

## Sustainable development of *Bangus Valley* as a viable tourist destination



*Bangus valley ©INTACH J&K Chapter*

Kashmir Valley has been described as an irregular oval shaped, consisting of a similar level vale in the center surrounded by a ring of mountains. The summits of the surrounding mountains are generally at an altitude of 10,000 feet above sea level bearing a short distance in the southernmost direction. The slopes of these mountains descending towards the central plain are drained by numerous rivers and streams, all of which join the principal river of the region, Jhelum within the confines of the valley. Aside from the main central valley, which is known as the Jhelum Valley, stretch out a series of side valleys, replete with their own set of forests, streams and meadows. These include the valleys of *Kishen Ganga, Lolab, Gurais, Sindh* and *Bangus*.

One of the relatively unknown areas of Kashmir with vast tourism potential is the valley of *Bangus*. The valley, which is at an altitude of

10,000 ft. above sea level, lies in the northern border district of Kupwara within the sub district Handwara. The valley is stretched over an area of around 300 sq. kms (20x15 km). It consists of a linear elliptical bowl aligned along the east west axis. The valley is surrounded by areas called Rajwar and Mawar in east, Shamasbury and Dajlungun mountains in the west, Chowkibal and Karnah Guli in the north and Leepa Mountains in the south.

Bangus Valley is a land of beautiful meadows recognized about 100 so far, according to local sources. These meadows are divided into two types, plain meadows & plateaus.

### Plain Meadows

Plain meadows include open plains of:

Chota Bangus,

Bodh Bangus (or Badha Bangus),

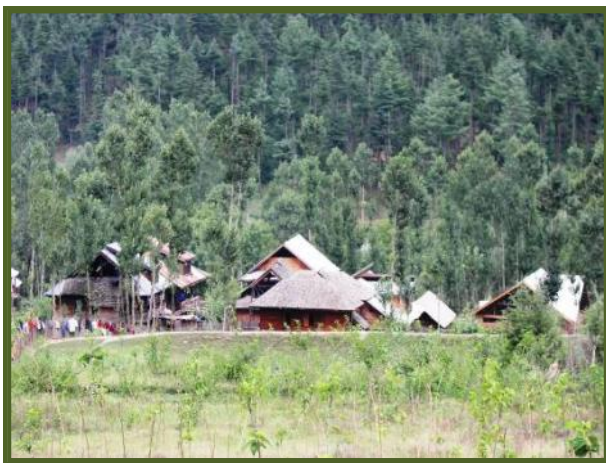
Masjid Aangan, Nichan Reyana & Kiyind Patter etc



### Plateaus

Plateau or tableland meadows constitute about 60% of the meadows. These include:

- Bidran,
- Lashar,
- Dodhe,
- Gumre,
- Cheekta Deeyar,
- Satkoul &
- Zanzer" etc.



Village in vicinity of the Bangus valley ©INTACH J&K Chapter

### Primary Objectives for sustainable development of the region

For an overall sustainable development of Bangus Valley as a viable tourist destination, an integrated approach to tourism planning and conserving of the rich, natural eco system is required. **Thus traditional tourism needs in terms of accommodation, accessibility, road network, services and related marketing and economic development need to be combined and integrated with a Tourism development Plan that primarily focuses on the preservation of the existing Eco-system.** The Proposed tourism activities in Bangus are based on the following basic, underlying objectives:

- Sustainable tourism in the area compatible with conservation of existing biodiversity.
- Maintenance of the existing structure and functioning of the ecosystem.

- Respect for the socio-cultural authenticity of host community, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- Protection of indigenous livelihood, resources and access to these resources.
- Supporting the effective participation and involvement of indigenous and local communities in the development, operation and monitoring of tourism activities.
- Control and monitoring of tourism activities in the area to ensure adherence to these objectives and the proposed guidelines.

