

THREAT LOOMING LARGE

Whether the government functionaries are saying that the terrorism is on last leg in the Valley or few others claiming that the sparse incidents of terrorism are due to desperation of terror mongers, the reality on ground is that the threat of terrorism is still looming large and no day passes when there is no encounter or an attack on a cop or security picket. There is no doubt that much has been achieved by the security forces after the BJP government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has came to power and given free hand to the security personnel to tackle terrorism but still there is long way to go to achieve complete tranquility in the Valley and elsewhere in the UT of J&K. In this context, the latest action by the terrorists is attack on a Police Inspector in Srinagar city which led to serious injuries on victim's neck. The reports asserted that terrorists fired at Inspector Sheikh Firdous, posted with Anti-Corruption Bureau in Dhobi Mohalla locality of Batmaloo area in Srinagar, outside the local mosque. Doctors at S.M.H.S Hospital in Srinagar; where the injured police officer was shifted, said he has suffered a bullet injury in the neck. This incident and many others in the recent past are testimony to the fact that the path of security forces is still difficult as there are many terror mongers which are required to be brought to book or should be eliminated before declaring the Valley free of terror. The Government should understand that in the hurry to take credit it should not lessen the guard in the Valley as threat to peace is still there with terrorists both foreign and native looking for the lose moments to attack and act in a way which is detrimental to the country. It is pertinent to mention that last year lot many civilian killings were carried out by the terrorists thus creating security problem which led to mass scale migration from the Valley as migrant labourers left the Union Territory to find solace in their native lands. Though government took tough measures and controlled the situation but it is the time that government remain on tenterhooks as enemy is still there and waiting for right moment to hit back as the case today when an officer of JKP was injured in shootout.

REMITTING STAMP DUTY

The initiatives of the present Government to ensure over-all development of J&K are being implemented with full dedication and honesty by the UT administration as every other day we observe some major development in this regard. It is a fact that after abrogation of articles 370 and 35A, which were earlier acting as major hurdles in the path of development in J&K as no outsider was allowed to set up a unit or industry in the erstwhile state, the gates of J&K were opened and several prominent investors were invited by administration to invest in the Union Territory thereby becoming a partner in its march towards progress and prosperity. It is only due to the untiring efforts of administration under the guidance of ruling dispensation that proposals worth several crores were received for investment in Union Territory and many of them were even approved by the Government, thereby paying way for them into Jammu and Kashmir. Further to ensure all possible support and assistance to the aspiring investors, a slew of significant decisions were taken by the Government so that they may not face any inconvenience in setting up their units. Where on one hand, dedicated industrial estates were launched, on the other hand single window clearance system was also ensured for the investors to get necessary permissions and NoCs. When these units will be set up in J&K, necessary housing facilities would also be required for the people from outside J&K. Moreover to boost real estate sector, so that more and more people purchase properties in J&K, in a significant decision the administration has now decided to remit 50 per cent stamp duty for all the first time buyers in housing sector for a period of two years. The main motive behind this decision is to motivate more and more buyers towards the real estate sector thereby giving a major boost to the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. As for registration of any sale of property, a huge amount was charged by the administration has stamp duty, as such to ease the financial burden from interested buyers besides making registration process buyer-friendly, the administration has remitted 50 per cent stamp duty. No doubt, this decision will cause some financial burden on administration but will attract a lot of interested people to buy property without any fear of huge stamp duty.



OFF 'D' CUFF

Dont Be in a Hurry

field, one must follow this natural course; otherwise one cannot attain any worthwhile goals. Why is it that when the tree was in the garden, it was green, but when the same tree was transferred to another place—the courtyard—it dried up? The reason is that when the tree was in the garden, it had its roots intact, but when it was transferred to the courtyard, it had very few of its roots left. And it is roots that give life to a tree. Without roots a tree is just wood and not a living tree.

This is a law of nature and this law of nature applies to all human activities. It is the need of every business, every profession, and every institution to have proper roots, that is, a sound basis. There is no exception to this law of nature.

