

VIBRANT DEMOCRACY Need to combat the Climate Change

Democracy is vibrant in India. This has been corroborated by the White House. "India is a vibrant democracy. Anybody that you know happens to go to New Delhi can see that for themselves. And certainly, I would expect that strength and health of democratic institutions will be part of the discussion", said John Kirby, Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House. The White House has further said that Rahul Gandhi ridiculed India. The White House praise on Indian democracy is a tight-slap on Rahul Gandhi who has been crying hoarse over 'democracy in peril'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's relationship with Barrack Obama, Donald Trump and now with Joe Biden is quite cordial. Rahul Gandhi's malicious campaign against the Modi government has no takers in the US. The misinformation and malicious campaign by Gandhi against India in the US has fallen flat. Kirby has acknowledged the importance of India not only for bilateral reasons but also multilaterally on very many levels. Modi's proposed visit will further strengthen the bilateral relations with the US. Democracy had been totally destroyed when emergency was declared on June 25, 1975 in the wake of the Allahabad High Court verdict unseating Indira Gandhi. It was a nightmarish time. Opposition parties and common citizens were gagged from speaking anything about government. After Lok Sabha election in 1971, the next election which was to have been held in 1976 was held in 1977 since the emergency intervened between 1975 and 1977. Lok Sabha election was delayed by one year. It was then that the democracy given a death blow. Unfortunately, the parties that fell victims to the imposition of emergency are now rallying round Congress with the sole objective of dislodging the Modi government at centre. Freedom of speech is the most important feature of democratic order. But the freedom of speech guaranteed by the Constitution is being blatantly misused by the political parties. The submissiveness and politeness that can be seen among political parties on the eve of elections would be replaced by the arrogance and autocratic rule soon after the elections. With all this, democracy has been surviving. The message by the White House debunks the claim of the opposition parties that democracy in India is in peril.

Last 9 years under PM Narendra Modi provided "Suvidha, Suraksha, Sammaan" to women

■ RAJNI SETHI

Narendra Modi's visionary leadership has brought transformative change in the lives of the women. PM has put Narishakti at the forefront of India's development journey. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao schemes has improved sex ratio at birth which is now for the first time 1020 women per 1000 men. The best promoted scheme for the upliftment of women was "Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana" by the minister of the Petroleum and National gas. Under the Below Poverty Line(BPL), Mission Shakti comprises two sub- schemes 'Sambal' and 'Samarthya' for the safety, security and empowerment of the women. With the success of Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan crores of women are able to access toilets without fear of safety or violation of dignity. Over 21 crores Sanitary Pads have been sold at one rupee at Jan Aushadi Kendra's. The ministry of women and child development came up with a scheme titled 'Massla-e-Haat' to assist small women entrepreneurs. The direct internet marketing platform was conceptualized to help women who were microbusiness owners self help groups and non-government organization show their products and service according to the PM. Women empowerment is contingent upon the economic empowerment of women programmes such as Mudra Yojna in which 68% of loans have extended to amounting to more than 27 crores of women across the country to pursue micro-level entrepreneurship and become financially independent. 3.18 crore Sukanya Smaridhi Yojna accounts have been created. Union govt. introduced a one stop centre, 'Nirbhaya' fund. These centres are located across the country and they provide refuges to victims of violence and abuse with legal, medical and counseling services. The 24 x7 helpline offers one roof. There are also so many other schemes for the empowerment of women. Women and politics in India has not been a common phenomenon since independence. However women have increasingly taken a step in the last decade and voiced their opinion regarding several political issues. The political party's success in several state elections is of the attributed to millions of women who have come forward to support the charismatic Narendra Modi.

In 2019 for the first time ever, the Bhartiya Janta Party increased the highest number of female voters. BJP has also been giving much more representation to women in the politics. PM Modi has ensured equal rights for women by correcting historical injustices like law against triple talaq allowing women to perform hajj without a male companion or abrogation of Article 35 in J&K. At last PM Modi. In the last 9 years of the Modi govt. has brought transformative change in the lives of women.

(The writer is J&K BJP Spokesperson).

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

The economies of nations and lives of human beings are disrupted by the climate change. Weather patterns are changing and sea levels are rising. Although the green house gases emissions have dropped in 2020 due to COVID-19 but it was temporally. As the global economy started to recover from the pandemic, emissions increase again. There is need to take action to protect the lives and livelihood of the individuals. For this purpose some new interventions need to be introduced. There is need to deal with the impacts of climate change. The whole world affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We can make our efforts to protect the environment. Now-a-days we can organize digital media campaigns, webinars and virtual panels to accelerate the climate action. We all are facing lot of environmental challenges from loss of biodiversity to climate change to plastic pollution. There is need to work on climate change at all levels of government. A unified global response is must to tackle the climate crisis. We need to develop new environmentalists who can engage millions of people on climate change.

