

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

World Mental Health Day is an international day for global mental health education awareness and advocacy against social stigma. World Mental Health Day 2021 was observed on October 10, Sunday for pressing need to focus sufficiently on health beyond the physical in a sustained way in the world still struggling to fight the coronavirus.

The day merits more attention in COVID-19 times. As the COVID-19 pandemic has increased inequalities in human development, including dealing a double whammy to mental health by causing more incidences of mental disorders and disrupting already limited mental health services.

Moreover mental health is a state of well being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and make a contribution to the community.

According to WHO, even before COVID-19 mental disorder of varying severity affected one in seven Indian. It adds upto 20 crore people having mental disorder in the country.

It is the time to re-imagine our approach towards mental healthcare beginning with increasing the budgetary allocation. According to the NMHS, mental health disorder also accompanied by stigma, thereby making affecting education and livelihood opportunities.

What is even more worrying is that there is correlation between the prevalence of mental disorder and suicides, whereas Indians account for more than one fourth of death by suicide globally, the disease, death of kith and kin and loss of income have caused mental health. Now the National Mental Health Policy guides the National mental health programme.

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has already released guidelines for prevention activities to address mental health issues caused by COVID-19. So we should aware the people for positive mental health because they can realize their full potential and also cope with the stress of life and also make meaningful contribution to their communities.

To maintain positive mental health people should be guided to connect with others, staying positive and getting physically active. It is the need of the hour.

Breathe in, for better mental health!

■ DIVYA KANCHIBHOTLA

Take a deep breath in' how many times have you heard this phrase? Breathing is an act we do 24/7, 365 days a year without fail. I have not met anyone who is alive and well and breathes only a couple of hours a day.

We can stay without food for several days and several hours without water, but being without air, is unimaginable, for us. This crucial act of breathing is also one of the things we pay the least attention to unless you have a cold or allergies.

Are you aware that you are breathing right now? Now you are How was your breath a second ago? By the time you reach the end of this article (or for most people, before that) your mind would have drifted again and you would have forgotten about your breath.

A senior pulmonologist once shared that we take in around 10,000 lots of air each day and 90 per cent of the energy we need comes from the oxygen in the air we breathe, unlike the popular belief that food is the main source of energy in the body.

Besides providing us energy and keeping us alive, the breath has a vital role to play in the mind-body complex. Breath and mind have a connection.

With each emotion we have, we breathe differently. Shallow fast breathing is often an indication of anger or anxiety and a sigh usually indicates sadness.

When we experience an emotion, our brain automatically signals to change our breathing pattern. Just observe someone who is watching a movie and you will see their breathing change with emotions on the screen.

The ancient knowledge systems of Yoga, Tai chi, QiGong etc explore and build on the knowledge of this powerful connection between the breath and mind. The techniques of Pranayama modulate the breath. With several techniques that involve holding breath, slow inhalation and longer exhalation, the mind becomes calm and the body is relaxed and energized. The ancient seers knew this and now modern science is re-discovering this connection.

With the advance in technology, there has been a lot of interest in studying how the breath impacts the brain and nervous system.

Scientific studies have shown that deep abdominal breathing activates the Vagus Nerve and the parasympathetic nervous system.

Vagus Nerve is one of the most important cranial nerve in the body and regulates several functions from our digestion, fertility, bladder movement to our social connection and happiness. Many doctors are now exploring electrical activation of Vagus Nerve to treat depression.

A healthy vagus nerve makes you happy, feels a connection to others, brings clarity of thought and can improve relationships. A few minutes of deep abdominal breathing with longer exhalations can help activate your vagus nerve, which in turn can lead to a healthier happier life.

Breathing techniques like Sudarshan Kriya, taught by the Art of Living have been linked to reduction in anxiety, stress and depression and increase in satisfaction with life and happiness.

20 -30 mins per day of deep abdominal breathing can reduce blood pressure and other symptoms of stress and increase resilience. Recent studies also link breathing to memory storage.

A research from Sweden shows that, if we breathe through our nose rather than through our mouth, while learning smells, we remember them better. This seemingly simple and natural act of breathing has tremendous regulation potential for our emotions and mental health and all you need to do is to tap into it is...well... 'Take a deep breath in.'

(The author is Executive Director, Sri Sri Institute for Advanced Research and has previously worked with Boston Scientific. She has trained thousands across the globe in breathing, Yoga and meditation techniques).

