

LEASE OF LIFE TO JKIFDC

To steer the people of Jammu and Kashmir out of the morass of mis-governance and discrimination, faced by them during fast more than several decades, the UT administration under the guidance of Centre Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated a significant development spree across J&K. It is only due to the dedicated efforts and strenuous approach of the present Government coupled with the proactive working approach of UT administration that the ongoing spree of development works is gaining momentum with every passing day thereby delivering expected results on ground level which can be observed even by a common man. As the Centre Government has always accorded a prioritized treatment to the newly created Union Territory, not only several major projects were launched but availability of ample funds was also ensured so that the ongoing works may not face any type of obstruction or disturbance at any level. Keeping the welfare of people on top priority, besides launching several new significant infrastructure projects, equal stress was also accorded to various languishing projects which were hanging in vacuum due to one reason or another by taking every possible step to remove the bottlenecks acting as hurdles in the successful completion of the same. Jammu and Kashmir Infrastructure Development Finance Corporation (JKIFDC), which has been bestowed with the responsibility of carrying out several significant projects by the Government, was suffering from acute shortage of funds thereby hampering the development works going on in various parts of UT. The issue was taken up several times with the concerned authorities as dearth of adequate funds would not only hamper the progress of works but can also result in inordinate cost escalations thereby putting extra burden on the UT exchequer. In a latest development, it has been informed that JKIFDC has inked an agreement with the Overseas Bank for raising a huge loan of Rs 1,000 crore, which will end the ongoing financial implications. It is hoped that this significant development will not only result in ensuring timely completion of several projects across J&K but will also provide a new lease of life to JKIFDC.

EXPLORE TOURISM FULLY

The tourism potential in Jammu and Kashmir is so vast and resourceful that if exploited fully every resident of the Union Territory can become rich, but the situation on ground is pathetic because except few conventional steps the helmsmen never think beyond leaving the stakeholders lurching for even the basic facilities thus changing the mind of tourists to visit other places in the country and abroad. In this regard, a delegation of hoteliers of Katra, the base camp of cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi, met the concerned Deputy Commissioner, who reportedly assured them that the tourism potential will be fully explored. No doubt currently the visitors in Katra are limited due to coronavirus scare but earlier also there were number of lacunae which stopped the devotees and visitors to have a longer stay in the region because of lack of interest of the government authorities in publicizing the tourist places in the region. There is a guarantee that a large number of devotees who visit the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine regularly year after year to pay obeisance must not be aware of any tourist destination except Patnitop in Jammu region, which is quite unfortunate because there are umpteen places in the province which are more beautiful than Patnitop but are virgin and under developed because of the lackadaisical attitude of the concerned authorities. What the Deputy Commissioner Reasi has avowed should be realized on the ground so that Jammu region gets its due share of tourism which in the long run can improve the socio-economical condition of the people and most of them will not be forced to leave the UT in search of livelihood. The local delegation rightly laid emphasis on developing the places of pilgrim/tourist interest around Katra including Dhansar Baba, Nau Devian, Sear Baba, Sula Park, Devi Ki Pindian as all these places have got the vast tourism potential and can increase the stay of the Yatris besides creating employment opportunities as well. These points are quite important and therefore the government should come up with a comprehensive plan to add all the places of tourist significance in the itinerary of devotees visiting Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine amid Trikuta Hills.



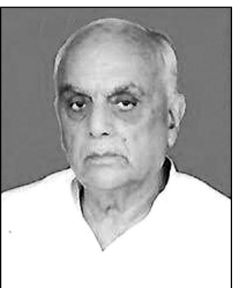
OFF 'D' CUFF

How To Give Your Best When You Need It Most

The Bhagwad Gita is about the ability of the underdog to achieve the impossible against all odds. The world demands excellence, peak performance from you 24/7. It is not enough for a sportsman to perform exceptionally well just once. A musician has to excel at every concert. Yet the enigma of fluent performance baffles us. How is it that you perform outstandingly well sometimes and fail miserably at other times? You are not the same person always. At times you are lazy, indifferent, and careless. Every now and then you are clouded by greed and anger. And rarely, there are moments when you are in the 'zone'. At peace, totally focussed, perfect. How do you ensure you are at your best when you need it most?

