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**J&K TO EMERGE
 AS STARTUP HUB IN
 INDIA: PROF ROMSHOO**

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J&K EMBARKS ON DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY TOWARDS BUILDING VIKSIT BHARAT



**J&K's portal,
 e-Unnat, has
 achieved the
 top rank
 among all the
 portals of
 the UTs**

Courtesy: ScooNews

Sualiha Zubair

Jammu and Kashmir is emerging as the vanguard for 'Digital India'—a cornerstone for highly anticipated 'Viksit Bharat'—as it tops the National e-Services Delivery Assessment (NeSDA) report.

According to the NeSDA Way Forward Annual Report, released by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) in February 2024, J&K has secured first rank in terms of providing the maximum number of e-services among all the union territories and states of India. The report is based on the inputs provided by states/UTs upto January 6, 2024.

To reduce the digital divide between urban and rural India, 'Digital India' programme was launched by the central government in 2015. It envisions to transform the nation into a digitally empowered society, enhancing transparency in government processes and promoting digital inclusion of every citizen across India. Digital India serves as the core component and flag bearer of a broader Viksit Bharat initiative, which

translates to Developed India.

Viksit Bharat is a roadmap towards a completely evolved India by 2047, wherein every citizen shall have access to improved standards of livelihood, literacy and healthcare. The objectives such as advanced digital infrastructure and robust government-citizen connectivity that are integral to Digital India's framework have been deemed indispensable in realising the grander Viksit Bharat dream.

According to the NeSDA Report, a total of 16,487 e-services are provided across all 28 states and eight UTs of the country, while J&K provides a maximum of 1120 services through a Single Unified Service Delivery Portal, which is e-Unnat.

J&K's portal, e-Unnat, has achieved the top rank during the assessment of online portals of the UTs as per the National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment 2021 report. The assessment is based on four key parameters: Accessibility, content availability, ease of use, and information security and privacy.

Mufti Hyder Ali, who has extensively worked with J&K e-Governance Agency as a technical manager and core

developer, believes that the end goal of digital initiatives is to make the lives of common people easier. Earlier, he says, due to the unavailability of information online, people had to struggle with even the basic services. However, he adds, now with more and more services transitioning into online mode, the accessibility of overall government services is improving.

"Offline delivery of services would earlier require people of all age groups to physically attend the concerned office. This was not only tedious but challenging for elderly or specially-abled people and those who belonged to far-off places," observes Ali, adding that citizens often had to pursue their applications from one office to another. "But thankfully now these shortcomings have been addressed."

Ali reported to Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha's office and was a core team member in establishing the platform behind the monthly programme, *Awaam ki Awaaz*, headed by the LG. He states that the initiatives like UMANG and DigiLocker have redefined the experience of government service delivery in J&K. These services allow

J&K is ahead of all other union territories and states in terms of providing the highest number of e-services

the citizens to directly avail the services and share documents without the need to upload them physically.

"As per the IT Act, the documents stored in DigiLocker can be treated as equivalent to the originally issued documents, which is a huge relief to our people," mentions Ali.

The sector-wise analysis of e-services shows that J&K is leading among all union territories by providing the highest number of services in various sectors. This includes 24 out of 25 services in local government and utilities, 27 out of 29 social welfare services, 20 out of 25 education services, eight out of 20

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Editor Speaks

VIKSIT BHARAT
VIKSIT KASHMIR

Viksit Bharat, or Developed India, represents a complete blueprint for India's prosperity. It is an endeavour to transform India into a developed nation by 2047—the 100th year of independence.

Viksit Bharat—a vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi—aims to raise the country's position at the global level. The idea is based on realising the nation's full economic potential. The vision encompasses various facets of development, such as economic growth, environmental sustainability, good governance, social progress, so on and so forth.

One of the key objectives of Viksit Bharat is to enable every citizen to participate in the economy that is full of employability and entrepreneurial opportunities. This can be gauged from the focus of central government on programmes such as Startup India, Digital India and Made in India.

It is, however, strongly believed that Bharat cannot be 'Viksit' without 'Viksit Kashmir.' The role of Viksit Kashmir in leading the journey of Viksit Bharat is, thus, being emphasised upon time and again. In other words, developed Jammu and Kashmir is paramount to achieving a developed Bharat.

