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G-20 MEET IN SRINAGAR

The collective belief is that this multifaceted development, complemented by the G20 event, will shape a new destiny for Kashmir. The region is set to emerge as a beacon of progress, embracing positive change with open arms. With every passing day, the vision of a transformed Kashmir becomes increasingly vivid, promising a brighter future for its residents and heralding a new era of growth and prosperity

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Embracing healthcare innovation

The recently concluded Health Conclave here was a watershed moment in the region's healthcare sector. The occasion, which was attended by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and other top officials, highlighted the significant progress made in recent years in J&K's healthcare. Several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed at the Conclave, paving the way for groundbreaking initiatives to be implemented across the Union Territory (UT). This meeting emphasised the transformative power of technology and infrastructure in revolutionising patient care. The healthcare sector in UT has seen a significant transformation during the last three to four years while it remains the fact that from primary to district level, developments have ushered in a new era of improved patient care.

The creation of solid healthcare infrastructure across the UT demonstrates the administration's dedication to the well-being of its residents. These efforts not only addressed gaps in healthcare accessibility but also improved the quality of services delivered to patients. The incorporation of modern technical tools has been one of the most notable developments in this healthcare revolution. These tools have transformed the way doctors diagnose and treat patients, saving time and allowing them to give the best treatment possible. The development of cutting-edge medical technology, computerised health records, and telemedicine services has bridged the urban-rural divide. This has introduced specialised healthcare services to rural areas, empowering both patients and medical personnel.

This extraordinary turnaround must be maintained and developed. The government should prioritise continuing investment in healthcare infrastructure, ensuring that people in both urban and rural areas have access to cutting-edge care. The first-ever Health Conclave in J&K has laid the groundwork for a bright future in the healthcare sector. The region is positioned to become a forerunner in providing great healthcare by embracing innovation, expanding infrastructure, and promoting collaborations. The efforts made thus far have already changed the lives of countless people, and with continued dedication, J&K has the potential to become a shining example of healthcare excellence.

ABDM's Scan & Share streamlining patient care in J&K

|| Irfan Ahmad

In a monumental step towards enhancing healthcare accessibility and streamlining patient care, the Health & Medical Education (H&ME) Department has initiated the implementation of the Scan & Share Queue Management System. This innovative system, introduced under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), aims to tackle the issue of long queues and reduce wait times for patients seeking outpatient department (OPD) registrations in hospitals across the Union Territory (UT).

Already operational in various hospitals across Kashmir and Jammu Division, the authorities are currently in the process of setting up the Scan & Share Queue Management System in all hospitals across J&K, aiming to facilitate the general public visiting the hospitals and make OPD registrations easy and seamless for them. Exploring the functionality of the system, the officials informed that individuals are required to create an ABHA ID using their Aadhaar card details and download a mobile application equipped with the ABHA feature. Armed with these tools, patients will be ready to experience a streamlined and hassle-free healthcare journey as soon as they reach the concerned hospitals.

Dr Shafqat Khan, the Additional Mission Director for the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission in J&K, further informed, "Upon arrival at their chosen hospital for a consultation, patients simply need to scan the hospital's unique QR code using the mobile application. This simple action registers them in the hospital's system and instantly provides them with token numbers. This process eliminates the need for physical queueing, minimizing wait times and ensuring a more organized and efficient flow of patients."

The introduction of the Scan & Share Queue Man-

agement System has garnered praise from patients who have experienced its benefits firsthand. Latief Ahmad, a patient who recently utilized the system at a hospital in Srinagar, expressed his satisfaction, stating, "The Scan & Share Queue Management System has made a significant difference in my experience at the hospital. I no longer have to spend hours waiting in line for an OPD registration. The process is quick and convenient, allowing me to focus on other things related to healthcare."

Beyond the convenience it offers to patients, the system also streamlines administrative processes for healthcare institutions. With the digitization of registration and queue management, hospital staff can optimize their resources and dedicate more time to providing quality care to patients. This technology-driven approach has enabled healthcare professionals to focus on what matters most: delivering timely and effective medical services, and the change is quite visible on the ground.

The implementation of the Scan & Share Queue Management System exemplifies the commitment of the J&K administration to embrace digital innovation and prioritize patient-centric care. By leveraging the power of technology, the UT is at the forefront of transforming healthcare accessibility, ensuring that citizens receive the care they need promptly. It is interesting to note that J&K is in the 3rd slot across the country regarding the implementation of initiatives under the ABDM and has generated nearly over 3 lakh OPD tokens through the Scan & Share Queue Management System, even though the UT started it just a few months ago.

"The 3 lakh mark has been crossed just in three months after the start of the initiative in J&K. We are moving ahead in the right direction, and we are hopeful of making the much-needed change on the healthcare

landscape in the UT," said Dr Khan.

One of the administrators of a hospital functioning in the peripheries, which recently got the Scan & Share system installed, said, "The introduction of the Queue Management System has been a game-changer for us. It has significantly reduced patient wait times and streamlined our operations. We can now allocate our resources more efficiently, resulting in improved patient satisfaction and overall healthcare outcomes."

While the hospitals that have implemented the facility have been able to improve their patient services, some others, despite being important hospitals, are yet to start the queue management system. The glaring example is SKIMS, Soura, which has been facing issues in implementing the queue management system, causing inconvenience for the patients coming from various parts of Kashmir. Even as other hospitals are making use of digital interventions to make patient care hassle-free, the long lines of patients trying to get their OPD card and make payments for investigations are still a norm at SKIMS, Soura.

"I have seen this facility in use in hospitals in districts, but at SKIMS, they are following the old way of making people stand in endless queues, which not only consumes hours but also affects the patient services badly. The authorities must take note of it and ensure that people are facilitated," said an attendee, Zahoor Ahmad from Bijbehara. On the other hand, the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission continues to revolutionize the healthcare landscape in J&K, breaking barriers and bridging gaps in healthcare access. By harnessing the potential of technology, the mission is empowering both patients and healthcare providers, fostering a patient-centred healthcare ecosystem.

Looking ahead, the commitment of the LG-led administration to expand the implementation of the Scan & Share Queue Management System across all hospitals in J&K is a testament to its dedication to transforming the healthcare sector. As more institutions adopt this innovative system, the UT moves closer to achieving its goal of comprehensive and inclusive healthcare for all its residents.

"The Scan & Share System is not merely a technological solution; it represents a transformative approach to healthcare delivery. Its success illustrates

how technology can be harnessed to bridge gaps and enhance patient experiences," said a doctor stationed at District Hospital Shopian.

People who previously struggled with several things are now witnessing a change in healthcare service delivery, at least in Kashmir, while they are expecting further improvements. They note that while smaller hospitals are providing a seamless experience, the



same cannot be said for important hospitals where a large number of people visit.

"The payment issue is a hectic process; while the authorities have taken the first step by digitizing the OPD registration, there is a need to find a way out for payments. If that is done, the result would be enhanced and better healthcare services, which no doubt are already improving," said Javaid Ahmad, a local journalist.

As the healthcare landscape in J&K continues to evolve, digital interventions represent a beacon of hope for a future where every citizen can access efficient, patient-centric care. The journey towards comprehensive healthcare for all is ongoing, and with the continued dedication of healthcare authorities and the transformative power of technology, the vision of a healthier and happier population draws closer every day.

