

EID THEN AND NOW - WHAT WE HAVE LOST

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KASHMIR CENTRAL

A KZINE INITIATIVE

**TOURISM SECTOR
REQUESTS LG GOVT**

**HELP US
MAKE KASHMIR
TOURISM A
SUSTAINABLE
INDUSTRY**

- * RESOLVE LEASE ISSUES
- * ENABLE LOCAL PLAYERS TO UPGRADE
- * PROVIDE PERMITS FOR COMMERCIAL LUXURY VEHICLES
- * ADDRESS OTHER ISSUES OF CONCERN

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DEMAND ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR TWO HOLIDAYS ON EID RESONATED IN VALLEY

There are times when social media gives valuable feedback to the state that can provide direction for policy planning. After Eid, some women employees of the state tweeted that the state must provide two holidays for this major festival. Their demand is rational and needs a positive response from the state.

The tweets highlighted that there is strong presence of women in the state's education department. Other departments too have a sizable number of women. At the same time, women bear the responsibility for most of the domestic chores. On the second day of Eid, when everybody in the community is in a festive mood, employees in the government sector have to go to their respective places of work because the state provides only one holiday for Eid. This may not be so difficult for men, but for women it may become burdensome.

Policy and planning must be sensitive to social needs and customs. It enables the government to win the trust of the people and build connect with them.

A tweet by a woman observed that such policy decisions have a larger impact on women in the workforce. "Our society still accords domestic roles to women. Therefore, many women will find themselves being discouraged from having professional careers," the Twitter user said, while demanding two holidays for Eid.

It may be an overstatement that women will be discouraged from having a professional career because they don't have two holidays for Eid. Having said that, one must admit that women who have to go for work on the day all others in the community are home may have to listen to barbs and comments from within the family or community.

Even nationally, one cannot expect work to happen in offices on the days when everyone in the community chooses to be home.

The tweets posted by the women employees have resonated with Kashmiris across the Valley. All private offices in Kashmir have at least two holidays for Eid in order to accommodate local concerns. The yearly calendar of holidays for Jammu and Kashmir can be rationalized. But it is completely in order that two holidays should be provided across the state for Eid.

Bashir Assad

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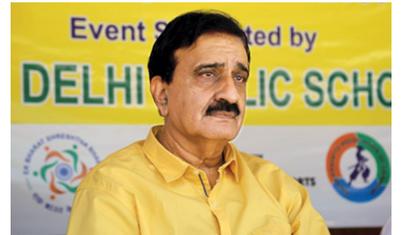
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THE EID
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Cry, My Heart, For All That We Have Lost

by **Bashir Assad**

It is a global phenomenon that the holy days of any religion or faith are celebrated by the followers of that religion in recognition of their local culture and traditions. In all civilizations, it has been observed that regional traditions and culture dominate in the celebration of these holy and festive days of the religion.

Let us remember how Eid festivities used to be when we were young. We all remember that Eid celebrations always had the local Kashmiri flavour. In every nook and corner of Kashmir, the valley used to reverberate with the songs (Rouf) and dances (Hekech) of women. Children used to celebrate Eid happily jumping up and down the villages, wearing traditional clothes and fabrics. Men used to assemble in their respective villages and towns dressed in their best attires with a local flavour, sing Eid songs and play kabaddi.

RAMADAN AND EID WERE MARKED BY JOYS AND FESTIVITIES

Kashmir wore such a beautiful, festive look on Eid. There were smiles on all faces, irrespective of class, creed or community.

I remember with nostalgia that Eid was the happiest time in



My beloved motherland was swamped by the hate and negativity of radical men. The hawkish Jamaat leader Syed Ali Geelani would always issue a statement days before Eid. He would call upon people to mourn Eid, not celebrate it

Kashmir, particularly for women and children. Women in rural Kashmir would perform Rouf soon after Iftar for the whole month of holy Ramazan. It was all so festive and colourful. Women would perform Rouf close to the premises of local mosques. Men would offer prayers simultaneously.

It was a simple society. People felt a closeness of heart.

They felt a loving togetherness. Perhaps that is why women sang and danced close to the mosque while the men of the families were inside. No one objected to the women singing and gently swaying there. There was joy and happiness in the air. Everyone shared in it.

I feel overwhelmed when I remember what Kashmir was, and what simple times they were. It was far from the current shrieking times of social media where everyone seems to be outraged and angry all the time.

As a child, I remember watching my mother, aunts, other women in the community lovingly and joyfully singing and dancing after Iftar through the holy month of Ramazan. They were close to the mosque, so some times their songs would be heard.

Then someone from the mosque would come. He would very politely and lovingly ask

the women to move a little far from the mosque to avoid distraction.