Report card of Devika Nagri-Udhampur

■ MAHADEEP SINGH JAMWAL

Udhampur town located in the Shivalik range of Himalayas is popularly known as 'Devika Nagri', once famous as a town of 'Ba, Bakay and Bowlis', named after Raja Udhay Singh, the eldest son of Maharaja Gulab Singh, the founder of Dogra rule in Jammu and Kashmir. It attained the status of district in 1931 A.D. In 1947, the former district as 'Reasi District' comprising Rajouri and Reasi tehsils was separated and Rajouri clubbed with Poonch district and Reasi became part of Udhampur. At that time the whole area of present district Doda, Ramban, Kishtwar and Reasi was a part of this district. The people from all these areas started visiting Udhampur for official works and it became a growth centre. In 1948 erstwhile undivided Doda district was separated from Udhampur and in 2006, Reasi district was also carved out from district Udhampur. In this way the ever flourishing district squeezed from time to time.

I carry with me the memories of 49 years of this town. During a long span of years, I can vouch that politically the Udhampur Constituency has never remained under domination of any political party. Honestly speaking, whatever is visible in the town or adjoining area as 'development' cannot be attributed to a particular representative. As a freelance writer, I feel my responsibility to divulge that whatever would have been achieved during this period is missing from the horizons of development. Here we can safely comment that this town has gained backwardness more than any progression. It will not be out of context to say that 'Politics of the Town' is much responsible for its backwardness as we have never seen the entire town on one platter, even when we have to look for better policies/schemes for the town. The populace of the town has been fren-

zied by political class for their vested interests and a particular political segment takes the town as their fiefdom and is always in hot pursuit of capturing the seats of public delivery. The city has enlarged by way of settling of much population from the adjoining area of the district and this has added to the multi-faceted complexities in the town itself.

The residential portions have been converted to commercial activities, as we find the entire much famous 'Lambi Gali' and 'Aarya Samaj Gali' converted to shops by front settlers creating hurdles for pedestrians. We do not find even a single lane in the town, not having commercial hubs. The encroachment in the 'Bazars' by hawkers and kiosk runners have contributed further to deface the town due to political patronage to this unorganized sector. We can safely conclude that the Udhampur town is a business hub owing to reasons of many formations around the town such as: 'Northern Command HQ', 'Command Hospital Northern Command', 'Police Training Academy', '3 Advance Base workshop EME', 'Air Force Station', '1 FOD', 'BSF Subsidiary Training Center', 'Range Police Headquarters of Udhampur-Reasi range', number of paramilitary locations around the city and many more. The visionary focus of the Udhampurians is thus business centered rather than looking for other essential developmental activities. If we focus on other aspects of human facilitation, we conclude that there is deterioration in all essential services, once the facility of water supply twice in a day has been slashed to a limited time by interval of days together. The population explosion in the town has forced an increase in the number of passenger vehicles/motorcycles in the town without any parking area thus creating a mesh in the town. The decrease in quality education in government schools in the

adjoining that forces the population to admit their wards in the city, have facilitated the mushroom growth of private schools in the city without having approved infrastructure. The worst situation is the unchecked encroachment in the town on government land, banks of extinguished seasonal 'Nallas', drains and what not.

We have digested claims of developmental achievements, schemes, many inaugurations and announcements in and around the town, but all these tend to develop as imaginary hoaxes. Many lucrative announcements made by very heavyweight ministers from BJP camp in much publicized 'Vikas Sushasan Rally' at Udhampur few years back such as: Rs 1.50 crore for Udhampur Municipal Council for purchasing JCB, tippers etc to equip it with basic infrastructure, Rs 50 lakh for construction of lanes and drains for the town, State of Art Auditorium at the cost of Rs 10 crore, eight overhead bridges at the cost of Rs 10 crore in the town to reduce the congestion, construction of Panchayat at Battal Ballia at a cost of Rs 50 lakh, community hall for Rs 20 lakh, all have yet to come in the light of day. When we speak of other announcements for the adjoining area of the Udhampur town, we come across regarding solid waste treatment plant at Mand Udhampur for Rs 25 crore, foot bridges in rural Udhampur for Rs 20 lakh, achieving of 100% target for rural electrification of entire Udhampur District, Under the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Jeevan Jyoti by March 2017 (even urban area is badly suffering till now, what to speak of rural area), construction of hall, sports stadium, children complex and other facilities at Chenani, construction of Udhampur Goldie and Chenani-Palangat from CRF, a community shed in Ramban town. These all announcements till date are imaginary hoax created towards develop-

ment. Later foundation stone for Akashwani Radio Station for Udhampur laid, announcements of Devika project, 'Captain Tushar Memorial Park', up gradation of 'Gangeda Hills' controversial Stadium' looking for further progress. Adjoining tourist spots of Kud, Patnitop, Sanasar, Sudh Mahadev, Pandava Temples in Krimchi, beautiful Panchari belt and many more have remained ever neglected thus their conditions are deteriorating exposing development in the field of tourist sector. Rehabilitating historical forts falling in the district is a daydream including religious places of much importance.

Summing up I can say that except for development in encroachments, traffic jams, increase in road accidents, increase in private schools, laboratories, the town has not seen what the development is? And we can rightly claim that development in Udhampur is an imaginary hoax.

