


MAJOR I'NTL COLLABORATION

New Zealand became the second foreign country to work with the J&K government after the UAE and pledged to help 'in doubling produce in the farming sector' of the Union Territory. J&K government signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) 'for transforming the sheep farming sector in the UT. The virtual signing ceremony with Mischa Mannix-Opie, Executive Director, New Zealand G2G, was presided over by J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at the Raj Bhawan. New Zealand Trade Commissioner for South Asia, Ralph Hays; Director Oceania, Ruby Jaspreet; Commercial Manager G2G, Erin Mehr also attended the MoC signing ceremony. The partnership is aimed at doubling produce in the next three years with substantial increment in quality of livestock products, wool production and introducing processing facilities and value addition to boost income and benefits to Jammu Kashmir J&K administration was creating an enabling environment for the integrated growth of livestock sector, which is providing livelihood support to around 1.2 million families and contributing 5 per cent to the Union Territory's GDP. LG said that it will enhance mutton production, value addition of livestock products, capacity building, technology transfer, greater education and trainings in J&K for the benefit, welfare and prosperity of both current and future generations. Overarching objective of MoC was to improve farmers' remuneration, transfer of technology, marketing and value addition of sheep products of J&K. New Zealand is an important partner of India's expanding relationship globally. "We attach special values to our ties not only because of deep bonding and cultural affinities but also from a mature understanding of our strategic convergences, global interests and economic potential," Sinha said, adding, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern believe in shared commitment to promote ideals of democracy, peace and prosperity for the people. Despite turbulent events of global pandemic since the last two years, there has been almost seamless continuity in India-New Zealand relationship. New Zealand G2G, the well-known public sector entity, is also partnering with other Indian States to leverage expertise and solutions for sustainable development. "The leadership of the two countries believes in the huge potential for our economic and commercial cooperation. We are committed to create conditions that would facilitate the rapid growth of this cooperation. I am confident this cooperation agreement between New Zealand G2G and J&K is just the beginning of widening and deepening our relationship in the future," he added.

Meanwhile, the J&K government and the world's leading travel tech platform, OYO Group, on Wednesday decided to launch rural home stay under project 'Crown of Incredible India'. LG Sinha has announced Rs 50,000 special financial assistance to youth willing to establish a home stay unit. With a market giant like OYO coming onboard, we are making inroads to encourage micro-entrepreneurs in the villages and revitalising local art and crafts and redevelopment of rural areas. The venture will help in building a tourist infrastructure of world standards in rural J&K. By December last year, around 200 home stays will be available on OYO platform, Ritesh Agarwal, founder and group CEO, OYO, said his group 'is proud to extend its partnership with the J&K government to generate economic and employment opportunities in rural areas.' "We are committed to strengthening tourism for the benefit of local communities and aim to work together with these micro-entrepreneurs to promote sustainable and responsible travel and home-stays that contribute to resilient local economies and support jobs," he added. OYO Hotels has tied up with 20 home stays in Pahalgal and 10 home stays are present on their platform as on date. The project also aimed to improve tourism in underpenetrated areas in Udhampur, Doda, Pahalgal and Kokernag.



OFF 'D' CUFF

Ego hinders one From Progressing

Man is not free. He is dependent on others. In a way, he is like a prisoner of himself. He remains tied up with many worldly issues all the time. He wants to be free but circumstances do not allow him to escape from the bondages.

His greatest bondage is his egoism. The ego keeps the man tied up in its bonds. The feeling of 'I', the feeling of 'mine' and the feeling of ego is nothing else than the bond that keeps the man tied up. Due to the bondage the man is unable to reach the destination where he wishes to reach. Egoism keeps him tied down and does not allow the man to rise or make any progress.

Ego pulls the straightforward-looking person backward. He becomes confused and loses all his initiatives of progress. He becomes unaware that he is tied up in the knots of egoism. If one is able to overcome ego or can successfully remove ego from the life then there is no power which could retard the progress of the man. If we look at the history of our country and also of other civilizations, it was due to the ego of certain individuals that there had occurred widespread bloodshed and many forward-looking countries got eliminated. Great civilizations had perished and, even at our local household levels, many prosperous families got destroyed for nothing.

