

BE CAREFUL

Unlike earlier days when people used to have blind faith on the western world, the scenario today is changed and there is dire need that people should enquire, verify and countercheck before dealing with entities based in western world. As it is said that world has become a global village and lately thousands of students from India are visiting foreign nations for study purposes by paying hefty amount as fees and other expenses including insurance etc. The same is true for the people of the J&K UT as there is a trend now to send children overseas for study purposes but the time has changed with people being deceived by the colleges as the recent case of four such colleges came to fore in Canada. Reportedly, over 2,000 Indian students faced an uncertain future after three Montreal colleges closed last month by declaring bankruptcy. The affected lot is struggling in foreign land and is seeking intervention by the Canadian government to give them justice but the situation is an eye opener for many in India to think hundred times before taking a step akin to the aforesaid students who are hanging in hull due to deceptive colleges in Canada. The CCSQ College, M College and CDE College had collected millions of dollars in tuition fees from the aforesaid students before closing. The modus operandi of these colleges is the same and therefore affected students are protesting in Canada alleging that they have been scammed and their careers are in doldrums. These students are currently in a fix but this should be taken as a lesson and those who intend to go for the studies in foreign lands should first become doubly sure that they are not been scammed in the manner the aforesaid colleges in Canada have duped thousands of students. At present these students are seeking intervention by the Canadian Government to help them complete their courses from other colleges but it is important for the people who wanted to send their children to foreign lands not to believe on colleges and their agents blindly as there are ways and means to check and counter check the authenticity of the educational institutions.

CONSTITUTING
SHRINE BOARDS

As before bifurcation of erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories, people of Jammu and Kashmir, especially that of Jammu region used to complain regarding discrimination at the hands of valley-centric leadership in almost every sector. Among number of out of the box initiatives taken by the Government in every sphere of life to ensure equitable development in J&K, focused attention was paid to develop tourism back in J&K, which suffered greatly due to terrorism and other challenges. As religious tourism forms a major part of the sector in J&K, due to presence of a number of shrines and religious places in both the regions, the administration initiated every possible measure to develop all such religious places having a vast potential to attract tourists from across the country, which were earlier ignored by the successive dispensations. As everyone is aware that a sea-change was observed in the famous shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, after constitution of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, requests were continuously pouring in for making functional the Shri Shiv Khor, Shri Mata Sukrala Devi and Shri Mata Bala Sundari Shrine Boards, which are presently lying defunct due to lapse of the tenure of non-official members long time back, thereby hampering the smooth functioning of these religious places, which are thronged by a number of pilgrims from various parts of the country. There are several instances, when a number of complaints were registered by pilgrims regarding lack of proper infrastructure and other necessary facilities at these shrines. Further, after the formation of the Union Territory, necessary amendments were made in the Shrine Board Act for including non-J&K residents as non-official members of the Boards. But, despite a long passage of time, nothing was witnessed on part of the administration in the regard. Now, in a significant development, the administration has decided to make these boards functional to ensure provision of all basic necessities for visiting pilgrims besides looking after the affairs of the shrines in a proper way. As per sources, a list of some persons have been recommended to the LG for nomination as non-official members of these shrines and very soon a formal announcement will be made in this regard. It is expected that with these boards back in place, these pious shrines will be developed at most modern lines for the convenience of visiting pilgrims.

A Living
Democracy

Sometimes it feels like we inhabit a land that is in a perennial state of election. With the assembly elections around the corner, our print, digital and social media are ablaze with election fever.

Elections in the world's largest democracy are invariably an emotional issue: passions fly; voters turn volatile; arguments turn heated; leaders make wildly inflammatory statements; and desperation rules.

In such a climate, consciousness — a prerequisite for both spirituality and politics — is compromised. Also, unsurprisingly, political leaders are unable to perform with any degree of efficiency.

It would be ideal to have assembly and parliamentary elections just twice in five years. The alternative is the gladiator sport of today, where rule books are habitually thrown to the wind and everyone is in survival mode, trying to out-shout and obliterate the other. When every state election is fought under the glare and hysteria of media attention, the ensuing drama is not democracy, it is populism.

I actually empathise with politicians of all stripes, because to be in perennial

election mode is to be in a state of constant existential siege. Scarcely is one election over when another has begun. Even if you win, there is no time to deliver on your promises towards the larger well-being of the state, the nation and the world. Unless this country's voters collectively show their refusal to be seduced by short-term benefits, nothing will change. We will simply be given sops, cash and trinkets at election time, and little else afterwards. It is time to insist on long-term priorities, rather than populist dividends. For instance, it is time for us to insist that education, ecology and health be viewed as key election issues. If population is our demographic dividend, a significant percentage of the GDP must be invested in education. This is the only way to leverage our core strength and create a skilled and accomplished young workforce.