Hence for a sustained eco friendly development it is imperative that a system of guidelines is adhered to and, their effects be evaluated over a period of time. It should be remembered that the proposed tourism activities in Bangus would entail the opening of a fragile and unique ecosystem to a vast number of visitors for the first time in history. As such it is important to follow and monitor the proposed guidelines to ensure that any proposed tourism activity will be of benefit to the area, community and the state at large. The guidelines are to:

- Ensure that the proposed tourism activity in the area is followed by efforts related to Impact Management and Mitigation. The aim of such an activity would be to minimize any potential damage to the biodiversity of the area. Government agencies (Department of Tourism, Forest, Wildlife etc.) and members of local community should be actively engaged in such a role.
- Ensure responsible use of natural resources (like land, soil, water, energy).
- Preventing the introduction of alien species as a result of any construction, landscaping or operating of tourism activity.



- Reducing, minimizing and preventing pollution and waste in an ecologically fragile area.
- Ensure that the proposed Tourism related activity, does not result in the erosion of traditional practices and lifestyles.
- Ensure that any Tourism activity does not result in the loss of access by indigenous and local communities to their traditional land resources and activities, viz-a-viz access to grazing grounds, water etc.
- Control, Restriction or prevention of Tourism related activities in Eco-fragile areas.
- Implementing means for control of mass tourist inflow, including excursions etc that can cause serious effect on the area within a limited time period.
- Encouraging use of local products, skills and services.
- Promotion of appropriate behavior by tourist, including measures for monitoring their field activities (like disposal of waste etc).

## INTACH PROPOSAL

To achieve the above mentioned primary objectives for sustainable development of the Bangus valley, INTACH, J&K proposed to develop and upgrade existing facilities in the area by focusing on:

- **Eco Tourism**
- **Adventure Tourism**
- **Culture Tourism (i.e; in the shape of Rural Tourism)**
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This will be ensured by demarcation of areas in Bangus and its vicinity for specified activities namely:

- **Designating Bangus as “Bangus Valley Biosphere”.**

- **Setting up of accommodation and other related infrastructure facilities along the stretch extending from Reshwari to Pothwari featuring on Cultural Tourism.**



*Bangus valley ©INTACH J&K Chapter*

## Proposed Bangus Valley Biosphere

The prerequisite for development of eco tourism is the identification of a natural biome, a condition that is easily met in Bangus Valley. **Lying within the Trans-Himalayan area, Bangus is a part of a unique ecological area, comprising Mountain Biome, which includes Grassland Biome with flora at lower altitudes, and Taiga or Coniferous forest. The area also contains wetlands in the form of a Fresh Water Marsh located within the Bangus valley.**

For a sustainable development of Bangus, it is proposed to earmark the area comprising approximately 300 sq km. as a part of a protected biome, under the name of **Bangus Valley Biosphere**. The proposed biosphere will comprise three zones, namely;

1. **Core Zone:** Around 76 sq. km of area comprising *Bodh* and *Lokut* Bangus.
2. **Buffer Zone:** Comprising around 300 sq.km of area including surrounding mountain ranges of Shamsbari etc.



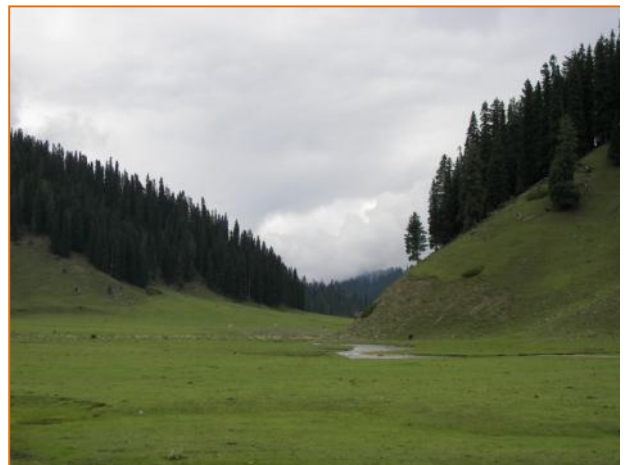
3. **Transition Zone:** Includes the settlements of Pothwari, Reshwari and Nowgam where most of the supporting infrastructural facilities will be set.

