

PANDEMIC PROLONGED

Recently there was a speculation that soon the pandemic coronavirus will end as less dangerous variant Omicron is here to mark the end of disease ridden days but going by the World Health Organisation and some other experts' viewpoint people will have to wait longer to get rid of the virus corona as chances are that some more variants may emerge to act as spoilsport. The rising number of deaths in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir including infants and young children is testimony to the fact that Omicron is not like normal flu but is as lethal as the earlier variants. Already people including the health authorities were worried due to this super spreader virus which is three to four times more virulent than the earlier versions of the COVID-19 variants and now the rise in number of deaths, exact number is 60 till date in Jammu region including the infants and young children is alarming and needs for more efforts to stop the spread of the virus. The situation is akin in all other parts of the country with Centre mulling to take more steps to curb the toll and tally especially on account of new variant Omicron. Looking into the emerging situation, the Central Government has extended the existing COVID-related restrictions in the country till February 28. Taking a strong view of the rising cases of COVID-19 and Omicron variants, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued the order directing all the states and the Union Territories (UTs) to instruct their local and district administrations to promptly take containment measures against the threat of the Omicron variant based on their own assessment of the situation. Such drastic measures have become utmost necessary because conventional methods are proving futile in war against the COVID-19 and its variants because cases are spreading like wildfire with no looking back. The warning from the WHO that anytime the criticality could arise as mutations of virus is dynamic and the same can cause damage therefore taking Omicron variants lightly is not at all a good idea. The misconception among the people that Omicron is toothless can lead to major catastrophe therefore people should always countercheck any information regarding the virus corona before taking any step with regard to this disease. This is the key to safety and people should remain cautious in this regard because it is a matter of life and death.

DISCRIMINATION CONTINUES IN JAMMU

The tourism spots in Jammu continue to reel under sheer discrimination, prejudice of the Tourism Department whereas the same department in Kashmir is showing top level of pro-activeness by organizing tourism related events that too under the harshest climatic conditions. Though winter months are the best season to lure tourists to Jammu region because of pleasant weather conditions but surprisingly the main stakeholder of tourism viz Department of Tourism is in deep slumber with nothing to offer to tourists in Jammu while its Kashmir counterpart is executing things with extreme keenness and full enthusiasm. In the same context, Tourism Department in Kashmir held a colourful Shikara Rally in world famous Dal lake to celebrate 75th year of independence under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and woo tourists to the Valley, the famous lakes in Jammu region including Mansar and Surinsar are luring for even the basic facilities with handful of tourists visiting these spots despite the places having gifted with nature's unbounded bounties. What is painful is that the concerned department has nothing in offering while in Kashmir despite crucial condition with regard to COVID-19 pandemic the Department of Tourism is on forefront to showcase its potential to host tourists even during the harsh winters of the region popularly known as Chilai-Kalan. It is pertinent to mention that Chilai-Kalan or Chilai-Kalan is the local name given to 40-day period of harsh winter in Kashmir. It is the coldest part of winter, starting from December 21 to January 29 every year. Chilai-Kalan is followed by 20-day long Chilai-Khurd that occurs between January 30 and February 18 and a 10-days long Chilai-Bachha which is from February 19 to February 28. The smartness of the people of the region is that they also market this harsh time of the year by connecting the same with the culture and traditions and attract tourists whereas in Jammu the opportunity is lost year after year because despite pleasant weather conditions there is nobody to showcase the beauty of the region thus denting the interests of the local population.

OFF 'D' CUFF

Change is a part of life

laugh, you don't lose anything, instead, you gain a lot.

Despite any difficult phase in life, try to change your thinking and point of view a bit for developing a fresh perspective towards any happening. Never consider yourself a part of the crowd because you are special. Your nature is different than others. You are virtuous, you are flexible and you are courageous — keep these things in your mind and experience variations in your personality.

Make 'change' a part of your life. Accept any transformation with dignity. It will help you in maintaining a state of happiness. And most importantly, be prepared for any variation in your routine life.