Of all the planets the Earth is considered as the luckiest planet in the universe because it is the only planet where life became possible. Beautiful life developed on this planet whether that is in the form of humans, animals, plants or marine life. But the human race lost its humanity and used the Earth's resources ruthlessly. The Earth is the most unique planet because it developed the most intelligent life called as the human race. Environmental and climate literacy is the engine not only for creating the environmental and climate laws

and policies but also to promote green technologies. It is worthwhile to mention here that our Earth planet is losing the 15 billion trees every year i.e. around 56 acres of forest in every minute. Many species are going extinct rapidly. With our efforts we can protect hundreds of species. Lack of environment education has led man to be harsh to nature. There is dire need to empower everybody with the knowledge to inspire action in defense of environmental protection. It seems that we have forgotten the most beautiful gift that we have got in the form of planet Earth. We also seem to have forgotten that this is our home and we need to take care of it in order to stay healthy and fit. We are mercilessly utilizing and depleting the Earth's limited resources. Our ignorance is causing severe problems like depletion of the Ozone layer, polluted rivers due to dumping of industrial waste, loss of soil health due to excessive use of agrochemicals, global warming etc. Deforestation is rapidly increasing due to increase in the industrialization. This has disturbed the Earth's environment. The increase in the Earth's temperature is melting the ice at the Poles. We already have dug quite a huge well for ourselves but still we can come out from it. We should protect the earth by planting trees; reduce pollution by limiting the use of vehicles, switching off lights when unnecessary, conserving petrol and diesel etc. These are small steps but when billions of people will do so together, there can be definitely the positive results to protect the Earth. The step of CNG vehicles in New Delhi is really highly appreciable that have considerably reduced the amount of pollution in Delhi. The mighty river Yamuna has also been polluted by the

industrial waste. The increased evaporation and additional moisture to the atmosphere has led more intense rains.

2019 year was recorded as the warmest year. Carbon dioxide and other green house gases also rose in 2019. The climate crisis is an existential threat. Many pandemics are related to the climate crisis, helping to nurture and host novel germs. Even in present era many people are not aware about some serious environmental issues-from air pollution to toxic dumps to pesticides to loss of biodiversity. There are enormous challenges but there are also vast opportunities on climate action. Climate change is considered as the biggest challenge for the mankind. There is dire need to tackle the climate crisis globally. Every country needs to step up with urgency and ambition for climate action to safeguard the present and future generations. People have started to protect the environment in small steps but there is dire need to take giant leaps to save the mankind on the Earth. Stringent laws and rules need to be made, to make people realize the importance of protecting the mother Earth. Every nation needs to cut down on Carbon emissions to reduce the effects of global warming otherwise the global warming will make the icecaps at the Poles to melt and raise sea levels. It can be so devastating that it will wipe out many countries on the Earth.

There is need of collective efforts to protect the Earth from pollution. If we do nothing for the protection of environment and let things be as they are, then there can be the worst results. Earth may take revenge and the wrath of the planet may be even more furious. Many times we have seen it happen right in

front of our eyes and observe cyclones, flash floods, sudden fires in forests, tsunamis, earthquakes, diseases etc. Such types of calamities are revenge of the Earth and a small revenge by Earth takes a huge toll on mankind. A major natural calamity happens only when we play with our environment. The size of earth is fixed while its resources are being depleted abruptly. It has been observed that some countries are causing more pollution affecting the other countries also. Many species of flora and fauna are extinct. We should protect our environment for our development. Without adequate environmental protection, development is useless. Humankind is rapidly depleting the natural resources on the Earth. It is acceptable that we need petrol and diesel to run our vehicles and the Earth is not refusing us. It only wants us to use it judiciously. Similarly the other natural resources should be used judiciously by the mankind. We can recycle the papers and stop using plastic bags. We should make collective efforts to reduce Carbon emission in the atmosphere to protect the mankind. On this day each of us should take initiatives to plant more and more plants and return the balance to the beautiful planet Earth so that everybody on this planet can live in peace. In the fast changing life we are so busy in day-to-day life that we don't have time to stand and contemplate about the planet we live on. But now we should make strenuous efforts to protect the planet Earth. The Earth will find some ways to protect us if we love and respect it. There is need to work together to protect the planet Earth.

