

## TOLL PLAZAS OR COLLECTION POINTS

Few months back, the Union Minister for Roads and National Highways, Nitin Gadkari has declared in the Parliament that there would be no toll plaza, within a distance of minimum 60 KMs and all those found operating against this rule would be closed within a period of 3 months. This assertion of the Union Minister brought a hope for the people of Jammu region especially those who travel quite often as they have to pay necessary toll at two toll plazas located at village Ban near Nagrota and Sarore near Bari Brahmana.

As the distance between these two tolls is quite less than 60 KMs, it was expected that as per the declaration of the minister, one among these two would be closed thereby bringing a respite to the locals. But one really finds it hard to understand that what to talk of three months, even after a considerable passage of time, both the toll plazas are still functioning normally and charging heavy tolls from the commuters. People were expecting closure of a plaza but a few months back, the toll was raised significantly at both the charging points thereby putting extra burden on people already suffering due to sky-rocketing prices of basic amenities and high inflation rate. Further, to pay toll doesn't pinch commuters if they are provided with good quality roads thereby safeguarding their lives besides ensuring good mileage of vehicles as the fuel prices are already too high.

But the matter of fact is that despite paying toll charges as per demand, the commuters don't get good quality roads as one can easily find a number of pot-holes and damaged stretches on the stretch between Sarore and Lakhanpur. There are also toll plazas in the neighbouring states like Punjab and Haryana but the condition of Highways there is really best thereby giving a jerk-free journey experience to the people.

If the administration of Jammu and Kashmir is unable to close these revenue collection points, then necessary measures should be taken to ensure that the money collected from the people are used in repairing the damages of road without any delay so that one can have a happy and safe journey on a road stretch covered under toll plaza.

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OFF 'D' CUFF

Aim For a Comprehensive, Divinely-Inclined mind

‘O foolish Man! Devote yourself to Govind, to God, to Paramatma!’ Whom is he calling, the foolish man? Who is the fool? As per general point of view that person is NOT considered wise who is willing to usurp the rights of others, who deprives others of their necessities and fills his own coffers, who goes on accumulating wealth for his sons, grand-kids and other relatives and thus becomes a rich man. There are few who are truly selfless and devoted to the welfare of others. Adi Shankaracharya was the first and most adorable flower of God. No second flower of that charm and beauty has appeared again in this world.

I call that mind a foolish mind which usurps and misappropriates worldly possessions. But that mind is the best quality mind, desirable mind which is efficient and expert in walking on the path to God. Everyone should have that intelligence. Philosophers and serious thinkers have called such minds as ‘Ritambara Buddhi’. It is one thing to be bright; mind may be very fast, clever, cunning highly discriminating but the best one is a comprehensive, divinely inclined mind. The man of Ritambhara Buddhi also sees the world from a different angle. When Buddha was young Siddhartha, he left his palace on a chariot and told his charioteer, “Today I am leaving everything behind, even these palaces.

I want to realize that element after acquiring which one does not have to get, achieve or realize anything else.” The charioteer could not understand what he meant. He said, “O Prince! We dream day and night that we should own palaces, get unlimited Wealth. But you have such a beautiful wife, a sweet son, there is no dearth of riches, you do not lack any comfort or pleasure. A person like me dreams day and night that a life like yours would be the best thing we can get.

What do you find lacking or missing in the

palace that you have turned yourself away from them?” Siddhartha said, “You hear the sounds of music in the palace but I see the flames of fire rising from there. There is no peace there but only he will know it who reaches His destination. Because man generally thinks that he should take ten or fifty steps more and reach another place; maybe I get peace there. But when a man reaches there, he finds that his assessment was wrong”. Buddha said, “There are many kings who will sit on the throne in an unconscious state of mind but I tripped and stumbled and my eyes opened. Therefore, I have understood there is nothing in the palaces.” But the charioteer did not follow what Siddhartha was saying. Then came the day when Siddhartha became Buddha and the crowns of kings began to touch his feet. Buddha went out, carrying immense peace and blessings for one and all, and then the charioteer understood what Buddha had meant. Though he has returned here after so many years, yet the situation today is that thousands of kings are placing their crowns at his feet.

