FARMERS' WELFARE

→nder Prime Minister Narendra Modi's regime, various initiatives have been launched aimed at improving the welfare of farmers in India. The government has recognized the crucial role that agriculture plays in the country's economy and has implemented policies to enhance the livelihoods of farmers, boost productivity, and ensure food security.

One of the key initiatives is the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme, introduced in 2019. Under this program, eligible farmers receive direct income support of Rs 6,000 per year, paid in three installments. This financial assistance has provided a safety net for millions of small and marginal farmers, helping them meet their basic needs and reduce dependence on

Another significant program is the Soil Health Card Scheme, which aims to promote sustainable farming practices. Farmers receive detailed information about the health of their soil, along with recommendations for fertilizers and nutrients. This initiative not only helps in enhancing productivity but also encourages eco-friendly farming techniques.

The government has also focused on agricultural infrastructure development through the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund. These programs aim to improve rural connectivity, making it easier for farmers to transport their produce to markets. Enhanced infrastructure can significantly reduce post-harvest losses and increase farmers' income.

The PM-FME Scheme (Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises) supports small food processing units, allowing farmers to add value to their produce. By providing financial assistance and training, this initiative empowers farmers to diversify their income sources and create employment opportunities in rural areas.

Moreover, the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme has been expanded to facilitate easier access to credit for farmers. This financial instrument enables farmers to obtain loans for agricultural activities at lower interest rates, thereby alleviating the burden of high-interest loans from informal sources

However, the Modi government's tenure has not been without challenges. Although these laws were repealed in 2021, the episode highlighted the ongoing struggles within the agricultural sector and the need for continuous dialogue between the government and farming communities.

The Modi regime has introduced a range of policies aimed at enhancing farmers' welfare, focusing on direct financial support, improving agricultural infrastructure, and promoting sustainable practices. Now Government has increased the MSP of Rabi Crops for Marketing Season 2025-26, to ensure remunerative prices to the growers for their produce. The absolute highest increase in MSP has been announced for Rapeseed & Mustard at Rs.300 per quintal followed by Lentil (Masur) at Rs.275 per quintal. For gram, wheat, safflower and barley, there is an increase of Rs.210 per quintal, Rs.150 per quintal, Rs.140 per quintal and Rs.130 per quintal respectively.

Kalam's Golden 'Kalam'

APJ Abdul Kalam's 'Wings of Fire' speaks volumes about rocket-man's patriotism

onth of October has scripted historical events. Actually October LV has got a unique significance on political front and at the same time, this month is synonymous with stock market crashes. The behaviour of markets in this month is widely referred to as the 'October

The series of events that have happened in this month also include the birth of a boy into a middle class Tamil family on October 15, 1931, in the island town of Rameswaram in the erstwhile Madras State. The boy was short in height with rather undistinguished looks contrary to the looks of his parents who were tall and

During the journey of his life this boy, APJ Abdul Kalam, became an internationally known Indian aerospace scientist and statesman who served as the 11th president of India from 2002 to 2007. He came to be known as the Missile Man of India for his work on the development of ballistic missile and launch vehicle technology. As a scientist of repute he spent more than forty years with the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO).

To commemorate Kalam's numerous achievements, particularly in the areas of academia and research, the United Nations declared October 15 to be World Student's Day in 2010.

Some time back I received "Wings of Fire" - an autobiography of A. P. J. Abdul Kalam - from a close friend. Though I am not a book worm, I still found the book of my interest because I have come across many of Kalam's beautiful quotes reflecting his unmatched power of thinking and

For instance, one of his awestruck quotes "Love your job but don't love your company, because you may not know when your

company stops loving you", is amazing. The display of the quote used to be a part of my office chamber during my tenure as Head of Corporate Communication and CSR Department in J&K Bank. Actually, these are the words of wisdom, suiting the current corporate world. In an era of a highly professional world, when companies keep on hiring and employees keep on changing jobs, the quote is an apt statement cautioning about the lack of loyalty as one of the latent reasons affecting employee retention.

