

RENEWED ENGAGEMENT

The recent announcement regarding the resumption of direct flights between India and China marks a significant and positive development in the complex relationship between the two Asian giants. After a long hiatus caused by the pandemic and further strained by diplomatic and border tensions, the move carries both symbolic and practical importance. It signals a cautious but welcome step toward normalizing bilateral ties and rebuilding channels of communication, people-to-people contact, and economic cooperation.

In the contemporary global context, where economic interdependence often supersedes political divides, restoring air connectivity between India and China is not merely about the movement of passengers. It represents a reopening of dialogue, an acknowledgment of shared economic interests, and a willingness to explore cooperation despite existing challenges. With both nations being major trading partners-bilateral trade having crossed the \$135 billion mark-direct flights will facilitate business, education, and tourism, boosting confidence across sectors.

However, this development should not be mistaken for a complete thaw in relations. The border situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) remains delicate, with trust yet to be fully restored. Both governments must recognize that economic and cultural engagement can complement, but not replace, the need for sincere diplomatic dialogue to address longstanding security concerns. The resumption of flights provides a platform to rebuild mutual confidence through practical cooperation while maintaining clarity on core issues.

Moreover, this move comes at a time when both India and China face economic headwinds and evolving geopolitical alignments. For India, enhanced connectivity offers opportunities for trade diversification, educational exchanges, and tourism revival. For China, which seeks to reinvigorate international connectivity post-pandemic, engaging India-a major regional player-is both pragmatic and strategic.

In essence, the reopening of skies between India and China is a small but meaningful confidence-building measure.

The 1947 Massacre and Tribute to the Martyrs of PoJK

■ ARUN CHAUDHARY

August 15, 1947, will forever remain immortal in the history of India - the day when the sacrifices, struggles, and martyrdom of countless brave souls brought independence to our nation.

But only a few days after independence, Pakistan's army, along with tribal raiders, surrounded Jammu and Kashmir from all sides. On October 22, 1947, they launched a brutal attack that shook humanity itself. Thousands of innocent people were massacred, and countless families were forced to abandon their homes, becoming refugees overnight. In later years - 1965 and 1971 - Pakistan continued its nefarious acts, especially in the Chamb region.

Operation Gulmarg and the Tragedy of PoJK

The attack of October 22 was part of Pakistan's conspiracy called "Operation Gulmarg," whose objective was to seize Jammu and Kashmir. During this invasion, thousands of square kilometers of land were captured - territory that today is known as Pakistan-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK).

This includes areas like Mirpur, Bhimber, Kotli, Bagh, Pulandri, Sudhmoti, Muzaffarabad, Gilgit, Baltistan, Dev-Battala, and Poonch. This land, once the heritage of our ancestors, was snatched from us through cruelty and betrayal.

In this attack, thousands of Hindus and Sikhs were killed. Many families were burned alive in their homes, mothers and sisters were subjected to inhuman atrocities, and countless people were abducted and taken to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Arab countries. Lakhs of families were displaced from their birthplace - scattered and broken, still waiting for reunion and justice.

Let us bow our heads in tribute to those martyrs who sacrificed their lives in 1947 to protect our very existence. This soil has been sanctified by their blood.

The Horror of Muzaffarabad

The first assault on Muzaffarabad occurred on October 22, 1947. Pakistan-backed tribesmen and soldiers unleashed terror upon the Hindu-Sikh population. People were given two choices - conversion or death. Those who refused to submit were mercilessly killed. Numerous women were abducted and never returned.

For three days, the youth of Muzaffarabad bravely resisted the invaders. Nearly 2,000 Hindus and Sikhs were killed. After this, the attackers advanced toward Srinagar. In this moment of crisis, Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession with India on October 26, 1947, following which the Indian Army landed in Srinagar on October 27 and halted the bloodshed.

The Heart-Wrenching Massacre of Mirpur

In November 1947, the city of Mirpur witnessed one of the most horrifying scenes in human history. The Pakistani army surrounded the city and launched a brutal assault on Hindus. The Gurdwara Damdama Sahib and Sanatan Dharam Temple of Mirpur became silent witnesses to this tragedy.

