

## ACHIEVING 100 CR VACCINATION TARGET- SOME FACTS

■ DR RENU SWARUP

**What does 100 crore vaccinations mean for the country?**

It is a remarkable achievement, well recognized not just within the country but globally as well. It gives us a level of confidence that we can take on any major public health healthcare challenge. We are inoculating around a crore every day, which is not an easy task, considering the vastness and varied demographics of the country. I would like to congratulate the entire supply chain, the logistics, the human resource personnel who have made it possible. Vaccination is one of the key measures of controlling the pandemic, but equally important is to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour. And I think every citizen has to ensure that we don't create an environment where the virus can spread, again.

**India has always been known as the largest producer of vaccines. What did it take for it to become a developer of the vaccine?**

This has been a very remarkable journey where we saw all researchers coming together from academia, the industry, and start-ups. We shared knowledge, ideas, infrastructure, breaking the boundaries between academia and the industry. And the result is there for all to see. We indigenously developed Covaxin which, along with Covishield, has driven our vaccination programme. We have already got Emergency Use Authorization for the world's first DNA vaccine, and soon we are going to have a vaccine from Biological E. Besides, an mRNA vaccine is in phase 2 clinical trials. We are confident that with the infrastructure and scientific acumen we have, we can develop many other vaccines, beyond COVID-19. Since COVID-19 vaccines have been developed in such a short time and are being given Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). How were you assured of their safety and efficacy?

We haven't really cut short the trial and have a good amount of safety data from phase-2 and phase-3 trials of these vaccines. Various studies are going on post-vaccination to keep track of the vaccine efficacy against various variants. We have also got data to show the types of breakthrough infections, re-infection cases, etc, which gives us the confidence that vaccines are both effective and safe. Various institutes across the country, including DBT's Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (TSHITI), have undertaken long-term studies to study various aspects of the vaccines.


**What were the challenges that the country faced during the development phases of vaccines and how did it overcome them?**

Vaccine development is a complex process. The challenges which we faced were in the scientific and technical front, which every scientific researcher would face. We were looking at developing five to six vaccines simultaneously. So, initially, our challenge was to have adequate research facilities to meet the demand. In fact, India was one of the first countries which got its roadmap to fight the disease ready along with other developed nations such as the US, the UK in the WHO meeting in February 2020. We identified vaccines as our biggest strengths. The government supported this high-risk innovation funding for new vaccine development platforms and that's how the industry got the confidence to work on mRNA and DNA vaccines. Simultaneously, we identified the gaps: We needed more animal facilities, immune assay laboratories, clinical trials facilities, and we quickly ramped them up. Today, we have 54 clinical trial sites and 4 animal test facilities and our researchers don't have to depend upon resources from overseas. We have all the required resources within the country. So, this has been a strategically planned effort.

**How will this massive investment in research help the country?**

The government has for the first time invested in a mission focused on a product so quickly. The Mission COVID Suraksha which was launched under the Atmanirbhar Bharat was a Rs 900-crore mission that helped us develop a number of vaccines in such a short time. In fact, I also strongly believe that we could achieve it because we have been investing in the basic science ecosystem for some years now. And this capacity that we have built will encourage us to develop many more vaccines such as vaccines for tuberculosis, dengue, chikungunya, malaria, and many more. And most importantly, a pan-Corona vaccine that could provide protection against all variants of COVID-19.

(The author is Secretary, Department of Bio-Technology).



OFF 'D' CUFF

## What is serenity?

When we are totally at peace, the world appears beautiful and we move through it with grace and ease. In serenity, we have moved beyond peace into a place of great softness where our presence brings comfort and tranquillity to others. A serene nature is one where the ruffles of life are no more than gentle breezes: they come, they caress our lives, and they leave. A serene person will not feel bothered by the ups and downs in the drama of life, by the changes in the elements, or by the moods of people. Serenity means that I ask no questions, but simply observe, remaining in my state of sweet detachment, yet all the while knowing what to say and when to say it.

Serenity comes from wisdom and experience. A serene and wise person has such breadth of understanding that nothing seems to be a surprise, yet there is that knowingness of how all things have their time and their place. When we are serene, then if others feel upset or disturbed, we flow with their feelings, allowing them to find a more comfortable space, but do not lose our own inner stability and silence.