J&K does not lag behind when it comes to realising the vision of Viksit Bharat. Numerous projects focused on development, tourism, healthcare, education and other sectors are currently underway in the union territory. Moreover, many schemes related to the agricultural sector have been announced for Kashmiri farmers that makes it even more inclusive for the locals. All such measures are pivotal in building a 'developed Jammu and Kashmir.'



Meanwhile, several events pertaining to Viksit Bharat are being held in J&K. For instance, a Viksit Bharat Ambassador meet-up was organised in Srinagar district on April 20. More than 300 participants, including writers, students, startup owners, professionals and journalists from North and South Kashmir attended the event.

The Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Awantipora, too has been organising events relevant to the themes of Viksit Bharat. The varsity has also been generating awareness among students about entrepreneurship and job opportunities as well as various government schemes focussed on the youth.

The current edition of *Times Echo* is dedicated to varied development measures under Viksit Bharat programme being taken up in the Kashmir Valley. The students have covered a handful of stories based on various aspects of the theme.

Viksit Bharat: A holistic approach
to rural development

Zeeshan Shabir

With a goal of enhancing the quality of life for its rural populace, India has made a tremendous progress in rural development over the past several years. To address some important concerns including poverty, infrastructure, healthcare, education and employment prospects in rural areas, the government has launched several projects and programmes.

Viksit Bharat's rural development schemes highlight the programme's revolutionary effects on India's rural areas. Numerous initiatives by Viksit Bharat to promote rural development have been carried out with success. The effort has improved agricultural productivity, connectedness and general economic growth—all of which have helped to uplift and empower rural people. The beneficial improvements brought about by Viksit Bharat are seen as a critical step in the direction of equitable and sustainable development in India.

Talking to *Times Echo*, Hilal Arafat, Block Development Officer (BDO) of Lassipora, says, there are several government programmes going on in the rural areas, including Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Swachh Bharat Mission, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), mid-day meal programme and so on. He adds that a 100-day paid employment is provided to unskilled labourers every year, in which rural women participate more.

To mention, PMGSY—a prominent rural road construction programme—aims to connect villages with all-weather roads, enabling improved access to marketplaces, medical services and educational institutions. The programme has led to a better connectivity and enhanced economic activities in rural regions.

"Under PMGSY, macadamised roads are being built, which makes accessibility to the school and nearby health care centre convenient," says Arafat.

He further says, under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), the government have provided shelter to economically weaker section families in the block.

Furthermore, programmes like MGNREGA have been instrumental in providing livelihood security to rural households. These have improved rural incomes to a notable extent.

Besides, by empowering rural women and youth through programmes

like Digital India and Startup India, efforts to advance digital literacy and entrepreneurship in rural regions have opened doors for skill development and economic expansion. With an emphasis on sustainability, inclusivity and empowerment of the rural populace, these efforts collectively demonstrate a determined attempt towards holistic rural development in India. The advancements



Photo: Zeeshan Shabir/IUST

made thus far point to a bright future for rural India, opening the door to a society that is both affluent and just.

A farmer, Ghulam Muhammad Mir, says, a decade ago, the alleys and roads were *Kachcha* (unmetalled), which would get muddy during rainy days making it difficult to walk. "However, with programmes like PMGSY, road connectivity has improved a lot, due to which farming and other related activities have gotten easier. We can now conveniently take cars and tractors to our farmlands," he shares. He adds that schemes like National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) have provided them better healthcare and also lowered treatment expenses.

The Swachh Bharat Mission has further raised the living standards of the rural population. The scheme focusses on enhancing hygiene and sanitation standards in rural areas, which has resulted in a notable rise in the building of toilets and the adoption of safe sanitation techniques. "This has enhanced general well-being and led to a better environment in the villages," says Auqib Ahmad Dar, a student.

Another local, Dawood Ahmad, says, Gram Sabha and other awareness programmes under the rural development banner keep people updated about latest happenings and development programmes in their locality. "The quality of life has improved significantly in the rural areas. Employment is being provided to one and all, including unskilled labourers, which has helped to reduce unemployment in villages," he added.

