

OUTSOURCING TOURISM ASSETS

Looking at the favourable results received by the government in its efforts to ensure normalcy and peace across Union Territory besides attracting more and more tourists towards J&K, the administration of Union Territory is mulling over several new proposals to provide a major boost to the tourism sector in coming days. In this regard, in order to ensure proper facilities to visiting tourists besides generating handsome revenue, the administration is now planning to outsource some of the assets of Tourism Department as well as J&K Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC), across Union Territory. As per the sources, the administration has framed a committee of bureaucrats to study best models available in various parts of the country for finalizing the outsourcing process of few assets at the earliest. Moreover, necessary guidance in this regard has been sought from the NITI Aayog to help the officers for finalizing the best possible option among the various available at present. As the affairs of JKTDC are being looked after by a Board of Directors, while tourism Department is under the control of Government, any decision in this regard will be finalised only after taking all the concerned authorities in confidence, due to which the Government has fixed no time-frame for the entire exercise. Pertinent to mention here that there are a number of assets owned by JKTDC and Tourism Department across J&K, which are not being looked after properly due to lack of adequate manpower and resources. Moreover, in this era of neck biting competition, when a number of private players are offering more services at comparable lesser price than the government institutions, a need has been felt to improve the services and facilities for attracting more and more visitors. Moreover, the visitors who prefer to stay at these assets, often register complaints regarding various issues which they face at these facilities. As such, in order to ensure complete transformation of the sector besides taking it at par with various private players to attract more and more tourists to Government establishments thereby generating handsome revenue, the administration is in mood to outsource tourism assets in coming days, which will help a lot in achieving the vision of the Government to make J&K once again an all-time favourite tourism hotspot across the globe.

MEHBOOBA SPEAKS OUT

The PDP Chief and former Chief Minister of erst-while state of J&K Mehbooba Mufti's repeated appeals for resuming talks with Pakistan seem to be 'suspicious' as with guns silent on LoC and IB, and no major anti-India activity going along borders then what is the need to stir up hornet's nest by giving undue importance to the rogue nation. As far as resolving Kashmir issue is concerned, Pakistan has no role to play as already revolutionary steps have been taken by BJP Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to move forward in restoring peace and tranquility in Jammu & Kashmir. PDP Chief's stance that there is no alternative to dialogue with Pakistan for resolving all issues including the political issue of Kashmir seems lopsided as India need not to succumb to any kind of pressure because Kashmir is internal matter of the country and the progress made by Modi Government in the region clearly indicated that terrorism is on last leg and sooner than later peace will be restored and golden days will return in this part of the world with or without Pakistan's support. Under no circumstances, India should go for talks with Pakistan unless the rogue country shuns its stand on creating unrest in the Valley and interfering in the internal matters. Surprisingly, the PDP leader is speaking the language of Pakistan by asserting that the impression projected by the government that the Kashmir issue was over after revocation of Article 370 has been proved totally wrong on ground. This is something which exposes badly the dubious intentions of Mehbooba because bringing J&K at par with other states and Union Territories was necessary step to ensure development and remove hegemony of selected few in the region. The response which Pakistan gave after the nullification of Article 370 is somewhat akin to what the PDP Chief is claiming thus raising a big question mark on her intent. All said and done, Article 370 has gone and nothing can be done in this regard and therefore it will be better for Pakistan and even the PDP Chief to look beyond and move on.



OFF 'D' CUFF

Now Arjun will not fight!

To establish the dharm of truth, I manifest in every age but only an Arjun can recognise me. Every avatar is different from the one before him and does something new according to the need of his age. Like Mahatma Buddh gave up the world to give a new form to detachment and non-violence which was completely different from Shri Krishn's worldly leelas. But everyone of them was evolved, meaningful, empowered and exemplary anukarniye visionary of that time.

In Satyug the fight is between poornta-apoornta perfection-imperfection, in Treta between sin and virtue, in Dwapar it is between dharm and adharm. At the time of Buddha, Ashoka fought for an arrogant war for the expansion of his reign, he won it but lost out to the truth within his heart. Now in Kaliyug it is time for strife between truth and falsehood. The facts of science have been cut from the truth of the Ved's and used their entire power in worldly commodities, destructive instruments, and to win over

Nature. No awareness dhyaan has been given to spiritual progress.