Kindly note, I'm not talking about loyalty of an employee but lack of loyalty on part of employers. These words of wisdom among other things serve a note of caution to employees against falling in love with their companies. This quotable quote suggests that one should not develop a blind loyalty to an organization. Companies can change policies, leadership, and priorities, and may not always align with an individual's values or inter-

Simultaneously, it underscores the importance of maintaining a balance between professional commitments and personal life. In essence, Kalam's message through this quote advocates for a balanced approach to work, emphasizing personal growth and adaptability over blind loyalty to any organization.

Another of his mind-immersing quotes "If you salute your duty, you no need to salute anybody, but if you pollute your duty, you have to salute everybody"- is simply a beacon light to the path of success in the field of any profession.

So, the kind of influence of Kalam's quotes made "Wings of Fire" an inevitable read for me. While going through the autobiography my opinion about him remained flexible till I finished the last chapter in which he emphasized for economic prosperity and strong security for growth and development. He has outlined Self Reliance Mission in Defence System 1995-2005 to provide the Armed Forces with a state-of-the-art competitive weapons system and the Technology Vision plan to put into place certain schemes and plans for the economic growth and prosperity of India.

Even as there's more about the evolutionary account of the success story of India's space rocketry and missile programme in the autobiography, Kalam's personal story of rising from a scratch to the limitless sky heights speaks volumes about his patriotism, but at a cost. The act of patriotism in our country is significant when it's shown especially by the largest minority community in the country. During his whole career, as reflected in his narrative, Kalam had strategized his delivery of professional capabilities not to prove himself a patriotic Indian but to show that India belonged to him. This strategy worked for him as he rose to the highest position (President) in the country.

I mentioned Kalam's patriotism at cost. Wittingly or unwittingly, while inventing defence technology for his country, he missed his connection not only to his family, more importantly to his society (largest minority community).

Kalam's revelation in the book speaks about his concept of 'Unknown, formless Almighty'. About his childhood days in Mosque street in island town of Rameswaram with famous Shiva temple in the vicinity, Kalam describes the influence of Shiva temple that "circling around the temple with the same reverence as any pilgrim from a distant part of the country, we (he & his friend Ahmad Jallaluddin) felt a flow of energy pass through us...I never doubted that the

A New Government and Renewed Hope

prayers in the temple reached the same destination as the ones offered in our

While in his childhood journey, his mother and grandmother would narrate him the events as bedtime stories from the Ramayana and from the life of the Prophet. Kalam's narrative suggests that he was more influenced by the bedtime stories of Ramayana. Since his aim in life was to become an air force pilot and had pursued hard to reach close to his goal, he was dropped in an interview at the Air Force Selection Board, Dehradun, In sheer disappointment, he trekked down to Rishikesh, a revered Hindu place, to beat his depression. "I bathed in the Ganga and reveled in the purity of its water". He also talks about meeting Sadhus to seek their blessing.

Kalam as a technology man, a philosopher, a keen innovator in rocketry and finally a successful man. Needless to mention, Indian Muslims in APJ Abdul Kalam gave India unbeatable defence technology, while Christians donated their ages-old church in Thumba, a fishing $_{
m village}$ Thiruvananthapuram, as mentioned by him in his autobiography to become the first office/laboratory of the Indian missile programme. The church's location was ideal because it was close to the earth's magnetic equator, where India's first rocket launch took place in 1963.

In short, Wings of Fire speaks about

Remarkably, the prayer room was Kalam's first laboratory and the Bishops room his design and drawing office. The church now houses the Indian Space museum that displays rocket models and the Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-3), which Kalam designed.

> (The author is a veteran journalist/columnist).

