

VDGs HOLD MUCH SIGNIFICANCE

As Kashmir Valley is witnessing increase in terrorist activities set-up like that of VDCs holds much significance out there to contain the violence through this initiative wherein people are empowered by giving them government support. As Kashmir's Kulgam has witnessed another terrorism related death in the killing of Panch in Kolpora area there is dire need to rejuvenate VDGs as soon as possible because locals' involvement in security edifice will make the security robust as it is likely that information will start flowing effectively as the terrorist attacks in the Valley are mostly attributed to intelligence failure. It is however praiseworthy that within a day of announcement made by Home Minister Amit Shah, the MHA has come up with the order regarding rejuvenation of the erstwhile VDCs which will be named as Village Defence Groups (VDGs) and their members Village Guards with no distinction of ranks and anomaly in honorarium. The Under Secretary to the Government of India (MHA) has written a communication to the Chief Secretary of J&K, informing him that the issue regarding the revised scheme of village defence groups has been examined in the Ministry and a few decisions have been taken. It said that the members of the Village Defence Group shall be designated as Village Defence Guard (VDG) and in more vulnerable areas, persons (VI category) who shall be leading/ coordinating the VDG would be paid of Rs. 4500 per month and other persons (V2 category) who are members of these VDGs on voluntary basis will be paid a uniform rate Rs. 4000 per month. It is pertinent to mention that the VDGs will function under the direction of SP/SSP of the concerned District. There is a clause in the aforesaid order that the revised scheme will, however, be made effective only after apprising the High Court. The whole thing is likely to bring in vibrancy in terror control measures besides fortifying the rural and far off belts in the UT of J&K. Earlier, the VDGs had more presence in the Jammu region but the need of the time is that similar groups should be raised in the Valley to put an end to the vicious cycle of violence.

ALL ARE WORRIED

Leave aside the inhumane messages circulating on the social media sites generating false narrative against those who were studying in Ukraine and are presently stuck in the war-torn country due to delay in taking decision to leave the region despite Government of India's advisories issued well before the invasion by the Russian troops, because the source of these messages are IT Cells of political outfits which like sharks are finding opportunities in this critical situation to woo people to their side without thinking about the mental state of the relatives and friends of those who are still longing to return to their native land. As far as administration in Jammu is concerned the officials are going out of the way to provide any kind of assistance and moral support to families of the young students who are on the way to home. It is pertinent to mention that the administration is in touch with the families of all the 32 persons from Jammu who are stranded in war-torn Ukraine. Two helpline numbers have also been earmarked for the cause as the same are providing information about the latest developments taking place in Ukraine. As far as those people are concerned who are spreading bogus news about students stuck in Ukraine or on the borders of neighbouring countries there, the English dictionary has no appropriate word to denounce them as they are good for nothing and can create hindrances while all others are doing whatever possible to bring back Indians from the war zone. Reportedly, parents of several students who are stuck in the war-torn Ukrainian city of Kharkiv staged a protest in Jammu and made a passionate appeal to the Central Government for their early evacuation. Such protests at this crucial juncture are not at all advisable when the entire country is watching the government's active role in bringing back Indians especially when the Prime Minister has asked the IAF to rope in gigantic C-17 aircraft to fast track the evacuation and also deputed four Union Ministers to different countries to streamline evacuation of people who are stuck in various cities and towns in Ukraine.



A Guru is God's Grace Upon you!

Once upon a time two friends were playing the game of hide & seek in their village.

In the first part of the game, the first friend won and in the second part, the second one won the game.

On the next turn, it was the time of the first friend to seek again but they were unable to finish the game because it was getting dark. So they took the decision to continue the game the next morning.

The Dawn of Magic

The next morning the first friend came but he found that his partner is absent. He waited for a long time and ultimately went to his friend's house to know the reason for his absence.

There, he found that his friend's parents and neighbors were crying.

To his utter shock, he came to know about the death of his friend last night.

He went near the dead body of his friend, and said, "It is not the right time to sleep; it is time to wake up and finish the game of hide & seek."

Hearing this, his dead friend got alive.

The magical power of the boy amazed all.

The boy with such supernatural powers was none other than Guru Ravidas, the poet-saint of the Bhakti movement; a kind socio-religious reformer; a thinker; and above all a spiritual soul who took Lord Krishna's devotee Mira Bai under his discipleship.

Guru Ravidas; a devotee with absolute devotion

Dr Archika Didi

Tradition becomes our security, and when the mind is secure it is in decay.

