

## ESTABLISHING EQUITABLE SOCIETY

Extension of central laws after abrogation of Article 370 has established an equitable society across Jammu and Kashmir while the implementation of several legislations is bringing a new era of progress and development in the Union Territory. With the extension of 890 central laws applicable to Jammu and Kashmir, repeal of 205 state laws and modification of 129 laws after the abrogation of Article 370, a system of equitable justice has been established in the UT for all sections of people. Rights of weaker sections like Scheduled Tribes, other traditional forest dwellers, Scheduled Castes, 'Safaikaramcharis' etc are now ensured by implementation of relevant Acts. Rights of children and senior citizens are now being ensured. In order to create a just and equitable society, reservation rules have been amended to extend benefits of reservation to left out categories like Pahari speaking people and economically weaker sections. For the first time, the spouse of a Jammu and Kashmir domicile shall also be deemed as a domicile. Earlier, spouses of Permanent Resident Card holders were considered at par but not domiciles. Children of central government officials posted for over ten years in Jammu and Kashmir will also continue to be considered domiciles. Sections of society like displaced persons of Pakistan-Occupied-Jammu and Kashmir, Chhamb, West Pakistani refugees are getting due benefits with the extension of central laws. The implementation of several path-breaking central legislations after the revocation of Article 370, like the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forests Rights) Act, 2007, the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1954, among others, is bringing a new era of progress and development in Jammu and Kashmir. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha is taking a personal interest in tribal development and recently launched the 'Smart Schools' project in the UT for tribal communities. Under this maiden project, modernisation of 200 schools in Tribal areas will be completed in 2022. After a wait of more than 14 years, due rights have been conferred upon the tribal community by implementing the Forest Rights Act, 2006, keeping in mind the basic spirit of social equality and harmony as guided by the Constitution of our country and Parliament. In Jammu and Kashmir, we have charted a new development path after August 2019. For decades, infrastructure was in tatters despite huge amount of money sent by the Centre. The non-development agenda of seven decades in Jammu and Kashmir mired the Union Territory in a low growth syndrome. Under the guidance of the Prime Minister, Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing a new dawn. Tribals are getting land rights, 11,000 government jobs have been provided within record time with complete transparency and major steps have been taken to ensure the empowerment of women, marginalized and weaker groups. In a major relief to socially and educationally backward classes, Jammu and Kashmir administration has enhanced their income ceiling from Rs 4.50 lakh to Rs 8 lakh allowing them to avail benefits of reservation according to provisions of Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004.



OFF 'D' CUFF

### All About Finding True Love

We are living in times when isolation and loneliness are rampant. With the hectic pace of our lives, we spend less time connecting with each other and enjoying each other's presence. As a result of our reduced human interactions, more and more people everywhere feel isolated and lonely. With isolation comes the daunting feeling that we have no support in life. This in turn leads to stress, depression and disillusionment. We all need to feel supported, loved and appreciated. When we feel the stability of this love and support, we find it easier to go through tough times and are able to lead lives that are more loving, calmer and more peaceful.

Knowing we have a friend to share our burdens with, and whom we can count on, takes our loneliness away. The question is where can we find a friendship that will last forever? There is only one thing that is permanent in this world, and that is God. Always with us, always protecting us, our constant companion, God is our true friend and benefactor. When we finally experience God's love and find our friendship with God, a whole new world opens up for us. We begin to lead our lives feeling loved, protected, safe, and unaffected by the turmoil around us.

To develop love for God, we must seek the refuge of the saints who help ignite love in our hearts for God. They teach us the technique of meditation and give us the blueprint that is needed to become a true human being and to progress on the path back to God. Under their guidance, we awaken to our true nature and learn to tap into the inner treasures that lie hidden within us, so we can grow in love for God.

This life is a golden opportunity for us to know

God and to find our way back to God. God's door is always open to us, and it is up to us to be sincere and diligent in our efforts to experience God's love, to have our attention always focused on God, and to find our way back to God in this lifetime.

God remains our unfailing friend and protector, as we navigate the ups and downs of life. No matter who we are, we all need help at some point in our lives. We look to our outer relationships for this support, and may receive the help, love, and guidance we need at times. However, the love we experience in this world is conditional in nature and the support we get from relationships is temporary, subject to misunderstanding, distance, and death.

