

UT FOUNDATION DAY : Steps for conversation of Wular lake biodiversity

Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory (UT) Foundation Day is celebrated on October 31st each year, marking the reorganization of the region into a UT on this date in 2019. This transformation was a significant milestone in the political and administrative landscape of India, following the abrogation of Article 370, which previously granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

The decision to reorganize the region aimed to bring about greater integration with the rest of the country, enhance governance, and promote development.

By transitioning to a Union Territory, the central government aimed to ensure that the benefits of various welfare schemes and initiatives could reach the people more effectively.

The UT structure also facilitates direct administrative control from the central government, which is seen as a means to address long-standing issues related to governance, security, and development in the region.

Foundation Day serves as a moment of reflection on the journey of Jammu and Kashmir, which has a rich cultural heritage and diverse population. The region is known for its stunning landscapes, vibrant traditions, and historical significance. Celebrations often include cultural programs, exhibitions, and discussions focusing on the achievements since the reorganization and the challenges that lie ahead.

On this day, various government and non-governmental organizations come together to celebrate the spirit of unity and resilience among the people of Jammu and Kashmir. It is also an occasion to highlight the developmental initiatives undertaken in sectors like education, healthcare, infrastructure, and tourism, which are vital for the region's progress.

The Foundation Day not only commemorates the administrative changes but also emphasizes the importance of peace and stability in the region. It is an opportunity to reinforce the commitment to fostering a sense of belonging and inclusiveness among all communities, regardless of their backgrounds.

As Jammu and Kashmir continues to evolve, the Foundation Day stands as a reminder of the aspirations of its people for a prosperous future. The observance of this day symbolizes hope, unity, and the potential for growth, as stakeholders work together to build a better tomorrow for the region and its inhabitants.

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF

Wular Lake, the largest freshwater lake within River Jhelum basin plays a significant role in the hydrography of the Kashmir valley by acting as a huge absorption basin for floodwaters. The lake with its associated wetlands is an important habitat for migratory water birds within Central Asian Flyway and supports rich biodiversity.

It is a major fishery resource in the valley supporting a large population living along its fringes. The wetland also generates revenue through fisheries, water chestnut, fodder, and other economically important species. The catchment of the lake supports coniferous forests, and alpine pastures adding to the natural beauty and biodiversity of the wetland area. Recognizing importance of the wetland for its biodiversity and socio economic values, the Wular Lake was designated as a Wetland of International Importance under Ramsar Convention in 1990.

The processes and functions of Wular Lake are inextricably linked with the hydrological regimes of River Jhelum. Almost all the lakes located within different altitudinal gradients are directly or indirectly interlinked with River Jhelum. The impacts within the river system upstream and downstream are bound to have impacts on overall ecological functioning and socio-economic benefits derived from these wetlands. An integrated water resources management approach recognizing interconnectedness of wetlands with their catchments is imperative for their sustainable management.

Sectoral developmental activities have, however, failed to recognize the immense role of the Wular Lake leading to its degradation. Revenue centric approaches followed aimed at short term economic gains without realizing their long-term implications on the overall sustainability of the lake ecosystem. The developmental activities in the upstream reaches have further created severe downstream impacts, thereby threatening the tenability of the overall ecological and economic efficiency of



resource utilization.

Despite wetland based livelihoods, particularly tourism being the major sectors of economic growth in the valley, no attempts have been made for the management of Wular with Jhelum basin into developmental planning. The major thrust has been on the Dal Lake ignoring Wular although the largest wetland within Jhelum basin.

Lack of understanding of the values and functions of Wular Lake and its associated wetlands have led to conversion of its large area for agriculture, settlements, plantations and other developmental activities. All along the periphery, particularly in Sonawari the wetlands were drained for agriculture development. Bunds were built up at various lake contour levels for the protection of crops and settlements against floods thereby fragmenting the lake ecosystem and changing its ecological character. Measures undertaken for flood protection, without considering connectivity of wetland and the role of Wular in hydrological regimes, have led to quick drainability and impairment of their capacity to moderate high flows and ability to retain water during the lean season. Catchment degradation leading to

soil erosion and its deposition in the lake has further decreased water absorption capacity of the lake ecosystem. The increasing demand for firewood has brought a vast area of the lake under willow plantations which have contributed to shrinkage of the lake area, degradation of resource base and overall poverty of marginalized communities depending on these resources for sustenance. Wular Lake is the primary habitat for the exotic avian and Pisces life of the region. The freshwater lake provides about 60 per cent of the fish yield of the Kashmir region and around eight thousand to ten thousand fishers earn their livelihood from this region and supply adequate quantities of fish in the whole state. Water-chestnuts or water-caltrops being the major production of the area, covers a significant portion of Wular. The lake is also home to a wide variety of fishes. The heart-shaped fruit is scooped out from picturesque floating plants that appear to be natural carpet of mosses covering the length and breadths of the lake.

