

RIGHT TO CLEAN AIR

Today in the name of development that the urbanization and industrialization is taking place hastily is a problem than solution for human misery. It echoes the grave concern of each and every urban living Indian. Unplanned and haphazard urbanisation is the root cause for all the pollution related problems. The green building movement is an attempt to minimize and eliminate negative impacts and maximize environmental, economic and community/human benefits. Constructing green buildings effectively reduce air pollution through reduced energy use, the use of appropriate refrigerants, and the use of materials with low off-gassing and other steps. The reduction in use of fossil fuels at the building site also results in lower air pollution contributions at the site, while reduction in electricity use results in lower air pollution associated with power plants. It is clear that if a builder is constructing a green building, he can jump the queue waiting for an environmental clearance. The release of gaseous pollutants from burning fuel of motor vehicles, industrial processes, burning of garbage, etc are contributing to the air pollution.

In its worst spell of importunate pollution in nearly two decades, the Capital's air quality slipped into the 'hazardous' level. It revealed that levels of air pollution remained "severe", the highest warning as per the National Air Quality Index. India comes just behind China - which witnessed an estimated 800,000 deaths - says the study, which relied on mathematical modeling to arrive at its figures. A number of occupational and environmental factors are also associated with an increased incidence of lung cancer. Emergency measures have to be put in place. People with heart or lung diseases, older adults, and children are to be advised to remain indoors and keep activity levels low. Vehicle density is too much in Delhi and the traffic jam is the main culprit for the ambient air quality deterioration. It is callous and irresponsible on the part of the Delhi government, which hasn't told its people that the air quality is so bad that they should not step outside to exercise or allow their children to play. The air pollution is increasing due to indiscriminate industrialization. As far as addressing the issue of air pollution is concerned, the authorities are more at fault for not devising and implementing proper system for disposing off the waste generated. Everybody has a right to clean air. Planting trees in every corner is essential to improve the quality of the air. The strategy should focus on stop the pollution and improve the quality of air. It's not just the big cities in India which are choking children with its bad air. Around the world, one billion children live in homes where solid fuel is used for cooking and heating - a vital cause of indoor pollution. Nearly 6 lakh children under the age of five are estimated to die every year from diseases caused or exacerbated from indoor and outdoor pollution. Globally, an estimated 2,000 children under the age of five die every day from diarrheal diseases and of these some 1,800 deaths are linked to water, sanitation and hygiene. Children are also exposed to harmful chemicals through food, water, air and products around them. Air pollution also increases the lifelong risk of heart disease, stroke and cancer. We need to make people aware that their activities should not release more emission when our air is already so polluted. It is to be remembered that every child is important. Every child has the right to health, the right to survive, the right to a future that is as good as we can make it.

OFF 'D' CUFF

Planting Trees In Gurugram

Trees save us from pollution. On Sunday, July 14, the Sant Nirankari Charitable Foundation (SNCF) and Maitri, a ladies' club, organised a green drive at Aloha residence project's lawns in sector 57, Gurugram.

More than 100 SNCF volunteers trooped in with saplings of native species to help Aloha residents make their apartment surroundings greener. The initiative was driven by women who decided to take matters in their own hands, encouraging other residents to join them.

"We wanted residents?to come together for a constructive activity in?which children can also participate and learn to?take care of their surroundings. If children?plant saplings, they can be taught to nurture trees and take care of the environment," said Hema Jain, member, Maitri.

"Our motive is that our society should be clean and the best way is to begin by cleaning our homes, our apartment complex and gradually work towards ensuring cleaner and greener future for everybody in Gurugram. This is just a beginning," said Santosh Lal, another member of Maitri, exhorting occupants to actively participate in the ongoing tree-planting drive. Founding members of the club, Sakshi Chamola and Rashi Khanna organised refreshments for the volunteers to help them stay cool on a hot summer day.

