saffron fields, which sprawl across thousands of hectares and produce the world's highest-quality saffron. Moreover, the district boasts four beautiful wetlands: Chatlam WR, Fashkoori WR, Manibugh WR, and Krenchoo WR. These wetlands serve as habitats for thousands of migratory birds annually, playing a vital role in the local



ecosystem and providing essential ecological services to humans.

In the following section, we will detail each part of the VIHI district, exploring its unique characteristics and contributions to the region.

## **Main sites/areas present in the VIHI District**

### **Kashmir Triassic Fossil Park**

The Kashmir Triassic Fossil Park is located at Khanmoh in the VIHI district. Approximately 252 million years ago, a massive bio-extinction occurred during the Permian-Triassic era. The organisms from that period are preserved within a rock system at Guryul Ravine in Khanmoh.

The Kashmir Triassic Fossil Park holds significance for numerous reasons. Firstly, it offers insight into two distinct geological eras, the Paleozoic and the Mesozoic, providing a unique opportunity to observe the evolution of life during these pivotal periods. Visitors to the fossil park can journey through time and marvel at the fossilized remains of long-extinct animals.

Secondly, the Kashmir Triassic Fossil Park contains evidence of the FIRST-EVER TSUNAMI. These immensely destructive events are documented in fossils, revealing how the Earth's surface was altered by powerful forces during the Triassic period. The park offers a rare glimpse into the aftermath of this ancient tsunami, shedding light on events that transpired millions of years ago in the region we inhabit today.

According to an article titled "Kashmir Triassic Fossil Park," published by Pen Dixie Fossil Park and Nature Reserve, the park serves as evidence of the FIRST EVER MASS EXTINCTION, further adding to its intrigue. By studying the fossil park, we can connect with the past and gain insights into the environmental changes that facilitated the evolution of new life forms.

Formerly recognized as a Natural Heritage Site prior to 2004, the Kashmir Triassic Fossil Park now shares its natural beauty with the Chinese International Meishan Section, enhancing its Global Strata Status. Despite being known by multiple names, the park retains its utmost importance.

### **Saffron Karewas of Pampore**

Pampore, situated in the VIHI district, is renowned as the "Saffron Town" of India owing to its expansive saffron fields locally referred to as "Wuder." Some of the world's finest saffron originates from the saffron Karewas in Pampore. Saffron has remained an integral component of Kashmir's culture for numerous generations. The unique combination of weather conditions, including the cool autumn air and fertile soil, facilitates the cultivation of the highest quality saffron. Delicate purple Crocus flowers are meticulously handpicked using a method passed down through generations.

Beyond the exceptional quality of Pampore's saffron, the process of its cultivation holds significant cultural and historical significance. Farmers demonstrate great reverence for the saffron Karewas, reflecting a profound connection to the land. The predominance of saffron fields in the VIHI district underscores the deep-rooted cultural significance of saffron within the local community.

### **Hangul in Khrew Forests**

In addition to saffron, the VIHI district boasts a place known as Batadalav forests. These forests serve as a sanctuary for wildlife enthusiasts and environmentalists alike. Nestled amidst the picturesque scenery of Khrew, they are home to the renowned Hangul deer, also known as the Kashmir Stag,

lending an enchanting aura to the VIHI District. While many believe Hangul to be confined solely to Dachigam National Park, this is not the case.

The Batadalav woods in Khrew feature a dense canopy of undisturbed trees, providing an ideal habitat for the Hangul to thrive and proliferate. As the state animal of Jammu and Kashmir, Hangul holds great significance in both local culture and environmental conservation efforts.

One of the primary objectives of conservation initiatives in the VIHI District is to safeguard the Hangul's habitat. These endeavors not only aid in the protection of a species exclusive to this region but also enhance the health and stability of the Khrew forests as a whole.

There are numerous opportunities for nature enthusiasts to immerse themselves in the beauty of the Batadalav forests in the VIHI district, including ecotourism and wildlife observation. Guided excursions offer visitors the chance to witness the exquisite Hangul in its natural habitat, providing a rare glimpse of this majestic creature in the wild.

### **Wetlands of Pampore**

Another significant aspect of the VIHI district is its satellite wetlands. The presence of the Chatlam, Fashkooori, Manibug, and Kranchu wetlands enhances the importance of the VIHI district. These wetlands, located within a 2 square km radius, form interconnected satellite wetlands. Moreover, they play a crucial role for various bird species that migrate during specific times of the year. Ecologically, these wetlands are vital as they provide essential habitats for birds and contribute to the overall biodiversity of the surrounding areas.

All four wetlands are nourished by underground springs, ensuring a continuous flow of fresh water. This natural water source not only sustains the wetlands but also supports a diverse ecosystem that enables the survival of the plants and animals inhabiting these areas.

