

DEVELOPING TOURISM

Jammu & Kashmir has long been known for its breathtaking landscapes, historical sites, and rich cultural heritage. From the snow-capped mountains of the Himalayas to the serene lakes and lush valleys, J&K offers a diverse and unique tourism experience. However, despite its vast potential, the region's tourism sector has faced challenges over the years, including political instability, security concerns, and inadequate infrastructure. In recent years, however, significant efforts have been made to revitalize the tourism industry and position J&K as a global tourist destination.

The most significant strength of J&K's tourism industry lies in its natural beauty. The state boasts world-renowned destinations such as Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Leh, each offering a unique experience. Srinagar, with its picturesque Dal Lake, floating houseboats, and the Mughal Gardens, is a popular destination. Gulmarg, known for its ski resorts and winter sports, attracts adventure enthusiasts from across the globe. Pahalgam, a peaceful town located along the Lidder River, is a base for the Amarnath Yatra pilgrimage. In the Ladakh region, destinations like Nubra Valley, Pangong Lake, and Tso Moriri are renowned for their pristine beauty.

J&K's landscapes offer a range of activities, from trekking, skiing, and white-water rafting to camping, fishing, and wildlife safaris. The promotion of these natural assets forms the cornerstone of the state's tourism development strategy.

J&K is also home to a rich cultural and religious heritage, making it a prime location for cultural tourism. The region's history is reflected in its temples, shrines, and architectural wonders. The Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra, the Amarnath Cave Temple, and the Shankaracharya Temple in Srinagar attract millions of pilgrims every year. The region's Sufi shrines, such as the Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar and the Ajmer Sharif Dargah in Ladakh, draw spiritual seekers from various parts of the country.

The state's diverse population and history are mirrored in its festivals, music, dance forms, and cuisine, which attract cultural tourists. Kashmiri cuisine, known for its Wazwan tradition, and the region's handicrafts, including Pashmina shawls and Kashmiri carpets items, are also integral parts of the tourism offering.

To transform J&K into a global tourism hub, the government has prioritized the development of infrastructure and connectivity. Airports in Srinagar, Jammu, and Leh have seen upgrades to handle increased air traffic. The construction of the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and the rail link between Jammu and Baramulla has significantly improved road and rail connectivity. By fostering partnerships between the government, local businesses, and communities, J&K can overcome challenges and become one of India's premier tourism destinations.

Government Employees & Pensioners left in lurch

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

The employees are the back bone of a government and it functions with the active involvement and participation of the employees. The pensioners had given their sweat, blood and measure part of their life to the government and have contributed their might to the administration. So both the employees as well as the pensioners have great hopes with the government and the government should try to satisfy the employees and pensioners. But as of today the life of the government employees and pensioners is deplorable and is a sad chapter and sad commentary on the functioning of the government viz a viz the employees and pensioners. The plight of both these important sections of the society is untenable and unwarranted with the government paying a blind eye to the needs, concerns and aspirations of both these sections of the society. During elections the political parties promise to provide relief to all sections of people including the salaried class, middle income group and pensioners but it is disturbing that after assuming power all Promises of the political executive fall flat and are not fulfilled, thus giving major jerk to the people including salaried class, lower middle income group and last but not least to the pensioners who are the senior citizens and require much attention by the rulers and the society. The prices of all most all goods and services and essential goods are soaring and skyrocketing. The rising prices that is inflation has broken the back of the common man, government employees and the pensioners as the brunt of increasing prices is tolerated by the middle income group, employees and the pensioners. Government employees, pensioners and poor people are caught in the cobweb of inflation and it has become very difficult for them to come out of the mess called in economic sense inflation and in the common mans language as rising prices. There is a mechanism in place with the finance ministry and the government whereby it compensates