Wular Lake is rich in its biodiversity and socio-economic values and houses multiple exotic and terrestrial birds like sparrow hawk, eared kite, Himalayan pied woodpecker, short-

toed eagle, alpine swift, and many more.

Wular Lake is the 2nd largest fresh-water lake of Asia, situated on the foothills of Haramuk Mountain. It is spread in a total area of 200 square km covering almost 24 km in length while its breadth is 10 km. Main source of water for Wular Lake is River Jhelum. This lake also has a small island in its centre called the 'Zaina Lank'. This island was constructed by King Zainul-Abi-Din. Wular Lake is also said to be a remnant of Satisar Lake that existed in ancient times. The premises of this lake also form a popular sunset point.

Wular Lake has played a vital role in supporting biodiversity and livelihoods for decades. Due to the widespread reclamation and drainage of the lake and its marshes for agriculture, settlements and plantations the lake produces hundreds of tons of silt every year.

The rivers Erin, Bohner, and Madamati, arising and channelling its way from the mountain ranges and the rivers Vetasta and the Ningal from the south are the root cause of the uprising silting problem experienced at the site of the Wular Lake.

The lake and its extensive surrounding marshes have a vital flora and fauna collection. The Wular Lake is a sustainable wintering destination for several migratory waterfowl species such as Shoveler, Little Egret, Mallard, Cattle Egret, and the common Pochard.

The Lake houses exotic species of birds that are enlisted under the RED List of the IUCN such as Pallas's Fish-eagle and Marbled Tea. However, multiple terrestrial species of birds are observed to be dwelling around the Wular Lake such as Himalayan Pied Woodpecker, Short-toed Eagle, Monal Pheasant, Little Cuckoo, and the European Hoopoe.

The only way to save the freshwater lake is through a demarcation line so that human intervention can be stopped as Wular Lake fosters an essential role in the hydrographic system plan for the Kashmir valley as it helps in the absorption of the basin for annual floodwater.

All About Muhurat Trading

■ SAJJAD BAZAZ

Marketplaces always witness a boom on the auspicious occasion with fervor and gaiety. In the context of investment matters, a special window of shopping opens on the day of Diwali in the stock market where people get money making opportunities through buying and selling of shares of different companies.

Actually the special window is the one-hour Muhurat Trading session held in the Indian stock markets on the auspicious occasion of Diwali where investors are given the opportunity to make profits by investing and trading of stocks. Muhurat Trading, which ushers in the New Year, is a decades old tradition practiced with a lot of faith and enthusiasm. Investors have fervent belief that it will bring prosperity for the duration of the year and yield delightful returns.

To be precise, it is an old belief that by doing trade during Muhurat trading time, a trader or investor will earn wealth and prosperity the whole year. This session is mostly

held during the evening and most of the traders buy stocks during this time. Most of the traders trade during this time for religious, sentimental and traditional reasons.

Since Muhurat Trading is considered to be quite auspicious to invest one's money, it is also known as the most auspicious time for new traders to do their first trade. One gets to understand the market and can experiment with a small investment. Once a thorough understanding is gained, traders can invest by picking up the best stocks.

While markets are closed on Diwali, both BSE and NSE are open for one hour.

So, amid Diwali 2024 celebrations, the stock market will remain open on November 1 (Friday) for the annual Muhurat Trading session from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM. However, the time for trade modification will end by 7:10 PM. To be precise, trading activity for the Muhurat trading 2024 is fixed from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM whereas modification in one's trade would be allowed until 7:10 PM.

It is worth mentioning that Diwali, according to the Hindu calendar, marks the start of a new year (Samvat) and this session sets the tone for the upcoming year. Observed for ages by the market trading community, this tradition pays respects to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth.

