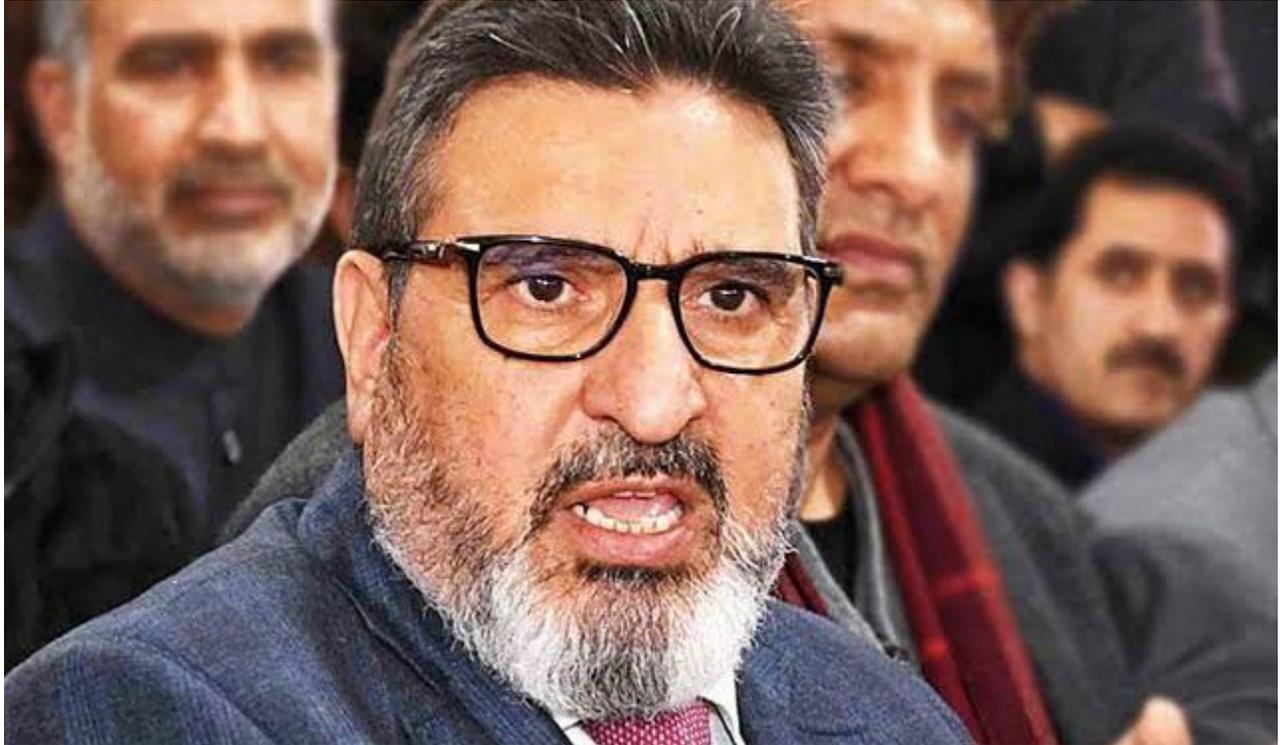


JKAP delegation led by Altaf Bukhari called on Lt. Governor



Submitted memorandum highlighting socio-political-economic issues

Srinagar, July 18: A delegation of Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) led by party president Syed Mohammed Altaf Bukhari on Saturday called on Lieutenant Governor Girish Chandra Murmu to highlight socio-political and economic issues faced by the people of J&K.

In a statement issued here, the JKAP leaders held detailed discussions on various issues confronting the people especially after the implementation of J&K Reorganization Act, 2019.

The meeting was held in an amicable atmosphere and the Lt Governor gave a patient hearing to the delegation and assured all possible support from the Government to redress the issues confronting people of Jammu and Kashmir. A memorandum highlighting some of the important political and socio-economic issues faced by the people of J&K was submitted to the Lt. Governor.