The Bhagwad Gita holds a mirror before you and explains the three grades of thought textures that make all humans – sattva, purity; rajas, passion; and tamas, apathy. Tamas is like trying to drive a sportscar with the ignition off. Overcome with inertia and laziness your talent and abilities lie dormant. Rajas is like driving with one foot on the accelerator and the other on the brake. Your energy and vitality get slowed down by desire, lust, and ego. Sattva is the superlative state which is like taking off in a

Is NATO responsible for Ukraine crisis?



■ ER P L KHUSHU

Relations between NATO and Ukraine dates back to early 1990s and have since developed into one of the most substantial of NATO's partnerships, since 2014, in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, when this cooperation has been intensified in critical areas. Vladimir Putin has repeatedly demanded that NATO promise to never admit Ukraine into its military alliance, which, of course, includes 28 European countries, the U.S. and Canada. Putin justified his invasion of Ukraine as a way to halt NATO's expansion eastward to Russia's borders. Ukraine crisis now a full-scale war, which has claimed over large scale lives and enough of devastation, is extremely deplorable. The blame for the deadly turmoil rests squarely at the doorstep of Washington. The United States, through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is obsessed stealthily with the ambition to emerge as the only superpower in the globe.

The notion of a 'balance of power' is anathema to the American establishment. The European Union, United Kingdom and other allies in NATO are mere pawns on the power chessboard of America. Hence, Russia is retorting back with a tough battle as America has been moving fighting force to Eastern Europe through NATO links, apparently to encircle and contain cunningly to encircle Russia, without considering that Russia as a world country is a big super world power to be reckoned with. In this bloody game of cunning wits being used and undertaken by USA to show-down Russia, Ukraine and its innocent people who became the targets of killings, displacements and acute devastation. By an approximate estimation as per press reporting, over 1.2 million refugees have already left Ukraine. The other tragedy in this whole war situation is that the present leadership of Ukraine is immature and probably quite incompetent to rule their country. There is no statesmanship or diplomatic qualities in them to rule this nation and are quite raw and inexperienced in their approach to global diplomacy. Immaturely, coming under the influence of NATO, to opt for becoming a member of NATO, under the hidden dictates of America, when NATO's hidden agenda was or is to come closer to the borders of Russia, has cost very heavily for Ukraine as a country. These leaders should have read the writing on the wall that it is America which is making them a tool in the hands of NATO for its own political and strategic interests to come around Russia. Russia in its fair national interests took a tough stand after due warning to Ukraine and NATO countries and made Ukraine to take a dip in the fierce war with Russia a super power by all counts. Hence, Russia is fighting back. The only profound regret is that this battle is not on a diplomatic front but involves bloodletting, which is comprehensively inadmissible. There is no justified war. Had US abandoned its sly intention to hem in or surround Russia militarily in order to emerge as the only superpower, when it has been moving machinery of force to Eastern Europe through NATO enlargement, cunningly to

encircle Russia, another superpower, there would have been no war. USA is fundamentally responsible through the corridor of NATO to put Ukraine to devastation through the medium of NATO, as Americans have been claiming that they are the lovers of freedom but why have they denied that liberty to others. It claims Ukraine is a sovereign State and is free to choose a path that pleases it by joining NATO. Why then is the US fighting Iran, another sovereign country, for choosing a path that suits it by developing nuclear arsenals?

United States was instrumental to create North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, with a design to counter any type of Soviet aggression in Europe. This alliance has now grown to 30 member countries, including three former Soviet republics, Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In the year 2008, NATO opened the door to membership to two more former Soviet republics when its heads of government declared that Georgia and Ukraine 'will become members of NATO.' Both have not formally received a go ahead to their eventual membership, with corruption concerns and a lack of consensus among members seen in part as holding back Ukraine's invitation. Russian President Vladimir Putin has demanded that Ukraine never join the alliance as he seeks to limit NATO's presence in Eastern Europe. Though Ukraine is not a member of NATO, yet, through an international security alliance with NATO, Ukraine has become a key target in its ongoing conflict with Russia, which escalated to a full-scale invasion by Russian forces.