Similarly, ecology is no longer an elite preoccupation. The desertification of Indian soil is happening at an alarming pace. This means an impending food crisis, plummeting levels of nourishment, as well as sociological and economic disruptions produced by mass urban migration. Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev

YOUR COLUMN

Curbing increasing crime

Dear Editor,

Street crime is a broad category that refers to multiple crimes, such as house robberies, pick pocketing, drug trade etc. It can extend both to public and private spaces. Some of these crimes are born out of opportunity, others out of necessity. Each crime type requires context-specific responses, though they may be analysed collectively. Citizens wonder why 2013 Indian operation failed to curb this form of criminality. This is because dismantling terrorist groups, terrorist wings or armed gangs can temporarily reduce specific types of violent crimes (although recent attacks may call these successes into question). However, street crime is a different challenge linked to broader socioeconomic issues. Indeed, some street criminals have previously been connected to groups engaging in religious or political terrorism, but the latter's decline is unlikely to disrupt the former. Policing, performed through public or private forces, is a limited response to street crime. At most, we can deploy more resources to certain areas, for hotspot policing, deterrence, or intelligence-collection. Such securitized responses may reduce crime in selected areas, but they cannot stop people from offending. Security deployment is a form of target hardening which is reactive, not preventive. It can also lead to punitive and populist penal policies. Prevention requires targeting structural problems in a society,

such as income inequality, unemployment, class-based discrimination, and a lack of political representation and empowerment of the working class. This is only possible when all stakeholders come together and have their needs heard and addressed, especially grass root organizations fighting for the basic rights of the most marginalized - their right to housing, water, work, protest.

Our sociopolitical structures and ruling elite do not have the appetite for this; they offer short-sighted, reductive and elastic crime-control solutions, such as criminalising beggars and shunting them from affluent residential areas. This risks further marginalising entire communities most vulnerable to violent crime. They also romanticise zero-tolerance policing styles of the 1990s, as seen in New York City when crime rates were brought down. They forget to mention that this could not have been possible without other significant changes taking place in political, judicial and infrastructural spheres, and in healthcare, to improve urban life. We must also consider that where there are structural problems in a society (such as economic disparity), and there are institutional problems within the police (such as underpaid officers), you will have a natural collusion between police officers and criminals. Karachi is no exception. Street cops rely on maintaining relations with local criminals (which is not always prohibited by the higher ups), because they cannot get their needs met by their menial salaries alone. If most officers are underpaid, they will strategically consider means of supplementing their income. Such collusion may also help recruit potential informants. In other words, where there are criminals, there will also be the police;

expecting a neat divide in this relationship ignores the messiness of policing India's streets.

While I hesitate to compare policing in developed and developing contexts, a relevant observation can be made from recent events surrounding the unceremonious ouster of London's police commissioner. Touted for following a 'policing by consent' model, the Met Police has suffered repeated allegations of institutional racism, sexism, corruption and a misogynistic police culture. While the commissioner's departure is celebrated, analysts caution that the chief's removal is unlikely to address deep-rooted structural problems in the police. Similarly, leadership changes within Indian police forces are often cosmetic and superficial responses. These manoeuvres enable police administration to show that something is being done, while still leaving the force open to criticism and blame when crime escalates, and insecurity intensifies. The brunt of this blame is directed at lower-ranked officers whose complex existence is uncritically problematised as 'Thana culture'. In short, street crimes and similar offences cannot be addressed by security administrators alone. These are not 'crises' to be 'policed', but symptoms of deep-rooted grievances, both within and outside the institution of the police. To therefore frame this as a 'policing' problem or a security challenge, necessitating a so-called 'war on street crime', diverts attention from faulty governance and unfulfilled political promises.

Mool Raj,
Doda.

Strengthening agriculture through CSR

■ DR PARVEEN KUMAR

The country's transition from a food deficient to a food surplus country has been achieved through a mix of technological interventions, appropriate planning and a policy back up that the farmers of the country took just like the fish takes it to water. Now country is the largest producer and exporter of many commodities. But, unfortunately despite all this, the sector still is confronted with some serious challenges. These include non-remunerativeness, degradation of natural resources, climate change, low adoption rates and technology diffusion, very less percentage of processing and value addition, lack of adequate infrastructure and many other associated problems. All these challenges can be attributed to lack of adequate investments in agriculture sector. The public extension system in the country which has been entrusted with the technology dissemination and adoption among the end users faces some inherent defects. These services are criticized for poor show in terms of making available the technology to the farming community both in terms of time as well as relevance. The public extension system in the country has already been crippled in the country due to lack of financial resources, adequate man power, lack of necessary skills, inadequate farmer research extension and market linkages, lack of convergence among the parallel stakeholders, top down approach without the participation of farming community in planning and implementation of its various programmes. Agriculture sector in the country also needs huge investment. Consequent to some inherent defects in the public extension system, last few decades have witnessed the emergence of pluralistic extension system in the country with the involvement of some private players, NGOs, business houses, agribusiness companies, producer organizations and corporates. All these are strengthening agriculture extension system in the country with their additional human and financial resources, expertise and infrastructure.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): CSR is a concept where businesses take

