


TOURISM IN VOGUE

As the terrorism has waned of in J&K by the extraordinary steps taken by the BJP Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it is time now to focus only on tourism as this is significant to bail out the newly created Union Territory from the financial crisis due to unrest and chaos on account of different factors including turmoil, political unrest, coronavirus pandemic, etc. There are different segments where the government has taken proactive steps to boost tourism but still there is a long way to go to explore the full potential of the UT as the Jammu region is still untouched despite assurances given by many of the stakeholders. In this regard, Ramban District has taken the lead in promoting tourism in Jammu and has opened Tulip Garden at Sanasar for the visitors, marking a beginning of new tourist season. The Floriculture Department deserves kudos for the effort and enthusiasm shown in this regard because what has not been done in decades the department has done in days under the UT's administration which is steering J&K to new heights of development by exploring what is unexplored yet. With this success story suggestions are now coming for developing a rose garden in Sanasar to lure tourists in all seasons though during harsh winter months the road to Sanasar remains cut-off for some time due to snow. This initiative is the beginning for the new era of tourism in Jammu region but if the stakeholders stress on districts Doda, Poonch, Rajouri, etc the sky is the limit for tourism industry because there are place in these districts and some others which are so beautiful that one gets mesmerized by mere visiting there. If one tries to give the specific names the account will become voluminous as there are hundreds of places where tourists can quench their desire of having a wonderful experience of visiting a place having splendid beauty. As Jammu & Kashmir UT is endowed with unparalleled beauty and natural landscapes which have huge potential for tourism the government should now exploit each and every corner of the region for tourism promotion without any prejudice.

AAP WAVE

The people in Jammu and Kashmir tend to galvanize towards the relatively new political outfit conceived by none other than Delhi Chief Minister as scores of political faces in J&K have embraced the party anticipating that it has a future in the UT. Though it is too early to say anything about its future in the UT but the way the AAP has found inroads in Punjab it can be said that the entry of this party in J&K will soon be going to hit the prospects of conventional rivals. It is the happenings of today itself that a former state minister, an ex-MLA and a former Congress leader joined AAP in New Delhi. This is not enough because along with them, more than hundred local leaders including village heads, Block Development Council (BDC) members and District Development Council (DDC) members also joined the party. Surely, soon the party will have strong stakes in the UT and the conventional parties should start making the strategies to counter the new party which has shown extraordinary performance in Punjab after proving its mettle in Delhi where there is a majority government of AAP since long back. The new incumbents were officially inducted into the AAP by Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Environment Minister, Gopal Rai in the presence of Durgesh Pathak, in-charge of party's political affairs in Jammu and Kashmir, and other leaders at the party headquarters. It is too early to gauge the political weight of AAP in J&K but surely there is an undercurrent going on in the UT and in the coming times more political faces are likely to jump over to AAP in the quest to get a better place in politics in the UT. The joining of aforesaid leaders is being seen as a shot in the arms of the AAP with the party working with an increased focus to expand its base in Jammu and Kashmir, with an eye on the assembly elections expected to be held in the Union territory after completion of the ongoing delimitation exercise.



OFF 'D' CUFF

### Concept of Creation and Evolution of Unit Mind

Development of the organism is a phenomenon of the progressive manifestation of dormant consciousness. The first and primary streak of awakened consciousness finds its way through the crudest portion of the mind-entirety. With simple cellular structures, the mind is confined to a few expressed elements of the body, its pleasure and protection. Whatever propensity exists is only for protecting the entity against environmental pressures and for increasing the number of similar creatures. That is why uni-cellular organisms are equipped with intense power. Both male and female capacities are combined in the one body.

The plant world that precedes the cellular animal organisms also has the privilege of the manifestation of mind. In the cellular animal organisms, however, the expressions of propensities are distinct. Though the initial tendencies remain confined to the preservation of material existence, with a gradual instinctive clash in progress, new propensities find their way, making the manifestation of the dormant consciousness still more distinct as the older structures are evolved into the forms of new species. The organs themselves are shaped and their relative strength is determined according to the needs of

Why Sri Lanka facing economic crisis?

