

Empowerment of Hill Councils

Ladakh has a long history of demand for converting the region into Union Territory. This demand was based on various reasons, which, however, did not find favour with powers that be. In stead, after a long time, the idea of conceding Hill Council status to Ladakh was floated. But before moving in that direction, the State Government carved out Kargil district out of Ladakh region obviously on the basis of physical and demographic specifications. In the process both the districts — Leh and Kargil were granted the status of Hill Council. The idea was borrowed from what was obtaining in the eastern part of the country.

Creation of Hill Council carried the fundamental idea of giving local population a structure and powers that would answer their urge for economic, social and cultural development. This came into being through an Act of the Legislature. The Act also defined the structure and powers of the Hill Council, and enjoined upon the State Government to provide financial and logistical support to the Hill Councils to conduct the part of administration assigned to them. Thus the two Hill Councils first formulated the structure and then began to function within the stipulated parameters.

With the passage of time, the Hill Councils of Leh and Kargil have gained much administrative experience. They have come closer to the people for whom they work and understand their problems and urges and aspirations. Development of the two regions is fraught with some difficulty owing to geography, climatic conditions, physical handicaps, and absence of full-scale agricultural pursuits and lack of industries. The area being snow bound for six months in a year restricts connectivity. All these factors have to be taken into consideration when developmental plans are chalked out and taken-up for execution on the ground. The two Hill Councils have met and brought under discussion almost all aspects of the Councils and the improvement that require their full empowerment. The members of two Hill Councils have unanimously decided to demand amendment in the LAHDC Act so that real autonomy devolves on them. They have specified what they precisely mean by full empowerment. Both the Hill Councils are in favour of conferring powers of Ministers to the Chief Executive Councilors and Executive Councilors for their respective departments. They have demanded powers to the CECs for imposing penalties on the erring officers after formal departmental inquiry; powers to CECs and ECs to either review or accept the Annual Performance Report of the district officers, bifurcation of the powers of the Deputy Commissioners/Chief Executive Officers of the Hill Councils by way of separating the powers of District Magistrate/Collector. The Hill Councils have decided to urge the Government to confer powers of Commissioner Secretary to Secretary/CEO in order to take decisions in respect of LAHDCs. There are other demands as well like structural development of the Councils so that their functionality is improved through institutionalizing of services. The Hill Councils also demand that their consent should be obtained before posting of Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of Police, Engineers and other district level officers.

These demands of the two Hill Councils are significant in their content and it is premature to comment on the reaction of the State Government. In essence the two Hill Councils want that they should be autonomous in letter and in spirit to run their local affairs and administration. The fact is that while considering their demand for more powers and upgraded structure, it has to be remembered that autonomy in theoretical sense does mean conceding the demands that have been jointly made by the responsible persons of the two Councils. It has generally been found that devolution of powers has proved useful in solving the problems of the people concerned. It helps in creating the sense of responsibility. Owing to ethnic and geographical peculiarities of the regions, empowerment of the Councils would be a right step in addressing their difficulties. The two regions have made progress in all walks of life. They are capable of running their affairs themselves. We find much sense in the demand of the two Councils that the Government should convene a meeting of all MPs, MLAs and MLCs of the two regions and discuss at length the question of devolution of full autonomy to the two Hill Councils. This is a constructive suggestion and there should not be any difficulty for the Government to accept it.

Colleges without infrastructure

In post-independence period, education has expanded at all levels in our State. A network of schools and colleges is to be found today. With this the percentage of literacy has also increased considerably. It is a good sign. It is an on-going process and a day will come when literacy in the State will be hundred percent. But it is not only literacy that will help the state move forward. Higher levels of education also need to be strengthened and supported. In that quest the Government opened 18 new degree colleges in 2008 to cater to the needs of student community in smaller towns and their peripheral areas. Finding that this step was received with good response, the Government in 2011 added 24 more degree colleges to the existing number. These were opened at far off places as the students of those areas could not easily reach the nearest degree colleges on the one hand and on the other they did not want to put an end to their urge for further and higher education. This changed the situation completely and evidently higher education was to be brought to the doorsteps of each and every person who was desirous of perusing it. Additionally the Government opened extension campuses of the universities in both the regions of Kashmir and Jammu, which literally brought higher education to the very doorstep of our student community. These are highly commendable measures taken by the Government and we should be grateful to the Government for undertaking the big project of expansion of higher education in the State.

