


TAKE ADEQUATE STEPS

It is surprising that the illegal activity which came to fore in December last year is still not being stopped by the concerned officials of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board or Police Department as recently the reports have again emerged that certain scrupulous elements are selling fake helicopter tickets using dubious websites for sorties between Katra and Sanjhi-Chhat. Although Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board has filed an FIR with the Jammu and Kashmir Police Cyber Cell against fake websites for duping devotees in the garb of providing tickets for chopper bookings, but it is likely that nothing concrete will come out of it because three-four months back also the same thing was detected as people complained about the same. It was unclear why the Shrine Board didn't file a report earlier or if the same was filed what was the outcome. It is sad that the unscrupulous elements do not even spare the devotees and trap them to get away with their hard earned money. As some dishonest elements were still selling fake tickets of helicopter rides for Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine like the modus operandi used a few months back, the same has been taken seriously by Shrine Board and this time cops have been approached to take the case to its logical conclusion by booking the culprits after thorough investigation. It is however unfortunate that the Shrine Board has not been adequately sharing with the pilgrims that no agency other than the Shrine Board had exclusive rights and authority to issue helicopter tickets from and to Sanji-Chhat and Katra which it should do now in adequate measure so that gullible devotees remain alert form the fraudsters conning people online. Pilgrims must also be told to use the website of the Shrine Board only for any information required by them, especially in respect of Helicopter bookings. In this context, the Shrine Board has also put a request before Google to identify and nail down such dubious websites to ensure financial safety of people. All said and done, the people should also understand their responsibility by not falling into the trap of such websites as for the aforesaid bookings; no travel agent has been given the authority.

UMANG FOR J&K

Carrying forward its endeavour to ensure provision of all basic facilities at doorstep of people besides ensuring a transparent and reliable official system in place, the present Government, has taken another new initiative under the name UMANG. It is a Mobile app, which can be downloaded easily both from Android and IOS platforms, which provides a number of Government services to people without even visiting the office physically. Earlier also, several such steps have been taken by the Government to ensure quick service delivery by launching several dedicated portals besides making employees and officials accountable towards people. In this newly launched app, all provisions have been brought under a single platform, right from submission of application, receiving receipt, tracking the progress of case besides getting the requisite service without any hurdle. Necessary provisions for making safe transactions, to submit necessary fee and charges besides keeping a check on the working of concerned departments have also been provided in the app. While launching the service formally, Chief Secretary said that this endeavour of J&K administration will support a lot in realizing the vision 'Apka Mobile Hamara Daftar' of J&K administration as a number of services can now be availed through the smart-phones. He further said that the initiative has been taken to enhance the accessibility of various Government services to people especially senior citizens and females, who earlier used to face several problems while visiting Government offices for the same. Initially, 25 vital services including birth certificate, death certificate, Rehri license, marriage certificate, income certificate, character certificate, dependant certificate, SC/ST RBA certificate etc will be available on the mobile app UMANG while the same can also be availed at https://web.umang.gov.in. This initiative will also help a lot in tackling the menace of corruption efficiently as, when people will get the requisite services through mobile phones, no one will prefer to visit Government offices thereby resulting in zero-contact between officials and beneficiaries. This multi-lingual mobile platform, where on one hand will help in providing several important services to people at the comforts of their home on the other hand will go a long way in realizing the vision of 'anytime anywhere governance' of UT administration.



OFF 'D' CUFF

Let's Go

Life brings us many disappointments and challenges. It is easy to fall victim not only to others who may hurt or mistreat us, but also to our own anger .When someone hurts us and we grow angry, we suffer twofold. First, we have to bear the pain that others may cause us. Second, we have to bear the pain and suffering that comes with feeling angry. Anger not only upsets us emotionally, but it has a deleterious effect on our physical body. It causes stress, which in turn contributes to stress-related ailments. This can affect us by increasing our risk of heart disease, cancer, stroke, high blood cancer, and other diseases. It takes a great amount of strength to withstand the temptations to overcome anger. We may think the angry person is strong, but actually they are succumbing out of weakness to this trick of the mind. It takes one who is brave of heart to say no to anger.

