

## READINESS FOR MONSOON

As the monsoon season approaches, the Jammu district administration and various civic bodies have geared up their efforts to ensure public safety and minimize the risk of disruption caused by heavy rainfall. Recognizing the region's vulnerability to waterlogging, landslides, flash floods, and infrastructure damage during the monsoon, several pre-emptive steps have been taken to enhance preparedness.

The Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) has intensified the desilting of major drains and nallahs across the city to prevent clogging and overflow during downpours. Special teams have been deployed to clean stormwater drains in low-lying and flood-prone areas like Janipur, Talab Tillo, Jewel Chowk, Gandhi Nagar, and Bhagwati Nagar. Officials have been instructed to complete this work before the monsoon intensifies to ensure smooth drainage and avoid urban flooding.

The Public Works Department (PWD) is carrying out inspection and repair of roads, culverts, and bridges, especially in rural and hilly areas vulnerable to landslides. Cracks and potholes are being filled, and efforts are underway to clear debris from previous rains.

The Power Development Department (PDD) and Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (JPDCL) have reviewed the condition of transformers, electric poles, and underground cabling to ensure that power supply remains stable and safe. Pruning of trees near high-tension wires and transformers is ongoing to prevent short circuits or outages.

The Health Services Directorate is on alert and has instructed primary health centers and hospitals to maintain adequate stocks of essential medicines and deploy mobile health teams if needed. Clean drinking water and sanitation measures are being coordinated with the Jal Shakti Department. Disaster Management Authorities have activated emergency response protocols, including establishing control rooms and communication networks at the district and tehsil levels. Relief and rescue teams have been kept on standby, especially in flood-prone areas such as Akhnoor, Samba border villages, and parts of the Tawi river basin. The administration is working closely with the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) to issue timely weather updates and alerts.

# Hill Agriculture and Sustainability

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Hills play a very significant role in sustaining about 10 per cent of world's population. There is small size of land holding in hilly areas and that too in scattered form. Hilly areas are endowed with ample natural resources including soil, water, climatic condition, diversity, topography, rich natural flora etc. which are conducive for the cultivation of a wide range of crops. Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is bestowed with natural beauty and located between 32.17 and 37.06 North latitude and 73.2 and 80.36 East longitude in the Himalayan region. The average temperatures of these two regions are 24.5 and 13.3 centigrade respectively. Hilly areas have huge potential in agricultural industry due to varied agro-climate and ecological conditions. Different types of commercially important crops can be grown in the J&K because of congenial atmosphere. In technology development, technology choice has a critical impact on many aspects of hilly areas development, especially the way we choose it, the way we design it, the way we deliver it to the masses. Technology is carefully chosen to enable the local people to imbibe knowledge appropriate to their needs and environment. Technology should upgrade the skills and capabilities, reduce drudgery, minimize fatigue, capable of easy assimilation, generate added value to the existing methods of operation, generate employment, low in capital investment, low in cost of production, be capable of replication and adoption and should blend harmoniously with existing eco-systems leading to tangible improvements in the living conditions and development of the people of hilly areas. There is a need to introduce appropriate tech-

nologies in the hilly areas particularly in disadvantaged groups. There is a need of institutional linkages and active participation of voluntary organizations, Science and Technology based institutions, Research and Development institutions, financial agencies and most importantly people who are the primary stakeholders. Success of these technologies lies on participatory systems with a systematically approach for effective dissemination of technology. There should be proper mechanism in development and transfer of effective technologies in the hilly areas. The requirement of technology is assessed by the Science and Technology based institutions and NGOs. These organizations then look for ideal technology option ensuring the availability of local resources and skills.

Technology is developed according to the in-house capability of the local people with the assistance of technical institutions. The technology is developed in such a way so that it is accepted by the people of hilly areas and which is best suited in their local conditions for a long-term sustainability. The people are trained for 2-3 years to handle the new technology and they are also trained in its maintenance and repair. The Science and Technology institutions and NGOs also helps in backward and forward linkages both for production as well as marketing for long-term sustainability. Looking into constraints and priority needs of the people of hilly areas, various thrust areas need special attention ensuring involvement of local community through network of developmental field groups in technological empowerment. Agriculture in hilly areas is the most important activity as it is directly related with the villager's sustenance. Agriculture in hilly