For example, education is the basis for a job, reputation is the basis of a business, and infrastructure is the basis of national development. Constructing a really solid foundation requires a long period of time; you cannot have such a foundation by just taking wild leaps. When you are in a hurry to achieve something, it means that you are denying the law of nature. You want to build a world on your own and this kind of procedure is not possible in this world. Those who engage in a gradual process will find support in nature; and without such support no achievement is possible in this world.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Fortified rice: Effectual meal to combat hidden-hunger, malnourishment

■ ANJINA ATTRI

Green revolution although significantly enhanced the productivity and achieved the food security problem in developing countries like India, but in terms of dietary diversification, it is far away from the developed nations. About half of the global population reported to have deficiency of zinc, iron and vitamin A, leading to impaired immune function, iron deficiency anemia and exophthalmia respectively. To overcome the problems of micronutrient deficiencies, people are advised to be cautious about the diversification of their daily diet, but most of the people can't afford to supplement their diet due to their poor economic condition. The same can have detrimental effect on a person's health, as well as affecting wider society with increased public costs, decreased work capacity in populations and a tragic loss of human potential. Malnutrition can lead to a variety of health issues, including increased risk of cardiovascular conditions and a weakened immune system. Pre-school children and women in their reproductive are most vulnerable to deficiencies because they require higher nutrient uptake. According to Food Ministry, every second woman in the country is anemic and every third child is stunted- a sign of chronic under nutrition and poor cognitive development. India ranks 94 out of 107 countries on the global hunger index (GHI), which put it in the 'serious hunger' category. Looking into this matter, the government has decided to distribute the fortify rice not only through ration shops, also call the Public Distribution System (PDS) but also via various government schemes such as Mid-Day Meal (MDM) which is renamed as PM Poshan & Integrated Child Development (ICDS) rechristened Saksham Anganwari and Poshan 2.0, covering all their centers across the country. The reason why Prime Minister in his 75th Independence Day speech also announced that by 2024, rice made available under every government programme will be fortified to combat malnourishment and micronutrient deficiencies in pregress, lactating mothers and children. The announcement made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi marks a huge push by the Central Government for fortified rice projects and process is expected to be implemented nationwide by 2024.

To address anemia and micronutrient deficiency in the country, in 2019, Government of India (GoI) approved the Centrally Sponsored Pilot Scheme on 'Fortification of Rice and its distribution' for a period of 3 years beginning 2019-20 with total budget outlay of 174.6 crore under which 130 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT) of food grains being provided to 112 specially identified (high-burden) districts of 15 states through Public Distribution System (PDS). However, with PM's announcement, the quantity will need to be scaled upto atleast 350 LMT. With such an ambitious target set by the central government to combat the 'hidden hunger' or micro-nutritional deficiencies, the print explains what fortified rice is and why it is so important.

What is hidden hunger: Globally, diets deficient in vitamins and minerals affect more than 2 billion people and India has an especially high burden of such people being home to about 60 per cent of anemic pre-school children, 50 per cent of anemic pregress and a quarter of anemic men. Since the problem i.e., lack of essential nutrients often go unnoticed, can contribute to the phenomenon known as 'hidden hunger', where a person's diet includes enough or even excess calories but does not contain necessary vitamins and minerals needed for optimal health leading to malnutrition. Though it is hard to detect, its ramifications can be serious.

Why government relying on fortified rice to address the problem: Rice, the world's most important food crop

provides more than 20 per cent of the world's calorie uptake, with approximately 480 metric tonnes of rice produced annually. As a staple food for over half of the global population, rice offers a good and affordable source of energy. However, white rice does not provide significant amount of most nutrients. Additionally, milling process though makes the grain taste better and visually appealing but less nutritious as it removes both the fat and nutrient rich bran layers and also lead to some grains being broken. A higher proportion of broken grains decrease price as the quality is generally acknowledged to be reduced. On the government level, generally two teams, one from the Food and Civil Supplies department along with the quality assurance person, and another from the Food Corporation of India must ensure inspection of paddy quality in storage godown and warehouses, twice in a month or two. As one of world's most widely consumed foods, rice is a promising vehicle for fortification. The fortification of rice also offers a commercial opportunity for brand owners to differentiate their products in a saturated market by offering special rice that address the specific health concerns of particular populations.