Over 100 young girls staying in the Arya Samaj Hostel sacrificed their lives by jumping into a well to protect their honor. Many people hid in cellars, but even some local servants betrayed their employers and helped the attackers. Around 10,000 men were killed, and 5,000 women were abducted, their dignity violated before they were murdered - their bodies thrown into the Jhelum River.

Thousands were imprisoned inside the Kirtangarh Gurdwara, which had been

turned into a detention camp, where hundreds were executed daily by the riverbank. After the intervention of the International Red Cross, only 6,500 out of 15,000 captives were rescued and brought safely to Jammu.

The Blood-Soaked History of Rajouri

Rajouri endured one of the most terrifying chapters in Indian history. Between November 1947 and April 1948, thousands of Hindus and Sikhs were massacred. To protect their dignity, many mothers and sisters took their own lives - jumping into wells or consuming poison.

On November 11, 1947, while the rest of India celebrated the first Diwali after independence, over 3,000 people were slaughtered in the streets of Rajouri. Eventually, on April 13, 1948, the Indian Army liberated Rajouri. Even today, locals have not forgotten those horrifying memories.

The Tragedy of Poonch

In October 1947, chaos spread through the Bagh Tehsil of Poonch. Pulandri, Bagh, Sudhmoti, and Rawalakot fell into Pakistani hands. Between November and December 1947, thousands of innocents were killed. The Indian Air Force carried out rescue operations, airlifting many people safely to Jammu.

The Suffering of the Displaced and the Wait for Justice

The people displaced from PoJK have lived for over seven decades deprived of their rightful status in their own country. Successive governments ignored their pain and suffering. The current government has begun taking steps to restore their rights - an important move toward justice.

The 1994 Parliamentary Resolution

On February 22, 1994, the Indian Parliament unanimously passed a resolution* declaring that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and that the territo-

ry under Pakistani occupation is illegally occupied. Parliament demanded that Pakistan vacate the area immediately and affirmed that India's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity were non-negotiable.

Tribute and Remembrance Week - 78th Anniversary

October 22, 2025, marks 78 years since the tragedy: From October 21 to 27, "Tribute and Remembrance Week" is observed in honor of the martyrs of 1947 and the Indian soldiers who defended the nation. During this period, torch rallies, memorial ceremonies, lighting of lamps in martyrs' names, seminars on PoJK, and "Accession Day" events may be organized.

Let us unite to bow before the sacred land of our ancestors and pledge to reclaim our lost homeland.

The Pain of History and the Promise of the Future

The partition and massacre of 1947 remain the most painful chapters of our history. Millions of families were uprooted, countless lives destroyed. We must never forget this tragedy - remembrance keeps us aware and strong.

"Tribute and Remembrance Week" is not only an occasion to recall the past but also a symbol of our commitment to justice, reconciliation, and restoration. Time may pass, but the pain of these wounds does not fade.

Together, we must build a future where the wounds of the past are healed with dignity and humanity remains supreme.

(The Author is the General Secretary of the PoJK Displaced Service Committee, Jammu and Kashmir. This article is based on the accounts shared by his late mother, Krishna Devi (wife of Late Sitaram Chaudhary, Kotli District, Mirpur), who was an eyewitness to the 1947 massacre)

Insights for Intersex Awareness Day: A Window into Recognition

■ DR LUCKY GUPTA

On 26 October, people around the world honour intersex awareness. "Visibility, Inclusion and Empowerment" is the topic that Intersex Awareness Day 2025 will adhere to.

