

FOCUS ON INDIA

This year is the 25th year of India-Germany Strategic Partnership. We have established a roadmap for a developed India, #ViksitBharat, for the next 25 years. I am delighted that at this pivotal moment, the German cabinet has released the "Focus on India" document. The "Focus on India" document outlines a blueprint for how the world's two leading economies and democracies can collaborate to become a "Force for Global Good."

Key Highlights of the Report
"Dynamic Transformation: India is undergoing significant changes that reflect a vibrant democracy and a thriving economy. This transformation is marked by an assertive role in global affairs, demonstrating India's ambition to shape a more equitable and sustainable world.

"Global Influence: As the world's most populous nation, India plays a crucial role in shaping global policies. The country actively participates in initiatives aimed at climate protection, environmental sustainability, and biodiversity conservation, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure a sustainable future for all.

"Peaceful Mediation Role: India's willingness to contribute to peaceful conflict resolution, such as its involvement in the Russia-Ukraine war, underscores its commitment to diplomacy and constructive engagement in global issues. This role enhances India's reputation as a responsible global actor.

"Regional Stability: India has a stabilizing influence in a region where the global order based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law is facing considerable pressure. The geopolitical lines of conflict in the Indo-Pacific and the high economic dynamics in the region will play a significant role in shaping the international order of the 21st century.

"Voice of the Global South: India is a leading representative of the Global South, advocating for the interests of developing nations. Through its participation in platforms like the G20, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, India amplifies the voices of those who are often underrepresented in global discussions.

"Rapid Economic Growth: Recognized as the fastest-growing major economy, India is projected to become the world's third-largest economy by 2030. This growth is driven by rising prosperity, a burgeoning domestic market, and significant investments in infrastructure and technology.

"Innovation and Technology Leadership: India has emerged as a global innovation hub, excelling in information technology, digital infrastructure, and space exploration. This leadership not only contributes to economic growth but also positions India as a critical player in shaping the future of global technology.

"Home to Rich Biodiversity: As home to a huge variety of different species, India has global significance when it comes to protecting biodiversity. It is home to around seven percent of global biodiversity. India's engagement in biodiversity conservation is therefore a matter of global importance!

"Commitment to the 2030 Agenda: India is recognized as a key player in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The nation's collaboration is essential in addressing shared objectives, including climate action and sustainable development.

"Commitment to Climate Goals: India remains steadfast in its commitment to climate-neutral growth, investing heavily in renewable energy and environmental protection. The nation's efforts align with the Paris Agreement goals, emphasizing the importance of sustainable development while acknowledging its significant greenhouse gas emissions.

"Renewable Energy and Green Transition: With immense potential in renewable energy, India is leveraging its solar, wind, and green hydrogen resources to transition to a sustainable energy future. Collaborative partnerships, such as those with Germany, focus on phasing out fossil fuels while ensuring energy security.

"Green and Sustainable Development Partnership: The Green and Sustainable Development Partnership, established in 2022 with Germany, emphasizes climate action, energy transition, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable urbanization. Key initiatives include agroecology, renewable energy projects, and forest conservation efforts. Additionally, India intends to draft a National Adaptation Plan by 2025 to address vulnerabilities to climate impacts like extreme heat, droughts, and floods.

"Green Hydrogen Task Force: In the Green Hydrogen Task Force, German and Indian experts are jointly compiling a roadmap to promote the market ramp-up of this fuel of the future, which is intended to implement rigorously.

"Investment Platform for Renewable Energy: With the creation of a platform for investment in renewable energies India and Germany want to elaborate tailor-made solutions for the rapid expansion of renewable energy. This will pave the path for India for becoming an ideal investment platform across the world!

Significant contribution by women agripreneurs in sustainable agriculture development

■ PROF POONAM PARIHAR

Agripreneurship can help women to become more self-sufficient, self-reliant, economically stable & independent decision makers. It can also help to reduce migration to cities & increase income & generate employment"

As Prime Minister Modi says, "We cannot achieve success if 50 per cent women are locked at home" A major thrust of PM Modi Government has been to nurture Women Entrepreneurs through financial support, skilling & training.

