

BE POSITIVE

It is quite unfortunate that certain political parties in Jammu and Kashmir are habitual of criticizing the government for each and every step it takes concerning the Union Territory. The National Conference seems to be on the top in finding faults of the government decisions and in this context the regional party today termed the release of Good Governance Index for 20 J&K districts as part of Government's efforts to hide its failures on creation of employment opportunities and bridging development deficit in Jammu and Kashmir. The assertion made by the NC Party that good governance in J&K is confined to papers only as the ground situation belies all the claims of administration, is quite unfair as this has come from the Party which is allegedly known for befooling the people for nearly 70 years after the independence of the country and has worked only to satiate the vested interests of those steering the party. The party has taken a line which is outrightly telling the world that whatever BJP is claiming about good governance and development in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is nothing but a white lie. This attitude of the party which has ruled the erstwhile state of J&K for so many decades is totally biased and uncalled for because what the BJP government has done for the people of J&K no other government has not even thought of doing the same. The biggest achievement of the BJP government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in J&K is the abrogation of Article 370, which has changed the course of the life of people in Kashmir. It is surprising that transformation of the region in terms of development, infrastructure augmentation and employment generation has in no way impressed the NC and several other parties in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir which during their tenures in government have done nothing except looting the resources of the region. The allegations made by the NC against the BJP Government citing failures have no takers in Jammu and Kashmir therefore the party should desist from misleading the people as they are smart enough to gauge what is good for them and what is not.

EMULATE DHSK

Though confronting almost same situations as far as current pandemic coronavirus is concerned, the Directorate of Health Services Jammu (DHSJ) seems to be lagging behind its Kashmiri counterpart, which is always on the forefront in the decision making and implementing the strategies to counter the surge in COVID cases especially on account of entry of new variant Omicron. The pro-activeness of the DHSK can be gauged by the fact that it is always coming up with new and innovative measures to counter the difficulties which the society is facing like the instant case when after getting reports that the patients who are suffering from renal ailments were contracting COVID-19 infection at an alarming rate, it has asked the health officers in districts to have at least two dialysis machines available for such patients. Such adroitness is missing in the DHSJ where the concerned officials preferred to toe the conventional line of going into active mode only after the problem has already struck as preparedness before the trouble knocks the door is not in vogue in Jammu Chapter of Directorate of Health Services. As far as DHSK is concerned the Directorate has asked the CMOs as well as Medical Superintendents across all the Kashmiri districts to make the dialysis facility available at the major hospitals falling under their administrative control. Besides, the CMOs have also been directed to rope in the registered private dialysis unit holders in their respective districts to deal with the situation that has arisen amid a spike in the COVID cases. Such kind of enthusiasm is missing in DHSJ as seldom the reports of similar kind appear in newspapers with regard to DHSK's Jammu counterpart. There is a need for the DHSJ to adopt a focused approach in this regard and take proactive steps to counter the difficulties like the COVID-19 and others which are akin to it. There is no harm in taking cue from DHSK in carrying out different works in Jammu because the approach of DHSJ's Kashmiri counterpart is quite pragmatic and should be adopted at all levels to give meaningful services to the people of the UT of J&K.



Redeeming the time

Time is a gift from God, and none of us know how much of it we are allotted. Only God knows how much time each of us has on this earth to make decisions that will impact eternity (Psalm 139:16). Ephesians 5: 15 -17 says that "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. "When God says we should be "redeeming the time," He wants us to live in constant awareness of that ticking clock and make the most of the time we have.

Each new day brings us 24 hours, 1440 minutes, 86,000 seconds, each moment a precious gift from God each calling for us to be good stewards, mindful that one day we must give an account for how we spent the time God loaned us, how effectively we "bought up" the opportunities He provided. Time is the seed of eternity." To make our life count for eternity, we must be wise in how we spend our time today.

Time is a strange commodity-we can't save it, retrieve it, relive it, stretch it, borrow it, loan it, stop it or store it, but can only use it or lose it.

1. SPEND TIME WITH GOD

The First Commandment requires that we put God above all else (Exodus 20:2-3). Jesus reiterated this fact, promising also that if we put God first, then He will supply

the time of our family. The legacy of M.K. Gandhi may hold solutions to the Indo-Pak relationship. I contend that the world's two largest powers should focus on finding solutions to climate change and the persistent Covid-19 pandemic rather than their current disputes over Kashmir Issue. Despite this, the proximity between both countries'

Reforming the Indian Administrative Service

■ RACHAV CHANDRA

Through what prism should we see reforms in the IAS cadre rules? Should primacy be given to localism or their all-India character? Should States be permitted to exercise overwhelming rights over the careers of IAS officers assigned to them? Should individual officers be allowed to exclusively determine where they want to serve?

