

BAD NEWS

A news item has been circulating in different media portals that some miscreants have vandalized the 'I Love Jammu' Selfie-Point situated at the Banjali Cart (BC) road in General Bus Stand area. This is really an unfortunate incident and a very bad news because it is an indicator of the fact that some people in Jammu are so sadistic that they don't want to see temple city's beautification. The cops should take the most stringent action in the matter as such hooligans are the enemies of the entire population of Jammu region. Instead of becoming guards of such assets created by the government under its Smart City Project, such elements are acting as foolhardy because the loss of such a beautiful spot is the loss of entire Jammu as this landmark place could become the favourite place of the tourists and even the locals and can contribute much in improving the socio-economic conditions of the people by increasing manifold the influx of the tourists. The contractor representing the Smart City Project has on camera said that they are encountering weird situation while working in the city as often they witness theft of the material brought in for the beautification of Jammu. It is the time that people of the temple city should grow and start thinking collectively for improving the edifice especially concerning tourism because it is the mainstay of the people of Jammu. Those indulging in such hooliganism are doing big disservice to the people of Jammu and even entire country. The city will become smart only when each and every resident of Jammu will start thinking that the property of Jammu City is his or her own property and will stop such miscreants from denting the public property by way of vandalism or thefts. The CCTV coverage which several media portals are sharing shows that well before midnight some youths committed this sin and damaged the aforesaid selfie point. It is really a matter of concern that in today's world there are people who want to slow down the pace of development of Jammu region by such actions.



OFF 'D' CUFF 'What I learnt from Sri Sri'

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar enriches my life with invaluable lessons that have been the light-house that I turn to when I need guidance. They have kept me buoyant and are a part of my being. I can't imagine what my life would have been without them. They have helped me evolve as a person and as a professional. On the eve of Guru Purnima, I would like to share them.

I used to read up on meditation and struggle with different techniques on my own until I found the Sahaj Samadhi Meditation from the Art of Living. It felt like it was made for me; so simple and yet so profound. After that, I never felt the need to try any other kind of meditation. The depth and ability to let go and be still is the greatest gift I could ever give myself. And the privilege of teaching this meditation to other people is a blessing in itself.

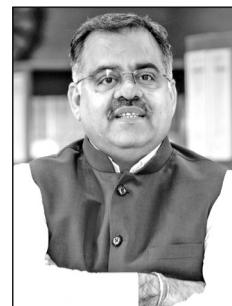
"Our soul is always in search of the truth. Wherever it finds the truth, it resonates. When something feels right in your heart, just listen to that and go with it," says Gurudev. When I find myself at the crossroads and have to take a decision, a quiet little voice tells me what to do. When I follow that voice, it's always been the right choice. In hindsight, when I haven't followed it — however illogical that voice may have sounded — it's been the wrong choice. I once left my laptop on a luggage trolley at Mumbai airport. Halfway home, when I found it missing, I panicked. Until that tiny voice said, "You will find it." When I went back to the airport, sure enough, it was waiting for me to reclaim it. Over the years I've learnt to listen to the voice more and more. Intuition, Gurudev said, is like a fifth limb we all have but just don't know how to use. Meditation takes you into a space of clarity that speaks to you from within.

Wisdom that surpasses all boundaries of time and geography, that's relevant to every single human being, is what I call knowledge. It's like small nuggets that you bring into your awareness; after a while they come spontaneously, changing the atmosphere inside, which, in turn,

He says, "Stay small and sweet and you will truly become big. And if you think you are very big and important in any field or aspect, the down-fall will begin. "Nature does not like arrogance and will always find a way to flatten it out. When I find myself becoming arrogant, I remember Sri Sri's words.

