

# CM bats for promoting round the year tourism

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DEVELOPMENT of requisite tourist infrastructure in consonance with environmental requirements is necessary to restore tourism glory of Jammu and Kashmir and make world famous resorts like Gulmarg round the year tourist attraction, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said today.

"Comfortable, accommodation and best service delivery act as driving force to attract visitors to come again and again and enjoy the hospitality of the people and the natural beauty," Omar said inaugurating a modern tourist facility created in the private sector at the famous ski resort of Gulmarg, 55 kms from here.

"The Khyber", an 85-room five star luxury hotel with hi-tech modern facilities is spread over seven fir-laden acres and has been designed in the local Kashmiri architecture with luxury furniture, furnishings and fixtures.

The Chief Minister said his government has

concentrated on holistic development of tourism making eco-tourism fulcrum in the creation of new facilities and upgrading the existing ones.

"The natural beauty is God's gift to the state and tourism is the key sector to catapult economy and generate jobs for people round the year," he said adding, it is imperative to maintain and conserve this natural beauty and bio-diversity of the state for present and next generations.

"This is the national duty of all of us," Omar said and called for joint and wholehearted efforts by government, private sector and public to safeguard the natural resorts and preserve their beauty.

Omar said visit of about 12 lakh visitors to the Valley this year indicates the interest people of the country and outside possess for visiting Jammu and Kashmir and enjoying the beauty God has bestowed upon it.

The Chief Minister said besides conventional tourism, government is focusing to harnessing the great potential of

adventure, pilgrim and sports tourism.

"Organising events of adventure and sports tourism and making skiing, mountain biking, white water rafting, trekking, hiking and mountaineering regular features in tourism calendar would help to give thrust to comprehensive development of tourism," he said.

Omar said Gondola and Chairlifts in Gulmarg have enhanced the orbit of organising more winter sport events in this place and attract visitors from all over the world.

He said development and upgradation of Golf Course at Gulmarg has added another attraction for the tourists.

"In fact the government has created a golf circuit in the state by developing Golf Courses at Sidhra Jammu, Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam and one is under construction at Leh. This has provided opportunity to the golfers to enjoy the sport in different geographical situations and climate during their visit to the state," he said. —PTI