

**Underground cabling and PMDP**

Under the alibi of non availability of funds, every type of non performance especially non adherence to time schedule etc would get refuge but when adequate and assured funds availability under Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP) is there, no excuse or pretext could be entertained or justified. The Power Development Department (PDD) has failed to meet the deadline for underground cabling of all electric networks in five major tourist and pilgrimage destinations of the state. This is so in spite of availability of funds under the PMDP. Undergrounding is the replacement of overhead cables providing electric power. Initially, the operation costs could be slightly higher but the same are offset by maintenance costs over the lifetime of the cables. Hence, it is both economical and assuring hassle free power distribution braving high velocity winds, torrential rains and snowfalls.

Realizing the importance of underground cabling, the state Government had decided to take up the major tourist and pilgrimage destinations in the state like Pahalgam, Sonamarg, Gulmarg, Patnitop and Katra for underground cabling of all electric networks at 33 KV level and LT level and strengthen and augment the power infrastructure in Phase 1 for which an amount of Rs.25.47 crore had been sanctioned under the package. It was envisaged that the work would be completed by 2017-18. About all this, former Finance Minister had made a statement in the Legislative Assembly. The Finance Minister in the month of January last year had further laid stress on the underground cabling in the phased manner. He had said, "There are so many shrines and places of pilgrimage like Hazratbal, Makhdoom Sahib, Dastgeer Sahib, Kheer Bhawani, Mata Vaishno Devi, Baba Reshi, Sukrala Mata, Chandi Mata temple, Shahadara Sharif, and many monasteries and mosques in Leh and Kargil where lakhs of tourists come to pay their obeisance. The existing power infrastructure in these places requires a lot of improvement".

A well designed underground cable network guarantees uninterrupted electricity distribution and provides high degree of safety. This network also serves the additional significant purpose of making the power lines less susceptible to outages during high speed winds and heavy snow, which otherwise is frequently experienced in all parts of Jammu and Kashmir. Its utility and comparative less expensive maintenance costs makes it ideal to be introduced in the state, of course, in phased manner.

The financial year 2017-18 is almost over but the underground cabling has not been completed in any of the five tourist and pilgrimage destinations selected under Phase 1. It is learnt that only around 60 percent work has been completed at Pahalgam, Sonamarg and Gulmarg while curiously, no headway is made in this respect at Patnitop, the major tourist destination of Jammu region. It is all the more astonishing that at a place as famous as Katra, nothing of the sort has started there during full one year. The Union Government has cleared the proposal for the shrine area only as detailed project report has not been prepared for the entire Katra town. Inordinate delay in this respect is not accounted for.

Has not the Government failed to meet the deadline for underground cabling in five destinations and it is still in the state of ambiguity as to when the work would be completed? With this track record of performance, how can similar work be started in other places is a moot question? Commissioner / Secretary PDD has confirmed that the work had not been completed in any of the five destinations of Kashmir valley as pace of the work got descended because of harsh winter months. He expects, now the work getting expedited. Let it be seen how far the assurances get translated into reality as we shall be watching the developments intensely.

**Pampore Court complex**

Again, the floods of 2014 are referred to in the context of how Munsiff Court complex in Pampore area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district was ravaged but more than three and a half years time seems insufficient to the concerned authorities in the Government to make it functional so that problems faced by lawyers and the litigants could be over.

JKPCC constructed Munsiff Court Complex in Frestbal area of Pampore in 2012 and lawyers started working in that complex for one year before floods devastated that. Munsiff Court was established in the year 1996 from a rented accommodation and was shifted to the new building after more than a decade. Lawyers complain that the court building is "deliberately" not renovated as the cost would escalate and the Government was not willing to pay for it for political reasons. As on date, the Munsiff Court was functioning from an old building which is cracked and lacks basic amenities like parking accommodation and was close to the highway. There are traffic jams outside the court complex which hampered the smooth work in the court.

The astonishing aspect of the matter is that the new building was constructed in a flood-prone area and on the part of the playground area which was objected to by the lawyers who wanted the building to be constructed near Fire - Services but they were never heard. We have authoritatively learnt that all paper work like estimated cost etc has since been completed and forwarded to the Government only after a few months of floods but proper response was awaited. The concerned authorities need to take a call on urgent basis now.

Anil Anand

The just concluded 84th plenary session of Congress has certainly created the much needed buzz both for the party and its chief Rahul Gandhi for more than one reason. But the biggest surprise in store came in the form of a vacant, long and unwinding stage with the entire top brass staring at the place where they had been used to park themselves in the past, sitting among the crowd.