What is fortification: According to World Health Organisation (WHO), 'Fortification is the process of increasing the content of an essential micronutrients, such as vitamins or minerals in a food item to improve its nutritional value and provide public health benefits'. It is one of the strategies used by WHO and the Food and Agricultural Organisations to tackle nutrient deficiencies at a global level with more than 86 countries working on cereal grain fortification like rice, wheat and maize among others. Fortification has a distinct edge over supplements when it comes to combating micronutrient deficiency. It has minimal effects on taste and cooking properties with simultaneously adding multiple nutrients to cure multiple deficiencies. This process involves grinding broken rice into powder mixing it with micronutrients like iron, folic acid, vitamin B12 and then shaping them into rice kernel either through hot extrusion, cold extrusion, coating and dusting. The former three processes produce a rice-premix that is blended with retail rice (polished rice packaged at rice mills). However, latter one (fourth) applies a micronutrient-premix directly to rice. In addition, both extrusion technologies (hot and cold) mentioned above maintain a low shear process due to relatively high in-barrel moisture content (30-35 per cent).

Fortified Rice Kernels (FRK) have shelf life of at least 12 months. As per guidelines issued by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public distribution, the shape and size of the fortified rice should 'resemble the normal milled rice as closely as possible' and length and breadth of the grain should be 5 mm and 2.2 mm respectively. Under the ministry guidelines, 10 Kg of fortified rice kernels must be blended with 1 Kg of regular rice to obtain fortified rice. This fortified rice resembles milled rice in shape, size and colour but contains additional vitamins and minerals that retained their micronutrient content when washed and boiled in water. According to regulations laid down by FSSAI, 1 Kg of fortified rice will contain the following: iron (28-42.5 mg), folic acid (75-125 µg) and vitamin B12 (0.75-1.25 µg). The packaging (FSSAI packaging regulations) is to be made in jute bags with the logo ('+F') and the "Fortified with iron, folic acid and vitamin B12 mandatorily printed on the pack. The Union Ministry of Consumers Affairs, Food and Public distribution had launched a programme for distribution of fortified rice having atleast three micronutrients- folic acid, iron and vitamin B12 to children and lactating mothers. As a part of the programme, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) was asked to come

up with a comprehensive plan to scale up the annual supply of fortified rice as well as in 112 specially identified aspirational (high burden) districts of the country. The FCI supplied fortified rice to 17 lakh children under Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme and 55, 607 Anganwari centers under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) for 2021-22 in Andhra Pradesh. In J&K UT, FCI has distributed 8576.126 and 10331.026 MT fortified rice through MDM and ICDS respectively during the year 2021-22.

Biofortification: Ending all forms of hunger by 2030, as set forward in UN-Sustainable Development Goal (UN-SDG2) is a daunting but essential task. Though several minerals and vitamins often lack in human diets, but iron, zinc, vitamin A and vitamin B9 (Folate) deficiencies are amongst the most severe. Bio fortification, the enhancement of micronutrients of staple food through biological processes, such as plant breeding and genetic engineering, is advocated as a pivotal means to reduce micronutrient malnutrition. Biofortification of rice offers a unique opportunity to grow rice varieties with a higher content of vitamins and minerals, either through selective breeding of rice crops that are naturally high in micronutrients or through transgenic techniques that modulate gene expression in the rice crop to accumulate more micronutrients in the kernels, although the latter have yet to receive full approval for release to farmers. In the last few years, the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of implementing biofortification using conventional breeding techniques has been established as a key intervention to reduce mineral and vitamin deficiencies in developing countries. Another point worth mentioning here is that fortified crops are now released in 40 countries globally.