In simple words we can say that development means to drag out the suffering commonality from multifaceted problems, enabling them to have the living basics at their doorstep and to keep the population updated with the modern and scientific approach. We call development that is based on creation of infrastructure, Industrial base, and human development in health, education and living standard. If we have to accelerate and shape development, we have to focus especially on how the environment can be made most conducive for self-organizing complexity to evolve. Since time, the immortal human race has been in continuous development, but Politics is the main reason for lacking it. This contributes to the main concern of the politicians to consolidate vote banks based on religion and caste system rather than to go for equitable development of the area. Same applies to the historic town of Udhampur.

Promoting medicinal & aromatic plants

■ G L KHAJURIA

Ever since the dawn of civilization, the man has remained wonderstruck viewing its surrounds, the flora and fauna, the natural bounties who alongside subsist with him. And at times, he wondered as to how these animals and plants are less disease free with vibrant, lush green and flora. This has left him with regenerating perceptions of all hues and years have rolled by and these mysteries till date remained as folded as ever before. Undoubtedly, nature is a greater healer and its mysteries are so far hidden and folded. Unlike men, whom there is a team of doctors for treatment and then what about for those innocent and voiceless animals and birds. Surely, hunters and poachers are definitely there in the process! And then why the nature should come to their rescue of human kind.

One also wonders at times or gets more curious to know how were the names given to the plants and how do we name them today is again a folded mystery. Presumably enough, the oldest names given must be having in the remote past some relevance when no language existed barring few broken words which offshooted, of course, the beginning of plants nomenclature, for they are as obscure as the record of earliest civilization. The first book dealing with plants was directly taken from early Greek or Latin manuscripts or more so ancient translations into those classical languages. The plant names are mostly Greek or Latin but of course, some seemed to be unaltered barbarous names used by not too civilized tribes of the time. However, the first attempt to scientifically nomenclature the plants was made by renowned/celebrated Greek, Philosopher 'Theophrastus' (370-287 B.C.) who was pupil of Aristotle. He had wide intellectual interests of various subjects which he wrote on biology where he described around 500 species of plants in his botanical treatise "on the study of plants: and "on the causes of plants", the main thrust being on the medicinal plants.

Later, Pliny the Elder (23-79 A.D.) described about 1000 species in his book 'Historia Naturalis' and at the same time a Military Physician 'Diesecardis' described around 600 Mediterranean medicinal plants in his book entitled 'Materia Media' in the early part of 16th century. Man's curiosity ever since remained in the run-race in exploring more and more medicinal plants and many biologists of whom the few et al

Morrison carolus, John Ray Linnaeus and Benthom and Hooker (1830-1884) remained in the lead. Though it seems strange and intricate when one talks of botanical names, yet at the same time these occupy extremely interesting and instructive part in so far as modern 'Ayurveda System of Medicine' is concerned, apart from 'Unani' and Siddha. This system of medicines have had an integral part when the modern allopathy had no longer surfaced and that's why this herbal system occupies a unique placement amongst the most proclaimed systems of medicines so much so that the 'World Health Organization' (WHO) has fully recognized its values in its broader spectrum.

In India, where around 70 per cent of population is below poverty line, 'herbal system' (Ayurveda) is perhaps the last hope. The system though having no side effects unlike other system of medicines. It is matter of utmost pride that India in general and the Himalayan states in particular are the richest source of medicinal and aromatic plants though human interferences in many a ways are diminishing the rich, vide, varied resources which warrants their due preservation and enhancement and that's why there is endless scope of Ayurvedic medicines abroad which fetches hefty dividends, besides providing undesirable side-effects. Strange are the ways of nature that there exists a strong linkage between the herbs, shrubs, climbers, plants and the trees with the variety of ailments as for example, Belladonna (meaning beautiful lady) was employed in Italy by ladies to give softness to their eyes and the same was for Potentilla-a panacea for all cures. There is a wide diversification of plants in times long past when they received their names because of medicinal properties real or supposed to assuage grief and so on the list goes endlessly..." Of the few, the most important Ayurvedic herbs, shrubs, climbers, plants and the trees are briefed down below viz-a-viz their medicinal uses:

Pierorhizakurrra: locally spoken as 'Kour' is perennial herb found in Himalayas (2500-4500m) is the best herb for liver ailments, roots however, contain glycoside. Liv-52, Livosin and heptaguard are the Ayurvedic drugs prepared from it.

Valeriana Wallichina (Mushakbala) is predominantly the most important medicinal plant, apart from its uses in perfumery/dhoop.

Whithania Somnifera (Ashwagandha) (L) Dunsal (1725): belongs to F

Solaceeae, finds its usefulness to rejuvenate therapy, excessive emancipation, bronchial asthma, insomnia and cardiac disorders.

