

Opinion-Jammu & Kashmir: With positive approach on path of progress

The provision, Article 370 of the constitution, prevented the Indian government from having any say in the affairs of Jammu and Kashmir except in matters of defence, finance, foreign affairs, and communications. This contributed to the province's struggles: While the rest of India experienced strong social and economic development, Jammu and Kashmir lagged in terms of economic growth, employment, fighting corruption, gender equality, literacy, and many other indicators. Pakistan has its own stakes in preventing prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir, and in the Ladakh area of Kashmir because a weak economy fuels separatist sentiments in some quarters. This fits into Pakistan's larger strategy of using terrorism as a political tool. Therefore, it also opposes the repeal of article 370, which legitimized discrimination and hindered economic progress.

The decision of Indian Parliament to reorganise the province and rescind this article corrects a historic wrong. It opens the door to rejuvenate a moribund economy and promote horticulture, tourism and handicrafts that are the unique strength of its culture. This change is now delivering social and economic justice to a region that was out of step with the rest of the nation. Article 370 was an obstacle to progressive legislation prevalent in the rest of India, such as affirmative action, equal rights for women, juvenile protection, and safeguards against domestic violence. Laws that protect the right to education and information under the Indian Constitution did not apply in Jammu and Kashmir. Clearly, this prospect for a more prosperous Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, cut the ground under the feet of Pakistan. In past, we have seen a plethora of comments from Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan and senior officials of his government painting an apocalyptic picture of India's reorganisation of its province of Jammu and Kashmir - and raising the threat of conflict, including nuclear war, with India.

Under Prime Minister Khan's watch, the people of Pakistan are reeling under economic depression, with inflation at a five-year high, national debt exceeding gross domestic product, and asking for an International Monetary Fund bailout. Khan has, of course, every right to run his own economy into the ground. But his determination to inflict similar damage on the province of a neighbouring country must be challenged. What Prime Minister Khan finds difficult to accept is that the Kashmir region is now back on the road to progress and prosperity because the Indian government has repealed an anachronistic and temporary provision of law that has hindered development. Its prime minister claims that he offered to work for peace, progress, and prosperity with India. What he does not say is that the assembly line of terrorists that is a major industry of his country continues without pause.

He suggests that institutions like the Financial Action Task Force, an international organization that investigates terrorist financing, are part of a conspiracy against Pakistan. He obscures the fact that the mastermind of the Mumbai terrorist attack of 2008 has been shielded by Pakistan. And that the Pulwama suicide bombing was carried out by Jaish-e-Muhammad, a United Nations-proscribed terrorist outfit that operates openly from one of his major cities. Khan has criticized India for its treatment of Muslims and other non-Hindu minorities. This would be laughable if the reality was not so tragic. When Pakistan was created, its population was 23 percent minorities. This is now down to 3 per cent, a figure that speaks for itself. And there are countless faces - Shias, Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, and Sikhs - who can testify to this tragic reality. Fellow Muslims are not spared; ask the Shia, the Pashtun, Sindhvi or the Baloch people of Pakistan. The irony of seeing Islamabad refusing to recognize the legitimacy of Israel and tolerating anti-Semitic sentiment, but now invoking images of European fascism, is simply astounding. Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, are now in transition. The changes introduced by India have challenged entrenched interests who benefited from the old system at a cost to the people. Incitement and support from across the border for violence and terrorism are to be expected. Many of the restrictions on travel and communications intended to ensure public order and safety have since been relaxed. Preventing loss of life is the highest priority. India's actions regarding Article 370 had no implications outside of India. Its external boundaries have not changed. What has changed is that there is now hope for development that will help the residents of the region - and that will obstruct Pakistan's longstanding support of cross-border terrorism. That is why the prime minister concocts alarming scenarios, hoping to stop these improvements. The development will happen, progress will be visible, prosperity will take root and terrorism will fail. India will hope that Pakistan renounces hostility, violence, and terrorism to become the normal neighbor that the entire world desires.

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Forgiveness- It is a Virtue

virtue.