The residents plan to turn the colony into a self-sustaining unit by producing their own vegetables through terrace farming and balcony gardens. "We can't wait for the government

and builder to take action, we have to start taking care of our environment to restore the water table. SNCF volunteers have helped us a lot in our initiative; it's amazing that they don't demand anything from us and yet they keep on giving in whichever way possible. They are doing true seva of their Satguru," said artist Atima Kala, another founding member of Maitri, about SNCF's contribution to the greening initiative.

Gurugram's SNCF unit is guided by M C Nagpal, a senior member of the Sant Nirankari Mission. Since 2010, SNCF has been working towards social development and has been involved in various national level projects across India; these include Swachh Rail, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, tree plantation drives, cleanliness drives and health check-up camps. The foundation is also actively working towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number six set by United Nations, that is, sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. It is facilitating watershed development project in Talasari village, in Palghar, Maharashtra.

To give a boost to water conservation, Bindhya Chhabra, executive president, SNCF, inaugurated two dams on June 23 in Palghar. Thousands of people from the tribal belt will be benefitted by the project that aims to conserve water for drinking and irrigation purposes. It will also help local farmers increase their income and prevent them from migrating to big cities, fulfilling the foundation's motto of healing, enriching and empowering

-Team ST

Rich man's shampoo vs poor man's plate, are we a hungry nation?

■ DR PARVEEN KUMAR

The world's hunger is getting ridiculous. There is more fruit in a rich man's shampoo than in a poor man's plate. Does this quote of the yester years still hold relevance? The latest report of Global Hunger Index GHI 2022 raises serious question marks on our efforts towards ensuring food and nutritional security for all. The Global Hunger Index is a tool designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger at global, regional and national levels reflecting multiple dimensions of hunger over time. GHI is an annual Report Jointly published by Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe. Concern Worldwide is an international humanitarian organisation dedicated to tackling poverty and suffering in the world's poorest countries. Welthungerhilfe is one of the largest private aid organisations in Germany, independent of politics and religion. It was first produced in 2006. It is published every October. The 2022 edition marks the 17th edition of the GHI. The report that aims to comprehensively measure and track hunger at the global, regional, and country levels is calculated on the basis of four indicators viz undernourishment referring to the share of the population with insufficient caloric intake; Child Wasting i. e share of children under age five who have low weight for their height reflecting acute under-nutrition; Child Stunting depicting the share of children under age five who have low height for their age reflecting chronic under-nutrition and finally child mortality describing the mortality rate of children under the age of five. Based on the values of the four indicators, the GHI determines hunger on a 100-point scale where 0 is the best possible score (no hunger) and 100 is the worst. Each country's GHI score is classified by severity, from low to extremely alarming. Undernourishment data are provided by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and Child Mortality data are sourced from the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UNIGME).Child wasting and stunting data are drawn from the joint database of UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World

Bank among others.

After decades of decline, the most unfortunate thing has happened and that is the increase in global prevalence of undernourishment, a component of the Global Hunger Index. This shift can be attributed to many factors and can be taken as a leading indicator of reversals in other measures of hunger. Inequality and access to resources between regions, countries, districts, and communities is all pervasive and left unchecked. This ultimately has the potential to keep the global community away from achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) mandate to 'leave no one behind'. Africa, South of the Sahara and South Asia are the world regions where hunger levels are highest. Hunger in both regions is considered serious. The fight against hunger is dangerously off track. Based on current GHI projections, the world as a whole and 47 countries in, particular - will fail to achieve a low level of hunger by 2030. Food security is under assault on multiple fronts. Worsening conflict, weather extremes associated with global climate change, and the economic and health challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic are all driving hunger.

The Statistics: On the severity scale, the countries with a score of less than or equal to 9.9 are in low level of hunger category, those with score in between 10 to 19.9 fall under moderate category of hunger and those with a score of 20-34.9 are categorized as countries with serious levels of hunger. India with a score of 29.1 has a level of hunger that is serious. With the 2022 report, India has slipped 6 positions from its 2021 rank of 101 making it the country having the highest child wasting rate among children. What is worse is that India is ranked behind most of its neighbouring countries. Pakistan is at 99th spot, Sri Lanka at 64th, Nepal at 81st and Bangladesh at 84th in the GHI 2022. The only country in South Asia that performs worse than India on the index is Afghanistan with 109th rank. Although, India has seen improvement in child stunting and child mortality between 2014 and 2022, but undernourishment has increased. The report claims that child stunting has declined from 38.7