AIMING TO TRANSFORM HEALTHCARE IN KASHMIR

‘AIIMS shall improve quality of medical education, patient care’

Khadijah Qasim Kamili

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) project in Awantipora has entered its critical phases of development with stakeholders eagerly anticipating its completion. This transformative healthcare hub for the Valley of Kashmir is expected to bring a new era of advanced healthcare, medical education and research opportunities.

The continuing development of AIIMS Awantipora not only represents a huge milestone for healthcare in the region, but it also corresponds with the overall goals of Viksit Bharat. As part of India’s ambition to attain comprehensive development by its 100th year of independence in 2047, Viksit Bharat emphasises the critical role of improved healthcare facilities in uplifting communities and fostering national progress. It is a strategic investment in achieving Viksit Bharat’s healthcare objectives. Once operational, this cutting-edge medical centre is expected to revolutionise healthcare access and quality in the vicinity.

The idea and development of AIIMS in Kashmir, specifically at Awantipora, were a part of a broader endeavour to address various issues pertaining to healthcare in the area and to enhance India’s healthcare system as a whole.

With high expectations about the institute, Dr Amin Tabish, with a postgraduate degree in Medical Administration from AIIMS Delhi, says, “I envision it as a centre where the aspirations of students, researchers and patients will be realised. The cornerstone of AIIMS Awantipora lies in its mission of providing medical education, biomedical research and quality patient care.”

AIIMS institutions are not only healthcare facilities but also premier medical education and research centres. By setting up an AIIMS in Kashmir, the government aims to provide high-quality medical education to aspiring doctors and healthcare professionals from the region, fostering local talent and expertise. These facilities are equipped with modern medical equipment, advanced technologies and specialised departments, which contribute to raising the overall standard of healthcare services.

Discussing the potential impact of AIIMS Awantipora on healthcare in Kashmir, Dr Tabish states that it will bring quality care to a significant number of people in

Kashmir, especially in South Kashmir. “AIIMS will address the healthcare needs of the population, nurture future health professionals and foster collaboration in medical research,” he adds.



The under-construction structure of AIIMS, Awantipora.

Photo: Khadijah Qasim Kamili/IUST

Additionally, AIIMS is expected to create employment opportunities for doctors, nurses, technicians and administrative staff, benefiting the Kashmir region. It also aims to decrease the need for patients to travel great distances for specialised care by bringing modern medical services closer to the local community.

“THE CORNERSTONE OF AIIMS AWANTIPORA LIES IN ITS MISSION OF PROVIDING MEDICAL EDUCATION, BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH AND QUALITY PATIENT CARE”

Talking to *Times Echo*, residents recall how they had to travel all the way earlier to Srinagar for basic healthcare provisions, which had a consequent load on the city’s hospitals. “People from Anantnag, Kulgam and other districts of the South can now come to Awantipora conveniently and get world-class treatment nearby. It will help save many precious lives,” says Muhammad Ashraf, a resident of Awantipora.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare under the Government of India is in charge of the autonomous group of government-funded medical universities. An Act of Parliament has

designated these institutions as Institutes of National Importance (INIs). The pioneering institute, AIIMS New Delhi, was founded in 1956. Later, 24 more institutes have been set up.

Formally sanctioned in 2019, with a budget allocation of Rs 1828 crore, the AIIMS Kashmir project is gearing towards fortifying and strengthening critical healthcare infrastructure through the construction of several edifices—57 buildings alongside other facilities. Spread over 272 kanals of land, the institute aims to significantly boost healthcare capacity in Kashmir with its provision of 1000 beds that include 300 super-speciality ones. Furthermore, the establishment will host a medical college catering to 100 students and a nursing college accommodating 60 students, thereby elevating both the medical care standards and educational opportunities within the valley of Kashmir.

By incorporating developmental projects such as AIIMS Awantipora in healthcare infrastructure within the larger framework of Viksit Bharat, India not only addresses pressing healthcare demands but also provides the groundwork for long-

term development. The AIIMS project exemplifies the spirit of Viksit Bharat by encouraging innovation, research and skill development in the healthcare sector, resulting in a strong ecosystem of

medical excellence. Furthermore, the building of AIIMS Awantipora underscores India’s commitment to equitable regional development, bridging healthcare access gaps and ensuring that no community falls behind on the path to growth. As Viksit Bharat envisions a developed India by 2047, projects such as AIIMS play an important role in reaching crucial milestones in healthcare delivery, education and technological integration, thus establishing a strong foundation for long-term national progress.