At Hazratbal shrine, LG Manoj Sinha calls for revival of 'shrine tourism' in Kashmir

- || “Prophet Muhammad (Saw) has stated unless heart is purified, body remains impure”
- || “Valley shrines can attract huge number of people from outside”
- || “Seeks peoples support to establish peace”



SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir’s Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha visited the revered shrine of Hazratbal in Srinagar and called for revival of ‘shrine tourism in Kashmir.’ He said that Eid-ul-Adha is a festival of peace and harmony.

Reviewing the preparations and facilities at the shrine that houses the holy relic of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), he said that today top officials from the administration are present and preparations are in place for the upcoming festival of Eid-ul-Adha. Quoting saying (Hadith) of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the LG, said that the Prophet (SAW) has stated that unless the heart is purified, the body

remains impure. “If heart is clean, the entire body is clean,” he said.

The LG said that the way people from across India are coming for the Amarnath Yatra, people can also come to see revered shrines like Hazratbal, Charar-e-Sharief and dozens of other shrines in the Valley. “Shrine tourism can be revived to attract people from the rest of the country. I am open to get feedback from the people, Waqf Board and anyone else on this issue. You can come to me or I can visit you as well,” he said.

He said Eid-ul-Adha is a festival of peace and harmony. The LG prayed for the peace and prosperity in J&K at the shrine.

Your future doesn't lie in Guns, Stones, India, world awaits your talent: Amit Shah to Youth

- || "Three families had hijacked democracy in J&K, never allowed Panchayat elections"
- || "PM Modi ensured democracy at grassroot level"
- || "J&K politicians bought Vilas in foreign, spent winters outside"
- || "G-20 became best platform to showcase Kashmir peace"
- || "Hotel room capacity to increase three times in next 5 years"

Srinagar: Union Home Minister Amit Shah while reaching out to Kashmiri youth said that the future of Valley's young generation doesn't lie in guns and stones but in the huge Indian and global market that awaits their talent.

Addressing the gathering after inaugurating several projects at Rajbhawan Srinagar, Shah said that those who handed over guns and stones to Kashmiri youth were never well wishers of the young lot of Valley. "Future of Kashmiri youth doesn't lie in guns and stones. Pick up laptops and march ahead as there are huge opportunities waiting for you in big Indian and global markets. We are waiting for your talent. I urge the Kashmiri youth to be part of the change," Shah said.

He said Kashmir has changed a lot over the past few years. "School closures, strike calls and explosions have been controlled and there is an atmosphere of peace. Last year 1.88 Crore tourists visited Kashmir," Shah said, adding that last time when he visited Kashmir, many people complained to him that they couldn't get taxis. "I ensure that every

person is entitled to get a taxi after proper security verification. There was a rule that only those whose



fathers or grandfathers were owing taxis are entitled for new taxis but that is not the case now."

Taking a dig at Gandhi's, Abdullah's and Muf-ti's, Shah said these three families were never

allowed to flourish democracy at the grassroot level. "For 70 years, Panchayat elections were never held here. To ensure change needs a will and that will was shown by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who took a step to see Panchayat polls are held in J&K and democracy reaches to every village in J&K," he said.

Asking people when they have seen a new hotel coming up in Kashmir, the Home Minister said to accommodate the huge rush of tourists, hotel room capacity across the Valley will go up three times in next five years. "We will not face any issue while accommodating tourists," he said.

He said for the first time, J&K people are benefiting from a lot of small schemes. "Farmer's never got any money in their accounts in the last 70 years, but 12.43 lakh farmers of J&K are getting Rs 6000 in their accounts yearly.

He said money was never an issue for J&K but that it would never reach the right person and due to unprecedented corruption crores of rupees would go waste. "J&K politicians bought palatial houses in foreign and they would spend winters in foreign every year," he said. "Does anybody know where these people got the money?"

Shah said that today there are top institutions in Kashmir including AIIMS, IIM and IIT people are reaping the benefits. The Home Minister announced that Dal lake and Tatoon ground will be major attractions of Kashmir where every Indian would love to visit Srinagar.

Taking a jibe at National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah and PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti welcomed the G-20 summit in their own way but due to the personal efforts of J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, the event became a grand success. "The change that took place in Kashmir over the past few years had to be showcased at global level and G-20 became the best platform," he said. KNO

In Jammu

Lashing out at the Gandhi's, Abdullahs and Mufti's, Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday accused the three families of being responsible for the killing of 42000 people in J&K from 1947 to 2014. He said successful G-20 in Srinagar was a grand success and all the participants have gone back to their respective countries with the message of message.

Addressing a massive gathering at Bagwati Nagar Rally Ground in Jammu amid scorching heat, the Home Minister, said that gone are the days, when three families would rule and ruin J&K. "From 1947

to 2014, 42000 people were killed in J&K, who was ruling during this period. Three families—Gandhi's, Abdullah's and Mufti's," he said.

Paying tributes to the BJP ideologue, Dr Shayma Prasad Mukherji on his death anniversary, Shah said that Dr Mukherji was illegally arrested in 1953 for entering into J&K without a permit. "Why need a permit for entering one's own country? He was jailed and later assassinated," Shah said, adding that today the "soul of Dr Mukherji will be resting in peace as his mission and vision of Ek Vidhan, Ek Nishan and Ek Pradhan stands fulfilled."

The Home Minister said that Dr Mukherji was the first to oppose the inclusion of Article 370 into the Indian constitution on the pretext that "one nation can't have two flags, two constitutions and two heads." "On August 5, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a big step and removed the Article 370 forever and fulfilled the vision of Dr Mukherji," Shah said, adding that if West Bengal is with India today, it was due to the vision of Dr Mukherji.

He said India is celebrating nine years of PM Modi's rule. "Modiji's rule is an open book. It is not like UPA that did Rs 12 lakh Crore scam. There is not even a single corruption allegation against Modiji during his nine year rule," Shah said.

He said Jammu is touching new heights of development and today multi-crore projects were inaugurated in the city. Shah said that BJP tightened noose on terrorism and today "terrorism is on the death bed." "In UPA's ten year rule, there were, 60,327 terrorism incidents. In Modiji's nine year rule, terrorism touched its lowest ebb. In 47 months after abrogation of Article 370, there were only 32 calls of strikes while stone pelting declined by 90 percent," he said, adding, "Youth of J&K have replaced stones with laptops and books."

Shah said that in 2022, for the first time, 1.88 Crore tourists visited J&K. Seeking support for Modi from the people of Jammu for 2024 parliamentary polls, he said there is no comparison between "Rahul Baba and Modji." "We will win over 300 seats in the 2024 polls," he said. The Home Minister said that the successful G-20 summit in Srinagar on May 22 to May 25 this year, was a "grand success."

"Every foreign dignitary has gone back to their respective countries with the message of peace and changing Kashmir post Article 370 abrogation," he said and credited LG Manoj Sinha for the smooth conduct of the G-20 summit in Srinagar.

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J&K witnessing new era of peace, development in Amrit Kaal: LG Sinha

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha inaugurated Digital Movie Theatre at Kishtwar.

The Governor congratulated the people of Kishtwar, District Administration and all stakeholders on the return of the movie culture to the district.

“J&K is witnessing a new era of peace and development in Amrit Kaal and the launch of a movie theatre after almost three decades in picturesque Kishtwar is a symbol of aspirational society,” the Governor said.

Art and Creativity transcend all boundaries and bring people closer. Cinema is not just a medium of entertainment, but it is also an integral part of the culture, society and a reflection of change happening around us, he observed.