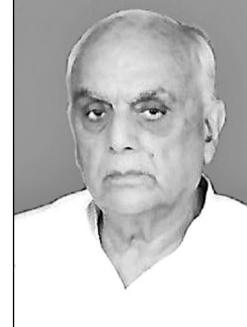
Convert unhappiness into happiness

To convert unhappiness into happiness, change yourself now. Do not wait for tomorrow. Accept the world as it is. Remember one thing, you have to modify yourself first before bringing any positive change in the world. When you plan to alter yourself and your habits, do not wait for tomorrow. A positive change will happen when you start thinking from this moment. You can assert- "I will make progress from today itself."

Accept Change with a Smile

The art of accepting variations (positive or negative) is very important in life. With acceptance, you may change your unhappiness into a smile. When you smile during difficult times it works the same way as a bright sunshine in winter days. A smile is God's greatest blessing to human. It can be transitory, but has a long lasting memory. When you smile or

Unveiling Netaji Subash Chandra Bose's Hologram Statue



■ ER P L KHUSHU

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated hologram statue of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose at India Gate, on 125th birth anniversary of iconic freedom fighter on January 23, 2022, under the cupola where the statue of British monarch King George V once stood. "Role of our heroes, whose memories were being erased post-Independence, are now being revived," Modi said at the inauguration. President Ram Nath Kovind said, "India gratefully pays homage to Netaji Subash Chandra Bose on his 125th birth anniversary. The daring steps that he took to fulfill his fierce commitment to the idea of a free India -- Azad Hind -- make him a national icon. His ideals and sacrifice will forever inspire every Indian." Paying tribute to Bose on his birth anniversary, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "I bow to Netaji Subash Chandra Bose on his Jayanti. Every Indian is proud of his monumental contribution to our nation." A grand statue, which will be made of granite, will replace the hologram statue once it is completed. The statue will be a fitting tribute to Bose's immense contribution to the freedom struggle and would be a symbol of the country's indebtedness to him as said by Prime Minister. The hologram statue will be powered by a 30,000 lumens 4K projector. An invisible, high-gain, 90 percent transparent holographic screen has been erected in such a way that it is not visible to visitors. Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that this is not just a statue but a befitting tribute to legendary Netaji, who gave everything for India's freedom.

Subash Chander Bose was born in an affluent Bengali family on January 23, 1897 in Cuttack, Orissa. His father, who was an eminent lawyer by profession, ensured that his son availed the best education in eminent institutions like Scottish Church College Calcutta and Fitzwilliam College at Cambridge University in 1920. He was the 9th child amongst 8 brothers and 6 sisters, which means that they were 14 brothers and sisters in all. Bose appeared in the prestigious ICS examination and secured 4th position. He was a very intelligent and a sincere student and was strongly influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and was known for his patriotic zeal as a student. During the period of civil disobedience movement by Mahatma Gandhi, Bose resigned from ICS in April 1921 to join the freedom movement. He joined the youth wing of Congress Party and soon rose to the higher ranks of the party hierarchy by virtue of his eloquence and leadership skills. Bose joined the non-cooperation movement started by Mohandas K Gandhi, who had made the Indian National Congress a powerful non-violent organisation. Bose was advised by Gandhi to work under Chittaranjan Das, a politician in Bengal. At an early stage he accepted Deshbandhu Chittranjan Das as his political guru. There Bose became a youth educator, journalist and commandant of Bengal