SPREAD OVER 272 KANALS OF LAND, THE INSTITUTE AIMS TO SIGNIFICANTLY BOOST HEALTHCARE CAPACITY IN KASHMIR WITH ITS PROVISION OF 1000 BEDS, INCLUDING 300 SUPER-SPECIALITY ONES



Photo: Khadijah Qasim Kamili/IUST

IUST'S VIKSIT BHARAT

EMPOWERING YOUTH FOR VIKSIT BHARAT: IUST HOSTS 2-DAY SKILL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

The Directorate of Physical Education and Sports at Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) in collaboration with CIED IUST Foundation, organised a two-day Skill Development Workshop on Field Archery on March 27-28. The event was part of a series of programmes covering various aspects aimed at realizing the goal of Viksit Bharat, focusing on the significance of sports and the priority of nurturing champions to bring glory to the nation.

Lauding the organisers, Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Shakil A Romshoo underlined that youth are the powerhouse of energy and essential stakeholders in the development process. He stated that



Photo: IUST

their proper training in constitutional values, commitment to excellence and societal concerns will herald a new dawn of prosperity.

Registrar IUST, Dr Waseem Bari, underscored the importance of sportsmanship, discipline, and perseverance in academics and extracurricular activities. The training aimed to promote physical activity, precision, and teamwork through

archery. Seasoned archery professionals led the workshop, providing both beginners and seasoned archers with an opportunity to refine their techniques.

Participants enjoyed hands-on coaching sessions, interactive demonstrations, and friendly competitions, creating an engaging and immersive learning environment. Assistant Director of Physical Education and Sports, IUST Dr Hilal Ahmad Rather highlighted that the purpose of such programs is to help youth explore new opportunities and impart life skills such as focus, resilience, and leadership. Finance Officer, Sameer Wazir, and Director of CIED, Dr Parvez Ahmad Mir, were also present on the occasion.

IUST holds awareness program on J&K startup policy

J&K TO EMERGE AS STARTUP HUB IN INDIA: PROF ROMSHOO

A one-day awareness programme on Startup policy 2024-27 was jointly organised by CIED-IUST Foundation and Department of Management Studies. The programme was aimed at spreading awareness about the prospects of the new policy and the benefits that the aspiring entrepreneurs can avail.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Shakil A Romshoo, Vice Chancellor, IUST, said, the J&K Startup Policy will herald a new beginning and will transform the startup ecosystem in the union territory. He urged the participants to leverage the support offered by the government and work towards establishing successful business units.

Prof Romshoo also instructed the organisers to reach out to youth through different extension initiatives and highlight the opportunities that they can avail. He assured full support of IUST in terms of incubation, innovation, technical support, mentorship and so on.

The programme was attended by experts from the industry, incubates, IUST students and faculty. Prof Parvez Ahmad Mir, Director CIED, highlighted several provisions of the policy, such as the Seed Support, opportunity for student entrepreneurs, setting up of a Venture Capital Fund and others. Coordinators of different verticals of the CIED also addressed the participants on issues of IPR, gender inclusivity, marketing support and other aspects.



Photo: IUST

IUST hosts skill counselling program

Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) in coordination with the Jammu and Kashmir Skill Development Mission (JKSDM) organised a student counselling programme on May 29. The event was a part of a broader initiative involving interactions with various organisations to conduct a comprehensive skill gap study and develop intervention strategies.

Students from various departments participated in the programme, engaging in discussions and providing feedback on the Skill Gap and Youth Aspiration Survey. They were encouraged to share their aspirations and identify areas where they felt additional training was needed to enable devising of

redressal strategies.

The programme was organised



Photo: IUST

under the aegis of Dean of Students, Dr Asifa Baba, who stated that IUST remains committed to empowering the youth of J&K by imparting skills to them. She said that Prof Romshoo has prioritised increased industry engagement for curriculum development, industry training and internships for students to make them industry-ready.