The delegation was assured that few of the demands mentioned in the memorandum which are exclusively within the jurisdiction of the union government would be forwarded to the concerned quarters with specific recommendations from the J&K government.

Besides the party president, the delegation comprised of party leaders Ghulam Hassan Mir, Rafi Ahmad Mir, Zaffar Manhas, Haji Mohammad Ashraf Mir, Javed Hassan Beigh, Usman Majid Ganai, Abdul Majid Padder, Abdul Rahim Rather, Noor Mohammad Sheikh, Raja Manzoor, Ghulam Mohammad Bhawan, Shoaib Lone, Javed Ahmad Mirchal, Muntazir Mohi-ud-din, Irfan Naqib, Mir Sammiullah, Syed and Farooq Andrabi and Jagmohan Singh Raina.

Following is the memorandum submitted by JKAP to LT. Governor

To,

Shri Girish Chandra Murmu Ji,

The Hon'ble Lt. Governor

Jammu and Kashmir

Raj Bhavan, Srinagar.

Subject: Memorandum with regard to socio-political and economic issues faced by the people of J&K

Respected Sir,

We take this opportunity to inform you about the fact that almost a fortnight is left for completion of one year since the J&K Reorganization Act 2019 was implemented in Jammu and Kashmir.

With these constitutional reforms, the competence field of J&K was substantially reduced. And the erstwhile State became more dependent on the Center primarily for the devolution of funds as it lost financial autonomy it had, as a State.

The downgrading of the State of Jammu & Kashmir to the status of Union Territory was not received well by the people who essentially saw this move as a brazen violation of the principle of federalism. With the result, a deep sense of alienation and disenchantment continues to dominate the public opinion especially that of the youth in J&K.

If the government of India is serious about its argument of socio-economic development and political stability in J&K, it must aggressively work to put this message through. It should also feel the pulse of the people who are anxiously waiting for immediate restoration of Statehood to J&K and further expect a decision in this regard very soon. Such a decision is bound to bring about confidence and trust among the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

On this occasion we would like to remind the top leadership of our country particularly the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and union home minister Shri Amit Shah of their promises in this regard so that the sense of hurt among the population in J&K over the state becoming UT is addressed expeditiously.

Also to win over the confidence of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the Centre will have to re-examine its decades' old policies and shun its complete dependence on security measures and dealing with peoples' political aspirations through the law and order prism.

We are of firm belief that the economic development in J&K is possible only if the political aspirations of the people are addressed in a just and humane manner. Restoration of Statehood to J&K on completion of one year of Reorganization Act can be one major step in this direction.

In light of the above mentioned observations, we therefore submit this memorandum for your kind perusal and hope that your good office will also pursue some of the demands which are exclusively within the jurisdiction of the union government:

1. Restoration of Statehood

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. An early announcement in this regard would further solidify the idea of pluralism and respectful coexistence in this region.

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 a pluralistic blend to continue to shine in this part of the country. We take this opportunity to remind the government of India through your good office about its promise on 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. Domicile Rights over Land and Jobs

The constitutional and legal decisions taken on August 5, 2019 have been viewed by a significant number of the population of J&K as something like “stripping them off from the rights over their land and other rightful holdings.”

While our party has been vehemently demanding Domicile Rights on land and jobs for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the recent Domicile order issued by the union government vis-à-vis the rights of residents of J&K on jobs reflects a casual approach.

Being a government issued order and not a law made by the Parliament, the new gazette notification regarding Domicile rule for J&K residents is not immune to any judicial review.

Our demand is that those residents of J&K who have already a valid Permanent Resident Certificate should not be asked for domicile certificates both for possession of land and immovable property or for applying to any government jobs.

We also demand threadbare discussions with all stakeholders of Jammu and Kashmir to be held at an appropriate time to remove anomalies in the recently issued Domicile rules for J&K.

3. Release of Detainees

Though it is an appreciable step that most of the leaders belonging to various political parties have been released and PSA against them revoked the detention of hundreds of other political activists who were detained around the August 5, 2019 continue to remain in jails without any review.