areas is mostly rainfed, poor crop productivity, poor cultivation practices etc. Organic farming has immense potential in hilly areas. The litter fall in hilly areas can be utilised for compost making. This can highlight unproductive hilly areas contour as organic farm. Organic products produced in hilly areas can help the farmers to fetch better prices. In hilly areas off season vegetables can be grown which can fetch higher prices. Seed production and low cost nurseries units made in hilly areas can generate the income. The perishable products do not fetch better prices due to various market intricacies. The hilly areas agro-climate offers better potential for non-perishable products such as spices, pulses, oilseeds etc. Horticulture has lot of scope in hilly areas. Different varieties of fruit crops can be produced in hilly areas. But the fate of all such produce has been poor due to certain reasons such as: transportation facilities, storage facilities and processing facilities. Horticulture in hilly areas is largely ignored but it has immense potential. Hilly areas farmers need proper training for horticultural crops. There should be storage, processing and packaging facilities of fruit crops for commercial purpose.

In hilly areas scarcity of fodder crops for animals is observed specially in off seasons. There is a need to produce high breeds of animals in hilly areas. Buffalo rearing, poultry farming and goat rearing have lot of scope in hilly areas. The special varieties of fodder crops should be introduced in hilly areas. Green cover in hilly areas is very important for the maintenance of environment. The green cover with appropriate bio-engineering plantation management is considered as need based. Water and energy are

important resources for the hilly areas ecosystem. In hilly areas large numbers of dams are in process in but the traditional water mills, huller, carding devices should also be taken into consideration for the up gradation. Strenuous efforts are needed to develop sustainable technologies for harnessing and conserving renewable energy like water lifting devices, solar lantern etc. Capacity building and technological empowerment are needed to mitigate the disaster management challenges for the people of hilly areas. Medicinal plants occurring in hilly areas have a great national and international importance. Growing awareness towards herbal therapy provides immense scope for developing herbal industries in hilly areas.

Health care of hilly areas people is an important area that needs to be taken care of. There is need of technology intervention in the area of rural sanitation. Tourism forms the basis for the economy of many hilly places. There should be linkage between the people of hilly areas and hill tourism. Agro-tourism tourism should be promoted in hilly areas. It is concluded that the bottom up approach for participatory technology development starting with the people and with the contribution of Science and Technology Institutions and close interface with voluntary organisations can provide sustainable models for technology development and transfer. Appropriate networking and linkages amongst people and institutions can change the lives of the people of hilly areas through technological empowerment and capacity building at the grassroots level.

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■ GL KHAJURIA

Often-repeatedly, it has been in regular columns of dailies, weeklies and other print-media regarding garbage piling up everywhere and every now and then and as a corollary, the complaints column is flooded with ever-increasing malice in and around Jammu, a city of temples and elsewhere also the situation is likewise same. This way, the life has become totally unhygienic and there is cruelty amongst stray cattle who subsist upon the rotten polythene garbage and waste refuse of banquet halls and other unhygienic dumping.

It is disgusting rather dismay that this unhygienic scenario is aggravating and tantamounting to multiple diseases gripping the rural populace as well. And still sad is the way in which the innocent stray animals feed upon these dead and thrown out stuffs from the ceremonial occasions of various hues. Over the years, polythene culture in most of the states including that of ours was completely banned but his practice continues as ever before. Imagine the eating up of garbage along with other polythene by stray cattle, which over the past few years have taken a heavy toll of cattle population. This is grave tragedy and warrants immediate aversion. The people, even those deemed to be much civilized have forgotten the civic sense and throw away the rotten stuff on the road side alongside nallahs, instead of putting these in municipal bins.

The menace has engulfed almost all inhabiting areas in and around Jammu city, leaves aside posh colonies



like Gandhi Nagar, Trikuta Nagar etc. The Jammu Municipality is endeavouring hard in conducting trails/survey to make this city of temples neat, clean and green by keeping the garbage-bins in almost all the locations yet we Jammuites should apply our senses and lend a helping hand to the authorities concerned for the rational disposal of garbage.