What does this change in sitting arrangement really reflect? Was it the indication of changing times ahead? Was it meant to jolt the old-guard firmly saddled at the AICC headquarters and refusing to move on? Or was it meant to be a symbol of Rahul establishing his authority notwithstanding the controversies, spurred both from within the party and his political rivals elsewhere?

Definitely the hero of the show was Rahul and there is no denying the fact that it was meant to go that way. The right buzz, the perfect ambience and a speech that enthused his partymen and sent some worrying signals to the political opponents, the plenary had all the ingredients that were

needed at this juncture to herald the setting-in of Rahul era. But the real time starts now for him.

A significant question arises that whether Rahul was waiting to be elevated as the party president to discover himself on proper footing and throw the gauntlet at his opponents both within and outside the Congress. There is also no denying the fact he sounded confident and sure of what he was talking and what he intends to do. By all means he emerges winner in the first round.

A big take-away of the plenary session was that Rahul did not disappoint his partymen and the countrymen as a whole on two fronts. He finally spelled out his vision of what he described as a "new Congress" in the offing, though not that elaborately. And, secondly he created an impression that he was no pushover in taking his political rival, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, head-on.

The plenary session coming after Rahul taking over as Congress president was the right launch pad for him to create the

**Time for Rahul to act**

right pitch for organisational makeover as well as preparing for the coming electoral season particularly 2019 Lok Sabha elections. So far so good, but will he be able to move with same alacrity to achieve these goals, with which he fixed the targets. His pronouncement, in the midst of a power packed speech, that party-

Rahul's perspective.

What are the tough decisions he has in mind? The answer to this question was available in a portion of his speech. Pointing at the vacant stage, he invited young performing leaders and professionals to come and capture the space. There was a broad hint that a widespread change is in the off-



men should be prepared for tough decisions had the desired effect. While the rank and file thundered in happiness, the mood among the old guard was visibly sombre. Both these scenarios amply fit into the groove of the current transitional phase in Congress from

ing. All eyes would now be on him as to how and when this resolve would take a practical shape.

Whenever there is a talk of such widespread change in the party's hierarchy the mind is immediately ignited by the memory of the famous or infamous for

some, Kamraj plan. In the early 1960s Kumaraswamy Kamraj then third time chief minister of Tamil Nadu had resigned from his office to set the tone what ultimately came to be known as the Kamraj plan. The plan floated by him had envisaged that senior party leaders including ministers, union and state, and chief ministers should resign and draft themselves for party work as he had a feeling that the Congress was losing its sheen.

Rahul's reference to the vacant stage immediately set a reaction of sorts. The septuagenarian Goa Congress president Shantaram Naik lost no time in sending his resignation. The reports emanated that comparatively younger UPCC chief and former cine-star Raj Babbar, who is perceived to be close to Rahul, had also offered to resign from his post. Going by the Congress culture some others might toe this line and in turn create pressure on those reluctant to understand the real intention behind the vacant stage at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium

which was the venue of the plenary session.

The challenge ahead for Rahul is to carry forward the true spirit of the plenary session in letter and spirit. Unlike the previous occasions when he showed occasional spark, mooted ideas and went into oblivion, he will now have to show consistency in following what he preaches. He hardly has the luxury either to delay his decisions or cover under pressure or fear of the old guard. To act and act fast is the only way forward for him from here on.

As compared to earlier AICC sessions including plenary, the changed sitting arrangement with a vacant dais was not merely a symbolism. It was meant to convey a strong message to all the partymen, from top to bottom, that it was no easy landing there unless you prove yourself. In earlier avatars of AICC session the stage was a much sought after place with all and sundry using all tactics to find a space and, place them at a strategic slot so as to figure in the photo frame alongside the party president and other senior leaders. So the need to at least talk and ultimately usher into a new culture!

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**Judicial Intervention in Land Acquisition**

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

The issue related to payment of fair compensation to farmers affected by Semi Ring Road in Kashmir valley has finally landed in the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir. While hearing the petition filed by around 200 aggrieved farmers from four districts of Pulwama, Budgam Srinagar and Bandipora, Justice M K Hanjura in his interim order directed the state authorities to consider compensation for the affected villagers as per the NHAI's communication of October 4th 2017 wherein National Highways Authority of India (NHA) had told Deputy Commissioner Budgam that they have no issues in paying compensation as per the Central Land Acquisition Act also called Right to Fair Compensation under Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act (RFCLARR 2013) provided state of J&K adopts the law. The court also said that final payment on account of compensation to farmers would remain subject to the final outcome of writ petition. Under RFCLARR Act 2013 affected people / farmers get four times more compensation than the actual market value of land and property in rural areas and this compensation is double in urban areas. The affected farmers from around two dozen villages of Pulwama, Budgam, Srinagar and Bandipora districts have petitioned before the J&K High Court

through their counsel M Y Bhat that the due process of law has not been followed by Government authorities. Petitioners in addition to payment of inadequate compensation allege that the provisions of J&K Land Acquisition Act have been violated as various notifications were not issued in local urdu newspapers plus necessary drumbeating was not done in the villages where land is to be acquired for the highway construction.