To safeguard the ecological balance of the Proposed Biosphere in the face of any tourism-generated activity in the area, following activities should not be allowed in the vicinity:

- **Construction of any permanent buildings or structures for accommodation or related purposes.**
- **Construction of any road network system within the area.**
- **Introduction of any alien plant or animal species within the biome which falls within the purview of the Proposed Park.**



Wooden house in the village near Bangus valley ©INTACH J&K Chapter



Bangus valley ©INTACH J&K Chapter



Bangus valley ©INTACH J&K Chapter

### Development of Reshwari- Pothwari Area

The entire area from Reshwari – Pothwari comprises a linear belt of land surrounded by dense forested, low lying mountains with the Mawar stream flowing in the centre. The existing habitation consists of beautiful wooden log houses, and it is proposed that Government in participation with local community develops the area as starting point for treks and trails to Bangus. Eco lodges, comprising wooden log houses merging with the existing architectural context of the area can be set up under a partnership between private and public sector. The underlying focus on

elements related to the socio-cultural background of the local community will ensure that such a development also becomes an essential part of cultural tourism in the area.

# Efforts on to make J&K mosaic of architectural landmarks: Dr Drabu

## Reviews restoration work on Mubarak Mandi Complex

**JAMMU, Jan 29:** Minister for Finance & Culture, Dr Haseeb Drabu today said that Government to begin 'cultural mapping' of J&K with the listing of cultural resources and documentation of the artifacts outside its domain. He said the State Government also mulls to take up with the concerned ministries to bring back the lost treasure to J&K. While taking a review of restoration work on the prestigious Mubarak Mandi Heritage Complex here, Dr Drabu said with all such initiatives, the culturally-rich State would become a mosaic of varied architectural landmarks.

"We shouldn't trivialize our culture and heritage," he told officials during an extensive tour of the heritage place here. "Government is making all efforts for the bringing back the lost glory of the heritage sites including the Mubarak Mandi Heritage complex," he added. Expressing concern over slow pace of restoration work on the prestigious Heritage Complex, Dr Drabu stressed bringing synergy into the official machinery to complete the works. He also stressed for roping in other agencies to supplement the ongoing works being carried out by the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) so that the restoration work is expedited and grandeur of the heritage site is restored. He also called for adopting a mechanism of beautifying the approach roads. Floating the idea of 'Cultural Mapping' of the State, the Minister said the Jammu and Kashmir has a rich cultural and heritage origin and there is a need to recreate these cultural repositories on the cultural scenario. Dr Drabu directed officials for exploring possibilities and come up with a plan to demarcate various cultural and

He also asked the tourism officials to work in close coordination with the officials of Culture, Archeology and Museums for the greater marketability of such areas. He further stressed for fixing a timeline to take up various components of work of the State Protected Monuments and also directed the officials for having a close coordination with the ASI to get the work and restoration work done on other heritage sites of the State.



Meanwhile, the Minister also took review of Department of Archives, Archaeology and Museums and unveiled an imaginative Calendar-2017 compiled by the Department. The Calendar showcases the treasure-trove of J&K's antique creative marvel and artistic legacy, titled as Shahnama Firdousi in which calligrapher, Syed Jallal-ud-Dinn Bukhari has depicted the marvelous work of 1654 AD (Mughal Period) in Persian language. The calendar is a collective voyage of rare manuscripts, priceless paintings, ancient scriptures and beautiful calligraphy in possession of the Department of Archives, Archaeology and Museums.

