

THREAT LOOMING LARGE

Threat of terrorist strike is looming large in J&K especially after the strong steps taken by the BJP Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Jammu and Kashmir to make the UT part and parcel of the country in real sense. The changes which have been ensured in erstwhile state of J&K including abrogation of Article 370 and giving full powers to armed forces to eliminate terrorism once and for all have disturbed the enemies of the country including its western neighbour Pakistan and also the Dragon country China which are trying to create unrest by different ways and means like exporting terrorism and showing aggression along LAC in eastern Ladakh sector. These two nations have become a headache for the Government of India as both of these neighbouring countries are using all their available resources against India making this most beautiful place on earth as trouble and turmoil ridden. Every next day there is an encounter between the terrorists and the security forces with both ends facing casualties and injuries besides the Chinese PLA has engaged in military standoff with India and 14 rounds of military level talks have failed to resolve the issue despite Chinese claim of amicably resolving the issue. In the whole context, the Indian Army is confronting different levels of challenges in the form of terror plots, locals' resistance and of course Chinese army's aggression to capture Indian Territory. It is good that the Army and other security forces of the country are facing all the challenges head on with enemies facing defeats on different counts. Apart from encounters in Kashmir region the Pakistani stooges are trying to vitiate the atmosphere in Jammu Division also and in this context reportedly an improvised explosive device (IED) was seized in Poonch district today. The seizure was made by security forces from near Sheendara village on Jammu-Poonch highway on specific information, and was later neutralised by experts of the bomb disposal squad. Such challenges are confronted by the security forces on daily basis and it is quite satisfying that army is well prepared to tackle any kind of situation but as the two neighbouring nations are after India to vitiate atmosphere the task is tough and the security forces need support of all countrymen and the government in fight against terrorism.

FOLLOW LOCKDOWN

No segment of the society should think that the government is acting against their interests as far as lockdown restrictions are concerned because the steps taken to curb transmission of COVID are only in the interests of the people. Of course the restrictions which were imposed recently due to the surge in corona cases especially on account of new virus variant Omicron have affected the businesses in the UT of J&K but again people should understand that the government has to make a trade-off between the disease and the comfort level of people. It is prudent of the government that it is trying the best possible methods to stop the virus' spread as many deaths have been reported due to the third wave of the pandemic in J&K. Common man should not think otherwise about the government's action in this context because every single step it is taking is in the interest of society as a whole. As the cases have started tumbling down, the government has heeded to the appeal of business bodies in the UT and now restrained weekend lockdown to Saturday and Sunday only. The Friday curbs on non-essential movement have been lifted after the tally of the virus has seen a dip and if the people will follow the directions of the government religiously soon things will become normal and there will be no restriction either on Saturday or Sunday as well. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Jammu is playing a pivotal role in bridging the gap between government and the business establishments and now after the end of Friday curbs, it has demanded for ending restrictions on Saturday also. Though the situation is precarious because the common man has to suffer especially the traders who had already faced the brunt of months long lockdowns therefore the government should act fast in revisiting the decisions on lockdowns and do some favour for the business fraternity of the UT of J&K. Whatever the government will decide to contain the coronavirus should be followed in letter and spirit because the decisions of the government are scientifically based and need to be respected because business is not above the lives of people. The trader bodies should understand this and need not to mount pressure on government functionaries to alter their plan to stop the virus step as this can have dangerous ramifications.

OFF 'D' CUFF The Eureka Moment

All of us have at some point experienced Eureka moments or insights, where suddenly the solution to a long-vested problem has emerged in a flash. Such sudden insights have been the basis of some of the greatest discoveries. The flash of insight of Archimedes, who ran naked in the streets of Athens shouting 'Eureka!' and hence, the origin of the word 'Eureka'; Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton, Barbara McClintock, and innumerable other discoverers, came mostly at the time when they were not expecting it. For example, Archimedes got his insight of Archimedes principle when he was sitting in his bathtub; Einstein got his idea about the general theory of gravitation when he visited the painter who had fallen from the roof; and Newton got his idea of gravity when an apple fell on his head. Great discoveries and insights have come from people who have thought very deeply about the problem at hand. During this process, it becomes a junoon, passion, for them and the whole brain is simply seized with one idea or thought which occupies it for a very long time. This requires a tremendous will power that leads to powerful concentration and helps in preparing the mind for the insight. This deep thinking or internal churning of the brain is called Sanyam by Patanjali. Sanyam is defined as a combination of dharana, focus; dhyana, contemplation; and samadhi, immersion, done on any subject or the object. Patanjali says when sanyam is done on anything, it's complete knowledge results. However, most discoverers have also stated that though they thought deeply about the problem, the solution sometimes came unexpectedly and in a flash. So, what exactly is the mechanism by which such insights suddenly appear? The thought production in the brain takes place when a large number of neurons fire in a particular manner. This firing activates the neural pathways. And it is a generally accepted fact that energising and triggering of neural pathways produces thought that is a three-dimensional hologram. We still do not know how many neurons are involved in producing a single thought, yet these numbers are large. Anil Rajvanshi