However notwithstanding this extension, the institutions newly set up lack in infrastructure both in terms of accommodation and faculty. Most of these institutions are running in private accommodation and most of them are having only temporary faculties on contract basis. It is important that a higher institution should have the campus and the buildings of its own and should not depend on rented accommodation. Its personality does not grow in rented houses. This is one big deficiency in the infrastructure of these colleges. Secondly, most of these newly set up colleges do not have all the branches of study that are important in present context. Science Faculty is missing in most of them and only Arts subjects are taught. The reason given is that there are no laboratories and other paraphernalia needed for introducing science subjects. Thus these degree colleges remain restricted to Arts Faculty and do not cater to the needs of students who would go for science subjects.

While appreciating the intention of the Government to expand education and bring it to the doorsteps of each and every citizen of the State, we would like to entreat the Government to pay attention to providing necessary infrastructure to these colleges. We have to raise the level of education of young students that would be compatible with modern system of education. We are aware of financial constraints that hold the Government back from lavishly funding the higher education chapter. But knowing that education is of paramount importance that can lead the State along the path of prosperity, it is advisable that the Government finds means of providing necessary funding to the institutions to transform into a modern and fully equipped institutions catering to the needs of the students.

Depleting underground water

H C Katoch

Two third portion of the earth surface is covered by water. Out of the total water available on earth surface only 2.5% water is potable, while 97.5% is salty. Three fourth of drinking water is in the form of snow and glaciers. One fourth of the water is, thus available for drinking. This is available in the form of streams, wells, Bowlies and springs.

The availability of drinking water, thus, differs from country to country, State to State & place to place. Its availability to population in particular area depends upon the sources of both surface and underground water. Some areas have access to surface water, while other areas are dependent upon ground water. Where the recharge of the ground water is less and exploitation is more, the areas go dry and it becomes drought prone.

People's Science Institute organized a training workshop on Ground water Management for Voluntary Organisations at Dehradun recently that was participated by NGOs from different states of the country. The purpose was to train the volunteer sector to take up this task in their respective states. It was startling to note that the underground water resources are rapidly depleting and there is hardly any awareness to recharge these sources which are in the form of tube wells, dug wells, hand pumps, wells, bowlies and springs.

Spring shed management
Spring is a natural source of groundwater. Mountain springs emanating naturally from unconfined aquifers are the primary source of water for rural households in the Himalayan region. Due to the impacts of climate change on precipitation patterns such as rise in rainfall intensity, reduction in its temporal spread, and a marked decline in winter rain, coupled with other anthropogenic causes, the problem of dying springs is being increasingly felt across this region.

Unlike wells, which may be owned and controlled pri-

vately; springs are generally community-owned and community-managed. Thus, they give a sense of a "common" resource i.e. groundwater shared through a common mechanism, i.e. the spring.

Decreasing spring discharge has become a matter of concern throughout the Himalayan region. The decrease in spring-discharge implies either or both of two scenarios - firstly, the recharge to the system which

agement of springs as 'commons'. A recharge site, for instance, may be located within forest land, private land, common land, revenue land etc. The strategies adopted for the purpose of spring recharge will vary depending on these locations, the type of spring, dependent population etc., and calls for a scientific approach that includes all the above considerations.

Underground water-need for recharge

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feeds the springs (mountain aquifers) has reduced; secondly, the storages of these mountain aquifers are tapped by artificial means such as wells.

The recharge areas of these springs are site specific, depending on the rock type and rock structure. Despite the complexity of spring hydrogeology, geomorphology remains the prime factor on which conventional watershed approaches for spring recharge are being promoted in the Himalayan region. A systematic process of identifying the type of springs and characterizing them on the basis of their type, discharge quantities, seasonal factors and water quality is the way forward towards improved spring-water management in the Himalayan region. In the same vein, the socio-economic and administrative units are extremely crucial in the man-

agement of springs as 'commons'. A recharge site, for instance, may be located within forest land, private land, common land, revenue land etc. The strategies adopted for the purpose of spring recharge will vary depending on these locations, the type of spring, dependent population etc., and calls for a scientific approach that includes all the above considerations.

There is unabated exploitation of underground water without caring for its recharge simultaneously so that the flow of water remains constant for future. Our Public Health Engineering Department has only one objective to find the source and tap its potential. Even Economic Reconstruction Agency aided with funds from Asian Development Bank has also dug tube wells to feed the urban population. It is observed that the tube well when dries another one is attempted at a different place. The pressure of population growth has further raised the demand for more water which is met through both surface water and ground water. Thus there is a heightened need for recharging the underground water area.