You do not get that status from earning wealth or from accumulating worldly possessions what you get in this carefree sleep, life of real happiness and a life of lasting peace. One who has come to his senses, one who is awakened, is really wise. Otherwise, everyone else in the world is busy in accumulating the objects of the world.

Shankara acknowledged due requirement of worldly objects and money – but how much? To what extent are they useful? He said, “You take the accurate dose of a medicine, neither more nor less. If you take a lesser dose it does not cure; if you take more, it causes harm. Take only that much as is necessary, as is required, and do not forget that the journey of life is ever-flowing.”

Shri Sudhanshuji Maharaj

## Kishtwar: The land of three ‘S’ Sapphire, Shrines and Saffron

■ BY MOOL RAJ

Kishtwar was an independent hilly state during the medieval period. Maharaja Gulab Singh, the Dogra ruler annexed it in 1821 AD. Kishtwar was carved out from the erstwhile district Doda during the year 2007-08 when the Chief Minister of J&K G.N Azad had taken a historic decision in July 2006 for the creation of this new mountainous district. It has the unique distinction of being the biggest district of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir in area. The area of Kishtwar district is 7737sq.km. Location: The plateau of Kishtwar is 5300 feet above Sea level. It lies between 75-25° East longitude and 34-10° North latitude. Distance from Jammu-234 km. Distance from Kashmir- 280 km.

The entire district is full of mountains, forest and hills. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists all reside here with amity and brotherhood. So Kishtwar represents a true picture of secularism of India. District Kishtwar has its boundaries touching the valleys of Himachal in the south - east and Doda on south - west. It also shares the boundaries with Anantnag district. The population of the Kishtwar as per the 2011 census is 230,696 of which male and female are 120,165 and 110,531 respectively making it one of the least populous districts of J&K UT. People of Kishtwar are so nice, humble and helpful.

Kishtwar is home to people of diverse ethnic origin, ranging from Kashmiris, Paharis, Gujjars, Gaddi and Buddhists. People speak languages of Kashmiri or Kashur, Urdu, Kishtwari, Hindi, Batli, Paddri, Phari, and Gogjiri.

Kishtwar is full of hidden charm, wonderful sites and spots, health resorts, tourist locations, famous historical and religious places, shrines and monuments. Some major valleys and tourist spots of Kishtwar are Sinthan top, Mughalmaidan, Saffron valley, Padder (Sapphire mines), Machail, Kishtwar National Park, Dachhan, Marwah and Warwan valley. These are very beautiful places to visit, one can easily fall in love with the natural beauty of Kishtwar. Some of the beautiful spots and shrines are given below:

Chowgan: In the centre of the Kishtwar. There is a big play ground/ grazing field known as Chowgan. Its area is about 520 Kanals or 165 Acres. It is surrounded by Chinard, Deodar and different kinds of trees. It is the main attractive place in the Kishtwar district. On its North there is a big temple

called Gori Shanker Mandir and in its south there is a Shrine (Ziyarat) namely Asrar-Ud-DinBagdadi. Its ancient name is Goverdhansar which was a beautiful lake in the olden days, but with natural crisis all of its water flow down after which it was used for playing and grazing field. This ground is now developed in a modern ground with electric lights and different types of flowers all around it. All live stock (goat, cow etc.) of Kishtwar area depends much on this ground. Its herbs and grass are very nutritious and useful for animals. Maximum numbers of people are used to walk on this ground in the morning and evening. There is also a small helipad/airport on its North. Numbers of villages are surrounded to this playground that adds its beauty. It is about 1500 meters far from the main bus stand of Kishtwar. There are all type of facilities available to reach this place. It touches Dak Bungalow, Kuleed from its right side and Bun Astan, Matta and Sarkoot from its left side. This ground acts as intermediate between these places.

Qila Top: 1.5Km from Main Bus stand, Near the Shrine of Shah Farid ud Din (RA) is Qila Top on a hillock where a Fort and Palace existed during the rule of the Raja's of Kishtwar. As the Sikhs took possession of Kishtwar, it was razed to ground, with the passage of time the Palace and fort became non-existence excepting the Throne made of Stone.