The greatest help that we can receive is from God because God is our true Parent. God loves us unconditionally, and we can experience this love as we go within through meditation. We can experience our friendship with God through meditation. It is this love that when experienced in the silence of the soul, can alleviate the pains of the world.

As we experience the love, Light, and bliss of God, we are filled with God's love, and this love radiates from us to all within our orbit. When each of us experiences this bliss, we create circles of happiness which will ultimately envelop the whole world. We then experience God's love and are able to share in the godly characteristics of wisdom, peace, bliss, and love, gradually the peace and joy we attain will spill over to our environment and will have a positive impact on everything around us.

It all begins with meditation wherein we experience God's love.

**Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj**

To my mind, there is no doubt that this Gandhi age is the dark age of India. It is an age in which people, instead of looking for their ideals in the future, are returning to antiquity. -B R Ambedkar

# Hike in GST rates fuelled inflation

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

Unfortunately there has been an increase in GST rates on various goods and services and this hike in the rates of the GST on many goods fuelled inflation in the country. This increase in the rates of GST on different goods and services resulted in the increase in the prices of many goods and services and it has broken the back of the common man and as such the GST council should consider the roll back of the levying and increase in the rates of the GST on some goods and services so that it may not lead to inflation in goods and services. The curd, Lassi, cheese and honey has become costly and the people have to pay GST at the rate of 5 per cent on these goods. The packed curd, Lassi, cheese, honey, cereals, rice, wheat, flour, mutton, fish purchases have been levied 5 per cent GST. Besides these essential goods, rooms in the hospitals costing more than Rs 5,000 have been levied 5 per cent GST and thus there is hike in the rates of the charges of rent of rooms of hospitals which is a cause of grave and great concern. Rooms of the hospitals which were without ICU were levied 5 per cent GST which has come into effect from July 18, 2022. In the mid of continuing inflation your pocket will become more loose. In last month meeting of the GST council it was decided to make changes on the rates of the GST on various goods and the effect of the changes on the rates of GST on various goods and services has taken effect from 18th July. Thus now under this curd, lassi, cereals , rice, flour, mutton, meat and fish has become costly due to the levy of 5 per cent GST and other goods have also become costlier because there has been change in GST rates and slabs and the net effect of all this has come to influence the prices of various goods and services. There is possibility that the prices of 149 goods and services have been

increased due to the hike and levying of 5 per cent GST and decision to this effect has taken place due to the decision of the meeting of GST council last month and it gave rise to the prices of a number of the goods and services and it has in fact put a big drain on the pocket of the common consumer and thus it calls for the reconsideration of the recent decision of the GST council so that the common people will heave a sigh of relief. In 143 goods, 92 per cent goods have been increased GST rates from 18 per cent to 28 per cent and this has come into effect from July 18th and it is a cause of concern to the consumers particularly to the middle income group. In the last month meeting of the GST council under the chairmanship of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman there has been change in the rates of the GST slabs and new items have been levied 5 per cent GST. The government has made changes in the rates of the 143 goods. These changes in the rate slabs of the GST will cease the exemptions which government had given to people before the Lok Sabha elections of 2019,in 2017 and 2018.From the first savaan Monday the consumers have experienced a big jerk because of the increase and levy of the GST and the economic condition of the common man has worsened because of the levy of the 5 per cent GST and because of the change in the slab rates of various daily used items and it has created much trouble and inconvenience to the common consumer. Because of the inflation the pocket of the common man has already loosened and the government has given a big setback to the common man because of the hike in the rates and the levying of the GST rates by 5 per cent and it is very unfortunate for the common man who is reeling in inflation. Now from 18th July the common man has received a big jerk and setback due to the decisions of the GST council of last month. The GST council