The Government has been working for channelising the

surface water for water conservation through different approaches like watershed development through intervention like check dams gully plugging, provision of vegetative cover etc. There does not seem any target for underground water recharge on scientific pattern.

There is another problem that attracts attention is the pollution /contamination of water that flows from household consumption like kitchen, bathing, washing of clothes that goes as drain water and absorbed in the soil which finally percolates to the ground thus polluting the ground water. The industry further adds to this problem where the chemicals released by different processes of manufacture of industrial goods infiltrate and mix with the ground water. Thus the ground water quality becomes harmful for human life.

A different scenario exists in the villages where a household keeps the animals, his toilet, handpump and sewerage system in the same compound and the material released both by the human beings and animals finally percolates in the same area thereby contaminating the underground water especially the recharge area of hand pumps dug in his compound. There is no awareness of checking the quality of water.

The State has to plan for this venture, especially the mapping of the area and study of the geological features in relation to the spring shed areas for their recharge. We may go for on pilot basis especially for those areas which have severe problem of drinking water and water for irrigation. We have some examples of the areas treated by the community members in the country and they have come out successful in their venture. There is need for spreading awareness amongst the public and prepare Para Workers in such areas by giving them proper training. This can be attempted on pilot basis.

(The author is former Director in Planning Deptt)

What's the glitch in implementing ?

Rohit Kapoor

The operative part of the recent judge of Supreme Court, in Public Interest Litigations for declaring sub-section (4) of Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 as ultra vires the Constitution, reads as under:

"However, if any sitting member of Parliament or a State Legislature is convicted of any of the offences mentioned in sub-sections (1), (2) and (3) of Section 8 of the Act and by virtue of such conviction and/or sentence suffers the disqualifications mentioned in sub-sections (1), (2) and (3) of Section 8 of the Act after the pronouncement of this judgment, his membership of Parliament or the State Legislature, as the case may be, will not be saved by sub-section (4) of Section 8 of the Act which we have by this judgment declared as ultra vires the Constitution

While data regarding exact convictions isn't available as yet, the ADR and NEW analyzed the number of sitting MPs and MLAs who have declared criminal cases against them. Of the total 4,807 sitting MPs and MLAs they analyzed, a total of 1460 or 30% had declared criminal cases against themselves, as per their sworn affidavits submitted to the Election Commission of India prior to contesting elections. Around 14% of these had serious criminal cases pending against them. Many of these however, are already in appeal in higher courts, and won't be affected by the current judgment.

We must not forget that days may come when our patience, our endurance and our fortitude will be tried to the utmost. In those days, let us see to it that no heart grows faint and that no courage be found wanting. Sir Robert Borden, Canadian Prime Minister.

"The Jharkhand 2009 Assembly has the highest percentage of elected representatives (74%) who declared criminal cases against themselves," stated a press note released by the ADR and NEW stating that 55 out of 74 MLAs of the Jharkhand 2009 Assembly declared criminal cases against themselves," said a press note issued by the two bodies.

"Among the recent elections, the Bihar 2010 Assembly has 58% MLAs who have declared criminal cases against themselves. The Uttar Pradesh 2012 Assembly has 47% MLAs with criminal cases," it stated.

The ruling received widespread support on social networking sites. "The Supreme Court stands tall again," stated one tweet, capturing the cynicism of the common man against the impunity in which Indian politics operates.

Leave aside the legal/technical flaws, if any, in this judgment as being pointed out by certain individuals, why spirit behind this judgment to bring probity in public life is seen as "a concern" by some politicians. Apprehension of misuse by the police or the party in power for score setting is misplaced as there is sufficient law to protect such abuse of power. Secondly who created this Frankenstein of which now they are expressing concern?

"The Government is studying the ruling of the Apex Court and will consult all the political parties before giving response" is the stand taken by the Union Law Minister. Is the Government and all the political parties so dependent on these convicted lawmakers that prevents them to welcome the judgment and begin its implementation forthwith. Court judgment should empower the Government and the political parties to get rid of such elements which otherwise they might have felt it difficult to do it, of course not for good reasons.

We must not forget that days may come when our patience, our endurance and our fortitude will be tried to the utmost. In those days, let us see to it that no heart grows faint and that no courage be found wanting. Sir Robert Borden, Canadian Prime Minister.

