

MEMORANDUM

To,
Shri Girish Chandra Murmu Ji,
The Hon'ble Lt. Governor
Jammu and Kashmir
Palace Road, Karan Nagar,
Jammu, 180001

SUB: MEMORANDUM REGARDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS OF PEOPLE OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR.

Respected Sir,

We take this opportunity to solicit your attention towards the socio-political and economic situation that emerged since August 5, 2019 (Nullification of Article 370 and reorganization of erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir).

Since the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status embedded in Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and bifurcation of the State into two Union Territories- Jammu and Kashmir with a legislature and Ladakh without one-the majority of its residents are yet to reconcile with this decision.

Although it is heartening that the Kashmir Valley remained peaceful and no fatalities were recorded due to enhanced security measures and other administrative efforts but the credit must go to the people of Jammu and Kashmir who showed extreme maturity while registering their peaceful protest.

Fact of the matter is that a majority of people in Jammu and Kashmir feel hurt and there are vocal concerns wherein they feel their decades-long privileges were unceremoniously curtailed.

To win over the confidence of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the Centre will have to re-examine its decades old policies vis-à-vis Kashmir. Depending solely on security measures and dealing with peoples' political aspirations through the law and order prism will always have its old tested repercussions.

We are of firm belief that the economic development can only happen if there is normalcy and stability in the region. It is not because of Article 370 that normalcy and stability was affected. It is the assurances given under that Article and the erosion of special privileges that created the situation in the Valley over the past three decades. No development is possible unless these apprehensions among people are allayed in a just and humane manner.

In light of the above mentioned observations, we therefore submit this memorandum for:

1. RESTORATION OF STATEHOOD

Until August 5, 2019 people of the Jammu and Kashmir had not realized the essence of Statehood. For the residents of J&K, the issue of statehood holds more emotional importance than legal. Statehood for the inhabitants of the erstwhile princely State is something they genuinely relate to as a reference to their glorious past, a place which has been a mosaic of various religions, cultures, languages and regions. So Statehood for these people is solidification of the idea of pluralism and respectful coexistence.

In view of keeping the pluralistic ethos and diversity intact, it is more than essential that restoration of statehood to J&K is considered as an immediate requirement for keeping up the spirit of coexistence and allowing this mosaic to continue to shine in this part of the country. We demand restoration of Statehood including establishment of a Legislative Council and in providing thereto reservation of seats for socially and economically backward classes, Art Culture, Languages, Literature and Sports.

2. SAFEGUARDING RIGHTS OVER LAND AND JOBS

The abrogation of Article 370 and, in particular, annulling Article 35A on account of being "discriminatory against non-permanent residents and women of Jammu and Kashmir" and it being "an obstacle in the development of the state" has outstanding issues.

As we know Article 35A, among its various provisions, granted special rights to permanent residents of J&K for: " (i) employment under the State Government; (ii) acquisition of immovable property in the State; (iii) settlement in the State ..." and, of course, defining such residents.

Annulment of this Article (Article 35-A) is the main reason behind the present discontentment among the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The constitutional and legal decisions taken on August 5 have been viewed by significant number of population of J&K as something like "stripping them off from the rights over their land and other rightful holdings."

Though the country's leadership including the Hon'ble Prime Minister and Hon'ble Home Minister have repeatedly cleared these doubts, yet the dominant perception about the August 5 decisions remains the same. There could be varied opinions about this decision, yet there is a dire need to allay these apprehensions.

This most important issue can be addressed by tangible legal and constitutional safeguards that can be put in place by virtue of which protection of Domicile Rights including that of reservation for the permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir in the matter of employment and that of admissions to professional courses is ensured. A blend of models like Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and parts of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh can provide solution for protection of these rights of the Peoples of Jammu and Kashmir.

3. RELEASE OF DETAINEES

One of the psychological setbacks to a number of people in Kashmir is that their near and dear ones were detained around the August 5, 2019 decisions. These people were not arrested for committing any violation of law, but were preventive detentions vis-à-vis law and order situation.

Now that the life has almost returned to normal and all apprehensions regarding law and order subsided, it is a genuine demand that these detainees should be immediately shifted from the jails across the country to Jammu and Kashmir and subsequently released on priority basis.

Also, there has to be a compassionate policy regarding those detainees who are citizens of J&K and in jails under PSA. Since they are under detention for years, this has caused agony and trauma to their families. It would be a great Confidence Building Measure if the cases of these PSA detainees are reviewed on compassionate and lenient grounds to facilitate their early release.

4. WITHDRAWING CASES AGAINST YOUTH

There are scores of youth, (mostly teenagers) who were detained under different FIRs by Police during law and order situation in the summer of 2016. Then juveniles, these youth are now adults who are living life of ordinary citizens. However, they are still caught into legal cases which becomes a huge de-motivating factor for them and doesn't help them assimilate into the society as responsible citizens.

Some of these youth have got jobs in Police and Army, but they are denied Character Certificates as their cases are awaiting disposal in police stations. This issue merits urgent attention of the Government. It is requested to withdraw cases against such youth on compassionate grounds and support them integrate into the society.