Source: [www.dailyexcelsior.com](http://www.dailyexcelsior.com)

## Convener INTACH J&K, M Saleem Beg among 31 given state awards

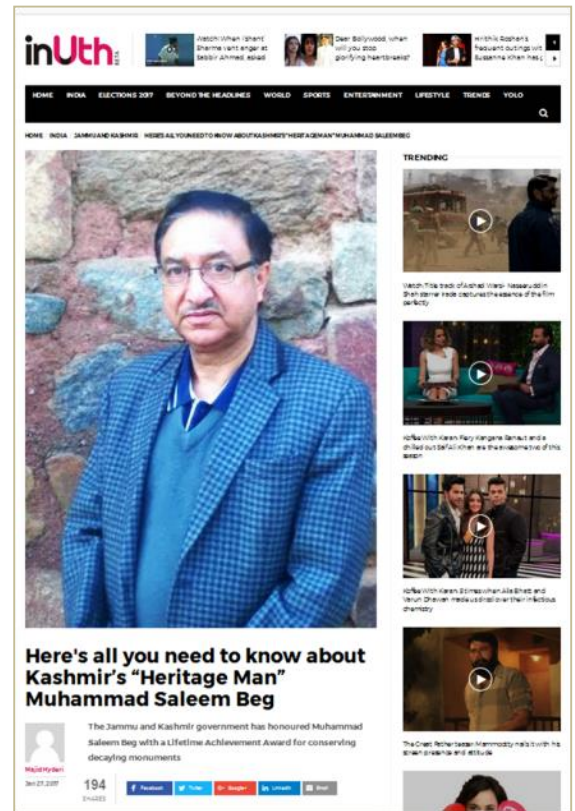
*The Jammu and Kashmir government has honored Muhammad Saleem Beg with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions towards heritage preservation & conservation in the State*

The Jammu and Kashmir government has conferred state awards on 31 persons, including Convener INTACH J&K Chapter, M Saleem Beg for his contribution in field of heritage conservation in the State.

In 2004, after his retirement from government services as Director General Tourism, Beg formally introduced heritage conservation by opening J&K chapter of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), a globally renowned group specialized in this field.

As Convener INTACH for around a decade, he went for “specialized mapping of historically significant buildings” in the Valley. This mapping technique has recorded the architectural details of over 800 structures so minutely that in the case of any damage “the same can be reconstructed brick-by-brick.”

Beg and his team also worked on the restoration of monuments that were otherwise decaying fast. Centuries old structures like Aali Masjid, Manasbal Temple, Gulmarg Palace and Mughal Gardens were magnificently restored to pristine glory. As the word of his work spread, Beg was taken as a member of the prestigious National Monument Authority (NMA). Having completed his tenure there, he is back to INTACH J&K.



[www.inuth.com](http://www.inuth.com)



[www.onlykashmir.com](http://www.onlykashmir.com)

Source: <http://jkgad.nic.in>

## Isis destroys tetrapylon monument in Palmyra

Syrian antiquities chief says militants have demolished structure and part of Roman theatre after seizing city for second time



The ancient tetrapylon in Palmyra, photographed in 2008. Photograph: Alamy



The Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra of Russia performs at the Roman theatre in Palmyra in May 2016. Photograph: Sana/Reuters

**Syria Jan 20:** Islamic State militants have destroyed a tetrapylon and part of a Roman theatre in the ancient city of Palmyra in the group's latest attack on Syria's heritage.

Syrian and Russian forces reclaimed the city from Isis in March, only to lose it to a counter-offensive in December. Isis first captured Palmyra, once a Silk Road oasis that boasted some of the best-preserved ruins of antiquity, in May 2015. Militants rampaged through the city's museums and ruins, blowing up the 2,000-year-old towering Temple of Bel and the Arch of Victory along with other priceless artifacts. They also killed Khaled al-Asaad, a leading archaeologist. Abdulkarim said on Friday Isis had destroyed the tetrapylon, a collection of monumental pillars on a raised platform near the ancient city's entrance, and part of the facade of the Roman theatre, where musicians from St Petersburg's Mariinsky orchestra had performed at a victory concert.

The attack is the latest in a campaign by Isis against the region's heritage. The group has previously destroyed historic Assyrian sites in Iraq and other treasures in Palmyra.

### Palmyra monuments desecrated by Isis



Syrian archaeologists had transferred many artefacts including about 400 statues to Damascus to prevent further destruction if Isis returned, but many reliefs and buildings remained at the site and were vulnerable to destruction.