Evidence of biological efficacy of fortified rice: Various research studies conducted among children and young women have demonstrated that regular consumption of rice fortified with adequate levels of iron and other micronutrients significantly improves anemia and micronutrient status. Five studies, in Costa Rice, India, Thailand and the Philippines assessed rice fortification in the context of a large effectiveness trial. The trials studied different populations and different outcomes with three of the five studies included more than one nutrient in the rice. Four of the five studies reported improved outcomes i.e., decrease in neural tube defects, increase in hemoglobin, decrease in anemia and infant beriberi deaths. Extruded rice fortified with iron when fed to 6 to 13 year old children, as part of a school lunch meal, improved body iron stores and decrease the prevalence of iron deficiency. A meta-analysis by WHO showed rice fortified with vitamins and minerals, including iron, reduce the risk of iron deficiency by 35 per cent. In Maharashtra's Gadehiroli, rice fortified with iron had shown a reduction in anemia prevalence by 10 per cent and improved average cognitive scores by 11.3 points.

Hoax of 'Plastic rice': Claiming about the presence of plastic rice supplied by government PDS shops, here it becomes pertinent to mention that by nature plastic rice cannot be cooked as its melting point increases with increase in temperature and the rumors of plastic rice are just hoaxes spread by people to create doubt and confusion. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) urges people to neither believe nor spread this fake news through social media channels and assured that if they found any evidence of such complaints of plastic rice, they will take it seriously and if found genuine, will take legal action under the Food safety and Standard Act 2006.

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Deliberately Manufactured Discontent

■ M R LALU

A feeling of being arm twisted by a pressure group with its most delicate weapon, the religion, is the situation that the country is dealing with at present. There were instances of arm twisting in India in the past too. The recent agitations in the streets of India are an exposition of how vulnerable can the idea of secularism in a democracy be, when it comes to face the unity of a particular community.

Beginning from the streets of Udupi of Karnataka, the drama in the name of religious fundamental rights continued to stay in the eye of the storm across the country. Brouhaha went on in the past too for days to what the country witnessed during deliberate agitations that took place in the streets with the unscrupulous backing of the veiled liberals, intellectuals and a section of the media. Radicals came out in the open with the same victimhood narrative to grab exposure. Planting girls in the veils in the front, as usual, the same radical, liberal nexus with a deliberate homework and planning, executed what they wanted. The idea was to force the administration to kowtow, if not, at least to keep the issue burning to the extent of attracting the attention of the international agencies. This is just a trailer. The real show is anticipated. This is an experimentation and testimony of unity, which in turn, is trying to shake the conscience of the rest of the population. The Hijab rumpus gained ample support from the double standard politics, which frequently relies on what they call a minority vote bank. A bigger game plan that has silently been hatched for months and executed in a well-articulative manner; as it is possible in a country like India, where democratic values become the liability of the majority. To reiterate the reports, the whole

game plan started with some girls, who from the minority community made a beline in tune with a right-wing student organisation by being a part of its rally, and subsequently got apprehended by the Campus Front of India cadre and convinced and canvassed to stay away from the right-wing. The cadre could further induce the girls to become instrumental in implementing its sinister agenda of disruption in the name of religious rights.

The allegation of discrimination of girls in Hijab, which is reported to have begun in November 2021, could successfully be enhanced into the level and reach and attention that it gained today. It was not only the agenda that someone in the media alone would fan into flames, but the left-liberal lobby holding hands with Islamists could achieve it hiding behind the veils. As usual, narratives were fixed on religious rights. The fight appeared to be against an administration, blamed to have been audacious to challenge the religious rights of the citizens as enshrined in the constitution. The victim card that they play from Parliament to the public platforms and to streets is straightforwardly supported by the lobby, who since 2014, has been jobless and out of the corridors of power. The agenda is to deliberately blow issues out of proportion and tarnish the secular image of the country internationally and lamentations of victimhood being played out to people across the country and outside. The easy way, according to them, is to catch the emotionally vulnerable groups such as farmers, women, students and the illiterate people from the economically backward communities. The intent is to create chaos and confusion hiding behind burning tyres and vehicles in the streets and systematically executing mob violence to mob lynching.

