

## Pak rakes up Kashmir again

It sounds queer that Pakistan should rake up Kashmir wherever it gets a chance at whichever platform even after having on umpteen times being told that the only dispute in respect of Kashmir was to vacate the areas it had through aggression usurped in 1947-48. It is now bringing in constitutionally abrogated Article 370 and other issues which were internal matters of a sovereign independent country over which Pakistan had no locus standi. It has been told that much water has flown down the Jehlum all these 75 years and it was, therefore, futile on its part to rake it up, be it the platform of the United Nations, the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) and the like. Instead of talking overhauled fast it could guarantee the International Community about stopping cross border terrorism and infiltrating its armed agents into Jammu and Kashmir and thus keeping sustaining the proxy war of terrorism against India, it was beating around the bush of Kashmir and claiming to be self styled champion of minorities in India.

The funniest part of the duplicity, double standards and indulging in deceit by Pakistan is that it invents non-existent "ill treatment of minorities" in India and speaks about fictional human rights violations whatever in Kashmir. The fact of the matter, on the other hand, is that the religious minorities in Pakistan have systematically been decimated in that country and continuously subjected to worst types of discrimination and state sponsored repression. The fear instilled in the minorities in Pakistan is such that they cannot even speak about the repression and discrimination they are subjected to only because of their faith. Fear of being forcibly converted, apprehensions about the safety and security of their women especially minor Hindu girls and the sword hanging over with regard to falsely implicating in manufactured issues is a grave challenge to the very existence of Hindus who are reduced just below 2 percent of the total population in Pakistan.

Pakistan cannot wash off its sins and treachery with the civilized world in respect of providing state protection and stay in the heart of Pakistan to terrorist Osama Bin Laden while claiming all innocence about his whereabouts not to speak of sponsoring terror attacks like Mumbai attack of 26/11 in 2008 by sending 10 of its fully trained and armed terrorists who killed 166 and injured 300 innocents in the financial capital of India and where the handlers and the master mind of such an attack on humanity find their safe, secured and assured haven in Pakistan. Indian diplomat, therefore, exercising the right to reply reminded Pakistan to at least introspect before levelling false allegations against this country. He asked Pakistan as to why it had stopped publishing its data on shameful atrocities and on discrimination against the religious minorities in that country where it had set the "world record" of gravest human rights violations against them.

In this connection, we may add, whether Pakistan has been given "all clearance" by the world community, even in the least, about it taking steps leading to the removal of the blot of being the epicentre of terrorism? Whether it has officially contradicted the brazenly admitting by its former President Parvez Musharraf about the existence of terror training camps in and support extended by Pakistan to "our boys"?

PM Shabaz Sharif spoke at the UN General Assembly Session again taking up the issue of Kashmir and his entire "speech" was punctuated with remarks and accusations against India which have no basis or any substance and India represented by its External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar rebutted such false accusations of Pakistan by saying that there was no justification for any act of terrorism, regardless of motivation as India has been bearing the brunt of cross border terrorism for decades. "No rhetoric, however, sanctimonious can ever cover up blood stains", was the logical stand taken by the Indian External Affairs Minister. Hitting out at China without naming it, he warned that those defending proclaimed terrorists were doing it at their own peril - "they advance neither their own interests nor indeed their reputation."

## Mine blast injured entitled to compensation

In an important judgment, the J&K and Ladakh High Court ruled that a victim was duly entitled to compensation even if the cause of accident was the result of a subversive activity. Such compensation too is, therefore, payable under Motor Vehicles Act. Like this, the court has dismissed the appeal of the appellant against the decision of the amount of compensation granted to the concerned victim by the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal Pulwama where the Tribunal had considered an amount of Rs.3.86 lakh in favour of the mine blast victim travelling by the ill fated vehicle.