Shrinking wetlands, environmental imbalances & natural disasters

■ MIR MUKHTAR AHMAD

There is long story of the evolution of living beings and the essence of this story is that not only do we have the right of living on the earth, but millions of species existing in its different parts also have the same right over it as do. We get fascinated by the variety of plants and animals found in rivers, lakes, seas, forests and mountains. When rich biodiversity is seen on both water and land, then the thing to think about is that the place where aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity meets, how rich will it be in terms of biodiversity? There are more than 1758 wetlands sites of international importance in the world. Wetlands are one of the most important biodiversity ecosystems on the planet. In addition to providing shelter for a wide range of animals and plants, they provide the food needed by almost half of the world's population and as a balancing act in different parts of the world. Over the past century, about half of the world's wetlands have been destroyed due to drainage and land supply for construction and agriculture. Illegal fishing, hunting and pollution caused by population growth are also serious threats to life on this planet. The definition of wetlands under the Ramsar Convention includes marshlands, floodplains, rivers and lakes, mangroves, coral reefs, and other marine areas not deeper than 6 m at low tide, as well as man-made wetlands such as waste-water. Treatment ponds and reservoirs are also included in this.

Since 1960, the world communities had realized the importance of wetlands and various measures and meetings were taken to protect this ecosystem. Finally, in February 1970, a meeting was held in Ramsar (Iran). The meeting was organized by the efforts of the father of Iran's environment and the then head of the Environment Organization, Eskandar Firooz. As a result of this meeting, the world's oldest environmental protection treaty was ratified and the Ramsar Convention was named in honor of this meeting. Ramsar Convention is in fact an international treaty that provides a framework and structures for national action and international cooperation to protect and properly use wetlands and their resources.

Currently, 171 countries have acceded to Ramsar Convention to protect wetlands. Today, 2375 wetlands are known worldwide as Ramsar Wetlands and many efforts are being made to protect them. Iran, as the founder of this international convention, is a member of Ramsar Convention, and currently 25 of Iran's wetlands have been registered worldwide. If we compare the biosphere with the human body, then the 'swamp' can be called its kidneys, which perform a storage, biological, geochemical, hydrological, climate and gas control function. Wetland systems are of great importance for maintaining the stability of ecosystems and preserving the biological diversity of the plant species that grow in them. Due to the meeting place of aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity, there is a rich ecosystem of wetland due to the abundance of wildlife species and flora. In today's modern life, the biggest threat to human life is from climate change and in such a situation it becomes necessary that we conserve our biodiversity. More than 40 percent of species live in wetlands and get nutrition through them.

Wetlands are a good source of water supply and also contribute to the problems of human dehydration by feeding groundwater resources. They also help prevent water pollution by preventing the ingress of saline water as well as removing sediments and toxins. Coastal wetlands that form along the coast are a great help in preventing coastal erosion. In addition, wetlands are home to a variety of migratory and native birds and have a positive impact on the environment. In addition, wetlands can be used as a water transport platform or a natural tourist destination for domestic tours or incoming tourists.

According to UNESCO, it affects 40 per cent of the world's flora and wildlife that inhabit or breed in wetlands. In today's world, the rapid development is happening, at the same time, the environment is also being harmed. We are running like this in the blind race of development that we can't even understand our own interests and disadvantages. Development has given us the facilities but is also finding their disadvantages to see in society and in nature. Modern development has caused most damage to our environment and wetlands. Sewage

from factories, mining and over-exploitation of groundwater are some of the human causes that have caused extensive damage to wetlands or wetlands. Along with this, due to natural reasons like rise in sea level, climate change, storm etc., wetlands are also losing their original form. Construction work has been done by filling some small wetlands in Kashmir province. An international study of aquatic bird sanctuaries found that Lake Wullar had dropped by 45 per cent. Hokarsar has been reduced. Jhelum River, water quality has also declined and the water in aquifers and lakes and waterfalls is becoming polluted day by day. Research has shown that water quality has also declined due to agriculture, tourism and increasing construction. The sources of fresh drinking water are fast depleting all over the world, due to which there may be a crisis for human life on earth in the near future. Due to urbanization, industrialization, increasing demand for land like roads, railroads, etc., due to the rapid expansion of agriculture, 35 per cent of water sources like lakes, rivers, swamps and creeks have been lost between 1970 and 2015. The water bodies, which are considered very important for the world's ecosystem, are spread over 12 million square kilometers around the world. However, after 2000, the rate of decrease in their numbers has increased rapidly. One billion people depend on wetlands for their livelihood; Wetlands contribute \$47 trillion annually to essential services.