its employees, pensioners and family pensioners by compensating for bearing the higher cost of living and rising prices. The government usually gives relief to its employees and pensioners by announcing increased dearness allowances preferably twice a financial year. The union cabinet had approved a 3% increase in the Dearness allowance of the central government employees and pensioners from January first 2024, thus making the total D.A 50% of the basic pay and now again the central government has increased D.A of its one crore employees from July first 2024 by another 3 percent giving a big relief to its employees, pensioners and family pensioners. There rates of D.A have also been given to its employees by various state governments and UT governments to its employees, pensioners and family pensioners. But to great dismay the J&K UT government has not announced any increase of DA to its employees, pensioners and family pensioners and so the two installments of dearness allowance at the rate of 3% due from first January 2024 and second installment of 3% due from first July 2024 is due but unfortunately pending troubling JK, UT employees, pensioners and family pensioners. So two installments of dearness allowance are outstanding by the JK, UT government. Non-announcement of dearness allowance by the Jammu and Kashmir government to its employees and pensioners has denied its due to the employees and pensioners, thus troubling them and putting them to great inconvenience. The non-seriousness of the UT government of J&K has caught the government employees between the devil and deep sea. They are bearing the brunt of continuously rising prices of goods and services and the cost of living is increasing. But the pertinent question is why the UT government has not yet announced two installments of dearness allowance to its employees and pensioners? Thus the government employees and pensioners as well as the family pension-

ers are feeling suffocation, harassment and inconvenience as all of them are suffering because the Jammu and Kashmir government has failed to announce the two pending installments of the DA to its employees and pensioners, thus putting them to trouble for no fault of theirs. It seems that the UT government of J&K is in no mood to announce the two pending installments of dearness allowance to its employees and pensioners. In these days of soaring prices, the employees and pensioners are finding it very hard to make both ends to meet. The Jammu and Kashmir government employees as well as its pensioners are hard pressed and they are facing financial difficulties in the face of non-announcement of the dearness allowances. It seems that even on the eve of new year the J&K government is shying away from announcing two pending DA dues to its employees, pensioners and family pensioners so putting all of them to inconvenience. One feels that because of dual power centers in Jammu and Kashmir, the DA has not been announced as yet, thus troubling employees and pensioners. It seems that the LG's administration is passing the buck on the elected government so far as the release of the pending installments of DA are concerned. It is the ill luck of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, that there are two power centers in UT of Jammu and Kashmir and people are the sufferers. LG administration feels that release of pending DA is the prerogative of the elected government and the vice versa and the end sufferers are the people and in this case of non release of the outstanding dearness allowances the government employees, pensioners and family pensioners. Time and now the UT government of Jammu and Kashmir through its finance department is issuing orders and circulars concerning the pensioners and family pensioners and not few months ago in the scorching heat and humid climate the UT government had ordered its pensioners and family pensioners

to undergo pension verification. For undergoing the pension verification the poor pensioners and family pensioners were forced to have the rounds of visits to the Jammu and Kashmir Bank and the concerned treasury to get the pension verification done. That pension verification put the aged and old pensioners and family pensioners to unease and trouble. And few days after the pension verification, the meek pensioners and family pensioners were again asked to give life certificates and present themselves in the JK Bank branch. Someone has rightly said that PPO is not pension payment order but it can be said to be Pensioners prisoner order. Ladakh government also had since released 3% DA to its employees and has also increased medical allowance to its pensioners to Rs 1,000. It seems that the UT government of Jammu and Kashmir is hell bent to put its employees especially its pensioners to untold sufferings. The government is twiddling its thumbs and making no efforts to decide to announce the pending DA to its employees and pensioners. The UT government, LG Manoj Sinha and the elected chief minister and the finance minister all are requested and appealed to order the release of the two pending installments of DA to its employees and pensioners without any further delay and give some relief to them from soaring prices. But is any authority listening is the million dollar question? It can be opined that JK government Tas Se ma na hote hai so far as the decision to release the two pending installments of DA to its employees and pensioners is concerned. The government seems relentless so far as the order of the release of the pending DA is concerned. In short the UT government of J&K has left the employees and pensioners in lurch to fend for themselves and it has made the plight of government employees and pensioners plight deplorable.

(The author is a columnist, social, KP activist and freelancer)

■ GL KHAJURIA

The world wildlife fund (WWF) had long back formulated projects to earmark a biological profile for various states of India. This was being done to high-light the problems connected with biodiversity, particularly its conservation, augmentation, sustainability and utilization at a bigger scale. The first such profile, of course, was the North-Eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh which is internationally acclaimed as the hot-spot. And the second in the series is the north western state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Jammu and Kashmir state provides a considerable amount of habitat of wide, varied diversity.

These range from unimaginable and unaccountable beautiful enchanting snow-topped mountains, glaciers and cascading crystal-clear gurgling ice-cold waters in the rivers apart from high altitudinal attractive mountainous landscape and streams. And these, therefore, have their extension to the most hostile-habitats such as the lakes, other water bodies, lush green dense forests, and the high altitudinal meadows with carpet cover of green silky grasses covered by multihued wild fragrant flowers for miles and miles in togetherness. Supporting all these, there is ever-refreshing cool breeze of the temperate zone and over-head there are milky white wafting clouds, which still adds to the beauty while these hover overazuresky in its ambience.

