

VIRUS SPREADING FAST

With outbreak of the COVID pandemic, almost all the spheres of life suffered massive damages, majority of which are yet to be recovered. COVID-19, with which the entire world is grappling till date, has emerged as the most-deadly pandemic during the last several decades as lakhs of precious human lives have fallen prey to the contagious virus. The most surprising thing is that despite all effective measures taken by the Government to check the spread of the virus, it is increasing like a wildfire with a large number of new cases being reported on almost daily basis from every nook and corner of the country. Although in the past the mega vaccination drive initiated by the Government has played a significant role in improving the overall scenario in respect of COVID pandemic, yet at present time it is once again spreading fast. As per the health experts, this dangerous virus is capable of fast mutation as such various new variants of the same have been reported during the past two years. The health experts have further warned the people not to lower their guard against the contagious virus and follow all precautionary measures diligently like wearing face masks, maintaining social distancing, frequent hand washing etc, as the vaccination can only safeguard the people to some extent and is not capable to provide full immunity against the novel virus which is changing its forms with the passage of time and existing conditions. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, as per the directives of the Centre Government, has also left no stone unturned in implementation of COVID containment measures and imparting awareness among people regarding fatal infection, still after witnessing an improved scenario during past few months, the situation in J&K is once again becoming grim with every passing day. The administration, this time is stressing on localised containment measures and in place of imposing complete lockdowns is preferring some other options like declaration of containment zones, expediting vaccination drive, imposing weekend lockdown etc. There is no doubt that all necessary measures are already in place by the administration to break the chain of contagious virus yet the need of the hour is to support all the initiatives of the Government against the COVID so that this fatal infection can be rooted out from the country in the larger interest of humanity.

ACT RESPONSIBLY

There is dire need that media should act responsibly especially when there is a matter related to terrorism because a small gaffe can let to colossal damage as far as communal tension, disturbance in social fabric or for that matter law and order situation is concerned. There is no need to show over enthusiasm in cases related to anti-national activities or terrorism because it hundred times better not to report a wrong news than making public a fake news or factually misleading news because it can lead to major law and order problem and also can serve the purpose of those who want unrest to sprout in the country especially the turmoil ridden Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory. Going by the news published in media that a grenade blast has occurred in the Maharaja Bazar area of Srinagar city, the J&K Police has outrightly refuted the same by saying that no grenade attack took place in the aforesaid area. The news agency which reported the matter is a prestigious one but somehow it has reported that the officials had said that terrorists hurled a grenade on security personnel at around 4.30 PM in the Maharaja Bazar area of Srinagar on Saturday, however there was no immediate report of any casualty. Surprisingly, the Srinagar Police has termed the report of grenade attack as a 'rumour' clarifying that no such attack has taken place in Srinagar. This is surprising that despite Police and other security agencies issuing appeals and advisories about confirming such news reports before making them public such a thing has happened because police and media sections of other security forces readily share such news items with people belonging to the scribe fraternity. It is hard to believe that a news agency of such a stature can commit such a mistake but as per the clarification of police the err has taken place and there is need that media houses should act responsibly by creating liaison with security forces and the Information Department because such news without basis can many a times serve the purpose of the enemies of the country and therefore under no circumstances the same thing should be allowed to happen.



Before Changing the World, Change Yourself!

Undoubtedly, the 21st century youth is motivated, spirited, full of fresh ideas and open to modern customs, beliefs, and technologies. They are highly ambitious. They are intelligent and way far ahead of their times in terms of knowledge and awareness. They have the potential to bring tremendous growth to their motherland.

They also have the courage to outshine the mindset of older generations and bring fresh changes that the society indeed is waiting for.

However, to see the real change in society, actions need to be taken.

Are our youth ready for the action? Are they ready for the hard work?

Challenges before Millennials

In order to bring positive changes in society, the youth must change themselves first. Of course, they have the right to see what is wrong with the society and criticize that, but they should earn that right through realizing what is wrong with themselves first and take corrective measures and then do something

Shri Sudhanshuji Maharej

When I admire the wonders of a sunset or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in the worship of the creator.