-Jiddu Krishnamurti

EDITORIAL

'Har Ghar Dastak'- Campaign to inoculate entire eligible population with COVID-19 vaccination

Jammu & Kashmir administration left no stone unturned in its endeavour to contain the violence through this initiative wherein people are empowered by giving them government support. As Kashmir's Kulgam has witnessed another terrorism related death in the killing of Panch in Kolpora area there is dire need to rejuvenate VDGs as soon as possible because locals' involvement in security edifice will make the security robust as it is likely that information will start flowing effectively as the terrorist attacks in the Valley are mostly attributed to intelligence failure. It is however praiseworthy that within a day of announcement made by Home Minister Amit Shah, the MHA has come up with the order regarding rejuvenation of the erstwhile VDCs which will be named as Village Defence Groups (VDGs) and their members Village Guards with no distinction of ranks and anomaly in honorarium. The Under Secretary to the Government of India (MHA) has written a communication to the Chief Secretary of J&K, informing him that the issue regarding the revised scheme of village defence groups has been examined in the Ministry and a few decisions have been taken. It said that the members of the Village Defence Group shall be designated as Village Defence Guard (VDG) and in more vulnerable areas, persons (VI category) who shall be leading/ coordinating the VDG would be paid of Rs. 4500 per month and other persons (V2 category) who are members of these VDGs on voluntary basis will be paid a uniform rate Rs. 4000 per month. It is pertinent to mention that the VDGs will function under the direction of SP/SSP of the concerned District. There is a clause in the aforesaid order that the revised scheme will, however, be made effective only after apprising the High Court. The whole thing is likely to bring in vibrancy in terror control measures besides fortifying the rural and far off belts in the UT of J&K. Earlier, the VDGs had more presence in the Jammu region but the need of the time is that similar groups should be raised in the Valley to put an end to the vicious cycle of violence.

Aak: The unexplored plant

■ DR VIKAS SHARMA & SAIYANA SHARMA

Aak flower plant is having an important place in Hinduism and considered as a holy and sacred plant to worship Lord Shiva. Aak pharmacological activities have been popular in the past to cure several diseases in human beings such as cold, fever, leprosy, asthma, rheumatism, eczema, indigestion, diarrhea, elephantiasis, skin diseases and dysentery. Himalayan regions are well-known to supply life-supporting plants to humans. The Northwest Himalaya represents very distinct topographical belts having characteristic climate, geology and unique flora of high valued medicinal and endemic species. One of the most paramount flora found in India is Calotropis procera, commonly known as Aak. There are mainly two species of Aak present in India: red & white, while red Aak flower plant is highly useful in Ayurveda and the white Aak flower plant is having an important place in Hinduism and considered as a holy and sacred plant to worship Bhagwan Shiva. Basically, Calotropis procera is a soft-wooded, perennial shrub of the family Apocynaceae and subfamily Asclepiadaceae (the milkweed family). It is known by various names in different languages nationwide-In Hindi: Aak, Madar, Akooa, Akwan, Aakan; In Sanskrit: Ark, Mandar, Alark, Shulkal; In Marathi: Akadak; In Bengali: Aakand; In Gujarati: Aakado; In English: Mudar, Gigantic Swallow Wort, Apple of Sodom, Sodom's milkweed, swallow-wort, Indian milkweed, mudar fibre, mudar plant, rooster tree; other common names of Aak are: bitter apple, poison apple, snake apple, thorn apple, cabbage tree, camel tree and dead sea fruit. It is an evergreen xerophytic plant which is generally found in arid and semi-arid habitats. The word "Calotropis" is derived from Greek word which means "beautiful," that refers to its flowers; whereas "procera" is a Latin word referring to the cuticular wax present on its leaves and stem. It is a spreading shrub or medium-

the grassroots level. Under this campaign, specific focus has also been laid to step up the targeted delivery of healthcare schemes for the poor and ensure 100% saturation of eligible beneficiaries in a mission mode.

The campaign comes handy while administering second dose of COVID vaccination in the Union Territory as J&K administration is among the forerunners of inoculating its population with 1st dose of COVID-19 vaccine when this campaign was launched. The district administrations aggressively worked on this initiative and launched campaigns to cover all unvaccinated people in convergence with ICDS where the teams of healthcare workers, CSEs, VLEs and ICDS went door-to-door to vaccinate people eligible for the second dose. 'Har Ghar Dastak' also aims to cover the poor families from rural background and ensure greater coverage with easy access to affordable healthcare

facilities during health emergencies.