This brings to me another beautiful memory. Eid was the day when women had complete freedom and liberty to celebrate the festival as they wished. The celebrations and festivity of Eid truly reflected upon Kashmir's liberal and inclusive society.

EID CELEBRATIONS DECLARED UN-ISLAMIC

It seemed unimaginable at that time that these simple and godly days shall end. Even as a grown and mature man, my heart cries at times that they ended.

With the onset of radical religious thought processes which finally culminated into terrorism, Eid celebrations were denounced and declared un-Islamic. The radical religious preachers would issue decrees against Eid celebrations.

My beloved motherland was swamped by the hate and negativity of radical men. The hawkish Jamaat leader Syed Ali Geelani would always issue a statement days before Eid. He would call upon people to mourn Eid, not celebrate it.

Geelani would always recite Iqbal's famous couplet *Eid-e-azadaan shikoh-e mul-o-deen Eid-e-mehkoomaan hujoom-e-moomneen* (Eid of free people is discussion and debate on religion and politics while Eid of slaves is just a crowd).

FINALLY, EID WAS ENFORCED AND ACCEPTED AS DAY OF MOURNING

From 1993 onwards, Jamaat e Islami workers took it as their bounden duty to ensure that people do not celebrate Eid according to local cultural traditions. They joined forces to chase away people who would gather in their respective localities to celebrate Eid with local traditions.

The radicals started enforcing more and more restrictions on Eid celebrations. Now even children were barred from celebrating Eid. Simultaneously, Kashmir became more and more dark and tragic. The number of people killed in militancy-related incidents swelled with each passing year.

Slowly, gradually, this beautiful day of festivity and celebration was enforced and accepted as a day of mourning. From 1995 till 2008, radical groups like Jamaat e Islami and the militants ensured that Eid was observed strictly according to their interpretation of Islam. Note this. Eid was not celebrated now. It was observed.



MILITANTS AND JAMAATIS TOLD US TO MOURN EID, REVELLERS WERE INTIMIDATED

With the advent of radical Islam and its culmination into militancy, the women in Kashmir lost their songs and dances. They lost the celebrations. They lost the smiles on their faces that Eid would bring.

In the initial years of militancy, militants would appear at Eidgahs. They would give sermons before Eid prayers. They would warn women and children not to venture out of their house for Eid.

The militants would dispel the crowds who had assembled in open spaces to celebrate Eid, by resorting to aerial firing. They would beat men and women to chase them away

from the field where they had gathered for Eid celebrations.

For a couple of years, Kashmiri men and women resisted the diktat of the militant groups. But finally, the simple commoners had to give up owing to threats and intimidations. By this time, some youth from these simple families had absorbed the poisonous thoughts circulating around them. They had become part of the militant groups or Over Ground Workers. These radicalized youths too dictated their writ within their families in the name of Islam.

STONE PELTING MADE A KASHMIRI TRADITION

From 2008, stone pelting was introduced by the separatists. After the culmination of Eid prayers, the youth were

Militants would warn women and children not to venture out of their house for Eid. Militants and Jamaatis would chase away the crowds who had assembled in open spaces to celebrate Eid

routinely provoked to engage into pitched battles with police and security forces deployed for maintenance of law and order.

All the separatists, irrespective of their ideologies, would call stone pelting as Intifada. This was the revolt begun in December 1987 by Palestinian Arabs to protest Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. There was so much thrust on the so-called Intifada that from Eid congregations to special Friday prayers, the stone pelters would

Pakistan Suffocated In Kashmir Everything That We Rejoiced In

By suffocating and snuffing out even the Eid celebrations, Pakistan and the separatists made sure that Kashmir became a place where everyone was always supposed to be angry, pessimistic and depressed. The rich cultural ethos of the Kashmiris was deliberately and cruelly choked. Our traditions and folklores were choked. Now the only discourse is about killing and killers. I was startled at how truthfully the Kashmiri journalist and poet Bashir Manzar captured the situation in his words. *"Yehan shayar nahi karte lab-o-rukhsar ki batein. Yehan maqal ke qisse hein faqat hein daar ki baatien."*



Teachers at Kothi Bagh Girls Higher Secondary School sing Eid Rouf and sway. The man passing by them smiles. The video went viral over social media in Kashmir

HAPPY NEWS

EID ROUF MAKING A COMEBACK

There was a phase when children were provided with toy guns in abundance on Eid, and they would play with them. The culture of toy guns was encouraged. One can imagine the psychological impact of this culture on tender minds, combined with hate spread by radical preachers and the otherization of outsiders in Kashmir.

