

# **EDITORIAL**

### STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

India and Russia share a long-standing defence relationship that has been a cornerstone of India's national security strategy for decades. Rooted in mutual trust, historical partnerships, and shared geopolitical interests, this collaboration has enabled India to modernize its armed forces while reinforcing strategic stability in the region. As global security dynamics evolve, it is imperative for both nations to deepen their defence cooperation, addressing emerging threats and ensuring technological advancement.

Historically, Russia has been a key supplier of military equipment to India, ranging from fighter jets and submarines to missile systems and advanced artillery. This partnership has not only strengthened India's defence preparedness but also allowed its armed forces to maintain operational readiness across land, sea, and air domains. In an era where regional conflicts and border tensions are increasingly complex, continuing and expanding this collaboration ensures that India remains equipped to face conventional and asymmetric threats effectively.

Beyond hardware, defence cooperation between India and Russia encompasses joint research, technology transfer, and codevelopment of cutting-edge platforms. Projects like the BrahMos missile, jointly developed by India and Russia, exemplify how such collaborations can yield strategic assets that enhance both nations' security capabilities. By investing in joint defence research and advanced manufacturing, India can achieve greater self-reliance while benefiting from Russian expertise in aerospace, nuclear technology, and electronic war-

Moreover, deepening India-Russia defence ties has broader geopolitical significance. With shifting alliances and rising tensions in various global theatres, a strong bilateral defence partnership strengthens strategic autonomy for India and reinforces Russia's role as a reliable global security partner. Enhanced cooperation also enables coordinated responses to transnational threats such as terrorism, cyber-attacks, and maritime security challenges in the Indian Ocean region.

However, to fully capitalize on this partnership, both countries must address challenges in procurement processes, technology sharing, and operational integration. Streamlining bureaucratic procedures, ensuring timely delivery of equipment, and expanding joint training exercises will enhance the effectiveness of the collaboration. Greater focus on innovation-driven initiatives, including artificial intelligence, unmanned systems, and hypersonic technology, will ensure that India's armed forces remain

By fostering deeper technological collaboration, operational coordination, and strategic dialogue, both nations can ensure a resilient and enduring defence partnership that benefits their citizens and safeguards shared interests.

As India continues its journey towards strategic self-reliance and modernization of its armed forces, maintaining and strengthening defence cooperation with Russia is crucial. In an increasingly uncertain global security environment, this partnership remains a linchpin of India's defence strategy, combining historical trust with forward-looking technological collaboration. The India-Russia defence alliance is, and will continue to be, a vital pillar of regional and global security architecture.

## Battling the silent epidemic: Heart Health at risk in Jammu and Kashmir

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quietly become one of the most serious public health challenges Jammu Kashmir, emerging as a silent epidemic that is touching lives in every part

of the Union Territory - from the bustling plains of Jammu to the mountain hamlets of Kashmir and the remote valleys of Chenab and PirPanjal. Once viewed as a condition linked mainly to old age, cardiovascular diseases are now affecting younger people, raising deep concern among doctors, policymakers, and families alike. The steep rise in cardiac ailments over the past decade reflects a troubling shift in lifestyle, environment, and public awareness - a combination that calls for urgent attention and collective response.

Across the region, hospitals are witnessing a marked increase in cases of heart attacks, hypertension, and high cholesterol. What makes this trend particularly worrying is the growing number of younger individuals many in their thirties and forties - reporting cardiac complications. The change mirrors the transformation in lifestyle patterns, work habits, and diets that have reshaped daily life throughout Jammu and Kashmir. Sedentary routines, long working hours, and dependence on technology have dramatically reduced physical activity. Traditional outdoor recreation and physical labour, once part of everyday life, have given way to more static, indoor

At the same time, dietary habits have changed. Balanced, home-cooked meals - rich in vegetables, pulses, and whole grains - are increasingly being replaced by fast food and packaged items loaded with salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats. The growing culture of eating out and reliance on processed foods have fuelled obesity, diabetes, and hypertension all major risk factors for heart disease. This shift in lifestyle has not spared even the rural population, where the influence of urban food habits and declining physical activity are becoming more visible.