Democracy revisiting J&K after ten years

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY t is so good that finally democracy has again set Lits foot in the turbulent political waters of Jammu and Kashmir .J&K which has the distinction of being the crown of India has been revisited by democracy after a long gape of ten years and it is really a matter of pride, satisfaction encouragement and win of the alienated people of the Jammu and Kashmir. Now that the democracy has again revisited the mountainous region of Jammu and Kashmir, the political parties of both NC-Congress alliance which are now ruling JK and the opposition party BJP which has got the mandate to perform the role of the effective and stable as well as strong opposition should both play their role and part so that democracy and its experiment will not only work but grow, thrive flourish and function for meeting the problems ,concerns ,needs and above all genuine aspirations of the people of two divisions of the UT that is Jammu and Kashmir valley .People of the Himalayan region have been anxiously and eagerly waiting for the return of democracy which era has now revisited the UT after a long pause .Finally the long lull and wait has come to an end and the assembly polls were held successfully with free and fair manner . The people of J & K have taken active part in the polls for the first time unexpectedly and unprecedentedly and have this time trusted NC-Congress pre poll alliance and have given them the mandate to rule J &K .The people of the sensitive Jammu and Kashmir have played their role and part by voting in large numbers never before and have reposed their trust in NC-Congress alliance for forming the coalition government and also have voted for BJP so that it will perform the effective role of a strong stable effective and viable opposition which is a must for the successful functioning of a democracy .The gullible people of the UT have done their duty by exercising their right of adult franchise and now it is the turn of NC-Congress government to perform and deliver best for the people of Jammu and Kashmir and come to the expectation of the people .Now NC legislature party leader who is also the vice president of NC and the chief minister designate has taken the oath of office and

secrecy on 16 October 2014

Wednesday in the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir .LG Manoj Sinha has administered the oath of office and secrecy to Omar Abdullah as the chief minister and to the other ministers in a glittering function at SKICC at the banks of river Jehlum which is now the witness to the transition of power to the first democratic and popular government since 2014. The new democratic government of NC-Congress should sit together and concentrate to perform ,deliver and do good for the people of both regions of Jammu and the valley irrespective of who voted for them and in this lies the good of both the rulers and the ruled .The litmus test for the new popular government is its coming up to the expectation of the people who have voted them to power .Omar government should give priority to the fulfilling mundane promises and assurances given to the electorate .It should first of all sincerely try to address the issues of water uninterrupted electricity, good schooling ,hygiene ,health ,good roads which are the major issues confronting the people of J&K .Besides ,the people should get some relief from skyrocketing prices of all essential goods and services as well as the provision of employment to the youth .The maiden government of Omar should press for the political issues later on as he should not take cudgels with the LG and also with the centre government .LG is the constitutional head of the UT and it is incumbent upon the elected chief minister to function in a cordial manner and respect and revere the LG's post and in the present case he is the fatherly figure and Omar should take advice and suggestions from him to govern the UT so that the issues of the people are addressed on a priority basis .Omar should not do any sort of confrontation with the centre government but function in the spirit of federalism and unitary character of our constitution .The new chief minister should cooperate with the centre government and try to get enormous allocations and funds from the Modi government which is in the interests of the J&K .There is utmost need to keep the political issues of article 370,35 A and other such issues in the back burner and start the new inning on a positive and

happy note and not begin

with confrontation .No doubt

article 370's revival is the part of NC's poll manifesto but it should be taken with the centre government at last .So far as the issue of restoration of statehood to JK is concerned, the GOI has made it clear in uncertain and unambiguous language that Modi government will restore the statehood to Jammu and Kashmir at an appropriate time and so Omar dispensation should give reasonable timeframe to the centre government for restoring the full statehood which is the constitutional and democratic right of the people of Jammu and Kashmir .Government and the political executive that is the CM Omar and his team of ministers should appreciate the stark reality the central government is committed to restore the full statehood with all provisions and guarantees as well as eights .Sooner or later the GOI will give back the statehood to J&K and thus no confrontation on this important issues should be made as it will harm the interests of the people instead of resolving the issues of the people .People need power ,roads ,jobs and civic amenities and to tread the beaten path will do more harm than good to the people .J&K people had been lamenting and silently outpouring their dismay and discontent on downsizing of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcating it into two UT's of Jammu& Kashmir and Ladakh and also on stripping them of the special status by abrogation of controversial Article 370. The new government should do nothing in haste and hurry for which it will have to repent later .It is good and in the favor of the people here that maximum funds and finances should be sought and received and the generous funds and finances will come from Delhi only when there are cordial relations between the UT's government and the centre .In short the democracy has revisited JK and now it is the duty and responsibility of treasury benches and the opposition to play their role well .People of JK should also play their part so that democracy which has arrived to JK after a long gap of ten years will flourish, thrive and function so that people's lives will

lems. Hats off to democracy! (The author is a columnist, social and KP activist)

shine by addressing their

mundane issues and prob-

he Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed a ▲ significant political development. For the people of this diverse region, the installation of a stable government is not just a matter of governance but a beacon of hope for progress, development, and inclusivity. The people of Jammu and Kashmir are eager for leadership that brings sustainable development to the region. It is essential that this new government addresses the issues while ensuring that every community, irrespective of their background, reaps the benefits of progress.