■ VINOD CHANDRASHEKHAR DIXIT

Sri Lanka is facing the double whammy of rising prices and high debt, and its people are bearing the brunt of it as the domestic situation turns increasingly grim. Rising prices and the nation's debt crisis have turned the situation extremely grim. There have been extreme food shortages as private banks have run out of foreign exchange to finance imports. Sri Lanka's economy is now in shambles. Sri Lanka is heavily dependent on imports. With forex falling, the government has not been able to pay for fuel and even food imports. The mismanagement of government funds, ill-timed tax cuts as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the economy.

Sri Lanka has the highest rate of inflation in Asia and over 500,000 of the country's citizens say they have been pushed into poverty since 2020. Sri Lanka's decision to completely ban all non-organic fertiliser around the time meant that farmers were forced to pay nearly double for organic fertilisers, passing off the cost to consumers. The shortage of U.S. dollars in the country has led to a ripple effect on the prices of most food items and raw materials that are essential for her food business. Sri Lanka's foreign debt has increased steadily since 2014 (30 per cent of GDP), reaching 41.3 per cent of GDP in 2019, and this, in turn, has put a severe load on the country's debt service.

The various news reports reveal the fact that Sri Lanka is now facing the worst economic crisis since gaining independence in 1948. The recession is attributed to foreign exchange shortages caused by the clampdown on tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 dealt another blow to the island

nation's tourism-dependent economy aggravating the debt burden. Furthermore, the effect of the COVID crisis, the loss of tourists, high government expenditure and tax cuts depleting state revenues, and the use of money for initiatives with minimal returns have all contributed to Sri Lanka's economic meltdown. The Coronavirus pandemic, which originated in the Wuhan province of China, had restricted people to their homes. This proved fatal for the tourism industry across the globe, especially in Sri Lanka where tourism is a key source of foreign exchange.

Without adequate foreign currency reserves, the country has not been able to import fuel, food and other key goods. Hoarding of food items like rice and sugar is making matters worse. Milk has been rationed together with other food items, like rice and sugar. People are not able to bear the brunt of the current economic crisis and they have been shunning their meals at least once or twice a day - even avoiding tea and coffee to save money. Daily power outages have become commonplace and many Sri Lankans have been forced to collect firewood to power their homes. China accounts for nearly 10 percent of Sri Lanka's total foreign debt in the form of concessionary loans, though additional commercial loans through Chinese state banks have also been procured by Sri Lanka. The country has been seen as a prime example of the Chinese 'debt trap' narrative, where China aggressively pushes developing countries into building large infrastructure projects using Chinese loans.

In the year 2019, during election campaign, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had vowed to transform the country's agriculture sector into 100 per cent organic. On

April 26, 2021, he imposed a complete ban on import of chemical fertilisers. The objective was to save import costs and the environment at the same time. The ban coincided with the Wuhan Coronavirus pandemic. Many experts had warned the government that such a move could lead to food scarcity. Interestingly, the move was supported by both liberal groups and Christian churches. It is also reported that Sri Lanka's organic farming policy was a disaster. In most countries, agriculture held up during the pandemic. But it was the opposite in Sri Lanka. According to IMF, there was a worse-than-anticipated impact of the chemical fertilizer ban on agricultural production. A major problem that Sri Lanka is facing is its huge foreign debt burden, and it owes over USD 5 billion to China alone. Sri Lanka's foreign reserves are shrinking partly because of construction projects built with Chinese loans that are not making money. There is no doubt that Sri Lanka will have to seek World Bank assistance in addition to an International Monetary Fund (IMF) rescue plan to be discussed next month. It has already received financial support from China and India in the form of credit lines and currency swaps. India has also recently offered credit and foreign exchange support, which includes a \$500 million line of credit to help Sri Lanka purchase fuel. India has also extended a \$400 million currency swap and deferred payment of \$515.2 million to the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) by two months. India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, China and Qatar have agreed to provide economic assistance to Sri Lanka. But several sectors of the economy are on the brink of collapse.