Tobacco use remains another major driver of the crisis. Despite widespread awareness



campaigns, smoking and other forms of tobacco consumption remain common among both youth and adults. The easy availability of cigarettes and the increasing use of drugs and other addictive substances have compounded the health burden. Equally damaging are rising levels of stress and mental health challenges caused by unemployment, financial strain, academic pressure, and social uncertainty. Chronic stress triggers biochemical changes that adversely affect heart health, and when combined with unhealthy coping mechanisms like smoking or overeating, the results can be devastating.

The climate of Jammu and Kashmir further aggravates this problem. The severe winter conditions in Kashmir and parts of the Chenab and PirPanjal regions often lead to a spike in cardiac emergencies. Cold temperatures cause the blood vessels to constrict, raising blood pressure and putting additional strain on the heart. In areas where heating arrangements are poor, sudden exposure to cold can trigger heart attacks, particularly in the early morning or late-night hours. On the other hand, the intense summer heat in the plains of Jammu can also put stress on the heart, especially among the elderly and those already battling cardiac conditions. Both climatic extremes - freezing cold and sweltering heat - intensify the burden on an already vulnerable population.

Compounding the crisis is limited public awareness about the early symptoms of heart disease and the importance of preventive care.

Many people continue to ignore warning signs such as chest discomfort, shortness of breath, or unexplained fatigue. In several cases, patients seek medical attention only when symptoms become severe, losing precious time in the process. Although healthcare facilities have improved in recent years, advanced cardiac care remains concentrated in a few urban hospitals. For people living in far-flung or mountainous areas, reaching a wellequipped medical centre during an emergency often proves impossible within the critical "golden hour."

Efforts have been made in recent years to strengthen the healthcare system. The introduction of telemedicine services, digital consultations, and referral networks has improved access to specialists, particularly for patients in remote areas. Government health departments, non-governmental organisations, and medical institutions have launched awareness drives, organised health camps, and promoted regular screenings for blood pressure and cholesterol. These initiatives are steps in the right direction, but they remain limited in reach and continuity. To make a real difference, awareness campaigns and preventive care programmes need to extend to every block, school, and community across Jammu and Kashmir.

The impact of heart disease extends far beyond the individual. It is not merely a medical issue but a social and economic one. When people in their most productive years develop heart conditions, families face emo-

tional trauma and financial strain. Longterm treatment, medication, and hospital visits are expensive, and the loss of earning capacity can push entire households into hardship. Preventive healthcare, therefore, is not only about saving lives - it is also about protecting livelihoods and strengthening the social fabric.

Addressing this growing crisis requires more than medical treatment; it demands a cultural shift toward health consciousness. Strengthening rural healthcare infrastructure, ensuring regular screening at primary health centres, and promoting preventive habits must become public priorities. Schools, colleges, workplaces, and community institutions can play an important role by educating people about the importance of a healthy diet, regular exercise, and tobacco cessation. Encouraging outdoor activities, sports, and walking can help people rediscover physical habits that once defined life in the region.

Community involvement is central to reversing this trend. Religious leaders, local organisations, and media outlets can help spread awareness and advocate for heart-friendly lifestyles. Traditional Kashmiri and Dogra cuisines, when consumed in moderation and balanced with fruits, vegetables, and physical activity, can remain part of a healthy lifestyle. Reconnecting with local food wisdom and active living can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease.

The rising tide of cardiac ailments across Jammu and Kashmir is a stark reminder that health cannot be taken for granted. It calls for collective responsibility - from individuals to institutions - to safeguard heart health and promote a culture of wellness. The growing number of heart attacks and related diseases is not an inevitable outcome of modern life; it is a preventable tragedy that demands awareness, discipline, and community action.