(The writer is Sr. Scientist & Head of KVK, Reasi SKUAST-J).

Forest Fires, Causes, Control and Protective Measures

■ GL KHAJURIA

According to the Forest Survey of India (FSI) 2019 report, about 21.40% of forest cover in India is prone to fires. The Forests in the NE-region and central India are most Vulnerable. The finding has emerged from a study carried out by the FSI along forest fire points across the country from 2004 to 2014.

Fire-Prone Extremely fire-prone areas account for 3.89% of total forest cover, Very highly fire prone areas account for 6-01% and Highly fire prone areas for 11.50%.

In J&K, the fire most commonly engulf periodically the "the shivalik ranges" from lakhampur to the last tip of the border touching Poonch comprising mostly of scrub forest with chirpine as the most economical species. Nature has itself provided chirpinewith thick bark for its susceptibility but it is more prone to fire. Admittedly man made big strides in modern days information technology and other allied fields, yet so far no fool proof method could be devised to counteract this malady which strikes year year with the onset of summer spells. In the higher stretches of forest where chirpine, blue pine, deodar, and spruce exist, the incidence are far lesser but once it engulfs those forests, it is havoc. The ground flora is burnt to cinder, off shooting crown fire which spreads swiftly thus making the situation grave and uncomfortable.

Forest fire-it nature

Though the modern days man has made scrupulous advancement in science and technology, construction of road bridges, hydel projects and the like and all these factors such as road links provide a smooth ground for the movements through forest and the unmindful man, in, his pleasuring travels throw cigarette which ignites the dry needles of springing wild fir which uncontrollably engulfs big chunks of forest. Man by virtue of nature has born with greed as the saying goes, nature can fulfill man's need but not its greed" goes true. So does the man and in almost 80 percent cases, he is responsible by putting the forest ground fire for the yield of the rich and flourishing grass to fulfill grass

requirements for cattle. A man in the street raises accusing a finger towards forest department which is not so. This is baseless, unfounded and uncalled for as the forest department over the years has by all dints protected and preserved the forest at the cost of their life.

There are glaring examples on record where in most of cases the forest officials had to play with their lives in encountering forest fires. It does not go without saying that a poor forester is helpless and ill-equipped to counter the menace without local cooperation whereas the forest laws provide that in the event of forest fire, it is obligatory on the part of locals to render all possible assistance under law. They are supposed to assemble at the site of fire give/ record their attendants in extinguishing forest fire and make all efforts with forest officials. However, invalids, old persons and female have been exempted from this purview of law and that's why, the local inhabitants are granted concessions in the issuance of concessions of timber/ other within the concession zone besides the glazing of domestic animals in the open forest except those prohibited under law en vogue. But ironically, the case is otherwise as the local response is very poor and it becomes cumbersome to face the situation by the department single handedly.

Preventive measures:

Debris burning. All the dead dying and diseased fallen material left after the exploitation by the state forest development cooperation agency are breeding grounds for spread of fire whereby healthy crops are inflicted and more so with the onset of dry spell, this material provides empties for further inflammation to the fire. The solution, therefore, lies in the disposal of such remnant material by debris burning under the close surveillance of the department or to issue such timber to the local concessionist.

Fire lines: In forestry parlance a wild strip is being laid down in the forest most vulnerable to fire, the nature/density of the crop and the extent of vulnerability. All unwanted bushes, poles and even trees are cut and removed to make it into a wide passage so that in

the eventually of fire it does not get an occasion to cross adjoining part of forest. The fire lines formations are warranted.

Control burning with the onset of autumn there is leaf litter fall particularly both in the deciduous/ conifer forests which almost cover the forest floor with inflammable material. In order, therefore, to safeguard the forest from fire, it becomes imperative to collect all such leaf litter and remove to safer places for control burning under the supervision of forest department.

Fire-fighting equipment. As is invogue with the fire service department, necessary infrastructure such as fire beaters, pick axes, bill-hooks, fire proof jackets, hats and other infrastructure needs to be kept at the Disposal of the department. This is imperative and warranted.

Construction of watch towers this is most helpful aspect and the watch towers need to be constructed at equidistance for close surveillance and regular monitoring so that as an where fire occurs, rapid action can be taken instantly to combat and control spreading.

Firefighting squad-Forest protection force is an independent wing provided with wireless sets and all communicative infrastructures. This wing has a long role to play with to combat fire hazards. The force further needs to be invigorated and fortified to safeguard the green wealth.