Congress volunteers. His activities led to imprisonment in December 1921. In 1924, he was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Calcutta Municipal Corporation, with Das as Mayor. Bose was soon deported to Burma (Myanmar) because he was suspected of having connections with secret revolutionary movements. Released in 1927, he returned to find Bengal Congress affairs in disarray after death of Das, and was elected President of Bengal Congress. Shortly thereafter he and Jawahar Lal Nehru became the two General Secretaries of Indian National Congress. Together they represented the left-wing faction of party against the more compromising, right-wing Gandhian faction. When the civil disobedience movement was started in 1930, Bose was already in detention for his associations with an underground revolutionary group, the Bengal Volunteers. Nevertheless, he was elected mayor of Calcutta while in prison. Released and then rearrested several times for his suspected role in violent acts, Bose was finally allowed to proceed to Europe after he contracted tuberculosis and was released for ill-health. In enforced exile and still ill, he wrote The Indian Struggle 1920-1934 and pleaded India's cause with European leaders. He returned from Europe in 1936, was again taken into custody, and was released after a year. Meanwhile, Bose became increasingly critical of Gandhi's more conservative economics as well as his less confrontational approach toward independence. In 1938, he was elected President of the Indian National Congress and formed a national planning committee, which formulated a policy of broad industrialization. However, this did not harmonize with Gandhian economic thought, which clung to the notion of cottage industries and benefiting from the use of the country's own resources. Bose's vindication came in 1939, when he defeated a Gandhian rival for reelection. Nonetheless, the 'rebel president' felt bound to resign because of the lack of Gandhi's support. He founded the Forward Bloc, hoping to rally radical elements, but was again incarcerated in July 1940. His refusal to remain in prison at this critical period of India's history was expressed in a determination to fast to death, which frightened British Government to release him. On January 26, 1941, though closely watched, he escaped from his Calcutta residence in disguise and, traveling via Kabul and Moscow, eventually reached Germany in April. In Germany, Bose came under the tutelage of a newly created Special Bureau for India, guided by Adam von Trott zu Solz. He and other Indians who had gathered in Berlin made regular broadcasts from the German-sponsored Azad Hind Radio beginning in January 1942, speaking in English, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, and Pashto. A little more than a year after the Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia, Bose left Germany, traveling by German and Japanese submarines and by plane and arrived in May 1943 in Tokyo. On July 4 he assumed leadership of the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia and proceeded, with Japanese aid and influence, to form a trained army of about 40,000 troops in Japanese-occupied Southeast Asia. On October 21, 1943, Bose proclaimed the establishment

of a provisional independent Indian government, and his so-called Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauj), alongside Japanese troops, advanced to Rangoon (Yangon) and thence overland into India, reaching Indian soil on March 18, 1944, and moving into Kohima and the plains of Imphal. In a stubborn battle, the mixed Indian and Japanese forces, lacking Japanese air support, were defeated and forced to retreat; the Indian National Army nevertheless for some time succeeded in maintaining its identity as a liberation army, based in Burma and then Indochina. With the defeat of Japan, however, Bose's fortunes ended. A few days after Japan's announced surrender in August 1945, Bose, fleeing Southeast Asia, reportedly died in a Japanese hospital in Taiwan as a result of burn injuries from a plane crash. Did Bose actually die in a plane crash in 1945 as officially accepted? If yes, then why his death remains shrouded in mystery even today. A lot has been written and said about the unfortunate death of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose. There have been myriad theories, debates, discussions, movies, and several documentaries about the cause of his death, yet there has so far been no confirmation to any of these theories. Netaji had gone missing in 1945 and some of his family members had rejected report of his death in a plane crash in Taihoku airport in Taiwan on August 18 that year. Several reports claimed that Netaji had on August 18, 1945, boarded a plane from Taihoku Airport in Taiwan, which crashed leading to his death. An investigative report by the Japanese government titled 'Investigation on cause of death and other matters of the late Subash Chandra Bose' was declassified in 2016. It concluded that Bose died in a plane crash in Taiwan on August 18, 1945. The report was completed in January 1956 and was handed over to Indian embassy in Tokyo, but was not made public for more than 60 years as it was classified. According to the report, just after take-off, a propeller blade on the airplane in which Bose was traveling broke off and engine fell off the plane, which then crashed and burst into flames. When Bose exited, his clothes caught fire and he was severely burned. He was admitted to hospital, and although he was conscious and able to carry on a conversation for some time he died several hours later. The Centre from time to time had constituted panels, Shah Nawaz Committee in 1956, the Khosla Commission in 1970, and the Mukherjee Commission in 2005, to shed light on the circumstances leading to Netaji's death or disappearance, but none could render any answer. On September 1, 2016, Narendra Modi Government declassified investigative reports of the Japanese government, which concluded that Bose died in a plane crash in Taiwan. Reports also suggested that his remains are preserved at Renkoji temple in Tokyo. Many, however, continue to believe that Netaji survived plane crash and lived in hiding.

