

# Jammu & Kashmir Digest

A Review of Developments in J&K



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- Sharda Devi Temple celebrates Diwali after 75 years
- Financial Aid helps rural women grow mushroom farms
- Early Snow draws in record number of tourists

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**Maa Sharda Devi temple at Kupwara in Jammu and Kashmir, during its inauguration earlier in March this year. — PTI Photo**

Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara District lit up on the festive occasion of Diwali this year as it was being celebrated at the Mata Sharda Devi Temple for the first time in 75 years.

The temple was rebuilt to rejuvenate the sacred and centuries-old pilgrimage to Sharda Peeth temple in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Sharda Peeth, a temple now abandoned along the Neelum River, used to be a prominent centre of learning and one of the 18 most revered temples throughout South Asia.

Earthen lamps adorned the temple, crackers were burst, and prayers were performed to celebrate the occasion and the fact that the temple, based in the area on the Line of Control, was open to devotees after decades of being under reconstruction.

Ravinder Pandita, Head and Founder of the 'Save Sharda Committee' expressed his sentiments at this joyous event.

'It's a matter of happiness that Diwali is being celebrated in the same way as it used to be 75 years ago.'

The inauguration of this temple was done on March 22 after its renovation.' He also shared his request for the government 'that Sharda Peeth be opened like Katarpur Sahib.' — [India TV](#)

## FESTIVAL SECTION

### MAA SHARDA DEVI TEMPLE CELEBRATES DEEPAWALI AFTER 75 YRS

CELEBRATING SPIRITUALITY

## CONFERENCE ON KASHMIRI SUFISM

Lt.-Governor Manoj Sinha recently addressed the gathering at a conference on 'Sufism and Kashmiriyat: An Example of Peace and Harmony,' organised by the Indian Minority Foundation.

He observed that 'Kashmir has been the land of Sufism and communal harmony where for centuries, the spirit of goodwill and brotherhood has flourished. Kashmir's heritage of co-existence is also centuries old, but in the last few decades, it had become plagued by terrorism. But now Kashmir is changing...major changes are now being seen in Kashmir.'

This was the first major event where Muslim leaders from all sects congregated after the August 2019 constitution reforms. The representatives hailed Prime Minister Modi's efforts in the region, bringing about stability and peace. — [Hindustan Times](#)



**Kashmiri women harvesting mushrooms at an in-house mushroom farming unit built from financial aid provided by Jammu and Kashmir Rural Livelihood Women (JKRLM). — File pic**

Maimoona Akhtar is one of the several women who have been the beneficiaries of financial assistance provided by Jammu and Kashmir Rural Livelihood Women (JKRLM).

Hailing from central Kashmir’s Ganderbal District, she has single-handedly set up a small unit of mushrooms to generate income for her family’s sustenance.

She harvests four quintals of mushroom annually and provides employment to other women in her village.

The step towards empowering herself and other women came on the heels of the tragic loss of her husband in 2020 in an accident. Therefore, as she explained, she ‘decided to stand on my (Akhtar’s) feet and do something for my family.’

Mission Director JKRLM, Indu Kanwal Chib, has pointed out that to this day, around six lakh women in Jammu and Kashmir have benefitted from the scheme.

Moreover, approximately Rs. 100 crores have been granted to female entrepreneurs for their start-ups.

Chib added that JKLRM has signed a deal with Amazon, Flipkart, and Meesho, popular e-commerce platforms. –

**Deccan Herald, Kashmir Observer**

# WOMEN'S SECTION

FINANCIAL AID HELPS RURAL WOMEN GROW MUSHROOM FARMING UNITS

## ARMLESS ARCHER



Sheetal Devi, a 16-year-old hailing from Jammu and Kashmir’s Kishtwar District, is a female archer without arms from the UT who competes internationally. In October 2023, she won three medals – a silver in mixed doubles, a gold medal in other mixed doubles, and a gold medal in the women’s individual category – at the Asian Para Games held in Hangzhou, China.

Devi spoke about her journey leading up to her recent victories – ‘My parents always had faith in me. My friends in the village also supported me. The only thing I didn’t like was the look on people’s faces when they realised I don’t have arms. These medals prove that I am special. These medals are not just mine, but that of the country.’

**The Indian Express**



A train braving the early and heavy snowfall in the valley. — file pic

At a time when it is still autumn in Kashmir, hundreds of tourists were taken by surprise to witness snowfall at various locations in the valley. Most of them had come to enjoy the autumn hues and the golden coloured chinar trees of Kashmir, but got snow instead.

The J&K government last month released figures that show that 1.70 crore tourists have already visited the Union Territory this year, and by this year-end, the number may cross the 2-crore mark, which would amount to a remarkable surge in tourism for Kashmir. A peaceful atmosphere, snowfall in October, coupled with the launch of Vistadome train services have added to the tourist rush to the Kashmir valley.

According to tour and travel outlets, they were getting a lot of queries about tourism packages in Kashmir valley for the autumn season, but the early snowfall resulted in a lot of bookings for the winter months, especially as the tourists want to enjoy snow at Gulmarg and Sonmarg.

Social media platforms like Instagram have really helped in giving a push to tourism in the past few days as tourists who were already in Kashmir valley uploaded their photographs in the snow-covered Gulmarg and Sonmarg. — *The Sunday Guardian*

## TOURISM SECTION

### EARLY SNOW DRAWS IN RECORD NUMBER OF TOURISTS

#### WEDDING DESTINATION



The tourism sector plans to draw tourists from the rest of the country seeking the scenic locales of Jammu and Kashmir as their wedding destination. The UT is already becoming a favoured wedding destination with Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Dal Lake hosting several tourist weddings.

In this regard, the Tourism Department has already opened properties like the Royal Spring Golf Course in Srinagar as an esteemed venue for weddings.

It invites wedding planners, wedding influencers and photographers to showcase their work for selection in these weddings. — *Deccan Herald*