

“Jammu & Kashmir holds the promise to be the torchbearer of India's journey to Destination 2047,” says Dr. Jitendra Singh

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Centre sanctions 500 new Atal Tinkering Labs for Jammu & Kashmir

Innovation in Space, Biotech, and Aroma Sectors to define India's future growth: Dr. Jitendra Singh

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Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology; Earth Sciences; and Minister of State for PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh, said that Jammu & Kashmir holds the promise to be the torchbearer of India's journey to Destination 2047.

Speaking at the launch of the ATL Sarthi and Frontier Region Programme of the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog, at the University of Kashmir, Dr. Jitendra Singh said that as India's economy moves up from rank 4 to rank 3 and further upward, the value addition will come from regions and resources hitherto underexplored, and J&K qualifies on both counts. He added that the region began receiving its due attention only after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014, and its vast resources of the Himalayas and rivers found new outlets with initiatives like the Aroma Mission, launched by this government.

The Union Minister said that Jammu & Kashmir has the potential to emerge as a frontline contributor to India's innovation-led growth story in the next two decades.

Congratulating the launch of the ATL Sarthi initiative in Srinagar, Dr. Jitendra Singh said the occasion marked a “dual celebration” — for Kashmir University becoming an instrument of engaging J&K as a mainstream player in India's growth journey, and for AIM extending its innovation network to this peripheral Union Territory.

The Minister announced that under the Frontier Region Programme, 500 new Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) will be set up in J&K, forming the largest share of the 2,500 labs sanctioned for frontier regions, with an investment of ₹100 crore. These labs, he said, will give school students exposure to cutting-edge tools in robotics, 3D printing, and artificial intelligence, enabling them to innovate at a young age.

Dr. Jitendra Singh underlined that India's economic growth over the past decade has been propelled by technology-driven sectors, including space, biotechnology, oceans, and the Himalayas, which will continue to drive value addition in the years to come. He noted that India's space economy has grown rapidly from "near zero" to \$8 billion and is projected to touch \$40–45 billion within a decade, with more than 400 startups already active in the sector.

Highlighting the importance of global benchmarks and public-private collaboration, the Minister said, *"Unless we devise a method of involving private players, we cannot sustain growth. Initiatives like InSpace in space research and BIRAC in biotechnology have shown how structured collaboration can succeed."*

The Minister pointed to J&K's emerging role in areas such as the Aroma Mission and floriculture, which have already generated thousands of lavender- and flower-based startups. "Today, around 3,500 lavender startups are flourishing in the region. Young people are returning from corporate jobs to take up entrepreneurship in these fields," he observed, adding that such ventures were redefining opportunities beyond government jobs.

On the innovation pipeline, Dr. Jitendra Singh noted that 50 students from J&K featured among the top 1,000 in the nationwide School Innovation Marathon, reflecting the region's rising talent pool. He also urged students and parents to shed the myth that startups can only succeed in metros, stressing that nearly half of India's startups today come from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

"As we talk of India@2047, the students in these tinkering labs will be in their prime working years. They will be the torchbearers of a developed India, and through them, J&K will already be a torchbearer of the national journey," Dr. Jitendra Singh said in his concluding remarks.

The launch event also witnessed the participation of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Education Minister Sakina Masood, University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nilofer Khan, and AIM Mission Director Dr. Deepak Bagla.





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