

Illegal constructions galore in Pahalgam

Authorities mute as hoteliers flout norms; even green zones not spared

KHALID GUL

Pahalgam, July 1: With tacit support of authorities, several influential hoteliers are carrying out construction work in picturesque south Kashmir resort of Pahalgam in blatant violation of court directions. What speaks loud of government inaction is that the constructions are going on in all areas notified and bought under Pahalgam Development Authority (PDA) last year.

The High Court has imposed blanket ban on constructions in Pahalgam till framing of new Master Plan, following the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Peoples Welfare Pahalgam.

Sources, however, revealed that many influential hoteliers under the garb of repair work are flouting the directions and going for construction of fresh structures. They further said the PDA was facilitating the transportation of construction material.

"A hotelier in Laripora, who had got permission for minor repairs of his eight-room hut, went on to construct another storey with authorities acting as mute spectators," sources said. They said the hotel has come up in violation of all norms set up by Building Operation Control Authority (BOCA).

In Bradihaji too, which has been declared highly fragile zone by Environment Expert Committee constituted by court, illegal structures are being raised with impunity. "The expert committee has even suggested shifting the habitation from this area but now new structures are being allowed to be raised," an official said.

Sources said that initially tin sheds are being erected and later converted



into huts. Similarly, in Lidroo area near Check Post, sources say a huge hotel is coming up in the dense forest area. The area being highly fragile consisting of pine trees was designated as green zone even in previous flawed Master Plan and has been kept so in the new draft master plan.

"Many other influential people who had sought permission for minor repair work from Court or even those who have no prior permission are raising structures in the vicinities of their hotels and huts in main Pahalgam, Bradihaji, Sarbal, Rangiwad, Ganesbal, Nunwan, Laripora, circuit road area, Lidroo and Langanbal," sources said.

They said that PDA was not monitoring the repair work and violation of building permission norms.

"We fail to understand how these influential people manage to ferry huge construction material into Pahalgam and then dump at their hotels and huts," said the residents. They alleged that the officials posted at check post were facilitating the entry of construction material into Pahalgam.

"While the locals whose houses got damaged due to windstorm, snow or blaze and have proper permission from Court struggle to bring construction material for repair work, the influential hoteliers have been given free hand to bring in material," they said.

Sources further say that illegal constructions continue to thrive in the vicinities of Pahalgam downstream Lidder River despite being notified and bought under PDA by the govern-



ment recently. The areas were notified following the recommendations of the committee formed by the High Court as well as Kashmir University's Environment Assessment Impact Committee.

"Illegal constructions galore on the banks of Lidder River in Mawoora, Yanner, Ganespora, Jaibal, Aamad Wagad as well as in forest and wild life areas of Batkoot, Gujrani Batkoot, Veersaran and Srechan," sources said.

They said that concrete structures were also coming up in agriculture and kahcharai land in Yanner, Batakoot, Ganespora, Jaibal and Aamad Wagad.

"An influential doctor from Srinagar has been carrying out construction of huts in Gujrani Batkoot amid dense forests under the nose of authorities for last two years," sources said. They said

the doctor has raised illegal structures in main Pahalgam, Aamad Zoo, Langanbal and at many scenic spots with the tacit support of authorities.

"The government should immediately finalize new Master Plan to stop further vandalism of this scenic spot," locals said.

Chief Executive Officer, PDA, MY Bhat, said that the Authority has constituted a team to monitor violations. "I have taken over charge recently and I am doing everything possible to implement the Court orders," said Bhat.

Regarding the ban on construction in the area downstream Lidder River notified last year, Bhat said, "Yes there have been certain violations and constructions have come up. But I won't allow anyone to flout orders."

LD doctors leave behind surgery thread in woman's womb

Patient undergoes 2nd surgery in 2 months

SHABIR IBN YUSUF

Srinagar, July 1: Doctors at SMHS Hospital here carried out second surgery on a patient after she complained of severe abdominal pain. The doctors have recovered surgery thread from the womb of the patient, reportedly left behind during a surgery at Lal Ded Hospital two months ago.

Admitted in ward number 18 of SMHS Hospital, Zainab (33) wife of Arshad Hussain Gargroo of Chanpora was first operated upon at Lal Ded Hospital on April 24. After the surgery she gave birth to a baby girl.

Zainab complained of severe abdominal pain 15 days ago and

was brought to SMHS Hospital for treatment. "We were asked for CT Scan by doctors here," Arshad told *Greater Kashmir*, adding that during the surgery at Lal Ded Hospital the doctors have left behind gauze inside the womb of his wife.

The woman is now recuperating.

A senior doctor, who carried out the surgery on Zainab at SMHS Hospital, told *Greater Kashmir* that they have recovered a granule from the abdomen of Zainab and have sent it for biopsy. "It seems it was silk suture reaction. Suture is a thread used during surgery," the doctor informed.

Sopore opposes shifting of SKUAST departments

GHULAM MUHAMMAD

Sopore, July 1: Expressing resentment over the proposal of shifting Horticulture and Forestry departments of Sher-i-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST) from Wadoora here, various organizations have appealed the state government to reconsider its proposed decision.

The organizations including Sopore Trade Federation, Sopore Bar Association and Fruit Growers Union, while expressing resentment over the proposal, have said that they would launch a district-wide agitation in case officials go ahead with the proposed move.

"We strongly oppose the move and demand that state government should come clear on the issue," said Muhammad Ashraf Ganai, a local trader.

PDP raises issue of basic amenities

People forced to stage demos even for water, ration: Mehbooba

Srinagar, July 1: Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti Tuesday said bad governance has pushed respectable citizens into virtual destitution as is evident from demonstrations all over the state to press demands even for basic amenities. Addressing various meetings in Devsar constituency of Kulgam district, she said apart from its political agenda PDP will focus on improving the quality of life for the citizens of the state. She was accompanied by deputy speaker of legislative assembly, Muhammad Sartaj Madni, on her tour which took her to Larmgangi Pora, Palpora, Akran, Kailam and other villages.

Mehbooba said she is pained by the frequent sight of the people, mostly ladies, holding dharnas and demonstrations for even drinking water at many places. She said if this could be the case in a state so much rich in the water resources nobody other than the National Conference and Congress, who have been in power ever since independence, can be blamed for such dehumanizing conditions.

The PDP chief said in spite of huge investment in the development schemes very little seems to be changing for the people who have to face immense difficulties in getting power, water, rations, healthcare and education. Women still have to fetch water from distant sources and virtually fight for survival. She said the state has been deliberately projected as a begging bowl because the parties in power have time and gain sold out its interests for their own political survival.

PDP, she said, would reverse this impression and try to establish a model welfare state where people would get what they deserve as a matter of right like members of a dignified society.

Mehbooba said the government has been holidaying while the people are left to their fate. She said the farming community has suffered immense losses due to inclement weather conditions which have resulted in heavy damage to apple and other fruits. Similarly, hailstorm in many areas has left crops devastated but the government agencies have been unable to intervene either in disease control or loss assessment. GKN

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