If a person is able to overcome the traits of ego, one can easily reach the doors of the Supreme Power. Remember that God does not feel inclined to listen to the prayers of the arrogant

Shri Sudhanshuji Maharaj

■ PROF HARI OM



The July 17 Ikkjutt Jammu-sponsored demonstrations at all district headquarters in Jammu province in support of its demand seeking statehood for the politically-marginalized and economically and socially neglected region has evoked response on expected lines. The friends and well-wishers of Jammu province have openly and in private welcomed the demand, saying if the disempowered and colonized Jammu province is to be regenerated socially, economically and politically, it has to be separated from Kashmir. Contrarily, the loud clamour for separate Jammu State has rattled, disturbed, alarmed and upset the apocryph of those in Kashmir, who destroyed, fledged, exploited, drained and systematically disempowered the people of Jammu province for 75 years after 1947.

Take, for example, former powerful minister and pro-self-rule PDP's ideologue Altaf Bukhari. A day after demonstrations in Jammu (July 18), he, inter-alia, in Jammu itself said: 'Apni Party will continue to fight against the divisive forces. We will not allow such elements who are creating division among the people. We will continue our struggle for the Unity of J&K. Those speaking for separate statehood are trying to divert attention of the people from the real issues. The people who want to create division in the name of region and religion are the enemies of peace and unity of historic Dogra State of J&K. Jammu has become a victim of divisive campaigns, which have ultimately hit the development, business and tourism sector in Jammu'.

What he said was nothing but a desperate attempt of the essentially separatist and fundamentally Kashmir-centric Kashmiri parties to mislead and hoodwink the long-suffering people of Jammu province and pit vested interests in Jammu province against the ardent believers in the concept of national

integration and Jammu's freedom from the oppressive Kashmiri leadership. They are simply beating their chests to fool the people of Jammu province but all their ill-motivated, ill-designed and ill-intentioned attempts are destined to fail. Will he or any other Kashmiri leader answer thirteen questions?

1. Why did Kashmiri leadership snatch the age-old Jammu city's capital status and make Srinagar permanent capital of J&K State? Why?
2. Why all the J&K CMs till June 2018 were from Kashmir belonging to one particular religious sect? Why?
3. Why did the Sheikh Abdullah divide the Hindu-majority Udhampur district and create out of it Muslim-majority Doda district in 1948? Why?
4. Why did the PM Nehru-backed J&K Wazir-e-Azam Sheikh Abdullah let loose a reign of senseless brutalities on the integrationists in Jammu, who had launched 'Ek Nissan, Ek Vidhan and Ek Pradhan' movement in 1952 to ensure J&K's full integration into India? Why? The state oppression left almost two dozen integrations dead and many others wounded across Jammu province. The Kashmiri Muslim leaders, without any exception, dismissed as 'reactionary, communal and anti-national' the Jammu movement.
5. Why did the GM Sadiq Government reject the 1968 Gajendragadkar Commission report, which had, among other things, recommended three Statutory Regional Development Boards, one each for Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh? Why?
6. Why did not the Farooq Abdullah Government adopt the 1999 Singhal Committee Report that candidly acknowledged that the share of Jammu in professional colleges was just negligible? Why? The report had suggested that all the seats available in the Jammu-based professional colleges will be the sole preserve of the Jammu youth and all the seats available in the Kashmir-based such colleges will be the sole preserve of the Kashmiri youth? The ratio of Kashmiri youth and Jammu youth, respectively, in medical colleges in 1987 was