These questions become pertinent in the context of the sharp reaction of some states to the amendments proposed in the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954 whereby the officers to be deputed to the Central Government shall be decided by the Central Government in consultation with the respective State Governments and in case of any disagreement, the decision of the Central Government will be final.

At a broader level, the best answer to this conundrum is found in the words, spoken seventy years ago, of Sardar Patel, the statesman-administrator, regarded as the patron saint of the civil services, when he spoke about the expectations from the newly created steel frame: "Successors to the ICS and IP, which, apart from filling the existing wide gaps in these services, would contribute to the unity of the country and the strength of the administrative structure, and make for a high standard of efficiency and uniformity."

IAS officers are recruited by the Central Government through the meticulous UPSC, but their services are placed under various State Governments. Although it is part of the service conditions that they would be obliged to serve both under the State

and the Centre, no minimum period for central deputation is stipulated. Currently, 40% of the sanctioned strength of officers in a state is the central deputation reserve or CDR against which IAS officers in a state can come on central deputation. In the past, in some cadres, such as those in the troubled Northeast, there was a preponderant attraction towards working in Delhi and the CDR was breached. However, with time, the ground level atmospherics and conditions in the states have changed significantly- officers have multiple charges and so the operational spread of resources and canvas of work is significantly richer-making a posting in the state attractive. Besides, Delhi postings at the Deputy Secretary and Director level are perceived as desk-bound grunt jobs, with hardly any contact with the public and with limited scope for experimentation and innovation. Thus, we have the troubling phenomenon of young officers managing to stay in the state without experiencing working in the central government until they reach the rank of Joint Secretary.

Given that the CDR utilization has dropped from 25% in 2011 to 18% as on date, Government of India's initiative to get states to commit adequate number of officers for central posting is entirely justified. IAS officers are the backbone of the government at all levels and every Ministry needs a few Deputy Secretaries and Directors who have had the experience of the field as Collectors and Administrators of various development projects to help formulate policies that are grounded and beneficiary-oriented.

The contention of some states that this

will prevent officers from giving their best to the state because of the uncertainty of where they could be assigned next, they forget that it is in the best interest of IAS officers to work alternatively in the central government and the state so that they enrich their own experience with a suitable mix of both nation-wide and state-specific planning.

Such knowledge and experience sharing is also crucial to the states to ensure that their interest is protected in central policy-planning.

Officers cannot but be aware of the higher level of uncertainty in the states than in the government of India, thanks to a faster turnover of political regimes and the spoils of power. As a result, we witness the frequent and whimsical transfers of officers, of some being punished senselessly for opposing those close to the party in power, even refused permission to go on deputation to the Centre. On the other hand, there are officers who wallow in the incessant patronage bestowed on them for their localized loyalty-making them perennially indispensable to the state. Some end their entire careers without even once budging out of the state for a posting elsewhere.

Precisely for this reason it is important to create a regime whereby the IAS officers should spend at least a third of their careers in the central government out of which at least 7 years should be at the Deputy Secretary/Director level. It is also necessary to shape the IAS like a central elite corps, with ultimate commitment to the nation, without any parochial loyalty to the State cadre they are borne to. It is only when officers spend time out of their

comfort zone in the state-even a posting to another state should be acceptable if an officer is not happy to work in Delhi - that IAS officers will be able to shed their provincial mindset. Only then will the all-India character of the IAS be preserved - with direct benefits for the unity of the country and uniformity in governance standards as espoused by Sardar Patel.

At another level, at the time of recruitment it should be made abundantly clear that officers would have to serve for defined periods both in the central government and in the states. To foster an inclusive and modern mindset, training in the very best universities of the world on government account has to be mandated as part of the career planning equation. An online system should be devised to facilitate officers to apply for government jobs in consonance with their sectoral specializations and choices. Even if officers want to go to the private sector for limited periods of their career, they should be permitted to step out to absorb the best practices of the corporate world to create an ecosystem in which the private sector and the public sector can work collaboratively.

IAS officers will be best utilized when they are groomed and positioned as an elite corps with skill sets and experience to work efficiently in the global arena, in the central government and in the states. To ensure that the States utilize them effectively and provide them a conducive working climate to elicit their best effort, it is important for the Centre to adopt an approach with the states which is consultative, tolerant and paternalistic.

(The author is a former IAS, ex-Secretary to the Government of India).