The Court, in this connection, held that the administration bound by following the SoP guidelines should have not issued the clearance to the vehicle to ply on the road as during those days such activities were going on. Since the driver was not at fault and the accident took place due to a remote reason of a blast, it was entitled to compensation under the Motor Vehicles Act. Since there was no negligence proven or otherwise of the driver of the vehicle which met with an accident due to a mine blast, the victim therefore was entitled to the same relief / benefits as would otherwise be considered in respect of cases which are victims of terrorist violence/ bomb blasts.

# Rethinking tourism to take advantage of ecotourism potential

Ajay Khajuria

The theme 'Rethinking Tourism', adopted for the World Tourism Day 2022 by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has, perhaps, been most appropriately selected for bringing into focus the challenges that face the Tourism Industry, across the Globe today, as it struggles to recover in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. International tourist arrivals which had reached an all time high of 1466.00 million tourists Globally, and 17.91 million tourist arrivals in India (including NRI's) in 2019, plummeted on the outbreak of the pandemic to 399.00 million tourist arrivals Globally and 6.33 tourist arrivals in India in 2020. This spelled out a loss of \$930 billion in International tourist receipts globally in 2020 which also included a loss of \$23.10 billion in the foreign exchange earnings from tourism in India which fell from \$30.05 billion in 2019 to \$ 6.95 billion in 2020.

While a good part of 2020 and 2021 remained a weak patch for the tourism Industry there are encouraging indications that it is now moving towards a strong rebound in 2022, as the pandemic abates. According to the latest UNWTO figures, almost 250 million International arrivals were recorded from January to May 2022, indicating a recovery by the sector to almost half (46%) of pre-pandemic 2019 levels. Similarly, figures released by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India also indicate resurgence in International tourist arrivals in India during the period January- July, 2022 which stood at 2.76 million tourists, equivalent to 45.17% of the arrivals during the same period in 2019.

As the industry endeavors to attain the pre-covid levels of tourism activity, however, it becomes essential for destinations to rethink and work out how to align with the post covid behavior of the potential tourists and to modernize infrastructure and facilities to develop tourism as a more sustainable, inclusive and a resilient sector of the economy. Amongst the paramount concerns of the tourists, of course, is maintaining of safety and hygiene protocols. This requires putting in place appropriate mechanisms and regulations for increased cleanliness, socially distanced seating, providing hand gel, and enforcing masks, etc. in some settings, while at the same time easing restrictions on travel, and providing ease of accessibility.

Dr. Bharti Gupta

On 27th September is celebrated the World Tourism Day to commemorate the adoption of the statutes of World Tourism Organisation (WTO) in 1970. This paved the way for the establishment of UNWTO in 1975. World Tourism Day was designated by UNWTO in September 1979. The first World Tourism Day was celebrated in the year 1980. Each year World Tourism Day celebration is marked with a theme. This year's theme is "Rethinking Tourism". The theme 'Rethinking Tourism' aims to engage the stakeholders of tourism in re-imagining the sector's growth both in terms of size and relevance. According to UNWTO, this aims to inspire for discussion around Rethinking Tourism for development including through education and job; tourism's impact on the planet and opportunities to grow more sustainably. Each year is announced a country which officially hosts the world tourism day celebrations on behalf of UNWTO. This year on its 42nd edition, the celebration is being hosted by Indonesia.

Recently, tourism has been recognised strongly as a transformational force to bring development. This recognition has yielded Tourism for SDGs. SDGs refer to the Sustainable Development Goals which were an outcome of historic agreement among world leaders at the United Nations in 2015 on a universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Under SDGs 2030, there are 17 SDGs and the corresponding 169 SDG targets that offer the world a new direction. As per the UNWTO's platform on Tourism for SDGs, tourism holds potential to play a significant role in sustainable solutions for people, the planet, prosperity and peace. Tourism has the potential to contribute directly and indirectly to all the goals of the SDGs. Besides, the tourism statistics is quite impressive to the world economy. As per UNWTO, tourism as an economic powerhouse is the third highest world category in export earnings (2015). This represents 10% of the world GDP, 30% of service export and 1 out of every 10 jobs.

