

PROMOTE TOURISM RATIONALLY

There is no doubt that the mainstay of J&K socio-economic stability is tourism and economy of both Kashmir and Jammu provinces depend on the tourist footfall whether it is because of religious tourism especially Cave Shrines of Mata Vaishno Devi in Reasi District's holy town Katra and Baba Barfani Shri Amarnathji in Kashmir or regular visitors who come with the itinerary to have a glance of beauty of paradise on earth and the unmatched hospitality of the people of this region. There is no doubt that the beauty of Kashmir is splendid and the successive governments in the region have laid much focus on developing the facilities out there but as far as Jammu region is concerned the natural beauty here is bountiful but the phlegmatic attitude of the past regimes has offered step motherly treatment to the region with only single Dak Bunglows in each tourist destination with handful of facilities with no provision for a tourist to book the same for stay or other conveniences. Such was the attitude of the stakeholders in the tourist destinations that people avoided to revisit these spots. Despite locals' projection about the beauty and culture of the places situated in Jammu region things remained pathetic. Though, LG Manoj Sinha's administration has taken some initiatives but one can say that 'Dilli Abhi Door Hai'. Till the time the incumbent dispensation comes up with a revolutionary plan to promote tourism in big scale, the Tourism Department should do something to attract people to at least Jammu City. In this regard, the stakeholders should take a cue from their counterparts from other states of the country as all states do not have Kashmir to showcase therefore it is imperative for Jammu Tourism Department to shun the lethargy and come out with some rational initiatives to kick-start tourism in a big way without much effort. There are many ways to do the same as a simple daylong Tonga ride starting from within the walled city upto Suchetgarh border and back with small breaks in between offering snacks, etc and off course Dogri Music and cuisine is not at all a bad idea to start with. There are hundreds of similar things which can be done but for all this will to do something is a must. A musical ferry ride or steamer ride in River Chenab in Reasi or in Mansar Lake can also click like the case of Hussain Sagar Lake in Hyderabad in Telangana State where people have to wait for hours to get tickets for the same. Options are many but what is missing is will to change as for how long tourists visiting Maa Vaishno Devi's shrine will go to Patnitop and other conventional places. Do something and do something real fast to woo tourists and uplift the socio-economic condition of Jammu region.

PROBLEM STILL PERSISTS

Without going into exact figures one can say that the peak of Omicron has simply passed away and the fresh tally of cases has seen a dip in the last couple of days. The sign is good but what is still worrisome is the fact that this new variant is after the co-morbid patients because the number of deaths of this category of people due to Omicron wave is quite high, and even the vaccinated population of people having co-morbidities is falling prey to this new mutant of COVID-19 thus making it necessary to remain careful and follow COVID appropriate behaviour at all times. Just take the case of Thursday only, five persons died of COVID-19 in Jammu region and all the dead were co-morbid. This is not enough because four of them were fully vaccinated making it amply clear that co-morbid patients have to remain on toes to be safe from the merciless virus which is changing its contour and cruelty level after every mutation it experiences with the passage of time. The rapid spread of Corona variants especially Omicron and the dipping mercury levels are causing respiratory infections more often and therefore people suffering from asthma and other co-morbidities like lung infections, diabetes and hypertension should remain extra cautious as contracting corona could prove detrimental to their health. Reportedly, the lining of airways swells among people suffering from asthma and this makes airways narrow making it difficult to breathe. The situation becomes worse in winters as the cold air also causes airways to tighten further. Under such condition, if a patient gets infected with Omicron or Delta, then he or she is likely to face more difficulties in breathing and it could lead to hospitalization and other complications therefore proper treatment coupled with COVID-appropriate behavior is very important to ensure that coronavirus disease could not have an adverse effect as seen in the last few days when people with co-morbidities fall prey to the disease. The need of the time is that until the disease is eliminated fully people should not take things lightly and do the misadventure of going off guard.



Healing the World

The world is in need of healing. We need to heal the ecology of the planet so that we have clean air, clean water, and protection for all forms of life. We need to make wise use of our resources so there is enough for everyone.

We need to heal people who are starving, or are without shelter, medicine, education, and basic human rights. There are many groups actively working in different parts of the world to help heal the planet. It is a mammoth task to change the hearts and minds of people.

I place before you a solution that will bring definite results: let us each heal ourselves. If we can heal our body, mind, and soul through meditation we have added one more whole human being to the world population.

If each one of us does it, we will find faster results. We cannot control what others do; we can only control what we do. If we become a person who is healthy in body, mind, and soul, others will notice us. The people we meet at

Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj

Remain calm, serene, always in command of yourself. You

will then find out how easy it is to get along.