And I believe a time has come for all the political parties, people of this Country to ensure implementation of the law laid down by the Supreme Court, for the sake of order in the society.

(The author is an Advocate)

Ram Rattan Sharma

In the emerging complex social scenario, women have a pivotal role to play. They can no longer be considered as mere hangers on of peace, but are emerging as the source of power and symbol of progress. Indian culture attaches great importance to women, who constitute almost half of its population. Therefore, India has been symbolized as "Mother India". Keeping in view the exemplary qualities of women. They have now taken up professional roles in order to create a meaning for themselves or out of economic necessity. They have risen above socio-cultural traditions to take serious note of themselves, their potentialities and capabilities. The traditional role of a housewife has gradually evolved into the dual and mere fulfilling role of a working woman and housewife. Some of the factors responsible for this change are better education, changing socio cultural values, and the need for supplementary income caused by inflation. The problems and difficulties of working women are environmental, social and psychological.

In the environmental sphere, a working woman, specially a married one, has a dual responsibility looking after the home, husband and children on one side and her job on the other. This causes a lot of strain for her. Though she may be adding considerably to her families income, her job is looked upon

Problems of urban women workers

as "Secondary", and her husband and in-laws often expect her to do all the work of a full time housewife. She gets to spend less time with her children, and this often makes her feel guilty of neglecting them. Studies have shown that the majority of husbands wanted their wives to work for financial reasons. They were not prepared to share the household chores or help in looking after the children. This is a typical Indian attitude in a male dominated society, where the men feel it beneath their dignity to help in the domestic sphere. As a result the working woman over strains herself in trying to manage both home and work spheres so she is tired, irritable and unpleasant at the end of the day. The family happiness and peace are thus disturbed. If she gives more importance to her work and neglects her home, she is not only accused to being vain, inefficient and useless as a wife, housewife and mother, but is made to feel guilty for it, of ten frictions and tensions arise in the married life due to all these factors.

In many cases, the married working woman has to give up her pay packet in her in-laws or to her husband. As a result, even after sloggng all month long, she has hardly any economic independence and cannot spend her salary as she wishes. In

some cases, she is not even given pocket money to meet her personal expenses. Finding out a marriage partner for an earning girl is always a difficult job. There are persons who are prejudiced against working women. They feel that they may not be good housewives. With their well developed personalities and economic independence, it is often difficult to find a suitable partner for them. Another problem common to most urban women workers is their limited mobility - they are often unwilling to accept employment away from their homes. The absence of suitable housing facilities at places where jobs are available is the most important single factor that limits mobility. The question of wages is perhaps one of the most important problems for women workers, unlike in Western Countries, where women work just for the sake of it, or for "Pin money", in India. Women go in for work to add to the family income, which is often meager and in case of a single woman or widow, to support herself and her children. The working woman in India faces some difficulties at the operational level also. Unlike her western counter part, who have a lot of time saving equipments and gadgets to take the drudgery out of their household work, she has to do most of the work manually, there are hardly

any crèches where she can put her children.

The efficiency of a working woman is always suspected. The co-workers in the office cannot mentally accept the superiority of a woman's works. Her subordinate males do not like her authority over them. Another problem for women workers is the limited number of jobs available. Growth opportunities and freedom of choice of occupation are not available to Indian Women, married working women face the problem of separation from their husbands and families due to transfer to different places. Proper accommodation is also not available at certain places to women workers. Surveys have shown that transport is a big problem for women workers, specially in big cities. Women often have to commute large distances in over-crowded buses and trains, which leave them exhausted even before they start their day's work. The return journey is equally tiring, and she hardly has any energy left for the household chores, or taking part in family activities.

Children of the working women feel neglected, they miss their mother's love and attention, also elder children may form bad habits like smoking, drinking or even get addicted drugs. The children's personality gets distorted. Working women

are also often exploited by their male bosses.

In spite of several acts being passed for the benefit of women workers, these are often full of loopholes and ambiguities, which the employers take advantage of. Also, many women workers, even in urban areas, are not aware of their rights under these acts.

The problems of urban women workers in India today are multifarious and multidimensional. Their problems can be solved, if women are educated, we should create facilities for their education in urban and rural areas. Only when she is educated, could manage her dual responsibilities of home and work and could master the mechanics of systematic working and efficient planning.