She also convened a meeting of students' council with the Advisory Committee to the Council of Students, wherein various matters related to student affairs were discussed. The upcoming cultural events and initiatives were also discussed with the students' council.

TECHADE PROGRAM: Chips for Viksit Bharat held at IUST

Islamic University of Science and Technology celebrated the launch of Semiconductor Mission in a programme held at campus on March 13. The mission titled 'Techade: Chips

for Viksit Bharat' was launched by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. The programme that was chaired by Prof Waseem Bari, Registrar IUST, was attended by Dean School of Engineering

and Technology, Dean of Students, Finance Officer, Head Department of Electronics, faculty, scholars and students from various branches of Engineering and Technology.

RAT ENDEAVOURS

IUST to establish C4i4 under GoI

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Heavy Industries, Government of India, the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) has signed an MoU to establish the Centre for Industry 4.0 (C4i4) at the varsity. The premier centre shall endeavour to adopt the standards of Industry 4.0, while focusing on enhancing the competitiveness of Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) in India, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir.

The C4i4 is expected to further boost an innovative ecosystem at the University and facilitate industrial growth through partnerships among the government, industrial sector and technology firms. A delegation from the Ministry of Heavy Industries and C4i4,

Pune, led by its Director, Shri Dattatraya Navalgundkar, and Head of Operations, Dr Rajesh Pahadi, visited IUST on April 4 to formalize the establishment of

centres nationwide), recognising its contributions to foster innovations and entrepreneurship in the country.

The MoU signing event was



Photo: IUST

the centre. IUST was selected for this prestigious project (one of the 10 such

chaired by Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Shakil A Romshoo, and attended

by officials from Ministry of Heavy Industries, C4i4 Pune, and IUST, including Prof A H Moon, Dr Waseem Bari, Prof Parvez Ahmad Mir, Sameer Wazir, and heads of B.Tech departments.

During the ceremony, Prof Romshoo highlighted IUST's dedication to link academia with industry and business to cultivate skilled human resources. He emphasised the opportunity for India, and J&K in particular, to become a manufacturing hub through digital transformation, thereby boosting the global competitiveness of local industries. He further stressed the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in leveraging India's demographic advantage by equipping the youth with Industry 4.0 skills.

IUST holds seminar on women pioneers in technology

The Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) hosted a day-long seminar on 'Rise and Lead: Business and Public Life' on May 8. The seminar, organised by IUST in collaboration with the National Commission for Women (NCW), aimed to celebrate and empower young women in various fields.

Chairperson NCW, Prof Rekha Sharma, who was the chief guest on the occasion, inaugurated the event. She highlighted the importance of addressing the gap between women's educational achievements and their representation in leadership roles. She underlined the need to encourage active

participation of women in politics and digital literacy.

In his welcome address, Registrar IUST, Dr Waseem Bari, shed light on the historical and contemporary contributions of Kashmiri women in politics, poetry, aviation and sports. He said, IUST is committed to foster an environment where women are encouraged to pursue knowledge, excel in different fields and develop into leaders of tomorrow.

Dean Research IUST, Prof Sheikh Javed Ahmed, said, encouraging women to pursue education is not just about empowering individuals but also about enriching entire communities and



Chairperson National Commission for Women, Prof Rekha Sharma. Photo: IUST

shaping a brighter future for generations to come. Seminar Convener and Dean of Students, Dr Asifa Baba, underscored the goal of inspiring and supporting

young women on their path to leadership roles.

The seminar also featured three technical sessions covering topics such as navigating emerging opportunities in Artificial Intelligence and Drone technology, women in decision-making roles in public life, and women breaking glass ceilings in the corporate world. The sessions were conducted by experts in their respective fields, including Dr Asifa Baba, Dr Rumaan Bashir (Associate Professor, Department of Computer Sciences), and Dr Ruheela Hassan (Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication), respectively.