Kishtwar has immense potential for film tourism. This movie-theater and infotainment center for children will be an important step to harness the potential of local talent, the Governor added.

The Governor shared the efforts to revive the J&K's bond with the film industry. Significant steps like Film policy, opening of cinema halls in the districts have created a vibrant film ecosystem in the UT. Today, Jammu Kashmir has become the most preferred destination for the filmmakers and more than 300 movies and web series were filmed last year. This is also providing huge

opportunities to the local youth, he said.

The Governor said, in the month of July, three more cinema halls will be opened. These cinema halls will also become the center of information and exchange of ideas for the youth, he added.

The aspiration of youth is our biggest strength in developing progressive and inclusive Jammu Kashmir. We are fully committed to provide all the resources for their holistic growth and development, the Governor further said.

The Governor urged the people of Jammu Kashmir to actively contribute in the successful conduct of Shri Amarnathji Yatra, starting from 1st July and make it as successful as G20 summit. The innovative edu-infotainment digital movie theatre at TRC Kishtwar is the collaborative effort of District Administration Kishtwar, Kishtwar Development Authority and Picture Time to address the public demand and provide facilities of recreation to the people.

Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary; Dr Mandeep Kumar Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor; Dr. Devansh Yadav, Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, senior officials, various stakeholders, youth and people from all walks of life attended the inaugural ceremony, in person and through virtual mode.

After 18 years, Srinagar records hottest June day at 35.0 degree Celsius

SRINAGAR: Amid the ongoing heat wave in Kashmir, Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir has recorded hottest June day after 18 years at 35.0 degree Celsius on Friday while Qazigund and Pahalgam in South Kashmir recorded second hottest June day in the last 33 and 15 years respectively.

An Independent Weather Forecaster, Faizan Arif Keng said that the mercury settled at 35.0 degree Celsius today, which is the equal warmer June day recorded on June, 03 2018.

The all-time highest June day was recorded on June 29, 1978 at 37.8 degree Celsius, he said.

He said that Kokernag has recorded the highest maximum temperature in June in 18 years where the mercury settled at 33.3 degree Celsius while the previous and all time highest temperature was recorded on June 24, 2015 at 34.9 degree Celsius.

Qazigund and Pahalgam in South Kashmir have also recorded the hottest day of the season after the gap of 33 and 15 years respectively.

According to Keng, the mercury in Qazigund settled

at 34.2 degree Celsius, which is the hottest June day in the last 33 years while all the highest temperatures at 35.7 degree Celsius have been recorded on June 25, 1990 and on June 26, 1988.

In Pahalgam also, the second hottest maximum temperature in June was recorded today after the gap of 15 years at 30.2 degree Celsius while the previous hottest day has been recorded on June 09, 2021 at 30.3 degree Celsius. However, he said that the hottest day of all time was recorded on June 25, 1990 at 32.0 degree Celsius.

Moreover, the weatherman has predicted respite from the ongoing heat wave from tomorrow onwards, saying that there is a possibility of light rain, thunderstorm at scattered places of Jammu and few places of Kashmir division as well.

Deputy Director Meteorological department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that from June 25-28, the weather would remain generally cloudy with possibility of intermittent light to moderate thunderstorms at many places.



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STRAY DOGS BITE 11 PERSONS IN BLA VILLAGE

BARAMULLA: At least 11 persons including three minors were injured after they were attacked by stray dogs in Chandoosa area of Baramulla in north Kashmir's Baramulla district on Friday.

Stray dogs attacked and injured 11 persons including three minors at Chandoosa village of Baramulla district.

The injured were shifted to a nearby hospital for necessary treatment, it said.

Confirming the incident, Block Medical Officer (BMO) Sheeri, Dr Naseer said that they received eleven persons, which include three minors aged between 5-8 years old, with dog bite injuries.

The injured were treated with vaccines and as such they are out of danger, BMO said.

Meanwhile, locals of the area here have appealed to the authorities to act against increasing menace of stray dogs in the area.



OPPOSITION PATNA MEET:

Amid Cong vs AAP, Oppn leaders agree to fight BJP together in 2024 Lok Sabha polls



Following the first meeting of the Opposition parties to forge a common front against the ruling BJP for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Patna today, Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, while addressing a press meet, said that all the leaders have agreed to fight unitedly against current regime in the Centre. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge further informed that the next meet in Shimla will finalise the modalities of the front. This comes despite differences between AAP and the Congress during the meeting, where the former made it clear that it would be “very difficult” for it to be part of an alliance until the Grand Old Party denounced the Centre’s ordinance in Delhi.

Reacting to the meet, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) launched a scathing attack, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah calling it a “photo session” and saying that the various Opposition parties can never be united. BJP MP Sushil Modi said, “This is a ‘Gathbandhan of Thugs’. They are preparing to fool the country. They have no principle, or policy and all are

involved in corruption.”

Raising the pitch for a united Opposition front in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said that “Congress’ ideology can never be separated from Bihar”. He also said that Rahul Gandhi was instrumental in bringing together Opposition leaders from across the country. Kharge added, “If we win Bihar, we will win India. Kharge was addressing party workers at the Congress office in Patna, ahead of the joint Opposition meeting.

In an escalation of tension between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Congress in the midst of the Opposition parties’ first joint meeting in Patna Friday, the AAP signalled a further deterioration in its strained ties with the Congress, saying that unless the latter publicly denounces the ordinance promulgated by the Centre it would be “very difficult” for it to be a part of any alliance that includes the grand old party.

The BJP-led Centre’s Delhi ordinance takes control of administrative services from the Arvind Kejriwal-led

AAP government in the national capital.

The standoff between the AAP and the Congress played out during and after the meeting of the 15 Opposition parties at Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar's residence in Patna, which was convened to work out their common roadmap for taking on the Narendra Modi-led BJP dispensation in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

While the Congress was represented at this conclave by party president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, CM Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann were also present at the meet.

In the course of the meeting, the AAP leaders were said to have raked up the Congress's non-committal stance on the Delhi ordinance so far.

Kharge, it is learnt, then conveyed his strong displeasure to Kejriwal over an AAP spokesperson's charge in Delhi – which apparently came even as the meeting was underway in Patna – that there was allegedly an agreement between the BJP and the Congress on the ordinance and that the latter would walk out when the Bill will be put to vote in the Rajya Sabha in Parliament's upcoming session.

This led to an exchange of words between Kharge and Kejriwal, prompting West Bengal CM and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee to intervene and play the role of a referee. Sources said she told Kejriwal that he should calm down since the Congress has made it clear that it will take a stand on the issue before the commencement of the Parliament session. Most of the leaders sided with the Congress suggesting that let the party go through its internal procedures and not be forced to take a stand in the meeting.

Sources said Banerjee at one point asked the leaders of the Congress and the AAP to sit and resolve their differences over tea and biscuits.

Kharge reportedly said the support on the ordinance issue could not be put as a precondition for an alliance to fight the BJP and cited the AAP's several "provocative statements" targeting his party.

Kejriwal did not attend a joint press conference addressed by the Opposition leaders following their meeting. However, while the press event was underway, the AAP issued a statement, saying the Congress's silence on the ordinance "raised suspicions about its real intentions". It said except for the Congress, all other 11 parties, which have representation in the Rajya Sabha, have expressed their stand against the ordinance and announced that they would oppose it in the Upper House.