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Desertions in Congress

■ OKMAR DATTATRAY

The unprecedented desertions are unfortunately taking place in congress, the grand old political party of the country. Day in and day out various leaders of Congress are leaving the party to join other political outfits perhaps for greener pastures. These desertions are a cause of concern for congress and its leadership. The Indian national congress top leadership should introspect and make self analysis and find out the cause of the desertions which plague the party. The congress leadership is unable to stop the phenomena of the desertions in party. Earlier Jyotiraditya Scindia, who was a big leader of Congress, left the party and joined BJP. Many big and small leaders have also deserted the congress in the past and have joined other political parties especially BJP. These desertions have weakened the party and brought havoc to congress. Recently many leaders of substance have left the congress and joined BJP just before the state assembly elections. The desertion of R P N Singh who was a big wing of congress and was a union minister in UPA Government of Manmohan Singh is a big jolt to congress party just before the assembly elections in UP. He along with two other leaders of the congress have deserted the party and joined BJP. However all these politicians have asserted that they have been influenced by policies of BJP and the style of the functioning of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and have thus joined BJP to serve the cause of nationalism. These leaders also alleged that the congress of today is not the congress of yore and the congress in which they were working and the congress which has fought for the country's freedom. R P N Singh has also said that he has joined BJP because of its nationalistic character and has joined BJP without any pre-conditions but only for the service to the national cause. Whatever it is but the spree of desertions is a very disturbing development for the congress which has ruled the country for a pretty long time. But today the congress party is in doldrums and it is a sinking ship and its big and small leaders are leaving the party and joining BJP as they see their future safe in this party. It is very unfortunate that RPN Singh has quitted the congress, who was Incharge of party in poll-bound UP. Many political pundits opine that the desertion of RPN Singh is the last nail in the coffin of Congress and this is a matter of serious concern for the congress and needs serious introspection. It is becoming crystal clear that congress has turned into a sinking ship and its many leaders are leaving the drowning ship for self protection. There is some truth in this assertion of the political pundits. Besides this it is also true that the congress of today is not same as the congress of the yester years when it was considered as the party which has fought for the freedom of the country from British. But desertions in congress are serious matter for congress leadership and self introspection and self analysis should be conducted by the top leadership of the party for finding the causes of the desertions in the party. It is also a matter of serious concern that the poster girl of Congress Priyanka Moria who was spearheading Priyanka Wadhra's movement of Ladki Hu Ladsakti Hu has also deserted congress and has joined the BJP. She has alleged that there is no respect for the women in congress and the assertions of the congress are false so as they relate to the congresses so called movement for the girls. Congress has become a party of empty promises and shallow and hollow slogans and the people of the country are least interested in the congress rhetoric and therefore are distancing themselves from the congress and its policies. There is no denying the fact that the congress has become a party which believes in Hindu bashing and Hindutva and Hindusim is an eyesore for the congress of today. If congress wants political space in the country it should strive to shun its anti-Hindu and pro-minority image and should desist from minority appeasement to be able to have a place of pride which the party enjoined just after the independence. But for this happens, congress leadership has to work very hard and shed pro-minority and anti Hindu-image. However it is not so easy and for this the congress has to introspect and take necessary steps to regain its past glory so that it once again becomes a party of the common masses. But for this congress has to see unto its sleeves and resurrect the party so that it becomes a party with a difference and distinct ideology which it was just after the independence. Today congress has become a part of differences and many congress leaders are deserting the party and joining other political parties especially the BJP just for their safe political careers. Thus the phenomena of desertions has rocked Congress party and it has damaged its future political prospects and therefore if the congress leaders sincerely want the redemption of the party, its top leader-

ship should take all necessary steps in the direction of making congress a force to reckon with. But for this congress leadership needs to work hard and make introspection and self analysis and work for making congress a mass based political force which it has lost for last few decades. Therefore congress should clean its stable from the inconsequential leaders and make room for the dedicated leaders who are influenced by the congress ideology and thinking. Thus the congress should start its pruning and make room for the dedicated politicians and statesmen in the party so that it once again becomes a party with a mass base. But for this the congress needs to work hard and work with dedication so that once flourishing party once again becomes a political party of a substance and mass base and mass appeal. The way its leaders of substance are leaving the party and joining the BJP reflects on the poor political management of the party by its top leadership and therefore what is needed is that the party should be reformed so that it once again becomes a part of the masses. However it cannot be overlooked that the congress has become a sinking ship in which its leaders are leaving the party in lurch and are joining BJP and other political parties perhaps for the greener pastures. It is because of the fact that the days of clean politics have gone and today ever Tom, Dick and Harry is present in the political parties without any exception. But as far as the congress is concerned it has become party of differences, confusion and chaos is rife large on the face of congress and unless and until pragmatic steps are not taken by the top leadership of the party it is bound to lose its significance in the prevailing circumstances. Thus necessary steps should be taken by the leadership of the congress party so that the spree of desertions is given a good bye and the congress party once again becomes a force to reckon with. For this the rank and file of the congress has to work hard so that the congress becomes a mass based political party having a mass appeal and representation. All steps need to be taken by the top congress leadership to shun the party's sinking ship image so that congress becomes a party of substance and occupies a place of pride. It needs reform and restructuring of the organizational structure of the congress to ensure a place of pride for the party.