NI-MSME visits IUST, lauds entrepreneurship ecosystem of varsity

Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) hosted a delegation of National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (NI-MSME), Government of India, led by Director General, Dr S Glory Swarupa, on May 2. The collaboration in the areas of skill development, business incubation, innovative readiness and further strengthening the industry-academia interface was discussed in the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Shakil A Romshoo, said, the University values engagement with industry to foster

innovation, entrepreneurship, skilling and startup ecosystem as envisaged under NEP-2020. He said IUST prioritizes focus on new age technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Quantum Computing and so on. "The University is establishing the Centre for Industry 4.0 in collaboration with Ministry of Heavy Industries, Government of India, which will be one of the 10 such centers across the country," he informed.

Prof Romshoo further said, the need of the hour is that educational



Photo: IUST

institutions dovetail with the industry to make up for deficit in skilled and productive human resources.

Dr Swarupa commended

IUST for its efforts in promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, and highlighted various programmes offered by NI-MSME that could significantly benefit aspiring entrepreneurs in the region.

Prof A H Moon, Dean Academic Affairs, discussed various verticals of CIED and collaborations with different eminent national institutions like SIDBI, IITs etc. He highlighted new centers and new programmes established in the IUST that focus on the requirements of IR 4.0.

GOVT REVIVES ANCIENT MARVEL

Sualiha Zubair

In a significant move, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is reviving the ancient Avantismwami temple situated on the banks of River Jhelum at Awantipora in Pulwama district of Kashmir. The restoration of the temple could be seen as a plan under the government's vision of *Viksit Bhi Virasat Bhi*, which refers to safeguarding historic landmarks nationwide.

Built by the Utpala dynasty's King Avantivarman, who ruled Kashmir in 9th century CE and dedicated to God Vishnu, the temple holds immense historical and cultural significance for devotees from Jammu and Kashmir as well as outside the UT.

Speaking about the recent developments, Muhammad Akram, a staffer from the Archaeological Survey of India, who oversees daily operations at the Avantismwami temple, says, although reconstruction of the temple took place multiple times in the last decade, serious efforts have been taken by the ASI since last year.

Without altering the pre-existing structure, some new structures are being constructed ensuring that these structures are in conformity with the heritage structure. "The government began with repairing damaged elements of the temple, then reconstructing missing parts based on historical evidence, and using some new concrete material wherever needed to ensure structural stability," says Akram.

Locally called as the *Pandav Lari*, the monument has been declared of national importance under the Ancient

Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958. Even today it reflects the architectural prowess of J&K from centuries ago. Natural disasters along with years of neglect had turned this revered site into ruins for a long time, prompting concerns about its preservation and continuity.

Akram adds that the



Avantismwami temple at Awantipora, Pulwama.

Photo: Sualiha Zubair/IUST

government has also planned to upgrade this place to a full-fledged tourist destination, "for which various steps have already been taken." "A well-maintained park has also been developed around the temple to attract more visitors," says Akram.

While briefing over the footfall of visitors, Akram says that people not just from India but foreign countries too are visiting the temple now "primarily due to the department's efforts to maintain the site well."

"Since there is more awareness about the place due to Internet and social media, many tourists on their way to Pahalgam stop by and spend some time at this temple," he adds.

shifting of the state government's capital between Srinagar and Jammu, was brought to end in 2021 due to the harsh climates. This tradition dated back to the time of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, who ruled the Valley in 19th century. It included movement of hundreds of trucks to transport the official documents over 300 kilometers from Srinagar to Jammu at the onset of winters and vice versa when the cold weather ended.

In this regard, Ali mentions that by discontinuing the 149-year-old practice of Darbar Move, the government has been able to save all the expenses that it took to move the files, the labour cost, travel allowances and cost of accommodation to employees. "Abolishing this practice has saved the government around Rs 400 crore," he claims.

However, what made discontinuation of Darbar Move possible was the transition of J&K administration from physical files and documents to e-office. In March 2021, the J&K

He reveals that post Covid-19 period, there has been a steep rise in tourist footfall with about 42,039 Indians visiting in 2022-23. "On an average, around one lakh people from India and abroad visit the temple annually," he shares.

The locals of Awantipora state that before any reconstruction

began at the temple, over years multiple teams conducted thorough research to understand the original design, architectural features and cultural significance of the structure.