responsibility for their impacts on the environment and the society, in which they are embedded, beyond their economic impacts. CSR may be looked in terms of 'Creating Shared Value' wherein, business can help progress of agriculture and agriculture sector can help business to improve and flourish. According to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Corporate Social Responsibility is defined as a business management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. CSR is generally understood as being the way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives, while at the same time addressing the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders. On April 1, 2014, India became the first country to legally mandate corporate social responsibility. The new rules in Section 135 of India's Companies Act make it mandatory for companies of a certain turnover and profitability to spend two percent of their average net profit for the past three years on CSR. The law, which stipulates that CSR activities should be undertaken only in 'project/program' mode, provides detailed guidelines regarding what kinds of activities are eligible across several categories. This includes hunger and poverty, education, health, gender equality and women empowerment, skills training, environment, social enterprise projects and promotion of rural and national sports. The CSR law or more popularly known as the CSR mandate applies to every company registered under the Companies Act, 2013, and any other previous companies law qualifying having a net worth of rupees five hundred crores or more or having a turnover of rupees one thousand crores or more or having a net profit of rupees five crores or more during a financial year.

Prior to Companies Act 2013, CSR in India has traditionally been seen as a philanthropic activity where in keeping with the Indian tradition, it was believed that every company has a moral responsibility to play an active role in discharging the social obligations, subject to

the financial health of the company. The Board of every company shall approve the Corporate Social Responsibility Policy for the company and disclose contents of such Policy in its report and also place it on the company's website, ensure that the activities as are included in Corporate Social Responsibility Policy of the company are undertaken by the company. Ensure that the company spends, in every financial year, at least 2 per cent of the average net profits of the company made during the three immediately preceding financial years, where the company has not completed the period of three financial years since its incorporation, during such immediately preceding financial years and also provided that the company shall give preference to the local area and areas around it where it operates, for spending the amount kept for Corporate Social Responsibility activities. If a company contravenes the provisions shall be punishable with fine which shall not be less than fifty thousand rupees but which may extend to Rs 25 lakh and every officer of such company who is in default shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with fine which shall not be less than Rs 50,000 but which may extend to Rs 5,00,000, or with both.

CSR initiatives in agriculture: Various industrialists and corporates in the country have also come forward for the socio-economic upliftment of the resource poor farmers in the country by way of initiating various projects for their benefit under the broad ambit of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In this regard private giant Mahindra & Mahindra, with the help of Swades Foundation, BAIF Development Research Foundation and Dr Punjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth has launched the Krishi Mitra project where it is helping small and marginal farmers by educating them in updated techniques in farming like soil health, crop planning, creating model farms with bio-dynamic farming practices, infrastructure development and capacity building resulting in improvement in agricultural productivity, for the benefit of the farmers. Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) in partnership with UDAY a skill development

(The author is a Scientist at SKUAST-K).

Is this the normalcy?

■ OKMAR DATTATRAY

Both the common man and the government want peace, tranquility and end of the uncertainty. The government of NDA headed by BJP claim that peace and normalcy is returning to Jammu and Kashmir but ground reality says a different story and does not substantiate with the government's claim. One fails to understand as to what the normalcy means in the terrorist infested union territory. The government spokesmen wear biased spectacles and their definition of normalcy is altogether different from meaning of normalcy of the common Kashmiri and people do not accept the biased claim of normalcy of the government. The killings of the innocent people and martyrdom of the security forces Jawans continue to soak land of Kashmir with innocent human blood and normalcy seen nowhere, except in press briefings of the government. There is hardly any normalcy and atmosphere of peace and tranquility in Kashmir as innocent human blood continue to be spilled by the sadistic marauders at the behest of Pakistan but the government is parroting the false theory of normalcy to distract the attention of the people from the real issues and problems confronting them. The rulers also project the theory of normalcy to leech to the power as the cosy-chair is so dear to the political apparatus and they do not like to part the power under any circumstance and thus give false statistics to substantiate their normalcy theory. But the ground situation does not corroborate the government version about the normalcy. The innocent people and the security forces continue to lose their precious lives in Kashmir which is very unfortunate. Day in and day out, the plebeians are killed and security forces continue to get martyrdom at altar of the country's integrity and sovereignty and the normalcy and peace is not found in Kashmir as the land of Sufi saints is soaked with the innocent human blood. The killings of the innocents and martyrdom of the security forces Jawans should stop for the return of normalcy and peace. However, this is not happening in Jammu and Kashmir where people, army and paramilitary forces continue to attain martyrdom at hands of the barbaric terrorists and it is a matter of serious concern to all right thinking people. The terrorists are taking sadistic pleasure in killing and spilling of the human blood but our governments are advocating the normalcy theory to mislead public opinion while the fact is that there is no normalcy in Kashmir. The people of Kashmir have become habitual of working in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion and amid the fear psychosis. The fear of gun wield-