meeting which has taken place on June 28-29, and its decisions have come into effect from 18th of July and the common man has been overburdened and this is cause of great and grave concern to the people and the planners as well as the government. Because of inflation the pocket of the common man is burdened already and now from 18th of July it is affecting the pocket and the life of the commoner and a big setback has been done to the consumer because of the increasing of the prices of many essentials of daily use. As such because of the decisions of the GST council of the last month the inflation has been fuelled much once again and it has started its effect from 18th July because from this date the decisions of the GST council have come into effect. Thus the prices of many goods have increased from 18th July 2022 and the government should do something to mitigate the sufferings of the consumers because of the recent decisions of the GST council headed by finance minister of the country. The meeting of the GST council has decided to increase the rates of the GST of the daily use goods and has also decided to levy GST on more goods and services and thus gave a great setback to the consumer. Thus the GST council has decided to increase the rate of GST on many items if the daily use goods which the common man is using and on many items the deduction in the rates Of GST has been withdrawn and this is a big setback to the common consumers. Now on the packed goods and packaged goods with labels excluding frozen goods, fish, curd, cheese, lassi, honey, dried Makhana, wheat and other cereals, the GST has been levied at the rate of 5 per cent with effect from July 18. The bank consumers will have to pay the rates of 18 per cent GST on checks issued and their clearance. The GST council has decided to hike GST rates on the items of daily use and this decision of the

GST council has led to inflation in the country as common man is facing the brunt of the excess prices and inflation due to the hike in GST rates of various products. The GST rates have been hiked and this has led to increase in the prices of many items. The prices of coconut water, different raw material, hotel rooms have been raised to 18 per cent. However the GST has been slashed from 18 per cent to 12 per cent in case of the transport charges on the medicines and drugs transportation. The packaged and labeled goods of curd, Lassi, cheese, honey cereals like rice wheat flour purchases will attract 5 per cent GST from July and it is a big setback to the common man and the net effect of the decisions of the GST council meeting held at the close of the last month has resulted in the increase of the prices of many items of the daily use and it has given a big jerk to the poor consumers. Thus because of the GST council meeting of the last month, now curd, lassi, honey, cereals food items, mutton and meat, fish have been levied 5 per cent GST from 18th of July and thus it has fuelled inflation in the country and the common consumer is facing the brunt of the higher rates of GST and the consequent hike in the prices of the various goods and services. In short the last months decision of hiking the GST on some products and the decision of leaving GST on other goods which were hitherto exempted from GST has affected the pockets of the common man. The net effect of the hike in the GST rates on some products and levying the GST on some other packed goods has made it difficult for the common man to make his both ends meet. The government is appealed and requested to reconsider hike in the GST rates and also to rollback the decision of levying GST on some items.

(The author is a Columnist and Social Activist).

## J&K's transition to grass root democracy

■ ROHIT KUMAR

With the Article 370's revocation, Jammu and Kashmir's true integration into India was achieved, addressing a lacuna that had been allowed to exist for too long. Its transformative impact on democracy has managed to touch the lives of people in a meaningful way. History of strengthening grassroots democracy was created in J&K with the conduct of free, fair and peaceful Panchayat elections. Panchayat elections recorded a substantial 74.1 percent voter turnout. A total of 3,650 Sarpanchs and 23,660 Panchs were elected to lay the foundation for the three-tier Panchayati Raj system for the first time across J&K. After successful conduct of Panchayat elections, elections for Block Development Councils (BDCs) were conducted for the very first time in J&K. The BDC elections saw an overwhelming voter turnout of 98.3 per cent in which 276 chairpersons were elected in a total transparent manner. Finally, District Development Council elections were held in 8 phases which witnessed a tremendous voter turnout of 51.7 per cent. The process elected 20 DDC Chairpersons and 20 Vice-Chairpersons besides a total of 278 DDC members were also elected, thus completing implementation of 3-tier Panchayati Raj system here. In his speech at Palli village of Samba, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi described Panchayat Diwas celebrations in Jammu and Kashmir as indicative of big change, adding that Central government schemes are now getting implemented expeditiously and are directly benefiting people. Districts in J&K, through their elected Panchayats, have been allocated funds worth Rs 22,000 crore this year, up from Rs 5,000 crore until three years ago. Since August 2019, the government has been focusing on bringing about wide-ranging reforms to substantially improve governance and enhance ease of living for the people. To further improve the skills and efficiency of PRI representatives, a slew of capacity building and training programs are being conducted for