The time to act is now. Investing in preventive healthcare, strengthening early diagnosis, and fostering healthy living habits can save countless lives. Protecting the hearts of the people of Jammu and Kashmir is not just a medical imperative - it is a moral one, vital to securing the region's collective well-being

(The author is a senior analyst)

# Traditional Cuisines in the Dogra Community: Role of Kayur, Ambal and Beyond



ammu's cuisine is known as Dogra cuisine. The city has a rich culinary tradition that is famous across India. Dogra cuisine

of flavors, closely associated with the culture and traditions of the region. The taste comes from the aromatic spices used in these dishes. Unlike other regional foods, Jammu's cuisine has its own distinct identity that represents the rich heritage of the state.

offers a unique blend

The famous cuisines of Jammu include Rajma Chawal, Kalari Kulcha, Kalakand, Kayur, Patisa, Ambal, Meethe Chawal, Chocolate Barfi and

are some of the most delectable cuisines of Jammu, enjoyed by both locals and visitors. Dogra food is especially popular in the northern part of India, and many tourists visit Jammu to explore its traditional delicacies.

Now let's explore these cuisines in greater detail:

Kayur: Kayur is a very famous traditional dish of Jammu and is considered essential during weddings. It is made with maida (refined flour). The flour is mixed with water to make a medium-thick batter, with or without a pinch of salt. Once the batter is ready. it is fried on a griddle in a style similar to jalebi. Kayur is served with sugar and curd. In Dogra culture, it is considered very auspicious to prepare Kayur at weddings. During the bride's Saant ceremony (similar to the haldi tance. Without Ambal, a traditional

ceremony in other cultures), she is served Kayur. Saant involves applying butna (a paste made of turmeric and other ingredients) to the bride. Guests visiting her after the ritual traditionally offer Kayur. Similarly, the groom is served Kayur by his sisters-in-law on the wedding day as part of a playful ritual. Thus, Kayur is not only a dish but also a symbol of relationships and cultural unity.

Ambal: Ambal is another traditional dish of Jammu, usually made with pumpkin, though tamarind and mango can also be used. It is a tangv curry often enjoyed with rajma chawal or dal chawal. Ambal is considered an essential part of wedding feasts, ritual ceremonies, and social gatherings in Jammu because of its cultural impormeal feels incomplete. Its sweet-andsour flavor is loved by people of all ages, making it a must-try delicacy for anyone visiting Jammu.

Rajma Chawal: Rajma chawal is the comfort food of Jammu and holds a special place in Dogra households. Known for its authentic flavor, this dish is famous across India. Jammu rajma, particularly the Bhadarwah variety, is highly renowned. Rajma chawal is more than just food-it is a tradition. For many families, it is a mandatory Sunday meal, cherished from childhood into adulthood. Rajma chawal is also a must at weddings, rituals, and community feasts (bhandaras), highlighting its cultural significance.

Kalari Kulcha. Kalari Kulcha is beloved street food of Jammu. Kalari most purchased sweets in Jammu. It is

is a type of traditional cheese made from cow, buffalo, or goat's milk. Kulcha is a soft, fluffy flatbread that pairs perfectly with it. Kalari slices are heated on a tawa until they form a crispy golden crust outside while staying soft inside. The hot Kalari is then stuffed into kulcha and served with tangy chutney and chaat masala. This flavorful snack is loved by locals and tourists alike.

Patisa: Patisa is a famous sweet from Jammu, similar to soan papdi but with a unique taste. Made with gram flour, ghee, sugar, and cardamom, it has a flaky, crispy texture that melts in the mouth. Patisa is especially popular during festivals and celebrations. The most famous Patisa comes from Prem Sweets in Kud, making it one of the

often given as a festive gift and holds a special place in Dogra celebrations.

These are some of the most popular cuisines of Jammu, deeply rooted in the traditions and emotions of its people. For them, these dishes are more than just food-they are memories, rituals, and a symbol of togetherness. Dogra cuisine is an identity of Duggar culture and sets Jammu apart from other regions, offering a unique recognition in the world of food. Because food is not just about taste-it represents region, culture, traditions, people, and their happiness. Tourists visiting Jammu must experience these delicacies, as they are sure to fall in love with the unique flavors of this land.