per cent to 35.5 per cent. Child mortality has also dropped from 4.6 per cent to 3.3 per cent. On the other hand, prevalence of undernourishment has also risen in the country from 14.6 per cent in 2018-2020 to 16.3 per cent in 2019-2021.It implies that 224.3 million people in India (out of 828 million globally) are considered under-nourished. India's child wasting rate (low weight for height) at 19.3 per cent is worse than the levels recorded in 2014 (15.1 per cent) and even 2000 (17.15 per cent).

The data raises serious question mark on our efforts towards the various pro farming and farmer initiatives. Although Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India reverted back issuing a criticism to the latest GHI ranking (2022) in which India's rank was lowered to 107, saying that, 'consistent effort is yet again visible to taint India's image as a Nation that does not fulfill the food security and nutritional requirements of its population'. The government said that the index is an erroneous measure of hunger and suffers from serious methodological issues.

The report is not only disconnected from ground reality but also chooses to deliberately ignore efforts made by the Government to ensure food security for the population especially during the COVID Pandemic.

Despite the GHI ranking and trailing on some vital indicators, there is no doubt that the government and its different agencies have put in lot of efforts for making agriculture profitable and sustainable. This is evident from the various flagship initiatives of the central and respective state government which have started paying dividends in the form of increasing incomes for the farming community, positive impact on environment and employment generation. It is the result of the government's commitment of Doubling Farmers Income by 2022 that income of thousands of farmers has more than doubled.

The profitability in this sector has motivated the young generation to return to their roots. Many of the highly qualified peoples working abroad have left their jobs and ventured into various agricultural related enterprises in the

country. Backed up by a pro entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country, these youths are now employment generators providing employment to many others. Scheme like Soil Health Cards, Promotion of organic Farming, Parampragat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), Zero Budget Natural Farming have improved the soil health and minimized the harmful impact on our environment. POSHAN Abhiyan the largest nutritional security programme in the country has led to revival of the lost and neglected crops like various types of cereals.

The cereals are a rich source of various nutrients and moreover their cultivation is very less as compared to other food-grains like Maize, Wheat and Paddy. Fortification of foods is also being taken up by the development and release of various fortified varieties of different crops. It will definitely go a long way in ensuring nutritional security for all. Agri-startups have unleashed an entrepreneurial revolution in the country.

The youths after upgrading their skills through different skill development programmes are changing the fortunes of agriculture in the country. With various marketing reforms in the form of e-NAM, FPOs and branding and certification, it is now [possible to sell the produce form one region of the country to all across the globe.

With schemes like PMKISAN which provide an amount of six thousand to the farming community in three installments per year, farmers now do not depend upon the land lords and money lenders for purchasing inputs at the time of sowing of crops. It is due to all these efforts that our stores and go downs were full and the government is still providing food grains to the poor and needy free of cost even as the globe has started recovering from COVID-19 pandemic.

Let us hope that with the hard work of our farming community and the dedication and commitment of scientific community, we will be able to overcome all the shortcomings and would emerge as a leader in world as far as food and nutritional security is concerned.

(The author is a scientist at SKUAST-K).

Agricultural diversification in J&K

■ DR BANARSI LAL

Agriculture is the key sector for income and employment generation in J&K. This sector is considered as the backbone of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir as it provides employment directly or indirectly to about 70 per cent of its inhabitants. Thus, this sector continues to remain as an important sector for the socio-economic upliftment of people. Jammu and Kashmir is a mountainous Union Territory in which Jammu region is predominantly sub-tropical while Kashmir is temperate. The average size of land holding of J&K is only 0.67 hectare against 1.33 hectares land holding size on national basis. Only 30 per cent of area of J&K is under cultivation. Jammu & Kashmir is located between 32.17 and 37.06 North latitude and 73.2 and 80.36 East longitude in Himalayan region. The agro-diversity of the state varies from sub-tropical in Jammu region and temperate in Kashmir region. The average annual rainfall of these two regions is 1069 mm and 660 mm respectively. The average temperature of these two regions is 24.5 and 13.3 centigrade respectively. There is dire need to increase the income and employment in agriculture and allied sectors for the farmers in J&K. There is possibility to increase the production and productivity of the crops and to enable the farmers to diversify their crop production. By adopting the modern technologies in agriculture and establishing the infrastructure for the farm production. There is need to promote the diversification in agriculture and move towards high value crops like vegetables, aromatic and medicinal plants, saffron, mushroom, beekeeping, silkworms, pulses etc.