Finding joy in creating anarchy in a country which in itself is a package of compulsions and complexities is a new normal. Religious, political, economic and social disparities shaking it day by day, the country is seen to be panting and wheezing heavily. Deliberate disruptions to test bargaining power in a democratic setup by force and turning the judiciary into a mere scarecrow, the agenda is well-administered by the lobby. Jumping into conclusions and throwing a hat of support in haste will be a dangerous folly. To become a sympathiser of the feminine rights to cover their head as a gesture of protecting their religious rights appears to be harmless. But the demonic intent behind it, surreptitiously planning to divide the country in the name of faith should not be easily neglected. It is easy to blindfold our eyes. But the reality will be so cruel by then, as we open our eyes, the values that this nation practiced and preserved for ages, accepting and accommodating all the diversities with open arms that had flown into its courtyard, will disappear forever; turning this into a dark space of radicalism. A patriarchal mechanism, capturing the market of spirituality in its fist, ordains its cohorts to believe what they enforce as right. Visuals from the lands of radicals are horrifying examples of a mind-set that the same patriarchy white-washes in the name of faith. Staggeringly, the elements of disruption show the audacity to go beyond the space of authority of the judiciary and dictate as to what a secular country such as India should follow. It is a start and a message that this impulse is sending, that the political parties who once joyfully nibbled on to the minority vote bank need to watch on as to how the emergence of a consolidation forming in the horizon, which would be fully communal

in nature. All parties who were seated in the lap of the minority vote bank with their pseudo secular double standard would be slowly evicted. Expect a new party emerging nationally to consolidate the cause of a particular community, stretching in all directions of the country, becoming a bargaining force in the days to come. Issues such as Hijab, calibrated to that extent will flourish unbouedly gaining support. Everything that stands for being national will be disparaged. Perpetuating the patriarchy to the extent of anarchy is the reality. That which is anti-national will gain acceptance and be rated as credible. Crying for the essence of being Indian will be ridiculed. Clergies will dictate as to what this country should run like. By choosing the dictates of a patriarchy to education, a generation is sending signals of a mindset being radicalized. Reforms aiming a transformation lead to affluence and peace in the society. Any faith for that matter, if reluctant to embrace reforms, would dangerously hit and collapse one day on the wall of modernity. Religions that walked on the path of reformation eradicating anomalies would remain rejuvenated and continue to survive overcoming all difficulties. Hinduism has always been open to reforms and probably this character of assimilating modernity must be the reason that it survived centuries of terrible invasions and their nasty effects. Christianity too made efforts to shed practices that they thought were obsolete to a modern atmosphere. Before fuelling violence in the name of faith, there should be independent reasoning on everything that creates distrust and unrest in the country. Creative reforms are indicators of peaceful coexistence.

YOUR COLUMN

Nation's medical education system requires special attention

Dear Editor;
Russia-Ukrainian War has also brought our country face to face with the fact that about 20,000 of our students are studying in Ukraine; About 18,000 of them have gone on to study MBBS, i.e., medical education. The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that the Union government has asked its ministers to travel to neighboring countries so that students can be brought to India through neighboring countries. Diplomatic experts have raised a number of questions about the Government's delay; first

is why the students were not brought back when it was being estimated at the diplomatic level that the chances of war were very high; the negligence is at the diplomatic and diplomatic level; second, even with clouds of war looming, solid arrangements were not made; students who returned to the country were charged many times more. MBBS students in Ukraine have to come to India and pass Medical Council of India (MCI) exam. It is estimated that 4,000 students from Ukraine take test each year; but very few pass. Despite this, thousands of students from India enroll in Ukrainian universities. There are two main reasons for this, first, the cost of education in medical, engineering and other fields there is far less than in private sector educational institutions in India and secondly, students do not need to take a separate test for admission.

Why do our students go to study in these small countries? Referring to medical education, he also questioned whether the

private sector could not solve this problem by investing heavily in medical education. Government of India also blamed the state governments for not providing cheap land for setting up medical colleges. Health experts are of view that the root cause of the problem is failure of governments to set-up medical colleges in the public sector. In many states cheap land has been provided for private sector hospitals and medical colleges but these hospitals and colleges are out of reach of the common man. Private hospitals, medical and engineering colleges have flourished over the decades, but they have also exacerbated the problem. Medical colleges differ from other educational institutions in that they have to have large hospitals attached to them. In addition to the recall of students from Ukraine, the government needs to pay special attention to the field of education, especially medical education besides investing heavily in the field.

Vijay Garg.