Construction of water ponds such constructions help in extinguishing forest fires in much needed areas besides fulfilling multiple purposes and can go a long way in combating the fire hazards with the advancement of modern technology, most of the European/advance countries are pressing into the use of foam gas which grips/ control the fire, the CFC (Chloroflouro Carbon) and halogen gases are further the most useful gases in extinguishing fire. These technologies as well needs to be introduced in our country.

Conclusively, therefore, it is quite pertinent to work out fool proof strategies if at all we humans have to live over this precious mother earth which has bestowed upon us by the almighty God and let us be fear of him.

(The author is former Deputy Conservator, J&K Forests).

G20 has opened new chapter of Peace & Development in J&K

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

It is a welcome development that G20 has opened new vista and chapter of peace, positivity and socio economic development. The G20 meeting has brought a change in attitude in Kashmir and about Kashmir in the minds of people at home and abroad. It is very encouraging that everything is changing very fast including the impressions and understanding of the people about the Jammu and Kashmir. In fact a new chapter of development, progress and prosperity has not only begun but is taking firm roots and benefitting the people of the union territory. It is very encouraging and positive that there is all round and wholesale change and development which is a positive sign for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. G20 has heralded and ushered a new Jammu and Kashmir where the militancy and insurgency of the last over three decades is dying fast and in its place the people of Jammu and Kashmir are for change, peace and prosperity and they abjure violence and this augurs well for the economic, social, cultural and spiritual health of Kashmir.

A new dawn of change, peace and progress has begun after the successful conclusion of G20 meeting and big milestones in the spheres of social, economic and all round development are taking place and attracting the attention of the world.

This new Jammu and Kashmir is in the interest of the local residents and also good for India and the world at



large.

G20 meeting has not only promised the change and development but in fact the era of change, favorable atmosphere and peace has not only begun but is taking deep roots and it is very encouraging thing for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, India and the world as well.

The people of the world look towards Kashmir with great hope and expectation from the people of Jammu and

Kashmir. There is discernable change in the tourism sector and lacks of tourists are visiting Jammu and Kashmir and adding to the economy of all those who are directly and indirectly associated with tourism.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir are warmly welcoming the tourists and showing Kashmir's hospitality for which valley is famous in the World.

Modi government and the LG admin-

istration encouraging the tourism both urban and rural and all the allied sectors associated with tourism and this is a big development and favor to Jammu and Kashmir. There is great scope for film industry and the changed circumstances and good and favorable conditions of Jammu and Kashmir after more than three decades of militancy and because of this the lull in the Bollywood industry has now come to an end

and according to union minister Hardeep Singh Puri the film industry of Jammu and Kashmir will be developed and the film stars and actors and directors will be encourage to come for shooting films to Jammu and Kashmir as the scenic spots are the favoured destinations of the Bollywood. This coming of the Bollywood to Jammu and Kashmir for shooting of the films is very encouraging and this has become possible due to change for better in the conditions. As the militancy is counting its final days the tourism and film tourism is gaining ground and it will provide employment opportunities to a big number of the local youth. Besides this the local talent will be searched and encourage to take part in filming and acting and this will attract the local talent in the countries film industry and it will be a favor for the people of Kashmir which is due to them. The fast changing scenario and peace and normalcy is going to attract Indian and foreign investment in the different sectors of the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. The favourable and changed atmosphere of Jammu and Kashmir is attracting investment in trade and industry and the Modi's ease of doing and single window system and total digitization is opening new vistas of investment and development and it will augment the job opportunities and increase the per capita income of the people and this will result in the increase in the living standard of the people. The government of India and the UT administration is encouraging investment both

Indian and foreign and thus huge investment is coming to J&K and helping the UT to develop and prosper. The changed atmosphere and favourable conditions are the guarantee to the corporate investors that they will get the return on their investment-ROI and this in fact is the litmus test for investing in the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. Because of this changed scenario and favorable atmosphere the investors are being attracted and thus huge investments will flow in Jammu and Kashmir's industry and different sectors of its economy. The G20 has led to significant change in the ground situation in Kashmir as the success of the crucial and historical summit points towards the fact that situation in Kashmir is changing for the better and in this lies the good of its citizens. All negative and anti national elements who were opposing the G20 meeting at the behest of Pakistan proved wrong and now they as well are in favour of peace and progress and this is a good development for the Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir is fast returning to normalcy and again becoming a paradise on earth in Firdousian sense and embracing film stars, corporate houses and others associated with tour and travel. In short it is very encouraging and positive that a new chapter of change, peace and prosperity has begun and changing old and negative notions about Jammu and Kashmir.

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist).