

Resolution on drug eradication

Production and distribution of drugs and narcotics is assuming alarming proportions in the State with the each passing day. Cultivation of poppy and charas has become popular among some farmers in the State and more and more people are lured to it because it is a very lucrative trade. Those involved with this trade never take into account what will be the consequences if a large number of youth get addicted to drugs. Unfortunately more and more youth in the State are getting addicted to it. Strangely, even the boys of affluent parents too have got addicted to drugs. Only a week or ten day ago we took up the issue of drug addiction editorially and analysed how serious the menace was and what are the threats to the society posed by the youth addicted to drugs and narcotics.

The issue was deliberated in the Legislative Assembly, and it appears that members have begun to take keen interest in what we had been pleading for a long time. We reiterate that a household with good and clean habits and healthy environments will make far reaching impact on the youth for whom chances of going astray are rare. It is the wrong environment in which the young boys are brought up that can have everlasting impact if the environment is bad and unhealthy.

It is good that the Legislative Assembly has unanimously passed a resolution vowing to eradicate drug addiction from the State lock stock and barrel. Private Member Bill was tabled by the MLA from Banihal. Introducing the Bill, the member elaborated the damaging impact of drug addiction not only on the person addicted but to the entire family and categorized it a social evil. The members from the opposition joined their voice and thus paved the way for a unanimous resolution which was passed by voice vote. In this connection, it is to be noted that the family, society and the Government all must play a concerted role to overcome the menace.

In the first instance the police have the biggest role to play and that is of not allowing drugs to be trafficked from town to town. The police have to mount very strong vigil after they come to know of the conduits and the routes through which drug trafficking is going on. The police are also supposed to take stringent action against those whom they find involved in drug trafficking. It is known to all that drug peddlers are not working in isolation but there exists a network which needs to be demolished. This can be a transnational network in many cases. Our alert police force is fully aware of such networks and they can mount strict vigil to neutralise them. Additionally, drug trafficking is now reported to be linked to terrorism also. We know that the Afghan Taliban had almost legitimized poppy cultivation because they used the revenues from poppy trade to fuel the war machine. From Taliban, the drug peddling exercise reached the Pakistani Taliban and then to Kashmir terrorists also. Drugs have been recovered from the possession of slain or captured terrorists in Kashmir. Where from did they obtain the drugs is what the police must be able to tell us. All that we can say is that there is unknown nexus on that count also.

An important suggestion is that drug treatment centres should be opened preferably at district level hospitals or at the least a few centres in major towns of the State. Using modern methods of correcting the addicts it should be possible to retrieve them and save the society from destruction. It should be possible for the police and also the civil society to keep a track of drug peddlers and bring them to book.

Truant Lawyers

Lawyers employed by the Government under different nomenclature like AGs, LAAGs, Dy AGs and Government advocates are supposed to plead the cases filed by the Government before the judiciary. They are required to present themselves in the court of law whenever a case with Government involvement is taken up by the judicial authority. However, there are reports that lawyers do not present themselves in the courts to plead the cases on behalf of the Government. This is dereliction of duty and as such the Law Department has taken very serious notice of the lapse.

Apart from absenting themselves when there is the hearing date for their cases, some of the Government lawyers are in the habit of seeking adjournment of their cases from the court. This is a dilly-dallying practice into which the State Prosecutors indulge with some ulterior motives known to them alone. Adjournment of the cases is a bad precedent yet strangely our Government lawyers have seldom any qualm of conscience in asking for the adjournment. We hope that with the warning from the Law Department it should be possible for the State lawyers of all categories to abide by the rule and not create difficulties for the Government in bringing the prosecution of the cases to their logical conclusion.

Nation First

Rajan Gandhi

Nation First is a firm belief in the idea that a truly rich and diverse nation like India is optimally united when its people give precedence to their identity as 'Indians before everything else'. All parties' staunch commitment to this principle is what is needed at this hour to make Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas possible. True 'National' politics, where every Indian, irrespective of his caste, creed or religion is an Indian first should be preached and practiced. Narrow politics of compartmentalization and division of society should be immediately shunned. All political parties agenda should be to unite people on the basis of their love for the country and then only India will re-emerge as a cultural and economic superpower. Philosophy of 'Integral Humanism', which considers all Indians as one united entity should be the agenda politics as it will ensure our precious energies aren't wasted in petty differences. Keeping the interest of the nation above everything else is what will ensure a united and powerful India, wherein each one of its 1.25 billion citizens contributes in his or her unique way, and fulfills his or her unique dream. India is a vast country and all Indians, irrespective of their religious backgrounds and different cultures, should be given equal rights. India's unity and integrity, its futuristic identity and the social strength, individual character and cultural uniqueness have been the hallmark of this great country and its people for long.