-Mahatma Gandhi

EDITORIAL

Indian Republic-Robust & Thriving

■ NIRMALA SITHARAMAN

During the last seven decades, the Constitution has provided integrity and stability, but it is our people who have kept the republic alive. A republic is made robust and kept alive by its people. In its current form, the Indian republic marks 73 years of maintaining a dynamic balance. This is often strained by the pushes and pulls of forces reflecting the plurality and diversity that India is known for. It is to the credit of our people that today we have a pyramidal three-layered elected representative system that governs us. With its warts and all, this system today has over 3 million elected representatives (a million of them women), over 4,000 elected to state legislatures and over 500 in the Parliament. The Preamble envisaged the republic to be governed by the people through their freely-elected representatives. This scale of directly elected representation, perhaps, can be seen nowhere else in the world. It can be accused of being argumentative, noisy, a bit too much at times, but it continues to be full of life.

Before 1950, January 26 was celebrated as Independence Day, following the resolution for complete independence (PurnaSwaraj) adopted at the Lahore Congress in 1929. Once independence from the imperial ruler was obtained and the Constitution was adopted, the day was marked as our Republic Day. In Pilgrimage to Freedom, K M Munshi writes, "The Constitution is not merely a legal document, nor is it a political document either. True, it was drafted by lawyers with the help of the political leaders who had won the battle of freedom. Theirs was a historical role. That of building a framework within which our national unity and democratic way of life might flourish. Essentially, our Constitution has a moral background - to secure justice for every section of our society; as also a spiritual basis - to preserve and protect all religions in the exercise of their functions... The leaders of my generation have left in the Constitution a legacy of freedom, of the Rule of Law, freedom of speech and religion and above all integrity and stability which the country has never enjoyed for over 500 years." There is no doubt that during the last seven decades, our Constitution has provided the integrity and stability that are critical for our republic. The challenges continue in securing justice for every section of our society. The Backward Classes, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and the poor across all categories clamour for better opportunities and affordable justice. Denial of constitutional rights over all these decades of our republic to SCs, STs and women in one region of India was corrected when Article 370 was abrogated. What Munshi calls the spiritual basis of our Constitution in having to preserve and protect all religions is also seen under stress. Perversion in practising the principle of secularism (introduced subsequently during the Emergency) through minority appeasement for electoral considerations had left women belonging to the minority community being denied their legitimate rights. The resistance to the Act making Triple Talaq null and void showed how the right given to women in many Islamic countries was being denied to Muslim women in India mainly for electoral considerations. Minority appeasement plays out again when the religious rights of some are upheld by denying similar rights

of others. The issue of religious rights, in its intensity, may vary from state to state, but when the usual suspects paint it as a nationwide uprising, they are not being objective or fair: When the right to practise one's religion is denied or threatened, the silence of the thinking public or the media weakens that constitutionally embedded protection. The strength of the republic is undermined by hypocritical values and the selective silence of the watchdogs.

There is no doubt that communication technologies strengthen modern republics. Technology has brought down costs of information sharing among people and of awareness building. It is a powerful tool, now well democratised. An unforeseen fall-out of this democratisation is the generation and sharing of unverified news or even false news. Through the power of technology and its capacity to broadcast at mass scale, an otherwise useful tool, social media, has become a challenge and sometimes a threat to one or several of the rights enshrined in our Constitution. Curtailing them to protect the rights of citizens is seen as trampling upon the right to free speech. Without any action, the damage caused to social harmony by such rampant false news can result in people losing faith in the Constitution itself.

