Etched in popular memory as sites of hard-fought conflict and martyrdom, Kargil’s Batalik and Tiger Hill are now open to tourists — among 17 trekking routes, including seven areas hosting meadows and ridges along the Line of Control (LoC), thrown open by the J&K government.

The State Administrative Council (SAC), chaired by Governor Satya Pal Malik, on Wednesday decided to open up the 17 routes without insisting on permits to enter the Ladakh region. A Raj Bhawan spokesman said Mr. Malik was in touch with the Union Home Ministry to give final shape to the scheme.

The trekking routes proposed to be opened along the LoC in Kargil district will include Kargil-Lalung-Shahshi Lake-Darchiks-Garkone Broq; Kargil-Hunderman Brok Ridge; Batalik Junction to Gargardo, an apricot village; Drass-Sumda-Marpola in Tiger Hill Base; and National Highway to Budgam-Majdass Village.

Ten traditional routes, which attracted hundreds of European and Australian climbers in the pre-militancy phase in the 1980s, will also be thrown open again.

These include Faroona-Jasgund via Lasar La; Akshow in Zanskar-Gulab Garh Kishtwar; Kanore-Batambis-Sapi; and Sapi to Rangdum via Rusila.

“The cross-Himalayan trek crosses through high passes and amidst scenic splendors, wild fauna and flora. Now that youth across India are inclined more towards adventure activities, these cross-Himalayan treks could become sought after destinations,” a tourism official said.

Rauf Tramboo, an adventure sports expert who owns Highland Journeys, which offers adventure sports-based tours in Srinagar, described the decision as opening up a treasure trove for tourists.

Game-changer

“These routes will offer trekking from three days to several weeks. The areas close to the LoC in Kargil offer unseen beauty. It will be a game-changer for trekking as a sport in Kashmir,” Mr. Tramboo told The Hindu.

The opening of these trekking routes will also provide gainful employment to the local people particularly in the Kargil region, say officials.

“Prior to 1990s, European tourists, especially Germans and French, topped the trekkers visiting Kashmir followed by Australians and Britons. The step will see a new beginning for tourism in Kargil and attract high end tourists again,” he said.