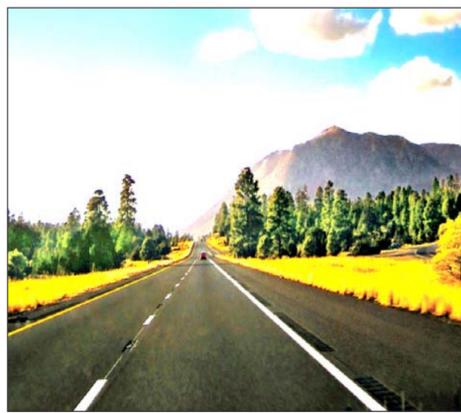
After handing over the Semi Ring Road project to National Highways Authority of India (NHA), the NHA management has recently allotted the contract to Hyderabad based M/s RAMKY Infrastructure Ltd. On the other hand farmers are adamant to give their land on the meager compensation and a legal battle has finally begun over this issue after Government gave lukewarm response to the farmers. The anti farmer policy adopted by Government and NHA could have led to serious law and order situation in the villages where from highway work will be taken up in the coming weeks and months. But after the judicial intervention, things may calm down for some time.

National Highways Authority of India (NHA) has issued Letter of Award for construction of the proposed Srinagar Semi Ring Road / Bypass from Gander Barampora to Sumbal crossing on the Jammu-Srinagar highway (NH-1A). The Project

would be implemented on Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode with construction period of 36 months. The estimated Project Cost is Rs 939.41. The entire greenfield alignment has been

tricts of Pulwama, Budgam, Baramula, Srinagar, Bandipora and Ganderbal.

Affected farmers in Jammu region also allege that Government is putting a pressure on them to give away land on a very



proposed on the western side of Srinagar City to cater to/provide connectivity to the habitation on that side. As per Government plans the new highway will also provide smooth and easy traffic flow in and around Srinagar City. Vehicles carrying heavy machinery to border/ strategic areas of Baramula, Uri, Kupwara, Bandipora and Ganderbal will have an easier, congestion free passage along this route. The new Bypass will pass through 52 villages and six Dis-

tricts of Pulwama, Budgam, Baramula, Srinagar, Bandipora and Ganderbal. Affected farmers whose land is going to be acquired for Semi Ring road connecting Pampore in South Kashmir with Manigam Ganderbal in North and Central Kashmir via Budgam came on roads in Srinagar several times demanding fair compensation for their land. Similarly farmers from Kathua, Samba, Jammu also held several demonstrations. Irony is that stamp value in Kathua and Samba is much less than other districts. I have been told that in some places stamp value of land is mere Rs five to seven lakh also per kanal in Kathua. Right now under existing law J&K Government pays compensation at the rate of stamp value plus 15 percent Solatium (Jabirana) which is complete injustice with the farmers. Similarly in Kashmir valley the stamp value is again low when compared with market value of land. The stamp value for instance in Wathoor area of Budgam which is located 10 kms from Srinagar city is Rs 28 lakhs per kanal, but the market value ranges between Rs 60 to 90 lakh / kanal. Same is the case in Ichgam, Gudsathoo, Dharmuna, Narbal, Ranbir Garh, C/R Khan and other villages of Budgam and Srinagar districts. The affected farmers whose land is acquired are not able to purchase land near the vicinity of proposed highway as rates have gone too high. Farmers have been telling Government if they can't pay adequate compensation to them, let Government provide

alternate land around the highway to farmers.

**Conclusion**  
The National Highway Authority of India (NHA) pays adequate compensation (4 times more than market value of land) to the farmers during land acquisition for construction of similar highways in other states of India. As per the provisions of Right to Fair Compensation for Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act (RFCLARR) enacted by Congress lead UPA Government in 2013, land and property owners get four times more compensation than the market value in rural areas and two times in urban areas, plus jobs, rehabilitation and resettlement. As the said law is not applicable to J&K state, affected farmers in Jammu and Kashmir are deprived of the fair compensation. Why cannot Government of Jammu and Kashmir pass a cabinet order wherein compensation for land acquired by central Government agencies should be paid compensation as per the RFCLARR Act of 2013. From last 5 years I have written more than one dozen articles on the issue of Land Acquisition and disparity in payment of compensation. It seems Government is not ready to listen to the woes of farmers. Now the matter in before High Court of Jammu & Kashmir, I am sure farmers and affected people will get justice from this forum very soon.