In order to align with the theme of Rethinking Tourism, this write up focuses on Rethinking about Tourism as discipline. Rethinking tourism discipline holds relevance because the academicians hold huge responsibility to create and pass knowledge that adheres to Sustainable Development at

Since the threat of resurgence of COVID has made people reluctant to travel and visit tourism hot-spots, it is vital for destinations to publicize their hygiene and safety policies and what measures are in place to persuade tourists that it is safe them.

It is widely acknowledged that another important factor that is impacting the industry in the aftermath of the pandemic is the increasing inclination on part of tourists to avoid crowded destinations and to visit new places which are off the beaten path, as also to make a minimum impact on the environment and local cultures during the visit. There is also an increased inclination to spend more time to get to know local heritage and cultures more closely. For a destination like Jammu and Kashmir, this shift in tourist preference in the post covid scenario represents a golden opportunity in developing and promoting the profuse mountainous areas of the Union Territory for Ecotourism as well as for Adventure tourism and other outdoor activities whose vast potential, especially in Jammu province, has remained largely outside the mainstream of tourism promotion so far. Rethinking the existing orientation to also bring this untapped potential into focus is, therefore, likely to yield beneficial results in promoting tourism to Jammu and Kashmir.

Although the unique topography of Jammu and Kashmir, which encompasses the entire range of geographical features ranging from the sub-tropical plain areas to the temperate mountainous areas, has the potential to be promoted for catering to a number of tourist segments, the myopic focus on a

limited number of destinations like Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Shri Mata Vaishnodevi Ji, etc. in the past, has resulted in a large number of other beautiful areas being deprived of the benefits that could accrue from an inclusive approach to tourism development in Jammu and Kashmir. Numerous rural districts of the Union Territory have the potential for promotion of Ecotourism, which is one of the fastest emerging segments of tourism and can have a profound impact on its rural economy. It comprises tourists who, not only want to move away from the cities for acquiring new knowledge and experiences, but who also want to ensure that their visit has a positive impact on the inhabitants and natural resources of the destinations, with earnings from visitors being ploughed back into preserving and conserving the natural environs and local cultural integrity.

The unexplored areas of Jammu and Kashmir provide innumerable opportunities for ecotourism on a round the year basis. During the summer months it includes, among other activities, wildlife tourism opportunities in the Kisthwar High Altitude National Park, which is home to several rare species of mammals, primary amongst them being the Snow Leopard, the famous Kashmir Stag 'Hangul', Musk Deer, Ibex, Himalayan Tahr, Markhor, Himalayan Black bear, Brown Bear, etc. The Kisthwar Himalayas also afford excellent mountaineering opportunities for climbing World famous peaks like Sickle Moon, Brahma I, Brahma II, Nun, etc. Besides, Doda and other districts in the Folds of the Lesser Himalayas having tem-

perate conditions also offer the opportunities for promoting trekking, camping, nature study, Camping, Bird-watching, Photography and eco-friendly adventure activities including Paragliding, Mountain Biking, Zip-lining and Rock-Climbing and river rafting during this period.

During the winter months, besides skiing which can be held at a number of suitable locations in the temperate areas indicated in the previous para, almost all the other activities mentioned above, except location specific activities, can be organized in the districts in the Sub-tropical and Intermediate zones in areas along the Shivalik range. The Chenab provides excellent river rafting opportunities in Reasi District. While opportunities for Kayaking and Canoeing exist at Mansar and Ranjita Sagar Lakes. With the existence of potential for promoting Ecotourism on the scale outlined above, a shift towards including a focus on this segment of tourism has the potential to have a widespread positive impact on income generation, education and poverty reduction by improving individual livelihoods in local communities in the remotest areas of the Union Territory.