Ami Patel

Punjab heading towards disaster



■ TARUN CHUGH

Known as a sword arm and the bread-basket of the country, Punjab has always shown a path of development and prosperity through its vibrant and healthy culture to the rest of the world. But, over the past few years, the state has been facing severe problems which every Punjabi is feeling pain about. Ironically, these pressing problems are the result of maladministration and lack of political will and vision on the part of the ruling dispensation. The land of Gurus today is passing through difficult times. Economic growth is in shatters, unemployment is sky-high, the agrarian sector is in the doldrums; farmers are committing suicides and are under the burden of debt traps while the state has been reeling under heavy debt. The root cause of these problems is sluggish economic development which is giving rise to many other problems like drug trafficking which needs an immediate solution.

An Economic Disaster in Making:-

The economy of Punjab has historically been agrarian. After the independence, the economy of Punjab got a boost in the form of the Green revolution. It made Punjab the number one state as far as per capita income is concerned and Punjab enjoyed this title for more than 2 decades. Ironically, this green revolution led to the lopsided development of various regions, sectors and sections of society.

Data over the last three decades beginning 1990s shows that the agricultural growth rate has been less in Punjab than in other parts of the country. As of today, Punjab is the 15th largest state economy in terms of GDP and 16 in terms of per capita GDP. Punjab has focused on rice and wheat cultivation and has not been able to diversify its agrarian sectors as well as its economy. It could not take benefits of opening up of the economy in 1991 which had a huge potential considering the economic prosperity of the state. Even the push given by either the Green revolution or reforms of 1991 did not lead to any industrial or manufacturing or service industry in Punjab. It is a classic case where the economic benefits of one sector of agriculture could not trickle down to the other sectors. Pertinently, in this regard, Haryana has taken the lead and service sector cities like Gurgaon and industrial centers like Sonipat became hubs of business activities. This lack of transition to either the industrial or service sector has been the main reason for unemployment as well as the emigration of youth to other countries for greener pasture and job opportunities. The Public exchequer of Punjab is in the doldrums. As per a recent projection by the CAG, Punjab's public debt would double in the next five years. The CAG further states that Punjab is using its new borrowings to repay the earlier loans, leaving little for capital expenditure.

As per data of NITI Aayog, Punjab's per capita income has slid to below the national average and its per capita capital expenditure is among the lowest in the country. At this stage, we need an overhauling of our agriculture sector. Crop-diver-

sification is a must and focusing on fruit crops as Himachal has been doing must be scrupulously done. In this regard, Punjab must develop a viable Industrial policy tapping immense potential in tourism, agriculture-related industries, dairy, sugar and farming activities etc. Evenly spread cluster of industries and linking them with the export market so as to increase the outreach of the industries should be the focus. Also, we need to fully tap the foreign remittance sent by almost one-crore strong Punjabi-diaspora.

Drug Menace:-

After winning its war against terrorism, Punjab has been now facing a major internal threat in the form of drug trafficking. None of the three regions of Punjab viz, Malwa, Majha and Doaba have remained immune from the scourge of drug trafficking. As a transit route for drug trafficking, Punjab has slowly become a victim of drug abuse, which has permeated deep in the socio-political fabric of Punjab. As per NCR Bureau, Punjab recorded 11,654 cases under NDPS Act 1985 in 2018 which is the 2nd highest in the country and account for 19 per cent of all such cases registered nationwide. Punjab is adjacent to the Golden Crescent (area of Pak, Afghanistan and Iran) which is largest opium-producer area of the world and shares a 553-Km border with Pakistan, it has emerged as a destination as well as a transit point for drug smuggling from Afghanistan.

As per one report, Opium-based drugs such as heroin and poppy husk, cannabis and pharmaceutical sedatives are the most used narcotics in the state. Surprisingly, Punjab neither produces plant-based natural substances like opium, cannabis and their derivatives nor manufactures the precursor chemicals which are processed into synthetic and psychotropic drugs. It means that whole of the drug in Punjab originates from outside the state through a supply network controlled by the local, interstate, and international drug traffickers. Further, as per one study, the young population has been the worst sufferers of this menace. Although contrabands have spread their tentacles in all parts, the scourge of drugs has been concentrated in certain localities, clusters, and villages. The issue of drug menace has been an election issue but nothing concrete has been done in the last four years to eradicate its scourge. No concrete actions either to check the spread of drug trafficking or prevent its outreach to the youth have been taken either.