ing marauders continues in Kashmir and the people live in perpetual fear and uncertainty thanks to the terrorism which continues at the behest of the enemy country. There is no safety to the person and property of the people in Kashmir and the noise of the guns and bombs are a daily occurrence and normalcy is not existent and normalcy is only in the television screens and the press briefings but in actual life situations there is no normalcy and tranquility. The rulers were biased spectacles and thus give biased versions about so called normalcy while the fact is that there is hardly any normalcy while fear and suspicion rule supreme in Kashmir. Therefore Kashmir situation is far from normal because the parameter of normalcy is not found in terrorist infested Kashmir where people continue to be made the targets for killings and the security forces both of the centre and the policemen are martyred by the gun wielding terrorists. Whether the terrorist or the innocent man or the security forces Jawan loses life, it is the precious human blood which is lost and therefore this bloodbath should stop for the return of the complete normalcy, otherwise we can say that there is no sign of normalcy in Kashmir. Since the people and soft targets are killed by the terrorists to show their dirty presence and the security forces are get martyred in Kashmir at the hands of the terrorists and so the government claims of normalcy are not a bundle of lies and there are no takers of the government version about the normalcy. But what is seen in practical field in Kashmir is continuation of the atmosphere of fear, suspicion and uncertainty and this cannot be called as normalcy by any standard as the basic parameter and criteria of normalcy is missing and so normalcy is far from truth. The rulers only parrot normalcy to hide their failures on the front of fighting the scourge of terrorism and terrorism and hence they only claim false normalcy which not found in the troubled valley of Kashmir. The necessary steps in the direction of normalcy should be sincerely taken by the powers so that real normalcy is made possible. But to create the conditions of normalcy is not that easy but it is a challenging job and needs determination and strong will on the part of the rulers. It also needs that the army and other security agencies which are fighting terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir should be given free hand to fight terrorism to finish. It is a matter of satisfaction that the BJP government has given a free hand to the security forces to fight terrorism. Thus the disciplined security forces are neutralizing the hardcore terrorists and the operation all out is in progress and a great number of terrorists were killed by our security

forces. While the security forces are killing the terrorists involved in the heinous crimes against the man and god but it is also a fact that the terrorists continue to martyr the security forces and it is a matter of serious concern. Though the security forces have an upper hand in fighting terrorism but the terrorists continue the killings of the innocent people. Not only the innocent people get killed by the terrorists but the security forces also lose their precious lives while defending the integrity and sovereignty of the country. Much human blood has been lost in over three decades of terrorism due to the barbaric incidents and acts of terrorists and there is no stop to the mayhem and dance of death and it is going unabated and is consuming precious lives of the innocent people and the security forces which is very disturbing and should not take place. The naked dance of death is continuing in Kashmir and there seems no possibility of its end in near future as the mastermind of terrorism -Pakistan is fomenting trouble in Jammu and Kashmir. Thus unless and until the base of terrorism is not attacked and dismantled the talk of normalcy is humbug and therefore for normalcy in Kashmir the terrorist sites and camps in POK and Pakistan should be attacked to dismember terrorism and terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. This if we want an end to the gun culture and terrorism in Kashmir the urgent need is to destroy the terrorist training camps in Pakistan occupied Kashmir so that Pakistan is not in a position to train, support and export terrorists to Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore India should attack the terrorist training camps in POK and other parts of Pakistan to give a death knell to terrorism and terrorism. Since there is an upper hand to security forces in the fight against the terrorism in Kashmir and this should be maintained to defeat the scourge of terrorism. Not that the terrorists are not killed by the security forces but it is very unfortunate that the security forces also get martyred and this is a great loss to the country. Roughly speaking everyday army Jawans, CRPF men and the Jammu and Kashmir police men give the supreme sacrifice of their lives to uphold the integrity and sovereignty of the country. So where the normalcy is in Kashmir, as innocent human blood continues to be spilled by enemies of humanity which includes the precious blood of our security forces. Thus for the normalcy, peace and development the killings of all sorts should stop so that normalcy in true sense of the term will return to Kashmir so that the people will recognize and appreciate it.

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