Bharnoin: The picnic spot of Bharnoin, is located in Pochhal village, 3 kilometers away from Kishtwar town is known for its eye-captivating beauty. The place is situated in a forest area dense with conifers like deodar and kale trees. People visits there and enjoy the natural beauty. The place nearby busting Kishtwar town is cool, calm and pollution free. The whole area is, indeed, full of mesmerizing beauty.

Saffron fields (Pochall): A place of attraction for the tourists are the saffron fields of Kishtwar located mainly in Pochhal, Hatta, Bera-Bhatta, Matta and Berwar villages nearby Kishtwar town. Saffron flowers are in full blossom in the months of October and November every year, so this time is the best for visit to Saffron fields. The view of purple-colored Saffron flowers, spreads like a blanket over the fields. The fragrance scattered by this blossom in the atmosphere gives a heavenly touch to the environment. Early In the morning before sun rises women folk, men

and children in their colorful attires go to the saffron fields for plucking flowers.

Bandarkoot: The place is situated at a distance of about 12 Kms from kishtwar town. A big mela is held here on Baisakhi every year. After a dip in the 'Sangam', the visitors pay their obeisance to the two most revered religious places, the Astaan of 'Shah Zain-ud-Din' on the left side of Chanderbhaga, an the ancient 'Neelgangeswar' pond and the temples of other gods and goddesses on the right bank of the river. These two places of religious importance attract thousands of pilgrims not only on Baisakhi but for the whole year round. Cocks and Sheep are offered at the Astaan by both the main communities for taking the blessings of the great saint.

Mughalmaidan: About 24 km from kishtwar is Mughalmaidan, a beautiful scenic spot on the bank of Chatroo River. The place is being developed as tourist spot. Chatroo River is known for rearing 'Trout' fish. Therefore, the fisheries Department of Jammu and Kashmir had established a 'Fish-Hatchery' here and constructed some buildings, Fish trade, if promoted, will raise the economic standard of the people. During summer people visit there to enjoy the mesmerizing beauty and take bath in the river as counter to extreme of hot weather.

Sinthan Top: From Chingam onwards, we find an ascending road amidst zigzag road and forest cover area. After that we find a beautiful spot which is known as Sinthan maidan, 60 kms away from Kishtwar. The alpine pastures of this place have matchless natural beauty. The cool and salubrious climate of the place has a refreshing effect on the tourists, 24 kilometers ahead of Sinthan Maidan is the Sinthan Top. Here we find unending slopes and plain meadows on the foot of the Sinthan-Top. The place is ideal for games like Para-gliding, horse riding, rock climbing and winter games like skating, ice-hockey etc.

Kishtwar National Park is a beautiful place, located in the Kishtwar district of UT of Jammu and Kashmir. It was majorly founded to protect the Snow Leopards that are now slowly vanishing from the nature. This Park is situated at a distance of 40 kms from the Town of the KishtwarShrine of Shah Asrar ud Din (RA):

02 Km from Main Bus Stand on the South Eastern corner of Chowgan Stands the Scarred and Famous Shrine of Shrine of

Shah Asrar ud Din (RA). About him it is said that he was a born Saint (Wali) and began to talk soon after his birth. He performed miracles to the astonishment of all. He began foretelling the future, making the Walls to Walk and bringing the Dead back to life. On 25th Kartik (Bikrimi) the 03 days Annual Urs is celebrated and Thousands of devotees visit the Shrine for seeking blessing of great Saint.

Shrine of Shah Farid ud Din Bagdadi (RA): 1.5Km from Main Bus stand a major Pilgrimage attraction "Shrine of Shah Farid ud Din Bagdadi (RA)" is situated. Shah sb. Came from Bagdad (IRAQ) along with his four disciples came to Kishtwar during rule of Raja Jai Singh. The high spirituality status of Shah sb. and the miracles done by him impressed everyone including Raja Jai Singh. 7th of Harr (Bikrimi) is celebrated as Urs of Shah Farid ud Din Bagdadi (RA) every year in which thousands of pilgrims coming from all over the State & adjoining States participated. Beside religious discourses & other rituals scarred relics are also displayed during Urs on 7th Harr i.e. month of June every year. Jamia Masjid: The Jamia Masjid of Kishtwar is the biggest and the towering Masjid in the Heart of the town. It is located just near to the bus stand. Its foundation was laid by Shah Akhyar ud Din (RA) about 110 years ago. This is the biggest masjid of Kishtwar and can accommodate about 5000 Nimazis at a time.

