

## APPRECIABLE INTERACTIVE APPROACH

It is happening for the first time in the history of Jammu and Kashmir that the local people are not only allowed to give their suggestions to further enhance the working of the government but also feedback is being sought by various sections of people regarding the ongoing development schemes and welfare projects initiated by the administration. The cherry on the cake is that all these suggestions and feedbacks are not received in form of lengthy letters, which earlier used to get misplaced in the pending files and other officials documents of Government departments but now the head of the UT administration LG himself is interacting online with people and listening to their grievances and issues besides directing the concerned authorities for initiating necessary steps at that very moment. None in J&K has ever dreamt that such an interactive and people-friendly administration will be here as during past seven decades only discrimination and apathy of successive Governments were witnessed by people along with numerous other challenges. In the recent radio programme Awaam Ki Awaaz, the LG gave a patient hearing to numerous suggestions made by people, especially youth belonging to various parts of J&K. Besides welcoming the innovative and out of the box suggestions put forth by the youth, the LG also highlighted numerous initiatives launched by the administration across J&K. The Awaam Ki Awaaz programme, which has been started after taking a cue from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly interaction programmes Mann Ki Baat, is getting immensely popular among masses of J&K, who now can be observed waiting anxiously for the same. The main reason for wide-popularity of the programme among masses is that the points highlighted by them during the interaction, are not only listened to patiently but necessary measures are also taken on ground level to implement the same, thereby developing a feeling among masses that there is someone in the administration who takes care of them and is always ready to listen to their grievances. Looking at the immense response of people towards the initiative, no one can deny the fact that the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is far better than the erstwhile state which was full of problems and sufferings.

## REJUVENATE ECOSYSTEM

The message of replenishing the green cover in Jammu region is significant for rejuvenating the ecosystem which has been devastated in the last several decades as the governments ruling the erstwhile state of J&K were preoccupied in other difficult issues including separatism, terrorism, crime, etc. It is the BJP government led by PM Narendra Modi that took revolutionary steps and brought drastic changes on ground by crushing insurgency in a big way and tightening the noose around the separatists besides teaching a lesson of life to Pakistan through surgical strikes and Balakot air attack. With the situation becoming conducive, the government in Jammu and Kashmir has now started working on other issues and problems which paralyzed the region and have led to manifold increase in difficulties which the people have to face on a day to day basis. It was known to the world that J&K was the place which enjoyed God's special bounties especially with regard to natural beauty and that was the reason that Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan wrote the famous couplet, 'Gar Firdous Baroye Zameen Ast, Hami Asto, Hami Asto, Hami Asto,' meaning 'If there is paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here.' Though there are different versions over the writer of this couplet, the gist of this couplet is beyond any doubt non-controversial with one and all endorsing the beauty of J&K with same pitch and frequency making it unquestionable. What is inspiring in today's context is that finally the J&K Chief Secretary Dr Arun Kumar Mehta has asked the Forest Department to replenish the denuded forest cover, increase plantation outside forest areas and repair the neglected 3,700 traditional village ponds. This exercise if completed with utter seriousness will help in rejuvenating the ecosystem which has been wrecked badly by insanely cutting the trees for greed and destroying the natural catchment areas of the ponds which were habitats of hundreds of creatures including microscopic, smaller ones and even big ones in some cases. Rejuvenating the ecosystem is a noble cause and the government should ensure that the order and directions issued in this regard should be implemented in letter and spirit to make Jammu part of paradise once again as tourism is mainstay of the region and by destroying natural beauty, the place has lost its clientele in a big way besides facing hardships due to environmental degradation.