J&K is endowed with ample natural resources including soil, water, climatic condition, diversity, topography, rich natural flora etc. which are conducive for the cultivation of a wide range of crops. It is matter of grave concern that the interest of younger generation in J&K is dwindling towards agriculture. About 58 per cent area under agriculture in J&K is rain fed and remaining 42 per cent is irrigated. Maize is first rank crop in J&K occupying one-third of the total cropped area, rice at number second and wheat at number three of the total cropped area. There is dire need of strenuous efforts to make agriculture more profitable and more income and employment can be generated among the farmers. The horticulture sector in J&K accounts for 13 per cent of the net sown area but contributes about 45 per cent of J&K agricultural GDP. Around six lakh families comprising of 30 lakh people are directly or indirectly involved in horticulture trade. Horticulture sector helps in nutritional security, land productivity, employment, exports and farm incomes by offering a wide range of choice to the farmers for crop diversification. The varied agro-climatic zones in J&K make it ideal to grow diverse high value horticultural crops. The forward and backward linkages offer tremendous potential for employment generation and rural upliftment in J&K. Horticultural sector contributes immensely to strengthen the financial condition of Jammu and Kashmir. Around 20 per cent area of J&K is under horticultural crops. Horticultural sector contributes around 10,000 crore to the annual income of Jammu and Kashmir. Among the horticultural crops in J&K apple occupies the predominant position constituting around 45 per cent of the total area under fruit crops. Horticultural activities major thrust is given in hilly areas. The fruit crops grown in J&K are almonds, walnuts, pears, cherries and apricots in temperate areas and mango, citrus, litchi, ber, papaya, guava etc in sub-tropical areas. Saffron is the costliest spice of the world. Saffron cultivation in Jammu and Kashmir is unique in the world. The annual production of Saffron in Jammu and Kashmir ranges from 10 to 20 tonnes. J&K government has made strenuous efforts to increase horticultural crops production. Incentives are given to the horticultural crops growers by the departments of J&K to develop orchards in Kandi and hilly areas. Subsidy to the extent of 50 per cent of fruit plants

