

## AGRICULTURE ACCELERATOR FUND

In order to improve the socio-economic status of farmers of the country, the ruling dispensation led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken a number of innovative measures, which are showing a positive impact on ground level. While highlighting few such steps, the Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar, in a written reply in Rajya Sabha has informed that the Government of India, Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare (DA&FW) is committed to the welfare of the farmers. It includes modernizing the agricultural systems by incorporating new and innovative solutions brought by the agri-entrepreneurs. Accordingly DA&FW is implementing 'Innovation and Agri-Entrepreneurship Development' programme under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) from 2018-19 with an objective to promote innovation and agri-entrepreneurship by providing financial support and nurturing an incubation ecosystem in the country.

This Department has appointed five Knowledge Partners (KPs) and twenty four RKVY Agribusiness Incubators (R-ABIs) have been appointed from across the country for incubation of startups and implementation of this programme. Under the programme, the financial support is provided to entrepreneurs in the field of agriculture & allied sector to set up their startups. For this, a financial support of Rs 5 lakh is provided at the idea/pre seed stage and Rs 25 lakh at the seed stage. So far, a total of 1138 agri-startups are supported under the programme with financial assistance of Rs. 70.30 crore. The technical and financial assistance are provided to startups to launch their products, services, business platforms, etc into the market and facilitate them to scale up their products and operations to attain business viability.

Agri-start-ups supported under the programme are at various stage of implementation from idea to scaling and growth stage. These agri-startups are working in different areas of agriculture & allied sectors for improving the farming practices such as precision agriculture, farm mechanization, agri logistics & supply chain, waste to wealth, organic farming, animal husbandry, dairy & fisheries, etc. Start-ups are trained and incubated at various Knowledge Partners (KPs) and RKVY Agribusiness Incubators (R-ABIs) appointed under the programme. The technologies, products and services developed by these startups are evaluated by KPs and R-ABIs in terms of their utility and impact in agriculture and allied sectors. Besides, KPs and R-ABIs are promoting these startups by linking them with various institutions and organizations for their product & technology validation, market linkages, supply chain management, streamlining the distribution and scaling up of the product and operations, etc. Government of India organize various national level programmes including agri-startup conclave, agri-fair and exhibitions, webinars, workshops to serve as a platform for the promotion of agri-startups by linking them with various stakeholders. Such programmes act as direct market reach and cater as an effective marketing tool to startups. Stakeholders get a direct opportunity to interact with the agri-startups without any intermediaries.

# Relevance of Maryada Purshottam Shri Ram

■ ER PRABHAT KISHORE

Ram Navami is the birthday of Maryada Purshottam Shri Ram, which falls on 9th day of the Indian New Year Chaitra Shukla Paksha of Vikrami Samvat. Bhagwan Ram is the seventh and most popular Avtar (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu Dashavatar and has taken birth on earth in Treta Yug to destroy evil forces. The nine-day auspicious Chaitra Navratra festival also concludes on this day. Lord Surya is the ancestor of Ram, so devotees start this auspicious day by 'Jal Arpan' (offering water) to the supreme God Surya in the morning.

In Treta Yug, not only Prabhu Ram, but other personalities were also incarnations of Gods and Goddesses who played their specific role as ordinary human beings. Goddess Lakshmi incarnated as Mother Sita, Sheshnag as Lakshman, Sudershan Chakra as Bharat, Panchjanya Shankh as

Shatrughan. The entire Leela of God's Avtar was for the victory of goodness over evil forces and the establishment of Dharma on earth after the removal of Adharma.

Beloved by the people, adored by his Gurus and admired by the Rishis-Munis, Lord Ram is the epitome of courtesy and virtues. Lord Vishnu has incarnated on earth to demonstrate how an ideal human being should follow the path of Dharma. Prabhu Ram symbolizes a devoted son, an ideal husband, an ideal brother, a loyal friend, an ideal warrior and above all an ideal king. That is why an ideal and utopian democratic system in all ageson earth has been termed as 'Ram Rajya'. Ram Rajya is known as the period of happiness, peace, duty, justice and prosperity. Shri Ram's life is full of struggle and even in the toughest circumstances he did not deviate from the path of righteousness, compassion and wisdom. He set the highest standards of

conduct and upheld the greatest of virtues and ethics in every walk of life. He was savior for the weak & the oppressed and was ruthless in penalizing the vicious forces. The teachings from his life are guiding all sections of the society. The name & fame, wealth, physical charming all fade up with time, but the noble character, boundless compassion and magnanimous deeds endure for all the times. Some special characteristics of Ram- Being dutiful, Courageous, Intelligent, Justice, Kindheartedness, Obedience, Patience, Popularity, & Universal love are the torch bearer for the human world.

The story of Prabhu Ram has been scripted in various languages and by various authors in their own ways. Of these epics, 'Ramayana' in Sanskrit by Maharshi Valmiki and 'Ram Charit Manas' in Hindi by Goswami Tulsidas are the most popular among devotees. Prabhu Shri Ram has special signifi-

cance in other sects originating from Sanatan Dharma, particularly in Sikhism. In holy scripture of Sikh community, Shri Guru Granth Sahib, the name of Prabhu 'Ram' has been chanted 2533 times. Prabhu Ram is Nirgun as well as Shagun. His personality and teachings are not limited to a particular sect, belief or space, rather he is ideal for all human beings. He is present in soul of everyone and available each and every particle of the universe (Kan Kan Mein Prabhu Shri Ram). Ramnavami is celebrated with great enthusiasm and devotion by people all over the world with special prayer, Pujas, and processions of Ram, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman. Fasting on this day can help purify the body and mind and brings blessings and good fortune. Shri Ram creates the path to the devotees to reach the zones of liberation and immortality.

(The author is a technocrat & academician).

# Need to check menace of stray dogs

■ PRIYANKA SAURABH

The 'menace of stray dogs' is constantly in the headlines in the media of India. For the last five years, more than 300 people - mostly children, from poor and rural families - have been killed by dogs. A 2017 study showed that stray dogs in rural areas can also be devastating to wildlife. Despite this, society remains insensitive toward this news. Occasionally this inertia is broken by some horrific events. Despite the acknowledgment of the menace by the states, the Centre, the judiciary, municipalities, and non-governmental organizations, the problem continues to grow. Dogs have had a unique relationship of companionship with the evolution of humans. This poses the moral dilemma of humans being responsible for their welfare, but it also has its dangers because the evolution of dogs is linked to wolves and their instincts. It may be an unsolvable conundrum for India, but most of the rest of the world has not recognized the rights of stray animals. If such animals are kept on a leash and registered, the keepers are bound to take care of them. If it is not, then as a last resort the state is bound to kill them in the interest of public health. Stray dogs are protected under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and the regulations enacted under section 38 of the Act, particularly the Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules, 2001. It makes it illegal for any person, RWA, or property management to remove or relocate dogs. Only 15 per cent of all stray dogs have been vaccinated.

India's stray population is huge, adoption is slow and limited as many people only want foreign-breed dogs. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001 (being updated) aim to limit the population of stray animals but do little to improve public safety. The proposed draft rules, or the Animal Birth Control Rules, 2022, put forward only procedural changes in sterilization and vaccination, allow only 'terminally ill and mortally injured' dogs to be killed, and require resident welfare associations to register their cases in their localities. The PCA and ABC regulations acknowledge that uncontrolled stray dogs must be stopped, although this does not account for the magnitude of the problem as there is approximately one stray animal for every 100 Indians. At about 21,000, more than a third of all rabies deaths occur in India. For the last five years, more than 300 people - mostly children from poor and rural families - have been killed by dogs. A 2017 study showed that stray dogs in rural areas can also be devastating to wildlife. More than 80 species, of which more than 30 are on the endangered list, were targeted by dogs in wilderness areas. Dogs that are out alone can cause accidents when they run across the road, injuring themselves and other people. Stray dogs enjoy opening garbage bags and they can be the cause of littering and spreading litter around the environment and road far and wide. Stray dogs will scavenge neighborhoods for food and may break open garbage cans and damage gardens. People who feed

stray dogs can be made responsible for their vaccinations and can bear the cost if someone is attacked by the animal. Each Resident Welfare Association should form a 'Guard and Dog Partnership' in consultation with the Police Dog Squad. So that the dogs can be trained and yet be friendly to the residents of the colony. Municipal corporations, residents' welfare associations, and local dog groups should take care of the vaccination and sterilization of animals. Sick animals and aggressive animals have to be put to death. The only long-term solution is to enforce stricter pet ownership laws, prohibit people everywhere from carelessly feeding dogs, and establish facilities for domestic dogs. More staff and funds are desperately needed. Apart from sterilization, attention should also be paid to adoption. And we must find some compassion in helping to resolve this crisis humanely. As long as dogs are homeless on the streets, the idea of a rabies-free India with harmonious coexistence between people and dogs would be a utopian dream. Leaving dogs homeless is bad for dogs, bad for people, and bad for wildlife. India lacks infrastructure and mechanisms to ensure that the vulnerable (the poor and their children) have access to treatment. As such, it is a fantasy to expect the number of dogs to decrease with sterilization and vaccination. India has committed to eliminating rabies by 2030, but until the threat from stray dogs is first recognized as a public health menace, India's poorest people will sacrifice their lives in safe public places at the sacrifice of dull sloganeering.

# Parliamentary debate: Fundamental part of democratic law-making

■ MAHADEEP SINGH JAMWAL

The caption of the article is the taglines of the words of the Chief Justice of India N V Ramana, spoken at the occasion of unfurling the National Flag on the Independence Day 2021 at Supreme Court premises at New Delhi with reference to the enacting of laws in the Parliament. Expressing his concern regarding enacting laws without debate in the Parliament, Justice said that it leaves ambiguity in legislation and leads to a lot of litigation. Parliamentary debate is a fundamental part of democratic lawmaking. In parliament, members' debate bills before they vote on them. Because debates are public, they provide Members of Parliament (MPs) an opportunity to represent the views of constituents on the floor and give voice to voters' concerns. The parliamentary discussions and debates are paramount for legislative portrayal because it generates relationships between people and their representatives and also provides an opportunity to discuss government policy, proposed new laws and current issues. Debates and discussions are helpful to make necessary adjustments and amend-

ments to a bill so that it can effectively fulfill its purpose. These can be helpful in Courts while interpreting laws.

The discussions and debates through lights on various problems faced by different sections of society, which are otherwise ignored. We cannot take the harsh commentary of The Chief Justice of India in a lighter vein that 'Now (it is a) sorry state of affairs. We see a lot of gaps in legislation.

There is a lot of ambiguity in making laws. There is no clarity in the laws. We do not know what purpose the laws are being made at, which is creating a lot of litigation, inconvenience to the public and government and loss to the government." These remarks of CJI carry our memory to the three 'Agriculture Laws': The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act that were enacted by Parliament on 27th of September 2020 but invited hue and cry and protests on large scale from farmers community labeling the bills to be against the interests of the farm-

ers. As per claims of Samyukta Kisan Moreha, the protests claimed 702 deaths and lasted for 333 days.

The said bills were stayed by Supreme Court on 12 January 2021 and their withdrawal was announced by the Prime Minister in a televised address on 19 November 2021 as such on 1 December 2021, the laws were formally repealed. During the monsoon session of 2021, 20 bills have passed in both Houses of Parliament, either without discussion or minimal, limited to treasury bench MPs speaking on the legislation. The Rajya Sabha has passed nine bills since the House convened on July 19 and clocked nearly 17 minutes per bill for discussion. The Lok Sabha passed 11 bills, each on an average talking about eight minutes. Most of these bills were passed without discussion. The CJI in his address carried us to the debates of the gone by days in the Houses that used to be very wise and constructive.

