

REPORT: Panel Discussion on “J&K Economy – Development Issues and Way Forward”

EconFest 2025 – Department of Economics, University of Kashmir

12 November 2025 | Ibn Khaldun Auditorium

The Department of Economics, University of Kashmir, organized a focused Panel Discussion on “J&K Economy: Development Issues and Way Forward” as part of EconFest-2025. The event brought together economists, administrators, sector specialists, and industry professionals to deliberate on the development trajectory of Jammu & Kashmir.

The programme began with an introduction by Dr. Md. Sarafraz Eqbal, Coordinator, Panel Discussion, followed by a Welcome Address by Prof. Effat Yasmin, Head, Department of Economics and Convenor, EconFest 2025, who highlighted the importance of academic engagement in shaping informed policy perspectives. The session was moderated by Dr. Javaid Iqbal Khan, Organizing Secretary of EconFest 2025, with participation from distinguished panelists representing academia, financial institutions, agriculture, industrial sectors, and entrepreneurial platforms.

Key Discussion Themes

1. Human Capital: Education, Entrepreneurship & Employment

Speakers including Prof. R. L. Bhat, Former Head, Department of Economics, Central University of Jammu laid emphasis on the promotion of cultivation of vegetables, dry fruits, saffron, fisheries, etc. He added that doing this will ease the unemployment problem. Mr. Shabir Handoo, CEO and Chairman, Kashmir Angel Network, discussed the challenges of educated unemployment, barriers to entrepreneurship, and the need to strengthen skill development and innovation ecosystems. They emphasized aligning educational outcomes with emerging job markets.

2. Sectoral Transformation: Agriculture & Industry

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad Shah, Director, Directorate of Sheep Husbandry, Kashmir Division, examined opportunities in horticulture, livestock, agro-processing, and industrial growth. He highlighted the importance of modern infrastructure, enhanced value addition, and better integration with competitive markets.

3. Tourism: Economic Viability & Sustainability

The discussion focused on tourism's contribution to income and employment while addressing concerns such as seasonal dependency, infrastructure gaps, and the need for environmentally responsible tourism practices. Speakers stressed sustainable planning to protect J&K's ecological assets.

4. Fiscal Health & Financial Development

Experts including Prof. Manoj Bhat from Department of Economics, University of Jammu and Dr. Altaf Ahmad Kirra, Chief Risk Officer, J&K Bank, evaluated J&K's fiscal position, public expenditure efficiency, and the crucial role of financial institutions—particularly in promoting financial inclusion, entrepreneurship support, and credit accessibility.

Interaction & Closing

A vibrant open interaction allowed participants to raise questions on employment, diversification, and long-term development strategies for the region. Dignitaries were felicitated with mementos, followed by brief closing remarks appreciating the relevance of the session.

The programme concluded with a formal 'Vote of Thanks' delivered by Dr. Rahul Kundal, Coordinator, Panel Discussion, acknowledging the contributions of panelists, coordinators, faculty, and students.