One of the most pressing issues that has plagued Jammu and Kashmir is unemployment. For decades, the region's youth have struggled with limited job opportunities, leading to frustration and unrest. The new government carries the hope of introducing policies that will not only create jobs but also provide equal opportunities for all. Additionally, the elimination of favouritism and nepotism from the recruitment process is a key expectation from this administration. A transparent, merit-based system is essential for restoring the faith of the youth in their government.

Infrastructure, healthcare, and education are critical pillars of development that need urgent attention in Jammu and Kashmir. The people hope that under the new government, the UT will witness a revival in these sectors. Developing better roads, communication networks, schools, and hospitals will uplift the quality of life and serve as a stepping stone to overall economic growth. A focus on education will empower the youth, while improving healthcare will ensure that the populace can lead healthier, more productive lives.

At the core of this new government is the hope for justice in every sphere of governance. This includes justice in terms of law, fairness in development projects, and accountability in the government's functioning. It is imperative that the leadership ensures no section of society feels marginalized or left behind. There is a strong desire for policies that promote diversity by creating inclusive and equitable opportunities for all segments of society.

Additionally, people hope that development will not come at the cost of the region's natural beauty and environment. The preservation of Jammu and

Kashmir's unique cultural heritage and the protection of its breathtaking landscapes are vital. The government must focus on boosting the economy while maintaining the region's natural charm. Promoting the preservation of old cultural sites and fostering the state's rich heritage is essential for maintaining its unique identity. The balance between progress and environmental conservation will ensure the region thrives without losing its

The hope is also that the government will treat all Jammu and Kashmir citizens equally, without bias towards those who have voted for other parties, and that the alliance will work harmoniously, prioritizing the interests of the Union Territory. True leadership lies in being accessible and providing confidence to citizens that their issues are understood and addressed. A government that stands with its people, especially during times of crisis, can earn their trust and long-term loyalty.

There is a resounding hope that this new government will be honest and corruption-free. Corruption has been a long-standing problem, eroding public trust and hindering progress.

The administration must make a concerted effort to root out corrupt practices and establish a system where integrity prevails at all levels of gover-

A key expectation from the people is the Centre's commitment to restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. This long-overdue step is crucial in giving the region back its political autonomy and in providing the people a stronger sense of representation. The central government holds the responsibility to guide, support, and ensure that Jammu and Kashmir's developmental journey is inclusive and beneficial for its diverse population.

Finally, there is hope that this government will foster a positive political culture by avoiding unnecessary criticism of the opposition. Constructive politics, focused on development and welfare rather than mudslinging, will ensure that democracy functions as it should While hope sets the founds tion, it is now time for the new government-along with the support of the central government-to turn this hope

(The writer is pursuing Advanced Business Consultancy Programme by AIMA).

Ratan Naval Tata-From Torchbearer to Transformer

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF

here are a host of reasons why Ratan Naval Tata was worthy of admiration, none more so than for the way he sailed through the high tide of his life as head of the Tata group, with grace and a quiet dignity all too rare in the tumult and cacophony that characterise the mostly grubby. sometimes noble intersection of business and life in

For the Tata Group, Ratan Tata was more than a chairperson. With an unwavering commitment to excellence, integrity, and innovation, the Tata Group under his stewardship expanded its global footprint while always remaining true to its moral compass. The rectitude and resolve behind this persona was of more consequence, though, defining as they have the shape and substance of a remarkable business conglomerate during what was the most transformative period in its long and storied histo-

Born to Naval and Soonoo Tata on December 28, 1937, Ratan Tata and his younger brother, Jimmy, were brought up by their grandmother, Navajbai R Tata, in a baroque manor called Tata Palace in downtown Bombay. Life was luxurious (the young Ratan was driven to school in a Rolls-Royce) but Lady Navaibai, a formidable matriarch, instilled a strong set of values in her grandchildren. "She was very indulgent, but also quite strict in terms of discipline." Ratan Tata would recall in one of those rare interviews where he opened up about his growing-up years: "We were very protected and we didn't have many friends. I had to learn the piano and I played a lot of cricket."