The state administration has miserably failed in either forming a viable policy or taking effective steps to stop the use of these drugs.

The promises of ending this menace have been more political demagogic than any doable or actionable plans. The state needs a political will and must address the nexus of drug trafficking and money laundering and check illegal and anti-national activities. Also, strict enforcement of the law and hitting hard on traffickers is a must. Further, popular culture through songs that promote drug use should also be banned. A counter-narrative through the use of the popular singers of Punjab against the drugs must be built so as to save the youth from its impressions. We need a political will and also a counter-culture to counter the drug menace.

(The writer is National General Secretary BJP).

Time is changing

■ R K SINHA

It is imperative to remember that India will be able to proudly claim to be fully developed only on the day when we will have thousands of Dalit industrialists/entrepreneurs thriving in our economy. Over the course of many years, India has witnessed many Dalits who become Presidents, Governors, Chief Ministers, Ministers, etc. In the world of science, education and sports youth belonging to Dalit society are also performing exceptionally well. But, we are still awaiting the advent of our first Dalit entrepreneur to adorn the status of a billionaire-trillionaire. The pleasant thing is that Dalit youth are now making a place for themselves in business world. Now, they are getting plenty of opportunities in the open economy structured by the Modi government. By taking advantage of the changes, they have started giving jobs instead of asking for them. It seems only plausible to expect the dawn of the era of Dalit billionaire-businessmen. However, this is not a small feat.

The Dalit society, which has been exploited for centuries, has finally started writing its history in the competitive field of business. Ravish Pipal, a Dalit entrepreneur from Agra is recognized among those who act as a source of inspiration for others. He provides widespread employment opportunities. Ravish is associated with the footwear business. Footwear companies around the world place orders with him to make goods according to their demands. Ravish Pipal provides design, technology, and marketing

advice to footwear manufacturers in India and supplies goods to the companies from where he gets orders. His employees belong to all castes in his company and jobs are secured purely based on merit. Nowadays, Dalit women are also succeeding as entrepreneurs. Take the example of Mumbai's Kalpana Saroj. Her story of struggle fascinates one a lot. She is President of Kamini Tubes. She says that she has benefited from the liberal economic policy of Modi government.

Saroj moved to Mumbai from Akola in 1980s. Until then economic liberalization was still a few years away. Saroj started earning a nominal amount every day by working as a tailor in Mumbai. She then started a furniture shop by taking a bank loan. When that worked out well, in 1997 Saroj bought land in Mumbai. In 2000, she sold her building. This portrayed her image as a woman who could do something on her own in Mumbai. In 2006, Saroj took over the command of a tube-making company, which was on the verge of bankruptcy called Kamini Tubes. Under her leadership now that company is making a profit. The success of Dalit entrepreneurs in the business world is being attributed to outsourcing. This has led to an explosion of entrepreneurship, in which Dalits have also benefited. There is a positive impact on the emerging section of Dalit entrepreneurs in the retail market. For the educated Dalits, huge opportunities in business are constantly being created. The truth is that government jobs in the country are also decreasing rapidly every year. Jobs are

decreasing rapidly in the Central Government, State Governments, Banks, Public Sector Undertakings, etc. The second thing is also that the reasons due to which the youth were attracted towards government jobs no longer exist. As there is no pension in government jobs anymore and the crackdown on corruption is at an all-time high. Thus, there seems no reason for there to be a lot of commotion to secure such jobs?