During the decade of the 90s, Eid Rouf was kept alive only by Doordarshan Srinagar. On Eid day, Rouf would play on DD all day long. Women would delightfully watch Eid Rouf on TV within their homes. The happy memories of old times would also bring tears to their eyes.

Every artificial imposition has a shelf life. Now, the pendulum is swinging back. At the Kothi Bagh Girls Higher Secondary School in Srinagar, the teachers celebrated Eid Rouf with girls. The video went viral. Kashmiris are again searching and finding their roots. Hopefully, it is the Kashmiris themselves who will revive their old traditions of festivity and joy.

The days of Eid in Kashmir were reduced to a farcical situation. On one side, the state imposed restrictions to avoid clashes. On the other side, the separatists warned against celebrating Eid

dominate the streets. Mehbooba Mufti, during her tenure as chief minister, once said that separatists have reduced Friday to the stone pelting day.

Fearing deterioration in law and order, the authorities started enforcing restrictions on Eid. The days of Eid in Kashmir were reduced to a farcical situation.

On one side, the state imposed restrictions to avoid clashes. On the other side, the separatists warned against celebrating Eid.

**IT IS NOT
JUST THE
ECONOMY**

**IT IS PEOPLE
TO PEOPLE
CONTACT**

“The PM, the Lt Governor – All Want Kashmir to Prosper. They want to resolve problems of the hospitality sector. But things are taking time at ground level”

H *aaqiqat ye hai ki* tourism has picked up well in Kashmir in all segments. Kashmir is full of natural beauty and hence more and more people are drawn here. But we don't have the infrastructure of the required level to address the needs of high-end tourists. There are many challenges. The government must address this.



There are lease issues. There are concerns regarding lease extension. We need to renovate the hospitality properties so that tourists are happy. The hoteliers are willing to do renovation, but the government must resolve the issues of registrations and licenses

MUSHTAQ CHAYA

Founder Chairman, Mushtaq Group Of Hotels
Chairman, J&K Hoteliers Club

HOTELS NEED PERMISSION FOR RENOVATION

There are lease issues. There are concerns regarding lease extension. We need to renovate the hospitality properties so that tourists are happy. The hoteliers are willing to do renovation, but the government must resolve the issues of registrations and licenses.

I met the Prime Minister last month to request this. I told him people of our own country are coming to Kashmir in large numbers. We need the right facilities to provide hospitality services to them. Our hotels need upgradation and renovation so that tourists are happy.

The hoteliers are ready to do the renovation. All that we are asking – nothing is beyond the law. All of this is within the purview of the law. These problems are being faced in Gulmarg, Pahalgam, other places. We have old hotels that were made about 40 years ago. Now they should be renovated to meet the tastes and the demands of the tourists. The government needs to address this promptly. Please allow us under law to care for our own house.

VITAL AREAS THAT NEED GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

Good roads. Street lights. Electricity. All these need to be addressed by the government so that Kashmir offers the highest degree of joy and comfort to the tourists.

We should have clean and well-provided washrooms on the way to popular tourist destinations. If the government wants that the hoteliers association should provide for it, please tell us. We shall do it.

The important thing is that these issues need to be addressed. The Tourism Department works very hard for the promotion of tourism. They know that the road to



Mushtaq Chaya and others with PM Modi during their meeting to address demands of tourism sector in J&K

We are totally agreed that all stakeholders must act responsibly. The government should classify the hotels so that tourists know what to expect in which property. But tourism also works according to the principle of demand and supply

peace and prosperity in Kashmir is through our robust tourism sector. When they work so hard, the appropriate support system must also be provided.

is taking so many measures to make tourism flourish.

Then ease of doing business must be assured. Renovation. Reconstruction. Repair. These aren't such major issues that they need policy decisions at the highest level. They can very well be addressed by the UT Administration. Permissions for lease extension, for licenses, for registration – all this can be streamlined easily by the UT Administration.

But it is not done. Even though there is honesty of intention at the highest level, these basics are not addressed swiftly. They are hanging for years.

WE WANT EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

All of us are aware that when tourism flourishes in Kashmir, we all benefit. The government

PM MODI, THE LT GOVERNOR – ALL WANT KASHMIR TO FLOURISH

In early April, I met Prime Minister Modi to discuss these

PLEASE ENABLE EXISTING STAKEHOLDERS TO UPGRADE

The government is very keen that new hotels should come up in Kashmir to serve all segments. The government wants new investors to strengthen the hospitality sector here. That is fine. At the same time, one must be practical.

The new investor, the new construction – all this will take long. At least a few years. Till the new players set up base and start functioning, Kashmir Tourism cannot be put on hold. We do not need to wait that long to provide world-class infrastructure to the tourists here.

