

KEEP VIGIL

The frequency of smuggling bids by Pakistan using drones shows that the rogue nation is not in a mood to mend its ways and therefore Indian security agencies stationed along LoC and IB should remain vigilant at all the times to counter any of the nefarious designs of the western neighbour. In this context the BSF has shown grit and proved its mettle by foiling smuggling attempts by Pakistan on many occasions along the border which is spread across many states and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The latest in the series is the foiling of another attempt of smuggling of contraband by engaging a 'flying object' coming from Pakistan in Punjab's Amritsar Sector and by seizing heroin weighing over 7 Kg dropped by it in the area. The border in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab is volatile as far as ill-conceived designs of the Pakistan are concerned. It was alert BSF troops, who heard the humming sound of a flying object coming from Pakistan and without wasting even a jiffy, they engaged the object by firing on it and also illuminated the area by firing illumination bombs. As per Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), all sister agencies were informed and as soon as the BSF troops heard the sound of dropping from the flying object, the area was cordoned and seven packets of suspected heroin were recovered during a search operation conducted in the morning. BSF has the responsibility to guard 3,323 Km India-Pakistan borders as well as curb illegal activities like smuggling of contraband and Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) among other activities. It is not the first time that the vigilant BSF troops, despite adverse climatic conditions, had foiled the nefarious attempts of anti-national elements to smuggle contraband. BSF is committed in the fight against drugs besides securing the borders against the regular army of the crook Pakistan. It is highly praiseworthy that another attempt has been thwarted by the BSF to dent the interests of the country. There are number of similar incidents along IB and LoC in Jammu & Kashmir when Pakistan has tried to smuggle narcotics, arms and ammunition by using the drones and the worst instance was of June 27 last year when twin UAVs attacked Jammu Aerodrome with explosive leading to injuries to IAF personnel and damage to a building. The threat is still looming large though anti drone technology has now been installed at vital installations. There is dire need to remain vigilant against the enemy designs because Pakistan is not at all a reliable neighbour.

OFF 'D' CUFF

Confession of an Atheist

Buddhist scholar Stephen Batchelor tells Sonal Srivastava why Buddhism is not a religion.

Why do you call yourself a Buddhist atheist?

In some sense, all Buddhists are atheists. In fact the title of my new book is Confession of a Buddhist Atheist because atheism has become an important topic in America and Europe. There are a number of people positing a rather militant atheism as a reaction against what they consider to be superstitious or fundamental religions.

This is creating a polarisation which we don't need. It is putting people in opposition towards one another that is bound to be destructive. It is also ignoring the fact that you can have a fully realised life as an atheist. The idea that atheism is irreconcilable with religion is blatantly false.

Buddhists don't believe in God but they are able to lead a life devoted to spiritual values and practices, ethics and morals without any recourse to the word god or anything remotely similar to the word god. In Buddhism, the core values are wisdom, compassion, tolerance, commitment to an ethical way of life and reflection on the meaning and purpose of life.

They don't need to be underwritten by belief in a transcendent deity. What Buddha taught in the fifth century BC was a complete way of life, which most people consider to be spiritual or religious and yet without any God. One of the preachers of Buddhism rejected the pedantic ideas of atman and Brahman. It's not accidental that Buddha didn't mention God, even though he quite deliberately presented something opposite to it.

By saying Buddhism is not a religion, aren't you moving away from the traditional definition of religion?

Buddhism has certainly ended up as a religion. It's got shrines and statues and chanting and all the stuff that goes with religion. So, yes Buddhism has certainly become a religion, but this was not the idea that Buddha had in mind. He was not particularly concerned with behaviours that were called religious. Try and imagine what it was to be around the Buddha, while he was alive. You wouldn't think it is religious activity or overt religious behaviour at all.