Subhash C Kashyap observes, "Our Constitution is a living, dynamic process, always evolving, constantly in the making through amendments, judicial interpretations, and its actual working." Our Constitution is the most amended of all constitutions in the world. Rightly, successive governments have ensured that the Constitution keeps abreast of the times and the aspirations of our people. If there are more than 100 amendments made to the Constitution, there are more than 1,500 laws that have been repealed because they have outlived their times. These deadwood laws, by remaining on paper, occasionally became a weapon in the hands of rent-seekers. Their removal, as a part of administrative reform, has kept the role of the executive transparent and accountable. It is imperative that every change to the Constitution is done mindful of the objective that the original intent of the framers of the Constitution is not lost. That the Constitution is always evolving is best exemplified by the 101st amendment which rolled out the Goods and Services Tax. This amendment brought in a unified indirect tax regime by subsuming most of the indirect taxes of the Centre and the states. The GST Council was set up. It has the power to decide on issues related to GST and importantly the rates applicable to each item covered under it. Yet to complete five full years, the GST Council has stood the test of challenging times even in its initial years. It augurs well for cooperative federalism. Our Constitution has served us well in these seven decades. Several republics in the post-imperial era have rejected their earlier constitutions and tested new ones. Babasaheb B R Ambedkar felt, "The working of a Constitution does not depend wholly upon the nature of the Constitution. The Constitution can provide only the organs of State such as the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The factors on which the working of those organs of the State depends are people and political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their politics." So, it is the people who can keep the republic robust and alive.

(The author is Union Minister for Finance).

Teacher Resource Repository

■ ER PRABHAT KISHORE

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was adopted on 29th July 2020, which envisages provision of quality education and equitable access to all students in a sustainable manner. During the past year and a half, schools across the world have adopted numerous innovative practices to ensure the continuity of education during prevailing COVID 2019 pandemic. To widely disseminate school education related to quality, inclusive practices and sustainability, Shikshak Parv was organised wherein teachers from both Government and private schools shared various innovative practices adopted by their schools during and afterwards pandemic. The initiatives were appreciated by both policy makers and practitioners. In light of the encouraging response and to further increase the width and depth of dissemination, a National Teacher Resource Repository (NTRR) at national-level and State Teacher Resource Repository (STRR) at state levels are being created. The objective of TRR is to enhance quality of education and highlight the contribution of educators so that they can take pride in their profession and further train many teachers in their respective states. It also aims at recognising and appreciating the good initiatives of teachers. Peer-to-peer learning or mutual learning of participants of the same level in a group helps in constantly improving the skills of the whole group. Peer learning is especially well-suited for sharing innovations. The peer sharing of innovative school practices among TRR participants has the potential to inspire and motivate a large number of schools and teachers across the country. Learning from each other's experiences, teachers can be encouraged to collate their resources to improve the teaching learning process in their classrooms. Sharing innovations from time to time and on a continuous basis will provide the desired impetus towards quality of education for all students. This will help all the teachers, especially those in the remote areas, to improve their pedagogy. Amenities are not evenly distributed in our vast nation. The innovation and dissemination of such practices will help in meeting the resource constraints; facilitate peer-to-peer learning; leverage technology to disseminate best practices amongst other teachers.

The TRR will be equipped with teachers from ten themes that align with the policy objectives of NEP 2020, namely (1) Early Childhood Care and Education - The Foundation of learning, (2) Foundational Literacy and Numeracy - An Urgent & Necessary

Prerequisite to Learning, (3) Curtailing Drop-out Rates and Ensuring Universal Access to Education at all levels, (4) Curriculum and Pedagogy in Schools - Learning should be Holistic, Integrated, Enjoyable and Engaging, (5) Teachers, (6) Equitable and Inclusive Education - Learning for All, (7) Efficient Resource and Effective Governance through School Complexes/clusters, (8) Standard Setting and Accreditation for School Education, (9) Technology in Education - NDEAR, (10) Reimaging Vocational Education and Skill Building. An innovative exercise by a teacher engages all the students in the classroom and makes the teaching-learning process enjoyable. A verity of practices has been applied during the COVID 2019 pandemic. Addressing the issue of connectivity, teaching children using different material available at home (Angana Me Shikshak), teaching children under an umbrella on a bike (Chhatri wale Guruj), Mera Doordarshan Mera Vidyalaya, Bal Samvidhan, Bal Sansad, Bal Bachat Bank, Question Bank and Bal SamacharPatrika for shaping the personality of the children in right direction, eco-friendly activities like 'Best from waste', alternate assessment models in lieu of regular examinations including self-evaluation, peer feedback & parent feedback. Career Mitra Portal and other innovative practices on different themes known for improvement in quality of education, need to be propagated for spurring the teachers across the country to innovate. The teachers from the repository will serve as a resource from which master trainers will be identified to train the teachers of other schools. The teachers of STRR will be trained by SCERTs and those under NTRR will be trained by NCERT. A WhatsApp or other group on social media of identified teachers will be created for each theme, which will share innovative practices adapted in their schools in a virtual mode. There is no doubt that the pandemic has badly affected the human life and created hurdle to the education of the learners, but it has also opened door for alternative and innovative ways of learning and thinking. Efforts have been made to cope up the alarming situation with local available resources. Several methods adopted in scattered regions, when cumulated through TRR, will certainly strengthen the education system of the nation in the long run.