Ishfaq Qadir Bhat, a native, says, it was a flood that hit Kashmir centuries ago, which damaged the structure. "The stones of this temple are found deep inside the nearby River Jhelum even now," he reveals. The historical evidences including books and government documents about the temple prove the same. "Upon the earliest excavations antique items such as a book, idols of god and coins were found at the place," says Bhat.

According to National

administration switched to e-office software—an electronic system that stores large amounts of data in a secure and structured manner, protecting them from natural or man-made disasters.

This major e-governance



administrative reform in the UT enables an authorised employee to locate the required documents in the shortest possible time resulting in increased efficiency in the functioning of employees.

Monument Authority, Ministry of Culture, the temple was brought to light and revived during the large-scale excavation undertaken by the famous archaeologist of ASI, Daya Ram Sahni, in 1913. Sahni did the second and the most extensive round of excavations at the site. His findings were first published in 'Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India 1913-14' under title 'Excavations at Awantipur.'

During the excavations, a wide range of antiquities were found, including inscribed earthen jars, 108 copper coins issued by various rulers such as Toramana, Sultans of the Shah Mir dynasty, and Durrani Afghan rulers, and some manuscripts that are preserved at S.P.S museum Srinagar.

"The site stands as a testament to unique constructive and designing skills of the ruling dynasties of Jammu and Kashmir," says Akram.

The temple has majestic pillars, wall carvings of god and goddesses, sets of staircases, sculptures of kings, queens and attendants, and other detached figures, which make it a must visit.

Beyond its historical importance, the revival of Avantismwami temple is also providing economic benefits for the town. The influx of tourists and pilgrims drawn to the restored site is already boosting the local economies and creating employment opportunities. "Be it shopkeepers, bus and cab drivers, street vendors or the local guides, everybody is earning a good livelihood with the development of this temple," says Bhat.

While endorsing this step and calling it vital for e-governance, Ali adds that apart from financial benefits, e-office is a favorable step to contain corruption at all levels. The process of introduction of e-office, however, was not straightforward. "The primary milestone was to ensure the digitization of all existing files and paperwork. For this, centralized scanning centers were setup in the Civil Secretariat," he states, adding that e-office has been an integral part of the entire government, functioning with more than 300 offices onboard and disposal rate of files being reduced to three days.

While talking about the challenges in the digitization process of e-initiatives in J&K, Ali admits that the major challenge remains the lack of technical expertise in the offices. "We must bring in industry experts and train our ground staff to the technical world to create top-notch services for the public," he concludes.

(Viksit Bharat)..... from page 1
tourism services, 15 out of 26 labour and employment services, and 17 out of 20 finance services.

Previously, in March 2023, J&K became the first in the country to introduce auto appeal feature of Public Services Guarantee Act (PSGA) for various online services. Under auto appeal system, appeals get automatically moved to the appellate authorities in case the service is not provided within the period defined under the PSGA, thus leading to accountability and transparency. In a statement at the launch of these services, J&K Chief Secretary Arun Kumar Mehta had said, this would ensure the prevalence of discipline on the part of both public servants and applicants. "And any sort of indiscipline or breach of timelines in providing the services would attract a penalty as per the PSGA."

As a result of digitizing data and records, J&K's Darbar Move, a unique practice involving the biannual

HAZRATBAL SHRINE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT GOES ON IN FULL SWING

Hazratbal is revered as the most sacred shrine in Kashmir, where a hair strand of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), known as the relic or *Moi-e-Muqaddas*, is believed to be preserved. The term *Hazrat* signifies holiness or respect, while *Bal* denotes a place, giving the shrine its meaning as a 'holy place.'

Visitors often consider Hazratbal Shrine a significant site to explore in Srinagar, while devout Muslims from all over the country ensure to make a pilgrimage to this hallowed site at least once in their lifetime. The revered hair strand of the Prophet (PBUH) is exhibited to the public on special occasions, such as birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his four main companions: Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq, Hazrat Umar ibn Khattab, Hazrat Usman ibn Affan, and Hazrat Ali (RA).

The development project for Hazratbal Shrine has already begun to attract even more devotees and tourists from various parts of the country. On March 7, 2024, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, had addressed 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Jammu Kashmir' programme in Srinagar. He dedicated the project for 'Integrated Development of Hazratbal Shrine Srinagar' to the nation. Photos and text by **Shaista Altaf**.