Since these activists were not detained for committing any violation of law the government should have taken a review of their detention and released them without any delay.

Now in view of the COVID pandemic which has not left even the jails immune to this infection, these political 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 are in jails under Public Safety Act. 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 of cases against youth

Hundreds of youth, (mostly teenagers) continue to be detained under different FIRs in Kashmir valley and are still caught into legal cases which have become a huge hurdle in their way to join the national mainstream.

This issue merits urgent attention of the Government. It is requested to withdraw cases against such youth on compassionate grounds and allow them to fully integrate into the society and allow them to behave as responsible citizens of the country.

5. Ensuring JK Bank's Functional Autonomy

Jammu and Kashmir Bank has been a repository of trust and confidence of peoples' economic interests. Control over financial matters besides its overall functioning has been unnecessarily put to a question mark.

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

Recently, the bank quashed a selection list of candidates who had applied for posts of probationary officers and banking associates, two years after the bank conducted an RBI supervised examination. With this illegal decision, lakhs of candidates have been pushed from pillar to post to

seek justice. This action smacks of an unwarranted external interference which is highly detrimental to the interests of the Bank and livelihood of the local youth.

In another case of seemingly external interference, the bank has stopped salaries of around 2800 of its employees who are working with utmost dedication in its various business units and have been unnecessarily deprived of their remunerations which is a gross injustice with their families.

These employees have been working in the JK Bank for the last many years and most of them have been promoted to higher positions. By stopping their salaries these employees along with their families have been subjected to social stigma and are virtually undergoing a mental trauma.

The J&K government needs to remove the unwanted interference of ACB in the functioning of the Bank which has otherwise caused a huge dent in the credibility of this iconic financial institution.

6. Reviving Agriculture and Horticulture Sectors

Though many “packages” have been announced by the State and Central governments from time to time for the upliftment of Agriculture and Horticulture sectors, yet absence of a practicable mechanism to support the growers and farmers is 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.

Introduction of schemes specific to orchard rejuvenation and high density plantation for apples is the need of 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 line with the Hon’ble Prime Minister’s vision to double farm level income by 2022 in India.

To start with, first of all the horticulture sector should be compensated for the losses due to snowfall, which was the worst since 30 years. We will have to subsidize the transport cost also. Market intervention scheme introduced last year was an utter failure. It should be planned well in advance and we should see that payments are made immediately on receipt of consignment.

Similarly, under the Government of India's flagship programme PradhanMantri AatmaNirbhar Bharat Scheme (PMANBS), all the left out perishable fruits and vegetables of J&K.

This way, lakhs of orchardists, farmers and vegetable growers across Jammu and Kashmir who deal with fruits and vegetables other than Tomato, Onions and Potatoes would get vast benefits extended under the centrally sponsored scheme primarily with regard to protection from making distress sale due to COVID-19 lockdown and reduction in their post-harvest losses.

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 J&K industrial policy 2016, though with many loopholes, had ensured viability of the local industrial units including micro, small, medium and large in view of the geographical and economical limitations faced by the unit holders.

The inevitable cost of achieving competitive efficiency which is being projected by the government cannot be applied to J&K unit holders who are not in a position to compete with their counterparts from the rest of the country. This is true with all Micro, Small, Medium and Large industrial enterprises in J&K.

The industrial unit-holders in the rest of the country are far more ahead in terms of availability of raw material, cheap labour costs, uninterrupted power supply and constant working allowances.

While as in contrast, the J&K unit holders work only for a few months in a year and most of the time especially in Kashmir valley these units' remains shut. Besides the J&K unit holders have a limited market and primarily depend on government tenders. The government of India should not equate J&K unit holders with their counterparts from the rest of the country when there is a huge difference between the parameters of industrial feasibility.

The government should accord preference to the J&K unit holders in extending incentives or otherwise the local unit holders here will have no other option but to close their units rendering lakhs of skilled and unskilled youth unemployed in both divisions of Jammu and Kashmir.