Sonal Srivastava

BJP vs SP in UP elections

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

Now that the election Bugle has been sounded by the election commission and the different political parties have jumped into the election fray. By and large there will be multi cornered contests in the UP elections but after all and in the ultimate analysis there will SP versus BJP at ground level and both the contenders to the throne of Lucknow have geared up for the tough contest and have put on their sleeves and readied for elections. The UP elections are becoming very interesting and significant in the sense that the route to Delhi darbar goes through this populous state and therefore these state assembly elections of 2022 is the semi final for 2024 general elections and therefore all the eyes of political pundits and the general public as well are focused on the UP election struggle and its outcome. Although different political parties are contesting the UP elections like congress BSP, AIMIM, Rajbars party, AAP, RJD and other smaller parties but the main contest is between the ruling BJP and its stiff opponent the SP. In seems, election battle is between Yogi's BJP and Akhilesh's SP. Though there are different parties in the election battle but the main contest will be between Yogi and Akhilesh. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the main election battle is between the BJP and SP though it cannot be overlooked that the election battle will in a way be between the BJP versus all others. Thus all the political parties are tightening their belts and are somewhat joining hands to dislodge the mighty BJP from power in the state of UP. But in actual practice the opposition parties is a divided house and as such they cannot face the mighty BJP in the election battle. It is cent per cent true that the opposition cannot fight the BJP severally and the opposition unity is far from truth. In spite of this the BJP is set to fight a stiff election battle with SP and it is premature to predict the outcome of the elections because both the two main contenders to the power are strong enough and in such an environment it is very difficult for the two political parties to assume powers so easily but at the end of the day it is likely that the louts will again bloom in UP because BJP has done a very good job for the common man of the state. There is less anti-incumbency in UP elections and this will in the ultimate analysis favour the return of the BJP to power. Since BJP has a scientific marketing strategy and the party is in a position to market its achievements to the people of UP and thus there is likelihood that BJP may bounce back to power in the elections. But there will be tough fight between the BJP and SP as these two political parties are the contenders to the power in UP as there is direct fight between the BJP and SP and it is to be seen as to which way the wind will blow but indications are that BJP's lotus will again bloom after these elections. There are many big and small parties in the field but the contest in



the elections is between the Yogi's BJP and Akhilesh SP. Samajwadi party will give a tough fight to BJP but at the end of the day it seems that BJP will again win the elections as it is a cadre based and disciplined party and has its solid vote constituency which will vote in favour of BJP and make it successful in the elections. Both BJP and SP is banking on and resorting to the caste and social engineering to woo voters to their side. Samajwadi Party is appealing to the Dalits, weaker sections and consolidating minorities especially Muslims and is doing utmost to woo these sections of the society to their side. But so far as the Muslim votes is concerned, this time SP is finding it difficult to gain access to Muslim votes as the Assud-ud-Din Owasi's AIMIM is directly appealing Muslim votes as he is playing the Muslim card in these elections. He is going to field many candidates in these elections and is dividing the Muslim votes and this is going to harm the prospects of the SP as the party will not be in a position to woo Muslim votes en mass and it is a disadvantage to SP. So far as the Dalit and other Schedule caste, schedule tribe and other weaker section votes are concerned, these will be divided because of the appeal of Mayawati's BSP which appeals to

these sections of the society. Since BSP is the party of the Dalits and weaker sections of the society and there is every likelihood that the votes of the Dalits, SCs, STs and other caste combinations will be divided and a bigger chunk of these votes will go in favour of the BSP and this is going to cut a sizable number of the lower caste votes to SP and thus it will dent the vote and support of the weaker sections to the SP. But in spite of this reality and the caste-ridden society, SP is going to get a good number of the votes of the lower castes because of the division of the votes. There is every likelihood that the Muslim votes, Dalit votes and other weaker section votes will be divided and this division of the lower caste and Muslim votes will benefit the BJP in the elections. It is a fact that the vote constituency of the BJP is solid and intact and there is no division of the votes of the BJP and so it is an advantage to the saffron party. BJP is going to the people with its Hindutva agenda and also the development plank and is banking on Modi's slogan of sabka Sath Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas and this is going to translate into vote in the elections. Thus is BJP going to gain in the vote percentage. BJP is selling its achievements of five years of its rule and anti-incumbency is at its low and this is going to benefit BJP's poll prospects. The votes of upper castes and Brahmins are with the BJP and they will vote in favor of the party with a difference. The BJP is appealing to the voters that the party and the prime minister has abrogated the controversial article 370 of the constitution and has made the Jammu and Kashmir an integral and inseparable part of India and is asking for votes on this basis. BJP is also seeking votes against achievement of the construction of the grand Ram temple at Ayodha to the prospective voters. Not only this it is selling its many schemes to the people and asking for the votes on the basis of the many schemes launched by the Modi government. Thus is the BJP banking on the pro poor schemes to gain votes in the election. It is asking for votes on the subject of wiping the Gundagardi from the UP as Yogi is asserting day in and day out that the Gunda elements have either left the UP or have been jailed or neutralized and this is no mean achievement. SP is appealing to the weaker sections ,backward castes, Dalits and Muslims and is resorting to social and caste engineering to gain votes. Aklesh Yadav is also promising free electricity to the people of UP up to 300 units and thus is he resorting to the politics of freebies to woo voters. SP has also organized the Brahman conclaves to woo them to their side. Thus, SP does not leave any stone unturned to give a tough fight to BJP. In brief this assembly election is a fight between BJP versus SP in the ultimate analysis.