It was India which came to support Sri Lanka in this crucial hour by extending

urgent trade credit amounting to \$1.5 billion on two separate occasions. Most Western outlets prove that China is the main culprit. In Nepal, most of the intellectual discussion is focused on the narrative of the Chinese debt trap. The crisis is widely seen as a result of mismanagement of government finances and ill-timed tax cuts, in addition to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to analysts the country needs to either restructure the debt or go to the International Monetary Fund for a relief package. The current economic crisis faced by Sri Lanka is the cumulative effect of the mismanagement of the finances of the country by successive governments leading to a situation where debts far exceed the forex reserves. The worsening economic and energy crisis caused by a shortage of foreign exchange has resulted in long hours of power outages and scarcity of essentials. Meanwhile, India ferried a consignment of 40,000 metric tonnes of diesel to mitigate the spike in power cuts in the island nation. But it would take some time for Sri Lanka to emerge out of the woods. The government, headed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, has been seeking credit lines from countries such as India, China and even Bangladesh for purchasing milk powder and diesel. The situation is so grim that the central bank is forced to buy oil from Iran by bartering tea leaves. According to Global Strat View, Sri Lanka has to rethink seriously to save its economy from the debt-trap policy of the dragon. "First and foremost, President Rajapaksa must reconsider his policies to offer security to his own country by seeking the assistance of neighbouring countries such as India, which can work as a balancing wheel against China.

Celebrating Ram Navami

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

Since India is a spiritual land and different festivals are celebrated across the length and breadth of the country and Ram Navami is one such festival of the Hindu community which is celebrated with great pomp and show by people. The festival of Ram Navami falls on the ninth day of the Navratri festival and it is thus celebrated on ninth day of the Navratri and has special significance for the Hindu community and religion. Besides being incarnation of Lord Vishnu Shri Ram was an ideal king, husband and brother as well and so Ram Navami is celebrated in honor of Ram as the Avtar of Lord Vishnu and as an ideal king. So the society and the politicians and political parties aspire to have Ram Rajya which is the ideal rule. It is also believed that Bhagwan Ram has taken birth on this day and so Ram Navami is celebrated in honor of Lord Ram throughout India and also in countries abroad to commemorate his birth day. Every year on the ninth day of second fortnight of Chaitra month Ram Navami is celebrated with great fervor and enthusiasm and Bhagwan Ram is worshipped along with Sita, Laxman and Hanuman. The Ram Navami is celebrated as birthday of Dashrathnandan Ram and is celebrated across India. It is marked by worship and Pujan of Bhagwan Ram and obeisance is paid him. This year festival of Ram Navami is being celebrated April 10 (Sunday) with gaiety and traditional fervor. Ram Navami is celebrated because it fulfills our dreams and gives us the desired results and fruit and therefore the Hindus celebrate this festival. It is celebrated on the last day of Chaitra Navratra and the festival has great importance and value for Hindu religion. On this day the goddess Durga is given good bye and Shree Ram is welcomed and the festival is celebrated with great festivity by Hindus. Gowsami Tulsidas had started the writing of the great epic Ramayana on this day and so the day is also celebrated to remember the day on which the great epic started. On the occasion of Ram Navami people observe fast and it delivers desired results and fruits and even salvation to the true devotees. According to religious scriptures Ajodhya's King Dashrath had three wives but they did not have any child and for the birth of a son, King Dashrath convened a Puttereshti Yagya and out of the Hawan, Kheer Prasad emerged from the sacred fire and King Dashrath offered Prasad of Kheer to her three wives and they became pregnant. After nine months Rani Kaushlyia gave birth to son Shri Ram, Queen Kakayee gave birth to Bharat and Queen Sumitra gave birth to two sons Laxman and Shatrughan on the ninth day of the Chaitra navratra and since then the festival of Ram Navami is celebrated to pay obeisance to Bhagwan Ram. According to the religious scriptures the festival of Ram Navami had been in vogue for the thousands of years and it has great religious significance for the Hindus. Since the day of Ram Navami is associated with the birth of Bhagwan Ram, the day