Also 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. Address lockdown impact on vital sectors of economy:

First of all we appreciate the J&K administrative council for taking slew of measures to tackle the slowdown of the economy due to the COVID [pandemic](#). However, need of the hour is to provide relief to stakeholders in all important economic sectors who have not availed any kind of loans. J&K's economy was already in recession due to multiple factors particularly the law and order situation. This dismal economic scenario worsened since August 5, 2019 and now coupled with COVID-19 Pandemic, the industries, tourism, agriculture, horticulture, handicrafts, transport, hotel industry and all other allied sectors are reeling under tremendous distress.

It is also extremely disheartening that the industry and other business communities of J&K have been superficially covered for the benefits of a special package of Rs 20, 000 Crore announced by the government of India to revive the shattered economy in the country.

The union finance ministry should end the differential treatment with business fraternity of J&K and a separate stimulus package covering the lockdown period since August 2019 should be considered in order to revive the business activity in this trouble hit region.

In Jammu region, the tourism and its allied sectors especially the hotel industry is completely shut by the suspension of Vaishno Devi Yatra. Same is the case with Jammu's agriculture sector especially its Basmati producing farmers who have suffered a huge financial distress because of the prevailing situation.

The COVID pandemic has further squeezed all these economic sectors which can only be revived by a serious intervention of the government of India. To begin with the government must go for interest subvention for the years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 to agriculture, horticulture, tourism, hotel, and other industrial and business sectors of J&K and provide soft loans to them at least upto 30 per cent of their investments.

The government should release long pending dues to MSME unit holders of Jammu and Srinagar which amounts to Rs. 100 Crores under centre's Saubhagya Scheme implemented by Power Development Department. Similarly, the other MSME unit holders have around Rs 250 Crores

pending with various government departments, PSU's, especially SICOP. Fiscal incentives, tax exemptions, Kisan Credit loans waiver can be some major confidence building measures in this regard.

9. Revival of Tourism and allied industrial sector:

The revival of tourism and allied industries including hotels, handicrafts, tour operators, houseboat owners, shikarawallahs is critical to the revival of the economy of Jammu & Kashmir.

In this regard, interest subvention need to be looked into from August 2019 upto March 2022 to support the industry. 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 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.

10. Restoration of Internet

The restoration of 4G internet connectivity in all regions of the Union Territory needs to be looked on top priority. Almost one year is nearing completion since the ban on 4G mobile internet was imposed. This unjustifiable ban on mobile internet has caused huge inconvenience to the people especially students and traders community in J&K. The government must review its decision and lift the ban on high speed mobile internet so that people can avail the benefits of modern day data and telecommunication facilities.

11. National Highway and Regional Connectivity within J&K

The National Highway connecting Jammu to Srinagar is in urgent need of works to be expedited. Due to the frequent highway closure medical emergencies cannot be fully responded to in a time bound manner along 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 improvement in intra regional 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 PerkhionGali 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 need 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 as 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 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.

12. Ensuring rights of locals on geology and mining activities in J&K:

The quarrying activities in J&K have been halted since last year putting lakhs of families associated with this business directly or indirectly in a state of constant agony.

Not only the small and medium raw material processing units are shut but the ban on extraction and lifting of raw material has deprived lakhs of local families of their occupation and exposed consumers to skyrocketing prices of key construction materials.

Since the first claim on local resources rightfully belongs to the natives of J&K, the government must chalk-out a protective mechanism for ensuring the rights of locals on minor mineral resources are safeguarded.

In view of the above we demand that the local quarry owners at Athwajan, Panthachowk, ShalegufZewan, ZewanBala, Khanmouh in Srinagar and Kathua, Samba, Akhnoor, Reasi, Doda, Kishtwar in Jammu division should be allowed to go for extraction and lifting of raw material on Short Term Permit basis.

Similarly as per the Panchayat Raj Act, Panchayats should be authorized to allow the process of extraction and lifting of raw material in rural areas of Baramulla, Kupwara, Budgam, Bandipora, Ganderbal and Anantnag districts.