Congress confused on PM's security

■ MANMOHAN DHAR

Confusion, it looks has now taken the centre stage in the thought process of Congress party and its leadership. Since the BJP Govt. took over the reigns of power from Congress in 2014, opposing Modi has become the past time of almost every Congressman, big or small. All seem to be obsessed with ridiculing Modi for almost everything he does for the country and for the benefit of the citizens.

"Oppose Modi, Ignore India" is the new tag line of their political stance. National priorities are nowhere seen in their political interests and agenda.

Now, a fresh controversy regarding the lapse in PM's security in Punjab has put the Congress on a back foot. In fact, Congress has been going helter-skelter in order to have some face saving in a situation of humiliation which has been designed by none other than its own party members. Be it the CM of Punjab Charanjeet Singh Channi, Punjab Congress President Navjot Singh Sidhu, CM of Rajasthan Ashok Gehlot, Congress stalwart Digvijay Singh and a large number of other Congressmen. Everyone has put Congress in a state of embarrassment. In normal circumstances when PM visits some state it is the protocol that CM, Chief Secy. and the DGP Police have to be present on the arrival. But all the three were not there to receive the PM.

This was taken a very serious note of, both by the Central Govt. and the BJP at the same time.

Well, the security of PM happens to be of a prime importance for the State which the PM is visiting.

And, no question of taking it in a casual way, as it was by the Punjab administration with regard to providing the PM a foolproof passage on all routes. Police was seen not performing their duty the way it was supposed to. Police DGP had cleared the route for PM while briefing the SPG (The Special Protection Group) of the PM. Which means that PM is cleared to pass through the route assigned for his cavalcade.

But, the reality was something very disturbing and dangerous.

The route on which PM was on his way

to the place of event, was in fact obstructed by the protestors who could have been stopped by the state police for the security reasons. But, going as per the statements of the protesting farmer leaders, it was the police who gave them the information about the PM's route. And this is what is unusual and quite surprisingly doubtful.

How can an information which is supposed to be kept secret by the police, be shared with the people who are suspected protestors.

For about twenty minutes PM's cavalcade got stuck on a highway flyover. And, the SPG had a challenging task at hands.

Though the SPG Commandos are trained for all sorts of eventualities but the vehicle in which the PM was sitting was dangerously stuck and anything could have happened.

People allegedly termed as farmer protestors, were at a few metres distance from the PM's car and this cannot be a coincidence.

It was only after twenty to twenty five minutes of anxiety, insecurity, risk, endangerment and a direct threat to PM's life, that the SPG decided to take the PM back to the place of origin without any untoward incident Enroute. A big and unprecedented threat was averted and PM returned safe.

Now, what can we infer from all this? It may look like a Drama, Farce and an election stunt, as most of the Congress leaders put it. But, it cannot be as simple as that.

It has happened with a lot of thought process behind it. After all it is directly related with the security of the Prime Minister, you cannot brush it off so easily, there are agencies who are expected to provide a reliable and unfailing security to the Prime Minister of the country.

Instead a series of unruly, irresponsible and silly statements started coming from the ruling Congress Party in Punjab and all its leadership needless to mention the Chief Minister Charanjeet Singh Channi.

You can hate an individual, you can hate Narendra Modi, how can you hate the Prime Minister of your own country.

military activities leads to the possibility of an incident triggering a global crisis.

I, emphasized that this reality is a cause for great concern, and our governments should proceed with caution and diplomacy. Instead, many use this opportunity to stoke the flames of war, describing the situation as critical, in which military conflict is inevitable. I have taken quote from the Bible that "Blessed are the peacemakers."

I want to acknowledge that peacemakers and bridge builders often attract hostility from both sides of a conflict, "each side thinking that they belong to the other."

However, a bridge cannot choose sides, or else it loses its purpose. In the following dialogue, some participants of member countries should questioned being a "bridge" is the responsibility or proper role.

India has the opportunity to serve as a role model for the world in how it handles dual relations with the Pakistan and China. I think that Pakistan's role may not lie as a facilitator of diplomatic relations but should focus on fostering favourable economic conditions between the two countries.

My pragmatic view is that while finding points of cooperation are difficult in a systemic rivalry, Pakistan should attempt to create space for de-escalation through engaging both countries in programs involving reconstruction and working on transnational issues like public health and climate change.

India is committed to pursuing "mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation."