Throughout the year, the wetlands attract a flurry of activity as they become bustling havens for migratory birds, waterfowl, and various other species. Additionally, the wetlands of Pampore serve as a source of water for local residents, utilized for various activities such as irrigation.

### **Wasturvan Forest Top**

Another captivating destination within the VIHI district is the Wasturvan forest top, renowned among locals. Each year, thousands of people embark on treks to this stunning mountaintop. Situated among the highest peaks in the VIHI district, the forest top harbors a diverse population of wildlife and birds. What makes this forest top particularly special is its panoramic 360-degree view of the Kashmir valley. From this vantage point, visitors can admire different parts of the valley, a rarity among mountaintops. The Wasturvan forest top is highly sought after by wildlife enthusiasts and trekkers alike, contributing significantly to the appeal of the VIHI district.

### **Cultural Significance of the VIHI District**

The VIHI District holds immense cultural importance in Kashmir. The region boasts a rich tapestry of religious and cultural history, owing to the presence of revered saints and historical figures like Lal Ded. Lal Ded, a prominent figure in Kashmiri history, was a poetess and saint whose teachings continue to resonate today. Additionally, the VIHI District was home to many renowned Sufi saints, including Sheikh-ul-Alam and Wahab Khar (RA). This cultural wealth is evident in the district's customs, festivals, and inclusive nature, welcoming people from all walks of life.

Spiritual and cultural leaders have left an indelible mark on the VIHI District, shaping its unique character. It serves as a living testament to the rich history that has influenced the



culture of the Kashmir Valley. Residing in the VIHI District instills a sense of pride and continuity among its residents, bridging the gap between the past and present through its vibrant cultural life.

### What Needs to be Done?

Now that you have gained a better understanding of what the VIHI district entails and its significance for the Kashmir valley, it's evident that the VIHI District is a remarkable blend of natural, geological, and cultural treasures that necessitate long-term protection and sustainable development initiatives. Some local organizations have already initiated conservation programs for the VIHI district, such as "Go Green Kashmir" and "ECO-RESTORATION OF VIHI DISTRICT," marking crucial strides toward environmental preservation and highlighting the importance of collaboration among authorities, experts, and local groups.

In addition to safeguarding natural and cultural resources, promoting responsible tourism can unlock the area's full economic potential while ensuring its protection. Further research projects can enhance our understanding of the district's ecological and historical diversity, essential for formulating robust conservation strategies.

The local government must take proactive measures to preserve the various components of the VIHI district. Implementing proper laws and management practices is imperative for monitoring and conserving assets like the Kashmir Triassic Fossil Park, which holds far greater importance than commonly perceived and can serve as a representation of the Kashmir Valley's heritage in the future.

The same applies to the Batadalav forest and wetlands of Pampore, which are already captivating our attention. It is now incumbent upon both authorities and local communities to harness the invaluable resources present in the VIHI district.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the VIHI District stands as a hidden gem within the Kashmir Valley, teeming with natural, geological, and cultural riches that warrant the care and attention of all. The Kashmir Triassic Fossil Park boasts remarkable geological features that narrate tales of ancient tsunamis and mass extinctions. The saffron fields of Pampore symbolize cultural abundance, while the biodiverse sanctuary of Hangul in Khrew's forests serves as a tangible illustration of the intricate connection between nature and human life. Furthermore, the ecological significance of the area is underscored by the presence of wetlands and the Wasturvan Forest Top.

Initiatives such as "Go Green Kashmir" and "ECO-RESTORATION OF VIHI DISTRICT" play pivotal roles in safeguarding this rich heritage and fostering a more sustainable future. The cultural legacy of the VIHI District, shaped by revered saints like Lal Ded, Sheikh-ul-Alam, and Wahab Khar, imbues us with a profound sense of continuity.

To shield these treasures from the impacts of irresponsible tourism, further comprehensive studies are imperative to scrutinize each area individually. Moreover, concerted efforts are required from both the populace and the local government to support conservation endeavors in the VIHI district. With collective action and dedication, we can ensure the preservation of this invaluable heritage for generations to come.



The VIHI district holds great potential for improving both the ecological and economic status of its inhabitants. However, before any progress can be made, people must become acquainted with what this place entails. Currently, there is a dearth of literature available on the topic, exacerbating the issue. Therefore, in this article, we go into everything concerning the VIHI district, including its composition and significance.





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An initiative towards sustainability and equality

A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE BY **JAMMU & KASHMIR POLICY INSTITUTE, JKPI**, to explore how we can move from research to practice and make a meaningful contribution to improve the lives of people in our communities.





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