Sarpanchs and Panchs in reputed training institutions like IMPARD and outside institutions as well. In addition to induction courses, digital literacy training, Gram-Panchayat development plan training, and training workshops are also organized for newly elected BDC Chairpersons. Near about 750 elected representatives have been provided training cum exposure visits outside UT. But democracy is not only about conducting elections; It is also about sharing responsibility and empowering representatives appropriately. To support and empower block development councils, both the Union Territory administration and Central Government have been working overtime to extensively to create safe and conducive atmosphere to conduct the elections. In order to strengthen the security apparatus, the Government of India has provided Rs 9,120.69 crore to the Government of Jammu and Kashmir under the Security Related Expenditure (Police) scheme since its inception. As per MHA report, the amount includes Rs 448.04 crore that was spent till December 31, 2020 since bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir. In addition to that, five India reserve battalions, two border battalions and two women battalions are raised for Jammu and Kashmir. Abrogation of article 370 also provides unique employment opportunity for youth and women. Government has been heavily investing in Jammu and Kashmir to foster infrastructural developments across the region. It includes building roads, tunnels, railway bridges, railway routes, etc. in regions, which were once ignored or deprived of development owing to their inaccessibility. With other projects in the pipeline, Kashmir may require many local civil engineers, well-versed with the local condition, terrain and situation to guide and plan large-scale and small-scale infrastructural development across the valley. Ever-growing retail and e-commerce sector is another realm of career opportunities for the Kashmiri youth. One of the most significant examples in

this regard is the UAE-based retail giant Lulu investing INR 200 crore to set up a food processing and logistics hub in Kashmir. The project will not only generate employment but benefit farmers and the agriculture sector as well. Companies like Tata and Reliance have expressed interest in investment in Jammu and Kashmir in various sectors, which includes information technology. Investments across the IT sector will help generate thousands of jobs. Should these prospective investments turn into reality, they'll generate enormous career opportunities across the IT and its allied sectors. Qualified people with a flair for teaching can partner with potential investors to start skill development centers that aim to hone the skills of youth across various sectors such as technology, commerce, and arts. Even being a prime tourist destination in country, the sector hasn't been able to flourish and grow to its potential on account of the perpetual terror threats and attacks. But ever since the abrogation of Article 370, Kashmir has witnessed a steep decline in terror attacks. This year Kashmir is witnessing a record footfall of tourists this year. After a slump of three years, nearly two lakh tourists visited the Valley in March alone. And between January and 15 May 2022, it saw 700,000 visitors, the highest in the last 10 years. This growth of tourism in the long run can refer to the creation of employment and numerous job opportunities for the Kashmiri youth. Other potential sectors include horticulture, dairy farming, the restaurant business, logistics (courier service), etc. Whether self-employment or job, this is something for the youth to choose based on its preferences, financial muscle and skills. But with these proposed investments and heavy infrastructural development, Kashmiri youth may not fall short of career opportunities in the future. The abrogation of article 370 has ushered an era of new possibilities and opportunities for all and allows every section of society to be partner in growth and development of J&K.

■ MANSHU SHARMA

G-20 Presidents and Prime Ministers may have to ignore China and its 'all-weather friend' Pakistan's rant that powerful group's meeting next year should not be held in Kashmir. China's official spokesperson's recent statements on this count and Pakistan's rumblings point to the possibility of two countries using G-20 as a punching bag to hit at India. Pakistan is not a member of the globally influential G-20 that seeks to establish financial stability on the economic front internationally. As seen in the past, Pakistan seems to have found a way to vent its frustration by raising the bogey of Kashmir as India prepares to take over the G-20 presidency on December 1, 2022.

While the Pakistani leadership is clueless about getting the country out of 'near bankruptcy', its usual ploy is to flag Kashmir as a diversionary tactic and take its own people's attention away from pressing bread-and-butter issues. What's more significant this time round is that China has provided some 'vocal power' by stating that Kashmir cannot be a forum to host G-20 foreign ministers or summit-level meetings. Neither Beijing nor Islamabad have any business to bring up the Kashmir question, especially in relation to G-20 that came into being in 1996 to address economic and global challenges. At a time when a global economic crisis is staring in the face and G-20 leaders have to draft immediate responses and draw up a long-term roadmap to tackle lopsided development, China and Pakistan's 'Jugalbandi' on Kashmir is more of a comic act of sorts. Responses from India to such pumped-up 'diversionary tactics' of China Pakistan duopoly have been firm and clear. India went ahead and stated that not only Jammu and Kashmir, even the picturesque Leh-Ladakh will be a venue for several G-20 meetings over the next one-and-a-half years. It is well within India's right as G-20 President till November 30, 2023, to decide on venues, meetings and work plan for the most powerful non-partisan economic and development block. India's right to showcase development and progress made after having carved out Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh as union territories is undeniable. No nation within the G-20 or outside should have any objection to re-starting of the democratic process beginning with district development councils elections and delimitation of constituencies in Islamic terror-ravaged Kashmir. Actually, India should effectively debunk the propaganda of Islamic terror modules, their handlers and nations backing them by showcasing the progress made in Jammu & Kashmir as well as Ladakh regions especially after amending Article 370 of Indian Constitution on August 5, 2019. Showcasing the true picture of Kashmir before the global community may turn out to be the antithesis of the negative propaganda unleashed by Islamist terror networks in the two decades. Ignoring this side show of China-Pakistan, India as G-20 President will have to work on expanding the