"The Congress, a national party that takes a stand

on almost all issues, has yet to make its position on the Black Ordinance public. However, the Congress' Delhi and Punjab units have announced that the party should support the Modi government on this issue. Today, during the like-minded party meeting in Patna, many parties urged the Congress to publicly denounce the Black Ordinance. However, the Congress refused to do so," the AAP charged.

"Congress' silence raises suspicions about its real intentions. In personal discussions, senior Congress leaders have hinted that their party might informally or formally abstain from voting on it in the Rajya Sabha. The Congress' abstention from voting on this issue will help the BJP immensely in furthering its attack on Indian democracy... Congress' hesitation and refusal to act as a team player, especially on an issue as important as this one, would make it very difficult for the AAP to be a part of any alliance that includes Congress," the AAP statement said.

"Until the Congress publicly denounces the Black Ordinance and declares that all 31 of its RS MPs will oppose the ordinance in the Rajya Sabha, it will be difficult for AAP to participate in future meetings of like-minded parties where the Congress is a participant. It's high time that Congress decides whether it stands with the people of Delhi or the Modi government," the Kejriwal-led party added.

Reacting to the AAP's statement, Delhi Congress leaders sought to argue that the former's insistence on securing a commitment from their party over the Centre's ordinance was "a desperate bid to survive on part of Kejriwal".

Congress sources also alleged that the AAP was "acting as per the BJP's directions" to throw a spanner in the Opposition parties' efforts to forge a common front against the BJP in the 2024 elections.

"The Congress' Delhi and Punjab units have already made something amply clear when it comes to the question of an alliance with the AAP – over their dead bodies. He (Kejriwal) is seeking consensus on the ordinance to project himself as a larger figure in national politics than he actually is," Congress leader and ex-Delhi MP Sandeep Dikshit said.

"Not only is the AAP not required as far as larger Opposition unity is concerned, what also needs to be asked especially now is when was the last time – if at all – that it talked of Opposition unity? When they were contesting elections (against the Congress) in Goa, Gujarat and Uttarakhand? He (Kejriwal) is not fighting for the sake of Opposition unity but to keep himself out of jail," Dikshit charged.

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G-20 MEET IN SRINAGAR

The collective belief is that this multifaceted development, complemented by the G20 event, will shape a new destiny for Kashmir. The region is set to emerge as a beacon of progress, embracing positive change with open arms. With every passing day, the vision of a transformed Kashmir becomes increasingly vivid, promising a brighter future for its residents and heralding a new era of growth and prosperity

वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्

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The words of the External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, resounded with clarity and conviction, casting a spotlight on the undeniable truth: Jammu and Kashmir should not be denied the bountiful fruits of development and globalization that the rest of India has savoured. With unwavering resolve, he emphasized that these benefits are the rightful inheritance of the people of this Union Territory.

It is with this grand vision in mind that the Government of India planned the third G-20 Tourism Working Group meeting in the picturesque city of Srinagar. This strategic move aimed to introduce Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the enchanting region of Kashmir, to the world in an entirely new light—a land brimming with vast potential for both business and tourism. Simultaneously, it served as a testament to the evolving nature of Jammu and Kashmir, showcasing the relentless transformations occurring with each passing day.

While numerous meetings had been convened across various corners of the nation, choosing Kashmir as the venue held unparalleled significance and conveyed a profound message. It was a deliberate endeavour to transcend mere symbolism and communicate the unwavering determination of the government to unleash the true potential of Jammu and Kashmir to the world at large. By showcasing the untapped opportunities and the evolving landscape, the government sought to captivate hearts and minds, instilling a deep-rooted belief that Jammu and Kashmir was an emerging beacon of progress and prosperity.

The anticipation surrounding the G20 meeting brought a wave of unfamiliar excitement to the people of Kashmir. For the first time, conversations filled the air as Kashmiris found themselves frequently discussing this prestigious gathering. Some were well-versed in its purpose, while others merely speculated about the arrival of “world leaders” in their beloved region, their curiosity piqued.

Amidst this growing buzz, an intriguing phenomenon unfolded in the city of Srinagar. A flurry of construction activities took place at an unprecedented pace, leaving the locals astounded. The transformation was so rapid that it seemed to defy their prior experiences of sluggish project timelines. This sudden burst of progress felt unfamiliar, even strange, to those who had grown accustomed to delayed endeavours.

Bilal Ahmad, a shopkeeper in the bustling Lal Chowk, voiced the astonishment shared by many. He expressed, “We are unaccustomed to witnessing an entire area being excavated for renovations, only

to witness its swift resurgence within a matter of days. It was an extraordinary sight, unlike anything we had seen before.” His words encapsulated the bewilderment that gripped the community as they witnessed their surroundings undergoing a rapid metamorphosis.

These changes, coupled with the buzz surrounding the G20 meeting, ignited a sense of hope and optimism among the people of Kashmir. It was as if a new chapter had dawned upon them, a chapter brimming with possibilities and a departure from the stagnation of the past. The city's transformation became a symbol of the government's commitment to uplifting the region, stirring a sense of pride and anticipation within the hearts of the Kashmiri people.

Amidst the astonishment that pervaded the common folk, those involved in sectors such as tourism and various businesses harboured an equal measure of hope. They eagerly anticipated the arrival of delegates from different countries, recognizing the immense potential it held for their endeavours. It was an opportunity to showcase the unique offerings of Kashmir, ranging from its captivating arts, crafts, to its diverse indigenous treasures, on a global stage.

The prospect of international delegates bearing witness to the splendour and richness of Kashmir's cultural and artistic heritage ignited a sense of optimism. Those immersed in the local arts scene, like Sajjad Ahmad, a seasoned practitioner of the exquisite Sozni art, spoke with conviction. “Their visit to Kashmir is bound to yield significant benefits. They will witness the beauty, the opulence of our cultural and artistic heritage. Undoubtedly, they will carry back stories and experiences, ultimately amplifying our reach and opening doors of opportunity for us.”

For individuals like Sajjad Ahmad, this was an occasion of profound significance. It presented an invaluable chance to showcase their craftsmanship and skills to a global audience. The anticipation of the international community recognizing and appreciating the unique offerings of Kashmir fueled a renewed sense of purpose and determination among the artists, craftsmen, and entrepreneurs.

As whispers of the impending event spread across the valley, a collective belief emerged—a belief that the visit of these esteemed delegates would catalyze growth, amplifying the prospects of local businesses and paving the way for greater recognition and collaboration. It was a moment when dreams intertwined with possibilities, kindling a fervent hope that the world would soon discover the untapped treasures nestled within the enchanting realms of Kashmir.

INFRASTRUCTURE BOOM IN KASHMIR:

The preparation for the G20 meeting brought forth a surge of development across Kashmir, with a notable emphasis on the city of Srinagar. Previously sluggish projects under the smart city initiative gained momentum and underwent rapid transformations. Well in advance of the G20 gathering, Srinagar was meticulously prepared to captivate both delegates and visitors from every corner of the nation. The impact of the event, as suggested by the people, sparked a process that would reshape Kashmir, setting it apart in remarkable ways.

Countless efforts were undertaken even before the event was scheduled. Roads underwent astonishing transformations, while a diverse range of infrastructure projects flourished. The momentum unleashed by the G20 event signalled a remarkable shift that the people could already perceive. Waseem Ahmad, a student, shared his belief, saying, "Before the event, numerous developments were undertaken. The roads have undergone remarkable transformations, and a wide array of infrastructure has emerged. I am confident that this process will not halt; in fact, it will continue to improve with each passing day. The G20 event acted as a catalyst for transformation, a transformation that is palpable to the people."