Let us trace what happens to us when we do not forgive. Each of our personal stories generally begins with something that happens to us that we do not like. Some person has wronged us in some way. Maybe someone has said something to hurt our feelings. Maybe someone has hurt us physically. Maybe someone has taken some-

Gender equality today, sustainability tomorrow

■ DR PARVEEN KUMAR

Women, the indispensable; all across the globe have been silent but invisible partners contributing every way towards the development of their respective nations. They have been contributing to agriculture, health, industries, service, education and all other vital sectors of the economy. Neither their contribution is recognized nor are they given a proper place in the social hierarchy. They work day and night but all the decision making still rests with their male counterparts. They still suffer from various gender related gaps, prejudices, stereotypes, domestic violence and various other social stigmas.

Across the world, women remain concentrated in the lowest paid jobs, many in extremely vulnerable forms of employment. Women are still underrepresented in public life and decision-making and gender equality is still a distant dream despite many tall claims being made for the same. This gender inequality has also been revealed in a report of the United Nations Secretary General. The report reveals that women are Heads of State or Government in 22 countries, and only 24.9 per cent of national parliamentarians are women. The report further reveals that at the current rate of progress, gender equality among Heads of Government will take another 130 years.

Regarding gender gap, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF), it won't close until 2186. Women, especially young women are at the forefront of diverse and inclusive movements online and on the streets for social justice, climate change and equality in all parts of the world. Yet, women under 30 are less than one per cent of parliamentarians worldwide.

To highlight various issues being faced by the women, recognize the contribution of women and to further strengthen their roles in the development process, March 08, every year is celebrated as the International Women Day (IWD) all across the globe. On IWD, women across the world come together to force the world to recognize these inequalities while also celebrating the achievements of women who have overcome these barriers. The 'International Women Day' originated back in 1908 when some 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding voting rights, better pay and shorter working hours. A year later, the first National Woman's Day was observed in the United States on February 28, in accordance with a declaration by the Socialist Party of America. In 1910, a woman called Clara Zetkin leader of the 'women's office' for the Social Democratic Party in Germany came out with the idea of an International Women's Day. She suggested that every country should celebrate women on one day every year to push for their demands. A conference of more than 100 women from 17 countries agreed to her suggestion and International Women Day was formed. In 1911, it was celebrated for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland on March 19. In 1913, it was decided to celebrate

International Women Day on March 8 and since then it has been celebrated on this day. The United Nations recognized this day in 1975 and since it has created a theme each year for the celebration of the day. In 2011, former US President Barack Obama proclaimed March to be 'Women's History Month'.

Theme: Every year the International Women Day is celebrated with a theme. In the year 2021, the celebration of international women day focused on 'Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world'. This year the theme for IWD is 'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow' and the theme calls for climate action for women, by women. There is a need to understand that there is a vital link between gender; social equity and climate change and hence is the need to recognize that without gender equality today, a sustainable future, an equal future will remain out of reach.

Women and Climate Change: Though the climate change affects all; but not equally. The impact of the rising temperature varies among regions, sex, age and socio-economic status. Climate change is not gender neutral means it affects different sexes differently. In this context, the finding of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) also needs to be highlighted. The report reveals that people who are already most vulnerable and marginalized will also experience the greatest impacts. Both women and men working in natural resource sectors such as agriculture are likely to be affected. However, the impact of climate change on gender is not the same. Women are increasingly being seen as more vulnerable than men to the impacts of climate change, mainly because they represent the majority of the world's poor and are proportionally more dependent on threatened natural resources. The difference between men and women can also be seen in their differential roles, responsibilities, decision making, access to land and natural resources, opportunities and needs, which are held by both sexes. Worldwide, women have less access than men to resources such as land, credit, agricultural inputs, decision-making, technology, training and extension services that would enhance their capacity to adapt to climate change.

