

WELCOMING BUDGET

When Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the interim budget of Jammu and Kashmir for the year 2024-25 in the Parliament on Monday, the roadmap of the Central and State Governments to take the state to the pinnacle of development also became clear.

The budget includes good governance, strengthening democracy at the grassroots level, promoting holistic and sustainable agriculture, promoting investment destination in Jammu and Kashmir, employment generation, developing new tourist destinations, rapid development and inclusive growth, women empowerment. And the goal of social inclusion has been set.

Uniform Civil Code took a centre stage

OMKAR DATTATRAY

There is growing realization among the political parties about the fact that there should be a common civil code for all Indians irrespective of the religion to which they belong. The BJP state government of Uttarakhand and its chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has ensured that a bill on UCC be introduced and then passed in the current session of state assembly.

The chief minister of Uttarakhand is the strong votary and advocate of UCC and thus his government has passed a bill regarding uniform civil code. The passage of the UCC bill in the legislative assembly of Uttarakhand is worth emulation by other states of India and it will open the Pandora box as other states and the centre as well will also push for a bill in this regard and the centre government under Modi will introduce common civil code bill before the upcoming general elections.

If the NDA government headed by BJP will bring a bill in parliament to introduce common civil code in the country, it will be a big political development in the country and it will have great ramifications for the country and it will lead to uniform laws for all communities irrespective of their religion. All discrimination and injustice will be done away with as all citizens will be subject to same laws and regulations and in this way all discrimination and injustice will end.

But whenever some sincere efforts are made in this regard, the so called secular parties and some Muslim parties raise untenable hue and cry and raise apprehensions that Muslims and other minority citizens will be discriminated and the government will attack the religious freedom of the minority communities. However all opposition and criticism to the UCC is untenable and unwarranted as well as uncalculated far and hence has no value except doing petty politics ostensibly in the interest of Muslim community and other smaller religious denominations.

Other states of India and the centre government should take a cue from Uttarakhand and initiate the process of introducing the need bills in this regard so that UCC will become a reality. The uniform civil code for all citizens has remained an agenda item of the BJP's manifesto from last many general elections and now the Modi government which has the required numbers as well should make sincere efforts to introduce the necessary bill in this connection in the current winter session of the parliament.

So before the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, the centre government of NDA should fulfill its election promise and introduce and get passed that common civil code for all citizens irrespective of religion and faith. Uniform civil code Bill was tabled in Uttarakhand assembly. Once it becomes an act, Uttarakhand will become the first state in the country after independence to adopt the UCC. The Uttarakhand government on February 6, tabled the Uniform Civil Code bill in the state assembly which when passed will be the first such legislation to be implemented in any law state after independence.

The bill proposes a common on marriage, divorce, land, property and inheritance for all citizens irrespective of their religion in Uttarakhand. Final Uniform Civil Code draft for Uttarakhand recommends ban on triple talaq and Halala and tribals are sought to be kept out of the bills ambit. UCC committee suggests legalizing live-in relationships, equal rights in inheritance for women and men, minimum age of marriage for women at 21 years among others. The five-member committee constituted for drafting the uniform civil code -UCC in Uttarakhand handed over its final report to states chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Friday. The committee has recommended strict punishment for triple talaq and nikahhalala practices pertaining to Muslim personal laws and also suggested keeping the tribal community out of UCC ambit.

The Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami led government tabled the uniform civil code Bill in the state legislative assembly. The UCC bill proposes a common law on marriage, divorce, land, property and inheritance for all citizens irrespective of their religion in the state, excluding the Scheduled Tribes. The proposed UCC aims to establish uniform civil laws applicable to all communities within the state. The passage of the UCC bill fulfils a significant promise made by the BJP during the 2022 assembly polls. The uniform civil code bill presented by Uttarakhand CM in assembly on Tuesday, will also impose a complete ban on child marriage and will introduce a uniform process for divorce. The passage of the UCC bill will in Uttarakhand assembly will have its ramifications in other states and all over the country. Other states will emulate the example of Uttarakhand and will be motivated to take sincere efforts in the direction of making the UCC a reality. The fact is that the BJP state governments have no reservation in making efforts to have a common civil code in their states. Similarly the centre NDA government under the leadership and guidance of the prime minister Narendra Modi will take steps to introduce the UCC bill in the winter session of the parliament to fulfill its election promise. It will be so good and will be in the interest of the country and its citizens if the Modi government will table a bill on UCC before the upcoming general elections. The political parties and especially the common citizenry will come to understand that what Modi and his BJP promises, it delivers and fulfills such promises. UCC adoption and implementation is the core agenda and part of the ideology of BJP from Jansangh days and so the centre government should take a cue from the Uttarakhand government and thus take serious steps to adopt the UCC at centre level. The significant development of Uttarakhand will have demonstrational effect and other states and the centre government may take necessary steps to adopt and implement the common civil code in the country as the BJP is committed to ensure that the new law in this regard is introduced and implemented in the country.