It is worth noting that Jammu and Kashmir had already been experiencing a significant infrastructure boom in recent years. The expansion of road networks has connected remote villages and previously inaccessible areas, while the construction of new bridges and tunnels has revolutionized connectivity. However, the impact is not limited to infrastructure alone. A transformative wave is sweeping across all sectors, kindling hope among the people that the ongoing changes will pave the way for a better future.

The collective belief is that this multifaceted development, complemented by the G20 event, will shape a new destiny for Kashmir. The region is set to emerge as a beacon of progress, embracing positive change with open arms. With every passing day, the vision of a transformed Kashmir becomes increasingly vivid, promising a brighter future for its residents and heralding a new era of growth and prosperity.

ABOUT TOURISM SECTOR:

Through the momentous G20 event held in Srinagar in May of this year, the Government succeeded in unveiling Kashmir to the world as a destination brimming with world-class tourism potential. Throughout the meeting, Kashmir was described as a paradise,

characterized not only by its rich cultural history but also by its awe-inspiring natural beauty, capable of leaving visitors spellbound. One delegate, Adnan Aziz Gilitwala, representing the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), captured this sentiment perfectly during the inaugural session of the Tourism Working Group meeting.

He expressed that to truly grasp the beauty of Kashmir, one must visit this extraordinary place and experience it first-hand. He eagerly pledged to inform others about the wonders of Kashmir and encourage them to embark on their journey to this captivating land. Such statements were novel to the people of Kashmir as they witnessed foreign delegates promising to undertake the necessary marketing efforts to showcase the Valley on the global stage, ultimately leading to an increase in tourism.

The same sentiment reverberated among the stakeholders in the tourism industry. They wholeheartedly believed that the G20 event marked the beginning of something monumental for Kashmir—an opportunity to present the region to the outside world as an immaculate haven for tourism, boasting a plethora of offerings for visitors from across the globe.

The implications were profound. For the first time, foreign delegates expressed their commitment to elevate Kashmir's profile and attract international attention. This pledge resonated deeply with the people, who eagerly anticipated the arrival of tourists from far and wide. The G20 event served as a catalyst, igniting a sense of collective purpose and instilling unwavering hope in the hearts of Kashmir's tourism stakeholders. It was a transformative moment, poised to thrust Kashmir into the global spotlight as a pristine and enchanting destination, brimming with extraordinary experiences for all who ventured there.

"The G20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar was an incredibly significant event for our region, given that tourism plays a vital role in our economy. Our aspiration is for this event to bring about a truly exceptional and memorable experience for the tourism industry," said Manzoor Ahmad Wangnoo, Chairman, Nigeen Tourist Traders Association (NTTA).

For Abdul Aziz, a shikara wala operating on Dal Lake, the opportunity to take the foreign G20 delegates on a shikara ride held profound significance. As the shikara glided away from the shores of Dal Lake, he witnessed a sense of wonderment on their faces.

"In that radiance, I glimpsed a brighter future for Kashmir's tourism sector and the potential for improved livelihoods for us. I knew that they would convey



their experiences to their fellow countrymen," he expressed. Abdul Aziz recognized the government's efforts to uplift and promote tourism in Kashmir, and he emphasized that the G20 event was one of the significant steps that would bear fruit.

Abdul Aziz is not alone in his hopeful expectations. Many others, like him, have placed their aspirations on the government's ongoing endeavours, firmly believing that they will witness transformative changes in the days to come. They acknowledge that change takes time, but their optimism persists, and they eagerly await the much-needed transformation. Showkat Ahmad, another shikara wala, shared, "Tourism flows are good,

but they mostly comprise visitors from different parts of the country. We yearn to witness a surge in foreign tourists, and our hope rests on that."

Notably, for the Government of India, in addition to other focus areas, the primary objective of hosting the G20 event in Srinagar has been to drive an increase in tourist numbers. Union Minister for Tourism, G. Kishen Reddy, expressed during the delegates' stay in Kashmir that in 2022, 1.84 crore tourists visited Jammu and Kashmir. He highlighted the government's anticipation of attracting 20 million tourists to Kashmir this year, including foreign visitors. Additionally, the focus has been on promoting Kashmir as an ideal des-

tinuation for film shootings. Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh affirmed during the G20 event that the region has already witnessed significant positive changes, surpassing the progress achieved in previous years.

The government's commitment to bolstering tourism, coupled with its vision for the increased footfall of foreign tourists and the promotion of Kashmir as a favourable filming location, instils a sense of hope and excitement among the people. They eagerly anticipate the realization of these endeavours, which they believe will bring forth a new era of prosperity and growth for the region.

UPLIFTMENT OF MARKETS:

Change in Kashmir has always been perceived as a gradual process, something that unfolds over time. The people of Kashmir have embraced this belief, allowing time to be the ultimate arbitrator. However, recently, they sensed change knocking at their doors sooner than expected when the Government organized the first International Buyer-Seller meet in Srinagar for Kashmir's agriculture and horticulture products. This momentous meeting brought together 14 importers from countries such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bangladesh, Kuwait, Indonesia, and Singapore, alongside 22 exporters from different states. Kashmiri entrepreneurs proudly showcased their diverse range of products to international guests. It was a golden opportunity for them to engage in business on a larger scale, while for the Government, it marked a pivotal moment to catalyze a process aimed at boosting exports from Kashmir, propelling local businesses to new heights.

Anisa, a project manager of a company that specializes in exporting a unique variety of rice known as 'Mushk Budejj,' regarded this meeting with international players as an unprecedented event. She stressed the interconnectedness of such gatherings with the Government's broader efforts, which began with the hosting of the G20 event in Srinagar. "These events may seem disparate, but they are inherently linked," she explained.

In addition to exploring Kashmir's tourism potential, the G20 Tourism Working Group meeting also sought to foster alliances for economic development, knowledge exchange, and bolstering local markets by showcasing their distinctive characteristics. However, businesspeople in Kashmir believe that expanding the market economy further can only be achieved through increased exports. Those in business assert that the Government must facilitate this process and

engage with G20 member countries to make it a reality. "The G20 event in Srinagar could be the precursor for this transformation. However, how it evolves remains to be seen. Moreover, the Government must allow entrepreneurs to flourish and leverage their expertise to strengthen the markets," emphasized a local businessman.

With a multitude of government initiatives and private investments revitalizing traditional marketplaces, Kashmir's local markets are currently experiencing a remarkable transformation. People eagerly anticipate witnessing further progress and development in the days to come. The winds of change are palpable, infusing a renewed vibrancy into the fabric of Kashmir's traditional markets and capturing the imagination of its resilient inhabitants.

OUTREACH AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL:

What the Government of India did by holding the G20 event in Srinagar strengthened its position globally regarding Kashmir. There is no doubt that apart from ensuring that Kashmir is provided with an international stage to project the growth and development it is currently undergoing, the arrival of foreign delegates in Kashmir became a diplomatic victory for India because it showcased the massive transformation happening in the Valley and, at the same time, debunked the "false narrative" that was spread across the world. Post the abrogation of Article 370, there has been constant lobbying happening in the West, projecting that J&K was witnessing the "worst" in the shape of "human rights violations" and the "curtailment" of other civil liberties. However, what India did in the form of the G20 meeting in Srinagar was a masterstroke that resounded and made India's case, which stated that the move of August 5, 2019, was aimed at changing the economic and development landscape in J&K, even stronger. Experts believe that India has ensured a diplomatic victory by inviting foreign delegations to Kashmir and has achieved multiple targets with just a single move.