It is my request to the government – please enable the existing stakeholders to improve. Please address the lease renewal and extension issues. Please address the issues of licenses and registration. Please carry out full checks at ground level and then give permission where merited. All these decisions need to be taken. They cannot be moving about on files forever.

issues which are confronting the hospitality sector. He got very surprised that we are facing challenges at such a basic level. He said – we shall definitely address all these problems. We want tarakki in Kashmir. We want to focus on growth and development in Kashmir.

The Prime Minister is very keen that things should be good in Kashmir. There should be proper facilities for all sectors. The PM has given me full promise that all our issues and problems shall be redressed soon and appropriately.

I had met the Lt Governor too, for discussing these issues. He is equally keen on Kashmir's total and all-round development. But things take time at ground level. What to do.

With the right facilities, with infrastructure upgradation – one can expect all round growth of tourism in Jammu

and Kashmir. I want to say with pride that Kashmir is the number one tourism destination in our country.

GOVT SHOULD DEVELOP MORE TOURISM HUBS IN KASHMIR



Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonmarg. These are already

Kashmir Tourism cannot be put on hold, waiting for new luxury hotels to come up. The government must enable existing stakeholders to improve, by addressing lease renewal and extension issues

very strong. Other tourist hubs can be developed. Tourists need comfort and facilities. They don't want to run here and there. This should be our singular focus for the hospitality sector. Every inch of Kashmir is a tourist destination. When tourism thrives, every sector of the Kashmir economy thrives.

A few days ago, the Secretary Tourism called a meeting of all the major hoteliers. I said at the meeting – if somebody is engaging in black marketing, the government must take suitable action. We are with the government on this.

We are totally agreed that all stakeholders must act responsibly. The government should classify the hotels so that tourists know what to expect in which property. But tourism also works according to the principle of demand and supply.

NEED FOR LUXURY COMMERCIAL VEHICLES



The government must provide permission for the purchase of high-end commercial vehicles in Kashmir. The government knows that we need these for the high-profile tourists who are coming here now. So why should there be delay in giving us the permission?



**State Must Respond Swiftly To Address Concerns,
Challenges Faced By Tourism Sector**

'I EXPECT AN UPSURGE IN MICE TOURISM IN KASHMIR'



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KASHMIR CENTRAL | 08 MAY 2022

The tourism sector of Kashmir is seeing good days. Back in March, we had national headlines that Srinagar International Airport operated 92 flights in a single day, with a high of 15,014 passengers landing and departing from the airport. The number of tourists in March broke a ten-year record.

This definitely is good news for the tourism sector of Kashmir – the mainstay of the economy.

With the increase in tourist numbers, I can feel new energy in the Valley. People are getting encouraged. They should get the support system to flourish. This shall minimize unemployment



SHEIKH ASHIQ

President, Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), Director Alkhudam Group

SURGE IN HIGH END TOURISTS

There is a major shift in the profile of tourists coming to Kashmir. Kashmir was earlier the favoured destination only for middle and low category tourists. We did not see high-end tourists here, though it had been our constant demand

to the state that efforts must be made to develop Kashmir also as a high-end tourism destination.

The shift happened due to Covid. Affluent Indians had been travelling to exotic locales globally in very large numbers. The pandemic imposed restrictions on international traffic. Europe, Australia, North America and South America –

all were closed for tourism. But with adherence to strict Covid norms, Kashmir and other destinations within the country opened up for tourism.

The result has been that tourism traffic to Kashmir has registered a major surge, especially in the high-end section. We have never seen such affluent tourist crowd here as we saw last year.

Of course, this has greatly benefitted the local economy. Earlier, the maximum rooms in the hospitality sector were low budget. Srinagar has only two five star hotels – Taj and Lalit. The mid-segment has about 15-20 hotels. The rest were all low budget rooms.

Gulmarg too has only two or three high profile hotels. The rest were all low and mid budget properties. All these are being upgraded now. Wherever possible, hoteliers are adding new facilities.

FIT THE PROFILE NOW, NOT TOUR GROUPS

There is another shift in the profile of the tourists that are coming to Kashmir. Earlier, a large section of the tourists who came here from all over the country were part of tour groups. After the pandemic, people do not want to travel in tour groups. Rather, they want to travel with their family or close friends. The result is that tourism here has shifted to the FIT category – Free

Independent Travellers. Yes, we are happy indeed. But there are challenges. The government must help us to positively address these challenges.

CHALLENGES, CONCERNS

We need to upgrade infrastructure so that Kashmir's hospitality industry is able to gear up to meet the increased demand and benefit from it. Hotels and restaurants in each segment are upgrading their infrastructure to the extent possible so that they are able to compete better in the market. But newer concerns are cropping up.