Women should be given practical training in their work, so that their efficiency increases. They should also be trained to develop their capabilities of decision making and individual thinking. Women should be made aware of their constitutional and legal rights both in their work and in the social sphere. The attitude of the husband and other family members should be changed through mass media and other ways. Women should realize that opportunities will not land in their laps. They will have to create them and if need be, fight for them. A woman should be proud of being woman and a

professional at the same time. The main problem of a working mother is the care of her children, especially if they are young, proper crèches should be available at or near her place of work. The working conditions and environment of working women should be improved. More seminars, conferences and workshops on women should be organized, and women should be encouraged to participate in them and express their views. They should be encouraged to join trade unions. Protection should be given against harassment, discrimination should be abolished and employees should comply with the laws relating to women. Moreover, equal opportunities with regarding to training, employment promotion and working conditions should be ensured wage gaps between men and women should be reduced.

Working women form a major chunk of society today. Their presence, aspirations and problems cannot be ignored. It is imperative that they are looked upon as individuals engaged in gainful employment and be given the respect and status they so right fully deserve in society. In modern India, there is hardly a single office or factory where women are not employed. The precarious economic - social situation of women in the labour market of India demands that measures be introduced to overcome their problems.

(The author is former Deputy Librarian, University of Jammu)

Increase in infiltration bids

Sir, The increase in infiltration incidents along LoC border underlines the fact that militants are quite active across the border and terror infrastructure is quite intact there. The frequency with which these attacks have increased have not surprised security analysts, as it is presumed that these attacks may further intensify after American troops withdraw from Afghanistan. The security establishment have to formulate strategies keeping in view of the Afghan situation. The Government must take up this issue with the Nawaz Sharief Government at the earliest. Besides, the security set up must be further strengthened to keep militancy at bay. This is a daunting task in view of fragile peace facade prevailing in the Valley. A slight provocation on the part of security forces brings people on roads.

There is urgent need to evolve consensus among all political parties to work jointly for permanent peace in the State. Since elections are nearing, political parties in order to win voters may exploit the sentiments of people. Focus on development, unemployment and basic necessity should be priority.

Yours etc....
Anmol Parihar
Kishtwar

Violation of MVA

Sir, Section 129 of Motor Vehicle Act 1989 prescribes that every person driving or riding motor cycle of any class or description shall while in a public place wear protective head Helmet conforming to the standards of Bureau of Indian Standards provided that the provisions of this subject shall not apply to a person who is a Sikh, if he is while driving or riding on the motor cycle in a public wearing a turban. However, it is seen that this Act is violated by both people and the policemen.

Most of the times, it is found that people and policemen who enforces laws do not wear the helmet while driving.

This act is brazen violation of the said Act and the concerned authorities should take cognizance of it. Those found guilty should be severely punished according to law of land.

Yours etc....
S. Puran Singh
New Jail Road
Udhampur

Modi Vs Nitish

Sir, This is with reference to "Modi faces strong challenge ahead" by Brij Bhardwaj, D.E. June 28, 2013.

After remaining with "communal" BJP for more than seventeen years, Nitish Kumar CM Bihar, has all of a sudden realized that it was against his principles of secularism. Perhaps, Nitish Kumar thinks that JD(U) will get more than one hundred seats in next Parliamentary election and with the post-poll support of other parties, become next Prime Minister of India. But he perhaps has failed to realize that secularism in India means appeasement policy. He must be knowing that there are more than half a dozen political parties in India which fit very well in this Indian definition of secularism. As a matter of bitter fact, these so called secular parties fall on each other to appease the Muslim voter.

Nitish Kumar has actually put his seat of Chief Minister at risk by jumping out of NDA. Congress or UPA needs Lalu more than Nitish. Congress cannot allow anybody to occupy the seat of Prime Minister of India, if Congress or Nehru-Gandhi descendents do not like it.

Yours etc....
Avtar Singh
Simbal Camp,
R.S. Pura

Readers Write

Decriminalisation of politics

Sir, Refer news item 'MPs, MLAs will be disqualified on date of conviction, 'DE July 11.

The Supreme Court ruling regarding disqualification of MPs and MLA following their conviction is indeed a landmark judgement and deserves appreciation. The ruling may have worried people's representatives with criminal background, but it has warmed the hearts of people.

In India, almost, all political parties have some candidates involved in crime. The presence of these elements have spoiled the whole power structure in India. As a result, common people, show no interest neither in politics nor in politicians.

Today, politics is considered a game played by those who can wield money and muscle power.

Decriminalisation of politics in India is the need of hour. The earlier this process takes place, the better it is for the democracy.

Yours etc....
Surinder Sharma, Jammu