The Houses used to debate threadbare any legislation which they were making. Lawmakers used to discuss elaborately what would be the consequences of any law under enactment, how it will affect the

working class. Same way different laws were discussed and deliberated. Elaborate debates in the Houses always brought clarity to the object and intent behind legislations or amendments to existing laws.

The CJI recalled the contribution of the legal community, led by lawyers such as: Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru and Babu Rajendra Prasad to the freedom struggle and reminded advocates that the first Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and assemblies were filled with lawyers active in public life. Presently we find law breakers under Representation of Peoples Act as well as heinous crimes under Indian Penal Code are law makers.

Traced out from ADR data, we find that the percentage of tainted in Parliament is ever increasing.

When 2009 Lok Sabha was having 26 per cent tainted MPs, in 2014 it increased to 34 per cent, and nearly half of the newly-elected Lok Sabha members in 2019 have criminal charges against them, a 26 per cent increase as compared to 2014, according to the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR).

Similarly at present in Rajya Sabha 71

(31 per cent) have declared criminal cases against themselves and 37 (16 per cent) have declared serious criminal cases. Nothing more can be shameful for the democracy of the country.

We well remember how the Supreme Court five-member bench struck down the NJAC Act and deemed it as unconstitutional in 2015. The Supreme Court, on 20th July 2021, in Union of India vs Rajendra N Shah, struck down most parts of the 97th Constitutional Amendment. In 2022, a three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana, declared as unconstitutional Sections 3(2) and 5 introduced through the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act of 2016. In 2021, the Centre told the Supreme Court that independence of the judiciary cannot be invoked to test the validity of a law passed by the Parliament as a matter of policy. At the same we come across that in 2020, the present incumbent CJI has said that 'High Courts Have Power to Strike down Central Acts' while hearing a petition challenging 'Epidemic Act' and directing the petitioner challenging 'Epidemic Act' to move the High Court.

# Flourishing floriculture industry of J&K

■ DR BANARSI LAL

In recent years floriculture industry has been emerged as an important agri-business in India. Flowers play a significant role in our life right from birth to death. In the last decade or so, in view of fast development of technology, to grow the good quality of flowers, their plucking, preservation and transportation not only inside India but abroad also, this activity has assumed the status as an important industry. In our country this industry has started flourishing on the scientific basis.

In India, 303 thousand hectares area was covered under floriculture in 2018-19. Total area under floriculture in India is second largest in the world and only next to China. In 2021-22, Rs.771.41 crore has been earned by exporting the flowers from our country. This was possible because of good soil conditions, conducive weather conditions and availability of labour.

In the last two decades the floriculture industry has been increasing at the rate of 10-15 per cent annually. The states mainly constituting the floriculture industry are Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Maharashtra.

With the advance research in floriculture the new varieties of flowers have been developed. Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has an immense potential in commercial floriculture as it is blessed with conducive climate for different types of flowers. Moreover J&K is also said to be an abode of some world famous religious spots like Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, Amarant shrines, Shiv Khori Shrine etc. and there is huge demand of flowers throughout the year.

Floriculture is an intensive type of agriculture. In floriculture income per hectare is much higher than many other agricultural products if it is done in a scientific way. We should not forget the aesthetic value of flowers in our daily life. Colorful flowers in the house compounds and in the parks really enhance the beauty of our homes, villages, towns and cities. Flowers bring

the happiness in our life and boost the sagging spirits. Commercially floriculture increases the income of our farmers. If Farmers Producer Organizations (FPOs) are made of the flowers growers then the menace of middlemen can be eliminated. The cosmetic industries has also been encouraged which use wide varieties of floricultural products. The essential oils from different flowers such as rose, jasmine and tuberose used in the manufacture of cosmetics have very high price. The business of nursery in the floriculture industry can earn a lot of money for the rural people. One vital step in this industry is needed to certify the seeds and standardizing the nursery stocks.