ECONOMIC BOOST, ADDRESSES UNEMPLOYMENT

With such high influx of tourists to the Valley, it is natural that the local economy shall benefit. Due to the lockdown, daily

earners like auto drivers, taxi drivers, shikara waala, pony waala – all of them had to face a tough time. This led to an increase in unemployment. With the tourism sector picking up, all of them are able to earn their bread and butter. Our youth have got engaged. This is a very positive development for the economy.

MICE TOURISM IN KASHMIR MAY GROW BIG

We are registering a good growth in the tourism sector in Kashmir. I expect MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions) Tourism to get big in the coming years. The Administration can help us significantly in this regard by enabling us to provide the required facilities for MICE.

I have heard that some corporate events are being organized in small numbers. This will be a new trend. As Covid concerns go down, we can expect national companies and MNCs to choose Kashmir for business events. This shall

bring new dynamism into the sector. The tourism eco-system needs consistency to flourish. That can happen with robust growth in FIT and business tourism.

With well developed facilities, Srinagar, Gulmarg and Pahalgam can emerge as prime destinations for MICE Tourism. The road connectivity to Sonmarg is good. The infrastructure is also good, and a number of tourists are headed there now. Appropriate facilities can be developed there too, and at other attractive tourist destinations in Kashmir.

LACK OF HIGH END VEHICLES

Tourists seek comforts and facilities in line with their lifestyle. The high end tourists, who pay handsomely for their stay and reside in the best of hotels, demand equally good vehicles in which to move around. We even have demand for Mercedes and other luxury cars.

The problem is that we don't have high end





EXPECTATIONS FROM THE UT ADMINISTRATION

ease issues for properties, license and registration issues – all these must be addressed and resolved on priority so that the stakeholders can upgrade the infrastructure. The stakeholders in the tourism sector must be given soft loans which shall enable them to provide better facilities for tourists.

The government must provide support to repair the present infrastructure.

The Centre can provide a greater push to Kashmir tourism so that we see high tourism inflow here round the year, through all four seasons. A strong economy and higher prosperity shall play a significant role in addressing the various concerns in Kashmir.

The important thing is that the state must respond swiftly to challenges and concerns faced by the tourism sector.

commercial vehicles here. We have been requesting the UT Administration to give us the permits to buy these vehicles. This demand needs to be addressed on priority.

If Kashmir also emerges as a destination for business tourism, there will be increased demand for high-end vehicles. The government must plan for it in advance so that our business tourists and other affluent tourists don't get disappointed.

ROUND THE YEAR TOURISM DESTINATION

The good news is that Kashmir is emerging as a 365-day, all season tourism destination. The growth started happening towards the second half of 2021. Now, we can see that the high numbers of tourists have sustained. In addition to the popular destinations, Sonmarg is emerging as a favourite choice. Doodhpathri has great potential. Yousmarg can be

developed for its amazing beauty. There are various other destinations in Kashmir which are strikingly beautiful.

With the increase in tourist numbers, I can feel new energy in the Valley. People are getting encouraged. They should get the support system to flourish. This shall minimize unemployment.

Many of our handicrafts stores were at the verge of closing down. Some had shut shop. Now the demand is going up, and they are engaging more and more employees.

‘THE STATE SHOULD ENABLE LOCAL INVESTMENT FOR PREMIUM TOURISTS’

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KASHMIR CENTRAL | 08 MAY 2022

After Covid, local destinations have gained in terms of premium tourists because international travel wasn't allowed. Kashmir is a major gainer in this segment. For years, we had been telling the government to focus on attracting the premium tourists. Post the pandemic, this sector has also opened for us.

We also need the tourism facilities to support this segment. It is unfortunate that

we have only two five-star properties in Srinagar. The premium segment tourists want to go to Gulmarg. Only Khyber matches up to the standards demanded by the premium tourists. We don't have more properties that may accommodate such big-ticket tourists.

We should have six more Khybers in Gulmarg. We should have more five star properties in Srinagar, in Pahalgam and other destinations.

PROVIDE LAND, SUPPORT SYSTEM TO LOCAL PLAYERS FOR INVESTMENT

I don't know if the government is waiting for outside players, and how long they want to wait. The local hospitality players want to invest in offering better services available to tourists. The government should enable local investment.



SHOWAT CHAUDHARY

President
Jammu Kashmir Hotel and Restaurant Association
(JKHARA)

The government says that we will give land to outside players to invest in high-end tourism in Kashmir. The same facilities should be provided to the local players. Locals want to invest in the sector. We can do so if we get the land for the purpose. But the government imposes strict conditions regarding turnover, for the players who want to invest. This makes local participation difficult.