- 46.5% and 53.5%; in 1988, 52.97% and 47.03%; in 1989, 55% and 45%; in 1990, 40% and 60%; in 1991, 48% and 52%; in 1993, 48% and 52%; 1994, 62% and 38%; in 1995, 59% and 41%; in 1996, 64% and 36%; and in 1997, 80% and 20%.
7. Why did the Ghulam Nabi Azad-led government apply the 1983 Wazir Commission Report in a wrong way to hurt Jammu? Why? The Commission had recommended three new districts for the vast and difficult Jammu province and only one for the small Kashmir Valley, but the Azad Government created four districts in Jammu and four in Kashmir in 2007.
8. Why did the Azad-Mufti government adopt private member's divisive and communal bills on Shari laws and state flag in 2007 and reject outright bills on secularism, national flag, due representation to Jammu in the assembly, citizenship rights to the Hindu-Sikh refugees from Pakistan, temple protection etc etc? Why?
9. Why did the Azad Government violate the J&K High Court's unambiguous directions in 2008 and snatch from the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board that small piece of land at Baltal in Kashmir meant for creating some additional facilities for the Amarnath pilgrims? The uncalled move outraged the religious sensitivities of the Hindus across the world, led to over 2-month-long massive agitation across Jammu province and in other parts of India and martyrdom of more than a dozen devotees of Lord Shiva in Jammu province.
10. Is it not a fact that the Mufti Syed-led coalition Government imposed 12.5% tax on chopper service to the Hindus' places of worship, including Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine and Baba Amarnath Shrine? Why did all the Kashmiri leaders support the official move?
11. Is it not a fact that NC President Omar Abdullah abused the hero of the Jammu Dogras, Maharaja Hari Singh, in the Samba-Vijaypur belt while addressing election rallies in 2002?
12. Is it not a fact that the Kashmiri-dominated successive governments in the state

Rapid transformation in J&K post abrogation of Article 370

■ EDHA BHATIA

For decades, Jammu and Kashmir has figured in discussions across the world for all the wrong reasons. However, the historic decision of the government of India to reorganize the state on Aug 5, 2019, has rejuvenated the region's unique elements of 'Insaniyat' (humanity), 'Jamhooriyat' (democracy) and 'Kashmiriyat' (the identity of the people of Kashmir). Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act has brought in grassroots democratization, social equity and economic empowerment, the majority of which has been enabled through the application of progressive central legislations that residents of the region were hitherto deprived of. As a result, the people of Jammu and Kashmir have overwhelmingly supported the decision and have enabled these changes by participating in and contributing to the positive developments made under the act. One of the most important results of this historic decision is the wider percolation of democratic values in the region. Last year's District Development Council elections in the Union Territory (UT) - in which more than 3 million people voted, including marginalized groups such as Valmikis, refugees and scheduled tribes - established a fully functional three-tier local self-government structure in the territory. This paved the way for 'Gram Swaraj' (self-rule in villages) in the region, a vision of Mahatma Gandhi that gives more power to the people, from planning to implement developmental initiatives. Additionally, due to the applicability of central laws, the socioeconomically disadvantaged sections of the society, including the tribal communities that account for about 12 percent of the population, will benefit from the reservation of assembly seats to gain a political voice in the decision-making process for developing the UT. Aside from this, the decision has brought inclusive governance to Jammu and Kashmir, with 33 per cent of roles in local self-government institutions reserved for women, facilitating their participation in the political arena. Another positive development of the reorganization has been the social empowerment of underprivileged sections of society, such as women and minorities. Subsequent to the reorganization, 106 people-friendly central laws and nine constitutional amendments are now applicable in the region, including the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, the Forest Rights Act, and National Commission for Minorities Act. The reorganization has also given women equal property rights and reservation to minorities in education and employment, which will enable their socio-economic upliftment on a par with the other states/UTs of India. For the economic development of the region, the government has taken several steps to boost agriculture, infrastructure and the industrial sector. Innovative programs like e-markets for apple trade and a market intervention scheme to ensure direct payment to cultivators have increased incomes for the apple farmers of Jammu and Kashmir. Furthermore, there has been a paradigm shift in cultivation, harvesting and marketing to increase the production and sale of other popular farm products from the region, including saffron, tulips and mushrooms. On similar lines, the recent geographical indication tagging of the globally renowned Kashmiri saffron will boost its exports and secure its unique identity. The government has also given much-needed impetus to the agriculture, horticulture, sericulture and handicrafts industries, paving the way for development in rural Jammu and Kashmir.