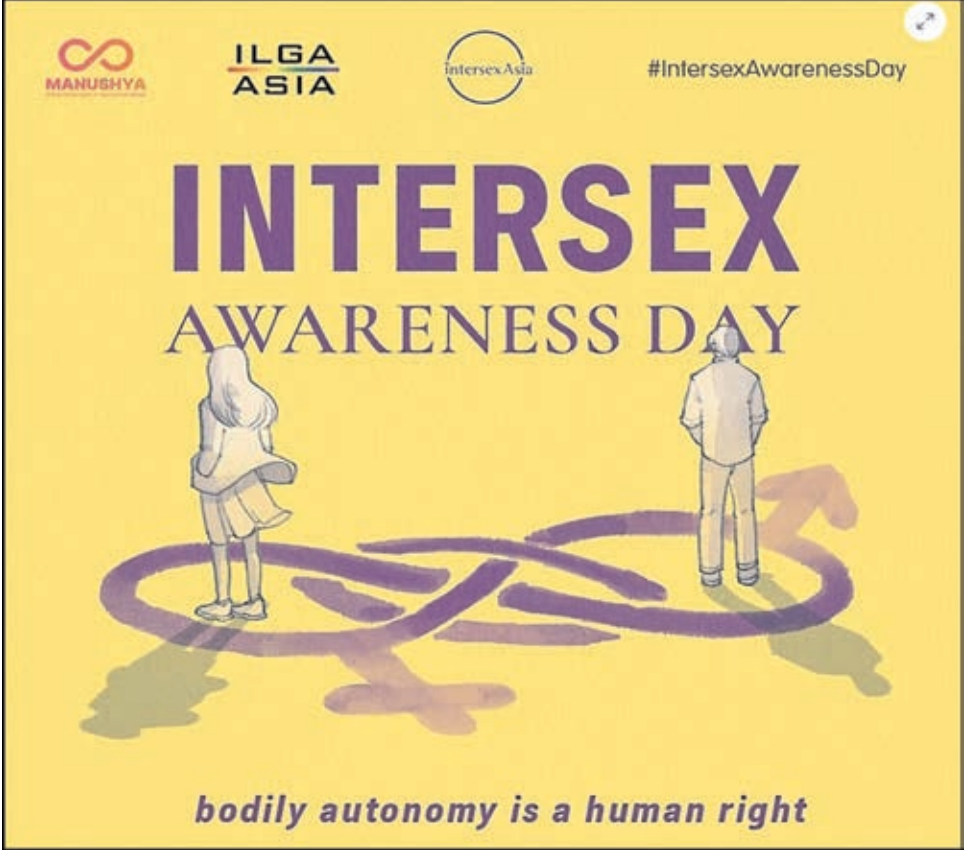
Intersex Terminology and DSD

People whose bodies do not conform to conventional gender norms are considered intersex, according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. "Hermaphrodites" and "congenital eunuchs" are now considered archaic descriptions of intersex people because of how the language surrounding them has changed. Those who identify as LGBTQ+ fall under a broad category that includes many different sexual orientations, romantic partnerships, and gender identities that do not conform to the heterosexual or cisgender binary. All of these communities come together as the LGBTQ+ Movement.

Trans Identity

Trans is a more inclusive term than transgender, according to some. While "trans" is most commonly used to describe transgender people, "trans" plus an asterisk expands the definition to encompass non-binary identities including bigender, genderqueer, agender, two-spirit, and genderless.

Disorders of Sex Development (DSD) is the professional name that has been used since 2006. But because of the pathologising connotations of the name, DSD is still a contentious one. It encompasses a wide range of biological and hormonal characteristics that do not fit



neatly into the traditional male or female categories when discussing reproductive or sexual

anatomy.

Incidence and Diagnosis

It is believed that between 1.2 and 2.0% of the population experiences intersex variants. An estimated 0.02% to 0.05% of infants are born with genitalia that are not clearly defined. Several tests, including karyotyping, geniturothrogram, hormone evaluations, and imaging procedures (such as ultrasound), are used for diagnosis. It is possible to detect equivocal development during pregnancy in certain situations, such as congenital adrenal hyperplasia.

Psychosocial and Medical Concerns

Intersex and DSD individuals are more likely to have a host of health problems, such as an increased risk of cancer (anal, breast, cervical), STDs, heart disease, and mental health disorders (depression, anxiety, drug misuse, etc.). It is essential to be sensitive and provide psychosocial assistance since discriminatory attitudes make it even more difficult to receive adequate healthcare services. Internalised transphobias and gender incongruence, issues with self-perception and social acceptance, and a fear of rejection are common, especially among adolescents.