Historically speaking, Muhurat Trading in Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) started in 1957, when there was no concept of online trading. The traders used to gather at the BSE floor during Diwali, dressed in festive wear and place orders for stocks they intended to hold for at least the next 1 year. The National StockExchange (NSE) started this in 1992.

There are certain precautions to be taken while exploring the Muhurat trading window. It is understandable that investors have fervent belief that Muhurat trading brings them a lot of profit as Sensex would have a bullish trend. So, many buy and sell the stocks on the same day. However, while doing so, one has to be cautious as there are

Muhurat Trading sessions where the Sensex has seen a loss. Also, there have been times when the Sensex has dipped after the festival.

Here, the best thing for any investor is to lookout for good company stocks that are showing high returns or good cash flows to invest. While Muhurat Trading is auspicious, it does not mean you put your money in any stock and make profits. There are a few things, as listed by the market experts, to consider before you start trading stocks. In other words, certain things to keep in mind during Muhurat Trading are:

- Since most of the traders and investors consider this time of year favourable for investing, a large number of traders throng the screens and the market can be extremely volatile and directionless. According to the market experts, an investor can take advantage of the volatility by choosing stocks with high trading volume, as the trading window is only one hour.
- One has to be mindful as a day trader. It's important for an

investor to keep an eye on resistance and support levels to make better trading decisions.

- All open positions at the end of the Muhurat Trading session become a settlement commitment.

- The primary investing mantras still hold, and an investor on Muhurat Trading should know a company's fundamentals before investing.

- Be careful while exploring 'expert advice' on investing matters. Be aware of the tips circulated through various media platforms. Many companies tend to advertise their schemes which might not be the best for you without proper consideration. Do not fall for any unauthorized advice whatsoever.

- Experts advise seeking insight from market experts, brokers, etc., or obtaining expertise and knowledge on managing their investments during such times. Even commodities are traded alongside stocks and require the eye of an experienced trader or broker to strategize regarding portfolios.

- Investing during this period does

not guarantee returns. Even if the stock performs well on Diwali, its performance in the future will depend on its fundamentals and macroeconomic factors. Invest smartly.

Meanwhile, there are other things which new investors should follow on the Muhurat Trading day. They will come across unsolicited emails and messages containing trade ideas to buy or sell shares. But they need to be careful about what they act upon. Trading with herd mentality and blind faith even on an auspicious day might lead to losses. Since the Muhurat trading window is open only for an hour, it makes sense to research the stocks well in advance before investing. Don't forget to invest in stocks of different sectors to mitigate risk of losses as stock investing is loaded with high risk.

Happy Diwali! Wishing you success in Muhurat Trading session. Inputs from forthcoming book of the author Straight Talk - Contemporary Banking Decoded

(The author is a veteran journalist/columnnist).

Celebrating eco-friendly and Green Diwali

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

Festival of lights, sweets and firecrackers-Diwali, India's major and most popular festival is around the corner! A festival which commemorates the victory of good over evil .It is time to shop ,decorate homes and get ready for the biggest celebration of the year .But with the increasing pollution concerns and global warning threats around the world ,it is time to stop a while and re-think ,''Is it worth celebrating Diwali ''It is sad that today Diwali has become synonyms with noise ,crackers and air and noise pollution. This notion has to undergo change and we should think about celebrating green Diwali.

With the government having been initiating to reduce pollution during Diwali celebrations, we as citizens must pay deep attention to ensuring the proper implementation during Diwali festival. A festival that used to be celebrated with traditional diyas and homemade sweets has now changed to noisy crackers and splurging .It is not only harming the environment but also is putting a question mark on an individual's health .Though we do not want to spoil our Diwali vibes, it is better to celebrate green Diwali that will help you to save the environment as well as to enjoy the festival to the fullest .At the outset we should know what is green Diwali. In simple words, green Diwali is a way of celebrating the festival of lights by ensuring minimum damage to the environment especially due to bursting of firecrackers. The bursting of firecrackers not only causes pollution but is also detrimental to the health of people. Due to air pollution many people suffer from different types of pollution -related ailments during this festive season .So we should



resolve to celebrate green and eco-friendly Diwali. Diwali is the Hindu festival of lights with its variations also celebrated in other Indian religions. It symbolizes the spiritual victory of light over darkness ,good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. Diwali is celebrated by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Newar Buddhists, although for each faith it marks different historical events and stories ,but nevertheless the festival represents the same symbolic victory of light over darkness ,Knowledge over power ,and good over evil. So originally a Hindu festival ,Diwali has transcended religious lines and today it is celebrated by people of different religions .Whatever it is ,Diwali should be celebrated in eco-friendly manner which means that we should celebrate this festival by ensuring mini-