On infrastructure front, the arch of the world's tallest railway bridge - over Chenab River as part of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link project - was completed in Jammu and Kashmir in April. The bridge, built at a height of 359 meters, is taller than the Eiffel Tower. It will connect the Kashmir Valley with the plains and hence ease the movement of people and freight, enabling economic development. Projects such as the Jammu-Srinagar-Ladakh highway will make all-weather travel possible in the region. In the field of hydro power, the UT is adopting the innovative run-of-the-river approach, which will minimize the environmental impact of projects while providing electricity in remote areas. Out of 54 infrastructure projects identified for the region under the Prime Minister's Development Package, 20 have already been completed. This focused policy approach has transformed Jammu and Kashmir by improving its infrastructure and connectivity, despite the difficult terrain and weather. In the urban domain, Jammu and Srinagar are being developed as modern, sustainable smart cities. In addition, 500 projects worth \$80 million have been completed and several projects, such as a light rail transit system and IT parks, are in the pipeline. Meanwhile, the tourism sector is also bound to flourish with the removal of Article 370,

which - coupled with the government's thrust on regional infrastructure development - will enable quick recovery of the region in the post-pandemic era. In fact, Jammu and Kashmir's economy is projected to grow by 7.5 percent this financial year.

The Government of India intends to create a local industrial base in the region, replicating the success story of the neighboring hilly state of Himachal Pradesh. The Jammu and Kashmir Industrial Policy 2021-30, in effect from April, will act as a facilitator and provide incentives for industries to set up units in the region. Steps such as the new land policy and a single-point clearance system are improving Jammu and Kashmir's ease of doing business ranking and will support its industrial development. Simultaneously, the government has launched skill development programs that will train local youths according to the employment market's requirements. The government has also accelerated the recruitment of Jammu and Kashmir's youth and has already advertised 10,000 jobs, which will be followed by 25,000 more in subsequent phases. The government's recruitment process favors residents of the area, along with other disadvantaged sections of society. The IT revolution in India, which could not reach Jammu and Kashmir before 2019, is now progressing rapidly in the region, providing easy and transparent digitized governance, along with other commercial services. Last month, the local government institutions at the village level in Jammu and Kashmir were digitally integrated, allowing government services to be provided to the doorsteps of rural households. Similarly, the government's renewed push for creating IT labs and computer-aided learning centers, along with the Knowledge Network Program of Jammu and Kashmir, has allowed children to access educational content online. Furthermore, such digital integration in remote areas has helped in providing basic health services online, which is vital to the coronavirus disease management efforts in the region. Unique ideas like a mobile application for grievance redressal and digitizing day-to-day activities, such as ration procurement and business registration and certification, have already been implemented in Jammu and Kashmir and have improved the standard of living for its people. There is no doubt that, due to the constitutional amendment made two years ago, the region, whose development had stagnated for seven decades, has witnessed rapid economic progress. The previously ignored sectors of health and education have also benefited from the policies of the Indian government, which have improved their quality and made them more accessible and affordable. For the comprehensive development of future generations in the region, 50 new educational institutions offering 25,000 seats have been established in the past two years, which is the largest, such expansion in Jammu and Kashmir in the last seven decades. The fundamental right to education, which is now applicable to Jammu and Kashmir, has ensured access to education for all students in the region. On top of this, more than half a million students have taken advantage of government scholarship schemes, which is a four-fold increase on an annual basis. A student health card scheme has also been launched to provide better healthcare for students in the region. And several prominent higher education institutions, including the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, will be established in the region to provide quality education to the youth of Jammu and Kashmir. To ensure healthcare services in the region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently launched Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, which will extend health insurance coverage to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. During the pandemic, 17 dedicated coronavirus disease (COVID-19) hospitals have been set up to provide adequate isolation and intensive care units. Meanwhile, 85 percent of healthcare workers in the region have already been vaccinated for COVID-19 and, in nine out of 20 districts in the UT, all people aged over 45 have received at least a single dose of vaccine. In fact, Srinagar is one of the 16 Indian districts to have been recognized for best practices in the management of the pandemic. These developments frame the broader picture of Jammu and Kashmir, in which its people, enabled by their government, are working to realize the region's true potential. They have already made rapid progress in the short period of two years. The Government of India, in collaboration with regional stakeholders, is embedding Jammu and Kashmir's crown with the jewels of democracy, equality and economic growth, which it has been deprived of since independence.