Prime Minister is the Legislative head and it is the position you have to respect and protect. As CM of Punjab you are expected to follow a protocol to receive the PM. Instead you make lame excuses about contracting Covid as such not in a position to receive him. And the very next day you sit in a press conference and resort to very irresponsible utterances not suiting to the position of a CM. You tell the media that PM and the BJP did it with an intention. And that there was no threat to pm's life. No stones were pelted, no sticks were fired, no bullets shot, then how come PM could get hurt.

How ridiculous of a person of the stature of a CM. So, this implies that if unfortunately any untoward incident would take place then only the State administration would come into action.

This is what the CM of Punjab Channi said. It did not stop there. The State President of Congress party Navjot Singh Sidhu went a step ahead and described the incident as Farce, an election stunt, a drama by the PM. Well, if one goes by the track record of Sidhu one can't expect something very weighty coming from him as well.

In fact, all that can very easily be drawn out of a very callous behaviour of Congress leaders on an issue that would have shamed the entire administrative machinery of Punjab including the Chief Secretary and The DGP, is that Congress cannot digest the popularity of PM Modi, both at the National as well as the Global arena. And, ironically they hate him to the extent that they undermine their duties and responsibilities they owe to the Nation.

This is not only a sad state of affairs but a very serious and grave concern too, for the entire Nation.

People of India need to give a very concerted thought to what this age old political party is upto.

A thorough investigation is what needs to be undertaken at the central and the state level for establishing beyond all doubts and speculations, as to what went wrong.

And if there is any concrete clue to some game plan or a pre planned conspiracy for putting the life of PM at a

risk, that should be brought to light and all those involved should be dealt with sternly and brought to book as soon as possible.

If some international bodies bent upon spreading hatred in India are in some way or the other involved in hatching the deadly conspiracy the Embassies in those countries should immediately be brought into action and asked to make concrete headways in taking the respective Governments into confidence and forge the arrest of such Anti national elements.

Some political parties of Punjab even said in front of press that the assassination plan was being hatched in the office of Congress party and the names they mentioned in their press statements are directly putting the Congress party on the dock. And seriously the party and its leadership will have to make a lot of explanations in order to come clean on everything.

However, all said and done, nothing is really going fine with the Congress party since Mr. Modi took over as the Prime Minister of India in 2014. All sorts of irresponsible and baseless narratives of Congress are the brain child of its Modi hate stance.

And this hateful obsession has inadvertently intruded their thinking capabilities that too to the extent of an irreversible damage.

It seems as if the party is already in a state of political hibernation and nothing but something very miraculous and unheard of can actually take them out of this uncertainty, ambiguity and unpredictability.

If someone needs to draw a conclusion from all that is happening on the political arena of Congress in the Country, the only conclusion that one can reach to is ; CONFUSION. Since last almost seven years Congress desperately wants to see Rahul Gandhi as their Party Chief, but the moment they do something towards that they are subjected to unprecedented humiliation.

So a very frustrating political party though very old finds itself very confused and the security breach in Punjab on PM's cavalcade is no less than a 'Self Goal' .

I agree that the dialogue bridge India and Pakistan may fulfil cannot be static but dynamic.

With the complexity of this trilateral relationship growing in the subcontinent it becomes too difficult to anticipate the near future.

Pakistan calling for SAARC Summit for democracy suggests less-than-warm relations between the Modi and Khan administrations.

While economic ties between Pakistan and India have certainly grown through dialogue development. This is why the opinions of members countries of SAARC from all sides of this relationship offering goodwill through dialogue are so necessary.

Many constructive imaginings of the type of bridge that India may become were offered to Pakistan for peaceful coexistence in South Asia Sub-continent.

I am grateful to Ambassador of India and Pakistan for pursuing this dialogue and allowing members countries to be optimistic for a cooperative future where the India and Pakistan realize and pursue their compatible interests rather than their incongruence.

My hope is shared by your esteemed daily newspaper affirmed that the Govt of India and Pakistan would like to hear words of "compassion, love, and harmony in the think tanks and corridors of power," and that foreign policy-makers should "spend more time reading my letter from the bottom of heart."

This is not idealism but a necessary perspective for any hope of a secure and prosperous future.

Mool Raj Doda.

YOUR COLUMN

A bridge cannot choose sides

Dear editor,

This manoeuvring would lead to mutually beneficial relations between the India and Pakistan for decades. India's role in facilitating the opportunity for peace is often overlooked by Pakistan number of times.. However, in the current era of resurfacing Cold War rhetoric, new opportunities for dialogue should be explored in historical precedents, and SAARC Summit may be positioned to act as a bridge once again between the two great powers. Member countries of SAARC should advocate for peace, see the current state of Indo-Pak relations as an opportunity to establish