## Pakistan Archeology” journal published after 20 years



**ISLAMABAD (APP)** – The Department of Archeology and Museum (DOAM) has published book “Pakistan Archeology” after two decades featuring reports of archeological survey and documentation of the cultural and natural stratigraphy conducted by the Harappa Archeological research project and DOAM. Last issue of the “Pakistan Archeology” was published in 1996. Since then this important journal dedicated to the research reports in the field of Archeology and its allied subjects could not be published.

Present issue of the “Pakistan Archeology” is an effort to resuscitate archeological activities in the country, said Dr Arif, Director General DOAM while talking to APP.

The New issue contains reports of archeological survey and documentation of the cultural and natural stratigraphy of the Beas settlements conducted by the Harappa Archeological research, project in collaboration with the Pakistan Archeology and Museum.

Irfan Siddiqui, Advisor to Prime Minister on National History and Literary Heritage says that Pakistan has a unique distinction of having cultural wealth of the evolutionary process of human society and the monumental landmarks of the succession of historic periods.

He said the Department of Archeology and Museum is the custodian of the Nation’s Cultural Heritage and in this capacity is the sole agency to protect and preserve its master pieces in the shape of movable sites, monuments and the movable antiquities and works of art.

Irfan Siddiqui said the present issue of the “Pakistan Archeology” is an effort of the Director General and his team to protect and promote the rich cultural heritage of the country at international level.

“It is hoped that this issue will be viewed with keen interest by scholars and students and the general public,” he said. He said this volume which we have the pleasure to introduce is dedicated to the study and surveys of the archeological sites and monuments in the country. It is government’s firm resolve to continue researches and activities in the rich tangible heritage that Pakistan Boasts, he added.

The 231 pages book “Pakistan Archeology” would be available at allvbooks stalls on Rs 1000. The Director General DOAM said the publication of “Pakistan Archeology” would also help the students and researchers working in the field of Archeology.

Archeology expert talking to APP, said this is good news that at last such an important book “Pakistan Archeology” was published. He said that credit would be given to the present government for publishing such important journal.



## Syeda Meher Taban Female museum curator Awkum wants women to adopt archaeology as career

**PESHAWAR:** Feeling proud to head a museum as a curator, Syeda Meher Taban wants women to adopt archaeology as a career. Belonging to a small village in the suburbs of Peshawar, Syeda Meher Taban joined the Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan as lecturer in the Department of Archaeology. Later, she was entrusted with the responsibility as curator of the museum set up at the university.

“Women normally don’t choose to make a career in archaeology. I chose it because I found it very challenging for women. It requires a lot of fieldwork,” Syeda Meher Taban told The News. She had topped the Department of Archaeology in the University of Peshawar. “The gold medal was just the beginning of the journey for me. I wanted to make a name in the field for my efforts in preservation of cultural heritage as a professional,” she added. According to Meher Taban, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is rich in archaeological sites where women can also work to preserve history and culture along with the male colleagues. “It is like many other fields where women are doing a great job. We have a rich history and culture and we all need to contribute in preserving it and educating our future generations about it,” she opined.

She started her professional career from the Peshawar Museum where she was appointed as assistant curator after qualifying the provincial Public Service Commission examination. “It was the start of the professional career that I had dreamed of. The journey wasn’t smooth but I knew that while working in a province like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, I would face certain obstacles. I made it sure these hurdles give me more strength,” she pointed out.



She was all praise for her parents, both of whom were teachers, and the entire family for their steadfast support in making career in a difficult and different field. According to Meher Taban, during her three-year service in Peshawar Museum she worked in different projects under Directorate of Archaeology at many places of the province, including Hund, Swabi, Charsadda and Mardan.

“After serving at the Peshawar Museum, I preferred a job as a lecturer in archaeology in the newly established Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan. Later, I got the real task when I was assigned additional responsibility as curator of the university museum,” she recalled. The female curator visited a number of museums and archaeological sites in the United States of America in 2012 and also attended an international seminar in Malaysia. “The world is preserving their past and they are proud of it. Our professional archaeologists are doing equally well despite lack of resources and technology,” Meher Taban opined.