Tuxusbacatta: A very important conifer species mostly confined to Himalaya region (Tangmarg belt). A life saving drug is manufactured out of bark and leaves of plants for the treatment cancer patients.

Macrotomiabenthami: belonging to the F Boraginaceae habitats Gurez - Kasmir valley reaching an altitudes upto 1200 ft. It finds its usefulness in cardiac ailments, apart from fevers and throat troubles.

Chrysanthiumcinerifolium also called Pyrethrum is belonging to composite F (Sun Flower) is injurious to warm-blooded and toxic insects and mostly used as insecticides and flits. Apart from the most prominent medicinal/aromatic plants, also include, Hibiscus esculentus, Acasia Arabica, Achyranthes aspera, Adhatodavasica, Agave Americana(sisal), Aloe Vera, Aloe Vulgaris, Rauwalfia Serpetina(cobra plant), Datura, Stramonium, viola odorata, Digitalis purpurea, cannabis sativa, Aegle marmelos(Bel), Various Artimisias, Vitex negundo(Bana), Cassia fistula (Golden Shower), Flacourtiaromondhii, indigoferas, Mallotus philippinensis, Phylanthus emblica, Benninghaunia albiliflora(pisum Buti) - an insecticide so on and so forth.

Chrysanthiumcinerifolium also called Pyrethrum is belonging to composite F (Sun Flower) is injurious to warm-blooded and toxic insects and mostly used as insecticides and flits. Apart from the most prominent medicinal/aromatic plants, also include, Hibiscus esculentus, Acasia Arabica, Achyranthes aspera, Adhatodavasica, Agave Americana(sisal), Aloe Vera, Aloe Vulgaris, Rauwalfia Serpetina(cobra plant), Datura, Stramonium, viola odorata, Digitalis purpurea, cannabis sativa, Aegle marmelos(Bel), Various Artimisias, Vitex negundo(Bana), Cassia fistula (Golden Shower), Flacourtiaromondhii, indigoferas, Mallotus philippinensis, Phylanthus emblica, Benninghaunia albiliflora(pisum Buti) - an insecticide so on and so forth.

Secondly, none can deny the fact that with ongoing onslaught of dwindling and decimation of forest cover together with diminishing voiceless wildlife, the medicinal and aromatic plant kingdom is still at greater risk. This being because of the fact that word minor (Minor Forest Produce) is so minor that its inescapability is too easy to be carried away by the greedy and over-needy men. As such, all out efforts and surveillance need to be actively initiated by all and one as per the laid down rules in the "Constitution of India" enunciated in general and the forest Depttas to play an optimum role in curbing the menace of smuggling of Kuth, Discoria and its ilk which are under the process of being smuggled out.

In the past many decades, credit, defacto goes in favor of Forest Deptt.

When Optimum number of cases has been taken into cognizance and action followed thereto rapidly. Public awareness and awakening is of paramount need of the hour as it is after all public property and such a tempo will have to be continued in achieving successful results forever and ever...And with this, the writer adds over here as such: Trees, herbs, shrubs, bushes and climbers through all their parts like leaves, flowers, fruits, shade, roots, bark, smell, juice, ash and buds get engrossed into service of others and for their benefits. They can even sacrifice their lives, how blessed are the lives of these trees, how (Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana)

(The author is former Deputy Conservator of Forests, J&K).

YOUR COLUMN
Recent killings of minorities condemnable

Dear Editor,

Through the medium of your esteemed daily, I would like to bring it to the notice of Lt Governor of Union Territory of J&K, Manoj Sinha with deep anguish that I am writing this letter in the wake of spate of killings especially those belonging to the minority Kashmiri Pandits and Sikh communities living in Kashmir. There is no doubt that UT Govt has failed to prevent such inci-

dents which has resulted in a fear psychosis amongst the community. The GoI and the UT government must introspect as to what went wrong with the governance practices adopted by your government that such a devastating situation has emerged in the valley in recent months.

There could be many reasons but one of the main reasons is that the government has lost total connect with the different stakeholders for whom the Government is supposed to work. This includes one of the major stakeholders, the Kashmiri Pandits who have been yearning to return and resettle in the valley and whose youth are working as PM package employees for the past 11 years. A pall of gloom has engulfed our community and fear has struck deep roots in our minds once again. With

another 2,000 children about to join their duties as fresh recruits this fear psychosis is disheartening and discouraging. We are having full faith in the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and LG that we will be able to come out of this situation soon.

I would request the LG to kindly arrange a visit by a delegation of Kashmiri Pandit community to Kashmir so that we can provide some solace to PM package employees serving in the valley and allay their fears. We can have a first-hand assessment and report to LG so that adequate measures can be taken.

K K Khosa
President, Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, Jammu.