The uniform civil code -UCC has been one of the intense subjects of discussion for over a decade. But recently it took centre stage when prime minister Narendra Modi mentioned the importance of UCC in one of the rallies in MP. But now with the initiative of the Uttarakhand government that the centre stage impact and position has been strengthened as other states and the union government as well will be marching towards making UCC a reality. But, the implementation of UCC poses severe hurdles and as a result of the cultural and religious diversity present in India. But when intentions are good, it will not now take long time to make UCC a reality in India and the start has now been made by Uttarakhand government and some other state governments will take a cue from this state's developments with regard to UCC and take necessary steps to introduce, pass and implement UCC for all Indians irrespective of religion. In short the day will not be far off when UCC will be a reality in India and all discrimination and injustice with women will come to an end and the nation will have a UCC which is the need of the hour.

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist)

Why a new dawn of development is imminent in the North East



C. KISHAN REDDY

Change is blowing across the quaint and beautiful mountains and valleys of the Northeastern states. After ten years of unrelenting efforts, a new age of peace and growth has begun. For the first time, the inherent potential of the 8 States was acknowledged when the Hon'ble Prime Minister called them the 'Ashlatakshmi' of Bharat, harbingers of growth and prosperity. History is being scripted in the accelerated pace of Roads, Rail, and Air connectivity in the region. When it comes to quality, they are comparable to the world-class infrastructure in the rest of India. The youth are no longer suffering with the bandhs, chakka jaams, and strikes but now their dreams are ringing truer than ever. Trade has been made easier, and new tourist attractions have been unveiled, all thanks to the enhanced connectivity. North East Region, in itself, is a saga of unprecedented political will, inspiring dedication and collective ownership of a cause so dear to every Bhartiya - heralding a new dawn of development and growth in India's Ishaan Kon!

As the Hon'ble Home Minister has aptly described during the recently concluded 71st Plenary of NEC, the past decade has been a golden chapter in the history of North East India. This transformative approach has not only shattered the glass ceilings of the conventional model of conflict-centric-administration to a development-oriented model of governance in the region but has sown the seeds of cultural and social integration, fostering a stronger, more united Bharat. The recent flagging of the first-ever international railway connectivity in the North East Region, the Agartala Akhaura Rail link, is a proud example of how a once neglected 'hinterland' of India has risen on the international trade and tourism map.

The North East of India, with its vibrant cultures and abundant resources, is a region that has borne the brunt of political indifference for far too long. Violence and instability were often used as a convenient cloak to veil a lack of genuine commitment and the huge chasm between precept and praxis was starkly evident.

However, under the leadership of PM Modi Ji, in the last decade, continuous efforts have led to the establishment of peace and security in most parts of the region. The Government, taking the challenges of geography and security head-on, is building highways of development and prosperity. The reimagining of Arunachal's Kibithoo from India's last to Bharat's first village and as the launch pad of the nationwide Vibrant Village program is symbolic of this commitment towards the North East and its remotest corners.

With over 5 lakh crore invested in regional development, by over 50 ministries, since 2014, the area is poised to seize growth opportunities. Since 2014, a financial revolution has been underway, with a whopping 233% surge in expenditure by 54 central ministries (from

24,819 crore in 2014 to Rs 82,690 crore in 2023) or a 152% boost in budget allocation for the DoNER Ministry (Rs 2,332 crore in 2014 to Rs 5,892 crore in 2023), reveals a dynamic financial landscape, fueling transformative agendas. The recent PM-DeVINE scheme, promising Rs 6,600 crore support for diverse state needs, is a testament to this commitment.

In 2014, the Hon'ble Prime Minister shared his vision of "Transformation by Transportation" in the North East Region, 10 years down the line; we are seeing his vision manifest wonderfully. Connectivity is now emerging as the most dynamic sector. Be it Manipur's first freight



connectivity in 75 Years, its second Railway Station in Nagaland after 100 years, flights taking off for the first time from several States, the first Goods train in 75 years reached Manipur in 2022, world's tallest Girder Rail Bridge- with 141m tall pier constructed on Jiribam-Imphal Railway Line, improving connectivity in NER has been a subject of awe and inspiration.