Putin's military operation has prompted NATO allies, worried about further escalation, to issue sanctions meant to impact the Russian economy, bolster troops along the alliance's Eastern flank and repeatedly warn that an attack on one NATO member is an attack on all. Putin has repeatedly demanded promise from NATO to never admit Ukraine into its military alliance, which, of course, includes 28 European countries, the US and Canada. Donald Trump emerged from political exile recently to blast President Joe Biden and NATO over the Ukraine crisis. Speaking at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference in Orlando, Florida, the former president spent 86 minutes reprising many of his favorite applause lines, assailing the 'radical left' and its 'witch hunt' against him. As massive explosions lit up the sky over Ukraine's capital Kyiv, Trump blamed Russia's invasion of its neighbour on Biden's 'weakness' and lavished praise on President Vladimir Putin's intellect. He said, "As everyone understands, this horrific disaster would never have happened if our election was not rigged," he said, to rapt applause. NATO, he said, was "looking the opposite of smart" for hitting Russia with sanctions rather than resolving to "blow (Russia) to pieces, at least psychologically. The problem is not that Putin is smart, which of course he's smart. But the real problem is that our leaders are so dumb." His remarks came as Russian rockets began pounding the outskirts of Kyiv in an escalating crisis. The world order seems to be changing dramatically following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. China seems to have emerged as the senior partner of Russia and both India and China seem to be on the same page vis a vis the Russian invasion. India, for its part, is observing as to how the situation is

developing, how Washington, in particular, is reacting and especially the step-up actions of the US and NATO. US trans-shipment of almost very little value military equipment, bestowed to a drowning Ukraine, has only confirmed to Asian countries their apprehensions of the US as a fickle ally and unreliable security partner. Equally, President Vladimir Putin has shown his determination to reclaim for Russia, at whatever cost, its cold War-era buffer zone and sphere of influence. Actually neither the US nor Russia really expected India to side with one or the other side on the Ukraine issue. It is just that the Vladimir Putin government had expected, and was politically prepared for and reconciled to India's neutral positioning far better than the Joe Biden Administration, which had hoped to convince New Delhi to join like-minded countries to pressure Russia. However, India stood on its position of neutrality in this sensitive situation, when US is a dwindling entity under Joe Biden. His posture and global philosophy of dubious statesmanship got exposed with his unexpected and timid approach towards Afghanistan policy, thus in a way to lure the Taliban. Russia welcomes India's 'independent and balanced' approach to global affairs, including the situation in Ukraine, and the fallout of the crisis will not affect bilateral cooperation in areas such as defense, as per Russian charged affairs. "We welcome the independent position India has taken in the UN Security Council twice already, which was expressed openly by the Indian external affairs minister and other officials," Russian charged affairs said referring to statements made by the Indian side at two Security Council meetings on the Ukraine crisis. India, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, is playing 'vital role of a responsible global power', and has adopted an 'independent and balanced approach to global affairs', he said. India's stance reflects 'our special and privileged strategic partnership and fully corresponds to Indian aspirations' to enhance its status in global affairs, he added.

With India now boosting efforts to evacuate its nationals and even India's air force gearing to join the evacuation mission soon, thousands of students find themselves engulfed in fear in the war-torn country. Indian students numbering about 18,000 constitute the largest group out of the nearly 76,000 foreign students studying in Ukraine mainly in medical courses, according to official estimates. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is more concerned about the evacuation of the stranded students in Ukraine. He asserted that the entire government machinery was working round the clock to ensure all Indians in Ukraine are safe and secure as he deputed four Union ministers to countries bordering the war-hit nation as special envoys to oversee the rescue efforts and more evacuation flights were deployed. The prime minister made the remarks at a high-level meeting, his second of the day, that was held to review the ongoing efforts under 'Operation Ganga' to bring back the Indians stranded in Ukraine, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Most of the students have already reached home, when the operation of getting them back is in full operation.