This menace has mostly been emanating for the last few decades with ever escalating ceremonial functions

like marriages, mundans, Naamkarn and the like with new names and fames. This is newly born culture preferably amongst rich elites so to be nomenclatures as "Neo-Rich. In such a fashion show, the less privileged common man has to bear the brunt against extravagant expenditure which is beyond his limits. In other words round, it tantamount to mere wastage of the wide-variety of stalls displayed beyond expected menu. All these factors are responsible for

accumulation or piling up garbage thus providing a multi-magnitude of ailments. The rotting breads, the hovering of flies, mosquitoes and breeding bacteria to the extent of dengue fever are directly or indirectly going to inflict the exposed eatables viz sweet shops and the like causing gastro-intestinal and other ailments and that is why the hospitals, other nursing centres are flooded with patients.

As per record, there are more than 1500 "Safikaramcharies" in Jammu Municipality. Though the strength is low for a bigger city like Jammu with a population over ten lakhs or so. The number need to be raised and they should energize their efforts for the cleansing operation.

Not only that, the public should realized and join hands with the authorities concerned in making Jammu city neat, clean and green. This is the call of the hour and let it become a slogan "Make Jammu neat clean and green."

**Suggestive measure:-**

Hygienic dumping and disposal:- Arguably, it is no doubt a denying the fact that ceremonial functions such as marriage, birthday, Mundan et al are celebrated with much fan and fare but when the function is over, the waste refuse should be very a rationally disposed off. In order, therefore, we are to extend an helping hand towards the concerned authorities, so that such waste material is not haphazardly dumped and it is finally disposed off properly.

**Aversion of polythene culture:-** Over the years, there had been lot of hue

and cry regarding blanket ban on polythene culture but its spirit and sanctity has not been carried out fully. The scenario still seems to be there as ever before. Though in HP including most of the other hill tourist spots of our state, the civic sense has been applied and Tourism Deptt have perhaps played a vital role in this behalf.

**Massive afforestation:-** Avenue plantation, a component of arboriculture need to be encouraged so as to provide greenery and delimitate the emission of poisonous gases as plants and trees are in variably the lunges which absorb Co2. Here, the forest department is rendering Yeoman's service but other sister departments viz Agriculture, Horticulture should also come forward as vast areas avenue lands and other wastelands, institutions, health centres, offices and so many other suchlike areas are available.

This shall provide extensive greenery to this city of temples giving a picturesque look to the locals and boost tourism as well.

**Boosting floriculture:-** There are plenty of park areas in and around Jammu city, apart from the avenue bunds and dividers. No doubt, some efforts have however, been made but these need to be invigorated by raising turfs so that these give carpet-type look, coupled with ornamental plants creepers, flowers such as roses both locals as well as exotic. There is a wide variety of roses and its hybrids varying from the tiny cri-cri to argue blooms of American heritage and from the soft translucent pink of Michele

Mainland to the brilliant vermilion of super star.

Among other flowering plants include gladiolus, chrysanthemums, carnations, daffodils, Ranunculus, dahlis/Lilies, Tulips, etc and so far as climbers and creepers are concerned these include Bougainvilleas, clerodendron, begonia, Jasminum, etc.

Making river Tawi healthy, with exploding population face to face with increase in number of vehicles, there is ever-amounting rush of heavy vehicles for cleansing in the only river Tawi. The practice should be lawful averted and defaulters brought to book. Apart from this, every sort of filth being dumped into the river thereby making it filth reddened. This as well warrants a complete check to restore back to its pristine glory and grandeur.

**Managing the canals and other water bodies:** On the same analogy, these as well warrant proper maintenance and cleanliness. All Jammuites should launch a mass campaign for its cleanliness and the concerned agencies together with NGO's and all citizens shall have to extend full support. Conclusively, therefore, it is added over here that it is incumbent upon every citizen of Jammu to apply there civic scene ad at the same time make all out efforts to ensure Jammu city neat, clean and green. It is mandatory on the part of every citizen. So, let us pledge to facelift Jammu to captivate and attract the pilgrims and visitors alike this will promote local tourism and boosting the local economy.

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# Tracks of Unity: How the Jammu-to-Kashmir Train Is Becoming a Ray of Hope for Rebuilding Trust Between Two Regions

■ DR. ASHWANI KUMAR

The recent success of connecting the Kashmir Valley with the Indian railway network is not merely an infrastructural milestone it is a transformative leap toward regional integration, national unity, and social healing. For decades, Jammu and Kashmir, though geographically contiguous, have remained socially and emotionally divided. While much of the national discourse around the region focuses on political tensions, terrorism, and security concerns, one of the lesser-discussed yet equally vital contributors to this separation has been the physical and psychological disconnect between the Jammu region and the Kashmir Valley.