Before 2014, the mammoth Indian railways never chugged beyond Guwahati or Tripura, today the network is spread far and beyond with the plan of connecting all state capitals nearing completion and a substantial 170% increase in commissioned sections, more than twice the average per year (66.6 km/year during the UPA-2 period to the current 179.78 km/year). Coupled with political will and collaboration, a remarkable financial upswing enabled this change, with a 384% surge in annual budget allocation compared to the UPA-2 era, soaring to Rs. 9,970 crores for FY 2023-24.

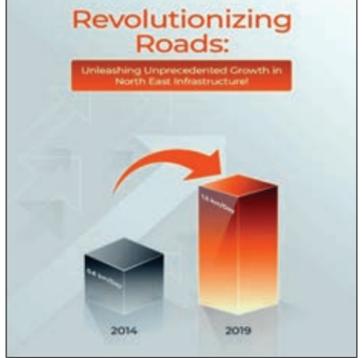
"American roads are not good because America is rich, but America is rich because American roads are good", this famous quote by former US president John F Kennedy finds an apt corollary in the North East. With the development of NER being a priority, National Highway development in the North East Region has overtaken the national average as well. Road construction in the Northeast more than doubled under this Government, rising from just 0.6 km of national highway being laid per day under the UPA government to 1.5 km, between 2014 and 2019.

Consequently, since independence, till 2014, there were only 10,905 km of National Highways in the NER, but in the span of just 10 years, by 2023 the figure rose to 16,125 km

of National Highways in the region. Today 5,388 KM of projects worth 1.11 lakh crore are ongoing!

Likewise, Air connectivity has received a major boost, with 8 new airports constructed since 2014. The Regional Air Connectivity Scheme proved to be a shot in the arm for air travel in NER, offering viability gap funding for challenging routes, today 64 new routes have been operationalized under the UDAN scheme. For the first time, each state boasts of a functional airport, with recent additions like Pakyong, Umroi, and Itanagar soaring into operation.

Rivers are a lifeline of the North East, in pre-partition days there were navigable transport routes that allowed easy access to goods. International boundaries ruptured the links cutting off economic opportunities for the peo-

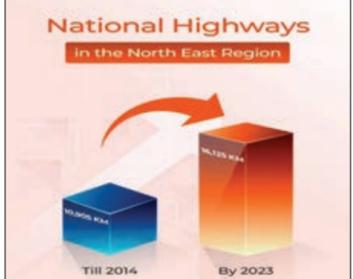


ple. Astoundingly, it took 7 decades to restore the inland waterway links. 19 new national waterways (with just 1 till 2014) and bilateral agreements, including the Inland Water Transport (IWT) protocol with Bangladesh and the use of Chittagong and Mongla Ports, will open economic opportunities for increased trade with ASEAN and neighbouring nations.

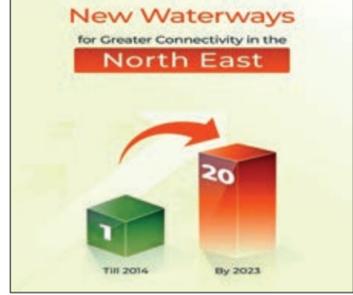
As the transformed connectivity paradigm brings about a ripple effect with benefits reaching far beyond the economic spectrum, it becomes evident that the Northeast Region is not only thriving in terms of infrastructure but is also nurturing talent across various fields. From budding entrepreneurs to world-class sports stars, the region is witnessing a remarkable surge in opportunities. Initiatives such as the country's first sports university in Manipur and substantial sanctions under Khelo India since 2018 reflect a commitment to harnessing the sports talent in the region. Moreover, the registration of almost 4000 startups and the sanctioning of microfinance loans exceeding 670 crores until December 2022 highlight the dynamic growth and potential within the North East.