Man's belief in religion strengthens through Satsang, and by undertaking pilgrimages. Just visiting the place is not enough. It is of significant advantage to visit those places to cleanse the mind and the soul. It is said that by joining Satsang, and by keeping good company, the mind gets rejuvenated and the thoughts get renewed. New waves of fresh thoughts begin to flow in the mind. An ideal person is the one who gets inspiration from anywhere and learns lessons from others.

Illuminate Your Life with Divine Gifts

Illuminate your life with divine gifts from today itself. Do not defer it to tomorrow or to the day after. When you will hear the voice from within you will realize that everyone outside is illuminative, but when the inner voice accepts you then only you are illuminative. Your inner being will only decide how many faults do you have and how many virtue you possess.

Forgive others. That is the

Shri Sudhanshuji Maharaj

■ DR PARVEEN KUMAR

Skill refers to the learned ability to perform an action with determined results wherein a definite amount of time or energy or both are specified. Skills can often be divided into domain-general and domain-specific skills. Skilled men power is an asset for any country. Unfortunately, our country has a very less percentage of skilled population. All across the globe, the proportion of formally skilled workers as a percentage of total workforce stands at 24 per cent in China, 52 per cent in USA, 68 per cent in United Kingdom and 80 percent in Japan as against only 3 per cent in India. There is a huge mismatch between the requirement and availability of skilled men power. Recognizing the importance of skills for the youth, World Youth Skills Day (WYSD) is celebrated every year all across the globe on July 15.

History of WYSD: In 2014, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared July 15 as World Youth Skills Day, to celebrate the strategic importance of equipping young people with skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship. The United Nations General Assembly by consensus adopted a resolution, spearheaded by Sri Lanka, declaring 15th July as the World Youth Skills Day. Sri Lanka initiated this resolution, with the assistance of the G77 and China to highlight at a global level, the importance of youth skills development. The UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Youth, Ahmed Alhendawi, and his office supported this initiative from the early days, while the UN system in New York and Colombo were solidly behind it.

Indian Scenario: India has the unique distinction of being one of the countries in the world where the working age population will be far in excess of those dependent on them and as per the World Bank this will continue till 2040. With large no. of population in the working age group, India has the demographic dividend. This has been recognized by economists and policy makers as a potential source of significant strength for national economy provided we are able to equip and continuously upgrade the skills of population working in that age group. Recognizing the importance of skills in development of youths and in the growth of national economy, the government is focusing on skill development of the youth. To remove the disconnect between demand and supply of skilled manpower and to build the new skills and innovative thinking not only for existing jobs but

also for jobs that are to be created, Government of India headed by Prime minister Sh. Narendra Modi set up a separate 'Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship' on 9 November 2014. The new ministry is to coordinate all skill development efforts across the country. The Ministry aims to skill on a large scale with speed and high standards in order to achieve its vision of a 'Skilled India'. The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSD&E) with the objective of Skill Certification to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood. Individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Under

WORLD YOUTH SKILLS DAY

ensuring that a MGNREGA family moves beyond labour work to improve employment opportunities. The labourers enrolled in MGNREGA have now the opportunity to upgrade their skill sets and equip themselves with better employment opportunities. To ensure that these MGNREGA workers attend the skill training programmes, the Ministry of Rural Development would make good the loss of daily livelihood of the family to the tune of rupees 200-250 daily as the MGNREGA worker undergoes training. This would also ensure that peoples attend training programmes without the fear of losing out on their daily wages. A government hand out says that the programme (UNNATI) is meant to train one adult member (between 18 and 45 years) per house household, who has completed 100 days of work under MGNREGA in the previous financial year: The candidate undergoing training will be paid stipend for a maximum period of 100 days and for one programme per household as per the prevailing wages in the state concerned. The Ministry of Rural Development has also tied up with Krishi Vigyan Kendras to upgrade the skills of MGNREGA workers in different aspects related to agriculture like vermi compost production technology, value addition and processing of fruits and vegetables, mushroom and spawn production, artificial insemination, storage of different commodities and many other topics relevant to creation of self employment opportunities. Agri-Clinics and Agri Business Centers AC&ABC is another