5. RESTORATION OF JK BANK'S FUNCTIONAL DOMINION

People of Jammu and Kashmir have always seen J&K Bank as a repository of trust and confidence of their economic interests. But unfortunately this trust and confidence seems to have been shaken for the last few years. Not only its control over financial matters but its overall functioning has been unnecessarily put to a question mark.

Seemingly, an atmosphere of uncertainty has gripped its customer base and the share markets which is not good for the economic health of Jammu and Kashmir. So there is a dire need for some concrete, purpose oriented measures and interventions to restore the functional dominion of J&K Bank which holds a revered position in Jammu and Kashmir's economic trajectory.

6. REVIVING AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE SECTORS

The agriculture and horticulture sectors are the mainstay of the economy in J&K. Though "packages" have been announced by the State and Central governments from time to time for the upliftment of these sectors, yet absence of a practicable mechanism to support the growers and farm-



ers has been missing.

J&K being an agriculture state needs a holistic agriculture and horticulture policy, which should include well-established Crop Insurance Schemes and Minimum Support Price. For this purpose, the Central government has to interact directly with the growers and seek their feedback for putting in place an accountable system, involving horticulture and agriculture departments.

A special food processing cluster should be evaluated with requisite support through soft loans. J&K is rich in horticulture growing and the absence of value addition through food processing is a major opportunity. Packages and industrial support on the lines of the North East can be looked into as a mechanism.

Introduction of schemes specific to orchard rejuvenation and high density plantation for apple is the need the hour to increase the overall productivity in the long run. A special focus on the establishment and promotion of nurseries for root stock and graft buds for the high density trees. This is in with the Hon'ble Prime Minister vision to double farm level income by 2022 in India.

Pertinent to mention that the November snowfall caused massive damage to orchards for which a concerted survey and relief is yet to be done.

Moreover, the loans which the farmers have taken under KCC, have to be waived off because the damage to orchards and farms and the produce is too costly a burden they have to endure.

7. SUPPORT FOR INDUSTRY AND MANUFACTURING SECTOR

The industrial and manufacturing sector is critical to the development of Jammu & Kashmir and an impetus on the same will lead to long term economic growth and increased private sector employment. Along with the planned Investors Summit in 2020, tangible policy measures must support the existing industries as well as development of new units.

Some immediate measure that can be looked into: Capital subsidy for new projects/expansion to be increased from the current level of Rs. 5 crore to encourage large scale industrial development. Soft loans for industry must be encouraged to support investment in industry by local entrepreneurs. Promotion of region wise industrial clusters or industrial estates dedicated to priority sectors like IT and IT related services, agriculture, food processing can help in balanced development of different regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

The refund of CGST and SGST to existing units, as well as transport subsidy as per existing policy must be expedited to support the entrepreneurs.

8. TOURISM AND ALLIED INDUSTRIES AND THEIR REVIVAL

The revival of tourism and allied industries including hotels, handicrafts, tour operators, houseboat owners, shikara wallahs is critical to the revival of the economy of Jammu & Kashmir. Post lifting of the travel advisory in October 2019; concrete measures must be taken immediately to support the industry.

In this regard, interest subvention need to be looked into from August 2019 upto March 2022 to support the industry. Deferment of banking installments due between August 2019 and March 2020 is also suggested. Moratorium for existing term loans for 2 years and extension of repayment period by 10 years, on case by case basis should be allowed. Soft loans for new tourism projects must also be considered for boosting investment.

In order to promote new investment, a dedicated tourism policy needs to be put in place along with the creation of tourism clusters/villages in different regions of Jammu & Kashmir. Eco-tourism needs to be promoted along with focus on homestays to promote cultural tourism.

The operations of the Jammu & Srinagar airports should be opened for international flights from the Middle East and South East Asia, along with the regular operationalization of evening/night operations for domestic flights. This will provide a much needed boost to in-bound tourism along with opening of employment opportunities for locals.

The grant/extension of "industry status" along with all the benefits of the Industrial Policy to tourism and allied industry will also be a major push to the overall development of this critical sector.

9. RELIEF FOR GENERAL TRADE INCLUDING SHOPKEEPERS, BUS OWNERS, TAXI OWNERS

The issuance of the travel advisory affected the general trade which includes shopkeepers, retailers, bus and taxi owners - it is suggested to provide relief to the general trade in the form of soft loans, interest subvention and deferment of banking installments similar to the Tourism and Allied Industry to support their livelihoods until the overall economy picks and developmental activities resume.