It is not often that one

## What is serenity?

would call nature serene. Nature is peaceful, violent, wild, and beautiful at different times, but it is human nature that has the quality of serenity. It is human nature that has the ability to adapt, to grow and become mature, and to see the whole course of events and watch the game of life from a distance. In serenity, one knows oneself. One is the observer, but at the same time, centered in the original nature and religion of the self, of peace.

Serene people have a particular quality of being able to be around anybody, without ruffling their feathers. They can walk into a room full of people and not create any waves. They can settle amongst one or a hundred souls and allow others to feel completely safe and at ease in their presence. With inner serenity, others know that you are a good person to be around, they instinctively understand that you won't become easily upset and that you will watch situations and know how to handle them. Serene people are a real blessing because, in a way, they have stepped away from the little issues of life and place importance on the value of individuals instead.

Brahma Kumaris



■ M M KHAJORIA

Crown and the church have always complimented each other. Theocracies have been the most oppressive forms of governance. The exploitation of the masses and the atrocities perpetrated on the working classes had the sanction of the Church. The courtier of God on earth peddled their exploitation and suffering as 'their destiny and the will of the God'. This cruel, irrational and palpably unjust formulation provoked Karl Marx to declare 'Religion as opium of the masses'. This declaration became basis of communist creed. Communism became synonymous with atheism. Religion became taboo for billions of practicing communists spread all over the world.

Savio Rodrigues, author at Sunday Times Live and Consultant of large number of Business Houses across the globe re-interpreted the connection between Religion and Politics in context of Talibanised Afghanistan, which also happens to be the largest producer and exporter of narcotics. According to him the masses on high (of opium) turn into asses. The behaviour of Afghan Taliban in the past and now in the present, after US and NATO troops abandoned Afghanistan and its hapless people in a shameless desperate hurry is 'according to Savio Rodrigues a reflection of the asses on display for a global audience.'

## Invasion on Jammu & Kashmir in 1947: Does date matters?

■ COL (RETIRED) AJAY K RAINA

Come 22 October and people gear up to observe it in various ways. It would, in no uncertain terms, an opposite way of revisiting that day in 1947 when invaders who were being led, armed and supported by the Pakistan army, strolled into the territory of the princely State of Jammu & Kashmir. I say 'strolled' into our space because they had been welcome and were now being aided and guided by their co-religionists who formed half of the strength of a renowned and well-reputed infantry battalion, 4 JAK Infantry, of the State forces. Had 4 JAK Infantry not disintegrated due to treason by their own, Jinnah's Operation Gulmarg (the code name given to conspiracy by British and Pakistan hierarchy in Pakistan) to annex Kashmir by force, would have fallen flat on its ugly face on that day itself. A battle-hardened battalion, fresh from the World War-II, would have made minced meat of those unruly, frenzied men in the carefully selected killing area sandwiched between Lohara Gali and Ramkot to the West of Muzaffarabad, had some of its officers and half its men not fallen for the trap shrewdly laid by Pakistan, using religion as a bait! What followed in Muzaffarabad, Domel, Uri, and later in Baramulla and countryside across the Valley, remains a splotch on humanity and the chronological sequence is well-documented as well as generally well-known. But for the 'last man- last round' stand taken by a handful of braves under their unflinching and intrepid Chief of Staff Brigadier Rajendra Singh, MVC (P), wherein they had kept the maniacs at bay for four days and as many nights, Kashmir would have met a fate that would have not only changed the course of history but would have mortified the human ethics yet again. The history, however, needs to be read in its correct perspective. There is no doubt that Kashmir was invaded on 22 October 1947 (and freed of any unholy presence on November 13) and mayhem had followed over next few days, the point to be noted and taken note of is the fact that the invasion on October 22, by no stretch of the imagination, was the first invasion of the State in 1947. While many in the literary circles tend to give a broad brush to the cross-border raids in the Jammu region, all those acts of raiding, looting, abduction of women and theft of livestock had commenced much before the fateful date of 15 August. Certainly, raids are more of intrusions and may not fit the classical description of an invasion where the intruder intends to come in, capture territory and then consolidate before expanding further.