We have been hearing from the Administration for three years that they are getting outsiders for investment in Kashmir. None has actually come yet. They got a few people from

Dubai. We had a meeting with them. It didn't seem that they are really interested in investment here. A local player works out as the best choice. He is personally invested in the region, he shall be here long term.

NEED TOURIST TAXI PERMITS TO PURCHASE LUXURY VEHICLES

We have approached the government many times for tourist taxi permits. But permits

have not been given for many years. The premium tourists demand facilities and comforts of all kinds. We require these permits urgently to cater to the premium tourism segment.

SUITABLE TRANSPORT FOR PREMIUM TOURISTS, LUXURY BUSES

We need suitable transport for premium tourists. We need luxury buses for tourists that offer a high degree of comfort. The local hospitality players shall provide for all of this. The government only has to issue the permits for the purpose. With the current upsurge, tourism is again emerging as a huge sector in Kashmir. The government must provide the required supportive system so that more and more tourists come here, and the entire tourism ecosystem can flourish and thrive. It shall benefit all.

I don't know if the government is waiting for outside players, and how long they want to wait. The local hospitality players want to invest in offering better services available to tourists. The government should enable local investment

Develop Food Streets In Srinagar



If you go to Dubai or any major tourism destination, you can have all kinds of food there. Why not here? The feedback we get from the tourists is that they have few options to eat out, and have to eat within the hotel.

But this isn't how it should be at the beautiful tourist spots of Kashmir. Within Srinagar, we should have at least three food streets. One can be at Zabarwan. Another at Shalimar. The third at Nigeen Club. A food street at Nigeen Club will greatly enhance its charm for the tourists.

Currently, the tourism potential of Kashmir has not been realized the way it should be. With the right vision and support, we can develop Kashmir as the most coveted tourism destination. This shall have immense gains for the economy. This shall bring about the most wonderful and desired changes in Kashmir.



Photo courtesy:
tehrantimes.com

Provide Premium, Mid-Budget and Low-Budget Tent Accommodation At Virgin Tourist Spots

Hotels will not be constructed overnight. But till then, the development of virgin tourist spots cannot be put off. The government must identify locations for tents. These will not take too long to come up. Plus they will also answer the need for suitable accommodation at tourist spots.

Tents have their unique flavour in terms of accommodation for tourists. The state may put up these tents and give them on lease. The state may give permits for putting up the tents. The state may impose conditions that must be complied with for the operation of the tents.

There are diverse options that can be considered. The important thing is that accommodation and other facilities should be provided at virgin tourist spots in order to develop them. We have taken this up with the Administration many times, reminded them repeatedly.

These tents may meet all the criteria of a hotel of that classification. One finds such tents at many popular tourist spots globally. In any new destination, hotel spaces will take at least five to six months to develop. Tourism development cannot and should not wait that long.

STATE MUST INITIATE CLASSIFICATION OF ALL PROPERTIES IN HOSPITALITY SECTOR

▼
The early initiative taken by the J&K Administration to promote tourism in the region has borne fruit. All stakeholders, including the pony waalas, shikara waalas, taxi drivers – we included everyone to welcome the tourists following Covid protocol. The campaign was successful, and by the end of 2021, Kashmir was welcoming tourists.

High end tourists could not travel abroad due to Covid. Now they found that everything is here

We don't have proper and official star rating of the properties in the hospitality sector in Kashmir. This should be done. Since there is no star rating, some online players are able to cheat the tourists. But this gives a bad name to Kashmir Tourism as a whole





MANZOOR PAKHTOON

Vice Chairman, Houseboat Owners Association

Treasurer, Kashmir Chamber of Commerce And Industry
General Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir Hotels and Restaurants Association

within the country. *Hamare ghar mein sab kuchh hai.* The message went out that Kashmir is a complete package as a tourism destination. All tastes are fulfilled here, from adventure to leisure to pilgrimages to beautiful nature and more.

We had a lot of budget and mid-segment traffic earlier from Gujarat and Maharashtra. Now people are not travelling in large tour groups. They come in small groups restricted to family and friends.

The demand has been so high that room rates have registered a fantastic increase. The kind of room rates we have in Kashmir now is almost

unethical business. The hike is 300 to 400 times, which seems unbelievable.

Take for example a hotel in Gulmarg, where room rent was approximately Rs 5000 earlier. Now, it is in the range of Rs 18,000 to Rs 20,000. The room which cost Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000 earlier is priced at Rs 40,000 or more. There are rooms even costing Rs 1 lakh or more.

In the short term, this may seem great, that the property owners are able to make so much money. The downside is that it spoils the destination. Slowly, a message may go out that Kashmir is too costly, and the facilities don't match the fantastic charges. That will be damaging for the local tourism industry.