and inputs used by the farmer are provided. It has been observed that about 40 lakh tones of fruits are exported annually from J&K. This sector contributes significantly to the economic and ecological development, employment generation, export and nutritional requirement of the people of J&K. Since Jammu and Kashmir is endowed with different agro-climatic conditions and topography, the scope for strengthening various commercial horticultural activities is enormous. Agricultural policies involve the government, different organizations and the farmers. The government aims in maximization of agricultural outputs on sustainable basis. The agricultural universities and research institutions give policy inputs and the government departments prepare the action plans on the basis of programmes and make efforts to achieve the objectives of the government. The farmers make endeavors to maximize their farm income and employment. The planning policies which are top down in approach decide on macroeconomic basis, assuming that the farmers would adopt them or could be induced to adopt. The general policy of government for agricultural development can be summarized in terms of (a) supply of inputs like High Yielding Varieties (HYS) seeds, fertilizers and insecticides-pesticides at reasonable rates; (b) supply of water, credits and electricity at subsidized rates; and (c) fixing of minimum support price for important food grains and other crops along with procurement system for wheat and rice. The farmers have responded to these policies by allocating higher acreage under wheat and paddy crops which have least risk of yield as well as price. In the nineties after reaching plateau in wheat and rice yields, some progressive farmers started to increase the production of floriculture crops, vegetables and fruit crops, citrus, strawberry and even in mushroom cultivation. The policy of diversification has been loaded with objectives like checking degradation of soil health, sustaining the land productivity, checking decrease in level of water table and water-logging, controlling the use of insecticides and pesticides, decreasing the water pollution, maintaining the ecological balance and increasing production of crops. The farmer thinks for the short term benefits. The continuous increase in area under wheat and rice in spite of echoing of the above mentioned considerations clearly proves the fallacy of this policy of diversification. The support price with procurement arrangement has been revealed as the most important instrumental variables in influencing the acreage allocation decisions of the farmers. The acreage planning for individual crops is widely used as a management tool by almost all the developed countries. Acreage planning requires realistic estimates of the acreage under individual crops at national level on the basis of domestic and export demand of the concerned crops. The level of production and acreage can be fixed for different crops at national level so as to fetch a market price reasonably above the cost of production. Apex organizations in J&K have made commendable achievements through research and extension but still there is an immense scope for further improvement to increase production and productivity of different crops in J&K. Efforts need to be made for further exploration of high yielding varieties, production of quality planting material, canopy management, high density plantation of fruit crops, rejuvenation technology and water harvesting. Different state and centrally sponsored schemes/programmes can change the fate of agriculture scenario in J&K. Emphasis should be given on crop husbandry as food security and diversification are indispensable. Technologies developed through Front Line demonstration (FLDs) and On-Farm-Trials (OFTs) should be disseminated to the farmers through main extension system of J&K. There is need to change the outlook of the farming community from traditional agriculture to diversified agriculture.

(The author is Head, KVK Reasi, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology-Jammu).

PROGRESSING J&K

UT Admn establishes E-Unnat platform to obtain feedback on service delivery

Step emerging as game-changer to curb delay in service delivery

Jammu and Kashmir Administration has made a remarkable achievement in the digital journey of Jammu and Kashmir with e-Unnat providing window for government to obtain feedback from citizens on any subject related to service delivery to identify areas for further improvement. The interface of e-Unnat is user-friendly as it has been created with an aim to make all Government services accessible to the common man at the click of a button and ensure efficiency, transparency, responsiveness and reliability of such services to realize the basic needs of the common man.

Through e-Unnat, citizens need to first register and apply for any service by filling an application form. After that, they will receive an output certificate/report as the service deliverable.

Notably, to provide a major impetus to transparent, citizen friendly and efficient governance, Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta recently inaugurated the integration of Public Service Guarantee Act (PSGA) portal, having Auto-Appeal System feature with the e-Unnat.

With this step, the J&K government has now integrated the online dashboard (<https://aas.jk.gov.in>) for all citizen centric services available on e-Unnat Portal, as per the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Guarantee Act, 2011 (PSGA). In the process, J&K has become the first UT in the country to implement such a system.

This step of the government is expected to be a game changer as it empowers the citizens and would go a long way in curbing delays in providing services to citizens, weed out red tapism, inefficiency, lethargy and culture of apathy and impunity.

Under this system, the service delivery timelines, details of defaults and penal provisions thereof, besides generation of statistics and drill down facility, together with auto escalation / auto-appeal feature is available online.

The aim of the government in incorporating the auto-appeal and auto-escalation feature in the portal is that the provisions of the PSGA get integrated into the online application processing and service delivery mechanism to be strictly adhered to. Meanwhile, J&K also became the first union territory to launch its own Unified Citizen Services Portal (<https://eUnnat.jk.gov.in>) incorporating 'Meri Pehchaan' (National Single Sign-on) to make available Citizen Centric Services to the common man under a single portal.

The TEJAS Dashboard on the e-UNNAT portal would show, at a glance, the online e-service applications received, services delivered, applications pending, applications rejected et al, with the delayed services delivery break-up further displayed based on time delay periods, less than a week, one to two weeks, more than two weeks, and so on.

At the same time, the e-UNNAT portal now also provides a glimpse into the My Scheme portal of the Government of India by mapping, initially, six schemes of the J&K government and providing access to information on those by re-directing through a single URL.