The first instance of a conventional invasion had happened in the Jammu region when the post-Monsoons weather was yielding to the autumn chill. A platoon (24 men) of Gorkha soldiers under Subedar Dhan Bahadur Singh (2 JAK Infantry) at Owen Pattan was the first to face the brunt of brutal enemy assault on the night of October 8-9, 1947. Based on the intelligence inputs about a huge build-up across the international boundary between J&K and Pakistan's Punjab, the orders for the platoon to withdraw to Company HQ base at Sensa had already been issued on 08 October but before the withdrawal could commence, a huge horde of the enemy had encircled the post. Gorkhas fought back

bravely but were heavily outnumbered. The post, itself, was designed to police the border and didn't have much defence potential. By the morning of 9 October, the post had been captured by the enemy with most of the Gorkha warrior killed/ maimed or taken prisoners. The very first happenstance of a military invasion of the State had, thus, been completed by 9 October 1947. Sensa company base, under Lieutenant Raghubir Singh, had only the elements of the Company HQ and one platoon (total 32 men). The enemy contacted Sensa on the morning of 9 October itself. At that time, one relief platoon (25 men) under Captain Mohd Hussain from Kotli was on its way to Sensa to coordinate with Lieutenant Raghubir Singh before proceeding further West to Owen Pattan. The reinforcements had been sent after receipt of information about the critical situation at Owen Pattan. The force, on approaching Sensa, found the base surrounded by hundreds of enemy personnel from all sides. Captain Hussain fought his way in and entered the camp at Sensa after some intense fighting. Now reinforced, the garrison fought on for a few hours but soon the tides started to turn against the men inside the camp. Before the ammunition finished and strength fell below critical levels, a decision was taken to abandon the post. Fighting their way out, the troops vacated the post by late evening on 10 October and fell to Tharochi Fort while a jubilant mob of reckless, frantic men got busy with ransacking and looting whatever had been left behind by the residents and the soldiers. Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Hamid Khan, CO, 2 JAK Infantry, having learnt about the enemy action, gathered two companies and marched off for Sensa on October 12, with the aim to recapture Sensa and then push forward to reclaim Owen Pattan. The refugees from Sensa too went along with the hope of retrieving their properties and livestock. The column, having brushed aside opposition at a few places, reached Sensa evening on October 12 itself.

A Pakistani flag was seen fluttering on top of the Government rest house building, confirming the nature of the operation; they were now occupying our territory. Without wasting any time and without allowing the enemy any reaction time, the CO ordered an attack on the rest house and forced the enemy to flee, leaving behind Gorkha soldiers (from Owen Pattan) who had been kept in the captivity. There was a sense of jubilation as civilians rushed to their homes and the relief column went chasing the enemy towards Owen Pattan. The worst seemed to have been prevented through timely intervention. However, to the dismay of Lieutenant Colonel Khan, a huge contingent of the enemy, including the fresh reinforcements in form of regulars of Pakistan army, had been waiting for them between Sensa and Owen Pattan. In a classical progression of an invasion, the Pakistani planners had not only occupied the State's territory, they were now executing the expansion post-consolidation. The next two days saw repeated attempts by the column to push back the enemy while the enemy kept on bringing in more and more men and tried to encircle the column. With ammunition and supplies now running low, even the defence of Sensa became unviable and the CO decided to pull back and ordered the

Taliban have by now gained control of most of Afghanistan including key districts and border posts with Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The nightmare has commenced for the men and more importantly for the women and girls of the unfortunate country. Taliban co-founder and deputy leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar recently told certain sections of global media that Taliban believed in peace. He further asserted that the Taliban believed that the genuine Islamic system is the best means for the solution of all issues in Afghanistan. Baradar also assured that the rights of all Afghans including women will be accommodated in that system according to 'glorious religion of Islam' and Afghan traditions. This is yet another fraud being played on the world community especially on demoralised retreating US and NATO forces. Who will define the meaning of 'the genuine Islamic system'? Please tell us The Taliban or the ISIS? Who does not know that Talibanism was just another garb of Islamic radicalization and extremism. The intent was no different from ISIS whose atrocities in Afghanistan and ISIS controlled territory were still fresh in the minds of men and women all over the world. The underlining principle of the Taliban was a radical and extremist form of governance and people control. They believed that it was more rewarding to rule with fear than with hope. More than the men, women will witness and suffer the return of the dark days in Afghanistan under the Taliban. The Taliban forced women to cover themselves from head to toe, banned them from working outside the home, severely limited girls' education, and required women to be accompanied by a