is considered most auspicious. On this day a big fair is held in Ajodhya. It is believed that through fasting on the day of Ram Navami, all ambitions of the devotees are fulfilled and they get the desired fruit. On this day Ramcharitmanas is recited by the people and all their ambitions are fulfilled due to the recitation of this religious scripture. Bhagwan Ram is called Maryadha Purshotam Ram and the ideal king, as he was always true to his words and never breaks his promise come what may, which is evident when he happily left home and takes exile for 14 long years to fulfill the promise which his father King Dashrath had given to his wife Kakayee. Lord Vishnu has taken birth as Ram from womb of Koushalya in Threta-Yug for the establishment of righteousness and Dharma. While the festival is named after Rama, the festival typically includes reverence for Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman. Ram Navami is one of the important festivals of Hindus and is celebrated every year in the second fortnight of the month of Chaitra with great fervor and enthusiasm. This festival is celebrated as the birth day of the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This festival is celebrated every year. People celebrate this festival with great dedication and devotion. The birth of lord Ram had taken place in Ikshvaku clan from the elder wife Kaushlyia of King Dashrath of Ajodhya. On this day devotees worship the child form of Lord Ram. As Ajodhya is the birth place of Ram so the people in large numbers from different parts of India visit this place to pay obeisance to Ram in child form. People observe fast and recite the Ram Story called popularly Ram Katha. Some devotees also bath in sacred river Saryu which is situated on the banks of Ajodhya.

It is believed that on this day the bath in the sacred river of Saryu is very auspicious and on one side people take bath in the sacred waters of river Saryu and on the other side devotees worship the child form of Ram and some people take fast on this day and some people offer clothes to the devotees on fast. From the faith and religious viewpoint Ram Navami festival has special importance in Hindu religion and Hindus celebrate it with traditional gaiety.

On this day people from different parts of India throng Ajodhya and worship Ram and pay obeisance to the Lord Ram. Since all the festivals are celebrated by the people jointly and same is true so far as the celebration of Ram Navami is concerned.

The celebration of this festival fos-

ters communal harmony and mutual brotherhood in the country. The characteristic of unity in diversity which is the hallmark of Indian culture and the intrinsic beauty of our plural and secular democracy gets strength and shines in the country as the people of different religions jointly celebrate their festivals and same is true of the festival of Ram Navami. On the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami President and the prime minister of India offer greetings to the people and pray for the flourishing of the plural democracy and composite culture. In every time frame in accordance to the circumstances Lord Vishnu takes birth and Ram Navami is celebrated in honor of the Lord Rama's birth and Shree Ram is the seventh incarnation of Vishnu who has taken birth to destroy the wicked, to protect the righteous people and to establish Dharma. On this day worship of the seventh incarnation of Bhagwan Vishnu, Shree Ram is done and the blessings of the Lord Ram are obtained. It is believed that the obstacles from the lives of the devotees are removed by worshipping Ram on this day. This day is also the day of culmination of the Navratras and welcoming of the Ram Navami, because of being the last day of the Navratri festival, the importance of this day increases more. The day is also known by the name of Maha Navami. In the good olden times of Ram Raj there was no place for crimes and corruption and other vices. It is because of this golden time of Ram that the politicians and chief ministers swear to introduce Ram Raja as that period of the Kingdom of Ram was free from the crimes and other vices and so the politicians of the modern India aspire and swear to have Ram Raja to cure the society from all ills and vices. On this day in different Ram temples the festival of Ram Navami is celebrated from the first Chaitra to ninth Chaitra of the second fortnight of Chaitra and Lord Ram is worshipped during these auspicious days. During these days and on the day of Ram Navami Ramayana is recited and the idol of Rama is dressed in special dresses and is worshipped to obtain the blessings of Ram.

In Kashmir valley the day is also celebrated in honor of Mata Shiva Bhagwati and the devotees throng Shiva Bhagwati temple located in village Akingam of district Anantnag and worship her to get her blessings. Let Bhagwan Ram free the humanity from residual coronavirus which is still there and threatening us constantly.