Women comprise 33% of the agriculture labour force and 48% of the self-employed farmers in India.With growing urban migration by men, the agriculture sector is being managed by women.Women contribute to agriculture through multiple roles as cultivators, entrepreneurs, and laborers.About 60-80% of the food produced in India can be attributed to the efforts of ruralwomen. Their contributions span various activities, including cultivation, entrepreneurship, and labour-intensive tasks. These remarkable women are responsible for producing 60-80% of the country's food, and they are also involved in allied sectors like livestock rearing, horticulture, and post-harvest operations.Rural women are torchbearers for social, economic and environment transformation for the 'New India'. In India, Agriculture employs about 80 percent of rural women. Empowering and mainstreaming rural women workforce in agriculture can bring paradigm shift towards economic growth. It will enhance food and nutrition security and alleviate poverty and hunger. It's a win-win strategy for achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. India is an agrarian economy with about 54.6 percent of total workforce engaged in agricultural and allied sector activities (Census 2011). Women are extensively engaged in the activities pertaining to agriculture and allied sector. The workforce participation rate for rural females is significantly higher at 41.8 percent against urban women

participation rate of 35.31 percent (MoSPI, 2017).India is an agrarian country with a vast availability of land for agricultural activities and huge population is depending on the agriculture and its allied businesses. The Agripreneurship is the concept of the Entrepreneurship in agricultural sector, brought in by the people with innovative ideas to develop the existing practices for a better productivity. Women Agripreneurship has the potential to overcome problems like diversifying income, generating growth, greater employment, new technology and optimum utilization of the resources available. There has been inclusion about various schemes available for their promotion and finally on how Indian agricultural sector can take benefit from these Women Agripreneures.The concept of Agripreneure is having a wide scope in today's era especially in India. The introduction of this concept into the agricultural sector can have a great impact in various aspects such as better income to farmers, good productivity with new technology and better living of the rural farmers who can no longer depend on lenders and fall into a debt trap. In the realm where innovation meets sustainability, women entrepreneurs are not just cultivating crops; they're sowing the seeds of a more sustainable and resilient future. Entrepreneurship in sustainable agriculture encompasses regenerative farming, precision agriculture, organic farming, and farm-to-table initiatives.Women primarily empower cultivation of cropswith their physical efforts and put their processingknowledge to produce significant food, revenue and employment. Women agripreneurs have evolved as significant contributors to the agricultural sector and take part in training programs and awareness campaigns and benefits from sponsored by government.Women entrepreneurs have also outperformed male counterparts in various fields. Similarly, in agriculture they are doing exceptionally well.Women agripreneurs can also prove a milestone and show their worth in

the agriculture sector.

Women groups have always been efficient, hard-working and intelligent whenever given scope. These "women Agri entrepreneurs" have been examples for other local ladies as they adopt new techniques to improve cultivation. Women Agri-preneurs have worked hard, accepted all challenges from working in the kitchen to fields and leading to market opening doors for vast opportunities in employment, becoming self-sufficient, adopting innovation techniques. These steps increase the women's role in the economies of the country and provide economic strength and higher position in society. Indian women are conquering every field of income generation. They have brilliantly managed the natural, economic and social resources for family welfare and economic gains. Women entrepreneur's in agriculture have adopted new methods for crop production, poultry, and livestock production with the support of different Government schemes. Village women sell the milk, ghee, curd and paneer to market and at home to working people and earn money. Some farmer/ cooperative societies have taken the step to collect such milk products directly from village houses suitable for housewife groups of various villages. With such initiative, women can easily perform business activities, and time and energy are saved. Women also perform other activities like managing animals and shed cleaning, farmyard manure, cow dung cake preparation, animal food collection, etc. Value-added food products are key to gain more profits from perishable food and vegetable products. There is scope for individual women farmers and self-help groups to work for value addition of food and milk products that are easy to market and have more shelf life than the raw material. Market scenario in today's world is changing rapidly with discrete demand of consumers. Today's consumer is interested in buying the products online at home. They prefer quality over quantity. Thus, women agri- entrepreneurs who are lim-

ited to direct sale of produced products can enter this market to serve the consumers online with quality. These types of markets are expanding globally and provide a great scope to explore, earn good profit from ventures.