male relative when they left their homes With the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan , girls and women can forget about their dreams of an education. Educating a woman is considered to be 'Haram'. Education is only allowed up to the fourth grade for a girl child in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001, public executions, conservative traditional dress codes, and restrictions on the personal liberties of women were commonplace during the Taliban rule. The concept of human rights for women's rights was alien to the Taliban then and even now I am afraid it will continue to be alien. The Taliban recently distributed leaflets in Afghan cities and other habitations, ordering locals to follow strict rules that were similar to those they imposed on Afghans when they last governed the country. To the people of Afghanistan especially girls and women it was a cruel twist of fate and faith when life was slowly returning to some normalcy, the Taliban return to bring its oppression under its interpretation of Islam. The section of women in Kashmir bitten by the extremist bug whose largest number ironically came from the educated and teaching communities (college teachers/ Principals and students) who admire Taliban and the ISIS, were for a huge shock. They apparently ignore the pain, suffering and indignity that women and girls suffer in Talibanised Afghanistan. They don't seem to have the faintest idea of what they were in for: It is public knowledge that life for women under Taliban and ISIS is hell. Yes hell and living in heaven do not yearn for hell. The women admirers of Taliban in Kashmir better watch out?

column to fall back to Tharochi on 14 October. What followed those actions- another treachery at Tharochi or siege of Kotli is well-known. Interestingly, while a joint force composed of the remnant of State forces and Indian Army troops was fighting the invaders near Pattan on October 28, a new development was unfolding in the South of Pir Panjal. On that night, Bhimbar was attacked by a large throng of invaders. 11th Prince Albert Victor's Own Cavalry (Frontier Force) or PAVO CAV (now 11 CAV (FF) of Pakistan) had been tasked to lead the attack but in disguise. Colonel 'Tommy' Masud was the CO and the regiment attacked the border town with armored cars during the night. Armored cars actually gave their identity away. In isolation, the incident may simply appear to be reinforcing the Indian claims about the role of Pakistan army (denied vehemently by Pakistan at that time) but the incident had a linkage with another incident that happened on November 7, 1947 at Shalateng, on outskirts of Srinagar. That, in any case, is a different story wherein Indian Army's armored cars had been welcome by the invaders before getting sorted out by our men in those cars.

Having established the date of the first invasion as the night of October 8-9, let's try and see why October 22 and why not October 7-8 is considered as the date of invasion of the State. The first reason, of course, would be Kashmir centricity that continues even today. The second reason given by many was the comparative volume of thrust, especially, the number of lorries (between 300 and 1000 as per various accounts) along Muzaffarabad-Uri-Srinagar road as against foot-based operations in Poonch region. Such arguments ignore two facts. The first fact relates to the terrain and infrastructure. Poonch had no road that could match the dimensions and reach of the main Muzaffarabad-Uri-Srinagar road. Had a similar axis been available, there would have been a similar concentration by the enemy even along that non-existent road. Secondly, a mere glance at the sketch of Operation Gulmarg (now in public domain) would throw up a fact or two. As against six lashkars (6,000 men) sent into the Valley, ten lashkars (10,000 men) had been sent into Poonch-Mirpur area. In addition, 7 Division of Pakistan army had moved up opposite Poonch while another brigade was posturing around Sialkot opposite Jammu. Many commentators also feel comfortable calling 22 October as the day of invasion because they see the following actions, i.e., request to India for help by the Maharaja and signing of the Instrument of Accession a bit later, as meaningful consequences of the invasion. Here again, we tend to ignore that Maharaja Hari Singh had toured Poonch-Mirpur after loss of Owen Pattan and Sensa and had requested the Indian government to help. The fact that a battalion from Patiala Forces did land up in Jammu around October 15 and an artillery battery too landed (without sights though) in Srinagar on October 17 only because of request by the Maharaja to the central leadership. Unfortunately, it was because of an unwarranted hard stand taken by Pandit Nehru that had actually delayed the signing of the instrument right till October 26. State's Deputy PM, R L