(The writer a master's degree mass communication student at University of Jammu)

# Green Elections: Pioneering Sustainable Democracy in India

n an era defined by increasing environmental consciousness and the urgent need for sustainable practices, the concept of "Green Elections" has emerged as a pioneering approach to conducting democratic processes in an eco-friendly manner. Green Elections represent an innovative effort to minimize the environmental footprint of electoral activities, ensuring that every stage, from campaigning to polling and post-election operations, adheres to sustainable principles. This approach seeks to reduce carbon emissions, minimize waste generation, and promote the use of eco-friendly materials, thereby aligning electoral integrity with environmental stewardship.

The genesis of Green Elections in India can be traced to the efforts of Heera Lal Patel, an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from the Uttar Pradesh cadre, who introduced the country's first Green Election model. Patel's initiative gained traction and was first implemented in the Anandpur Sahib Lok Sabha constituency in Punjab in June 2024. Subsequently, the model was adopted in the Maharashtra Assembly elections in Anushakti Nagar and Chembur in November 2024, and more recently, in the Junagadh by-elections in Gujarat in 2025. Patel's model aligns with the Election Commission of India's (ECI) 2023 guidelines on "Green Elections," which consolidated eco-friendly directives for electoral activities, providing a comprehensive framework for sustainable election management.

In August 2023, the ECI reissued comprehensive instructions aimed at making elections more sustainable. The then Chief Election Commissioner, Rajiv Kumar, emphasized that India had set a global benchmark for conducting lowcarbon, environmentally responsible elections. Key directives included minimizing the use of single-use plastics in

campaigns, encouraging digital promotion instead of printed materials, utilizing Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) to cut paper use, and promoting waste segregation and recycling during election operations. The use of EVMs during the 2024 General Elections alone saved approximately 11,520 tons of paper, as reported by the ECI, underscoring the significant environmental benefits of adopting technology in electoral process-

The environmental rationale behind Green Elections is compelling, given the substantial waste generated during traditional election campaigns. A 2019 study by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) estimated that Indian elections generate nearly 6,000 metric tons of plastic waste from campaign materials alone. Posters, banners, and hoardings made of PVC and flex are major contributors to this environmental burden. The Green Election model seeks to counter this damage by promoting the use of biodegradable and recyclable materials, conducting tree plantation drives to offset carbon emissions, promoting paperless campaigns through digital platforms, and encouraging citizen and stakeholder participation in ecoawareness efforts.

Heera Lal Patel's leadership and passion for ecology have been instrumental in driving the Green Election initiative. Throughout his career. Patel has consistently advocated for integrating environmental responsibility into governance. His earlier tenure as District Magistrate, Banda (UP), was marked by tree plantation initiatives and the elimination of plastic use, efforts that drew national attention and recognition. Patel's commitment to environmental sustainability has inspired stakeholders to contribute to the Green Election

The Green Election initiative represents a shift towards responsible democ-

racy, merging electoral integrity with environmental stewardship. By adopting sustainable practices in electoral processes, India is taking a significant step toward climate-conscious governance and setting a global precedent for sustainable electoral practices. The initiative promotes the use of eco-friendly materials, reduces waste generation, and encourages citizen participation in environmental conservation efforts.

One of the critical components of Green Elections is the reduction of paper usage through the adoption of digital technologies. The use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) has significantly reduced the need for paper ballots, saving thousands of tons of paper during elections. Digital promotion and social media campaigns have also reduced the reliance on printed materials, minimizing waste and promoting environmental sustainability. Waste management is another essential aspect of Green Elections. Traditional election campaigns often generate large amounts of waste, including posters, banners, and single-use plastics. Green Elections promote waste segregation and recycling during election operations, ensuring that waste is disposed of responsibly and that recyclable materials are reused. The use of biodegradable and recyclable materials in campaign materials further reduces the environmental impact of elections.