Present Scenario in Jammu & Kashmir: Valley has been bestowed the abundance of freshwater sources from north to south Kashmir & east to west along with its beautiful surroundings of green mountains. There are thousands of unidentified wetlands located in dimensions of the valley. They give shelter to the thousands of bird species, fish species and other beneficial organisms. In draught prone areas they act as source of irrigation to the fields, drinking water to the domestic and wild animal and at times extinguishing the fires. These water bodies need to be identified as people are illegally converting these pure water bodies in to other uses, which amounts great loss of these assets. The natural wetlands and lakes that add to the beauty of Jammu and Kashmir have declined by 50 per

cent. Natural lakes and wetlands in Jammu and Kashmir have been damaged to an alarming extent due to illegal occupation, pollution and turmoil, according to a recent study. According to the report, there are a total of 3651 small and large wetlands in erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir, of which five wetlands are of international repute. In Jammu province Surinsar & Mansar are internationally recognised Water bodies. People's interference has eroded the Beauty of these precious water bodies including their area. If not watched properly, these may get shrunked. Other Water bodies in the region need to be brought in Ramsar sites, so that important source of livelihood can be protected.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has prepared a four-pronged strategy for the restoration of wetlands, which includes: basic data preparation, Wetland health card making, listing of wet wetlands and preparation of targeted integrated management plans. In the year 2011, the Government of India has issued the notification of the Wetlands Protection and Management Act 2010. 90 per cent of the world's disasters are water-related and it affects 60 per cent of people living in coastal areas due to floods or tsunamis. The wetland acts as a natural and efficient carbon sink. For example, swamp moss covers only 3 per cent of the land, but it has the capacity to absorb twice as much carbon as all the forests in the world. Wetlands act as a buffer against climate-related disasters, thereby avoiding the sudden effects of climate change.

The lotus, which is one of the most beautiful flowers in the world as well as the national flower of India, grows in wetlands. Wetlands provide shelter to many such flora and fauna around them which are helpful in economic development. Wetlands represent a diverse ecosystem. All the major civilizations of the world have settled near water sources. The livelihood of the people living near the wetlands is largely dependent on them directly or indirectly. Wetlands are the source of firewood, fruits, vegetation, nutritious fodder and herbs for the human settlements around them. Wetlands provide an important range of environmental, social and economic services.

Modi-Master strategist of BJP

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

Modi is the master strategist of the BJP and he plans and executes everything most meticulously. His planning and executing qualities are par excellence both during normal governance and also during electioneering. Since the elections to five state assemblies have been announced by the election commission and the different political parties have jumped into the election fray, the importance of Narendra Modi as a strategist becomes all the more significant. Modi has a magnetic personality and the voters are attracted towards the BJP because of his electioneering tactics. The people who are the sovereigns in our democracy are mesmerized by the articulation of Modi and his style of addressing the common people in elections through physical address and through virtual mode also and otherwise as well in normal course. It is because of these qualities of Modi that he has become the master strategist of BJP and thus he undertakes the election tours in order to impress the voters. Because of his magnetic presence the people are attracted towards the BJP and ultimately vote in favour of the BJP. His electioneering tactics makes miracles possible and even his staunch adversaries are forced to change their loyalty and switch towards the BJP and such is the attraction of his multifaceted personality that even his political rivals are forced to tow his line and they start showering and heaping praises on him and his BJP. As a master strategist, Modi believes in marketing the achievements and performances of the BJP to the people in order to attract the voters. Thus is he directing his BJP and the chief ministers of the BJP ruled states and other leaders of his party to market the performances of the BJP in the elections so that people are attracted towards the BJP and its policies and

programs and in the ultimate analysis vote in its favour. It is because of his style of planning, controlling and executing that the leaders of the BJP and the chief ministers of the BJP ruled states are busy in marketing the performances and achievements of the party to attract the voters in the elections in the five state assemblies. Modi is such a planner and strategist who makes it possible to turn the election wave in favor of the BJP so that the BJP is in a position to gain political dividends in the form of gaining votes even from his detractors. It is because of this fact that he undertakes election tours in the poll bound states so that the policies and programs of the BJP are marketed to the people so that the voters are attracted towards it and ultimately vote in favor of the BJP. The people as the prospective voters are attracted towards the BJP's policies and programs because of the style of the functioning of his government and its pro poor and pro people policies and schemes. Thus is he and the leaders of the BJP and its chief ministers are busy in marketing the achievements and performances of the centre government and the BJP ruled state governments during the current elections to five state assemblies. In fact it is Modi who is going to spear head the electioneering in the five states including UP whose election is considered as the semifinal for the general elections of 2024 and therefore much significance and interest is attached to the UP elections. Modi is attaching much needed importance to the elections to five state assemblies including UP. He is directing his party leaders to give proper information and knowledge to the electorate about the policies, programs and schemes of the BJP government so that they will come to know about the functioning of the double engine governments and the benefits of such govern-