But despite this all our state parties at different point of time have shown their true color which has not only vitiated already surcharged atmosphere but has added fuel to the fire. Be it demand of restoration of pre 1953 demand by NC, release of all stone pelters by PDP led government or filing of FIR against Army Major and BJP acting as mute spectator is just making mess of the things. One must understand that stone pelting is not part of any democracy anywhere in the world. All praise to the Indian armed and paramilitary forces who despite all odds

against them are still able to control the situation and success of Operation All Out is testimony to this. Kashmir centric parties are just scoring brownie points against each other without keeping National interest above all. Narrow political gains cannot justify the actions and statements of politicians. Such is the real situation of politicians right now that no MLA dares to visit any far flung constituency as well as Jammu border area. First Major Gogoi and now Major Aditya, what is the state government trying to prove is anybody's guess. All these incidents have only one cascading effect, demoralization of army and belt forces. Result of all

As per media reports these militants were there in Kashmir area for quite some time and travelled all the way to Jammu without any check and were successful in causing extensive damage. Loss of five army men in this attack really depicts the sorry state of affairs. Army has been made to face the enemy on border as well as internal enemies which are more lethal and dangerous.

Inciting public with taunting tweets or irresponsible statements are not going to help either ruling party or opposition and neither the Nation. Accession of J & K to India is final since 1947 cemented time to time in 1953 by Delhi agreement or 1975 - Indira -Shekh accord or Rajiv Farooq accord in 1986, as well as free and fair elections from 1996 onwards. In 1939 itself Jenab Sheikh Abdullah shunned local religious politics by renaming MC (Muslim Conference) as NC (National Conference) and further by rejecting Jinnah's call for merging NC with MC during his 1944 visit to Kashmir and finally by choosing to go along with India after Pakistan backed tribal invasion. Statements of patriotism by the relatives of Subedar Mohammad Ashraf from Kashmir, army man killed in Sunjwan attack, must act as an

eye opener for the valley leaders. Its time our leaders realize their past mistakes and focus on good governance rather than playing petty politics.

Supreme Court has rightly stalled the FIR proceedings against Major Aditya but the role of state and central government in the whole affair is not appreciable at all. Jammu has rightly remained calm and composed despite repeated instigation by militants but state government must ensure free hand to police and security forces to deal with these national elements. Nobody objects to frisking, questioning at airports, similarly police must go ahead with nakkas at different point of cities as well as highway to check movement of subversives. It's our luck that militants did not choose a school or else consequences would have been beyond one's imagination. With militants looking for some soft target all schools and vital installations must provide fool proof security in present scenario even if they have to take help of J & K Police. It is always better to be prepared in advance rather than putting sorry faces afterwards.

We all have to work for the unity and equality among society, as we all believe in the principle of "Justice and development to all". When we talk of development, it means, we should experience the change that enables us to fulfill the potential and overall improvement in our daily lives and well-being. With this primary agenda only we can aim to transform and empower the weakest and the most neglected sections of Indian society, without any biases for caste, creed or religion. Today's India is a young India, where the people are willing to work hard with an assurance of being masters of their own destiny and youth of J & K is very much part of this progressive approach. Successful candidates clearing elite services exam year after year from Kashmir is the real mood of the youth of Kashmir. No subversive activity can deviate them from their dreams of joining mainstream along with whole nation. Let us all pledge ourselves whole hearted once again towards 'Nation First'.

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India and the Maldivian crises

Harsha Kakar

Maldives is back on the boil. The Maldives Supreme Court in a judgement ordered the release of political prisoners and demanded their retrial. The release order included that of former Vice President Ahmed Adheeb Ghafoor, former Prime Minister Mohamed Nasheed (presently in exile) and reinstating 12 members of parliament, thus giving the opposition a majority in the country's assembly. Post this judgement, the President Abdulla Yameend declared a fifteen-day emergency and arrested all opposing him, including ex-President Gayoom and the Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed, who had passed the order. His predecessor, Mohamed Nasheed, has requested India, from his exiled location of Colombo, to despatch an envoy backed by military force to restore democracy in the nation.

Many western nations, including the US and UK as also the UN have criticized the emergency alongside India and demanded its roll back as also implementing the Supreme Court judgement. The fact remains, if this order is imple-

mented, the opposition would gain majority and could impeach the President. India, as the big brother has maintained an official studied silence and only expressed dismay at the imposition of the emergency.