These wide-arranged landscapes can very conveniently be maintained through proper managing conservation of the biodiversity. And no less is the most enchanting and charming vista, the Jhelum formally quite and placid but at occasions in floods fury. At one point of time, Dal Lake used to be have crystal clear with water butwith the passage of times the same dal is turning dull and so is the situation with wular and other water bodies which have mostly been polluted.

Kashmir or the vale valley is world

widely regarded as the paradise on earth and this sanctimonious land is blessed with many saints, sages and seers and of course, blessed with great writer and thinkers.

But unfortunately, this pride land is losing its pristine lustre owing to the outside interference by the neighbouring border countries who are hell bet to destabilise its peace and harmony. But fortunately, The inhabitants together with a varied biodiversity are well in place and the locals are intelligent hard-working and progressively ahead with zeal and zest wherever they harbour.

As per the latest survey report of India ending year 2015, the Jammu and Kashmir state is having a forest cover 201796 Hectares (recorded) out of 22539 Hectares (Actual) which shows the recorded percentage of area having per capita forest cover at around 0.1796 Hectares ending year 2011 which is dismally jeering.

In view of the frizzling forest cover of our state, their seems to be an alarming scenario ahead if soremainsthe situation. As such, therefore, some strategic and tangible steps are warranting and need to be afooted to anticipate impending environmental degradation and the repercussions accruing therefrom.

The Jammu and Kashmir state is as well is nomenclarised as a biomass state of the county for reason as well-known having a potential exporter of fruits (fresh/drieds, nuts), vegetables, medicinal and aromatic herbs of multihued forms apart from seeds and other minor forest produce (MFP) for the manufacture of multi-medicinal drugs (Ayurvedic) for which we are having a richest treasure trove of medicinal potential for which we are privileged ad prideful. The only pertinent and moot point of expectation is the active surveillance of forest deptt. To avert exploitation and illegal smuggling of Minor forest produce (MFP) their conservation and promotion.

Apart from all that as have been enu-

merated here in above, J&K as a whole is the richest biomass source such as Mushrooms, honey, condiments like black zira (Caraway) and above all saffron (Kesar-Zafran) an equivalent of chanan of South India. S

Silk and silken product /garments, woolenproducts such as rafals, pashmina and shatios, carpets, silk and silken products such as rafals, pashmina and shawl, carpets, fur garments are as yet another forms of the most attractive and charming part of Kashmir products which, of course, constitute fascinating component of biomass. Wood crafts, carving, Khutamband ceilings, wicker work, Papier mache, Joinery products and sports items occupy an important and alluring part and parcel of Kashmir products of the biomass which nowhere are nowhere in existence throughout India and unambiguously across the globe. These luxuriant and attractive products are everlasting rather constituting heritage itemization.

Kashmir is as well prominently known for embroidery on silk, wool and even on cotton garments, curtains and other allied furnishings and these materials together with products are fundamentally derivatives of biomass, much of which is from rich and varied biodiversity existing in the valley.

In a way, the trade and economy in the valley is almost dependent exclusively on biological raw material directly or indirectly whose optimum source is from biomass ensuing from biodiversity in all its forms and ramification. And this calls for boosting and invigoration in a bigger way to ensure and enhance state's economy for which it is the richest treasure trove throughout India and the best services of the idling youth can be taken use of who are wrongfully channelling their energies.

Tourism industry is predominantly the traditional mainstay of economy of the state which doubtlessly enjoys its unique placement. There is no dearth of beautiful spots in Jammu and Kashmir which

are no way inferior to any other place in the entire Himalayan region. Ranging from lower start to the higher echelons, all the spots are attracting, charming and mesmerising as, when and where we talk of beauty, tourism (eco-tourism, temple Tourism) so on and so fourth.

In so far as Jammu region is concerned, right from lakhapur (gate way to J&K) we find magnificent spots as those of Bani, Basohili, Billawer (Sukrala Mata, Shiva's temple) Udhampur (Devakar, Krimchi temples, ShankriDerta, Mougri cave)cheneni, sudhmaha dev (Lord Shiva's historic temple) Mantalai to the extent of Dudu Basantgarah- all the spots are dotted with seared spots of sanctimonious importance where the tourists/Pilgrims throng in multihued numbers pay obeisance for blessings. The twin lakes sruisar-Mansar are the enchanting water bodies with emerald waters flanged and fringed all around with beautiful pines and other lush green vibrant broad leaved forests intermingled with a varied variety of herbs, shrubs and micro-macro ground flora. These forest are as well associated with Kaleidoscopic wildlife including wingedvisitors who roamed about freely in the natural eco system.

