

## STEP TOWARDS SAFER ROADS

Road safety remains one of the most pressing civic concerns in Jammu and Kashmir and across the country. Every year, thousands of lives are lost due to reckless driving, speeding, drunken driving, and blatant disregard for traffic norms. The recent intensified action by traffic authorities against violators is, therefore, a timely and much-needed intervention to restore order on our roads and reinforce a culture of responsibility among motorists.

Traffic rules are not mere formalities; they are essential safeguards designed to protect human lives. Unfortunately, many road users treat them as optional, resulting in chaos, congestion, and fatal accidents. From jumping red lights to driving without helmets or seatbelts, from overloading vehicles to using mobile phones while driving - the list of violations is endless. What makes matters worse is the casual attitude of both drivers and pedestrians toward enforcement agencies. In such circumstances, strict and sustained action by the traffic police becomes not just desirable but imperative.

The recent crackdown on violators - through challans, license suspensions, and impounding of vehicles - should not be viewed as punitive alone but as a corrective measure to instill discipline. When rules are enforced uniformly and penalties are imposed without discrimination, it sends a clear message that traffic laws are non-negotiable. Moreover, it helps deter habitual offenders who often exploit leniency and loopholes in enforcement.

However, enforcement alone cannot bring lasting change. Public awareness, civic education, and collective responsibility are equally important. The government, schools, media, and civil society must work together to promote road safety values, especially among the youth. Awareness campaigns highlighting the dangers of rash driving and drunk driving can help reshape mindsets. Technology can also play a key role - installation of CCTV cameras, e-challan systems, and speed monitoring devices can ensure transparent and consistent enforcement.

The recent actions by the traffic police mark a positive beginning, but this must not be a short-term drive. Consistency, transparency, and accountability are crucial to maintaining discipline. Authorities must also improve infrastructure - better signage, well-marked crossings, and functional traffic lights - to complement enforcement efforts.

It is time we, as responsible citizens, treat road safety as a shared duty rather than a forced obligation. Strict enforcement of traffic laws, coupled with public cooperation, is the only way forward to make our roads safer, our journeys smoother, and our cities more disciplined.

## Rural Technology Development and Dissemination

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Agricultural growth is considered as the key pathway to resolve poverty and food insecurity especially in the developing nations. Agricultural productivity depends on the technology uptake and utilization. Over the years many organisations have targeted in improving the agricultural productivity through the introduction of various innovations. Some of such efforts include subsidies on inputs such as seed, fertilizers, introduction of drought and disease resistant varieties, use of ICTs etc. Spectacular progress has been achieved in agricultural production in the country during the last five decades which has been globally recognized. We have achieved record production of 332.22 million tonnes of food grains in 2023-24 which was only 50 million tonnes in 1960. Now we have huge buffer stocks of food grains. In the oilseed sector, there has been a quantum jump ushering in the yellow revolution increasing production of oilseeds to 39.67 million tonnes in 2023-24. The dairy sector has witnessed a white revolution. In inland fisheries, the country has registered an unprecedented compound growth rate of 10% bringing in blue revolution. The growth in poultry production and horticulture sector is also appreciable. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) mandate is to plan, aid, undertake, promote and coordinate education, research and its application in agriculture and allied sciences. Now the population of India is over 1.40 billion, the remarkable achievements made in green, white, yellow and blue revolution need to be increased. Now we need not only more food but also calorie availability and food security. There is need for reorientation of both research and extension to function in an appropriate manner.

Now the front line transfer of technology of the ICAR includes a network of farm science centres commonly called as Krishi Vigyan Kendra's (KVKs) across the country and also trainers training centres. At present, the KVKs activities include skill training of the farmers by providing work experience fol-

lowing the principle of learning by doing in agriculture, on farm testing to identify the location specificity of technologies, in service training of extension personnel to update their knowledge in agriculture, layout front line demonstrations to establish production potentials on farmers' fields and provide feedback. Presently there are 731 KVKs across the nation. Now almost every district of the country is having one KVK and establishment of two KVKs in some districts are in pipeline. KVKs have served the society in general and the Indian agriculture in particular. The front line extension projects were designed by the Council to organise front line demonstrations by the scientists to show the production potential of new agricultural technologies on farmers fields, testing the technologies for their location specificity, organizing extension activities in selected areas by the institutions, developing extension approaches and methodologies for field workers and getting feedback for improving research and extension.