Struggleful journey of Draupadi Murmu

Draupadi Murmu, a tribal leader from Odisha has now become first tribal President and second female President of India. As a tribal woman from remote Mayurbhanj district, she had never thought about becoming the President of India. Murmu comes from a discreet tribal community of Santhals. Santhals, also known as Manjhis, are an ethnic group largely concentrated in the states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar and West Bengal. According to Britannica, there are over 5 million Santhals in India alone. She is the first tribal woman from East to hold such a top position. Modi's Government choosing a leader from an Odisha Adivasi community seems to be its best bet currently. BJP's choice of Draupadi Murmu for president is an important signaling for India's historically prideful and underserved tribal communities. Murmu has a clean track record and as an Adivasi can challenge, at least in perception, the upper caste dominance in Odisha's politics and consolidate a large section of the Adivasi population in western Odisha. During BJP-BJD coalition Government that came to power in 2000, she held the Commerce and Transport, and, subsequently, the Fisheries and Animal Husbandry portfolios. She managed to win in 2009 even as the BJP paled against the challenge put up by the by-then estranged BJD. Murmu entered State politics in 1997 and was conferred with Nilkantha Award in 2007. BJP President J P Nadda, has rightly said that "Millions of people, especially those who have experienced poverty and faced hardships, derive great strength from the life of Draupadi Murmu. Her understanding of policy matters and compassionate nature will greatly benefit our country". When she assumed office as the governor of Jharkhand on May 18, 2015, not only was she the first woman to have done so but also the first tribal leader and woman from Odisha to be a governor in any Indian state. When she was born in 1958, in the district of Mayurbhanj in Odisha, there was nothing to foretell that she was headed to the Rashtrapati Bhawan. Living in one of the state's most underdeveloped regions, her family struggled with poverty. Despite her family's difficult situation, she went on to graduate from the Ramadevi Women's College in Bhubaneswar. Her father, who comes from a tribal family, made her stand on her feet by educating her. She struggled to reach the first job of a clerk in the Irrigation Department from a village in Orissa. She took her baby steps struggling with poverty in one of the most remote and underdeveloped districts of the country. Draupadi Murmu is a devotee of Lord Shiva. She is the only woman to have travelled from the Santhal tribal section to the post of President. She is recognized as a woman living with simplicity and taking strong decisions. But her life can inspire many of us who start thinking small difficulties as end of life. The 64-year-old Murmu was twice elected as a BJP legislator from Odisha and was a minister in the Naveen Patnaik cabinet when the saffron party supported the Biju Janata Dal (BJD). Born in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, Murmu belongs to a Santhal family - a tribal ethnic group. She began her career as an assistant teacher at the Shri Aurobindo Integral Education Centre in Rairangpur. Thereafter, she had working with the Odisha government as part of the irrigation and power department. In 2015, she was sworn in as the first woman Governor of Jharkhand. She was also the first woman and tribal leader from Odisha to be appointed as Governor of an Indian state. She has come a long way in making her way till here, on her own, breaking all social stigmas. When she had gone to study in Bhubaneswar before the nineties, there were no roads, no Google Maps to help people. She has always maintained a very stoic appearance in her public and personal life. She figured everything out on her own. She has devoted her life to serving society and empowering the poor, downtrodden as well as the marginalised. Her life has been marked with personal tragedies as she lost her husband and two sons. Over the next decade or so she held several leading roles within the BJP, serving as the state president of the ST Morcha and as the BJP district president of Mayurbhanj. She has diverse administrative experience having handled ministries such as transport, commerce, fisheries and animal husbandry in the Odisha government. She is a source of inspiration for us. As Murmu's contributions to our nation are immense and she possesses a lot of expertise in different areas which will be certainly of great benefit to our country.