Skilling youth in Agriculture: Agriculture sector constitutes the backbone of the Indian economy. This is because of the sector being a source of livelihood for more than 50 percent of the population and contributing about 20 percent to the Indian economy. It is also the largest employment generating sector providing ample opportunities of self employment for youths. The skills of these youths need to be developed. At the national level Agricultural Skill Council of India (ASCI) was formed on 2013 as the 13th sector skill council to address the end to end skilling needs in agriculture sector that employs more than 50 per cent of the workforce. The Agriculture Skill Council is working to achieve rapid growth in agriculture sector through creation of a skilled workforce in the country. Its mission is to create more non agricultural jobs i.e in the allied enterprises, linking and generating maximum number of entry level jobs, enhancing the economic value of time and labour of landless workforce, making farmers of the country agriculture entrepreneurs through market information and linking of

farm labour with wage related employment in agriculture sector during non-farm months.The Agriculture Skill Council of India has already trained thousands of young persons under the PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY). Various other government as well as private agencies and financial institutions in the country like Agricultural Universities, MANAGE,NABARD and other banks are also supporting enterprise development in agriculture sector through skill trainings, monetary support and necessary hand holding. The largest Employment Guarantee Programme in the country MGNREGA has now also been revisited by incorporating element of skill development of unskilled workers. This will definitely help them to equip them with better employment opportunities and to also the Government to make good the loss of skilled labourers. This is being done

under the project 'UNNATI'. It aims at ensuring that a MGNREGA family moves beyond labour work to improve employment opportunities. The labourers enrolled in MGNREGA have now the opportunity to upgrade their skill sets and equip themselves with better employment opportunities. To ensure that these MGNREGA workers attend the skill training programmes, the Ministry of Rural Development would make good the loss of daily livelihood of the family to the tune of rupees 200-250 daily as the MGNREGA worker undergoes training. This would also ensure that peoples attend training programmes without the fear of losing out on their daily wages. A government hand out says that the programme (UNNATI) is meant to train one adult member (between 18 and 45 years) per house household, who has completed 100 days of work under MGNREGA in the previous financial year: The candidate undergoing training will be paid stipend for a maximum period of 100 days and for one programme per household as per the prevailing wages in the state concerned. The Ministry of Rural Development has also tied up with Krishi Vigyan Kendras to upgrade the skills of MGNREGA workers in different aspects related to agriculture like vermi compost production technology, value addition and processing of fruits and vegetables, mushroom and spawn production, artificial insemination, storage of different commodities and many other topics relevant to creation of self employment opportunities. Agri-Clinics and Agri Business Centers AC&ABC is another

programme aimed at skill development of youth in agriculture and allied sectors. The National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad has been designated as the apex institute for implementation of this ambitious flagship programme for the agriculture professionals of the country. The objectives of this programme are to create self employment opportunities for agricultural professionals with degree or diploma and to strengthen extension services in the country by creating a pool of skill developed professionals who could cater to the advisory, diagnostic, inputs, marketing and other related needs of the farming community. The two objectives are to be fulfilled through the establishment of Agri Clinics and Agribusiness centers. Agri-clinics are meant to provide expert, updated and relevant advice to the farming community based on their requirement.. Agribusiness Centers, as the name suggests these are business entities related to agriculture. These are set up for commercial purposes. The Agribusiness centers are set up by young professionals trained under this scheme. Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY) is another programme of MANAGE aimed at skill development of rural youth in different areas related to agriculture and allied sectors. Start-ups have brought up a new type of culture in the country transforming agriculture to agri-business through agri startups where enterprising farmers practice profitable agriculture. Government of India provides proper support through including monetary support for establishing new ventures in the agriculture sector in the form of Start-ups. The start-ups besides generating employment opportunities has also creates new infrastructure in the villages leading to development of these rural pockets. Another programme aimed at development and upgradation of young agricultural graduates is Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture (ARYA). ARYA aims to attract and empower the youth in rural areas to take up various Agriculture, allied and service sector enterprises for sustainable income and gainful employment and to enable the farm youth to establish network groups to take up resource and capital intensive activities like processing, value addition and marketing. Since its inception, World Youth Skills Day has provided a unique opportunity to all the relevant stakeholders working towards the development of youth to come out with ways and means to continuously upgrade the skills of youth.