-Paramahansa Yogananda

EDITORIAL

A 'Balanced Budget' for the times

■ T.V. SOMANATHAN

Budgets in a parliamentary democracy serve several purposes. Partly, they are an annual financial statement, a function which is routine but crucial; but they are also statements of policy intent. Unlike the private sector, governments cannot choose their customers—they must serve all. They have not the luxury of concentrating on 'core competencies'—they have to do everything Parliament expects. They provide many things free—so demand is much higher than any feasible supply or affordability. They extract taxes—which are unpopular as they are inevitable. For all these reasons, Budget-making is a hugely complex balancing act.

The Budget 2022-23 is a budget for these peculiar times. Its biggest theme is boosting growth and employment through a large increase in public investment for the second year running, while continuing support for agriculture, health, education and welfare programmes. The budget for capital expenditure has been increased by over 35%. The PM Gati Shakti programme aims at not merely quantitative expansion in infrastructure, but also a qualitative leap through meticulous planning. Too often, we have had poor coordination between road and rail, rail and metro, port and road, etc. Integrated planning and execution can considerably increase domestic productivity and export competitiveness.

Another priority is generation of gainful employment. The capital expenditure boost in itself will generate millions of jobs directly and indirectly (through its multiplier effect on other sectors). A special feature is the unprecedented helping hand to States for their capital expenditure through a provision of Rs. 1 lakh crores of interest free 50 year loans, additional to their normal borrowing ceiling. The credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs is being revamped to provide a massive Rs. 2 lakh crores of new lending. Additional credit to hospitality, tourism and related (pandemic-affected) sectors is being provided through the highly successful Emergency Credit Line Guarantee scheme. The outlay for the PM Gram Sadak Yojana has been increased by 27%. Moreover, supplemental funding will be provided to states to meet their share in respect of certain priority sectors. Adequate provisions have been made to support agriculture, including fertiliser subsidies and grain procurement. Apart from the ongoing National Health Mission and AYUSH programmes, the new PM Atmanirbhar Bharat Health

Infrastructure Mission will permanently upgrade India's health capacity. A new, flexible, need-based "PM's Development Initiative for the North East" (PM DevINE) has been started for projects which may not fit into the parameters of standard schemes. In line with Finance Commission recommendations, 130 Centrally Sponsored Schemes have been revamped and restructured into 65, enabling greater flexibility and impact. While handling the financial predicaments of today, the Budget lays a foundation for solving the policy problems of tomorrow. It contains a wide, carefully conceived, range of fund allocations and policy initiatives for the India of 2047 including world-class indigenous railway technology, 'kisan drones' for agriculture, 'drones as a service', digital health information, telemedicine, electronic passports, digital currency, clean public transport, battery swapping, green hydrogen, coal gasification and universal optic fibre access. Clarity in taxation of crypto-instruments, plugging of loopholes and modernisation of Customs administration of SEZs are important features of the Budget. In his poem 'Bharata Desam', the visionary C. Subramania Bharathi dreamt of using the excess water flowing to Bengal to grow crops in central India. He passed away in 1921. A hundred years later, the first river linking project is beginning, through the Ken-Betwa project. All of this is combined with a careful fiscal policy to preserve macro-economic stability. In spite of pandemic-related spending and disinvestment shortfalls, high revenue growth and tight expenditure control have enabled the fiscal deficit for 2021-22 to remain at 6.9% of GDP, close to its budgeted level. This is the biggest ever single year reduction in fiscal deficit. Next year, the deficit is expected to be 6.4% of GDP. It is noteworthy that the fiscal deficit is effectively only 6.0% excluding the special transfers to states for capital expenditure. The revenue deficit is estimated to decline even more sharply from 4.7% to 3.8%. Without levying new taxes, the Budget adheres to the consolidation trajectory announced in the last budget of reaching 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26, starting from the 2020-21 figure of 9.2%. In economics, a balanced budget is one where expenditure is equal to revenue. The 2022-23 Budget is a balanced budget in a different sense: balancing action in the present with vision for the future, ambition in attitude with prudence in practice.

(The author is the Finance Secretary of India).