Now we are becoming little conscious of where the music of contentment has been lost. We do exhibit brotherly love, perform sacrifices with a feel of service, pray to be saved from troubles also, only to be able to enjoy and indulge in worldly happiness, not for inner growth and for the expansion of truth. That growth, which acts in accordance to the call of time, gives inspiration for the welfare of humanity. Now the time requirement is for the establishment of truth. The strategy of non-co-operation with falsehood and cooperation with truth will have to be adopted otherwise the time will never forgive us.

Now Arjun will not fight, he is tired, fighting since ages, what was gained by fighting – humanity perished, Bharat's great glorious, prosperous culture, riddhi-siddhi wealth & expertise finished, all great scientific seer-scientists wise manishi gurus, heads of states who worked according to Vidur neeti treatise of right conduct all were eradicated.

Meena Om

Is secular space shrinking?

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

India is a secular and plural country not only because constitution envisages secularism as a state policy but it is secular and tolerant because of its vibrant culture which dates back to five thousand years. It is because of this fact that the founding fathers of constitution did not felt the need and necessity of the term secular to the preamble of the constitution. The fact is that original document of the constitution did not have word secular in it and it is enough that India would be secular even without mentioning secularism in the constitution. The word secular was incorporated to the preamble of the constitution by 42nd amendment in 1976 along with the word socialist. Since we have added word secular to the preamble of the constitution and so secularism has become a matter of the state policy and our democracy is vibrant with secular ethos and functioning of our democracy exhibits secular tenets in theory and practice and all our endeavours and actions so far as they relate to social, political, cultural and religious life. Religion in India according to the constitution is a personal and private affair and the state has nothing to do with the religion of the people. In India everyone is free to practice, profess, propagate the religion of his or her choice and even citizens are free to embrace the religion of their choice and thus they are free to change and adopt any religion. The right to freedom of religion is guaranteed to citizens by Article 25 to 28 of constitution. Article 25 says all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate any religion of his choice subject to public order, morality and health. Article 26 says that all denominations can manage their own affairs in matters of religion. In fact secularism is a strong pillar of our nation and it is practiced in all our affairs and there is no threat to the strong edifice of secular foundations and it is seen in all our manifestations social, political and cultural and what not. In India all people belonging to various faiths live and coexist as brothers and sisters and the ethos of secularism and tolerance is embedded in birth and soul of India and bounds of secularism are vibrant and strong which can't be shaken by acts of anti-socials. Different things are taking place in our largest secular democracy which has the potential of disturbing the communal harmony for a short period of time but ultimately the secularism flourishes and makes all things to shine in its beauty. These days issue and controversy of

Burqa has raised its ugly head in various parts of the country and it may tarnish our secular image for a short span of time but ultimately everything is bound to be right as the responsible citizens of the country will not allow anyone to play with the religious sensitivities of the people and the secular philosophy of the land will continue to flourish in spite of the provocations of the narrow and orthodox politicians. It is writing on the wall that secularism and mutual brotherhood is so strong and stable that it cannot be affected by the provocations of the anti social elements. Secularism, tolerance and mutual brotherhood is ingrained in the blood and DNA of the Indians and so it cannot be adversely affected by acts of religious chauvinists and hooligans. But secularism is ever fresh in our democracy as all religious faiths flourish side by side in India and our country is famous in the globe for secularism and pluralism. We believe in secularism and practice it in all our actions and endeavours and we have trust and faith in secularism and inter religious harmony. The bonds of secularism are strong despite religious diversity as the people consciously and unconsciously practice secularism in the affairs of their lives and no one can deviate them from practicing secularism in their day to day lives. Secularism and tolerance is ingrained in our flesh and blood and there is no danger to secularism in the country. Those who try to destroy secularism will themselves be destroyed but the bond of secularism will remain strong and stable. The secular ethos and tenets of secularism will remain ever fresh and ever green and this is because of the rich cultural legacy of the land called India. India is more tolerant and secular because its vibrant culture ordains it so and therefore the people belonging to various faiths fallow and practice secularism. Our is a very tolerant society because the majority community is tolerant and assimilative and all absorbing because of its vibrant culture which is five thousand years old.

Therefore the secularism flourishes in the length and breadth of India and there is no threat to the secularism. The people of India are the best shields against those who try to impinge secularism and therefore the secular philosophy of the country is ever vibrant, strong and fresh and no one is allowed to tinker with the secularism. The tenets of secularism are applied in all the spheres of life of the citizens of India and those trying to destroy secularism are dealt with sternly and with iron hand by the powers so that no one will dear to tarnish our

secular image. Leaving some stray incidents here and there the secularism gives strength to the unity and integrity of the country and thus it is the duty of us all to uphold the torch of secularism for keeping this diverse country united and strong. Thus, for strength and unity of the country the secularism needs to be strengthened and it is the duty of all of us to uphold secularism and keep it high on our agendas. There is great scope for secularism and the country can march ahead only when the country practices and fallows secularism. No one can belittle the importance of secularism in our multi religious society and our society and country is kept united by following secularism in letter and spirit. There is no danger to secularism and mutual brotherhood, because people have qualities of secularism in their blood. The common people of India will not allow anyone to damage the secularism as tolerance and secular ethos is ever fresh in the minds of the people. The space of secularism is not shrinking in the country thanks to the vibrant cultural legacy of the country and its significance cannot be lowered. Thus, it is obvious that secularism continues to flourish and shine like a shining star in the beauty of India and any effort to damage secularism will not be allowed by the people who very dearly uphold secularism in the multi religious country. Leaving stray incidents here and there, the secular foundations are very strong and vibrant that it cannot be damaged by the provocations and anti social acts of some vested interests. As such, space of secularism is not shrinking but day by day secularism is becoming strong and stable and is manifest in all our functions and endeavours.

The secularism has got great importance in our multi religious society and the people of India recognize this fact and thus attach much significance to this time tested theory.

There is hardly any threat to the valued secularism from the anti-social elements and our in-born traits are strong enough to resist any attempt to damage secular edifice of the country and our responsible citizens act as shields against any attempt to damage secular ethos.

To conclude we can say with certainty that the space for secularism is not shrinking in the country but secularism is becoming stronger day by day and any attempts to damage are bound to fail given strong love and affection for secularism and tolerance among the people.

(The author is retired Education Officer and Columnist).

‘Anti-Conversion Law’ need of hour

■ AKSHIT BARU

In one of its verses of Manusamariti, it says, 'Yatra Naryastu Pujyante Ramante Tatra Devata' which means in English 'Where women are honoured, deities are pleased there, but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards. God dwells where women are worship'. This very idea has been the concept and moral ethic of people of this great nation from time immemorial, but sometimes we come across such incidents which force us to think about where this society is heading towards. One shameful incident happened in Tamil Nadu on January 19 when a 12th standard student of Sacred Hearts Higher Secondary School in Michaelpatti of Thanjavur District, Lavanya, who was just 17-years old, committed suicide as she was being mentally and physically assaulted by her school teachers and hostel-warden.

In her declaration, the deceased girl had stated that her missionary school had pressurised her to convert to Christianity and she had been subjected to harassment for her refusal to convert to Christianity.

In a country, where women are given the top most place religiously and socially, we as a society have

failed to safeguard life of many such Lavanyas.

We as a society are at a point where Hijab has got all the media attention, Hijab has become way more important that the life of any individual.

Through this article I want to draw attention of all the readers towards such cases of forceful conversions which are taking place in the country and silently pushing a whole generation to quit their lives at such a young age. Also the role of local state government of Tamil Nadu is under question.

The State government, local media and local police tried to suppress the conversion angle in the case and has also tried their best to ignore the dying declaration, forcing Lavanya's family to approach HC, seeking a CBI inquiry.

The state government headed by DMK is acting very negative in this case one of their MLA felicitated hostel warden who is accused of harassing and torturing the school girl. State police has also arrested National General Secretary of ABVP, Nidhi Tripathi along with other 35 activists who were protesting for seeking justice for 17-year old girl.

It becomes moral responsibility of every citizen of country to condemn such arrests.

It's not just about a single 17-year old girl, the debate remains that how such unhuman incidents be stopped, strong legal actions and punishments should be given to all those who are involved in such cases of forceful conversions.

Time has come when as a nation we are in a important need of having an 'Anti-Conversion Law' implemented throughout the country.

The Central government needs to take some serious steps towards this and this game of forceful conversions has to stop for a better future of country.

Apart from this another step that needs to be taken in order to stop, or minimise these kinds of incidents is to constitutionally prevent the involve of any religious organisation in schools, for example involvement of Churches in Christian Missionary Schools or Masjids in Madrassas should not be allowed. This step will work in favour for making education system of this country a true secular system. I'm hopeful that this article will work to awake masses against such unhuman incidents and this case will work as the base for pan-India demand for a strong Anti-Conversion Law.