(The author is a faculty at SKUAST-K).

Post Article-370: J&K fruit-growers reaping benefits

■ ARIF HUSSIAN

Irfan Hussian (45) vividly remembers his childhood days when his father and two uncles used to spend days and days in their numerous orchards in Kashmir valley during the harvesting season. "They used to literally live in the orchards during the harvesting season. Even when the harvesting was done, the long and tedious process of shipping the products to their destinations out of the valley started," recalls a now grown up Irfan who has now inherited the family business. "The main challenge started after the harvesting. The supply chain was dominated by a few strong middlemen who dictated when and where the shipment shall be delivered," Irfan said while holding a basket of fresh fruits from his orchard.

One of the major complaints of the traders like Irfan was the massive domination of the middlemen in the entire process of the shipping the fruits out of valley. "Along with the rates, the middlemen also controlled the supply chain," claims Irfan. This cartel of the middlemen not only ate away a chunk of the profits of the traders, it also disrupted a normal supply chain, so assiduously built buy the individual traders over the years. When the Union Government announced the abrogation of the Article-370, fruit traders like Irfan feared that it would lead to further deepening of the cartel network, thereby depriving the traders of their profits and disrupting the whole supply chain in a massive way. "We are immensely happy that our mis-

givings were proved wrong", reveals a relaxed Irfan. Centre set to buy Kashmir apples to protect farmers, traders. Immediately after the abrogation of Article-370, the Central Government announced that the Union Home ministry and the ministry of Agriculture would oversee the smooth procurement, wherein the Centre would directly buy apples from apple growers in J&K. In a notification, the Union Government directed that the state government will ensure direct payment in the bank account of the apple grower through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). It further added that all categories of apples - A, B and C - will be procured from the apple producing districts in Jammu and Kashmir as well as designated Mandis in Sopore, Shopian and Srinagar.

NAFED Roped In To Ensure Transparency: To ensure the transparency and efficiency of the entire process, the State-run National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) has been roped in to facilitate the process of procurement of produce of the fruit growers in the region. Accordingly, NAFED will procure 60 per cent apples produced in the Union Territory of J&K. This move assumes significance in the wake of the terrorists threatening apple growers not to sell their produce in the market. As per the notification issued by the Union Home Ministry, NAFED would procure A, B and C grade apples under a special Market Intervention Price Scheme

(MISP) and payments will be made directly to the growers' bank accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode within 48 hours.

NAFED would procure apples from farmers through the directorate of Horticulture, Planning and Marketing. According to official data, Kashmir accounts for production of 91 per cent walnuts, 90 per cent of almonds, cherry and saffron, and 70 per cent apples in country, worth a total of Rs 7,000 crore annually.

Centre's Intervention: In addition to the above interventions, Centre Government will pump an additional Rs 8,000 crore to help apple and dry fruit traders in J&K including Rs. 2,000 crore towards procuring apples directly from growers.

The move is aimed to send positive signals to the business community showcasing the region as an ideal place for investments post abrogation of the Article-370, thus helping to revive the business sentiments in the Valley. To further maintain transparency in the purchase of the produce, the government has also decided to set up a state-level price fixation committee to determine procurement price based on the variety and grade of apples, and other incidental charges like packaging, transportation, storage and related expenditure.

While a price committee will fix the fair prices for the produce, all necessary facilities and infrastructure has been set-up at Mandis across the important

production centers to ensure smooth rollout of the procurement. To ensure smooth coordination between various elements of the administration involved in the exercise, Centre has also directed the senior functionaries from the Horticulture Department to monitor and supervise the entire procurement operation, while directing the representatives from NAFED and the National Horticulture Board to also assist the administration with the procurement process.

Quality: Quality control-cum-grading committees have been constituted for each Mandi for validation-cum-certification of the apples to be procured at the Mandis to ensure quality control of the entire process. It is believed that the list of measures would enforce a strict quality control over the entire process of procurement and distribution of the produce.