This door-to-door campaign also focuses on achieving 100 per cent enrollment under Ayushman Bharat scheme. To achieve maximum results, the health care workers travelled the length and breadth of the region to cover each and every individual of the UT. J&K administration led by Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha has made it a point that the health care should be accessible to everyone in the UT. J&K has been a front runner among the States/UTs in vaccinating the eligible population with the COVID vaccine. As on date, the administration has administered 2,15,14,865 doses of COVID vaccine. UT administration through 'Har Ghar Dastak' Campaign is reaching out to each and every household and vaccinating the remaining individuals to ensure that safety net of vaccines covers all individuals of 18 years and above.

War against drugs

■ AVINASH BASSAN



Our Earth inhabits a variety of herbal plants being which are being used by mankind for medicinal purposes since time immemorial. With passage of time this natural gift of planet Earth is being used out of context of medicinal concerns and changed the basic narrative from medicinal use to drugs abuse thus sparking serious concerns of WHO, Governments, Societies and intellectual class across the globe. Not only this, even some Governments are using drug trafficking as a tool in furtherance of their Foreign Policy.

Situation is more alarming in South Asia especially in a country like India with huge population chunk, low education strata and less employment opportunities especially for youth who are soft targets for suppliers of drugs. The abuse of narcotics have caused wide spread concern to all the nations of the world. In India, Jammu and Kashmir after Punjab is becoming the leading victim of Narcoterrorism

Youngsters in the age group of 12 and above years can be easily found using Tobacco, Cigarettes, opium, cocaine, Charas, sedatives and other narcotics, which have surpassed all dimensions. Thus abuse of drugs has become an international problem. In Jammu & Kashmir, their number has been increasing at an alarming rate. Its use has gripped many young men and women. It cripples the addict's mental and physical organs and cause a painful for him and his family. Mostly it is the younger generation falling an easy prey to this menace.

In Jammu and Kashmir (as per studies) Pakistan sponsored Narcoterrorism is playing very destructive role especially among youngsters after sponsored terrorism.

Drug Addiction is one of the serious problems of the present times. The narcotics like heroin, hashish, and brown-sugar are commonly called drugs and young men and women either take these drugs orally or inhale their smoke. Tobacco is the beginning of Drugs addiction and easily available in market and there is no proper Check on the corners selling Tobacco, Cigarettes, and other paper products near schools, colleges and other institutions. In the modern society there are several family-problems. The lack of love and affection forces youths to get addicted to drugs. Sometimes the pressure of addicted friends tempts the youth to become an addict. Psychologists say that drugs help the addict to escape from the strains and problems of the world. But they damage the nervous system tremendously and shatter the mental make-up of the addicts. It even causes death. Even if the addict gives up taking drugs suddenly he may die. So withdrawal must be done gradually.

Identifying Addiction: Addiction typically starts as a source of recreation with drinking or using drugs in a social setting. The disease of addiction is progressive, which means that as time passes, he or she will exhibit a higher tolerance, frequently engage in the behavior, and experience intense cravings and withdrawal symptoms. If you or someone you love is struggling with substance use disorder, get help now.

Common Signs of Addiction: Over-active or under-active (depending on the drug); repetitive speech patterns; dilated pupils, red eyes; excessive sniffling and runny nose (not attributable to a cold); looking pale or undernourished; clothes do not fit the same; weight loss; change in eating habits; unusual odors or body odor due to lack of personal hygiene; behavioral signs of addiction; missing work/school; missing important engagements; isolating/secreting about activities; disrupted sleep patterns; legal problems; relationship/marital problems; financial problems; conversations dominated by using or drug/alcohol related topics; emotional signs of addiction; irritability/argumentative; defensiveness; inability to deal with stress; loss of interest in activities/people that used to be part of their lives; obnoxious; confused; rationalizing - offering alibis, excuses, justifications or other explanations for behavior; minimization - admitting superficially to the problem but not admitting to seriousness or full scope of the behavior or consequences; blaming - Placing blame for the behavior on someone else or some event; diversion - Changing the subject to avoid discussing the topic etc.