(The author is a Technocrat and holds Master Degree in Engineering from MN Regional Engineering College, Allahabad).

YOUR COLUMN
Ensuing spring season

Dear Editor,

In busy lifestyle of metropolis, the sound of seasons and excitement of festivals are not known. To some extent, the postponement of seasons due to environmental impact, encroachment is also responsible for the scenario. Winters have slipped away to Phagun and unseasonal rains ruined crops. In such a situation due to business of life, almost everything has come under the control of fast-spinning wheel of the economic cycle. Whether it is spring or winter, its feeling and enthusiasm has vanished. With arrival of spring, mango trees are in bloom. The garden-gardens are ashamed of the treachery of Rituraj, as if with the pinkish red color of the flowers of Kachnar. The golden aura is scattered in the fields by yellow mustard. As per Kalika Puran, for the first time, Kamaadeva asked for a partner to create disorder in Shiva's mind. Then Brahma created Vasant in form of a companion. The Gupta era and later texts mention celebration of Basant Panchami, which was related to dance, music and arts. This ceremony lasted till full moon day of Falgun. These were called Madnatsav. The description of this festival is found in Banabhatta's Harshacharita and Kadambari. There is also a description of Madnatsav in Malavikagnimitra, Dashakumarcharita and Varshakriyakaumudi. The girls used to dance frantically carrying

Amramanjari. Kalidas has said in the Ritusanhars-Vasante Dwigune Kamaah, which means effect of Kama doubles during spring. It is mentioned in folk literature that spring also makes old people young. The literature of two prominent medieval poets, Amir Khusrau and Malik Muhammad Jayasi, is immersed in the influence of spring. The description of Nagmati Virah of Jayasi is also Vasantsasik. But now-a-days spring, the joy of all the seasons and festivals seems to be drowned in the tumult of the struggle for wealth and livelihood. Saraswati Puja and Basant Panchami celebrations in schools and colleges on Basant Utsav are over. In our college days, the celebration of Mahakavi Nirala's birthday was celebrated with great pomp on Basant Panchami. Poetry and musical events were held. Not only the students, but the teachers also came wearing yellow or Basanti clothes. Sweet saffron rice was prepared in homes and Saraswati Puja was performed. Journals and magazines used to issue special issues on spring. The physical feeling of spring may have been fading away, but the intellectual feeling remained. But now this lusty feeling is on the verge of extinction from the memory of the people. The euphoria of the public mind is missing. Who has only time left to admire nature? We are living our lives detached from our surroundings. There is neither the heat of the arrival of new crops nor the alertness and cheerfulness of the change of seasons. Our new generation may not even recognize the difference between a swelled Kachnar and a Dahlia, marigold and sunflower flower. Acharya Hazariprasad Dwivedi has written in his essay Vasant Aa Gaya that spring does not come, it is