Jammu itself is a city of temples of temples and don't demand elaboration. And when one ascends up towards Patnitop, there seems a wider spectrum of colourful and lush green vibrant forest of pines and with altitudinal variation till one reaches Sanasar,Nathatop. All these spots have their own picturesque enchanting and enthralling beauty resembling that of Gulmarg and Pehalgamof vale of Kashmir. Apart from that, these spots are the abode of spirituality of Nag Rajas who are most reverentially revered by all and one.

Lastly, it would be incomplete and inappropriate without making mention of the most prominent dimension of the medicinal and aromatic plants which do deserve conservation, promotion and

propagation. Many of such plants are growing in wild viz. Picorhiza, kurra (Kour) a perennial herb useful for liver ailments, valerianawallichina (Mushakbala) prominently used in perfumery, withaniazomniferafinds its usefulness in rejuvenatotherapy, excessive emancipation and heart ailments, Taxus bacata, Macrotoniabenthom, crysanthinum, Acacias Acllyranthios, Adhatoda, Alove vera, Rauwalfanserpina (cobra plant), Datwea, viola, Digitalis, Aegle marmelos (wood apple), Arthimiasis, cotonesters, Flacourtiaromanshli, indigoferoas which are wildly sprawling over forests which dafacto, form a part and parcel our rich biodiversity and directly or indirectly constitute an important component of our state's biomass.

Observation and preservation of biodiversity of our state would actually ensure perpetual availability of the biomass which in turn would ensure the livelihood of the local inhabitants apart from boosting their economic status in a variety of ways. And this initiative if taken effectively by all the states will go a long way in improving the economy of the country in a bigger way. And in strategizing productivity, the best way would be to harvest and utilise for economic purpose only the annual increment or field of this biological capital.

People orientation cum participation and biomass based micro and macro/mega enterprise is the perfect and right answer for the development of state in the anticipative perspective. Given the inherent creative and artistic abilities of the people, particularly of those in the surrounding areas of the biodiversity sprawling zone and its local populace can be very conveniently moulded into uniquely beautiful goods.

Modern fields of science, information and technology should warranted gearing up for augmentation and ensuring economic and the ecological security of the state and all what is and innovative and creative thinking with a desired

spectrum for long-term sustainability.

Hopefully, of course, beyond all ambiguities the follow up on lines will go a long way in promoting and propagating state's arts, craft, tourism and other all multihued innovative fields of activities by all and sundry, particularly amongst those who are the of-shooting younger generation should endow channelize their acumen in the right track in making the state socially. These lines economically strongerthroughoutIndia. And alongside our rich varied biodiversity and its vital component biomass shall ever and ever flourish for the better and economic growth of the state in particular and county at large.

Concluding, therefore the writer arrives at the conclusion that the subject matter, J&K: the Biomass state of India is though indeed an interesting one where we do definitely feel that world wildlife fund (WWF) India we hope that the document is of paramount important insofar as the hilly state as that of Jammu and Kashmir is concerned where there is unlimited scope of planning of biodiversity of the state.

The state unambiguously is the richest source of wide, varied biodiversity which calls for its augmentation, preservation and promotion for improving infrastructure for the economy of the state in particular and the county as a whole as also emphasised earlier in the body of this article.

We as a state or nation doing our every bit the very important issues than what hinders us to hem in on this most vulnerable issues of biodiversity for which the govt. Of India as well as the state government.

In the ultimate analysis, the last hopes now rests with our chef Minister Mehbooba mufti, the most dynamic and visionary in picking up the thread and ensure its augmentation and promotion in the best of her wisdom and farsightedness for the state as a whole.