Farming provides livelihood support directly or indirectly to millions of the Indians through the food production network and marketing activities. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has initiated many extension programmes over the years. The National Demonstration Project was initiated in 1965 to demonstrate the production potential of technology packages on major crops, to provide the researchers a firsthand knowledge of the problems faced by farmers in adoption of the technologies and to influence the extension system in the country by demonstrating the yield gaps and indicating the operational constraints. The Operational Project was initiated in 1975 to identify technological and socio-economic constraints and to formulate and implement the technologies modules on target group basis. ORPs broad objectives were to test the performance of new research results at farmers' fields under their existing resources, socio-economic and cultural conditions. The problems identified by the ORPs include salinity and sodicity due to improper water use in new irrigation sys-

tems and use of brackish sub-soil water, flood prone area; heavy pest incidence and environment degradation due to indiscriminate use of pesticides. Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes areas have the complex problems in terms of socio-economic constraints. Keeping this in view, ICAR started the programme on the basis of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes in 1979. The objectives of this project were to identify the technologies which were appropriate to existing socio-economic and agro-ecological situation and to establish link between the people and various developmental agencies. The ORP on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes were an interface project with combination of both research methodologies and extension techniques. In 1979, as a part of Golden Jubilee Celebration, ICAR initiated Lab-to-Land Programme to transfer low cost technologies in agriculture and allied enterprises. The basic objective of this programme was to bring the scientists and farmers into close contact and to introduce appropriate technologies facilitating in diversification of labour use and creating supplementary sources of income in the fields of agriculture and allied enterprises. In 1992-93 all these projects were merged into KVK. In 1990-91, as part of Technology Mission on Oilseeds and Pulses, the Council took up front line demonstration on improved production technologies of oilseeds and pulses with a view to demonstrate its production potentials on the farmers plot and to organise need-based training for both farmers and subject matter specialists. In 1995 ICAR launched an innovative technology assessment and need-based refinement programme called as Institution Village Linkage Programme. It is based on participatory mode ensuring greater scientist-farmer linkage in bottom up approach. This programme is funded by World Bank under National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP). In order to meet the changing needs, trained, equipped and committed to serve the society 'Technology Agents' are essential. KVKs of the country are training the unemployed rural youths in vocational

activities such as mushroom cultivation, sericulture, poultry production, nursery management etc. It is believed that integration of science with rural development activities would enhance the functional capability and required impact of extension activities. The KVK should not work as an independent agency rather other programmes in the district should be integrated to make it more useful and holistic. Present age is an age of information package and its dissemination is equally important. The establishment of Agricultural Technology Information Centre provides such mechanism beyond individual units of research institution.

All these initiatives will require a strong interface between the research organizations and development departments at the centre, state and regional levels. An inter-divisional effort between crop science and extension division of ICAR has led to formulation and implementation of a project on Technology Evaluation and Impact Assessment through Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs). Such mechanism has provided the first hand knowledge through on-the-job handling of promising technologies in the pipeline at the final stages of their testing before release and feedback to researchers from extensionists and the farmers. The new initiatives at the state level to own these KVKs will further strengthen the transfer of technology mechanisms at the grassroots level. The farmers in the world have a tradition of experimentation and developing indigenous knowledge for solution to many of their agricultural problems in harmony with nature. The researchers, policy makers and development professionals are recognizing the value to such knowledge. The key features of such indigenous knowledge are reducing risks, affordability, availability, compatibility with current practices, visible results within a reasonable amount of time and overall satisfying multiple needs. Documentation of such indigenous knowledge resources will provide a base to the agricultural researchers and extension workers.

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## From Pilgrimage to Pride: How Jammu's Dogra Soul is Redefining Tourism

■ SWATI SUMAN

Jammu, once celebrated as the City of Temples, is gradually reshaping its identity. Beyond the sound of temple bells, a deeper rhythm is emerging, one that tells the story of Dogra heritage, living art, and a culture rediscovering itself.

### Faith That Built Foundations

For decades, Jammu's name was synonymous with devotion. Millions of pilgrims each year undertake the sacred journey to the holy cave of Mata Vaishno Devi in Katra, a tradition that continues to sustain the local economy.