Awareness and Education

All communities and healthcare facilities should make raising awareness and providing training a top priority in order to enhance care. Medical and nursing school curricula should include instruction on DSD and the use of inclusive terminology. Creating a comfortable atmosphere for patients is an important responsibility of frontline healthcare workers like paramedics and patient coordinators.

Ethical and Multidisciplinary Care

While dealing with people who have DSD, it is important to take into account their age, risks associated with puberty, family preferences, and sex assignment, among other factors. When making decisions that are crucial, it is important to get the parents' consent and children's assent if they are 12 years old or older. When considering surgical procedures, the patient's functional capacity and health in the long run should be considered more important than short-term cosmetic goals. For comprehensive treatment, a multidisciplinary team consisting of paediatric surgeons, endocrinologists, urologist, surgeons, psychiatrists, psychologist and geneticists.

Medical Management and Surgical

Part of the medical treatment involves hormone therapy and re-establishing electrolyte balances. It is important to only consider surgical procedures like phallus restoration, labioplasty, breast reconstruction or clitoral reduction when they are absolutely necessary from a clinical or functional standpoint after consent.

Conclusion

From the first stages of awareness to acceptance, caring for individuals with intersex and DSD is an ongoing journey that need finesse and a personalised approach. Empathy and open-mindedness are the key methods. Foundational to ethical care is the provision of lifelong psychological support and the assurance of inclusive education.

(The writer is Assistant Professor, Department of Paediatric Surgery)

The Longest Farewell: A Manifesto for Reclaiming Jammu & Kashmir's Future

■ RTN DR NAVNEET KAUR



We are a land defined by the beauty of our mountains and the pain of our goodbyes. At airport gates and bus stands across Jammu & Kashmir, we perform a familiar, heart-wrenching ritual. We send our sons and daughters off

with stiff smiles and crumbling hearts, whispering blessings that carry a silent, desperate question: Will you ever come back to me? This is not a simple departure; it is our longest farewell. It is a goodbye not just to our children, but to the doctors, engineers, artists, and leaders they were meant to be-a farewell to the very future of our homeland.

For our youth, leaving is not an ambitious choice; it is a forced exile from a home that can no longer hold their dreams. They are not abandoning us; we are failing to anchor them. The conflict that scarred our land did not end on the streets; it seeped into our classrooms, stifled our economy, and strangled the career paths of a generation.

The Unseen Wound: The Architecture of a Lonely Heart

Beneath the political headlines lies a quieter, more insidious tragedy unfolding within the four walls of our modern, nuclear homes. In our quest for privacy and progress, we have dismantled the ancient, noisy, warm chaos of the joint family. We replaced it with sterile silence and isolation. In this transition, we have committed an unthinkable act: we have privatized the human heart itself.

Our children now grow up in beautifully furnished, emotionally empty boxes. The grandfather's chair in the corner, once a throne of wisdom and resilience, sits vacant. The watchful aunt who could sense a hidden anxiety is no longer there. The cacophony of cousins that once drowned out the lonely voices in a teenager's head has been replaced by the relentless, flickering glow of a smartphone screen. The



immense responsibility of nurturing a soul, once a shared, communal duty, now rests solely on the overwhelmed shoulders of parents who are themselves drowning in the pressures of modern survival.

This is the core of our crisis. We have given our children the best gadgets and tuition, but we have failed to give them our full, present, and guided attention. This is not a failure of love, but a catastrophic failure of structure. It is a quiet, painful abandonment disguised as a privileged life. We are raising a generation guided by algorithms, not by ancestors, and the cost is a profound, cultural amnesia. The lullabies that held secret histories, the folktales that mapped our morality, the deep, empirical knowledge of our land held in the memory of our elders-their entire library of our soul is being shut down, book by book.