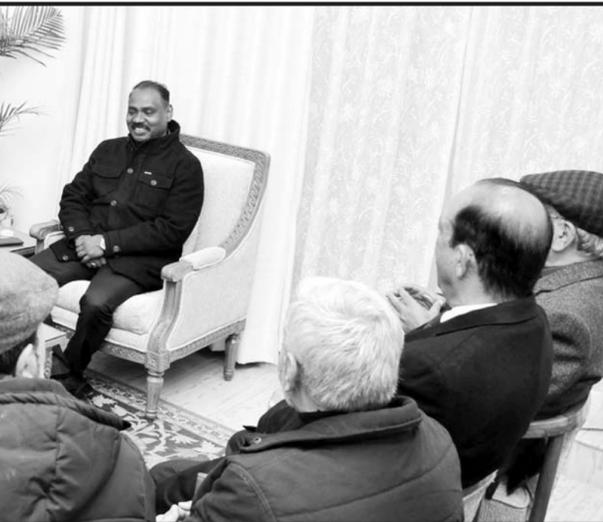
10. CREDIT EXPANSION THROUGH J&K SLBC

Banking credit is critical to the overall expansion of the economy and new development. A major push through the J&K SLBC is needed to spur new development as well as extension of working capital facilities to the existing industries. Credit expansion has been a major feature of the RBI's renewed push in economic development in the country and the same must be encouraged in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. This is a vital catalyst to increasing consumption as well as the improving the GDP of Jammu & Kashmir.

11. ADDRESSING UNEMPLOYMENT

As everyone knows unemployment is a burning issue in Jammu and Kashmir which has not only caused a great distress to the people but to a great extent fomented the trouble in the region. The routine recruitments in the government services are too small to attend the colossal issue of joblessness. The initiatives taken by the previous governments like SKEWPY have miserably failed.

There is immediate need to form a job policy in Jammu and Kashmir



which should ensure respectful ways of earning for the jobless youth for which liberal economic support from the Centre is essential.

12. RESTORATION OF INTERNET

The restoration of internet connectivity in all regions of the Union Territory needs to be looked into as a major confidence building measure and an outreach to the public. This is also very important for the industrial economy, education, medical services, media, as well as revival of the tourism sector in the Union Territory,

13. NATIONAL HIGHWAY AND REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY WITHIN J&K/CAP ON AIRFARES

The National Highway connecting Jammu to Srinagar is in urgent need of works to be expedited and traffic management be streamlined. The routine closure of this National Highway due to rain/snow causes extreme hardships to commuters besides being major deterrent to the economy of the Union Territory. Due to the frequent highway closure and massive traffic snarls, medical emergencies also can not be fully responded to in a time bound manner along the route of this highway especially between Udhampur and Banihal.

As the only all-weather road link currently between Jammu and Srinagar, it is imperative for a well-managed administrative plan to be put in place to deal with all eventualities on this highway so as to ensure continuous movement of vehicles and commuters.

Similarly the Mughal Road needs to be developed as an alternate all weather highway to support the current National Highway. In this regard works on the Mughal Road Tunnel need to be expedited for overall development and economy of the union territory along with improvement in intra region connectivity within the Union Territory.

The road connectivity also needs to be improved to Karnah with the development of the proposed Sadhna Top Tunnel to ensure throughout year road access to this region. On the similar pattern work on Perkhion Gali Tunnel needs to be approved and started in order to provide all weather access to the commuters from Kupwara to Keran. This tunnel will reduce the distance of 60 kilometers between Kupwara-Keran to just 3.5 kilometers thus reducing time from 4 hours to a few minutes.

Works also needs to be taken up to ensure round the year connectivity on Bandipora Gurez Highway for which a tunnel has been proposed as well. All weather access on the Kishtwar-Anantnag road through Sinthan Pass tunnel also needs to be started.

The improvement in the overall road infrastructure within the Union Territory is critical to the equitable development of all regions and can act a major catalyst in the socio-economic transformation of the various regions of the Union Territory.

Since the National Highway remains mostly closed due to its dilapidated condition, the airfares touch skies during especially during the winter months. The authorities must help people of Jammu and Kashmir by putting a cap on the rising airfares between Jammu and Srinagar and vice versa and provide some subsidy to the passengers flying on this route.

14. AUGMENTATION OF POWER AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW POWER PROJECTS ON PPP MODEL

The power infrastructure including transmission and distribution need to be augmented to provide regular electricity to the people across the Union Territory. Regular power cuts, especially in the winter makes harsh living conditions for the people and it is suggested that additional resources be tapped immediately from the Central Grid to provide relief to the people.

The hydroelectric and solar potential of the Union Territory needs to be tapped with the development of power projects on PPP/BOOT/IPP model. This is a major development initiative that will lead to long term value creation as well as employment generation in Jammu & Kashmir.

15. REVIVAL OF DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Most of the developmental activities have come to halt since August 5, 2019 and the same need to be restarted immediately across all regions of the Union Territory. These works are crucial in the creation of public infrastructure and services to the people and need to be expedited.

WITH WARM REGARDS,

1. Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari (Former Minister)
2. Ghulam Hassan Mir (President Democratic Party Nationalist)
3. Mohammad Dilawar Mir (Former Minister)
4. Zaffar Iqbal (Former MLC)
5. Javed Hassan Beig (Former MLA)
6. Noor Mohammad Shiekh (Former MLA)
7. Choudhary Qamar Hussain (Former MLA)
8. Raja Manzoor Ahmad (Former MLA)