Hazratbal Srinagar : Frontier view of Dargah shrine



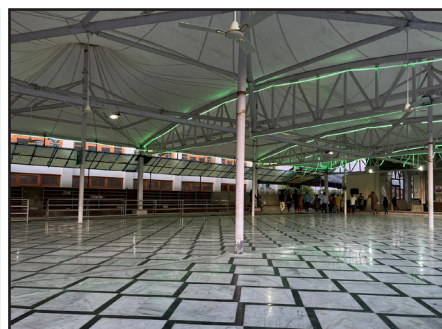
The majestic doors of the sacred sanctuary



Construction of a hall with multiple washrooms for both ladies and gents



Board mentioning pilgrimage amenities at Hazratbal Shrine



Reconstructed path that takes one towards the shrine



The tranquil path connecting the two peaceful parks of Hazratbal shrine.



IUST'S CS DEPTT PIONEERS IN DIGITAL INCLUSION FOR KASHMIRI LANGUAGE

Khadijah Qasim Kamili

Department of Computer Science, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), is spearheading efforts to integrate Kashmiri language with the digital world. Supervised by a team of expert faculty members, especially Dr Kaisar Javeed Giri, Head of the department and Dr Rumaan Bashir, Associate Professor, these projects highlight India's commitment to foster digital growth, technological innovations and language inclusivity.

The department is advancing digital inclusion through the integration of Kashmiri language into a range of Computer Science applications. The initiative, in alignment with Viksit Bharat @2047, emphasises on Digital India as well as promotion of regional languages. "Our department is committed to integrate Kashmiri language into the digital fabric, ensuring that technological advancements are inclusive and accessible to all," states Dr Giri.

The research scholars in the department and a group of 20 odd committed

students are initiating numerous projects that aim to elevate Kashmiri language in the digital sphere. Some of these visionary projects have already begun operations. One of the researchers at the department, Danish Nazir Raja, says, they are currently working on languages, particularly Kashmiri, with regard to Computer Science applications. "So

"OUR DEPARTMENT IS COMMITTED TO INTEGRATE KASHMIRI LANGUAGE INTO THE DIGITAL FABRIC, ENSURING THAT TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS ARE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL"

far, we have finished projects including Spoken Language Detection and

Identification in Kashmiri, and Neural Machine Translation from Kashmiri to English," he says.

Neural Machine Translation (NMT) comes under the broader domain of Natural Language Processing (NLP). Through this, Kashmiri sentences are converted into English using a Neural model. "Once the model is trained, we can test it by providing a sentence and checking if it accurately converts Kashmiri to English words in the right context," explains Raja. This project showcases how Neural networks facilitate precise language translation, making Kashmiri to English word linking more achievable and effective today.

Another significant area is Spoken Language Identification. This model works by capturing audio files and recognising the language being spoken in the input provided. "The system tries to identify the spoken language from the audio input, which is crucial for applications requiring multilingual support, thus enhancing user accessibility," says Raja. This technology plays a vital role in bringing the Kashmiri language to the digital

forefront, ensuring that it is recognised and preserved in the evolving digital landscape.

These initiatives are a part of a broader strategy to promote regional languages in the digital space. The University ensures to make Kashmiri language as digitally accessible as other languages throughout the world by harnessing technology. NMT is set to lay a foundation for future projects in Image Processing as well.

"Our future target is to explore other domains and areas of the Kashmiri language that can help to bring our regional language into the digital domain, at par with other languages available," adds Raja.

India's vision to become a developed nation by 2047 includes preservation of regional languages and digital inclusion as well, which is being implemented by the IUST. Through these initiatives, the varsity celebrates and revives Kashmir's rich cultural heritage in addition to advancing technological innovations. These endeavours reflect the ideals of Viksit Bharat 2047, ensuring a secure future to the youth.



On Going Projects

- ▶ SISFS-DPIIT- Govt. of India
- ▶ DST-Nidhi-iTBI- Govt. of India
- ▶ STEM (Skill to Enterprise Model) SIDBI
- ▶ NIAM- Agripreneurship Training Programs
- ▶ Transformation Leadership Programme
- ▶ C4i4 (Centre for Industry 4.0)

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