CHINA'S ABSENCE:

There were a few countries that backed out from the G20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar, and China was one among them. While China's move made quick headlines, it did not seem to affect India, as Dr Jitendra Singh told the media during a press conference at SKICC that China's move was a loss for them and that it did not affect India or the working group meeting in any sense. While this statement was

plainly made by overlooking the geopolitical complexities and interests, China had a point in choosing not to attend the meeting in Kashmir—it did so at the behest of Pakistan, which has stood in opposition to it from day one. The frustration was visible, and China complied with staying out. At the same time, China has been habitual in siding with Pakistan in such matters aimed solely at hurting India. However, the fact remains that both countries, China as well as Pakistan, have gained nothing from it. India's view of seeing it as a loss for China could be quite the reality.

Some believe that while China's presence would have been important for India, especially regarding J&K, it would not have gone in accordance with the Dragon's all-weather relationship with Pakistan. The experts who keenly observe India-China relations believe that China's absence was not a blow, but at the same time maintain that its presence would have made the entire scenario for India quite impactful. They noted that China's absence from the event held in Srinagar was not even felt.

HEIGHTENED SECURITY GRID:

The day the delegation reached Srinagar, detailed security arrangements were made by the authorities, even as the identified route that the delegates would take to reach the meeting venue underwent thorough checks as part of security protocol. However, according to observers, the unnecessary security grid, to some extent, played a negative role. Even the people believe that given the fact that the overall security situation in J&K has improved over the last few years, the security bandobast seemed needless. "They were the guests who came to Kashmir to know our richness in tourism and culture, which they would project and showcase in their respective countries; no matter if it was an international event, but the extent of security in place, in my opinion, was needless," said Mushtaq Ahmad, a local.

The hyped security arrangements were also noted by a few people from the international media, who then made efforts to highlight the same and project the entire scenario as per their agenda. On the part of the administration, though, it maintained that the security arrangements were done in accordance with the laid-down SOPs and keeping in view the importance of the event.

CANCELLED VISIT TO GULMARG:

Gulmarg is known across the globe for many things, but what holds importance—apart from its green

pastures and breathtaking surroundings—is its ski slopes, which are often termed better and seamless for snow skiing in comparison to the Alps in Europe. Gulmarg was on the itinerary, and the foreign delegates were scheduled to visit it, but the same had to face last-minute cancellations for reasons better known to the authorities. It was, however, given out that due to the lack of time, the visit of the delegation to Gulmarg was cancelled.

The place was beautified, developmental works were done well in advance, and the ski resort was quite ready for the delegates to visit and find themselves mesmerized by the intoxicating beauty. The cancellation turned out to be negative for the G20 Working Group Meeting in Srinagar and became an upsetting moment for the tourism players in Gulmarg because the visit of the delegates from G20 countries could have been a game-changer for the tourism sector in Gulmarg, especially concerning the arrival of foreign tourists.

"The Gulmarg Development Authority had executed several works, anticipating the visit of the delegates; this place was given a different shape and texture, ready to leave them hooked, but in the end, the visit was cancelled, which left everyone upset to the core. More importantly, the cancellation was a blow to the tourism setup in Gulmarg," said Tariq Ahmad, a local associated with the tourism operations in Gulmarg. While the authorities have maintained that the cancellation was due to the paucity of time, it seems that a lot remained untouched for the G20 delegates during their visit to Kashmir by not visiting Gulmarg.

DELEGATES WITH LOW PROFILES:

India, as the host of G20, had its topmost officials, as well as ministers, attend the Tourism Working Group Meeting in Srinagar, depicting the country's commitment to showcasing J&K's potential. However, the participating countries, except for Singapore and Bangladesh, had low-profile officials attend the meeting, which was important given it was being held in Kashmir. According to official details, a 60-member delegation attended the meeting, and there were also representatives from nearly a dozen countries who were invited. "The intention was to let the delegates know the potential of Kashmir, and if the delegates had been of higher ranks, the effect would have been big; that seems to be a missed opportunity that could have been utilized to ensure that what goes out goes with a thud and an impact," said the tourism stakeholders.

J&K government designates 4 more courts for trial of UAPA offences

SRINAGAR: In a significant move, the Jammu & Kashmir Government has designated four more courts for trial of offences under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act-1967.

J&K's Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs has designated four more courts- two each in Kashmir and Jammu- for trial of offences under the UAPA. With this development, the number of courts designated under the NIA Act for trial of offences under UAPA has gone upto 11.

According to a notification issued by the Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, the court of additional district and sessions judge (fast track Court) Budgam has been designated for trial of offences under UAPA in the jurisdiction of Budgam district.

Similarly, the court of additional district and sessions judge Ganderbal has been designated for trial of offences under UAPA in Ganderbal district.

The notification further states that the additional district and sessions judge (fast track court) Doda will hear UAPA cases of Doda and Kishtwar district while the additional district and sessions judge, Poonch will have jurisdiction over UAPA cases of Poonch and Rajouri districts.

It is worthwhile to mention that Supreme Court has observed that all offences under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA), whether investigated by the National Investigation Agency or by the investigating agencies of the State Government, are to be tried exclusively by Special Courts set up under the NIA Act.

Yatra symbol of brotherhood in Kashmir: Farooq

SRINAGAR: National Conference President and Member of the Parliament from Srinagar visited Chandwari & Pahalgam to review the preparedness and response mechanism of all the stakeholder departments on the Pahalgam route of Shri Amarnathji Yatra.

He also conducted on-site inspection of facilities and urged the stakeholder departments to ensure best possible lodging, health care, communication network, sanitation, water supply, weather forecasting and emergency response.

Dr. Farooq also chaired a review meeting on the preparedness of annual Shri Amarnathji Yatra with representatives of various stakeholder departments in Pahalgam.

He was accompanied by senior leader Mian Altaf Ahmed, Treasurer Shammi Oberoi, Chief Spokes-

person Tanvir Sadiq, his Political Advisor Mushtaq Guroo, District President Anantnag Altaf Ahmad Wani. Among others representatives of various stakeholder departments were also present on the occasion.

Describing the Amarnath Yatra as a symbol of brotherhood in the Kashmir Valley, he said those spreading hatred in the country should witness how both communities including Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir come together to support each other for the smooth conduct of the annual pilgrimage.

He further urged those who propagate hatred to observe the camaraderie and cooperation between Muslims and Hindus during the yatra.

He emphasized the importance of the Amarnath Yatra for the livelihood of the local population, particularly those who work during the pilgrimage season.

POWER WOES:

Unit price Rs 6, consumers pay Rs 3 per unit; KPDCL looks for alternatives

Consumers across Valley irked over pesky power cuts; Supplying 10 percent more power than previous year in June this year: CE KPDCL

|| **Nasir Azam**

SRINAGAR: Amid the persistent power cuts across the Valley, the administration has been looking for an alternative to purchase electricity at the cheapest rates in the markets to ensure better power supply to the consumers across Kashmir.

Reliable sources privy to the development told the new agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the electricity rates per unit are high at the spot markets and thus it has become unaffordable to purchase the electricity at Rs 6 per unit as the Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) has been supplying same unit to the consumers at the rate of Rs 2 or Rs 2.50.