The Siege Within: A System That Stifles Potential

Into this void of emotional and cultural connection, we offer a system that actively sabotages our youth's ambition. Imagine the profound cruelty of a reality where a student's

greatest adversary is not a complex equation, but a blank, unresponsive computer screen. For years, the internet shutdowns we endured were not mere inconveniences; they were acts of academic violence. They meant a brilliant, meritorious student from Anantnag watched her university application deadline pass without a click. They meant a budding coder from Jammu saw his dream internship vanish into the digital void. We systematically disconnected our children from the 21st century and then had the audacity to wonder why they felt orphaned by time.

Beyond this digital siege, they returned to a barren economic landscape. The revered government job is a cruel mirage for the thousands who compete for a handful of seats. The private sector remains a stunted sapling, unable to support the forest of talent we have cultivated. For a generation that dreams in the language of startups and global innovation, the map to success has only one, glaringly bold route: pointing away from home.

The Bleeding Homeland: The Ghost Towns We Are Becoming

Every time a suitcase zips shut, it is not just a personal farewell; it is the sound of our homeland bleeding. This exodus is a slow, steady drain of our society's lifeblood. Our villages grow quieter, our towns older. The energy, the innovation, the bold, disruptive ideas of youth-all are siphoned away to fuel the progress of distant lands.

The empty chair at the family dinner table is a tiny, heartbreaking symbol of a much larger emptiness: the empty chair in our future hospitals, the vacant lab in our research institutions, the silent desk in our newsrooms, and the dormant leadership in our boardrooms. We are in danger of becoming a land of ghosts, haunting our own beautiful valleys, tormented by the echoing potential of those we had to let go.

A Reformer's Covenant: To Build a Home You Can Return To

This manifesto is not a eulogy. It is a covenant. It is a pledge to end the longest farewell by building a welcome so compelling, so full of promise, that our children's hearts will lead them home. We cannot simply ask them to stay out of duty; we must give them a future worth staying for. The government must step into the role of the family we have lost-to become the wise elder who provides stability, the supportive uncle who opens doors, the collective guardian that invests unconditionally in their potential.

This is our concrete blueprint for action, our social reformer's pledge:

1. Create Digital Sanctuaries: We will establish resilient, community-owned centers with guaranteed high-speed internet, state-of-the-art computers, and digital libraries. These will be lifelines during any disruption and permanent havens for learning, innovation, and connection, ensuring no child is ever again left in the dark.

2. Forge Pathways to Purpose, Not Just Paychecks: We will launch a network of innovation hubs and business incubators tailored to our unique strengths. We will fund research into our unique ecology, saffron, and apples. We will provide grants for ventures in sustainable tourism, technology, and the arts. We must

show our youth that the valleys and mountains of Kashmir are not a backdrop for a problem, but a living laboratory and a global canvas for their genius.

3. Mend Our Torn Social Fabric: We must create intentional spaces for collective healing from the trauma of conflict. We will celebrate our culture not as a relic of the past, but as a dynamic, living force-by fusing our traditional crafts with modern design, our music with new rhythms, making our heritage a source of pride, identity, and enterprise.

4. Bridge the Great Divide: We will proactively build a powerful, structured network of our successful diaspora, transforming our "brain drain" into a "brain trust." This network will facilitate mentorship, knowledge transfer, and direct investment, creating a circular economy of talent and opportunity that benefits the homeland.

Our Collective Call: Let Us Till the Soil for Their Dreams

This mission is not for the government alone. It is a collective responsibility for every parent, teacher, entrepreneur, and community leader. The road is long and the work is hard, but we have witnessed the incredible resilience of our youth. They have conquered worlds far from these mountains. Now, we must match their courage with our own commitment.

We are not asking you to lower your ambitions or shrink your dreams. We are working, fighting, and building to ensure that the highest altitude for your ambitions is right here, in the shadow of the peaks you call home. We are striving for the day when the longest farewell is replaced by the warmest welcome home.

Let us work together now to till the soil of our homeland, to make it fertile for the seeds of their grandest dreams. Let us build a Jammu & Kashmir where the greenest pastures are not a distant promise, but the very ground beneath their feet.

Our children's future is the only future Jammu & Kashmir has. And we will not rest until it is a future they can not only live in, but one they are proud to call their own.

(The writer is Social Reformer)