Strategically Maldives remains important to India. The Maldives archipelago comprises of 1200 coral islands and sits astride major shipping routes. It gained its independence in 1965 and India established its mission there in 1972. There are about 25,000 Indian residents there and India is a chosen location for Maldivians for education and health care. Indian tourists form about 6% of the tourists visiting the country. In 1984, when an LTTE breakaway faction had attempted to take over the country, India launched an operation involving the parachute brigade to rescue the nation. Maldives is also a member of the SAARC.

Since President Yameen assumed office, India-Maldives ties have been frosty, with the nation moving closer to China. The nation signed a free trade agreement with China, thus openly snubbing India. It subsequently did offer India a similar deal and commenced

discussing granting India permission to develop an atoll as a naval facility. However, discussions have been deliberately progressing slowly.

In the present crises, India rejected the Maldivian offer of receiving a special envoy to place before the Indian government the state version of why it resorted to its present actions. The envoy did visit Beijing, Islamabad and Riyadh. It was Maldives alone which hesitated to stand by India when it indicated its unwillingness to attend the SAARC summit in Islamabad claiming Pak's support to terror groups. Thus, there is a cold distance between the two countries.

There have been press reports that India has kept ready a military force to intervene in Male if the need does arise, however has no plans for the same at present. China, aware of Indian concerns and its own direct involvement, has been warning India against taking any unilateral military action claiming that the present being an internal crisis should be allowed to be resolved inhouse. Clearly, geo-political battles are emerging at India's doorstep.

Though not officially clear, yet all actions taken by the

present Maldivian Government would have had Chinese backing. Chinese investments and loans are slowly pushing Maldives deep into the Chinese camp. It is unlikely to be able to repay China, hence China akin to Shylock, would begin demanding its pound of flesh. It is almost a replay of Zimbabwe, where Chinese concurrence was taken before a coup was launched against Mugabe.

Militarily, any action by India would be unjustified in the international environment and send a wrong signal to the rest of the South Asian region. It would reduce India's standing as a supportive big brother. Economic and diplomatic actions are being seriously considered as an alternative to military option. Such actions may be supported by the international community, as most nations including the UN have condemned the emergency. However, the stronger the economic and diplomatic action, the deeper would it push Maldives into the Chinese camp, as it would be compelled to bank on China for support.

For China, its own national interests and economic investments come first and hence in many cases, it has openly supported dictators, provided they

Cap prices of all drugs

Dr. Arun Mitra

The reduction in the coronary stent price by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) on 13 February 2017 after a court order had been welcomed by the people. The price of life saving coronary stents was slashed by up to 85 per cent by capping them at Rs 7,260 for bare metal stents (BMS) and Rs 29,600 for drug eluting stents (DES). Earlier, the average maximum retail price (MRP) for BMS was Rs 45,000 and for DES, it was Rs 1.21 lakh. This was a big relief and exposed the loot by the companies, the health provider institutions and a section of the health professionals. Some of the patients have got real benefit of this reduction. In fact, this is not a reduction in sale price but the actual price has been brought forth by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) and it has curbed excess charging.

The public sector institutions have passed on the benefit to the patients. But unfortunately, many of the private sector institutions have not given real benefit to the patients in terms of the total cost of putting coronary stent. This is because they have increased the procedure charges and cost of the ancillary material required during the procedure. If real benefit is to be passed onto the patients then the above anomalies have to be sorted out. The price of the ancillary material should also be fixed by the NPPA. A monitoring mechanism should be developed to ensure that the benefit is passed down to the patients.

Even though the NPPA decided to take action against those who charged more than the price fixed by the NPPA, it did not mention anything for excess charges for the total cost. For this the procedure cost of the institution before reduction of stent prices in February 2017 and after that should be compared to find out the discrepancy. This difference will reveal whether the increase in the procedure cost is justified or is just a cover-up to recover excess profit, which came down as a result of reduced price of stents.

A section of the industry is demanding increase in the price of stents on the plea that some new generation innovative stents will not be marketed in India at the reduced price, thus depriving the patients of new high quality stents. This demand is totally unfounded. The claims by some of these MNCs have to be evaluated thoroughly since many of these so called new generation stents are in fact pipeline innovations. This evaluation is important to determine the true value of stent.

The Indian industry should be encouraged to produce stents at reasonable rates. This will on one hand lead to cost effective stents on the other hand promote indigenous industrial development in health sector and reduce our dependence on MNCs. It may not be out of place to mention here that even US President Donald Trump has called for reduction in drug prices in his country. People in India are much poorer and thus all decisions pertaining to the price of stents should be taken in view of the public health concerns.