group's agenda to make it more inclusive, especially for developing and least developed countries. Leaving its imprint on G-20 with a purposeful and focused work plan is what needs to be attempted. Counter measures to tackle the global recession should become her priority. In the process, one cannot ignore IMF projections on world possibly heading for recession given the slowdown in China, adverse impact of sanctions on Russia post-Ukraine invasion and consequent spurt in commodity prices and related inflationary pressures. It will be pertinent to review and assess the economic progress made post-global meltdown and two years of COVID-19 pandemic.

While Bretton Wood institutions come up with growth estimates for 2023 and 2024 this month-end, initial computations project that economic growth may halve to 3.6 per from what was achieved in 2021. Economists would be more than happy if 3.6 per cent growth was achieved next two years without further slide. British economist Prof Nicholas Herbert Stern is optimistic that G-20 under the Indian presidency would be the 'turning point' with Prime Minister Modi expected to push for an inclusive and sustainable economic growth agenda. One would agree with Prof Stern that India was in that unique and special position to achieve the 'unachievable' and bolster the next phase of the growth cycle. Much of what Prime Minister Narendra Modi articulated at the Glasgow summit on climate change on November 2, 2021 may get subsumed into the agenda charted by India as G-20 President. Taking the G-20 out of the narrow economic and financial agenda and taking a holistic view with a focus on developing and least developed economies may get a push. The first Arun Jaitley memorial lecture delivered by Prime Minister Modi has provided the backdrop to economic and development thinking in the government. Investments by the private sector, especially in infrastructure sectors and their inter-linkage with growth and governance, may be flagged by Prime Minister Modi. Investments worth \$ 2 trillion is what Prime Minister Modi may have to moot for developing and least developed countries by 2050 to achieve sustainable, equitable and broad-based economic growth. This work plan may not include China. A marathon growth run plan may have to be charted by India as president of G-20 with no 'ifs' and 'buts'. While half such investment can be mobilized from domestic resources by respective countries, rich countries, international financial institutions and other stakeholders will have to pitch in the rest for this plan to pan out. A no-nonsense approach to the decade after the financial melt-down will have to be put in place. The Indian ethos and civilizational values outlined by her sages and thinkers like Chanakya may provide the right path to make India's G-20 Presidency a roaring success. Disruptive moves made by China and Pakistan should not distract India or G-20 from the larger agenda for the world.

## YOUR COLUMN Address grievances of people

Dear Editor,

Through the columns of your esteemed daily, I would like to highlight following few lines for the kind consideration of LG, Manoj Sinha and other concerned, regarding untimely services of Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC). JMC does not provide funds for installation of transformer as and when it becomes

unserviceable due to which public has to suffer without electricity and water. People run from pillar to post for installation of transformer and thereafter were informed that due to none payment of funds at proper time to contractors, they are not working properly. It is requested that funds be provided to PHE Mechanical department, like past practice, for proper functioning because right from the time funds are being allocated to JMC, people are suffering. It is requested to please do the needful for the sake of general public. As payments of previous work have not been made to contractors, they don't

work further. It is further requested that previous payments may also be released in favour of all contactors, which is about Rs 40 to 50 lakh. I, on behalf of all Sikh organizations of J&K, including Shiromani Akali Dal, Sikh United Front, Bhai Kanaiya Nishkam Sewa Society, All India Sikh Student Federation, Sikh Welfare Society, Youth Akali Dal, Istri Akali Dal, Sikh Naujawan Sabha urge LG to personally intervene into the matter in the larger interest of people.

**Mohinder Singh  
Chief Organizer, Shiromani Akali Dal, J&K.**