The government has launched many schemes for supporting and handholding women agri-entrepreneurs enabling them to participate in country's economy at larger scale. Agriculture sector contributes a lot in national income by empowering farmers with integrated farming system, crop management and animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries. This sector provides the opportunity for the young population, especially women, to showcase the skill set with dedicated knowledge and technology interventions to be self-sustaining. Agriculture sector is subjected to increase production and profitability for sustainable growth and should feed the required nutrition to every empty stomach. The Agriculture Sector provides women entrepreneurship opportunities to work in groups to have a wide range of undiscovered fields or be successful while practicing modern techniques for earnings. Women are playing a variety of roles in agricultural growth and development. They contribute to economic growth while facing numerous problems. Many challenges or issues arise in agri-entrepreneurship, such as market linkages, technology interventions, knowledge, climate, resources and fund management for infrastructure etc. The Ministry of Agriculture implemented various schemes and policies to promote agriculture development so that women groups can become successful agripreneurs and increase the income resources. Women agripreneurs and startups in agriculture sector with a handful of knowledge about agriculture techniques today will make larger population feed like thousands or even larger with agricultural produce and its value till 2030. Women Agripreneurs are making significant contribution to sustainable agriculture development in many ways.

Women are the eyes of the Nation

Importance of Accession Day

■ O. N KOUL

The 26th, October 1947 is the accession day and it is the day on which Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir Hari Singh signed the instrument of accession and joined the secular and democratic India. We are celebrating the accession day on October 26, 2023 and are celebrating it with fanfare. The UT and its people are celebrating 76th accession day this year. Thus this day has a special importance in the post independent history of not only Jammu and Kashmir but of the India as well. So this day should be celebrated with gaiety and fervor. But it is very disturbing that 26th October is not celebrated in the manner it deserves to be celebrated. However the LG administration had rightly issued order to all government offices and educational institutions to celebrate the accession day in a befitting manner. The 26th October has now been declared a public holiday by the government and therefore this day needs to be celebrated to commemorate the accession of J&K with the Indian union. In fact accession day in India's Jammu and Kashmir commemorates the day when the area joined the Dominion of India. The 26th October is important in the sense that Maharaja Hari Singh signed off the instrument of accession on this day in which Jammu and Kashmir joined the dominion of India. This was part of the series of events in 1947 by which rule the British Raj was converted into two independent Dominions of India and Pakistan, latter having territories separated by whole of the northern India. As a Hindu ruler of a state with both Hindu and Muslim population, the Maharaja's decision was crucial. The festivities of the day include holding rallies, lighting firecrackers, singing India's national anthem and raising the flag of India. Thus accession day carries great importance as it was on this day in 1947 that the

then Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir signed the Instrument of Accession to become part and parcel of the greatest and largest democracy of the world. This day marks the anniversary of Maharaja's signing the Instrument of Accession with the government of India. The signing of this document cemented Jammu and Kashmir as member of the Dominion of India. The people of India as well as of J&K especially children need to be taught about the historical developments which led to the signing of the Instrument of Accession and the importance of this day in independent India. The festivities of the day include holding rallies, bursting of fire crackers, singing of India's national anthem and raising of national flag and in some areas the festivities are as big as those of the Hindu festival of Diwali. Accession day is a public holiday in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The accession day became an official public holiday for first time in Jammu and Kashmir in 2020. While this day is celebrated and commemorated for acceding of Jammu and Kashmir with India and is celebrated by all nationalistic people but the separatists observe it as a black day. The Accession Day of Jammu and Kashmir with the union of India is celebrated every year on 26th October across the UT. Special functions are observed to mark the day. The day became an official public holiday in J&K for the first time in 2020 after the abrogation of article 370 and 35A on August 5th 2019. The Instrument of Accession is a legal document executed by Maharaja Hari Singh, ruler of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir on October 26, 1947. By executing this document under the provisions of Indian Independence Act, of 1947, Maharaja Hari Singh agreed to accede to Dominion of India. It is pertinent to mention that Maharaja Hari Singh, sought the

help of the Indian armed forces after an invasion from the army and tribesmen of Pakistan. The Indian government extended its help on condition of accession of the state to the dominion of India. Accession day is the new holiday that residents of Jammu and Kashmir will celebrate. Earlier the Jammu and Kashmir administration replaced former CM Sheikh Abdullah's anniversary and Martyrs day from its list of public holidays for 2020 and included Accession Day which will be celebrated every year on 26, October. The government should not have cancelled the holiday of the anniversary of Baba-e-Koum-Sher-e-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah because he was the towering political personality and his role is commendable for the upliftment of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Though it is so good to have cancelled the holiday on account of the so called martyrs day of 13th July but the government should not have tinkered with the holiday of the anniversary of Sheikh Abdullah. It is a bad politics and politics of vengeance. The accession day is observed on 26, October every year. This day marks anniversary of Maharaja Hari Singh signing the Instrument of Accession with government of India. The people in Jammu and Kashmir whose national sentiments favor India celebrate the day by lighting fireworks, singing the Indian national anthem and hoisting the national flag. Those in Jammu and Kashmir who have more separatist aspirations observe the day as a black day mourning Kashmir's independence. The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was torn apart when British India was partitioned to form modern nations of India and Pakistan. When Pakistani forces launched a guerrilla attack on Kashmir in 1947, Hari Singh, the reigning monarch of Kashmir at the