“The government has been looking for an alternative at present and trying to purchase the electricity at the cheapest rates to put an end to the sufferings of people, who have been witnessing erratic power supply,” the sources said.

They added that the KPDCL has been presently managing the electricity by resorting to power cuts in both rural and City areas. “Besides, it is important to share that the demand for electricity has increased. It seems that the people might have

been resorting to the use of more gadgets now and thus the demand has increased unlike the past,” the sources said.

Meanwhile, Chief Engineer, KPDCL when contacted, told KNO that they have supplied 10 per cent more electricity than previous year. “The department has augmented the power infra and thereby 10 per cent extra electricity has been supplied to the consumers this year,” he said.



Asked about any relief in power cuts, he said that KPDCL has a domain to supply the electricity only and it is being supplied as per the availability.

New Era of tourism in JK make strides



|| **Mohammad Hanief**

With an increasing footfall of domestic and foreign visitors, tourism in Jammu and Kashmir is scaling new heights, making the Union Territory one of top destinations in the country. “Year on year and month on month, we have received more tourists this year compared to previous year.

The natural beauty and picturesque locations have made it a favoured destination for tourists across the world. Jammu is famous for its temples, while Kashmir Valley is known for its lakes and gardens. J&K has agro-climatic conditions best suited for horticulture and floriculture.

Tourism industry has become a very fastest growing industry in the modern period. It is recognized as an important “tiger” industry for the first decade of the current century. Tourism does not produce goods, but

it is mainly a service industry and extends services to different classes of people. It consists of the activities undertaken through travel from home or workplace for the pleasure and enjoyment of certain destinations, and the facilities that cater to the needs of the tourist.

Travel and tourism have been important social activities of human beings from time immemorial. The urge to discover new places within one’s own country or outside and try to find a change of environment has been practiced from ancient times. Almost in every economy of the world, tourism sector plays a vital role in the contribution of generating revenue, employment opportunities and in economy’s GDP.

It provides opportunities to local populace to increase their living standards by increasing employment opportunities. According to the estimates from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) in 2011, tourism generates around 270.7 million jobs globally and accounts for over 10% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It also plays key role in cross-cultural exchange of the two cultures.

It helps to learn about different languages, life styles and tradition. It provides opportunities to adopt the qualities of different cultures vice-versa, as tourists are also bound to cause tension among the local popula-

tion by introducing new life styles and progressively promoting social, cultural and religious disruptions. Tourism serves as a means of conserving the cultural heritage of the local area which otherwise might be lost due to development. It provides scope for conserving local dance, art, craft, music, drama, dress and old historic monuments.

Jammu and Kashmir is geographically a unique place with three different regions i.e. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal husbandry, Forestry and Tourism are the main source of economy and among all industries, tourism is an important industry in the state. Tourism is considered to be economic bonanza for Jammu and Kashmir because industrial development is very limited to hilly terrains.

The tourism in J&K offers a wide array of places to see. The delighting backwaters, hill stations and landscape make J&K a beautiful tourist destination. Historical monuments, forts, places of religious importance, hill resorts, etc. add to the grandeur of the state as it attract tourists from all over the world.

Tourism has now become a significant industry in J&K, contributing enormously to the economy of the region and providing employment to a large number of people. Being a labor-intensive industry, the scope of employment is very vast. Tourism is regarded as multi-segmented industry, therefore provides different types of jobs like hotel managers, receptionists, guides, tour operators, travel agents, photographers & many other jobs which are required to strengthen the tourism. Additionally, J&K is also likely to become a major hub for medical tourism if timely steps are taken by the government authorities to exploit this opportunity as well. It is bestowed with beauty & rich forests, natural lakes, fresh water as is known all over the world for its beautiful valleys, lakes, snowcapped peaks, invigorating climate, valleys, cool climate, opportunities for trekking fishing, skiing & number of archaeological, historical, cultural & religious places, cool climate & hospitable people.

Jammu and Kashmir especially Kashmir valley offers various categories of tourism. These include adventure tourism, medical tourism, water rafting, skiing, religious tourism, etc. Jammu and Kashmir has a composite culture. There is a harmonious blend of art, religion and philosophy. Religions like Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism etc. has co-existed in J&K since hundreds of years.

Jammu and Kashmir has tremendous potential in tourism sector. The scope of large scale industrial development is very limited. Tourism being a labour

intensive industry provides a very vast scope for employment opportunities. The employment opportunities provided by this industry are comparatively higher than other industries. Tourism is regarded multi-segmental industry; therefore, it provides different types of jobs like hotel managers, receptionists, accountants, clerks, guides, travel agents, chefs, transport operators etc. The State of Jammu and Kashmir offers a very large number of marketable products.

While looking from tourist point of view, each district of the union territory has so much to offer such as: Vast Natural Resources, Adventure Tourism (River Rafting, Mountain climbing), Numerous Trekking routes, Pilgrimage Tourism (Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist), Wildlife Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Springs, Festivals and Cultural activities, Handicrafts etc. seeking an alternative for economic development and contribution in employment generation, tourism can be regarded as a viable source of economic development in the region.

Dividing categorically tourist destination of the J&K, one can analyze that the region has potential for: The growth of tourism in Jammu & Kashmir shows that the industry has registered an all-round substantial development in the state during the last two -three decades, most of the potential, for its growth has not yet been exploited and much more is left to be desired.

The new tourism policy of J&K is giving a big thrust to tourism-related infrastructure - improving the existing tourist infrastructure and creating infrastructure at 75 new tourist destinations being developed by J&K Tourism. On the anvil are 75 new sufi/religious sites, 75 new cultural and heritage sites and 75 new tracks.

The J & K government is giving a big push to film tourism. Under the new tourism policy, a single-window facility has been provided to promote film shootings in J&K besides offering a whole gamut of facilities including OB Vans, houseboats, shooting equipment and posit- production facilities to Indian and foreign film crews. On the road connectivity front, Rs 1 lakh crore has already been invested in road infrastructure and 6912 km of road network has been constructed under PMGSY in the last three years. The 670 km long Delhi-Amritsar-Katra greenfield expressway is set for December 2024 completion. The 250-km long Jammu-Srinagar 4-lane highway being built at the cost of Rs 16000 crore, will be completed by 2025. This all-weather road will link Kashmir with the rest of the country, reducing the road journey between Jammu and Srinagar to 4-5 hours.

The author is a regular columnist and can be mailed at m.hanief@gmail.com

Explore more Gandola projects under PPP mode: CS

SRINAGAR: Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta Tuesday chaired the 33rd meeting of Board of Directors (BoD) of the J&K Cable Car Corporation (JKCCC) here in which important decisions regarding expansion of activities of the corporation were taken by the members of the Board.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Finance; Secretary, Tourism; Director Tourism, Kashmir; DG, Budget; DG, Expenditure Division-I; MD, JKCCC besides other concerned officers.

During the BoD meeting, Dr Mehta impressed upon the officers to take up the work of maintenance and upgradation of Gulmarg Gandola an earliest as it is a major asset of the corporation and caters to thousands of tourists each month. He asked for carrying out thorough inspections of all of its installations by a technical team so as to ensure safety and comfort of the tourists. The Chief Secretary enjoined upon the officers of the Corporation to explore the possibility of establishing many such cable car projects across the tourist places of the UT. He advised them to look at the tourist destinations not covered under other schemes such as Bharat Mala.