Finish with school he did and then it was on to Cornell University in the United States, a nation and a state of mind that Ratan Tata fell in love with. Cornell, where he studied architecture and structural engineering, and those years in America from 1955 to 1962 would influence Ratan tremendously. It was, in multiple ways, the making of him. He travelled the country and was charmed by California and that West Coast lifestyle he was ready to settle down in Los Angeles.

The spell was broken when Lady Navajbai's health deteriorated. Ratan was forced to return to a life he thought he had left behind. Now back in India, Ratan had a job offer from IBM. JRD Tata wasn't amused.

Ratan Tata's early years at the Tata Group were characterised by adeliberate avoidance of any overt reliance on his family name. He began his career on the shop floor at Tata Steel, where he worked alongside blue-collar laborers, learning the business from the ground up. This humility and handson experience would define his approach to leadership in the years to come.

When Tata assumed leadership of the Tata Group in 1991, he inherited an empire steeped in legacy but in need of reinvention. What followed was nothing short of a corporate renaissance. During his two-decade tenure as chairman, Tata transformed the sprawling conglomerate from a predominantly India-focused entity into a global enterprise. Under his stewardship, the Group expanded into over 100 countries, with nearly two-thirds of its revenue generated from outside India.

Among Tata's most notable accomplishments were his bold acquisitions of international brands, a testament to his vision of making the Tata Group a global player. The acquisition of Tetley Tea in 2000 marked the first significant overseas purchase by an Indian company, setting the tone for what was to come. The group went on to acquire the UK's Corus Steel in 2007 and the iconic Jaguar Land Rover in 2008, moves that were initially met with skepticism but ultimately underscored Tata's far reaching foresight.

The government of India honored Ratan Tata with its second-highest civilian award, the Padma Vibhushan, in 2008. He was appointed Knight Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire and Rockefeller Foundation conferred him with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Among his other achievements, Ratan was also an honorary fellow of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, Royal Academy of Engineering and a foreign associate of National Academy of

Engineering. He received honorary doctorates from several universities in India and overseas.

Ratan Tata's dedication to philanthropy and the development of society has touched the lives of millions. From education to healthcare, his initiatives have left a deep-rooted mark that will benefit generations to come. Reinforcing all of this work was Ratan Tata's genuine humility in every individual

Perhaps the most defining trait of Ratan Tata's leadership was his unwavering adherence to ethical principles. In an era marked by corporate greed and misconduct, he was a beacon of integrity. He famously declined a bribe when his company was bidding to start an airline, underscoring his belief that profits should never come at the expense of

Tata's retirement in 2012 marked the end of an era for the conglomerate, but his influence remained palpable. He continued to mentor young entrepreneurs, offering guidance and support to India's burgeoning startup ecosystem. His investment in several Indian startups-including Ola and Paytm-demonstrated his continued belief in the power of innovation to drive progress

Ratan Naval Tata, one of India's most revered industrialists and a paragon of leadership, passed away at the age of 86. His demise marks the close of a remarkable chapter in the annals of global business. A towering figure in Indian industry, he was a man of quiet dignity, profound foresight, and a deep-rooted sense of social responsibility.

Beyond business, Ratan Tata was deeply committed to philanthropy, a legacy that traces its roots to the founding principles of the Tata family. As chairman of the Tata Trusts-one of India's oldest and most significant charitable organizations-he oversaw substantial investments in areas such as healthcare, education, and rural development. His personal dedication to these causes extended beyond mere financial contributions; Ratan Tata was an advocate for using wealth as a tool for societal improvement, often working quietly behind the scenes to advance causes close to his heart.