

Tuesday, July 18, 2023

E-Paper

KASHMIR OBSERVERTM

26th year OF PUBLICATION

☁ 31°C
Srinagar

NEWS LIVE ▾ IN DEPTH ▾ BUSINESS ▾ SPORT ▾ MEDIA PEOPLE CULTURE ▾ TRAVEL ▾ SOCIETY ▾ LITERATURE ▾ CINEMA ▾ EPAPERS ▾

Home > ENVIRONMENT

Plastic Waste, Garbage Dumps in Gulmarg Forests Spark Outrage

by KO Web Desk — July 18, 2023

AA

11 SHARES 533 VIEWS



NEWS LIVE ▾ IN DEPTH ▾ BUSINESS ▾ SPORT ▾ MEDIA PEOPLE CULTURE ▾ TRAVEL ▾ SOCIETY ▾ LITERATURE ▾ CINEMA ▾ EPAPERS ▾ Q



l on social media a few days ago, has once
gement practices in health resorts of

Mumbai to Goa

from Rs2,651

[View](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

The photographs circulated on social media depicted a sorry state of affairs with solid waste — mostly plastic bags, plastic wrappers and plastic containers — dumped openly in the forest area. After the circulation of these images created a buzz, environmental activists even alleged that the concerned authorities panicked and carried out a midnight garbage clearance operation by deploying trucks and JCBs to remove the waste.

Social media exchanges of environmental activists seen by *Kashmir Observer* have lambasted the concerned officials for “their inaction” and have expressed fears that such “mismanagement” of Kashmir’s top tourist attractions can result in their extinction as tourist destinations in a few years.

Real Also

- ▶ [Four Militants Killed In Encounter In J&K’s Poonch](#)
- ▶ [3 Govt Employees Sacked For ‘Anti-National’ Activities](#)

However, the Gulmarg Development Authority (GDA) has strongly refuted the allegations. “Apropos various photographs purportedly related to the waste management at Gulmarg being circulated in social media, it is to clarify that nowhere in Gulmarg meadows or the areas frequented by tourists, one can find any garbage. The sanitation is meticulously maintained. The garbage in the dump yard is expected as the garbage has to be dumped first in the dump yard and then segregated and then fed to machinery for processing,” GDA said in a statement.

The GDA statement further stated: “The Gulmarg Development Authority is committed to assist and augment the Municipal committee Gulmarg which is responsible for overall waste management of the destination. At times the wild animals spread the waste material of the dump yard on the road side during the night, which is immediately retrieved in the morning and kept in place in the dump yard.”



Gulmarg as a destination has shown an immense increase in the tourist flow and accordingly the generation of waste has increased manifold, GDA statement stated and added that the waste is being “efficiently collected and disposed off scientifically.”

Gulmarg is one of the top two tourist attractions in Kashmir along with Pahalgam. According to official figures over half a million tourists have

social media is not the first time when people sought attention of authorities regarding waste management in Gulmarg. In February this year, local shopkeepers in Gulmarg had raised the issue of garbage mismanagement in Gulmarg saying the solid waste is thrown in forest areas. On that occasion also, GDA had denied such allegations saying there was no such issue in the tourist site.

While hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL), a division bench of the High Court had ordered in July 2019 that manufacturers of plastic waste should pay for any pollution in Gulmarg on the principle of “the polluter pays” for the cost of environmental degradation in the health resort.

“We are informed by Mr Balki, Chief Executive Officer, GDA that a large percentage of the solid waste which is generated, is on account of the wrappers and containers of chips, biscuits, other snacks and soft drink cans which are manufactured by multinational companies,” the order of the division bench had said.

“We see no reason as to why the manufacturers of these items which are packed in polluting material do not contribute to the reduction of the solid wastes in the mountainous as well as the management of the solid waste which is generated,” the order of the division bench had observed and had directed the GDA to evolve a mechanism for such companies to pay for the pollution resulting from their businesses. But, so far no such example has been made following that order.

Environmental experts and activists have been arguing for years that despite hosting an extensive network of sensitive forest and wetland ecosystems, waste management in Kashmir does not match with the requirements this ecologically sensitive region demands. With increasing population, the mismanagement of solid and liquid waste has resulted in grave environmental challenges underlining the need for an urgent and comprehensive waste management strategy for the entire region especially the tourist attractions which are thronged by hundreds of thousands of people in summers.

Even official reports and research carried out by top regional experts has often highlighted the lacuna in management of the tourist resorts such as Sonamarg, Gulmarg and Pahalgam.

“It is a very precarious and awkward situation that the extent of built-up area for the development of infrastructural facilities envisaged under the master plan to be attained by 2025 has already been attained in 2015,” Kashmir University’s Centre of Research and Development (CORD), had pointed out in its Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report for Sonamarg’s master plan.

According to the findings in the CORD’s EIA report, about 57.57 hectares of land had already been brought under the built-up area (as early as in 2015) when the total area proposed to be under built-up by 2025 is 60.04 hectares. “It means that 96% of the built up area has already been covered, although the accommodation related infrastructure, which was envisaged to get developed in the built up area, is lagging far behind” the

Similar concerns were even expressed by the government's own departments around that time. The department of ecology, environment and remote sensing had communicated to the government through letters that immediate measures need to be taken to undo the environmental damage caused by unplanned construction at the famous Sonamarg resort.

“While development of modern infrastructure is of paramount importance for meeting the needs of the tourism industry, it is important to design such development in an eco-friendly fashion to preserve and conserve the fragile ecology and environment of Sonamarg,” the letters had warned. Similar concerns about construction and waste management have often been raised about Gulmarg and Pahalgam.