Also the left out mineral blocks in J&K should be well demarcated and notified within the radius of around eight kilometers for stone crusher units and at least 50 per cent of these demarcated blocks should be reserved for the local stakeholders.

13. 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.

14. Construction of Bunkers:

Construction of concrete bunkers for hapless people near firing range in Karnah, Uri and Poonch should be among the government's top priorities as these border areas are vulnerable to frequent border skirmishes which result in death and destruction of properties.

Though a speedy action was assured at the highest level but no purpose centric forward movement seems in this direction. There is a feeling that even this human tragedy is not free from lopsided treatment.

15. Remove income clause in reservation to Pahari tribe:

After a long battle the government had granted 4 % reservation in jobs to Pahari speaking tribes. What made the community to hail the decision and celebrate it across the State was their recognition as a tribe. However, the recently issued notification wherein an income slab has been fixed for reservation of this tribe, demolishes the basic purpose and adds salt to the injury. Hence the government must revisit its decision and withdraw the notification with regard to income slab for Pahari speaking communities for availing reservation benefits.

16. Security issues of political activists:

This serious issue is yet to be settled even after a gap of six months. After the recent barbaric and mindless killings at Bandipora, the political activists irrespective of their affiliations feel insecure, humiliated and left out midway as per the past practice. The front row political activists are humiliated by withdrawal of security from their residences. They are constantly deprived of security cover in their respective electoral segments. Hence they are forced to cool their heels in Srinagar, bringing the much talked about political process to a halt. The issue needs to be decided either way once for all.

17. Regularization of daily wagers and other low paid employees:

Thousands of need based, casual labourers, daily rated workers, NYC, HDF workers, consolidated, contingency paid employees, ITI and skilled workers, contractual and adhoc appointees working in various departments for over two decades are still awaiting regularization of their services.

These workers are genuinely curious about the stand taken by the present dispensation with regard to their regularization as the process was set in motion by previous regimes and directives were issued to all heads of departments to frame the lists of eligible workers who had completed over 10 years services for their permanent absorption in respective departments. The government must come clean on this issue.

18. Removal of SRO 202:

JKAP puts its appreciation on record to the union home minister and lieutenant governor of J&K for nullifying the clauses of SRO-202 mentioned in new recruitment rules but demands that the employees already recruited under the contentious SRO during last five years be compensated accordingly.

Reducing the probation period from five to two years in the new recruitment process is not enough. The government should do justice with the employees who have been recruited from time to time since 2015 under the obsolete SRO.

Similarly, the withdrawal and re-advertisement of posts by the government in view of the modified probation clauses of SRO 202 is bound to create anarchy and frustration among lakhs of candidates who have crossed the upper age limit.

The government should concede to the demand for complete revocation of SRO 202 as the draconian provisions of this SRO are highly detrimental to the interest of employees and unemployed educated youth of J&K.

19. Establish separate CAT Bench at Srinagar

The government of India should establish a separate bench of the Central Administrative Tribunal at Srinagar so as to do justice with lakhs of employees who cannot afford to visit and stay in Jammu to pursue adjudication of their service related grievances.

An effective and speedy dispute resolution process with respect to recruitment and conditions of service matters of persons against the Union or other authorities under the control of the Government demands an exclusive bench to be set up at Srinagar.

While we laud the union home ministry for accepting a huge public demand for keeping J&K out of the jurisdiction of Chandigarh administrative tribunal and establishing one circuit bench of the tribunal at Jammu, we demand a separate bench of CAT be established at Srinagar in view of the dangerous terrain and climatic conditions of the region.

With Warm Regards,

Shri Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari

ShriGh. Hassan Mir

Shri Rafi Ahmad Mir

Shri Zaffar Manhas

Haji Mohammad Ashraf Mir

ShriJavid Hassan Beigh

ShriUsmanMajidGanai

Shri Ab. MajidPadder

Shri Abdul Rahim Rather

Shri Noor Mohammad Sheikh

Shri Raja Manzoor

ShriGh. Mohammad Bhawan

ShriShoaib Lone

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