ments so that they will go to vote in favor of the BJP in elections. Again it is Modi the master strategist of the BJP who leaves no stone unturned to woo voters on the basis of the five year performance and good governance of the centre and state governments so that people in general will vote in favor of the BJP. Thus is Modi directing the leaders of the BJP and its chief ministers to go to the people with the agendas of the party and also to market the achievements and performance of the last five years so that people will come to know about the works done for the people by the BJP governments so that people will again trust them and once again vote them to power. Modi is going to ask for votes on the plank of development, good governance, and minimum of government and maximum of governance and theme of cultural nationalism and with these themes the top strategist of the BJP will again succeed in wooing the voters. Thus the success stories of the 2014, 2017 and 2019 of the BJP will be repeated in the assembly elections to five states in the year 2022 and BJP will be successful in these elections on the basis of the performance and achievements of the state governments. It is a stark reality that more than the achievements and the performances, it is the Philosophy of the marketing strategy of the Modi which is going to impress the general public and influence them to vote in favor of the BJP and in this the tall leader of the country will be successful and therefore all eyes are set on him. Modis art of speaking and articulation is going to impress the prospective voters and mesmerize them to vote in favor of the BJP which is a party with a difference. It is not hidden from the public gaze that the audience remains spell bound to the election addresses of the Modi in poll bound states and otherwise also and people are influenced to vote in favor of the BJP. So

more than anything else it is the Modi-Yogi wave which is going to turn the election tide in favor of BJP and this is possible because of the election strategy and tactics of the Modi which will do wonders and turn the election wave in favor of BJP. Thus Modi has an extra ordinary role in the elections to the five states as he is banking on the marketing strategy to impress and influence the voters so that they will vote BJP to power in these states. Therefore it is the time tested marketing strategy enunciated by Modi which is going to work wonders and is certainly impressing and influencing the voters so that they cast their precious votes in favor of the BJP in spite of the stiff competition and political rivalry. Modi is the tallest leaders and the statesman not only of the BJP but of the country and people trust him and his policies and schemes and thus at the end will vote in favor of the BJP. Modi the strategist has infused the life, blood activeness and energy in the organizational structure of the BJP though it is the direct domain of the BJP president J P Nadda but still the influence of Modi is dominant being the master strategist and the rank and file of the BJP is working on the path shown by this tall leader of the BJP. Modi believes in advertising and propaganda and banks on it and likes and directs the BJP leaders and its chief ministers to use the tool of propaganda and advertisement to woo voters as after all democracy is the game of numbers. To conclude one can say that Modi is the master strategist of the BJP who is going to work wonders in the elections to the five states. BJP wave is again going to turn the election tide in its favor in five states and therefore the strategist in Modi will be successful in the end at the election battle ground due to his style of functioning and articulating.

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YOUR COLUMN Embracing idea of e-Learning

Dear Editor, Based on the experience and observational studies, it is concluded by the leading educationalist that the learning institutes in response of the COVID-19 closure of schools and universities were practicing Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) and not E-learning. It is because ERT is a practical, temporary and a short-term transition of delivering education to deal with the crisis situation without much change in pedagogy. On the other hand, E-learning requires careful deliberation and the formulation of institutional policies and frameworks for course design and specialized training of teachers to become familiar with state-of-the-art online teaching tools and sites so that they can execute a good

quality and engaging outline for the students in the academic year and semesters. More than that, it requires an effective and streamlined collaboration with the IT department and the pedagogues so that the education delivery and term assessments are not compromised at all. Many educational institutes in Pakistan are already familiarizing and assisting their teachers with interactive teaching tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Jamboards and Google Classrooms ensuring that education and learning is not disrupted at any cost. More than that, they are also conducting digital assessments on forums such as exam.net through comprehensive training and assistance to the teachers and the students thus bringing into limelight that in the midst of challenging times, teachers can become facilitators and responsible educationalist who strive to preserve the future of their students by ensuring that they do not slack at any point.

Even though it is undeniable that the rapid shift to the use of technology in classrooms is without difficulties and obstacles for instructors, embracing e-learning and not ERT is the code of future education and learning. Even if the schools have physically opened, the possibility of future lockdowns still looms over us. As the future of education stands blurred before us, it is imperative that the government and the private sector collaborate over the implementation of e-learning that requires careful design, planning, research, prioritizing investments and resource allocation, training and assistance to faculty members, hiring learning designers who are responsible for integrating pedagogy with technology and relearning the modes of teaching and instruction. But what is more important is that students should be engaged in the process as student learning experience must be at the core of all pedagogies. Mool Raj, Doda.