A third important aspect which needs urgent attention is the development of Human Resources in the tourism sector. There can be no two opinions that sustainable development of the sector requires close collaboration across all major stakeholder groups, from the government to the communities as well as the private sector as well as the tourists. Also, since mobile technology is fast becoming a part of people's lives and is changing way tourists make a choice about places they want to visit, the way they book their holidays and the activities they want to participate in, this requires the availability of the right human capital base throughout the sector to meet current and future market demand as well as to enhance competitiveness and sustainability of tourism destinations. All encompassing Human Resource Development initiatives therefore need to be thought out and put in place for reaping the full benefits of the growing and fast changing tourism industry.

A rethink to give a wider scope to the development of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir in tune with the existing trends in the Industry can change outcomes substantially and place future growth on a sustainable and sure footing for the future.

(The author is retired JKAS Officer and a former Director Tourism, Jammu)



## Rethinking tourism

local, regional, national and global level and of course to bring awareness and remove misconceptions.

It has been observed that the general perception towards the tourism discipline is as something involving not much of grey matter. This is due to the tendency of associating the discipline with the fun and frolic image of the actual tourism experience. This perception is however a myth. Primarily, Tourism studies are part of the Management Studies with prime focus on services which makes it different from general MBA. Tourism studies are as serious discipline as can be any other discipline of social-sciences and management studies.

The unique characteristic of the discipline is that it is highly interdisciplinary. It connects at ease with disciplines like economics, environmental studies, education, ICT, Social Work, Cultural Studies, History, Anthropology, Sociology, political science, geography, etc which eventually has grown to become discipline of its own like in case of biochemistry, nanoscience and neuroscience.

One may be wondering, how? For instance, in case of the connection with the discipline of Economics; international tourism contributes to the foreign exchange earnings for a country; it contributes to the local economy immensely by domestic tourism. Many countries like Maldives, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, etc. mainly depend on tourism based economy. Tourism thus becomes relevant service industry whose unique components and structures receive attention of the economists.

**Education:** Tourism education needs to be framed as per the industry needs; and as per the needs of the potential areas like academia (students opting for tourism studies can look forward to taking NET exam for entering higher education institutions) and administrative services (the high inter-disciplinary builds student's capacity to even take Civil Services Exam of UPSC). The discipline thus needs serious designing with the most competitive pedagogies. Environmental Studies: Tourism impacts are conspicuous on natural envi-

ronment. So it becomes part of environmental studies.

**Information and Communication Technology:** Since tourism industry is highly based on the application of ICT, So role of ICT in tourism is one of the popularly studied areas.

**Social Work:** Touristic activities influence not only the economy but also the social aspects of the host communities which get affected both positively and adversely. This fits tourism well with the studies related to sociology and social work.

**Psychology:** In order to understand the tourists' behaviour in terms of their consumption patterns, motivations etc, consumer psychology comes into play.

**Culture and Heritage:** Tourism is phenomenon in which tourists gets attracted to a destination based on the various attractions. Amongst them, culture and heritage is significant and pivotal. Moreover, tourism professionals are cultural ambassadors of their representative areas if they are well equipped with the culture and heritage of the place. This way tourism discipline is closely associated with cultural and heritage studies. Infact, tourism gives economic value to the cultural and heritage resources of a country.

**Anthropology:** In order to understand indigenous tourism and tribal tourism understanding of the anthropology is useful.

**National Security Studies:** Tourism is being used as a diplomatic tool in peace initiatives in conflicting zones, as a medium for national integration process too. So it falls in the sphere of national security studies.

**Geography:** Tourism professionals need to be well equipped with the knowledge of the world geography and geographical features of the place to serve the needs of the tourists by offering the right tourism resources and products.

So, for those who understand the tourism discipline as something of not so serious work needs to "Rethink" as it gets well with different disci-

## Pakistani Taliban is a Volcano waiting to erupt

Manish Rai

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in June this year declared an indefinite ceasefire to facilitate peace talks being brokered by the Afghan Taliban. But there have been regular clashes between TTP and Pakistan security forces since then despite both sides confirming the truce is still on. Recently, questions were raised over the fate of peace talks after some media publications reported that armed militants had returned to their former stronghold in Swat, Dir, and parts of the tribal districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province.