Drug-addicts must be treated with love and kindness. The society should take strong measures to control the dishonest businessmen and drug-trafficking. There is a greater need of switching over to combine social and institutional effort to check, curb and control this new threat to humanity especially the youngsters. This can be achieved by arranging uninterrupted awareness campaigns involving, health organization, sports clubs, educational institutions, police, Red Cross, NGOs, women, youngsters and drugs rehabilitation centres.

sized tree reaching 2.5 to 6 m in height. It has a deep taproot of 3-4 m deep and a secondary root system with woody lateral roots that may rapidly regenerate adventitious shoots when the plant is injured. The stems are twisted and covered with a fissured corky bark. These have grey-green leaves which are 15-30 cm long and 2.5-10 cm broad and have a succulent and waxy appearance. The flowers are pentamerous, small, cream or greenish white at the base and purple violet at the extremity of the lobes. The fruit is a fleshy and inflated, up to 10 cm or more in diameter. *C. procera* is native to Africa, Arabian Peninsula, Western Asia, the Indian Subcontinent and Indo-China. It is a multipurpose plant and is widely used in traditional medicinal systems in North Africa, Middle East Asia, South Asia, and South-East Asia. The pharmacological activities of Aak have been popular in the past to cure several diseases in human beings such as cold, fever, leprosy, asthma, rheumatism, eczema, indigestion, diarrhea, elephantiasis, skin diseases, and dysentery. These medicinal attributes of *C. procera* can be credited to secondary metabolites and cardiotonic substances present in the plant. It can help to cure cough & cold, its powdered leaf helpful in curing wound faster. It is helpful in treating indigestion/constipation, killing of intestinal worms, curing tooth cavities, treating joint pains, normalizing blood circulation and also helpful in treating obesity and diabetes. It is also used as an antitoxin for snake bites. *C. procera* contains cardiac glycosides, which inhibits the proliferation of MCF-7 cells through cytotoxicity, apoptosis and autophagy. *C. procera* is also a promising phyto-therapeutic option for treating inflammatory conditions of the colon. *Calotropis procera* is an emerging source of natural fiber and is used as an alternative for fodder during dry periods.

(The authors are from Biochemistry Division of SKUAST-Jammu).

Yogyata Se Rozgar; Hallmark of new Jammu & Kashmir

Constitution of India enshrines the principle of fairness and equality in public employment as it empowers every citizen to secure employment on the basis of merit and fair play only. Jammu and Kashmir government has launched a slew of measures to uphold the sanctity of this sacred tenet of our constitution. In keeping with spirit of providing level playing field to job aspirants as guaranteed in the Constitution, the Jammu and Kashmir government has embarked on a journey of ensuring transparency and accountability in appointment of candidates to various public posts. The government has made necessary amendments to the recruiting process to ensure that merit and intelligence remains the sole criteria for appointment of candidates for government jobs. Apart from referring record number of posts to the premier recruiting agencies like JKPSC and JKSSB, the prime focus has been on ensuring transparent selections for all the referred vacancies. The recent appointment of nearly 10,000 candidates in first phase of the biggest ever recruitment campaign including around 8000 Class-IV posts by JKSSB is a prime example signifying the above reforms being carried out by the UT government. Official figures suggested that 11,000 appointments were made in the past 18 months in J&K. Around, 20,323 additional posts were referred to SSB for the recruitment for which is at different stages of completion. Many domicile certificate holders who could not apply earlier in the recruitment process in J&K will be eligible for these posts.

As part of second phase of the recruitment campaign in Jammu and Kashmir, the government has identified 12,379 posts that are being referred to recruitment agencies, a 38-page Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) report has revealed. The government of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is in the process of refer-

ring these vacancies to the recruitment agencies, it said. There are vacancies in most departments in J&K. The government is in the process of identifying all such vacancies for referral to the recruiting agencies and has recently framed a high level committee under the chairmanship of Secretary ARI & Trainings to ensure their recruitment is in consonance with updated recruitment rules. Moreover, in order to clear the stagnation and bring uniformity in the recruitment process government cancelled the long pending advertisement notifications sent to JKPSC and JKSSB so that a new process is initiated on fast track basis as per updated rules and requirements. Further, the Government has also made JKSSB the sole recruiting body for all the non-gazetted and class-IV posts for government jobs including that for Police, Prisons and Fire & Emergency Services departments. This step is going to bring transparency, uniformity and acceleration in recruitment process besides ensuring prevalence of merit in the process. In this backdrop, 'Yogyata Se Rozgar' celebrates the spirit of merit in public employment. To mark the successful conduct of examination for these posts and the appointment based on merit, 'Yogyata Se Rozgar' was celebrated at Panchayat-level and block-level across UT of J&K. In these events, newly recruited Class-IV employees were felicitated with garlands and souvenirs in presence of their family members and local residents. Such events exhorted these new recruits to devote themselves in the service of the masses. The optimistic spirit of the youth of J&K has been reinforced by such events. 'Yogyata Se Rozgar' is not just a one-time event to felicitate new entrants to public service but it epitomizes that by ensuring accountability in appointment to public posts, the UT of J&K will keep intact the constitutional dictum of equality in matters of public employment.