The progress achieved in the North East Region in the last decade has catapulted the region from being a remote corner of India to

its New Growth Engine. The revolution in connectivity has opened avenues never explored

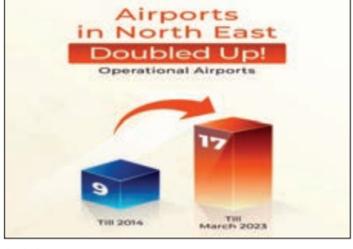


earlier. Today we are simultaneously working on the region's economic growth by nurturing its tourism, economy, agro-based industry, the potential of the service sector and the young workforce, natural and organic farming, the renewable energy sector and many other areas that remained untapped over decades. We have achieved a great feat in the region and there are more milestones to achieve and under the lead-



ership of Shri Narendra Modi ji, it is a battle half won. A few lines capture our vision and determination for a new dawn in Poorvottar of Bharat

"Embracing the dawn, crafting a journey so



bright, North East's journey, a beacon shining bright. Excited to soar high, where ambitions unfold, North East, a saga of growth waiting to be told".

(The author is Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region, Govt. of India)

Promoting Medicinal and Aromaic Plants Modern Medicine is a negation of health- "Ivan Illich"

GL KHAJURIA

Ever since the dawn of civilization, the man has remained wonder-struck viewing its surrounds, the flora and fauna, the natural bounties who alongside subsist with him. And at times, he wondered as to how these animals and plants are less disease free with vibrant, lush green and flora. This has left him with regenerating perceptions of all hues and years have rolled by and these mysteries till date remained as folded as ever before.

Undoubtedly, nature is a greater healer and its mysteries are so far hidden and folded. Unlike men, whom there is a team of doctors for treatment and then what about for those innocent and voiceless animals and birds. Surely, hunters and poachers are definitely there in the process!. And then why the nature should come to their rescue of human kind.

One also wonders at times or gets more curious to know how were the names given to the plants and how do we name them today is again a folded mystery. Presumably enough, the oldest names given must be having in the remote past some relevance when no language existed barring few broken words which offshooted, of course, the beginning of plants nomenclature, for they are as obscure as the record of earliest civilization. The first book dealing with plants was directly taken from early Greek or Latin manuscripts or more so ancient translations into those classical languages. The plant names are mostly Greek or Latin but of course, some seemed to be unaltered barbarous names used by not too civilized tribes of the time. However, the first attempt to scientifically nomenclaturise the plants was made by renowned/celebrated Greek, Philosopher 'Theophrastus' (370-287 B.C.) who was pupil of Aristotle. He had wide intellectual interests of various subjects which he wrote on biology where he described around 500 species of plants in his botanical treatise " on the study of plants: and " on the causes of plants", the main thrust being on the medicinal plants.

Later, Pliny the Elder(23-79 A.D.) described about 1000 species in his book "Historia Naturals" and at the same time a Military Physician 'Diesecarides' described around 600 Mediterranean medicinal plants in his book entitled 'Materia Medica' in the early part of 16th century. Man's curiosity ever since remained in the run-race in exploring

more and more medicinal plants and many biologists of whom the few et al Morrison carolus, John Ray Linnaeus and Bentham and Hooker (1830-1884) remained in the lead.

Though it seems strange and intricate when one talks of botanical names, yet at the same time these occupy extremely interesting and instructive part in so far as modern 'Ayurveda System of Medicine' is concerned, apart from 'Unani' and sidha. This system of medicines have had an integral part when the modern allopathy had no longer surfaced and that's why this herbal system occupies a unique placement amongst the most proclaimed systems of medicines so much so that the 'World Health organization'(WHIO) has fully recognized its values in its broader spectrum.

In India, where around 70% of population is below poverty line, 'herbal system' (Ayurveda) is perhaps the last hope. The system though having no side effects unlike other system of medicines. It is matter of utmost pride that India in general and the Himalayan states in particular are the richest source of medicinal and aromatic plants though human interferences in many ways are diminishing the rich, vide, varied resources which warrants their due preservation and enhancement and that's why there is endless scope of Ayurvedic medicines abroad which fetches hefty dividends, besides providing undesirable side-effects:

Strange are the ways of nature that there exists a strong linkage between the herbs, shrubs climbers, plants and the trees with the variety of ailments as for example, Belladonna (meaning beautiful lady) was employed in Italy by ladies to give softness to their eyes and the same was for Potentilla-a panacea for all cures. There is a vide diversification of plants in times long past when they received their names because of medicinal properties real or supposed to assuage grief and so on the list goes endlessly..."

Of the few, the most important Ayurvedic herbs, shrubs, climbers, plants and the trees are briefed down below viz-a-viz their medicinal uses:

Picorhiza kurrora: locally spoken as 'Kour' is perennial herb found in Himalayas (2500-4500) is the best herb for liver ailments, roots however, contain glycoside. Liv-52, Livosin and heptaguard are the Ayurvedic drugs prepared from this.