Today, large-scale government jobs are available only on a contractual basis. Because of this also many youths, most of whom come from Dalit and backward society, have made up their mind to do some business of their own. This is a pleasant situation. Many young people are also earning decent money through outsourcing. Dalit youth are also realizing that they cannot live their entire lives with the help of reservation. That is why the Dalit youth themselves have taken the concrete initiative of self-employment. Rajiv Kane comes from Dalit society who felt that he could not survive with the help of a job. During his childhood, he worked as a scooter mechanic in East Delhi along with his father. He did a lot of hard work and faced several struggles. After specializing in this work, Rajiv Kane took a leap. He set up a unit manufacturing electric scooters and motorcycles in Noida. He also managed to get loans. Now his company has dealers across the country. They believe that considering the ever-increasing prices of petrol and diesel, the time of electric vehicles has arrived. Thousands of Dalit youth have become successful entrepreneurs in Babasaheb

Ambedkar's home State Maharashtra. Their standard of living is also changing rapidly. They do not only aspire for reservations in workplaces and educational institutions. However, they do aspire to leave their mark in the business world.

Regrettably, leaders like Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav want to keep the youth coming from Dalit and backward castes entangled in questions like a reservation. However, their grip is weakening by the minute. Of course, any society that goes through difficult times and struggles progresses in the future. Take Marwaris for instance. They were born in the dry and barren land and desert of Rajasthan and Gujarat. Currently, many big industrialists of the country come from the Marwari community. Similar is the case of Parsis who fled from Iran and the Sindhis who left Sindh. All of them fought through adversity and emerged prosperously. The partition of the country gave birth to thousands of young entrepreneurs. Many Hindu and Sikh youths who came to India from Pakistan in 1947 made a place for themselves by starting new businesses. They did not give up in the face of adversity. Many of these later became Brijmohan Munjal (Hero Group), Mahasaya Dharampal Gulati (MDH Spices), Raunak Singh (Apollo Tyres), HC Nanda (Escorts). Now is the time for Dalits, who are progressing beyond their capabilities in business and shattering all outdated stigmas and stereotypes.

(The author is a senior editor, columnist and a former MP).

YOUR COLUMN

Dire need to create awareness on plastic pollution

Dear Editor,

Controlling use of polythene is becoming a major challenge, with most people starting their morning with a plastic milk-bag or a polythene envelope full of vegetables. Single-use polythene envelope is one of the most dangerous things, but still majority people are unaware about it. It harms our health and environment in many ways. With use of plastic bags piles of garbage around, forests, rivers, lakes, seas and oceans are getting polluted. The wind carries these envelopes everywhere. It also hinders the growth of polythene plants. By its indiscriminate use we destroy our Mother Earth. The sad fact is that most of the people are not even aware of the side effects of using plastic bags.

Every year millions of mammals, sea creatures and birds die after swallowing plastic bags as jelly-food. Citrine gas leaking when used is more harmful to human health, as the plastic used in general exposure to prolonged exposure to sunlight emits methane and ethylene gases to reduce the amount of oxygen in the air. This is why single-use plastics are called sweet poisons. Eggs take 1,000 years to decompose or disappear, although we never know the exact time of its degradation, as this material has been in use for a long time since the last century.

As such, they are non-biodegradable. There is no benefit in setting fire to these polythene bags, but they do cause air pollution with toxic fumes which can cause colds, coughs, respiratory diseases, skin diseases especially in children and the elderly. Diseases, headaches and many other serious side effects like eye allergies. Polythene bags are also responsible for obstruction of drains, sewerage and drainage systems in cities and towns. In rainy season, these polythene envelopes cause standing water. Then the mosquito breeds in the same water and then dengue-malaria

shows its color and infects many. The best way to minimize the use of plastic bags is to use paper, cloth or Jute bags should be used. Such bags are environmentally friendly. They can be recycled more easily, cloth bags are durable, can be washed and used from time to time. The use of polythene in packaging has increased tremendously in the last few years. However, the toxic chemical emitted from polythene has a devastating effect on humanity, animals and our environment. We have only one planet to live on, so there is more safety and wisdom in caring for it. The government should take effective measures to create awareness on plastic pollution and completely ban the use of polythene, NGOs said. Should support the teams of government departments, following the slogan given by Jalandhar Municipal Corporation to motivate them not to use plastic envelopes 'My bag is my pride' should start from home today. At school level children can be made aware of the dangers of polythene from an early age so that a better future can be expected.