'Many people in the West were secretly rubbing their hands and felt something like a flush of victory-including those who had promised us. 'We will not move 1 cm further east,' he was quoted. Casting the issue into the spotlight, many Western scholars held opinions that the issue was revolved around myths and misperceptions. One "myth" in particular kicked off a furious debate in e-mail threads, chat rooms and on Twitter: Russia was promised that NATO would not enlarge. However, Nikolai Sokov, a former Russian diplomat who served in the Foreign Ministry in Moscow between 1987 and 1992, disagrees. He said it sounded to be as a piece produced by the Ideology Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

One media outlet, RFE/RL reported, 'At no point in the discussion did either James Baker (Former US Secretary of State) or Gorbachev bring up the question of the possible extension of NATO membership to other Warsaw Pact countries beyond Germany,' according to Mark Kramer, director of the Cold War Studies Project at Harvard University's Davis Center. 'Indeed, it never would have occurred to them to raise an issue that was not on the agenda anywhere, not in Washington, not in Moscow, and not in any other Warsaw Pact or NATO capital,' Kramer wrote in an April 2009 article. While, according to Steven Pifer, a former US ambassador, who was serving at the State Department at the time, the US, France and Britain, along with Germany, had agreed to not deploy any non-German NATO forces in former East Germany. Russia's first president, Boris Yeltsin, was wary about NATO expansion but did not oppose it, according to declassified memos. 'We understand, of course, that any possible integration of East European countries into NATO will not automatically lead to the alliance somehow turning against Russia,' Yeltsin wrote in a September 1993 letter to US President Bill Clinton. But Yeltsin also cited what he cast as assurances given to Soviet officials during the negotiations on German unification, writing that "the spirit of the treaty on the final settlement...precludes the option of expanding the NATO zone into the East." Four years later, to assure Moscow's concerns, NATO and Russia signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act, a political agreement stating, among other things, that "NATO and Russia do not consider each

other as adversaries."

In 2002, NATO and Russia agreed to set up a joint consultative council, ostensibly as a venue to resolve disagreements. But the council was seen as ineffectual. Two years later, NATO underwent the largest expansion in its history; admitting seven more Eastern European countries, including the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which had been republics of the Soviet Union and chafed under Moscow's rule. While it wasn't the first time a NATO member bordered Russia or the Soviet Union, now a NATO member's troops potentially could be located just 625 Km from Moscow. In 2007, at the Munich Security Conference, an annual high-level gathering of officials, diplomats, and experts from both sides of the Atlantic, Putin unleashed a broadside against NATO, as well as the US, accusing the alliance of duplicity and of threatening Russia. "I think it is obvious that NATO expansion has no relation with the modernization of the alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust," he said. "What happened to the assurances our Western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today?" Putin asked-a remark that prompted some headscratching because the debate has focused almost exclusively on remarks made before the Warsaw Pact fell apart. "Where are these guarantees?" Among those who have given rise to Russian claims of a promise was the last US ambassador to the Soviet Union, Jack Matlock, who has repeatedly insisted, both in congressional testimony and more recently, that Gorbachev had received assurances that if Germany united, and stayed in NATO, the borders of NATO would not move eastward. But Wolfgang Ischinger, a former German ambassador and deputy foreign minister, said that agreements on German reunification, including the 1990 treaty known as the 2+4 Treaty, which formally paved the way for the two countries to become one again, made no mention of NATO enlargement. To my opinion, if diplomacy is given a broader chance, keeping aside all misgivings, Ukraine crisis can be resolved with affability.

Mool Raj, Doda.

YOUR COLUMN

Ukraine crisis: Truth & Delusion

Dear Editor,

Ukraine crisis was not born in a day. It brims with a myriad of truth and delusion that plunged the world into war. The credit for this goes to global players' insidious diplomacy that threw a spanner in the work. The trust deficit between Russia and the NATO allies remains a pivot of all adversaries, which played an anchoring role in the eruption of the Ukraine-Russia war. Through global diplomacy underpinned by superpowers, trust-building measures could have been bolstered but hegemonic ambitions did not let the peace prevail. Russia believes that during Berlin's unification in 1990, it was given assurance that NATO would never extend