Behavioral changes owing to corona

■ MAHADEEP SINGH JAMWAL

While COVID-19 gripped us in its fear, it also helped us see the world with a new lens. The Corona virus has changed our lives completely. We never anticipated that the intermittent lockdowns would eventually turn our lives upside down. We started working from home, colleges and schools started online classes, and we saw some historic changes. A reality that the world has certainly seen its share of generation-defining events, the latest one the 'COVID-19 pandemic' have brought behavioral changes in the populace world over. With the coronavirus pandemic, we've surely learned a lot. Some lessons have been painful but those lessons have given us recognition of our wrong and that has helped to push our systems in the right direction. Some of the disruptions, the Pandemic crisis caused, may produce lasting benefits. We have to admit that The COVID-19 has changed life as we know it and it has changed everybody's life goals and priorities ranging from dawn to dusk. When the pandemic commenced, it constrained a comprehensive effort to ensure that everyone practiced behaviors to keep themselves healthy and safe and keep others healthy as well. Not all but many people have learned a whole lot about respiratory infections and viruses, and how they spread from one person to another. This has prioritized every sensible and aware people's decisions as to avoid many functions if we don't feel well and even have very minor bad colds and prefer to stay home. We have realised the fact that in the human population, social contacts are a key for transmission of bacteria and viruses. Protective behaviors became the norm in our life. Everyone has embraced preventive measures such as mask wearing, maintaining a physical distance, and washing hands frequently. We picked up important wellness habits. The use of Masks once by medical professionals during surgery and the general hospitals, Jain monks covering their nose and mouth with a cloth to prevent microorganisms in the air from entering and getting killed, to hide the identity, scarves and veils of different colors and shapes were customary in countless cultures long before, but now the face masks seems to be critical to prevent the transmission of bacteria and viruses, and its use has become a symbol of times and use of facemasks seems to be an accepted intervention in our life worldwide that provide a barrier that can keep respiratory droplets from spreading. People have practiced self-care in a multitude of ways during the pandemic as they were forced to adjust to new work schedules, change their routines, and cut back on socializing. We realized the wastage of money on 'show off' during our functions and have committed to cut down the list of invitees in functions. This way luxurious arrangement in costly banquet halls has brought such functions back to our home space and we can easily pass on the expenditure without attracting burden on our wallets. The COVID-19 pandemic has had tremendous and swift effects on workplace culture. People have discovered that they don't have to be in an office, that they can get most things done remotely. They do not need to commute to work. People who were part of a community during the pandemic realized the importance of human connection, and those who didn't have that kind of support realized they need it. We tuned ourselves to socializing only to the required commitments.

While everyone's situation is different and some people have experienced tremendous difficulties, many have seen that it's possible to be resilient in a crisis. Scientists and nonscientists alike learned that a virus can be more powerful than they are. This was evident in the way knowledge about the virus changed over time in the past year as scientific investigation of it evolved.

The pandemic has probably taken the Internet from a 'nice to have' to a core utility for a large proportion of the population and businesses. The pandemic has been a great teacher.

We grew better at listening, not assuming that everyone's realities are the same, and focusing on things that truly mattered above all.

We've definitely learnt some skills and have become more independent than ever before. Another realization has been about our family's integral role in our lives. We were so consumed by the larger events that we failed to appreciate the little moments.

Indeed, there have been many sobering moments when we realized: 'Actually, nobody knows what's going on, when it will end, what's going to happen next.'

This situation has shown us that we are all the same regardless of our religion, culture, customs, whether we are poor or rich.

The virus simply does not choose. It connected us in a way; it showed us that we should all stick together. Finding the good elements of the sudden culture change, taking pride in them, can reinforce these shifts in behavior for the long-term.

taken away. The bloody color of the Palash ignites if a forest grove. Spring is the arrival of enthusiasm of the mind, of new energy, of new enthusiasm. Knocking on the doors of that sleeping consciousness, which has planted despair and depression among hearts, Spring is a call to renounce all these weaknesses. His message has to be understood. The season description of the commander is most effective. Nature has not disappeared from the point of view of those poets. He writes - Baran Baran Taru Phule Upvan Forest, Soi Chaturang Sang Dal Lahitu Hai. With the onset of spring, the forest gardens come and sit with their Chaturangi army. Spring does not give the message of migration. He binds with felicitations of welcome and enthusiasm. Today's writer maintains a vision of reality as he considers spring only as a sign of luxury. For a person who is grinding day and night for bread and butter, footsteps of spring in his life do not bring any innovation. He remains untouched by her touch. It is his compulsion, not his lack of aesthetics. The pursuit of bread, cloth and house is making him utterly monotonous.

In this time beset by materiality, only the thread of nature has been left out of our hands. In the battle of career, our instinctive spirit has been lost somewhere. Spring wants to come, but the doors should be open for it, there should be little scope for germination on the fertile land of the mind, so that one can hum again with full lofty consciousness - Sakhhi spring has come. The heart of the forest filled with joy, the shadow of innovation.

Vijay Garg.