Batrahad been sent by Maharaja Hari Singh to Delhi to open the talks for accession well before October 22 and soon after the invasion on October 8. Had it not been due to the delays because of Pandit Nehru insisting on obtaining concurrence of Sheikh Abdullah, the State would have possibly acceded to the Union much before 22 October. That is another story by itself. Another reason for giving priority to 22 October over October 8 was the narrative and convenience as it related to certain quarters in the literary circles. The expected question, then, is why so much against Poonch and not Kashmir? While Kashmir had its own significance and lure (the latter more important to the invaders), Poonch had far-reaching implications when it came to survival of the baby called Pakistan that had been born out of a virtual miscarriage. Their new capital lay less than 50 miles from Jhelum along which ran the international boundary. Further, their connectivity to North was via the road that ran just across Jhelum. And of course, Mangla headworks (later converted into a huge dam) were central to Pakistan's insecurity regarding water. Not known to many, turbulence in Poonch had been started earlier as part of the British plan to use influence over the previous British Chief of Staff of the State forces, Major General H L Scott who, in turn, used that as an excuse to move the only reserve battalion available in the Valley, 9 JAK Infantry from Kashmir to Poonch, thereby, rendering the Valley defence-less post treachery by soldiers of 4 JAK Infantry when that happened on October 22. The British, by planning and executing the plan through Pakistan establishment, had kept their part of commitment to save Pakistan. It was a big game, probably more gigantic than the famed Great Game of that era but unfortunately, we failed to see the macro situation in its correct perspective. And yet, another way of looking at the issue is, as we say in the defence forces, accepting the fact that all the developments in Poonch region were preparatory in nature and were aimed at facilitating the action on 22 October (move of 9 JAK Infantry being one such act). The fact that the date of 22 October (D Day for Operation Gulmarg) had been fixed much in advance (keeping in mind upcoming snowing season that would have closed the passes and isolated the Valley from three sides) and the aim of the invaders was to rush to Srinagar and capture Maharaja Hari Singh so as to force him to sign the accession papers, does add weight to the argument in favour of October 22. The bottom line, however, is that it doesn't really matter as long as we observe the Black Day both to remind Pakistan in particular and international community in general about the breach of international protocol, games played by the British, unreasonable attitude of certain political biggies and of course, to our own people about the supreme sacrifices that were made to defend the State. We will do well to remember that the invaders could get in only over the dead-body of the Chief of Staff of the State. Be it 08 or 22 Oct, the bigger picture needs to be understood, remembered and kept alive in the institutional memory of a great institution called India.

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boost socialising with peers and also enhance student's time and management skills. Students participating in extracurricular works are better equipped to live in groups by developing leadership skills and managing stress in an efficient manner. There are different ways in which extra-curricular activities can be encouraged in a school:

1. The school should allow teachers to do activities that they are passionate about. Like a teacher who may be interested in music can take up teaching music or a teacher who is good at dramatics can take acting classes.
  2. Get senior pupils involved in leading activities for the younger years.
  3. Remember that there is so much more to our pupils than just the exam candidate and these activities allow them to develop their characters doing something they genuinely love.
- Types of extra-curricular: These activities are generally undertaken side by side with the curricular activities. It gives the students an opportunity to develop particular skills and exhibit their non-academic abilities. These activities might be compulsory, such as music, art or drama classes that take place during

the day. Some are voluntary, such as participating in school sports teams, school debating teams, student newsletters etc. Sports activities include basketball, baseball, racquet games etc. Social qualities: Extra-curricular activities assist students in more than one way. They are essential in the aesthetic development of a student like their physical growth, character building, spiritual and moral values and also enhance their creativity. There are some qualities that can be acquired like coordination, adjustment and co-operation. In public speaking sessions, a child can receive some fine tuning like speech fluency, extempore and debating skills.

Constructive usage: Another interesting benefit of extra-curricular activities is that they can be opted as a career choice too. Imagine making money out of your hobby. This option is for those students who do not want to go for a traditional career choice and choose unconventional professions. It is through these classes that they realise their potential and liking for a certain vocation like dance, arts, acting, painting, singing, sports, etc which will eventually be their career choice.

Vijay Garg.