Vijay Garg.

Purification of democracy must to weed out corruption

■ PRABHAT KISHORE

In present hour, corruption has taken spread its roots in the country. Honesty and morality have become like a deceitful deer. As a result, our work culture has contaminated and development projects have come to a standstill. To annihilate this incurable disease, the government should make a separate strict law at the national level. The law for eradicating corruption will be completely effective and corruption will be uprooted, it cannot be guaranteed. It is not that corruption takes place only by escaping the law; corruption also takes place under the guise of law. In this circumstance, if such a law is made, then care has to be taken that no such hole should be left in it so that the corrupt can escape. Although there are already many sections in the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended from time to time) to deal with the corrupt, but they are not proving to be as effective.

It is proved by experience that this infectious disease is not going to be completely destroyed by only making laws or shouting 'corruption-corruption'. It requires determination, fair initiative and strict enforcement of the law. There is no doubt that the disease of corruption runs from top to bottom. So, keeping a close vigil on the bureaucracy alone will not be sufficient. Just as the cleaning of Gangotri is necessary for cleaning the Ganges, in the same way it is not possible to curb corruption without the purification of democracy. In the elections, instead of social service, the emergence of money power and Lathi system has given corruption the form of unbridled horse and loose half. Power and corruption have become two sides of the same coin. Is it hidden from anyone that how the person who used to walk on foot till yesterday, becomes the owner of wealth and immense opulence as he establishes his steps in the corridor of the power politics? For eradication of corruption, numerous commissions headed by Saryu Prasad, S R Das, M C Chagla, T L Venkatram, Justice Dutta and others were formed from time to time in the country. All of them in their reports brought many of the then heavyweight leaders in the dock of horrific allegations of corruption, but political gains and self-interest were given priority and those people were left free. Instead of being punished, such people were made participants of the power and were placed on high rags.

It is not that any particular party has done this work. Whichever party came to power, even if it stemmed from the struggle and mass revolution against corruption, unemployment and dictatorship, it also did the same thing. In such a situation, the morale of the corrupt increased instead of decreasing. As a result the disease, which was limited to certain pockets earlier, has spread from top to bottom like 'Amarbel' today. From the smallest to highest positions of the state, the hands of most are engulfed in corruption. There is an urgent need to create a nationwide environment to eradicate corruption completely. Political leaderships should declare without discrimination that there will be no place in their party for the corrupt or its patrons. What is happening today? The people of the ruling party, whom the opposition did not get tired of calling the 'corrupt' today; the saga of their penance and sacrifice is being sung by inducting the same people in the opposition parties. As long as this obscene policy is in place, neither corruption will be curbed nor anything will happen to the oppressors.

Only government efforts towards eradicating corruption cannot be trusted, because corruption is in every sphere of the society. The responsibility of its abolition cannot be left to the government institutions alone. Unless the common man of the nation will stand against this sin and crime, it is not possible to get rid of it. Just as the oppressor as well as the victim of atrocities is equally guilty, in the same way the person who helps in corruption is no less guilty. Today, along with the law, there is a need not only to awaken the public consciousness at the social level against the corruption prevailing in the society and system, but to create a group of such dedicated people who can do this sacred work like a mission. The Central Government should also constitute such fair and effective agencies which are capable of bringing punishment to the corrupt without any discrimination. It cannot be expected from the agencies of the State Governments alone that they can take from lowest to highest positions within the ambit of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

(The author is an educationist and holds Master in Engineering from MN Regional Engineering College, Allahabad/Prayagraj).