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Transforming J&K  
Tourism on road to recovery; 80 Lakh tourists throng UT in six months  
75 off-beat destinations being developed for adventure lovers

Sustained campaigns by the Tourism department coupled with other revolutionary measures towards tourism promotion in Jammu and Kashmir lured about 80 lakh tourists through the UT to enjoy its scenic splendor and grandeur, from October to March 2022. The UT is witnessing steep rise in tourist influx to the picturesque world famous destination of the country due to various remarkable initiatives launched by the department under the guidance of Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha to offer the tourists wide range of attractions. Union Government is supplementing the efforts of J&K tourism department with all the resources and necessary support. Liberal funding of a record budget allocation of Rs 786 crore, Rs 509 crore higher than last budgetary allocation, speaks about volumes of the Union government's keenness to boost tourism infrastructure and related services in Jammu and Kashmir. To offer tourists a peep into the hospitality of people, unique culture, traditions of countryside in J&K, Manoj Sinha launched J&K Tourist Village Network initiative to transform 75 villages of Jammu and Kashmir known for historical, picturesque beauty and cultural significance into tourist villages. The youth-led sustainable tourism initiative is also aimed to strengthen the rural economy and community entrepreneurship besides empowering youth and women by providing direct and indirect employment opportunities. These 75 offbeat locations will provide the experience of nature's wilderness to adventure seekers, trekkers and tourists and will also create a livelihood in the villages on forest environs through home-stays, nature guides, trek operators besides food stalls and forest souvenirs, an official said. The Union Territory government is adopting best practices recognizing the uniqueness of each village and showcasing the landscapes, indigenous knowledge systems, cultural diversity and heritage, local values and traditions besides encouraging film shooting, offering financial incentives as well as ensuring a digital platform to all these villages. Amid the tourist influx, the Srinagar International Airport has registered record flight operations. For example, on March 28, Srinagar airport operated 90 incoming and outgoing flights which ferried more than 15,014 visitors making it the busiest day in the airport's history. "Passenger footfall at Srinagar airport in December 2021 was 3,24,415 and so has Jammu airport recorded the highest footfall," a senior official of tourism department said. "The Jammu airport, one of the critical airports in the country, got 8,00,00-ft-long runway operational which will be instrumental in the development of Jammu and Kashmir," he added. Srinagar- Sharjah direct flight was flagged off by Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, on October 23 last year to boost trade and tourism in J&K, has been a hit among international tourists and domestic tourists who add J&K to their Dubai itinerary. It is pertinent to mention that LG Manoj Sinha highlighted the scope for cooperation between Jammu and Kashmir with the 34-member delegation of businessmen from UAE, Hong Kong and other GCC countries, which was on a four-day visit to the UT to explore investment opportunities, during Gulf Business Summit in Srinagar held to make 'paradise on earth' the most beautiful investment destination in the world. "We promise to provide global standard end-to-end facilities for the businesses, skilled workforce, transparent and hassle-free regulatory mechanism and creation of necessary infrastructure wherever required," Sinha said. Under the smart city project, 20 religious sites in Srinagar have been earmarked for face lifting and renovation to attract a larger number of tourists. The focus area is the induction of modern technology to uplift the overall infrastructural standard of the city. The government of Jammu and Kashmir in collaboration with the 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 the tourism potential of Jammu city. In a significant move, Jammu and Kashmir government launched a new film policy to boost tourism and investment in the union territory. The policy envisaged the setting of the Jammu and Kashmir film development council (JKFDC). The policy strives to create nationally competitive infrastructure in Jammu & Kashmir. It assures administrative assistance to ease filmmaking in the UT by setting up Single Window Cell to grant permission for shooting films, preferably within 2 to 4 weeks. The Indian film industry is rekindling its romance with Kashmir; a destination once a favorite of filmmakers and the audience alike. Soon, the Valley witnessed the cameras set on its blooming tulips, placid lakes, coniferous trees and the Dal Lake. Also, Kashmir's iconic Tulip Garden, one of the biggest in Asia, where 1.5 million flowers are in bloom, witnessed an all-time high number of arrivals of visitors, locals as well as domestic tourists, this year since it was opened to the public in 2007. Meanwhile, the Tulip garden at Sanasar in Ramban district, spread over 40 Kanals of land, set against backdrop of picturesque hills marks the beginning of a new tourist season in Jammu region.