time, turned to Mountbatten and India. He was asked to sign the Instrument of Accession a document declaring the princely state as part of the Dominion of India. After the first Indo-Pak war was drawn to an end the United Nations was called for mediation. The UN's suggestion to hold a referendum to discern the aspirations of Kashmiri people was refused by India. Jammu and Kashmir thus became a part of India. The state was accorded special status by article 370 of the Indian constitution. The article though was repealed in 2019 and the state of Jammu and Kashmir bifurcated into two union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. As already stated accession day was made a public holiday. Accession day highlights the modern history of Jammu and Kashmir. It shows how Jammu and Kashmir became a part of India. Through accession, we learn about the political aspirations of the people and how these impact the functioning of a state. Accession is an opportunity to understand special statehood. Jammu and Kashmir has a long history and it is in the fitness of things to use the accession day to educate the people especially the future generation about the importance of this historically significant day.

The children who are the future leaders and rulers should be made aware about the importance of the accession day and so it becomes our responsibility to make children aware about the significance of this day for the country. In brief the accession cements and creates the relationship of Jammu and Kashmir with India and it is through signing of the Instrument of Accession by the Maharaja Hari Singh that J&K became a part and parcel of India and hence the importance of this day cannot be exaggerated.

Tirupati Laddu Controversy: "Keep Gods out of Politics"

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

For clean politics and religious freedom as well as for Gods sanctity, it is in the fitness of things to spare gods and keep gods out of politics. Keeping Gods out of petty and dirty politics is not a new thing, however it has been observed the top court of India while giving its observation in connection with the Tirupati Laddoo Row the other day as the Supreme court has observed in no uncertain terms while giving admonition to Andhra Pradesh government and has asked all to stay away from politics as far as the Tirupati Laddoo controversy is concerned. Religion and Gods need to be kept away from politics and it means that there should be no politicking over gods and religion and the politicians should keep this truth in mind while doing politics. A bench of Justice B.R Gavai and K.V Vishwanathan also asked why was there a need to make a public statement when a probe had already ordered into the matter. Observing that at least the Gods should be kept away from politics, the SC sought to know what was the proof that contaminated ghee was used in making Tirupati Laddu's. The hearing in the matter is underway. The bench is hearing a batch of pleas seeking a probe into the alleged use of animal fat in making Tirupati laddus. AP Chief minister Naidu claimed that animal fat was used in preparing Tirupati laddus during the previous government of Reddy triggering a massive political row out of a religious issue. The YSRC Party has accused Naidu of indulging in "heinous allegations" for political gains. All stakeholders should now wait the Top Courts decision on the matter. If true what has happened with the Tirupati Laddu's so far as it pertains to the use of adulterated ghee is very unfortunate and it needs thorough investigation and probe to unearth the whole truth about the mixing of animal fats with the ghee which was used to prepare laddus which were offered to the deity and were also taken as Prasad. It seems that there is a planned conspiracy to make the religious sanctity of Tirupati Bala Devasthanam and temple unholy and profane and thus to incite communal tension in the multi-religious society and country. There is genuine anger and

resentment among the people against the sacrilegious act of mixing animal fats to the ghee that was used in the preparation of the laddus in Andhra Pradesh's Tirupati Balaji ji mandir and also offered to the deity. TDP and YSRC,s Jagan Mohan Reddy are indulging in worst kind of politics on this issue and one blaming other for this unholy act. The politics is in full swing in the state and there is no respite from the dirty politics. The Tirupati Laddu controversy has both political as well as religious dimensions. The issue has besides snowballing into a religious controversy, has also stretched too far and the Andhra chief minister Chandra Babu Naidu has made the issue a political weapon to set scores with his predecessor Jagan Mohan Reddy. Thus both the TDP of Naidu and YSRC of Reddy are busy in politicking this religious issue and both want to take political mileage of this unfortunate issue that will reach to the whole country and it has the potential to disturb the communal harmony in our diverse and plural society. The majority community deserve praise for having maintained communal harmony and mutual brotherhood despite the severe provocation and indulging into the profane act of allegedly mixing animal fats into pure vegetarian Laddu offered to the deity.