Valeriana Wallichina (Mushakbala) is predominantly the most important

medicinal plant, apart from its uses in perfumery/dhoop.

Whithania Somnifera (Ashwagandha) (L) Dunsal (1725) : belongs to F. Solaceceae, finds its usefulness to rejuvenate therapy, excessive emancipation, bronchial asthma, insomnia and cardiac disorders.

Tuxus bacatta : A very important conifer species mostly confined to Himalaya region (Tangmarg belt). A life saving drug is manufactured out of bark and leaves of plants for the treatment cancer patients.

Macrotomia bentham: belonging to the F. Boragiceae habitats Gurez' - Kahlmir valley reaching an altitudes upto 1200 ft. It finds its usefulness in cardiac ailments, apart from fevers and throat troubles.

Chrysanthimum cincerifolium also called Pyrethrum is belonging to composite F. (Sun Flower) is injurious to warm-blooded and toxic insects and is mostly used as insecticides and flits.

Apart from the most prominent medicinal/aromatic plants, also include, Hibiscus esculentas, Acaasia Arabica, Achyranthes aspera, Adhatoda vasica, Agave Americana(sisal), Aloe Vera, Aloe Vulgaris, Rauwalfia' Serpetina(cobra plant), Datura, Stramonium, viola odorata, Digitalis purpurea, cannabis sativa, Aegle marmelosa(Bel), Various Artimisias, Vitex negundu(Bana), Cassia fistula (Golden Shower), Flacourtia romonehhi, indigoferas, Mallotus philippinensis, Phylthnus emblica, Benninghausinia albiflora(pisumar Buti) - an insecticide so on and so forth.

Though the fact goes that this vide, varied medicinal/aromatic, herbs of plant kingdom are sprawling world over in general but fact still remains that our tropical, sub Himalayan and the Himalayan region are bountiful of the vast resources which remain hidden and folded all over the globe. Our 'Regional Research Laboratories' and others pharmaceutical in the arena should pick up the thread in exploring this vast potential which forms the very fundamental source of our " Indian System of Medicines" do,de facto, stand the test of the day. And these herbs, shrubs and other medicinal/aromatic plants are fastly depleting, obviously for two reasons.

First, that modern man wants quick relief which only allopathic system of medicines can provide too rapidly, but going by the side-effects, the results are alarmingly astonishing. Herbal treatments though go slow, but the results are success-oriented with zero side-effects and that is why

Hippocrates, the father of Ayurvedic system of Medicines depended on nature for cures. And alongside in not promoting and developing these plants will resultantly vanish this vast treasure-house of medicinal kingdom. It is no doubt a fact that the Ministry of forests and environment, Govt, of India has opened all avenues in almost all states and a separate wing by the name and claim as "Minor forest produce: to exaggerate and promote these medicinal/aromatic plants but here too lot of efforts coupled with and supported by funding is the call of the hour. India, of course, should feel proud that our world renowned Pharmaceuticals et al. Himalayan drug stores, Dabur, Chark et al. are rendering yeoman's services and their export potential is far exceedingly catching momentum and their medicinal outflow world over is fetching hefty dividends. Yet the task is not over and we have to make every possible attempt to grow and enhance the equilibrium of the vast, varied treasure to its proximity and hence then we can be proud of our achievements.

Secondly, none can deny the fact that with ongoing onslaught of dwindling and decimation of forest cover together with diminishing voiceless wildlife, the medicinal and aromatic plant kingdom is still at greater risk. This being because of the fact that word minor (minor forest produce MFP) is so minor that its inescapability is too easy to be carried away by the greedy and over-needy men. As such, all out efforts and surveillance need to be actively initiated by all and one as per the laid down rules in the "Constitution of India" enunciated in general and the forest Deptt has to play an optimum role in curbing the menace of smuggling of Kuth, Discoria and its ilk which are under the process of being smuggled out. In the past many decades, credit, de facto goes in favor of Forest Deptt. When Optimum number of cases has been taken into cognizance and action followed thereto rapidly. Public awareness and awakening is of paramount need of the hour as it is after all public property and such a tempo will have to be continued in achieving successful results for ever and ever...

And with this, the writer adds over here as such: Trees, herbs, shrubs, bushes and climbers through all their parts like leaves, flowers, fruits, shade, roots, bark, smell, juice, ash and buds get engrossed into service of others and for their benefits. They can even sacrifice their lives, how blessed are the lives of these trees. (Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana)

(The writer is former Deputy Conservator of Forest J&K)