(The author is Former Dy. Conservator of forest, J&K)

Effect of Climate Change in Vegetable Production

■ DR. POONAM PARIHAR & APPOORVA GUPTA

In India, agriculture is very important because it is the foundation of the country's economy and provides a living for most of the population. Latitudinal and altitudinal shifts in ecological and agro-economic zones, land degradation, extreme geophysical events, reduced water availability, and rise in sea level and salinization make it difficult to cultivate the traditional vegetables in particular zones in the world. There is a huge demand for fresh vegetables in the local as well as international markets, which includes Europe, Middle East, and Far Eastern markets but due to their perishable nature it is difficult to export this commodity. The world's farmers are challenged with growing abundant, safe and nutritious food for an increasing global population in the face of changing climate and pest pressures. Unless measures are undertaken to mitigate the effects of climate change, food security in developing countries will be under threat and will jeopardize the future of the vegetable growers in these countries.

Vegetables can be cultivated in off-season, with the induction of an artificial technique like greenhouse technology, in which temperature and moisture is controlled for specific growth of vegetables. Climate change is an imminent global challenge that poses significant threats to our planet's ecosystems, human societies, and overall well-being. Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns has shown all too clearly that climate change is here, and human activities have been the main

driver of climate change. Global Warming which has triggered the melting of glaciers, sea level rise, weather fluctuation, erratic rainfall, and an increase in temperature patterns over the next century is predicted. The increasing population and the resulting requirement for higher crop production represent a significant challenge to food security. Storms, droughts, floods, precipitation, increased CO2 levels, and higher temperatures all have a considerable impact on food supply. According to research, anthropogenic activities increase greenhouse gas concentrations, primarily carbon dioxide, resulting in climate change. Air and soil temperature, solar radiation, precipitation, relative humidity, and wind speed are all climatic variables that have a direct impact on plant physiological activities (Sharma 2014). Vegetable crops are heavily impacted by insect pests and diseases due to their softness, fragility and short duration in comparison to other crops. The importance of climate change's effects on insect pests is increased by the fact that insects participate in numerous biotic interactions with plants, natural enemies, pollinators, and other organisms that are essential to ecological functioning (Boullis et al. 2015). According to EPA (2014), a variety of factors arising from natural phenomena and human activities may cause changes in the earth's energy balance and contribute to climate change.

Causes of Climate Change:

1. Rise Impact of deforestation
2. Fossil fuel consumption

3. Urbanization and Land reclamation
4. Agricultural intensification
5. Freshwater extraction and Fisheries overexploitation
6. Waste production and Fossil Fuels Combustion
7. Solar Variability and Orbital Variations
8. Ocean Current Alterations
9. Impact of Volcanic Eruptions
10. Glacier Melting and rise in Sea-Level
11. Land use change
12. Gas Emissions from Green house
13. Emissions of Air Pollutants

High temperature stress disrupts normal cell function in plants. In higher plants affects the photosynthetic function. Pre-anthesis stage high temperatures cause developmental changes in anthers, irregular epidermal growth, stomatal opening and closure, poor pollen development, colour development, inhibit fruit set, induce flower drop, improper fertilization in vegetables leading to reduction in the productivity and quality of the vegetable crops. For example - In pepper, high temperature at the pre-anthesis stage did not affect pistil or stamen viability, but high post-pollination temperatures inhibited fruit set, suggesting that fertilization is sensitive to high temperature stress. In tomato causing fruit set failure bud drop, abnormal flower development, poor pollen production, dehiscence, and viability, ovule abortion, poor viability, reduced carbohydrate availability and other reproductive abnormalities.

Low temperature or Cold stress (chilling and freezing) -

As many crops are sensitive and intolerant to low temperature affect crop productivity. Stress causes membrane damage, changes in cytoplasm viscosity changes in enzyme activities leading to death of plants, no proper seed germination, reduced leaf expansion, wilting and chlorosis (yellowing of leaves) and may lead to necrosis (death of tissue), irregular plant growth, reduced pollen viability, pollen sterility, no flower and fruit set, triggers a series of morphological, physiological and biochemical changes in plants.

- Mitigation and Strategies
1. Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction
 2. Crop Diversification
 3. Soil and Water Management
 4. Sustainable Pest Management
 5. Weather Forecasting Application
 6. Water Efficient Techniques
 7. Management of Crop Residue
 8. Use of Renewable Source of Energy
 9. Conservation Tillage

Conclusion There is an urgent need to recognise the innovative and creative strategies for climate change's adaption and mitigation as climate change has seriously affected agricultural production of India. On the one hand, the population of India is increasing rapidly and on the other hand, agricultural production is negatively affected by climate change.

(The writers Dr. Poonam Parihar is Professor and Apoorva Gupta is PhD Research Scholar in SKUAST-Jammu)