

# Jammu & Kashmir Digest

A Review of Developments in J&K



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- Kashmir University's 'Sonzal' Festival Hails Youth Empowerment
- Kashmir to Surpass Past Tourism Records This Winter

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## **Empowering Youth: Sakeena Itoo Inaugurates Kashmir University's Annual Sonzal Festival**

**T**he Minister for Health and Medical Education (Jammu and Kashmir), Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, inaugurated the Kashmir University's Annual Youth Festival-'Sonzal' at Convocation Complex of Varsity on 12 December 2024.

As per Ms. Itoo, "Our Kashmiri culture and language is very unique, we all need to be very proud of our culture and heritage and celebrate it to its maximum extent...Language is the foundation of our culture. Without it, we lose touch with the narratives, stories and customs that have defined us for centuries. I urge the professors and students here to not only cherish the beauty of our Kashmiri language and culture but also ensure that it thrives beyond academic spaces." She made these remarks while stressing on the need to preserve the Kashmiri culture and language.

While inaugurating the annual youth festival 'Sonzal' at Kashmir University, stressing the importance of fostering talent among the youth. She highlighted the role of students in shaping the future of Jammu and Kashmir, emphasising that academic and cultural activities like this festival are vital for youth empowerment. The event aims to showcase students' skills across various domains, providing them a platform for growth and collaboration.

Commending the University for organising this Youth Festival, the Minister said that the 'Sonzal' is a very unique platform to promote and preserve the Kashmiri language which is an integral part of our cultural heritage. "Cultural outreach initiatives, like 'Sonzal', demonstrate University's commitment to nurturing creativity, preserving traditions and empowering the youth," Sakeena Itoo remarked. – [Rising Kashmir](#)

## **A Modern Take on a Kashmiri Tradition: Shazia Jan's Innovative Samovar Design**

**T**he traditional Samovar - a copper container traditionally used for making Kashmir's famed Nun Chai, the slat tea – has been given modernised by a local, Shazia Jan, a native of Chak Badwani, Qazigund. She has recently introduced Samovar's gas and electronic prototypes. With its origins in erstwhile Russia, Samovar came to Kashmir from Central Asia and is a key household requirement. Samovar requires charcoal for heating.

Jan was driven to modernise a key aspect of the Kashmiri lifestyle after she discovered Samovar's diminishing demand and relevance in the face of rising competition with electric kettles and given that it perceived by significant users as 'time-consuming.' Therefore, she embarked on a mission to explore potential modifications that could revitalise this cultural icon and make it more accessible and appealing to contemporary users.

Her latest development of this cultural relic is a versatile three-in-one prototype, capable of functioning with charcoal, LPG, and electricity to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of users. This multifaceted prototype efficiently brews tea while prioritising convenience for its users. She has created 10 prototypes of her product and was facilitated at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, in 2016, where her achievements were hailed. – [Kashmir Life](#)

## Satellite Phones Boost Safety and Connectivity for Kashmir's Trekking Tourism

The Union government's Ministries of Home Affairs and Tourism have taken the joint initiative to revolutionise trekking tourism in Kashmir by improving safety and connectivity for adventurers, more so in remote locations, by pushing for the introduction of satellite phones. These phones have been introduced to provide steady support for trekkers (considering the surge in foreign travellers to the region) in areas lacking network coverage by providing reliable communication avenues in reducing any potential risks.

This initiative aligns with Kashmir's efforts to boost tourism, offering a secure and connected environment. It can be seen as a critical step in ensuring the safety of tourists while promoting growth in the region's adventure tourism sector.

The discussion is currently in its final stages, with the Tourism Ministry pushing for this change, which would significantly improve the accessibility and safety of trekking routes that remain out of reach for most modern communication networks.

As more travellers seek out remote and off-the-beaten-path destinations, regions like Kashmir that offer adventure tourism are likely to experience increased demand. The improvement in safety measures, coupled with better connectivity, would likely drive further growth in international arrivals. – [Travel and Tour World](#)

## Khelo India Winter Games 2025

The Khelo India Winter Games will take place in 2025, with Ladakh hosting ice events from 23 to 27 January, and Jammu & Kashmir welcoming snow events from 22 to 25 February. This marks the continuation of the Games, which have grown significantly in participation since their inception in 2020. Participation has grown significantly over the years, with more than 1,350 athletes in 2021 and over 1,500 in 2022, reflecting the increasing appeal of the Games in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Games reflect the region's growing appeal for winter sports, as more athletes, including those from remote Himalayan villages, join each year.

Union Sports Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya remarked “We are once again looking forward to an exciting season of Khelo India Games. The Winter Games are crucial because India needs to identify the best athletes to represent the country at the 2026 Winter Olympics. It is our endeavour to promote winter sports and encourage more athletes to take up skiing and skating. We have already seen many athletes from remote Himalayan villages participating in these Games, which is very encouraging.” – [NDTV](#)