Dr Mehta observed that many of the tourist locations like Sarthal, Mantalai, Sanasar, Doodhpathri, Baderwah and Baisaran (Pahalgam) have tremendous potential of attracting tourists by establishment of cable car projects at these locations. He said that a mechanism under Public-Private partnership should be contemplated over for executing these projects in a time-bound manner.

Regarding the Peerkhoo-Mubarak Mandi vertical lift the Chief Secretary enjoined upon the officers to take up the project forthwith. He said that the project is long awaited and should be developed as an added attraction at Mubarak Mandi Heritage Complex. The package includes connecting it with the tourist places of Bahu Fort and Mahamaya Temple complex.

The Chief Secretary also told the Corporation to have a relook on the alignment of Makhdoom Sahib Ropeway project so that its lower boarding station is readily accessible to the devotees going up to the Sufi Shrine. He told them to extend the ropeway right up to the Hari Parbat Fort for attracting more visitors



towards this facility.

During the meeting the Board deliberated upon various agenda items that includes establishment of around six drag lifts at locations of Sonamarg, Doodhpathri, Gulmarg, Kangdoori, Padri (Baderwah) and Sanasar for promoting skiing at these locations. Further the corporation is going to construct ski shops at all the aforesaid destinations for the sport to take off at these locations.

The Board was apprised that the corporation is installing vertical lift between the Peerkho Station of Jammu Ropeway Project and Mubarak Mandi Heritage Complex at an estimated cost of about Rs 27 Cr. The Project had been bifurcated into two stages with one being vertical rise of 38 meters and 30 meters, and two horizontal foot bridges of 34 meters and 30 meters span. It was also added that the Project will have three stations, 02 viewing decks, with parking facility. The vertical lift will have carrying capacity of 13 passengers at a time.

Regarding the performance of the Corporation, the Board was informed that the corporation earned the net profit of Rs 20.21 Cr from the year 2019-20 to 2021-22 despite Covid-19 restrictions during the period. It was also informed that the corporation's financial health has improved a lot over the last few years and has generated the record revenue of Rs 100 Cr during the year 2022-23 receiving praise from none other than Union Finance Minister herself during her Budget speech.

Visitors rue basic facilities at **Doodpathri** tourist destination

Locals, traders say despite good inflow, tourists complain of network, other issues

|| **Naveed UI Haq**

BUDGAM: Doodpathri, a famous tourist destination in central Kashmir's Budgam district, is witnessing good tourist footfall. However, the visitors are complaining about the lack of basic facilities at the scenic place.

The locals as well as visitors told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that Doodpathri lacks mobile connectivity and ATM services.

“We fail to understand why the government has not ensured such basic facilities at this beautiful place. Telecommunication is an indispensable part of our lives,” said a local visitor.

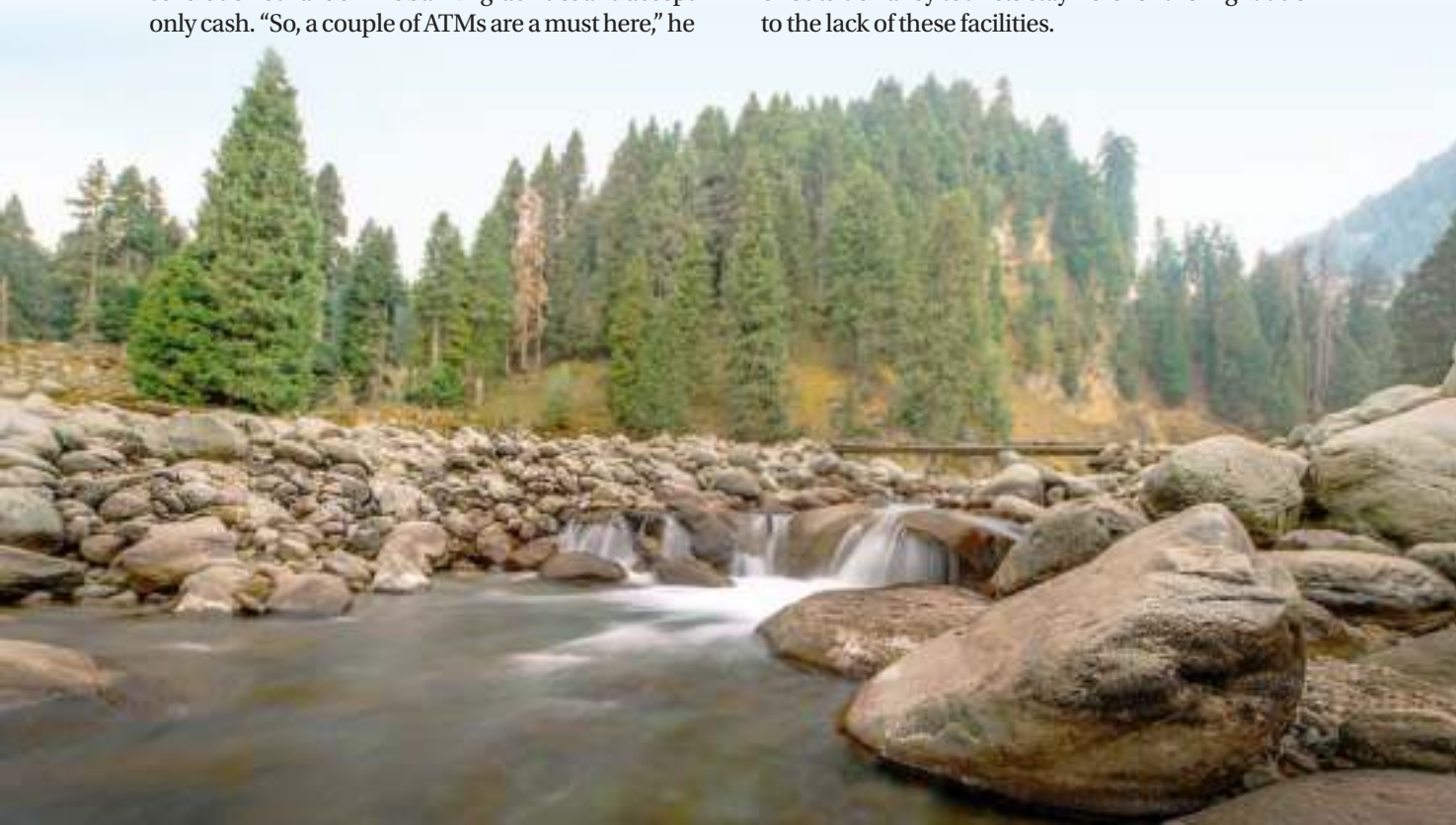
On the ATM services, he said most of the food sellers do not have online banking facilities and accept only cash. “So, a couple of ATMs are a must here,” he

said, adding that the nearest machine is around 15 kilometre away from the destination.

Ponywallas, restaurant owners and shopkeepers at these picturesque places said they are facing problems despite a good flow of tourists.

They criticised the government for not developing the place with the facilities like good network coverage, ATMs, adventurous sports, etc, saying the lack of these facilities always disappoints tourists. “There are employees from various departments who come with their families and face such problems,” the locals said.

The residents, especially the traders, have appealed to the administration to make mobile connectivity available at the Doodpathri, saying none among local or outside valley tourists stay here for the night due to the lack of these facilities.



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* Currency notes are exchanged in terms of RBI Note Refund Rules, 2009 (amended in 2018)



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