According to the Directorate of Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir (2025), the region recorded over 2.36 crore visitors in 2024, with religious tourism forming a major share of the inflow. Shops, hotels, and transport services owe much of their livelihood to this spiritual circuit.

Yet, as pilgrim numbers multiplied, a realization grew, that faith, while foundational, was not the full story of

Jammu. Beneath devotion lay centuries of Dogra culture waiting to be rediscovered, a culture of courage, artistry, and hospitality that shaped the region's history long before tourism statistics began to be recorded.

The Heartbeat of Dogra Heritage At the core of Jammu's transformation lies the legacy of the Dogra dynasty, whose contributions continue to define the region's identity. The Dogra Art Museum inside the Mubarak Mandi Palace remains a treasure of Basohli miniature paintings, royal costumes, coins, and manuscripts. These are not mere relics but echoes of a civilizational past that valued intellect and valor alike.

Beyond museum walls, Dogra heritage thrives in everyday customs, in Dogri folk songs, Bhaakh theatre, and the aroma of traditional cuisine. The famous Kaladi cheese of Udhampur, spicy Ambal curry, and humble Rajma-Chawal reflect a cuisine that is both royal and rustic.

Festivals such as Lohri, Baisakhi, Dogra Mahotsav, and Navratri unite communities in a shared celebration. Local artisans still craft embroidered Phulkari shawls, Pherans, and Pashmina wraps, symbols of patience and artistry. Government-supported fairs and exhibitions now help these crafts reach wider audiences.

Heritage Beyond Shrines Jammu's journey from a pilgrimage hub to a cultural destination is most visibly expressed through its architecture. The Mubarak Mandi Heritage Complex, once the royal seat of Dogra rulers, stands today as a symbol of revival. Under the Smart City Jammu Project, restoration of sandstone arches, murals, and courtyards is transforming the site into museums, cafés, and art spaces.

The creation of heritage circuits linking landmarks like Raghunath Temple, Bagh-e-Bahu Fort, Amar Mahal Palace, and Peer Kho Temple helps tourists experience a holistic story of

Jammu, one that blends faith, architecture, and daily life.

Beyond the urban centre, destinations such as Mansar and Surinsar Lakes, Bhaderwah, Sanasar, and Patnitop are being developed as eco-tourism hubs, offering homestays, local food experiences, and cultural workshops that benefit communities directly.

### Youth and the New Tourism Economy

Jammu's tourism revival is being led by its youth. Government initiatives such as Mission Youth and Homestay Jammu encourage students, artists, and entrepreneurs to connect tradition with opportunity. These programmes train young people as heritage interpreters, eco-tourism guides, and local business owners.

The 2025-26 Jammu & Kashmir Budget earmarked ₹390 crore for tourism development, focusing on sustainability and community participation. Workshops, cultural mapping

projects, and digital heritage platforms are enabling locals to tell their own stories.

For the younger generation, this movement is not only about employment but also about identity, a shift from being custodians of the past to creators of a new cultural economy.

### Balancing Growth and Preservation

As tourism expands, Jammu faces the classic challenge of modernization versus preservation. Unchecked commercialization can turn heritage into spectacle. To avoid this, tourism planners advocate responsible tourism, one that prioritizes authenticity, environmental care, and local participation.

This ensures that Dogra culture remains a living tradition, not a museum exhibit. Locals must be participants in their own heritage, and visitors should engage as partners in preservation, not mere consumers.

### From Faith to Identity - The New Jammu

Today's Jammu stands at a defining

moment. Its shift from a pilgrim's halt to a cultural destination is not a departure from spirituality but an evolution into a broader sense of belonging.

The same hills that echo with the hymns of Vaishno Devi now resound with Dogri music, art exhibitions, and heritage walks. The same courtyards that once hosted royal ceremonies are now platforms for artisans and storytellers.

Jammu's beauty lies in this coexistence, where temple bells and theatre applause share the same rhythm, and where homestay kitchens and palace galleries tell the same tale of resilience and reinvention.

Faith gave Jammu its foundation; culture is giving it a new voice. The journey that once began with folded hands now continues with open eyes, exploring, celebrating, and belonging.