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### Seek the Wealth of Intelligence

all in the form of knowledge, art, music, and intelligence. The story of Her birth is very interesting. How the 'quintessence of blessings' took birth? According to a mythological tale, when the entire existence was created, Lord Vishnu felt there is something missing in the cosmos. He told Lord Brahma that it seems yet another power is still required for the maintenance and growth of existence as it still lacks the passion and rhythm of life. There is no happiness or positive energy in sight. So Lord Brahma recalled His celestial internal world and imagined the beautiful form of Goddess Saraswati. Afterward, Goddess Saraswati appeared, dressed in pristine white and She infused the positive energy, vibrancy, and knowledge in the cosmos making it complete. She had a divine appearance; a powerful form, having 4 hands; in one hand, she had a book, in one a large musical instrument, harp, in the 3rd hand, a prayer bead, and the 4th one was in the form of offering blessings.

**Shri Sudhanshuji Maharaj**

May Goddess Saraswati make our Yajna (of life) successful with the eternal knowledge and action that nourishes, sanctifies, and bestows wealth & intelligence. Many people think of intelligence as an attribute that they are born with. Yet, Intelligence certainly isn't just a particular trait. It's a dynamic ability to learn and keep your brain active through positive habits. Intelligence allows you to solve problems and complete different tasks related to life, academics, and professional career. Apart from that, intelligence is also a collection of diverse abilities like singing, dancing, acting, painting, etc. Needless to say, intelligence is not less than wealth that can decorate a life. And in India we seek the wealth of intelligence from Goddess Saraswati. When the spring season begins people celebrate the 'Basant Panchami' festival-may be with different names-in many parts of India where-in Goddess Saraswati is worshipped with festive fervour. And Goddess Saraswati showers Her blessings upon

“Prayer in any form is efficacious because it is an action. It will, therefore, have a result. That is the law of this universe in which we find ourselves.”

-Dayananda Saraswati

# Major interventions to promote J&K tourism

Year 2021 witnessed a large footfall of tourists; both national as well as international due to numerous positive and constructive interventions of Central Government in consonance with the government of Jammu And Kashmir. Several remarkable initiatives were undertaken across the length and breadth of the Union Territory to rejuvenate the dwindling economic landscape which was affected due to relentless wrath of COVID-19.

In one such major intervention for upliftment of tourism sector in J&K, Union government made record budget allocation of Rs 786 crores in budget for tourism sector here which is Rs 509 crores higher than last budgetary allocation with an intent to boost tourism and allied services of Jammu and Kashmir. In commensuration with this, government of J&K has also undertaken several initiatives to give further stimulus and impetus to tourism sector here.

In a mega push to promote ecotourism in Jammu and Kashmir, government has approved development of seven new trekking routes in various wildlife protected areas. The decision will also allow online booking of 29 forest rest houses and inspection huts in Kashmir and Jammu divisions, under a common brand and logo.

The first night flight has started operating from Srinagar Airport on March 18, 2021, marking the dawn of a new era and indicating improvement in air connectivity to Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of country. Lieutenant Governor of J&K, Manoj Sinha also launched golf training Academy at Kashmir Golf Course in July 2021 to promote and strengthen sports ecosystem in the union territory. This is a giant step forward for restoring historic golf course after 2014 floods. A four-day JK open golf tournament was also organized in Kashmir on September 15, 2021 to attract large numbers of golf lovers and to make Jammu and Kashmir the golfing capital of the world. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has picked Srinagar among 49 cities as part of the creative city network under the Crafts and Folk arts category. This inclusion is likely to pave way for the city to represent its handicrafts on the global stage through UNESCO. It is a major recognition for Jammu and Kashmir on global platform. It is worth to mention, Jammu and Kashmir recorded highest tourist footfall in last 7 years. Tourist footfall crossed 6.65 lakh in 2021 compared to 4.1 lakh in 2020. 1.27 lakh tourists were recorded in November which is highest from the past decade.