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On re-opening of schools-Recollecting unlearned

■ SASHA BANHOTRA



With the sudden arrival of COVID pandemic there came a wave of unwanted unlearning among the students. The 'New Normal' during the pandemic required unlearning of what the children had always known about schools- the rows of desks, the classroom setup with boards, examinations in halls/classrooms, school bags, tangible objects in school premises, physical interaction with the same age group and teachers, teaching by teachers in person, group participation, critical thinking, playing in the playground, and extracurricular activities. But, unfortunately, within last two years it is observed that the feeling of anxiety, stress, depression and even nervous breakdowns have become a common part of their lives. Children are most beautiful creation of the almighty yet naive, hence need more protection from their vulnerabilities and insecurities. The feeling of mounting stress is the most among the children between age of 15- 23 years. If things continue to manifest in the same manner where the children

seem to lack the confidence to lead their lives with the fear of being infected by a virus, the future seems to be heading towards a vulnerable state of being. Apparently, one of the countries in which young people are especially struggling with mental health issues is India.

First came the concept of 'Distance Learning' then came 'Hybrid Learning' which took a toll on the minds of the students as it brought with itself a whole wave of confusion and anxiety. The shift from public space to personal space forced them to be confined within the four walls which impacted their physical as well as mental growth. Students have faced an identity crisis and some even have suffered from lost identities. Virtual learning brought with itself the necessary need of gadget usage due to which children have been exposed to insensitive devices which led to lack of sensitivity among the children. The impact of which was also seen during the online classes. With flexible access to internet connectivity, digital resources and the whole world of e-glamour on their screens, thinking of children has become abnormal. Recent studies have shown that with the arrival of the pandemic, the children are exposed to the VUCA world: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity & Ambiguity.

They need to be prepared to be living in the one, hence adaptive learning is required. A school teacher during an interaction said, "In online classes, children do not turn on their cameras as they have become more conscious about their backgrounds which might expose where they come from and also how they look at the moment. Hence, most of them prefer to keep it off or apply bizarre virtual backgrounds. This leads to hiding their true identities when they should be comfortable with it. For us, it seems like we are teaching our laptop screens."

The process of teaching- learning needs to push the reverse gear in order to make them familiar with the conduct of schools. So, here arises the responsibility of parents, household members and teachers to work together towards the development of children; the upcoming future of the country. Role of parents as well as teachers is essential in this phase of transition from 'Distance learning' to 'Back to school'. Art of parenting must be taught to parents in schools in the form of seminars. Children need to be taught that ones who are able to handle the extremes of life are capable of attaining peace in life. There is no doubt that in this whole process of shift of teaching- learning phases, teachers have been the

real heroes throughout the journey. Schools must focus on team-building activities, group interactions and have an open dialogue among the students to know more about their mental health. Extracurricular activities must be conducted more often in a week. Focus should be more on speaking activities like: debating, speech, theatre and drama, JAM (Just A Minute) sessions, and playground activities. Parents must take their children to their favourite outdoor spots to bring back the old memories hence become familiar with the social world again. This will result in fewer hours on their screens and more within the arms of nature. Children who are suffering from severe mental health problems must adopt some of these practices- regular exercising, gardening, going for a walk, meditation and the most important out of these all- Talking and sharing with their loved ones. Yoga is one of the best practices to curb anxiety and stress. It is essential for children to build short-term and achievable goals. Pranayama: a Yogic practice that helps to build focus on breathing equals mood of goodness which in return equals to completion of short term goals in a student's life. With reopening of schools, one can only hope that the children learn to grow with time and head towards a brighter future.

Horticulture- a significant contributor to J&K's economy

Horticulture is one of the important sectors of Jammu and Kashmir and contributes immensely to the economy here. This sector strengthens the financial condition of people associated with it and also helps in poverty alleviation, employment generation and other developmental aspects of the Union Territory. The variety of horticultural products of J&K has earned world-wide fame because of its good quality and taste. The fruit crops grown here like apple, almonds, walnuts, pears, cherries and apricots in temperate areas and mango, citrus, litchi, papaya, guava etc in subtropical areas are known all over the globe. Saffron cultivation in Jammu and Kashmir is unique in the world as world's finest saffron is produced here. Jammu and Kashmir's Horticulture is quietly showing progress as the yearly pay produced by the natural product industry has gotten over Rs 10,000 crore, contributing 8 per cent to Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). According to the public authority figures, 7.5 lakh families of around 35 lakh souls are associated with this sector. This sector has emerged as one of the prime sectors for gen-

erating self employment avenues for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