Agriculture in the Union Budget 2022-23

■ DR. PARVEEN KUMAR

Agriculture in the country is a key sector, contributing more than 17 per cent to the country's GDP and providing livelihood opportunities for a vast majority of its population. As such, the sector always remains in the spotlight in union budget of the country. This year too on Feb. 01, Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Finance minister in the second NDA government presented her fourth straight budget for the year 2022-23. Total expenditure is estimated at Rs 39.45 lakh crore. Receipts are estimated at Rs. 22.84 lakh cr. FY'23 fiscal deficit target at 6.4% of GDP Vs 6.9%. The Budget 2022-23 looks at taking agriculture on a sustained higher growth trajectory with an emphasis on digital infrastructure, incentivizing investments through public private partnership, promoting sustainability through Green energy and chemical free farming, livelihood generation, enhancing farmer incomes and building climate resilience. The agri sector will be further transformed by leveraging strengths of agri-techs and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). The allocation for Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has increased from Rs 1.18 lakh crore to Rs 1.24 lakh crores. The sector's share in the overall Budget allocations, however fell from 4.26% in 2021-22 to 3.84%. Reduction in allocation for Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE). The allocation of money to Agricultural Education and Research has been reduced from that of last year. Department of Agriculture Research and Education (DARE) has been allocated rupees 8,513 crore. The largest share from this allocation has gone to Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) with a provision of Rs 5,877.06 crore. The said amount is up from last year's allocation of Rs 5,561 crore by Rs 315.58 crores. A provision of Rs 455.48 crore has been made for agricultural education in the budget. Rupees 343.30 crore has been kept for animal science, while the expenditure on natural resources management has been estimated at Rs 185.77 crore. Ensuring assured income to farmers: To ensure that farmers in the country get assured and remunerative price of their produce, the budget has come up with an outlay of Rs 2.37 lakh crore towards direct payments for minimum support price (MSP) to wheat and paddy farmers. These payments would be made over the next year, April 2022-March 2023. Finance minister also announced a plan to promote oilseed cultivation to reduce import dependency and for promotion of millet production with emphasis on exports. Interlinking of rivers: The budget has also allocated a sum of Rs 44,000 crore for interlinking of Ken-Betwa river. This would further benefit about 9.1 lakh hectares of farm land, providing drinking water to 62 lakh people and generating 130 mw of power. Five more such projects are under process of implementation. One station One Product: The increased outlay for PM Gati Shakti, including 100 new railways logistics hubs will speed up supply chain, reduce logistic cost, ensure smooth movement of agricultural produce across the country and help in reducing wastage. Railways will develop efficient logistics for small farmers and enterprises with 'One station, one product' to help supply chain of local produce. The budget will further improve the connectivity; 400 new generations 'Vande Bharat' trains with better efficiency are to be brought in during the next 3 years. Besides 100 PM Gati Shakti Cargo terminals will be developed during next 3 years and implementation of innovative ways for building metro systems. PM Gati Shakti Master Plan for Expressways is to be formulated in 2022-23, to facilitate faster movement of people and goods NH network to be expanded by 25,000 km in 2022-23. For this an amount of Rs 20,000 crore will be mobilized to complement public resources. Natural Farming: To ensure that the citizens of the country take a non-toxic diet and to promote sustainability, the government is also all set for this by promoting chemical-free natural farming throughout the country with