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## National Law University in J&K: A Case for Balance, Fairness and Regional Justice

■ PROF. VIRENDERKOUNDAL

When the Chief Minister recently announced that the upcoming National Law University (NLU) in Jammu and Kashmir would be set up in the Kashmir province, the statement reignited a deep and familiar sense of déjà vu across the Jammu region. Once again, people in Jammu are asking a simple question why are critical national institutions consistently diverted towards one region without a transparent feasibility study, public consultation, or consideration of regional balance? The NLU is not just another higher education institution; it is a national premier institute, akin to the IITs, IIMs, and AIIMS, meant to serve as a beacon of legal education, research, and policy in a federal democratic structure. Its location, therefore, must not be reduced to regional favoritism or political convenience. Rather, it should be guided by principles of equity, accessibility, and geographic balance principles that Jammu province has historically been denied.

The debate over the NLU's location cannot be viewed in isolation. It must be understood against the long and painful history of discrimination faced by the Jammu province a region that has often been treated as a political appendage rather than an equal stakeholder in the governance and development of Jammu and Kashmir. From higher education to healthcare, from industrial investment to employment, Jammu's struggle has been a continuous saga of neglect, protest, and belated justice.

The story dates back to 1982 when the government established the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST) in Kashmir, completely ignoring Jammu's agricultural diversity. Farmers, students, and academics in Jammu had to launch a sustained struggle to demand a separate institution to cater to the subtropical agro-climatic conditions of the region. Only after 17 long years, in 1999, was SKUAST-Jammu established. This was

not a mere institutional demand - it symbolized the deep structural marginalization Jammu faced in policy decisions that directly affected its socio-economic development.

A similar episode unfolded in 2009 when the Central University of Jammu and Kashmir was sanctioned by the central government. The initial proposal was again Kashmir-centric, with administrative and academic planning concentrated in the Valley. Massive protests broke out in Jammu, led by students, civil society, and academicians demanding a separate Central University. The agitation continued for months until the government finally relented and established a distinct Central University for Jammu in 2011. The episode was emblematic of Jammu's recurring fight for parity in access to premier national institutions.

In 2015, the announcement of an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) for Jammu and Kashmir was initially interpreted to mean a single institute for the entire Union Territory. When it became clear that the location was to be in Kashmir, Jammu erupted in protest. For over two months, the region witnessed a 72-day long agitation, uniting political parties, traders, and civil society under one demand equal access to premier healthcare. Ultimately, the government announced two AIIMS institutions one each in Awantipora (Kashmir) and Vijaypur (Jammu). That victory was hard-earned. It should have set a precedent for equitable policy decisions in future - yet, the same cycle of discrimination seems to have resurfaced with the NLU.

The 2008 Amarnath land agitation remains one of the largest people's movements in Jammu's post-independence history. When the state government revoked the decision to transfer land to the Amarnath Shrine Board, massive protests erupted in the Valley, forcing a reversal of the decision. Jammu responded with equal intensity, perceiving the move as a denial of religious and regional rights. For two

months, the region remained paralyzed as the people of Jammu asserted their dignity, demanding equal respect and decision-making power within the state's governance framework. The episode laid bare the emotional and political fault lines that continue to define policy bias between the two provinces.

Recruitment to government posts, university faculties, and public services in the erstwhile state has often shown a skewed ratio favoring Kashmir. Successive Public Service Commission results and departmental recruitments have revealed that Jammu candidates remain underrepresented even in technical and administrative cadres. The demand for region-wise quotas and transparent recruitment mechanisms continues to echo, reflecting the sense of exclusion felt by the youth of Jammu. Despite its strategic location as the gateway to the Union Territory and proximity to Punjab, Himachal, and Delhi, Jammu has remained industrially underdeveloped. Most state investments, tourism projects, and infrastructural schemes have been concentrated in the Kashmir Valley, leaving Jammu's potential as a logistics, manufacturing, and education hub largely untapped.

Until the 2022 Delimitation Commission's intervention, Jammu remained grossly underrepresented in the Legislative Assembly. Although the region covers a much larger area and now holds a comparable population, the political structure historically ensured greater weightage for Kashmir. The latest delimitation exercise partially corrected this imbalance, but the mindset that perpetuated this structural inequality appears far from reformed.

The announcement that the National Law University a premier institution envisioned to nurture India's top legal minds would be established in Kashmir has triggered a storm of questions. Why was this decision made without a feasibility study, public consultation, or objective evaluation of accessibility, infrastructure, and regional

balance? Should such an important national institution not serve the entire Union Territory rather than being concentrated in one province? If the CM's statement reflects a final policy stance, it risks reopening old wounds and reviving the trust deficit that has plagued Jammu's relationship with successive administrations.