Impressed by the rich quality of fruits produced in Jammu and Kashmir and having major demand in outside markets, an ex-service-man of Indian Navy from Kathua district Dheeraj Kumar has turned into an agripreneur. Kumar develops three assortments of strawberries - Camarosa, Winter Dawn and Nubila - at his fields estimating 22 kanals (2.75 sections of land) in his local Haripur town in Hiranagar line sub-division. Development of strawberries has arisen as a rewarding business suggestion for the cultivating local area here.

Kumar offers his thanks to the Kathua agriculture office for giving monetary as well as specialized help and backing, other than familiarizing him about a few tailor-made plans. Sharing his example of overcoming adversity, Kumar says he has employed 10 individuals for leveling, picking, packaging and transport purposes. He supplies strawberries to shopping centers and significant outlets in and around Pathankot and regions in the outskirts of Punjab connecting Kathua. "I am also exploring the

option of selling online. I am in talks with a few e-commerce platforms," he says. An awardee of Horticulture Expo Jammu Awards, Kumar says there was no thinking back after he decided on the best in class innovation viz drip irrigation, which besides lowering the water dependency, ensures more crop per drop. He expects to produce a yield of an amount of Rs 15-20 lakh, which is in line with the prime minister's vision of doubling farmers' income. The enhancement of the subsidy amount to Rs 13,000 per Kanal from the earlier ceiling of Rs 3,125 per Kanal has come as a shot in the arm for newcomers like him. Horticulture has ample opportunities for establishment of agro-industries and thereby generating sufficient employment avenues. The government of India as well as the J&K administration is keen to expand the growth of Horticulture sector. This sector can transform the economy of UT tremendously over the next decade by creating job opportunities, increasing the production to maximum economic growth, ecological development, and poverty alleviation of the UT. An area of 3.33 lakh hectares (2020-21) is under fruit cultivation. A pro-

duction of 20.35 lakh MTs (2020-21) has been recorded. The Horticulture area assumes a significant part in J&K and contributes fundamentally to the Economy and is a source of livelihood for 33 lac souls. Horticulture development is one of the thrust areas and a number of programmes are being implemented, resulting in the generation of higher incomes in the rural areas, thereby improving the quality of life in villages. The variety of Horticultural products of J&K has earned world-wide fame because of its good quality and taste.

Among the various crops, apple and walnut are the major temperate fruit crops accounting for about 75 percent of the total area and 65 percent of the temperate fruit production, respectively. In India total apple production is approximately about 28 lakh MTs and of which 20 lakh MTs are produced from J&K. It is for the first time, 2,000 trucks of vegetables have been exported from Jammu and Kashmir to different parts of the country. J&K has accomplished top position in the whole country with a yield of 70 quintals for each hectare of paddy. We are converting over 60,000 hectares of Basmati cultivation

area into high productivity land.

Apple market has also reached 8,000 crore and is changing the lives of 30 lakh people connected with the sector. The region under cultivation of fruits in Jammu and Kashmir expanded from 2.21 lakh hectares in 2001 to 3.33 lakh hectares subsequently enlisting an increment of 1.22 lakh hectares in twenty years. On one hand the land under agriculture has seen a continuous decline but on the other hand the area under horticulture has seen a huge increase which has cemented the latest position as a torch bearer of the economy.

The fruit production in the Union Territory (UT) has impressively expanded. In 2001, the fruit production was recorded at 10.9 lakh metric tons and the same has now gone up to 24.44 lakh metric tons. Apple fruit partakes in an overwhelming majority in fruit production. In similar period, the development of apples has multiplied from 9 lakh metric tons to 18 lakh metric tons. Emerging as significant contributor to the development of Jammu and Kashmir, Horticulture sector in coming years will transform the economic landscape of entire J&K.