Gori Shankar Mandir: An old and historic temple of Shiva and Parvati situated at corner of Chowgan is famous among Hindus. It was originally a heritage place of a great saint Shri Paul on whose memory this place was named as Shrikut and now Sarkoot. The mandir is base of all prominent pilgrimages and festivals celebrate like Jamashtami, Ramnavami, Machail yatra, Sarthal yatra.

Neel Khanth Mahadev Mandir: The Temple is situated in the heart of Kishtwar town. In 1629AD it was built by Jagat Singh. A rare Lingam was placed in this temple which is said to be the family Idol of Kings of Kishtwar: Its colour resembled Sapphire later on it was taken to Basohli by the orders of Kings of Basohli. There are several other picnic spots like Har Gaddi, Tel Mochay, Godresh Naag, Gali Gaad, on Sarthal road, Dool Dam, Kalamater; Vimal Naag, Singpora and various other fascinating and eye - captivating places in Kishtwar. You can enjoy the real charm of natural beauty here."

PROGRESSING J&K

J&K Govt makes exceptional arrangements for 43-day-long Amarnathji Yatra scheduled from June 30

RFIDs made compulsory for this year's yatra for real-time monitoring of pilgrims

The 43-day-long Amarnathji pilgrimage, being held after a gap of two years, is scheduled to commence on June 30 with excellent and exemplary arrangements put in place by J&K Government.

The government is committed to provide the best facilities for Yatris. Improvements have been made in the arrangements as compared to previous years. All necessary facilities, including traffic management, health, communication, water sanitation are in place.

J&K Government has accorded top priority to provide quality healthcare to the pilgrims coming for the Amarnath Yatra 2022. A coordinated health care is made available to the yatris by Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB), Health Department, Security forces and various NGOs.

To assess the overall preparedness and response measures taken at critical sites to deal with any untoward incident during the upcoming Amarnath yatra, a mock drill was conducted by the Department of Disaster Management in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority and District Disaster Management Authorities and all the concerned government and private agencies from Sonamarg to Amarnath Cave at Baltal base camp.

Notably, to ensure safety of Yatris, RFIDs have been made compulsory in this year's yatra to help in real-time monitoring of pilgrims by tracking them enroute to the cave shrine.

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor and Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) chairperson, Manoj Sinha launched an online helicopter booking portal for the Amarnath yatris.

For the first time, devotees can travel with ease directly from Srinagar to Panchtarni and complete the holy yatra in a single day. It was a long pending endeavour of the government to introduce the chopper services for pilgrims from Srinagar. "Devotees can log on to the Shrine Board's website (<http://www.shriamarnathjishrine.com>) to book a chopper," he said.

J&K Government has ensured that experience of yatris on pilgrimage to the holy cave should be pleasant.

Directions have been passed to ensure that all pilgrims have a swift passage at the checkpoints and no yatri should have to wait for more than 30 minutes while going into the base camps, an official said.

Meanwhile, Lt. Governor also visited Baltal and Pahalgam to review Preparedness & Response Mechanism of all the Stakeholder Departments; conducted on-site inspection of facilities on both Yatra routes.

He also Inaugurated 70-bedded fully-equipped DRDO hospital for quality healthcare services for Shri Amarnathji Yatris.

He also held review meetings at the base camps discussed lodging, health care, communication network, sanitation, water supply, weather forecasting, emergency response, fire safety and all other basic necessities.

To cater to the high altitude medical issues of Yatris, adequate number of oxygen cylinders, medical beds, emergency responders, doctors and nursing staff has been deployed to deal with any emergency situation, an official said.

Director Health Services Kashmir informed that 70 healthcare facilities apart from nearly 100 ambulances have been kept ready ahead of the annual Amarnath Yatra which include 6 base hospitals, medical aid centers, emergency aid centers, and 26 oxygen booths have been kept in read-mode.

"In addition to that 11 on-route facilities and 17 other hospitals available while there are also 100 critical and basic care ambulances kept in ready mode; more than 100 ambulances are available from both the routes."