(The author is a retired Education Officer and Columnist).

Investing in J&K's economy

Jammu & Kashmir was a poor and backward erstwhile state of India union and it needs top most attention by Government. Since Jammu and Kashmir is a backward economy and as such it needs bulk investment so that the economic and social development is possible in the union territory. Thus, centre Government and LG's administration on toes to attract the huge private investment in economy of Jammu & Kashmir. The poverty, lack of employment opportunities and consequent problem of unemployment and low standard of living are the consequences of the absence of the required investment in trade and industry of Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, J&K is facing problems of unemployment and poverty and it need much capital to be invested in the economy of the country. LG Manoj Sinha is leaving no stone unturned to attract huge foreign and Indian investment in the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. LG embarked on the programme of foreign trips to ink agreements with the foreign investors for investment in J&K. The tour of the LG to Dubai is a step in the direction of attracting the foreign investment in Jammu and Kashmir. LG entered into the agreements with the Dubai industrialist to invest in the trade and industry in Jammu and Kashmir. LG is making sincere efforts to attract the foreign private investment in J and K so that its economy gets boost and economic development of the union territory becomes a reality. But it is very disturbing and unfortunate that the Kashmir centric regional political parties and politicians are unnecessarily making undue noise over the initiative of the LG so for the investment in the economy of Jammu and Kashmir is concerned. These politicians of Jammu and Kashmir smell false foul play on the Indian and foreign investment in J&K and raise the so called non issue of the demographic change and thus they try to settle the much needed investments in Jammu and Kashmir. It seems that the economic issues and mundane issues of bread and butter and economic developments are non issues for these selfish political leaders and they do not like the investment and development of Jammu and Kashmir. These political satraps are only interested in keeping the Kashmir pot boiling and like their political shops to continue to the disadvantage of the common and gullible Kashmiris and thus they oppose



the foreign and Indian investment. The Kashmir centric political parties are least interested in the economic and social development of Jammu and Kashmir and are only interested in inciting the religious passions and are as such opposing the investment and global partnership initiatives of Lieutenant Governor. It is very unfortunate and sad story and these selfish politicians will not succeed in their nefarious and selfish designs as the people of the union territory are matured enough to distinguish between the good and bad and they by and large support the investment and business partnership initiated by LG, who also addressed the investors and business leaders at Expo-2020 Dubai. He said that new business partnerships will further strengthen J&K-Dubai, trade and investment ties. The LG signed several important MOUs with Al Maya Group, MATU investments LLC, GL Employment Brokerage LLC and Noon to invest in J&K Expo 2020 Dubai. The LG who presided over the signing ceremony said that this will further strengthen J&K -Dubai trade and investment ties. The businessmen and investors of Dubai will invest in the real estate in Jammu and Kashmir and this is bound to increase the business and employment opportunities in the union territory and it is good for the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. The new investments will give boost to the industrial and economic development

of the traditional and technology oriented new avenues of the industry. The common people of Jammu and Kashmir need economic and social development and they by and large are in favour of foreign and Indian investment in the union territory and as such are interested in the economic upliftment and thus want the foreign and Indian investment in trade and industry. There is enough scope in the tourist industry, horticulture sector as well as in the field of handicrafts and medium and small sectors of the industry as for as investment in these sectors are concerned. The political parties of Jammu and Kashmir should not oppose the real estate investment and other investments in the core and traditional sectors. The real estate investment is going to provide the much needed employment to the educated and skilled youth of Jammu and Kashmir and therefore it is a step in the right direction and the selfish political parties should desist from opposing such investment for the interest of the economy of Union Territory. LG has said, "Relationship between India and UAE has matured enough over the years to become enduring Global partners in the 21st century. These are those times in the journey of Jammu and Kashmir were opportunities are in plenty." LG has also said that in the last twenty eight months, J&K has transformed from a sleeping business destination to the