It has been observed that the trade in cut flowers is worth more than 30,000 crore in which the main contribution is that of Europe, Japan and America. India too has lot of scope of floriculture industry. It has been observed that rose varieties have the highest demand followed by Carnation and Chrysanthemum. As far as floriculture in India is concerned we have the advantage of winter when there is high demand of flowers in the European markets. Our cost of production is less. We have good soil and weather conditions which are conducive for the growth of flowers.

All these factors indicate that there is immense scope of floriculture in India. Agriculture and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) under the Ministry of Commerce is working as a nodal agency for exporting the flowers. This authority has helped in the establishment of South India Floriculture Association and Karnataka Agro-Industries Corporation. Some more centres are to be established at Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi. In many other states now the farmers are becoming aware about this rising industry.

If we look our economy, our agriculture, horticulture and floriculture have attracted the attention of big investors. Indian Overseas Bank is providing the proper guidance, direction and information to the entrepre-

neurs.

The Consultancy Department Of Indian Overseas Bank provides guidance to the corporate institutions, development institutions, financial institutions partnership companies and other societies. Floriculture requires higher level of information, economics and technology, the consultancy services in preparing the project reports, to prepare the market survey report, evaluation studies etc. National Horticulture Board under the Ministry of Agriculture has introduced many new schemes to encourage the floriculture industry.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has sponsored projects on Green House Technology for small scale farmers which were implemented at Srinagar, Bangalore and Pune. Cold storage facilities at many gateway airports to export the flowers have been set up. Encouraged by the success in this sector, several state governments have initiated their own developmental programmes. For high quality of floriculture we primarily need the high quality plants which can give quality flowers. Market is another aspect in floriculture industry. For this purpose we need to develop quality nurseries in the villages which will help to create the employment in the rural areas.

The global trade of flowers and their products are increasing at the rate of 10 per cent annually. Government organisations have specified certain areas which are considered conducive for the certain varieties of flowers. Roses, Chrysanthemum, Carnation, Tulip and Lily have lot of international demand. In cut flowers type of roses (90 per cent) take the first place in production, while in developing countries contribution in the trade of flowers is 20 per cent. Also there is lot of demand of seeds of the flowers. High-tech Tissue Culture Bio-technology is utilized to produce more and more seeds. India has favourable weather conditions for floriculture and we have a good opportunity for exporting the flowers.

The main exporting countries are the USA, UK, Italy

and Germany. To produce the quality flowers we have to grow them under the controlled conditions. For this purpose we can use the green houses. Green house is a framed structure made up of either cane wood or steel. The transparent and translucent plastic materials are used. In such green houses the temperature, humidity and carbon dioxide are fully controlled which creates the conducive atmosphere for the growth of the plants. The advantage of green house is that only the congenial radiation which is required for the plant is passed through the sheet while the harmful radiation is trapped.

Those farmers who are interested to grow the flowers under green houses should consult with the qualified floriculture experts having good knowledge of plant engineering, production and market aspects also. Presently we have many high tech floriculture projects in operation all over the country.

If we look at the potential of floriculture industry, it can be said that there is need of skilled and unskilled persons right from planting the plants, plucking the flowers, their storage and their transportation in different local and international markets so that ultimately they can be reached to the consumers as fresh as they are plucked from the field.

The process involved in the floriculture industry requires the latest technologies. For this purpose the farmers who are interested to flourish this industry should be trained and necessary infrastructure facilities should be provided to them.

Looking at the scope of floriculture industry special training institutes should be set at the village level so that the farmers can be trained for the floriculture projects. Commercial floriculture can help us to create more income and employment opportunities for the rural people.

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