However, the exercise should not end at coronary stents only. The Alliance of Doctors for Ethical Healthcare (ADEH) has submitted in its letters to the Prime Minister, Health Minister and the Minister for Petroleum, Chemicals & Fertilizers as well as to the NPPA that anything that is labelled as drug should be brought under price control. The use and choice of the drug is not the patient's decision nor is it out of pleasure. It is a compulsion after a person is taken ill. The decision about the drug to be used depends on the health provider. Therefore, it is required that the price of all drugs, which includes the medical appliances used on the patient, should be capped.

Some of these are knee joint replacements, the intra ocular lens, the cochlear implants and hearing aids etc. The coronary stents are used by about two lakh patients per year in our country while the medicines are used by each and every person, which means by more than 125 crore people. Their prices need to be streamlined and brought down substantially to serve the interest of our people. The NPPA had called various stakeholders, including the MNCs, indigenous industry and public health activists, for consultations to review the price of stents on 5th February 2018. The ADEH reiterated its earlier demand in this meeting.

At present the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) is fixed by the companies. This must be changed and MRP of all drugs, including the medicines of branded or generic categories and appliances should be fixed by the NPPA after thorough cost accounting and considering reasonable profit margin for the manufacturer, stockist and the retailer. The private health providers should be brought under RTI so as to bring transparency in their transactions. (IPA)

Sunjuwan attack

Sir,

It may perhaps open the eyes of those in our country who are more concerned about the human rights of terrorists and about prospects of their rehabilitation in the hope of their shunning the path of terrorism and destruction that in the Sunjuwan attack, steel bullets were fired by them. Steel bullets are passing through even the conventional bullet proof jackets used by the armed forces.

With this it can be seen how Pakistan is arming its agents with the latest weapons and other guerrilla warfare tactics. Steel bullets were used to cause maximum damage for which these savages did not spare even the unarmed civil family members of the security forces.

Earlier these types of bullets were used by them in Pulwama attack also. Not only this, Pakistani terrorists are reported to be using other combat weapons otherwise used in professional operations.

This all calls for a ruthless all out finishing action against such dangerous but highly motivated people. They deserve no lenient treatment but outright elimination otherwise instances like Srinagar hospital terror escape could be repeated.

Yours etc....
Sujeet Kumar
Udhampur

Labourers dying from silicosis

Sir,

Labourers who work in stone crushing in different parts of our country are dying due to silicosis caused by inhalation of crystalline silica dust. These workers, deprived of any alternate source of income to support their families, have no choice but to work in these hazardous environments. While a few of them may wear protective masks, a large number of people are nevertheless getting infected with this incurable disease.

Greater awareness measure must be carried out so that the labourers wear protective masks at all times while working. Other safety measures also need to be implemented. The responsibility to help and protect these people from the threat of silicosis lies with the Government.

Yours etc....
Md Rustam Parwez
Hyderabad

Withdraw SRO 202

This has reference to the article 'SRO 202 violated minimum wages' published in DE sometime ago.

My father passed away before I was born. My mother brought me up with her Rs 8000 salary. Living in poverty and studying second hand books, I left behind thousands of other candidates in this cut throat competition to get a Government job. I'm posted 50 kms away from home and get paid around Rs 6000. I still have to take money from my mother to keep myself afloat. It's really depressing and if SRO 202 not revoked, I'll have to resign.

Yours etc....
Aditya Sharma
On e-mail

Readers Write

Introduce journalism in State Colleges

Sir,

I would like to bring into your notice that there is only one college in Jammu division offering the course of "Mass Media and Journalism" which is affiliated with "Kashmir University". I am astonished to find that "Central University of Jammu" has "Dept of Media Studies" which is only providing Master's degree and no Bachelor's course. On the other side, Jammu University does not possess any stream in media studies. Being a Jammu based student, it is very difficult for us who wish to pursue media studies and build up their career in media have to move out of the State unwillingly.

Talking about the only college providing Bachelor's course in media studies i.e. Gandhi Memorial College of Education at Raipur, Bantabal, the road connecting this college with the city is in miserable condition with very degraded transport facility. It consumes a lot of time and energy of students who travel from various areas of Jammu division in order to reach college on time.

So, I request the State Government to take this matter into consideration and act on it as early as possible. I also request our Education Minister Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari to take this matter in his own hands and provide graduation programs in Jammu University as well as in the degree colleges as early as possible.

Yours etc....
Sanchita Gupta
Jammu