As per the United Nations, around 80 per cent of the people most affected by climate change are women. Studies in recent decades have proved this fact. Evidence linking gender inequality and climate change have been established. Let me take the case of Bangladesh. In the aftermath of Cyclone Gorky, women accounted for 91 percent of deaths in Bangladesh. During the heat waves that erupted across Europe in 2003, 75 percent of those who died were women. These numbers are stark, considering that projections assess that more people will die from climate-driven temperature changes than from all infectious diseases combined. Due to the prevailing gendered differences in terms of inequality and

War & exodus of uncertainties

■ M R LALU

Pictures of exodus from a war-ravaged Ukraine are seriously distressing. The plight of the displaced ordinary people is ostensibly heart wrenching, which had to leave their homes overnight, with little more than the clothes on their back, probably uncertain of a destination that they can find asylum in. War is not only about the destruction that it can cause but the unlimited human sufferings it brings, makes it the most hazardous one. Cutting the umbilical cord of intimacy with one's own land, people flee for safety deserting their dreams and the ambience that they really loved and cherished. The world is watching millions of Ukrainians fleeing to neighboring countries like Poland, Hungary, Romania, Moldova and Slovakia with a chill in their spine. Would they ever be able to build their lives from under the debris of the devastating war? It needs tremendous courage to cross over to spaces of anonymity, enduring freezing temperatures, waiting for their chance for days on the road probably with unfed kids and feeble old people. Salutations to those who decided to take up Kalashnikovs in their hands back home, to fight the last war before they fall forever. Undoubtedly, beyond an ego war, Ukraine truly depicts the highest form of patriotism against the hostility of its gigantic neighbor. Nobody at present can predict the outcome of the war, not even the pundits. Twelve days after the Russian invasion began; it is still unpredictable to the level of casualty the war would cause by the time it ends. But the exodus by the innocent civilians to safety across the boundaries is relentless. With the United Nations estimating a 4 million people in the coming days to become refugees, the situation is becoming tougher; throwing humanity across the globe a chance and a challenge to exhibit the level of kindness that it is capable of responding with.

Human history, without pages devoted

to the stories of exoduses, will remain incomplete. For the Ukrainians, the acceptance by the European Union to accommodate them to its fold is a great humanitarian decision. Sudden influx of refugees to any country would make its socio-economic ambience wobbly. It takes time for the refugees and the countries that give them asylum to take a steady move further. History is full of evidence and tendencies of great humanitarian challenges. Large human migrations changing the demography of lands subsequently altering their civilization continuity in an unpredictable manner have been subjects of research. To quote from the scriptures, it was the Biblical Moses who took his people for a miraculous expedition, an exodus of the folkloric kind, having given a heed to his God's command to escape from the dry land of Egypt. On confronted by the pharaoh and being unable to continue his exodus, Moses had to wait until God's wrath happened upon humanity in the form of 10 plagues which almost wiped-out people from the land of Egypt. Disasters made Moses and his people to make the first human exodus.

Though conflicting and contradictory, Indians and many in e west cherished an Aryan Invasion Theory until recently, believing that central Asian pastoralists in an exodus, walked over to our subcontinent spreading their Indo-European languages. Exodus due to human aggression or natural calamities or any reason for that matter, is bound to make socio-political challenges in the place where they get settled. It was in August 1947, when the British decided to pack their bags back to England, India witnessed the most horrifying, humiliating exodus in Indian history. Millions of people who became homeless and impoverished, forced to cross the borders of the land they amicably settled, leaving everything behind which once they held as their own. Displacing themselves, about 15 million people