Hope for Future: Traders like Irfan and others from the region are relieved that with the Centre's intervention and proactive measures taken after the abrogation of the Article-370, the hold of the Mafia over the supply chain has been reduced considerably. This has enabled the traders to reap the benefits which otherwise would have gone to the middlemen.

Irfan believes that, after witnessing the enormous development and changes, the abrogation of Article-370 has ushered in the small villages and towns of the region, the people have finally realized the futility of their initial misgivings.

Cleansing our rivers

■ G L KHAJURIA

An eminent song 'Ganga Tera Panni Amrit' is quite often sung by all enthusiastically with reverence. Gone are the olden yet golden days of over-gone ages of pride India. The Ganga, the Yamuna and the Sarawati which confluence at 'Sangam' in Allahabad have mostly been piously revered over the years with much fan and fair. These rivers offshoot from greater Himalayas like Gangotri and Yamunatri glaciers, which form the part and parcel of our centuries - old heritage. Today, the purity and sanctity of these rivers have lost lustre in more than many ways. Similar is the situation elsewhere of Mahanadi, Godavri, Krishna,Kavari, Narvada and Tapti over Indian landscape. All these rivers have been very badly polluted owing to effluence, an outcome of industrial outlets and filth & faecal emanating from villages residing alongside these rivers.

Narendra Modi's dream of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has, of course, yielded successful orientation to make India neat clean and green. Over the years,

many missions with new names and fames have been earmarked to clean these rivers but all in unison have not yielded success- oriented results.

Talking of our own Tawi which is most oftenly nomenclaurised as 'Surya Putri-' daughter of the sun is facing the same fate. Originating from Kalash Kund (Kalpash) in Bhadarwah, it serpentine flows down, passing through the foothills of Suez Dhar, Jakhed, Latti-Dhuna, Marothi, Koi and finally reaches the base of Sudh Mahadev also prominently called as Haridwar. It takes in her lap two prominent catchments: One, from North- West Yugdhar, Patangarh, Gharian and other from Patnitop, Nathatop, Kud, Chenani, Budhi-Sudi, Shiv GarhDhar and Gaurikund. All these catchments together with rivulets in amalgamation drain down into Tawi. The water though, of course, is moderately stable which lower down ahead when it reaches Nagrota. The river thus loses its pristine purity with its onwards flow upto Beli Charana. And, enroute, it encompasses all sort of filth and other quagmire thereby making her filth-ridden.

Owing to administrative apathy coupled with public unawareness and improper sensitization, from up and around Jammu. It still makes an addendum with multihued filth and looses this perennially flowing river a quagmire beyond description.

Pollution likewise in all other rivers has badly grabbed our attention like never before. It is, therefore, a biggest challenge of our own creation with no stretch of efforts to ensure easy cleansing. The amount of filth, sludge and effluents of multihued form is a herculean task to be tackled with by the Government, industrialists, locals and other stakeholders in unison. Though it is a long-term exercise involving adequate manpower and fundings, yet extra expertise has to be ensured in cleansing our pious rivers on all parameters. The central pollution control Board (CPCB) estimates that out of around 445 rivers flowing over Indian subcontinent, 275 have become completely polluted. And around 650 urban settlements alongside 302 rivers are discharging 62,000 million Its per day compared to 38,000

Million Its earlier. Over the past five years, the number of polluted rivers has almost doubled from 121 in 2009 to 275 ending year 2015 which is a matter of dubious distinction. The figures make dismaying and unimaginative.

If no practical and warranting measures are taken now, our rivers will be a subject of glaring quagmire scenario. Bathing of both humans and cattle, washing of laundry and immersion of dead bodies are other factors contributing filth to our pious rivers. Conclusively, therefore, it is the clarion call at this delicate dilemma to ensure cleansing operation in all our rivers to make them neat and clean. If not now, than never. Let us, therefore, join hands to make our rivers free from dirt, filth and a multitude of such things like quagmaric quote so that a pristine purity is regained otherwise it would amount to an addendum for a new history of filthy rivers. Let's us unitedly endeavour with unflinching dedication and devotion so as to make rivers of our Mother India neat and clean.

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