

Jammu & Kashmir Digest

A Review of Developments in J&K



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Foreign Diplomats in Kashmir: Witnessing Democracy in Action

The recent visit by foreign diplomats to Jammu and Kashmir, organised by the Indian government, highlighted some positive developments in the region. The diplomats from 16 countries, including the United States, Mexico, and Singapore were invited (for the first time) to witness the recently conducted Jammu and Kashmir assembly elections, the first to be held after the revocation of Article 370 in 2019. These elections were a testament to a functional and thriving democracy in this region. The elections themselves have been marked by significant voter turnout.

As per an official, “The aim (of the elections) is to showcase the peaceful conduct of the electoral process and participation of people at a large scale, as this phase (2nd phase of the elections) is considered the most feasible to organise such a visit. The delegation visited polling stations in Ompora (Budgam), followed by stops at Amira Kadal and SP College, Chinar Bagh, within the Lal Chowk constituency. At SP College, delegates had the chance to visit a special pink polling station, managed entirely by women.

The success of this visit could be gauged from the reactions of the foreign delegates – “It is a rare opportunity to come to Kashmir and see the electoral process in action and see democracy. It looks very smooth, everything is very professional,” said Jorgan K Andrews, deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy. – [Hindustan Times](#), [India Today](#)

Kashmir Marathon 2024

The Kashmir Marathon 2024, held on October 20, attracted over 2,000 participants from 13 countries. The event, organised by the Jammu and Kashmir government, showcased the breathtaking landscapes of Srinagar, including Dal Lake, Mughal Gardens, and Chinar Trees, while highlighting the region’s potential as a peaceful, thriving destination for global tourism. The marathon included various categories, allowing people of all levels to participate, and it garnered international attention with athletes from across the world joining the race. Notable figures such as Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Bollywood actor Suniel Shetty also took part in this key event.

Raja Yaqoob, Director of Tourism explained, “The message of this marathon is that Kashmir is peaceful and open for global events. These athletes will become our brand ambassadors, promoting our cuisine, Pashmina, and more.”

Both Indian and international participants praised Kashmir's hospitality. A Danish athlete, participating for the first time, expressed her admiration for the beauty of Srinagar and the warmth of the people. Sunita, representing a group of 45 elite Indian athletes, highlighted the high prize money and the planned tour of Gulmarg as additional attractions of the event. – [India Today](#), [J&K Tourism](#)

Breaking Barriers: Three Women Elected to Jammu and Kashmir Assembly

In the assembly polls held in Jammu and Kashmir after a hiatus of ten years, three women were elected among the 90 members, with one woman being a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from the Jammu region and the other two belonging to the National Conference (NC) in the Kashmir division. The elected women include Shamima Firdous and Sakina Itoo from the NC, along with Shagun Parihar from the BJP. In the electoral battle, 41 women stepped into the fray, a rise from the 24 who sought their place in the 2014 contest.

Shagun Parihar won from the Kishtwar constituency by 521 votes in the assembly election. Parihar, a research scholar with an MTech degree in electrical power systems, was pursuing a PhD and preparing for the J&K Public Service Commission examination when she was nominated by the BJP for the high-stakes electoral battle. A senior face of the National Conference, Shamima Firdous is party's women wing president. This victory marks her return to the Habbakadal seat, which she previously held for two consecutive terms between 2008 and 2014 elections. A former minister and senior leader of the National Conference, Sakina secured victory from the DH Pora assembly segment in South Kashmir's Kulgam district. With a rich portfolio, she has served as the minister for various departments including social welfare, administrative reforms, education and tourism.

This marked a significant step towards greater gender representation in the region's political landscape. These women's victories are a triumph for female empowerment. Their victories highlight a growing trend of women stepping into leadership roles. Moreover, the election of these women is expected to inspire other women in Jammu and Kashmir to pursue political careers, contributing to long-term social change. Their presence in the assembly could help address gender-specific issues, particularly those related to women's rights, education, and empowerment. – [Hindustan Times](#)

Jammu Hosts 68th National School Games: A Showcase of Youth Talent and Sportsmanship

The 68th National School Games officially kicked off in Jammu on November 7, 2024, marking a major sporting event for the region. The games, organized by the School Games Federation of India (SGFI), are being held across multiple venues in Jammu and Kashmir, with participants from all over India, comprising 350 athletes and 35 teams, competing in a wide range of sports. The Games feature Judo Under-17 Boys category, which is part of series of events J&K is hosting in four sports disciplines of Judo, Wushu, Fencing and Football.

This event is expected to provide a platform for young athletes to showcase their talent and promote sports culture in the region. The opening ceremony, which saw a large turnout, was a

celebration of youth sportsmanship, with local officials and athletes participating enthusiastically. Addressing the gathering, Sarmad Hafeez (Department of Youth Services and Sports Secretary or DYSS) praised the achievements and activities of DYSS. Welcoming the participants drawn from across the country, the Secretary underscored that such events foster unity and sportsmanship. In his welcome address, DYSS Director General Rajinder Singh Tara expressed hope that the participants would cherish their time in J&K.

By hosting such a prestigious event, Jammu appears to be positioning itself as a hub for sports development, aiming to inspire young athletes to pursue careers in sports and create a lasting impact on the region's athletic community. The event not only promotes physical fitness but also encourages youth engagement in healthy competition, fostering a spirit of unity and sportsmanship among the next generation. – [Kashmir Observer](#)

Jammu and Kashmir's Ambitious Dairy Initiative: 3,000 New Farms to Boost Rural Economy

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has set an ambitious goal to establish 3,000 new dairy farms across the region, aiming to significantly boost the rural economy. This initiative is part of a broader effort to strengthen the agricultural and livestock sectors, providing financial stability to rural families and creating job opportunities.

Beyond financial support for purchasing cattle, the government's schemes also provide modern equipment to enhance production efficiency. Dairy farmers can access subsidised machinery, including milking machines, cheese-making devices, khoya makers, dahi makers, cream separators, ice cream makers, and butter and ghee-making machines, as well as milk vans and milk ATMs—all at a 50 per cent subsidy.

Altaf Ahmad, a 25-year-old dairy farmer from Pulwama, is a testament to the sector's potential. Since 2021, he has established two dairy units with five cows each, receiving a subsidy of Rs 1.75 lakh per unit. "We produce around 200 litres of milk daily, which we sell to dealers, and we also offer home delivery at Rs 45 per litre," he said. With a daily income of Rs 10,000 and monthly profits exceeding Rs 1 lakh after expenses, Ahmad encourages other young people to consider dairy farming. "Dairy farming is profitable and allows young people to become job creators rather than job seekers," he added.

This move also aligns with the government's broader strategy of enhancing self-sufficiency and economic development in Jammu and Kashmir's rural areas. By investing in dairy farms, the administration hopes to uplift rural livelihoods. – [Kashmir Life](#)