A National Law University is not merely a campus; it is a symbol of legal empowerment, constitutional learning, and public policy innovation. Its location must ensure accessibility for students from all regions, neutrality from political or regional influence, and integration with socio-economic and cultural diversity of the Union Territory. Geographically, Jammu and Kashmir's unique topography makes central accessibility a critical factor: Jammu province connects naturally to Punjab, Himachal, and the rest of India through the national highway and rail network. Kashmir, by contrast, remains dependent on the Jammu-Srinagar highway, which is frequently blocked during winters and adverse weather. If the objective is to serve the entire Union Territory, then Bhaderwah (Doda district) or Ramban emerge as the most appropriate and strategically central locations for the NLU.

The Chenab Valley region comprising Doda, Kishtwar, and Ramban represents the geographical heart of Jammu and Kashmir. Establishing the NLU here would not only bridge the physical and psychological divide between Jammu and Kashmir, but also stimulate educational and economic growth in an underdeveloped mountainous region, and symbolize a new era of balanced regional development post-Article 370. Bhaderwah already hosts a campus of the University of Jammu, with a serene environment conducive to academic excellence. Ramban, on the other hand, lies on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, making it equidistant from both capitals a natural logistical midpoint for a truly

Union Territory-wide institution. A centrally located NLU would promote inclusivity, accessibility, and symbolic unity a message that Jammu and Kashmir urgently needs in the post-reorganization era.

The National Law Universities across India such as NLSIU Bengaluru, NALSAR Hyderabad, and NLU Delhi are centres of legal excellence, producing Supreme Court judges, senior advocates, civil servants, and policy advisors. They represent India's vision of global-standard legal education interdisciplinary, research-driven, and socially responsive.

The NLU in Jammu and Kashmir has the potential to strengthen constitutional awareness and rule of law in a region that has seen decades of political instability, provide high-quality legal education to the youth of both provinces, and foster policy-oriented research on federalism, national security, human rights, and conflict resolution issues deeply embedded in J&K's socio-political fabric. However, if this institute is perceived as another symbol of regional bias, it will start its journey burdened by controversy rather than inspiration.

Before finalizing the NLU's site, the government must constitute a feasibility and location assessment committee including academicians, legal experts, and representatives from both provinces; evaluate infrastructure, connectivity, land availability, and accessibility for all districts; ensure public consultation with stakeholders; and prioritize balanced regional development in alignment with national institutional norms. Policy decisions made behind closed doors, without transparency or consultation, only deepen alienation. In a Union Territory that aspires for equitable development and lasting peace, symbolic justice through fair institutional distribution is as important as economic package.

The establishment of SKUAST-Jammu, the Central University of Jammu, and AIIMS Jammu did not happen overnight. Each came after massive

public agitation, administrative inertia, and political pressure. The lesson from those movements is simple development cannot be sustained on imbalance. A healthy democracy thrives when every region feels represented, respected, and included in the development narrative.

Jammu and Kashmir today stands at a crossroads of opportunity. Post-Article 370, there is immense potential to rewrite its developmental and institutional trajectory with fairness, inclusion, and accountability. The NLU's establishment offers a historic chance to break away from the old politics of region-centric favoritism and create a symbol of unity and equal opportunity. Let the National Law University not be a cause of division but a bridge of reconciliation one that serves both Jammu and Kashmir equally, both in spirit and substance. Bhaderwah or Ramban would not just be convenient midpoints; they would represent the moral midpoint between decades of discrimination and the promise of balanced progress.

The people of Jammu do not seek privilege they seek parity. They do not demand dominance only dignity and fairness. For decades, they have fought not to take away from others but to reclaim what has constitutionally been theirs: equal access to opportunity and development. The National Law University's location decision is more than an administrative choice - it is a test of the government's sincerity towards the idea of equal regional development in the post-reorganization era. Let the government of Jammu and Kashmir take this as an opportunity to demonstrate fairness by choosing a location that is central, accessible, and symbolic of unity. Let it not become another chapter in Jammu's long chronicle of discrimination. If fairness prevails, the NLU can emerge as not just a centre of legal excellence, but also as a monument to justice itself for both regions, and for the idea of Jammu and Kashmir.