Traditionally, the only viable route between Jammu and Srinagar has been the 280-kilometer-long Srinagar-Jammu National Highway. While scenic, this highway has long been unreliable frequently disrupted by snow, landslides, political unrest, and security-related restrictions. It has been a corridor marked by uncertainty, impeding regular civilian movement and deepening the isolation felt by communities on both sides. For the average citizen, traveling between the two regions was not just a journey it was an ordeal.

This is why the railway connectivity between Jammu and Kashmir is far more than just a technological feat. With the rail link now approaching the heart of the Valley, the journey from Jammu to Srinagar has been shortened to just around four hours. What was once a long and uncertain road trip has become a safe, stable, and swift ride through the



majestic-and previously inaccessible landscapes of the Himalayas.

However, the implications of this development go far beyond convenience or comfort. This railway holds profound social, economic, and psychological significance. Jammu and the Kashmir Valley are demographically, religiously, and culturally distinct. Jammu is home to a Hindu-majority population with strong ties to India's spiritual and cultural heritage, while the Valley has a Muslim-majority population with its own rich linguistic, artistic, and religious tra-

ditions. These differences are not problematic in themselves-in fact, they reflect India's pluralistic strength. But the lack of regular interaction has historically bred misunderstanding, mistrust, and at times, open resentment.

In this context, the train is not just a mode of transport it is a moving space of social engagement, a vehicle of exposure, empathy, and ultimately, unity. It allows people from Kashmir to visit and experience cultural centers in Jammu, including Karate gateway to the Vaishno Devi shrine, one of the most significant pil-

grimage destinations in India. At the same time, it enables people from Jammu to enter the Valley with greater ease and openness, not as outsiders but as fellow citizens sharing the journey of a united territory.

This kind of grassroots-level cultural exposure is crucial for long-term peace and social cohesion. When people travel together, observe each other, and converse in shared public spaces such as train compartments-they begin to humanize those they might have previously misunderstood. A Kashmiri vendor

interacting with pilgrims from Jammu, or a student from Jammu attending college in Srinagar, are no longer abstractions in a divided discourse. They are people living shared realities learning, listening, and building trust.

The railway compartment becomes more than just a place of transit it becomes a space of transformation. Unlike buses or flights, which tend to segregate passengers, train journeys allow a uniquely communal experience. People talk, share food, ask questions, and serve one another. This form of natural socialization has long been missing in the relationship between the two regions, and it is this subtle but powerful social process that can help rebuild fractured connections.

Moreover, the railway also opens avenues for economic integration and regional development. Farmers and traders now have faster access to markets across regions. Tourism particularly vital to the economy of the Kashmir Valley receives a major boost from improved mobility. Increased footfall leads to increased commerce, which in turn brings jobs, stability, and hope. Such progress weakens the appeal of extremist ideologies, which often find support in regions plagued by isolation and unemployment.

The Indian government's initiative in achieving this connectivity deserves recognition, especially given the formidable engineering and security challenges posed by the Pir Panjal range and the region's sensitive geopolitical status. Building tunnels through steep mountains, constructing bridges over deep

gorges, and ensuring safe travel in such a volatile zone is a testament to planning, perseverance, and vision. This is more than infrastructure development-it is an investment in national integration.

Of course, infrastructure alone is not a cure-all. Train lines can reduce physical distance, but to truly close emotional and cultural gaps, we must also invest in inclusive governance, quality education, youth engagement, and interregional dialogue. Accessibility must be paired with affordability and safety, ensuring that local populations-especially students, workers, and women can travel with confidence and dignity.

Yet, it is impossible to ignore the symbolic power of this railway line. At a time when India is increasingly focused on national unity and internal cohesion, this project stands as a concrete example of development that fosters integration not through force or rhetoric, but through opportunity and shared experience.

The railway line from Jammu to the Valley is not just a track of steel and stone it is a pathway to reconciliation, mutual respect, and progress. It offers the people of Jammu and Kashmir a chance to see each other not through the distorted lens of propaganda or suspicion, but through the clarity of shared journeys, conversations, and lived realities. It is a chance to build not only a connected region, but a united society-one train ride at a time.

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