Under smart city project, 20 religious sites in Srinagar were earmarked for face lifting



and renovation to attract larger number of tourists. The focus area is the induction of modern technology to uplift the overall infrastructural standard of the city. The ministry of tourism also organised a mega tourism promotion event in Srinagar 'Tapping potential of Kashmir: Another Day in Paradise' from April 11-13, 2021. The objective of the event was to showcase the myriad tourism products of the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir as destination for leisure, adventure, Eco, wedding, films and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions) Tourism.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir in collaboration with Archaeological Survey of India undertook the task of renovation, restoration and conservation work on Mubarak Mandi heritage complex, Amar singh Palace and twin sections of cable car project in Jammu to boost tourism potential of Jammu city. Recently, Chief Secretary of J&K, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta announced the promotion of 75 new tourist destinations through a dedicated 3-month tourism festival. In a bid to ramp up infrastructure and boost tourism in Anantnag district of South Kashmir, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has started building infrastructure under prime minister development project at a cost of Rs 3.5 crores.

In one of remarkable initiatives launched by government of J&K, Lieutenant Governor of J&K, Manoj Sinha launched Jammu And Kashmir Tourist village Network under mis-

sion youth to boost rural tourism. The aim of the initiative is to transform 75 villages of known historical, picturesque, beauty and cultural significance into tourist village. Another aim is to promote youth led sustainable tourism, community entrepreneurship and to empower women and youth by offering direct and indirect employment opportunities. All this will help in talking a long step to boost rural economy. A provision for multitude of benefits has been there in J&K tourist village network scheme like Rs 10 lakh for infrastructure, camping material and equipment, home stays etc, upto Rs 10 lakh for shooting any film or songs by empanelled companies and upto Rs 2 lakh to local groups for shooting songs etc.

Jammu and Kashmir government launched new film policy to boost tourism and investment in the union territory. The policy envisaged the setting up of Jammu and Kashmir Film Development Council (JKFDC). Moreover, river festivals on the lines of ganga festival, were organized in December to create awareness among the general public regarding cleanliness and preservation of rivers in Jammu and Kashmir. In December 2021, the administration organized safari tour in Srinagar's Eidgah area to boost Kashmir art and promote artisans with ramifications on tourism industry of Kashmir as well.

For better management of pilgrims at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, online booking has been made mandatory to visit for darshan. Crowd management measures like using radio

waves based RFID tracking system to track the location of passengers has also been started at the shrine. Ropeways will also be built for children and elderly, while sky walks and suspension bridges will be built for crowd management around the area. With the implementation of 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts in union territory of Jammu and Kashmir regarding local self government and with the resultant devolution of financial powers to the Panchayats at the three tiers, mobilization of resources in the form district capex plans has resulted in accelerating the pace of infrastructure development at the block and Panchayat level. Tourist huts, viewpoints, community sheds various other useful structures have been developed to further push tourism in the union territory. Plan allocation of district plans for all 20 districts of union territory has been more than doubled from 5136 crore in 2020-21 to 12600 crore in 2021-22.

Further at the global fora, on the sidelines of Expo2020 at Dubai, Jammu and Kashmir tourism organized an outreach meet with the stakeholders of the Middle East and adjoining areas. The event was part of a series by J&K tourism to promote tourism potential and varied tourism products of the union territory. The aim has been to attract tourists from the Middle East to explore the natural beauty, cuisine, art, culture and other products offered by J&K. In brief, the constant interventions initiated by both central and UT government are surely transforming J&K into one of the ideal tourist destination across the globe.

# People of UP, Bihar will continue to embrace Punjabis

■ R K SINHA

The smattering of the Chief Minister of Punjab, Charanjit Singh Channi, has now become utterly pitiable. While addressing an election meeting in Roop Nagar, he said that he won't allow the brothers of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi to enter Punjab. Priyanka Gandhi, who links her legacy with the Nehru family of Uttar Pradesh, sat there silently, smiling and applauding. The reason behind her support of this absurd statement is known only to her. Now, who is to tell Channi that Guru Gobind Singh was born in Patna Sahib, and thus, Guru Gobind Singh was also a Bihari.

It is a matter of deep regret that when Channi was delivering a statement causing a national uproar, Priyanka Gandhi did not tighten the leash of her Chief Minister. If she had reprimanded Channi in front of everyone, she would have garnered a sense of respect towards her. However, maybe she was unaware that he was degrading the entire Nehru family, as it is related to Anand-Bhawan Prayagraj. If one looks into the legacy of the father of Motilal Nehru, unnecessary controversy shall arise. There is a possibility that Channi, who has challenged people of Bihar and UP, may not even be aware that the 10th Guru of Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, who enshrined Guru Granth Sahib, was also born in Patna. He also founded the Khalsa Panth in 1699. That stands the most significant event for the Sikh community. Guru Gobind Singh is highly respected not only by the Sikhs but by all the people of Bihar and the country.

In his desire to grab power, Channi has not only insulted Uttar Pradesh but also Guru Ravidas, the adored saint of crores of Dalits. He did not even know that Sant Guru Ravidas was born in Varanasi. He must be aware that the devotional songs and verses of great Sant Ravidas have

made a lasting impact on the Bhakti movement. Sant Guru Ravidas has Gurdwaras at various places in Punjab.

Apart from this, Channi must realise that first Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Govind Vallabh Pant, which he is referring to with disrespect, had given lakhs of acres of land in foothills of the Himalayas almost free of cost to Punjabis who came to India due to the partition of country so that they can live with dignity. Today the current generations of those people are leading a happy life. Channi also knows that Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have a deep connection with Punjab, Punjabis, and Sikhism. These provinces had embraced Punjabi Hindus or Sikhs after 1947 from across the border after the partition. There will be localities of Punjabis in every city of Uttar Pradesh. Thousands of Sikhs settled in the Gumti area of Kanpur after the partition. They enriched Uttar Pradesh with their hard work and dedication. Similarly, thousands of Punjabis came to Bihar and Jharkhand. Inder Singh Namdhari is respected all over Bihar and Jharkhand. His family is not Bihari by origin. Namdhari, who was a cabinet minister in the joint Bihar government and was the President of Bihar state BJP, became the first speaker of its assembly after the formation of Jharkhand. Neither Bihar nor Jharkhand considered him an outsider. The personality of Namdhari is that of a visionary. He gave more importance to education in his life and promoted linguistic knowledge. Bharatiya Janata Party leader, S S Ahluwalia, may do politics in West Bengal but he belongs to Bihar/Jharkhand only. Punjabis settled in these states must have been hurt by Channi's statement about the people of Bihar and UP. If Channi even had a leaflet of knowledge of the society and history of Bihar, he would not have given

his above statement. He didn't even know that Bihar has always been the center or capital of the country's knowledge. Bihar has given the country personalities such as Lord Mahavira, Lord Buddha, one of the four first Shankaracharyas (Mandan Mishra) and even the first President of India, Deshratna Dr Rajendra Prasad. The desire to acquire knowledge is instilled in every Bihari. It considers the whole of India as its own. Bihar generously accepted and voted Madhu Limaye, Acharya Kripalani, and George Fernandes as its leaders to the Lok Sabha. For this generosity, Channi will have to make efforts in the next life as he has wasted this life with his actions. I must mention here regarding an old Punjabi colony located in Patna, the capital of Bihar. The residents there take great pride in calling themselves Bihari Punjabis. They came to Patna after 1947 as refugees and settled there. They marry their children only in Punjabi families settled in different districts of Bihar. Only after the order of the first President of the country, President Dr Rajendra Prasad, the Bihar government had set up a Punjabi colony for them near Chitkohra market. The children of Pal family studied with me. They were fourteen brothers. Pal Andal himself used to make colorful lemonades at home and sell them door to door on his bicycle. Then Andal built Pal-Hotel near the station, which became the most popular restaurant in Patna. Today all the brothers have many hotels and many other prestigious business establishments.

The same thing can be said for Uttar Pradesh as well. Uttar Pradesh has always embraced Punjabis. One more thing is that Uttar Pradesh will never stand against the country. The Uttar Pradesh of Ram and Krishna is basically and ultimately inclusive. Uttar Pradesh is

the only state which has had a Bengali woman Sucheta Kriplani as its Chief Minister. Kanpur contributed to giving impetus to the revolutionary life of Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh. His political vision became clearer while working in the newspaper 'Pratap' of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi in Kanpur. Kanpur city has repeatedly chosen the non-Hindi speaking S M Banerjee as its MP.

The same Uttar Pradesh made Sikh Rajendra Singh Hans the captain of its Ranji Trophy cricket team. On the other hand, Bihar also handed over the captaincy of its Ranji Trophy team to Hari Gidwani, who belongs to a Sindhi family. You can find several similar examples. Channi must understand that the people of Bihar or UP are not a burden on anyone, but are the ones taking on the burdens of others. In fact, for the past few years, it has become a fashion to slander the people of Bihar and UP. A few years ago, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that 'People of Bihar (he meant all Purvanchal including Jharkhand) come to Delhi with a ticket of Rs 500 and then go back after getting free treatment in government hospitals worth lakhs of rupees.' Should the Chief Minister of Delhi have been so insensitive? The same Kejriwal wants to rule the power of Punjab directly or indirectly. Should Biharis be prohibited from coming to Delhi hospitals for treatment? Do residents of other states have no rights in Delhi? Isn't Delhi the capital of the people of Bihar? Shouldn't all Biharis get treatment in the best hospital like AIIMS? Channi and Kejriwal have only disappointed the nation with their senseless rhetoric. They have destroyed their reputation by trying to humiliate people of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, who will continue to embrace Punjabis without any complain.

(The author is a senior Editor, Columnist and former MP).

## YOUR COLUMN Mitigate sufferings of residents of Ajit Colony

Dear Editor, Through the medium of your esteemed daily, I would like to invite the attention of concerned authorities towards miseries being faced by residents of Ajit Colony Extension, Ward-32, who are highly disappointed and anguished over indifferent and apathetic attitude of administration, by continuously neglecting and delaying allotment of funds for construction of deep-drains in the locality, which is presently without any proper drainage system despite claims, advertisements and slogans of 'Development of All' and 'Smart, Clean and Green

Jammu'. After numerous visits to former MLA Jammu West, Executive Engineer, Sewerage and Drainage Division (w) vide his letter No. DSD/II/902 dated January 16, 2018 submitted Technical Report, estimate, site plan and cost abstract amounting to Rs 169.05 lakh to the then SE. After almost 3 years, the XEn vide No SDJ/W/5602-04 dated December 24, 20 requested Superintending Engineer for funds and thereafter SE, Sewerage & Drainage Circle, Jammu vide letter No. SDC/1181-82 dated December 30, 20 requested Commissioner JMC to arrange funds along with necessary approval so that the works of drains can be taken up. Commissioner JMC took up the matter with the Housing Department but despite passage of a year, the funds have not been released.

The urgency in matter has arisen due to fact that flow of rain-water along North-South slope has been obstructed due to new constructions, resulting in water-logging.

Continuous rains during January 2022, forced the South-end residents to put layers of sand bags when rain water started entering their houses. Mayor after his visit along with Councillor Ward-32 vide endorsement No JMC/M/P/286/21 dated November 24, 21 directed XEN-UEED to visit site personally, meet inhabitants and do the needful on priority basis for resolving the issue, but it is surprising that directions of Mayor are yet to be complied with.

The residents appeal to LG, Advisor to LG, Mayor JMC, Commissioner Housing Department, Commissioner JMC, Corporator Ward 32 for understating their plight sympathetically and carry out their duty towards residents of the neglected colony of 'Smart City in the making' by granting necessary funds for construction of deep-drains to resolve long issue without any further delay.

**Prem Gupta, Ajit Colony Extn., Jammu.**