land of opportunities and investment. LG Monaj Sinha has said that this is the new Jammu and Kashmir to reverse the trend of past seven decades by pushing the target of economic growth. Our aim is very clear that is to deepen the trust with the business firms, build the industrial base for the economy and strengthen the social stability. LG has delved deep into the rich civilization of Jammu and Kashmir and has said we are offering you a stake in the present and future of rich civilization, the land of curiosity for intellectuals, travelers, traders and historians. Therefore, land of Jammu and Kashmir offers big business and investment opportunities to the investors both of the Indian and the foreign investors. The LG further said that India and united Arab Emirates -UAE enjoy strong bonds of friendship and historical ties which was further strengthened by the strenuous efforts of prime minister Narendra Modi. It is so good that the Dubai ports giant DP world is planning to build an inland port in Jammu and Kashmir as part of firm commitment by UAE to invest in Jammu and Kashmir. The plan to build the inland port is no mean development by any standard. Thus, foreign and Indian investments will come and remove the poverty and lead to the economic development of Jammu and Kashmir. Now the time has come for the huge investments so that Jammu and Kashmir becomes a hub of industrial and trade activities. Because now there is an atmosphere of peace in J&K and so the time is ripe for investments to boost economy of J&K. Now that the government of LG has removed all the obstacles and provided the ease of doing of business and much needed transparency to the investors and so the investment activity will naturally get a boost and provide much needed employment opportunities so that the poverty is removed and the economic and social development is possible and there is increase in living standards of people of J&K. Any way the people as well as the political parties should embrace the investment culture for the good of the common man. The politicians should not become an obstacle in the investment but should become facilitators in the tempo of investment and thus play their positive role in the development of Jammu and Kashmir.

YOUR COLUMN

Why to blame democracy?

Dear Editor,

Recently, a well-known intellectual has trampled on democracy insisting that the system should be wrapped up and whoever takes its name should not only be shot-dead but also the price of the bullet should also be recovered from his heirs. Those who hold such views should either be sent to land of Hejaz at Government's expense as in the old days, or they should be forced to quarantine, as such views are completely against public interest. But the level of tolerance in our society is that much high. Such people will be tolerated by giving benefit of intellectual fallacy, which is quite common in view of our objective circumstances. One party would come to power and the other would pour water on its foundations. Through constitutional tactics and protests, the opponent's breath would be suffocated and the country would be pushed towards early elections. The Charter of Democracy provided an opportunity for reform, but instead of passing the fruits of the demo-

cratic system to the grassroots level, the dynastic parties used it to serve their own ends. Now, if a part of the country's intelligentsia has turned against democracy altogether, then it is not their fault at all. Blame it on the ignorance that afflicts us because of centuries of external domination and consequent slavery. Seventy-five years of independence have also failed to dispel the darkness for the reason that the very concept of freedom has been tarnished. The pro-imperialist elite are not allowing patriotism to enter the realm of passion. Ideological confusions have been created in such a way that it has become difficult to differentiate between right and wrong. The question of the failure of democracy should not have arisen in a country which came into being through a democratically run independence movement. Democracy is not a scripture coming down from heaven. It is a man-made system that determines the peaceful transfer of power. Democracy provides a system of decision-making and accountability so that the rulers stay on the right path remembering that they represent the people not the vested interests. In order to reap benefits of democracy, its three pre-requisites are worth mentioning. First, the source of sovereignty is the people. Second, all citizens are equal regardless of

color, race or creed. Third, there will be no restrictions on regional trade. Go through the constitution and analyze the foreign policy, we have gone somewhere else in the name of democracy. A state's sole objective is to preserve human dignity in its confines through promoting freedom and dispensing justice among its citizens. But if it takes sides and prefers one religious community, sect or ethnic group over the others then it not only violates the principle of equality and the universal notion of citizenship but also erodes the foundation of justice so vital for its survival. We have a lot of ethnic groups. Three major religions have grown up in the region. Sectarianism, tribalism and communalism are also matter of concern. Democracy is a very appropriate system of government in an ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse country like India provided its requirements are met. If, after centuries of slavery, freedom had been achieved and at the same time a system of Government had been found, it was our duty to strengthen its foundations. That is to say, they would try to make it a real and functional state rather than putting it on a destructive path.

Mool Raj,
Doda.