The VHP has rightly urged the Chandra Babu Naidu, chief minister of Andhra Pradesh to establish Gaushalas in the state to house and feed 30000 cows so that pure ghee is made and supplied to the Tirupati Balaji Temple for the preparation of the lakhs of laddu's daily for sale. The matter of adulterated ghee used to supply to the management of Tirupati Balaji Devasthanam which was used to prepare the Laddus has reached the top Court of India. Congress and BJP as well also use it to score political points and use the issue to their advantage. Still some others see and consider it as a purely religious issue which in fact it is not given the politico-religious impact and influence of this issue. Again some others regard it as a food security matter and demand strict use of procedures to contain such adulteration in the interest of people's health. Others see it as a religious issue and demand that such issues and mixing of animal

fats to ghee used to supply and prepare sacred laddu's should be totally prohibited for the preservation of the religious sanctity of the holy place and shrine of Tirupati Balaji temple. The religious leaders opine that laddu is a divine food and contaminated Laddu's should not be offered to Lord. The political controversy encircling the issue of Laddu's points towards the delicate balance between politics, religion, food quality and last but not the least the public. The Laddu's for prasadam and sale are made with pure ghee and ingredients such as sugar, cardamom, raisins, cashews and grain flour are used to prepare Laddu's which are offered to deity daily and sold as Prasad to the devotees. The Laddu's sale also fetch Rs 500 crores yearly by way of selling these to the people. It is very disturbing that Naidu seized the Laddu row to attack Jagan.

He alleged that the Reddy government of allowing contaminated Laddu with beef fat in the ghee as Prasad. Nadiu raised it at a celebration of the Modi' governments 100 days in office in the third term, remember TDP is a coalition partner in the NDA government of Modi. Laddu's came into scanner in late sixties and seventies as well. At that time there were complaints that dalda vanaspati, a vegetable fat was added to the gee. Thus the suppliers were blocked. TDP used the Laddu issue as Naidu, claiming that the Japan governments cost cutting measures led to the purchase of low-quality ghee, thus compromising the quality of the Tirumala Laddu. TDP and in fact its chief Naidu accused Jagan of ignoring the sentiments of Hindus and also of neglect of religious practices of Hindus during his rule. The allegations assume importance because Jagan and his late father and CM, Rajashekar Reddy are converted Christians.

On his side Reddy refuted the allegations saying that it was politically motivated. Jagan also complained to PM Narendra Modi that under the garb of Laddu controversy Naidu was settling political scores against him. Jagan did not stop here but his YSRCP also criticized CM Naidu and performed the purification ceremony. The politics in the state is so intense and personal that Jagan was not

allowed to permission to enter the temple for any penance. The Laddu controversy has assumed enormous proportions with Jagn's sister Sharmila joining state Congress and became the chief of the Congress in Andhra Pradesh and she has taken the issue to State governor and has demanded a CBI probe. Pawan Kalyan a coalition partner in Naidu's government has taken the issue as a religious one and has gone on an 11 day penance claiming the corrupted ghee was a grave offence. Naidu plays a political card and Kalayan plays a religious card projecting Sanatan Ddhharma should be protected.

The Laddu row has sparked nationwide outrage among seers and devotees. The VHP, other seers and Hindu saints have demanded a thorough investigation to bring out the truth. This row has also led to demands that temples should be freed from government control. The matter has gone to Supreme Court as well and the petitioner demanding a constitution of a special team to probe the issue.

The state government has also set up a committee to go into the issue. The centre has asked the state government to send a report in this regard. AIMIM chief and MP Owasi has for the first time since the eruption of Laddu controversy said that it is bad if the animal fats were mixed in the ghee used for the preparation of Laddu's as animal fats are prohibited in Hinduism.

But in the same breath he has criticized the Modi government for piloting a bill to control Waqf Boards as it is an assault on the religious freedom of Muslims.

The TDP conducted a purification ritual and tried to assure the devotees that Laddu's were not contaminated. The issue may not die soon as the SC is seized of the row and it will take a long time to pronounce the verdict on the Laddu controversy. This sensitive issue if not controlled can damage the communal harmony in the country. All are looking towards the top Court for a verdict to close the issue and balm the religious feelings and sensitivities of the Hindu community after all Hindu feelings were hurt by the contaminated Laddu's.

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist)