(The writer is State Working Committee Member of ABVP Delhi).

Role of Civil Society & NGOs towards ‘traffic violations’

■ MAHADEEP SINGH JAMWAL

When we drive, we are accountable for anything and anyone we pass up on road including pedestrians, our fellow drivers, our passengers and ourselves as well as inanimate and living objects around us. So, road safety is a significant issue that affects one and all as every day we need to walk or travel by the road for one or the other reasons.

If one has to go anywhere, using the road becomes a mandatory thing. Moreover, in professions like driving, individuals can't avoid traveling by road and that takes place on a daily basis. Thus, the issue of road safety has become vital at present time. Road safety awareness campaigns have thus become an important regular feature these days due to the increasing number of cases related to accidents and mishaps.

It's a moral responsibility of all the citizens of the nation to abide by the traffic and road safety rules and avoid fast and furious driving on the road, which has taken many lives untimely. Ignorance of traffic rules is not a smart act at all, as many unfortunate lives have become victims of it and even becoming victims today.

Road traffic safety refers to the methods and measures used to prevent road users including pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists, vehicle passengers from being killed or seriously injured. The rising number of deaths of youth due to road accidents is a cause for concern and unless concerted efforts are not put in place united to fight against this serious issue and to raise awareness in the society, the number of accidents will not decrease.

The daily reported accidents involving loss of life, creates alarming situations required to be dealt with punitive as well as educative ways.

As per the reports, 11 per cent of the deaths due to accidents in the world happen in India. Total deaths of minors in road crashes in India account for 6.6 per cent. Road traffic injuries have become the eighth principal cause of deaths in India.

The Indian government through publicity campaigns, education, and training, is instilling knowledge about traffic and road safety among the masses.

The introduction of an Act concerning road safety, i.e., the Motor Vehicles Amendment Act by the government of India is concerned with working dedicatedly towards the safety of roads. The Indian government has strengthened safety law enforcement to assist the state government and other governments.

Road safety awareness is the most important and cost effective way of reducing accidents and enhancing road safety.

A circle of information-education-motivation is the best method of achieving the desired results of saving life on roads and to prevent the splash of blood on roads because of accidents. Road safety is a public good.

It comprises many dimensions which include legislation, funding, resource allocation, promotion of road safety, monitoring, evaluation, research and development, knowledge dissemination and coordination. These functions are expected to be primarily undertaken by the government, but need to be carried in partnership with civil society and businesses to achieve the desired results.

Where role of government should be focused towards, building road safety management capacity; improving the safety of road infrastructure; further developing the safety of vehicles; enhancing the behavior of road users; and improving emergency and other post-crash services, working with NGOs in the field of road safety, is a necessary supplement and extension to the government's efforts. The NGOs normally also reach the most important target group which is the road-user. We find many NGOs having strong grassroots links, field-based experience, the ability to innovate, process-oriented approach and participatory methodologies and tools.

The traffic rule enforcement agencies are required to collaborate with civil societies and NGOs in the field of road safety to involve them more as educators to be aware of vehicle users especially within the crowded cities, where we find frequent violation of traffic rules and safety aspects.

The collaboration with NGOs has become an increasingly important feature. Let us not forget that the traffic department will be stronger with collaboration of civil societies and NGOs coming together that will be bringing.

Keeping together will make progress and working together will give success. The most important factor that needs to be looked at is social responsibility. Drivers need to have a responsible attitude and a level of learning and skill when given this responsibility. The attitude and behavior of drivers plays a major role in road safety. The safety measures on road promulgated by Government of India, Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport & Highways, Department of Road Transport and Highways such as: Don't mix drinking and driving, use low beam at night, lane driving is sane driving, caution and care make accidents rare, drive with care, life has no spare, don't over speed, get your vehicle regularly checked, always wear helmets, mobile off and seat belt on, crossing is fine on zebra line are worth memorizing. Some more civilized rules are know your signals, stop, look, and cross, pay attention, listen, don't run on roads, always use sidewalks, crossroads and pedestrian crossing, never stretch hands outside the vehicle, never cross road at bends and observe two-second rule that means to maintain a safe distance. At least weekly lectures to school children in all Government as well privately run educational institutions should be the regular feature.

Mool Raj,
Doda.