Citizen participation and stakeholder engagement are crucial to the success of Green Elections. The initiative encourages citizens to participate in eco-awareness efforts and promotes collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, political parties, and civil society organizations. By involving all stakeholders in the process, Green Elections fosters a sense of shared responsibility for environmental sustain-

The long-term impact of Green

Elections extends beyond environmental conservation. By promoting sustainable practices in electoral processes, the initiative contributes to broader efforts to combat climate change and promote sustainable development. Green Elections also enhance the credibility and integrity of the electoral process by demonstrating a commitment to environmental responsibility.

The challenges and opportunities associated with Green Elections must be addressed to ensure the initiative's success. One of the challenges is the need for oreater awareness and education among voters and election officials about the importance of sustainable practices. Another challenge is the cost of implementing eco-friendly measures, which may require additional funding and resources. However, the opportunities associated with Green Elections are significant, including the potential to reduce carbon emissions, minimize waste generation, and promote environmental conservation.

To overcome these challenges and capitalize on the opportunities, several strategies can be implemented. First, public awareness campaigns can be launched to educate voters and election officials about the benefits of Green Elections and the importance of sustainable practices. Second, financial incentives can be provided to encourage political parties and candidates to adopt ecofriendly measures. Third, partnerships can be established with civil society organizations and environmental groups to promote Green Elections and mobilize citizen participation.

The Green Election initiative represents a significant step toward sustainable democracy in India. By merging electoral integrity with environmental stewardship, India is setting a global precedent for sustainable electoral practices. The initiative promotes the use of eco-friendly materials, reduces waste

generation, and encourages citizen participation in environmental conservation efforts. With continued commitment and collaboration, Green Elections can contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future for India.

The success of Green Elections depends on the active participation and support of all stakeholders, including government agencies, political parties, election officials, civil society organizations, and citizens. By working together, these stakeholders can ensure that elections are conducted in an environmentally responsible manner, minimizing the impact on the planet and promoting a sustainable future.

The Green Election initiative is not just about reducing waste and promotng eco-friendly materials; it is about transforming the way elections are conducted and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility among all stakeholders. By adopting sustainable practices in electoral processes, India is demonstrating its commitment to addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development.

The Green Election initiative also has the potential to inspire other countries to adopt similar measures, contributing to a global movement toward sustainable electoral practice. By sharing its experiences and best practices, India can play a leading role in promoting environmental sustainability in the democratic

The Green Election initiative is a testament to the power of innovation and collaboration in addressing environmental challenges. By merging electoral integrity with environmental stewardship, India is creating a model for sustainable democracy that can be emulat-

ed by countries around the world. The Green Election initiative is an ongoing process that requires continuous improvement and adaptation. As new technologies and sustainable practices emerge, they should be incorporated into the electoral process to further reduce its environmental impact. The initiative should also be regularly evaluated to assess its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

The Green Election initiative is not just about conducting elections in an environmentally responsible manner; it is about creating a more sustainable and equitable society for all. By promoting environmental conservation and sustainable development, the initiative is contributing to a better future for generations to come. The Green Election initiative is a symbol of hope and progress in the fight against climate change and environmental degradation. By demonstrating that it is possible to conduct democratic processes in an environmentally responsible manner, India is inspiring people around the world to take action and create a more sustainable future.

In conclusion, the Green Election initiative represents a transformative approach to conducting elections in India, merging electoral integrity with environmental stewardship. By promoting sustainable practices, reducing waste, and encouraging citizen participation, the initiative is contributing to a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future for the country. With continued commitment and collaboration, Green Elections can serve as a model for other countries to emulate, fostering a global movement toward sustainable democracy. The Green Election initiative is not just about conducting elections; it is about creating a culture of environmental responsibility and building a more sustainable and equitable society for all. It is a testament to the power of innovation, collaboration, and leadership in addressing environmental challenges and promoting a brighter future for generations to