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

YOUR COLUMN

Plastic pollution- a serious hazard

Dear Editor:

The last Earth Day's theme was 'End Plastic Pollution' as the environmental contamination is expanding worldwide due to the widespread use of plastic. Plastics and plastic products have been increasing in use and manufacture worldwide for the last 50 years. However, the truth is that public awareness can potentially save us from impending tragedy. India's waste management system is ineffective, resulting in a lack of efficient separation of biodegradable and non-biodegradable elements. As a result, non-biodegradable plastic remains in the soil, contaminating it with one of the elements of the environment. Plastic is being discarded into the water. Additionally, this plastic is being deposited at the river's bottom. Polythene has been deposited at the bottom of Ganga River, and crores of polythene bags have been scattered across India's soil. Although microorganisms are incapable of decomposing polythene, these gradually get absorbed into air and water by the weather. It also returns to the list of animal foods as a food dynamic cycle. As a result, the ecosystem and animals are under serious threat. Further, uncontrolled polythene use is contributing to increase water-logging across the nation. These plastic accumulations are clogging drains and canals.

At the moment, around three million tissue bags are offered daily in the country. Every day in the country, lakhs of tissue bags are made and marketed. There is a group of dishonest businessmen operating in the market under other names other than polythene, but whose main ingredients are synthetic fibers such as polyester, polypropylene, polyamide and rayon. Polythene bags have been blamed for inflicting harm on the environment and public health. Plastic is not only confined to the manufacture of items, bags, or bottles; its numerous applications have become a source of concern. Recent research has revealed an exponential increase in the use of micro-bits, a microscopic plastic particle used as a cosmetic ingredient. Face wash, body wash, toothpaste, and detergent are just a few examples. These common household goods are dumped in various ways into sewers, ponds, canals, and other bodies of water. Micro beads have been observed in the stomach, mouth, and even fish eggs. Aside from that, the use of polymers and plastic items results in a variety of health concerns in the human body. Plastics typically enter the human body through three pathways: air, water, and the food chain. Chemicals utilized in the production of plastic products are extremely hazardous to human health. Plastic products are responsible for the development of both permanent and temporary disorders in the human body and their complications. Cancer, asthma, skin illnesses, birth deformities, genetic alterations, and other major health concerns are just a few of the issues that need to be addressed.

The presence of micro beads in face washes and scrubs is most significant of these considerations. The presence of Micro beads has also been observed in soap detergents and toothpaste whereas majority of people in the country have no idea about micro beads. The tendency toward the use of plastic and plastic products is becoming more prevalent by the day. While the rest of the world strives to reduce the use of plastic, the manufacture and use of plastic is on the rise in our country. The Polythene Prevention Act's relevant section should prohibits the manufacture, import, sale, display, and stockpiling of ecologically hazardous plastics. Violators of this law are liable to penalty that may be imposed Imprisonment for number of years or fine or both. However, despite law's existence, its use continues to grow at an alarming rate. In order to reduce our consumption of plastic, lawbreakers who violate the Polythene Prevention Act must be penalized closely supervised. Jute is a standard choice in India, and its use has the potential to lessen the country's reliance on polythene and plastic. It is now very imperative to take steps to promote the use of jute goods, such as bags and fibre and cotton cloth bags might be a wonderful alternative to polythene bags in such instances. To protect the next generation, not only the Government, but also the general public, must be made aware of dangers of plastics usage so that they stop using plastic and plastic products.

Mool Raj, Doda.