

Atal Innovation Mission opens applications for 500 new ATLs in J&K under Frontier Region Program

Invites non-ATL schools to participate actively across Jammu & Kashmir

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In a major step towards building a robust innovation ecosystem in India's frontier regions, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog, in collaboration with the School Education Department, Government of Jammu & Kashmir, and the University of Kashmir, today launched the application process for establishment of 500 new Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

These 500 new ATLs are the key component of AIM's broader Frontier Region Program, which seeks to create customized and inclusive innovation ecosystems in geographically challenging regions through deep institutional convergence and localized implementation models. By strengthening linkages between schools, universities, industry, and innovation institutions, the program aims to nurture a new generation of young innovators and change makers from Jammu & Kashmir while ensuring equitable access to innovation opportunities across districts.

The initiative also aims at transforming Jammu & Kashmir into a leading model for frontier-region innovation by expanding access to emerging technologies, design thinking, and problem-solving education among school students, particularly in remote, border, hilly, and underserved geographies.

The application launch marks a significant milestone in operationalizing the vision announced during the launch of the ATL Sarthi and Frontier Region Program in September 2025, where the University of Kashmir was designated as the nodal mentoring institution for supporting and strengthening the ATL ecosystem across the Union Territory.

As part of the rollout strategy, AIM, in close coordination with the School Education Department and the University of Kashmir, has developed a customized application framework specifically tailored to the geographical and institutional realities of Jammu & Kashmir. The application framework incorporates several contextual modifications including inclusion of diverse school categories such as Government, Private, and Aided, Kendriya Vidyalayas, Army Goodwill schools, and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, relaxation in criteria related to school space and enrolment and special consideration for schools located in remote, border, hilly, and underserved regions.

A comprehensive outreach and awareness strategy has also been developed to ensure maximum participation from schools across all districts of the UT. This includes district-level awareness sessions, orientations for school heads and teachers, official communication through departmental channels, and leveraging the existing ATL network and institutional partnerships to ensure equitable participation.

Mission Director, Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog Deepak Bagla, during the launch said “today, as we open applications for 500 ATLs across Jammu & Kashmir, we are not only establishing these labs, we are going to nurture a new generation of problem-solvers, creators, and nation-builders. These labs will empower students from every corner of the UT, including remote and border areas, to dream boldly, experiment fearlessly, and develop solutions for real-world challenges. Under the visionary leadership of Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Atal Innovation Mission remains committed to building an inclusive innovation ecosystem that ensures every young mind gets an opportunity to contribute towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. We firmly believe that the next wave of innovators, entrepreneurs, and technology leaders can emerge from the classrooms of Jammu & Kashmir.”

He urged schools to participate actively in the application process to become the innovation hubs of the JK’s innovation ecosystem.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Ram Niwas Sharma, Secretary, School Education Department, Jammu & Kashmir, said, “The School Education Department is working closely with AIM and partner institutions to ensure that schools across all districts, irrespective of geography or management type, are able to benefit from this opportunity. The initiative will strengthen scientific temper, creativity, and experiential learning among students while enabling schools in remote and aspirational areas to become active participants in India’s innovation movement.”

Prof. Nilofer Khan, Vice Chancellor, University of Kashmir in her message emphasized the importance of building a strong grassroots innovation culture in Jammu & Kashmir and highlighted the University’s role through ATL Sarthi in mentoring, guiding, and strengthening the emerging innovation ecosystem across schools in the Union Territory.

A key highlight leading up to the launch was the organization of the “Innovation Mashaal” initiative, jointly conducted by AIM and the School Education Department, Government of Jammu & Kashmir across multiple districts. Conceived as a symbolic torch journey across ATL schools, the initiative aimed to foster a vibrant culture of innovation, creativity, and student-led engagement across J&K.

The Innovation Mashaal commenced from Srinagar and travelled through multiple districts across North and South Kashmir and finally to Jammu, connecting ATL schools through a shared spirit of innovation and scientific temper.

The initiative included district-level engagements, expert awareness speeches, community outreach activities, and participation from ATL schools across the region. Each participating ATL school signed the Mashaal as a symbolic representation of collective ownership and participation in the growing innovation movement of Jammu & Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the application launch marks the beginning of a large-scale state-wide outreach and implementation effort, with structured evaluation and selection mechanisms being put in place to ensure robust and transparent selection of schools. The initiative is expected to significantly strengthen the grassroots innovation ecosystem in Jammu & Kashmir, accelerate development of innovation-driven learning environments, and contribute towards the vision of Viksit Bharat through inclusive and future-oriented education.

The event concluded with the formal launch of the Application Manual for 500 ATLs in Jammu & Kashmir by all dignitaries present during the online launch. All non ATL schools in the above mentioned categories can apply here: https://aimapp2.aim.gov.in/atl_application_frp/





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