crossed borders to India and Pakistan. The legacy of the Indian partition is the story of thousands of homeless people, who, after 75 years of the deadly exercise, are still antagonized with an essence of estrangement. Another exodus that human history cannot miss is the massive exodus of over 500,000 people after their eviction from Jaffna by the LTTE. Every exodus creates a huge identity crisis for the fleeing group. The identity that they lost in their own country and mountainous difficulties and perplexities that new land offers as they try to gain a new identity. And the horror of being human frequently haunts them in a land where they get alienated with all their ethnicities lost. During the covid pandemic India was terribly rattled at its fallacy of pushing its migrant laborers to the streets forcing them to flee for their home states. More than the pandemic, the panic that was created was enough for the mass exodus to happen. Endless stretches of roads ahead and under the scorching sun, millions of India's migrant workers walked hundreds of miles. Estrangement in their own land was the effect of such an exodus. Every migration defines human survival irrationally, unable to distinguish the pleasure and pain of existence. But one thing is clear, from the exodus of Moses to that of the Ukrainians, humanity is intertwined with stories of terrible human sufferings. Since World War II, this must be the massive movement of people that Europe is witnessing. This is bound to pose serious economic and political problems in the days to come. Millions of Ukrainians flowing to European countries would critically affect the job market and turn the political situations of those countries unsteady. This war is putting the human race to test once again, to determine the depth of humanness with which it would accept millions of homeless women and children in the streets of Ukraine and to the lands they walk into.

inaccessibility the female folk face in the society; women, girls, and gender minorities face specific, life-threatening impacts after climate-related disasters. Their risk of gender-based violence escalates; for example, girls are sometimes forced into child marriage when families rely on this practice as a survival strategy during droughts.

Women's vulnerability: Women's vulnerability to climate change stems from a number of factors viz. social, economic, political and cultural. Seventy per cent of the 1.3 billion people living in conditions of poverty are women. In urban areas, 40 per cent of the poorest households are headed by women. Women predominate in the world's food production (50-80 per cent), but they own less than 10 per cent of the land (Balgis Osman-Elasha). Women represent a high percentage of poor communities that are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood, particularly in rural areas where they shoulder the major responsibility for household water supply and energy for cooking and heating, as well as for food security.

Engaging Women in Climate Action: A meaningful climate action should involve womenfolk also as active stakeholders in policy making and planning. In policymaking, countries with high proportions of women parliamentarians are more prone to ratify environmental treaties than other nations. The presence of women on company boards also correlates with improved energy efficiency, investments in renewable power; and lower company costs. Gender-inclusive water management results in more sustainable systems, and findings from diverse projects spanning from IUCN to the World Bank show that women's leadership in natural resource management reduces water-related conflicts.

This United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 2011 Human Development Report, has stressed that it is not only the women's participation important but also how they participate and how much and because women often show more concern for the environment, support pro-environmental policies and vote for pro-environmental leaders, their greater involvement in politics and in nongovernmental organizations could result in environmental gains, with multiplier effects across all the Millennium Development Goals. They can be active and effective agents and promoters of adaptation and mitigation. Women have historically developed knowledge and skills related to water harvesting and storage, food preservation and rationing, and natural resource management. Women are a storehouse of indigenous wisdom and knowledge. At the same time the gender issues associated with climate change adaptation, such as inequalities in access to resources, including credit, extension and training services, information and technology should also be taken into consideration. Without the inclusion of half of the world's population, it is unlikely that without gender equality today, sustainability for tomorrow can be ensured.

Transforming J&K

Implementing Forest Rights Act: A historic step for tribal communities

Jammu and Kashmir government scripted a historic chapter on 13th September 2021 with Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, handing over individual and community rights certificates to the beneficiaries of Gujjar, Bakarwal and Gaddi Sippi communities under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 at a momentous event in Srinagar.

The event was hailed as a significant step with a potential to transform the lives of members of tribal communities in the UT where the rights of forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers were recognized albeit to a long delay. "After a long struggle and efforts for more than 14 years due rights have been conferred upon the tribal community through implementation of Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, keeping in mind the basic spirit of social equality and harmony as guided by the constitution of our country and the Parliament," Lieutenant Governor had remarked.