He added that all the hospitals on the route will have an emergency response system including all the manpower available round the clock. Apart from that 2 dedicated 70-bedded hospitals are up and ready at Chandanwadi and Baltal.

## Disruption in energy markets, supply chains amid Russia-Ukraine conflict

■ BY AKSHAT JAIN

A group of London Business School spokespeople, writing for Forbes, have recently identified the issues forming from the tumultuous situation in Ukraine with this stark reminder -Beyond soaring energy prices and the horrendous humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, the rest of world will suffer from the ripple effects of Russia's war. Russia's war is sending shockwaves through the global economy, reverberating across the intricately intertwined global supply chain. "The principal reason that Russia plays above its weight is that it is a major exporter of some of the world's most important commodities.

If you're looking for a simplistic way of assessing the situation, given it is one which is myriad in its complexity and scope, then look no further than Ukraine's status as 'the bread basket of the world'. Ukraine produces approximately twenty five percent of the world's wheat crop, and its harvests have already been disrupted by a poor winter season before the war even began. Now that we are months into the conflict, there is mounting evidence that Ukrainian grain stocks are being seized in Russian controlled territories. Without even scratching the surface of the issue, the tactical advantage Russia holds with just these actions alone is vast, and that is before taking into consideration any other relevant factors such as fuel.

Much of the fuel Europe requires, specifically the gas in this case, is piped into the required countries from channels that originate across Russia and the Ukraine. US President Biden has startednowwith plans to reroute supplies to Europe as a response to the growing unrest. The rest is supplied 'on demand', delivered through global shipping channels, via Liquefied Natural Gas. This instability of an essential supply has been a great blow to the integrity behind many European based NATO members' responses to the crisis. This is a massive consideration, one that can be offset by the fact that some EU countries have had the forward thinking in years past to make sure they have large scale gas storage to cover societal operations in the event of a shortage.

In the eventuality of a crisis, of any kind, most of the most prominent EU states have a gas reserve that could last, theoretically, over a month.

Russia has now started to cut supplies to what it considers to be opposing nations. The Netherlands is to be



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cut off, with Denmark allegedly next if they don't pay in Roubles rather than their own currency. As the hot-war spreads further east throughout Ukraine, the trade war intensifies also. The UK finds itself at a huge disadvantage in this situation, with the available emergency gas reserves lower than anywhere else across Europe due to the UK's insistence on hard-line austerity in the years since the economic collapse of 2008, despite the still prominent wealth the nation clearly held before the destruction wrought by the Covid19 pandemic, a prominent member of NATO has therefore left itself open to coercive oppositional strategies and a need to pander when strength is required on the global stage. Although there are talks to repurpose an offshore UK power station as a hydrogen processor, such generalised thinking towards the future doesn't help the UK or its allies in the present.

Fuel and food, though essential to basic existence, aren't the only issues thrown up by the disruption of the Ukrainian conflict. Russia and neighbouring Ukraine are also major producers and supplier of multiple types of semi-conductors, materials essential for all the global electronics industry. Recent years have seen a slow production of these essential materials for a variety of factors, including flooding in Taiwan, and the implications of these deficits are chilling when factored against the backdrop of war. The financial advisory companyDeloitte reports that, Russia is a significant source of

many of the 35 critical minerals that the US Department of the Interior (DOI) deems vital to the nation's economic and national security interests, including 30 per cent of the globe's supply of platinum-group elements (including palladium), 13 per cent of titanium, and 11 per cent of nickel. Russia is also a major source of neon, used for etching circuits on silicon wafers. Palladium, a critical component of catalytic converters for cars, has climbed as much as eighty percent in price since the conflict started. Moreover, as a result of the Ukraine conflict, LMC Automotive has cut its forecast of light vehicle sales in Europe by two million units a year over the next two years.

Global supply chains have already been damaged by the woes of recent years, most of all the Covid-19 Crisis;but the onslaught looks set to continue with the fallout from the war and economic sanctions that stem from therein. Russia holds many of the cards in the trade element of this conflict, even if Russia's military prowess has been questioned by many during the conflict, with the National Institute of Economic and Social Research summing the situation thus, The war in Ukraine represents a challenge for the global economy with only a few winners - energy exporters - and many losers.

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