a focus on farmers' land in 5 km wide corridors along the river Ganga, in the first stage. Support to Millets: Considering the importance of millets in ensuring nutritional security, the year 2023 will be celebrated as the International year of millets worldwide. The budget 2022-23 has announced support for post-harvest value addition for millet products. This is also to enhance consumption and branding of various millet products both at the national as well as international level and also to increase the consumption of Indian millets and their products in the global markets. Agro-forestry, Agro-forestry and private forests get policy boost. Finance minister promises financial support to scheduled caste farmers for taking up agro-forestry and private forest creation. Drones will be used for crop assessment and spraying of pesticides. Start-ups will be promoted to facilitate Drone Shakti for Drone-As-A-Service. Fisheries: Fishery sector has received a boost in terms of the monetary allocations in this budget. One of the few schemes that saw a clear increase in allocations is the Blue Revolution initiative to augment fisheries infrastructure, aquaculture and seafood processing. The Fisheries Department saw its budget almost double from Rs 1,220 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 2,118 crore in 2022-23. Rural Employment: The allocation for MGNREGA which provides 100 days of assured wage employment to at least one member of each rural household scheme is down from the actual of about Rs 1.1 lakh crore to the proposed Rs 73,000 crore. The National Health Mission, National Livelihoods Mission and others have seen minor changes, with several witnessing a cut. Employment Generation: Towards employment generation, initiatives like Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for fourteen sectors for achieving Atmanirbhar Bharat has received excellent response with a potential to create 60 lakh new jobs and additional production of 30 lakh crore during next 5 years. PM KISAN: The Prime Minister Kisan Samman Nidhi has been allocated Rs 68,000 crores. The allocation for fertilizer subsidy has decreased from Rs 1.49 lakh crore in the current financial year to Rs 1.05 lakh crores. Rationalization/revamping: The Union Budget 2022-2023 has declared a major revamping/rationalization of centrally sponsored schemes (CSS). Since the last two years, the number of such schemes has been reduced by half. CSSs are totally funded by the central government but implemented by states. In the Budget 2022-2023, the government allocated Rs 4,42,781.19 crore for such schemes. According to the Budget document, 130 CSSs spanning all ministries have been rationalized/revamped into 65 schemes. CSSs declared after April 1, 2020 has not been included in the list. The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development that had 19 CSSs is left with only three that include a. Mission Shakti b. Mission Vatsalya c. Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0. Mission Shakti has subsumed 14 schemes, including Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, a major campaign initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Under the Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, 12 CSSs have been revamped into two schemes; three have been shut down. The two new schemes are: Infrastructure Development Fund and Development programmes (Animal Husbandry). The three to be closed are Dairying through Cooperatives, National Dairy Plan-II and National Dairy Plan. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has the highest toll 20 CSSs have been rationalized into three schemes viz. Krishinamati Yojana, Integrated Scheme on Agricultural Cooperative and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana. The National Project on agro-forestry has been subsumed in other CSS. Pruning the CSSs has been a Union government focus area in recent years. The 15th Finance Commission also recommended rationalization of these schemes.

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YOUR COLUMN

Encouragement - A Teacher's Essential Aid

Dear editor:

If we do nothing to stop corporal punishment in our schools, Madrassas and homes, we are collectively complicit in a woeful crime against man and God by aiding and abetting the evil practice to ensure the next generation will be even worse than we are now. How could hitting a child, in any setting for whatever reason, be justified? Civilised people don't hit people.

It is the moral duty of every school teacher to do all in his or her power to ensure every pupil is much better informed than they, or their parents were, when they were at their age. It is the unwritten law of every generation to do all in its power to ensure the generation that follows is better than the present. Not to fulfil that duty, goes against the laws of the universe and the enrichment of mankind. If we are not moving forward and making progress, we are throwing-in the towel and giving-up, never to learn what we are really capable of achieving. Imagine if medical science were to scream to a stop and declare "We are happy to have discovered aspirin, morphine, or some other pain-relieving, life-saving, life-improving medication... let us just call it quits and leave it at that." Where would we be today? Resting on one's laurels is not an option of any noble pursuit. The world rotates, constantly, ever changing, ever evolving. Its inhabitants need to do likewise, in a forward direction. Standstill is not improvement. To accept the past as our

best achievable should not even be a thread in the tapestry of our mind. People who never give their best effort to whatever task they perform (whether paid or unpaid) will never have the joy of knowing what their best really is. It will remain a mystery in their strongbox of self-belief forever. Only those who make the effort to give their personal best, beyond their present level of acceptance by way of heart, soul, and mind come close to getting a look-see glimpse to what their best really is. As an example, take Olympian athletes who push their level of endurance beyond their expectations daily, sacrificing many insignificant pleasures of distraction from their ultimate worthy goals; always moving forward, never dwelling on the negative and believing all that they are capable of imagining, they are capable of achieving. Encouragement aided their ascent. Getting to know one's best is forever elusive. An individual never really gets to know his or her personal best because even if they achieve what they consider to be their best, there's always the nagging thought running loose in their minds, 'maybe if I did this or that differently the end result would have been much better'. Such is human nature. While it is not essential for everyone to reach their best, they should try and be encouraged by others along the route, for their benefit, the nation at large, and to comply with the laws of the universe. Famed Irish playwright and Nobel Prize winner in Literature George Bernard Shaw once wrote "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." Much discussion and debate has ensued since that phrase was immortalised in his 1903 play 'Man and Superman'. Among the interpretations, could this be this meaning... while the teacher him/herself is incapable of achieving greatness, he/she can encourage others to do so,

Strong immunity: Need of hour

■ MOHAMMAD HAFIZ GANIE

Y ou may wonder how to help your body fight off illnesses. Body automatically fights the incoming pathogens that protrude into our body and eliminates them. It doesn't happen all the time sometimes our body skips or fails to recognize any foreign particle as non-self and hence invades successfully into our body and makes us sick. We wonder sometimes that is it possible to intervene in this process and boost our immune system, not clinically but domestically by following several dietary and lifestyle changes. Here are six basic golden life style and dietary changes we need to adopt:

At least 7 hours of sleep per night: Sleep and immune system have a bidirectional relationship. Immune response, like that caused by a viral infection, can affect sleep. At the same time, consistent sleep strengthens the immune system, allowing for balanced and effective immune function. Lack of sleep, on the other hand, can throw off the immune system. Evidence indicates that in both the short- and long-term, sleep deprivation can make you sick. During sleep, your body releases cytokines, which are essential for the regulation of the immune system. Cytokines are required in increased amounts when you are attacked by a pathogen or are under stress. The level of cytokines increase during sleep, and therefore lack of sleep hinders the body's ability to fight infections. This is also a reason why the body tends to sleep more while suffering from any infection. Hence a minimum of 7 hours sleep is all we need to stay immune.

Moderate exercise: Exercise initiates changes in the anti-bodies and WBC (white blood cells) by helping them circulate more rapidly during a workout or a physical activity session. WBCs are also known as leukocytes or leucocytes, which protect our body against infectious diseases and foreign invaders like virus and bacteria. The rapid movement of antibodies or WBCs helps to detect the ailments before it turns out to be severe. Exercise releases various proteins (cytokines) like IL-6, IL-7, and IL-15. IL-6 that help in maintaining immunity by directly transporting the immune cells to the infected areas, while IL-7 promotes the production of new T-cells, and IL-15 maintains the T-cell in the border and NK-cell section. All the elements work in coordination to increase our resistance towards infection and make us super immune.

Stress levels management: During the stress, the immune system's ability to fight off antigens is reduced. That is why we are more susceptible to infections. The stress hormone corticosteroid can suppress the effectiveness of the immune system (e.g. lowers the number of lymphocytes). Stress can also have an indirect effect on the immune system as a person may use unhealthy behavioral coping strategies to reduce their stress, such as drinking and smoking. In addition, stress decreases the body's lymphocytes - the white blood cells that help fight off infection. The lower your lymphocyte level, the more at risk you are for viruses, including the common cold and cold sores. To prevent stress we can meditate, pray in order to maintain the strength of our immune defense.

Prevention of dehydration: If we are dehydrated, the whole system of immunity could start breaking down, proper hydration is an essential component of a healthy immune system. Our immune system is highly dependent on the nutrients in our blood stream, and our blood stream is made mostly of water! If we don't have enough water, we cannot properly transport nutrients to each organ system. Staying well hydrated is also very important for detoxification pathways, increasing lymphatic draining and making sure we are clearing out any foreign invaders and other waste materials.

Dehydration can contribute to muscle tension, headaches, low serotonin production and digestive issues.

Hence water consumption is highly recommended in boosting our immune system.

Limited sugar consumption: Sugar may act as an immunosuppressant, depending on different conditions in the body. As a general rule, excessive sugar consumption depletes the body's nutrient balance, which triggers a cascade of inflammation and metabolic disruption.

A study reports phagocytes, a type of white blood cell that kills bacteria and pathogens, were less active in people who had recently consumed straight sugar or sugary foods, including honey and orange juice.

The measurements were taken within 5 hours of sugar consumption.

Limited sugar consumption can protect us from a breach in our immune system.

Probiotics supplement: Probiotics may help give your immune system a boost and inhibit the growth of harmful gut bacteria and some probiotics have been shown to promote the production of natural antibodies in the body.

They may also boost immune cells like the IgA-producing cells, T lymphocytes and natural killer cells. Yogurt, Buttermilk, Cheese, Pickles are very rich in probiotics and cheaply available.

whether they themselves believe the pupil is capable or not. The greatest and least expensive gift any teacher (or parent) can gift a child is not what is taught academically, but what the child is encouraged and inspired to do spiritually. Encourage... encourage! If what they say is true that in every child there are the makings of a saint, encouragement is an essential propellant to speed the process. The power of encouragement mystifies and amazes. It calls upon magical invisible forces to rush to a person's aid that more often than not generates previously unimagined positive results. Every great achievement was once thought to be impossible. In all the GOOD books it says the Kingdom of God is within. While I have no way of knowing that for sure, I suspect offering someone encouragement in a noble pursuit, triggers them to tap into a divine rich gold streak within themselves. While a teacher or parent, may not be properly equipped to teach a school curriculum (and many aren't), there is no excuse for them not to at least encourage pupils to succeed where they, themselves, may have failed and thus share in the pupil's success. We cannot