Budget and middle class tourists used to visit Kashmir round the year. If they start thinking that Kashmir is too costly, or that we cannot

afford Kashmir, then it will be detrimental to our interest. Business ethics may spoil in the long run. That will not serve us well.

With increased popularity of Kashmir as a tourism destination, we may also become a hub for business tourism. We need more and better infrastructure to cater to those kinds of tourists.

NEW DESTINATIONS HOLD GREAT PROMISE

There are many places in Kashmir which have amazing natural beauty and can flourish with the right degree of attention. These include Gurez, Yus Marg, Doodh Pathri, Sinthan Top. In South Kashmir, we have Kokernag, Verinag,

Aharbal, Daksum. Achabal. The UT Administration can develop tourist itineraries that will connect the beautiful spots of Kashmir, and develop them accordingly. We shall need more accommodation at these spots, and better infrastructure.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ADDRESSES UNEMPLOYMENT

There is enough potential in the tourism sector in Kashmir to address the problem of unemployment here. The government can spearhead this initiative. All stakeholders shall naturally join hands to help, because this benefits all, and boosts the local economy.

CHALLENGES

PROVIDE PERMITS TO BUY

One major challenge is that high end tourists demand luxury vehicles, but we don't have them. Permits for tourist vehicles have not been given for many years. These should be given to the deserving players. We have requested the Administration many times to allow permits to buy luxury commercial vehicles. But unfortunately this has not been looked into. So we only have the old Innovas for our high-end tourists. They demand new vehicles.

CLASSIFICATION OF ALL PROPERTIES IN HOSPITALITY SECTOR

We don't have proper and official star rating of the properties in the hospitality sector in Kashmir. This should be done. Since there is no star rating, some online players are able to cheat the tourists. But this gives a bad name to Kashmir Tourism as a whole.

There is huge demand for tourism in Kashmir because of its amazing natural beauty, but



We can expect Kashmir to emerge as a major destination for MICE tourism. This can be possible only if the government makes a policy decision to develop MICE Tourism in Kashmir, and enables the development of the support system accordingly

some local or online players do not give accurate information regarding the classification of the properties, whether these are hotels or houseboats.

Government should undertake classification of all properties in hospitality sector. This way, the client will know he is paying how much for what category of property. Otherwise today a room is priced at Rs 10,000 a night. Tomorrow the price of the same room is jacked up to Rs 30,000 on the basis of the demand and supply dynamics. But if the tourist doesn't get the right facilities, he feels cheated. All of us stakeholders want to ensure that Kashmir stays a sustainable tourism destination.

STATE MUST IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE AT VIRGIN TOURIST SPOTS

There are amazing destinations in Kashmir that can leave visitors spellbound. Gurez, Bangas Valley, Tosa Maidan. These are just a few names.

It does not help if the state makes just a few huts at these places in the name of tourist facilities. Thousands of tourists cannot be headed there if only a few huts are available.

The road to Gurez is still bad, though the place has breathtaking beauty. The state

must improve the infrastructure there. Then the private players shall also come forward to support the tourism facilities. It shall be a win-win for all.

NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR MICE TOURISM

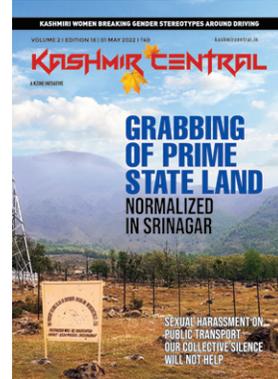
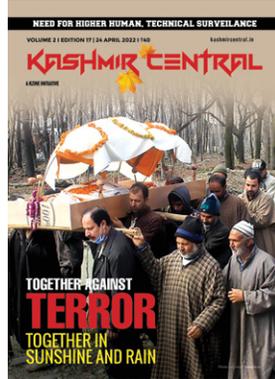
Now more and more tourists are again discovering Kashmir. We can expect Kashmir to emerge as a major destination for MICE tourism. For this we need additional infrastructure. We can expect Kashmir to emerge as a major destination for MICE tourism. This can be possible only if the government makes a policy decision to develop MICE Tourism in Kashmir, and enables the development of the support system accordingly.