Giving due credit to Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's guidance for conferring forest rights to tribal community, Sinha had added that the J&K administration had been vigorously pursuing the ideals of establishing an equitable and just social order in the UT. The UT government had been working sincerely to empower the tribal community which remained neglected and discriminated against for decades together.

Conferring rights over the forest land for these forest dwellers is poised to elevate the socio-economic status of a sizeable section of 14 lakh population of tribals and nomadic communities including Gujjar, Bakarwals and Gaddi Sippis in the Union Territory. These people have been living in the forests since centuries without any right over the forest land but implementation of FRA proved to be of great help for these forest dwellers. The Act was a step towards redressing prejudice and empowering communities to participate in the management of forest and wildlife protection. The preamble to the Act itself notes that it recognizes the historical injustice to tribals and others who have been traditionally living in forest areas.

As per provisions of Forest Rights Act (FRA), it provides the right to hold and live in the forest land for habitation or self-cultivation for livelihood by a member or members of Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDST) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD). FDSTs can be related with Gujjars and Bakarwals in J&K and OTFD can be related to Kashmiri, Dogri, Pahari or any other non ST people living near forests for the last 3 generations or 75 years or more. The FRA will certainly help towards strengthening the democracy at grassroots level besides correcting the wrongs done in past by replicating the true spirit of the Act in Jammu and Kashmir.

YOUR COLUMN
Human life & wildlife

Dear Editor,

This time theme of World Wildlife Day is considered to be very important. This time the discussion will focus on the conservation of those species, which have the greatest contribution to ecological conservation. For several decades in a row, the most neglected was wildlife. We must have expressed concern on the conservation of tigers, lions and elephants broadly, because they appear to be extinct, but today such species of flora and other fauna are disappearing, which keep the ecosystem stable. We do not know how many species have been lost by man since he took his dominion over the earth. Roughly about 8,400 wildlife and flora-species are threatened by us and it is believed that the existence of about 30,000 species has been raised in great questions. Earlier it has also been believed that if this continues, then we will push about one million species towards extinction in the coming time. We have certainly discussed extinct species, but perhaps if we had data about the adverse effects of

these species, whether wildlife or plant species, their extinction would be more serious. The overall health of any ecosystem is probably also directly related to human life, because if deteriorating winds can directly attack our respiratory system, it is somehow linked to the climate. Be it pure water or all the issues and questions related to our food, they also have a direct relationship with the ecosystem. The earth has woven the entire ecosystem through a fabric of 46 million years of labor, in which every small life or non-living element has a fine relationship with each other. They have interdependence and this is the reason that if this dependency is broken for any reason, then there is upheaval in the ecosystem. Now the reason for the loss of biodiversity is humans themselves. According to IUCN report, 121 plant species and 735 animal species have come in 'Red List'. One-third of the species are in the threatened category, of which 41 per cent are amphibians, 25 per cent mammals and 13.30 per cent bird species. These are data after the study of 63,838 species, which is only four percent of the total species available in the earth, meaning 96 per cent of the species have not even been studied. The understanding of nature, science and systems is negligible in all our education, because if it were part of education from the

early stages, then perhaps we would have increased understanding of our eco-system and the same would be reflected in our development policies. For some time now, if we also look at the rate at which we have lost forests every year, then perhaps we will understand some seriousness. The figure is in front. Every year we lose 1,090 million hectares of forest around the world. Also understand that Amazon, which is called the lungs of the world, loses forest equal to a football field every minute. Today we should also know that 400 dark zones have already formed in the ocean, which means that life in these areas has become zero. We have set up sanctuaries around the world to protect wildlife, but these sanctuaries have become victims of ambushes. This does not merely raise questions of mismanagement, but points to the more important collective participation, which is nil. Look in your own country. The death of a tiger in every two days has been recorded. Still we have not been able to seriously understand that life in our education, which in one way or the other contributes a lot to our economy, food and our other needs, which are directly related to human life. Until such a great understanding is not made, we will continue to celebrate such days every year to show off.

Vijay Garg.