Also, recently the Pakistan army said that five soldiers and at least four fighters died in a gun battle when security forces raided a hideout in Boyya, North Waziristan. TTP confirmed the clash and accused the government of bad faith, saying troops had attacked them in six districts recently, including Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Whether or not the negotiations progress, an imminent escalation of violence appears most likely. It has the potential of spreading from the frontier into the urban areas, particularly given the fragile political and economic situation in the country.

Also, in the long term, there are not many bright prospects for peace talks. The main sticking points are demands by the TTP to reverse FATA's merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Imposition of Sharia law in the area, and the withdrawal of Pakistan's military forces from the border region. These main demands of TTP are next to impossible to be fulfilled by the Pakistani deep state. Not only has the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan emboldened the TTP, once one of the world's most deadly terror groups, to intensify its insurgency against Islamabad. But it has also given it the confidence to expect a more deferential treatment from

Islamabad that parallels that of the US toward the Afghan Taliban. Hence its highly unlikely that TTP will negotiate on any of its core demands. The Pakistani Taliban is trying to portray itself politically on the same lines as that of the Afghan Taliban but is essentially anti-Pakistan in its stance. The outfit has repeatedly refused to acknowledge the Durand Line in this they are getting tacit support from the Afghan Taliban.

The alignment of interests between the Afghan Taliban and TTP goes deeper. As both the Afghan Taliban and TTP are Pashtun. It is thus alarming

*As a matter of fact, Tehreek-I-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is the largest militant organization in Pakistan. They may not be able to control large swaths of territory in tribal areas as they used to do till 2014.*

that at the same time the Afghan Taliban continues to challenge Pakistani territorial integrity by rejecting the Durand Line. The TTP is concurrently pressing for a reversal to the merger of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Together, these efforts could bring the idea of a mostly Pashtun-inhabited tribal borderland with a potential associated separatist movement into the mainstream.

Another source of the TTP's aggressive stance is the perceived weakness of its opponent, i.e., the Pakistani State, which has been experiencing high levels of socioeconomic and political instability. Mired in their own set of domestic problems, the Pakistani government and military officials come across as beleaguered, desperate for a peace deal to curtail violence. This perception is evident from

the tones taken by the TTP's chief, Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud, and spokesperson Muhammad Khorasani in their public statements since last October when these negotiations became public. For example, the TTP attributes the country's problems of inflation and taxes, rising ethnic division, and government mismanagement of natural calamities to the "State crum policies", the corrupt practices of its civil and military leaders, and a lack of Sharia implementation.

The TTP's links with transnational jihadi networks plus its demands to retain control of its

ments, such as the Malakand accord but also its fragmented nature. Peace negotiations often fail to work with a fragmented organization, because competing factions within the group will feel threatened if any political deal empowers their rivals. The TTP is not internally cohesive like the Afghan Taliban. And power struggles within different factions can result in heightened and prolonged violence as they will engage in outbidding and fratricidal violence. Internal competition can also result in defections, and in the TTP's case, Islamic State Khorasan (ISK) has been and may continue to be an attractive alternative.

As a matter of fact, Tehreek-I-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is the largest militant organization in Pakistan. They may not be able to control large swaths of territory in tribal areas as they used to do till 2014. But certainly, it can launch a new wave of terrorist attacks across Pakistan if not checked in time. The real operational strengths of the Pakistan Taliban are its affiliates and support networks, which still exist and are thriving inside Pakistan. The TTP, unlike the Afghan Taliban, has been designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the US. The TTP is closer to the global jihadist agenda of targeting the far enemy. Pakistan needs to realize that to address the threat emerging from TTP a multidimensional approach is required that goes beyond kinetic operations. In addition to building up military pressure on the TTP. Much effort and many resources need to be poured into countering violent extremism (CVE) measures, deradicalization programmes, and the potential reintegration of combatants in TTP-affected regions. (IPA)

(The author is a columnist for the Middle East and Afghanistan-Pakistan region and Editor of the geo-political news agency ViewsAround.)