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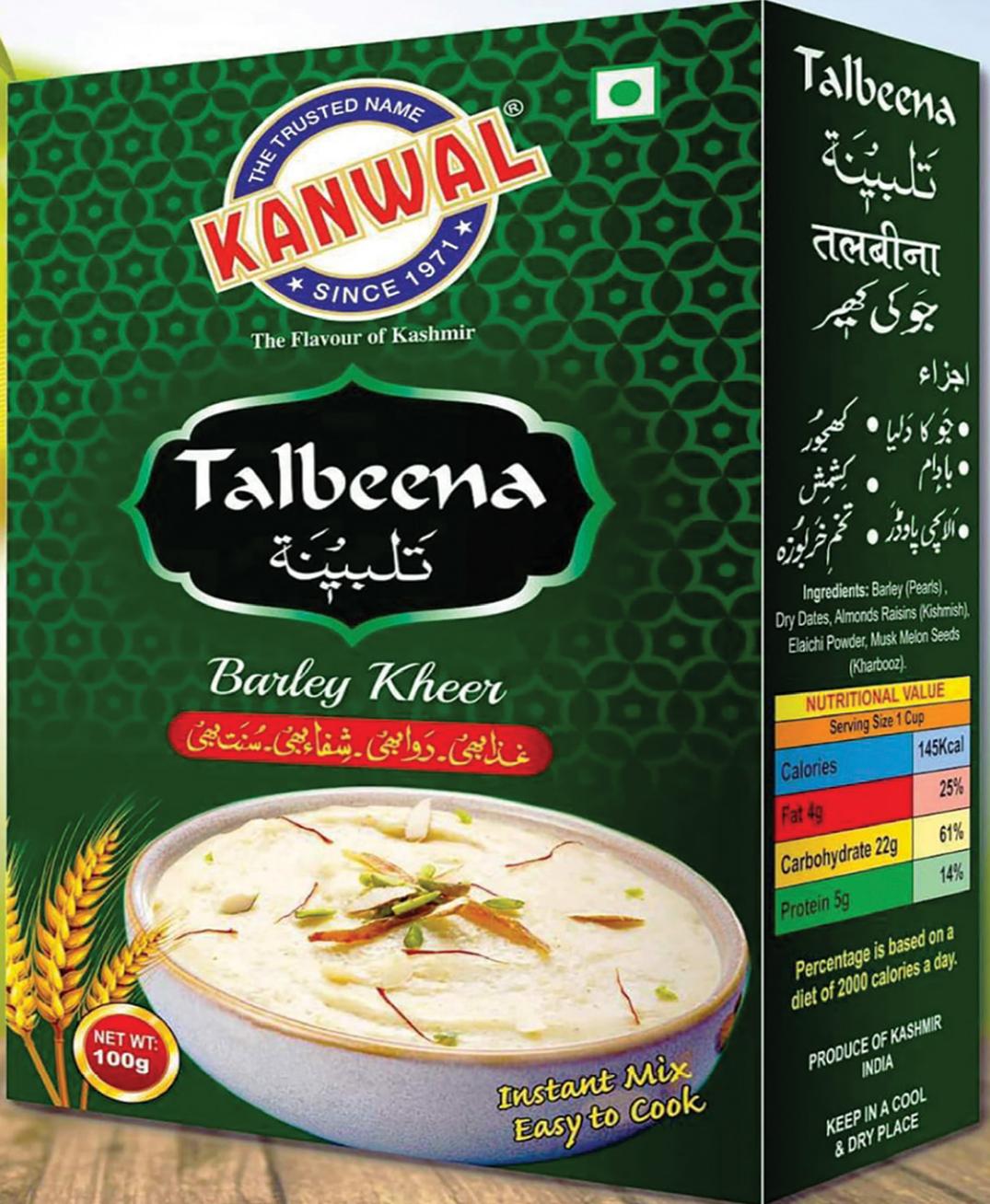
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Aisha  said, "I heard the Messenger  saying: "The talbina gives rest to the heart of the patient and makes it active and relieves some of his sorrow and grief."

[Saheeh al-Bukhaaree (5325)].

Being closer to Best Of Mankind 



KANWAL
THE TRUSTED NAME
SINCE 1971
The Flavour of Kashmir

Talbeena
تَلْبِيْنَة

Barley Kheer
غذائے بھی۔ دوائی بھی۔ شفاء بھی۔ سیرت بھی

NET WT: 100g

Instant Mix
Easy to Cook

Talbeena
تَلْبِيْنَة
تَلْبِيْنَة
جو کی کھیر

اجزاء

- جو کا دلیا
- بادام
- الائچی پادور
- کھجور
- کشمش
- تخم خربوزہ

Ingredients: Barley (Pearls), Dry Dates, Almonds Raisins (Kishmish), Elaichi Powder, Musk Melon Seeds (Kharbooz).

NUTRITIONAL VALUE	
Serving Size: 1 Cup	
Calories	145Kcal
Fat 4g	25%
Carbohydrate 22g	61%
Protein 5g	14%

Percentage is based on a diet of 2000 calories a day.

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