mum damage to environment and health of the people. Because the time is ripe to celebrate green Diwali for our own benefit and for the benefit of our fellow citizens. While celebrating Diwali ,nothing should be done to harm the environment ,nature and people's health and then only we will be celebrating green Diwali .Diwali is linked to the ancient legend of Lord Rama ,who was deprived of his kingdom and sent to 14 year's exile and it is celebrated in honor of the return of Lord Rama ,Mata Sita and Laxman to Ajodhya after defeating and killing of demon king Ravana .Diwali is celebrated on the Amayasa of the first fortnight of the Hindu month of Ashwin. This year it falls on chuterdishi. Diwali the festival of lights is the most important festival of Hindus and it is celebrat-

ed with great enthusiasm and fanfare throughout India and by the Indian Diaspora abroad .People and especially the children wait anxiously and eagerly for this festival .Diwali is also a festival which celebrates togetherness .We should surely celebrate Diwali and feel joy on this occasion because it is the day on which Lord Ram along with Sita and Laxman had come back to Ayodhya after completing 14 years of exile and therefore this is the moment of merry making. This festival is celebrated by worshipping Lord Ram, and Lord Ganesha, but the business community worship Maha Laxmi - the goddess of wealth and seek her blessings. However, along with this goodness, there are a few not so good things which like air pollution, noise pollution and wastage of resources that can harm to the

nature. Let us pledge to do our bit and celebrate green and eco-friendly Diwali so that no harm is done to the environment, nature and fellow citizens who are sick, old and students preparing for examinations .Like the good olden days we should lit beautiful Diyas to brighten our homes, shops and business establishments .It is cost effective and cheap to use and lit the earthen Diyas and illumine our surroundings .Electricity is an expensive commodity and the bill can cause a hole in our pockets .Therefore ,it is so good to illuminate your homes ,offices and other enterprises with diyas instead .Being traditional and organic ,this is close to the spirit of Diwali and will help the people whose livelihood depends on the business .It is good to gift something handmade. Electronics and gifts made of plastic can contribute to waste after some time ,therefore we should opt for personalized gifts made of natural materials like cloth and jute .The gifts as for as possible should be wrapped in newspapers .So instead of those shiny plastics which are difficult to recycle ,wrap the gifts you plan to give to your close ones with newspapers .It is better to use the comic strips section of the newspapers for children .We should become trend setter and show way to others to celebrate green Diwali. It is better to make use of natural material for making Rangoli .Instead of chemical Rangoli colors ,go for natural and use flowers like roses ,marigold, chrysanthemums and leaves to make Rangoli .We can try using turmeric ,kumkum and coffee powder for colors as well .These things are not only eco-friendly ,but can be disposed of easily in your compost bin the next day .It should be made a habit to donate your old things .Rather than

throwing your things while cleaning your wardrobe ,donate them to less privileged .The things will be reused thus reducing wastage .You can also give them firecrackers .This gesture will certainly be appreciated and bring a smile on their faces! It is all the more necessary to go for eco-friendly firecrackers .Although bursting crackers should be as for as possible avoided but it becomes difficult to convince the kids .The best thing to do in such situations is to buy eco-friendly crackers .These are made of recycled paper and make less pollution .It is better to make organic Rangoli. So ditch chemical -induced color powder while making Rangoli. The best way to celebrate green Diwali is to say no to fire crackers but it is easy said than done .The burning of firecrackers releases pollutants in the air and also creates noise pollution which makes deafening sound which is irritable also .It is good to use eco-friendly gifts and recycle decorations .As for as possible, reduce plastic use .It is so good if you buy green crackers .The supreme court has banned many kinds of firecrackers as it is hazardous to the environment and people's health .It is better to use natural colors for making Rangoli. Always so no to plastic gift wrappings .It is good to save electricity consumption for individual and national good. It is good to consume homemade sweets .It is so good to avoid firecrackers and save the wastage of money and put it to use for productive activity. Let the festival of lights which Diwali is illumine our minds and hearts so that we learn to work for others because those who only work for themselves are more than dead than alive according to saint, philosopher Swami Vivekananda.