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**Gender disparity in Higher Education**

Ram Rattan Sharma

Education has been important to the development of human society. The issues of class, race and caste have been of great significance to the educational discussions. Major stress has been laid on promoting equality through educating different classes, races and ethnic groups. Slowly and slowly gender added a new dimension to this education equality paradigm. Females criticize the discriminatory attitude towards women, the cause of responsible for keeping women behind in the field of education. Equality among human beings can be attained by providing sufficient opportunities for better health and education to the girls and women. Elementary education is important for enabling women to break through many traditional and social barriers for promoting social development through higher education, which plays an important role in the Social and occupational mobility, personality and intel-

lectual development. The modern Economy of the 21st century i.e. the knowledge economy, requires highly educated people for accelerating the process of economic development. The higher education system of a country plays a significant role in the creation of skilled human resources in the light of the growing importance of higher education as an instrument of equality and vertical nobility, especially in the era of knowledge. The role of women in shaping the society has been well recognized at National level as well as at international level. United Nations organization affirms equal rights of men and women with an objective to promote social progress and better standards of life. In the year 1995 united nations fourth world conference unanimously linked the women's rights to human rights for the first time in the UN history. Indian union in its constitution has safe guarded the interests of female population in all aspects. A high level statutory body the

National Commission for women was setup in 1992 to oversee the implementation of the constitutional and legal safeguards and the protection of women's rights and privileges.

The constitution of India made it obligatory on the part of the Government to provide free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of 14 years. The latest document, the modified national policy on education 1992 has put the target date as the end of the 20th century which could not be achieved. As recorded in the census 2001 only 65.38% of population in India is literate. The female literacy rate in India has grown almost six fold since 1951. The department of elementary education and literacy has come out with the fact that at the primary level, the gross enrolment ratio for girls has gone up from 24.8% in 1950-51 to 81.8 percent in 1996-97. There has been phenomenal growth in the number of women enrolled in higher education since independence. The

pace of growth has been particularly faster in the last two decade. The National agenda for governance prepared by the Government in 1998 proposes plans to provide free education for girls up to the college level including professional courses so as to empower women. In India, while we have made progress in educating people, it is far from satisfactory. What is even more disturbing is that for women the situation is worse than that for men, if you see the literacy rates. The female access to higher education is lower in India. The enrolment of men is larger than the female enrolment. It is observed that the motivation for girls education is higher, but still lower than that for boys as the boy is looked upon as the future bread winner. The girls are the first to suffer if there is any problem of access or cost. There is gap between literacy and education level of men and women. This is because of patriarchal society and it's hierarchical stand with clear prescription of the role of

women. The world development report 1990 observes that in India education is heavily biased in favour of urban dwellers and males. Urban literacy rates are twice as high as rural rates and females in both rural and urban India have lower literacy rates than males.

While education can play a positive interventionist role improving the status of women, the fact remained that low status coupled with rigid socio-cultural practices, denies women this basic right. When women are educated, there is significant improvement in their status within family and in society education of girls is increasingly being seen as a basic human right and above all a crucial input for socio-economic transformation, Gender disparity can be seen in proper perspective through the lens of the gender empowerment. Many countries like India have much further to travel in extending broad economic and political opportunities to women and

higher levels of female education can make appreciable contributions towards it.

During the last three decades the gender disparity at various levels of education in India has declined, but it still needs to be further reduced. In case of higher education enrolments, women outnumber men in many countries of the developed world. A progressive change in social attitude can bring about favourable change. Some states, of India have shown some progress and the tempo need to be accelerated. In developing countries ample economic and Pol. Opportunities can be extended to women and greater access of women to education in general and higher education in particular can provide tremendous push in this direction. India in this knowledge era can brighten its fortunes by increasing access of women at different levels of education.

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**Protecting ecology**

Sir,

Sustainable development is a wide term that encompasses vital areas of concern for the humanity. It involves ecological harmony, economic efficiency, conservation of resources and maintaining social justice. Man is at the top of the ecological pyramid while the primary plant kingdom is at the base of it. The human population is increasing rapidly to such an extent that the top is becoming broader while the bottom is gradually narrowing down. Naturally the ecosystem gets imbalanced. Before realising the importance at the outset sustainable development implies the meeting of present needs of the mankind without compromising the future needs of the coming generation. Day to day destruction of flora and fauna has caused environmental degradation in and around. The smoke and waste from industries has polluted the environment to such an extent that poses threat to life. The migration of people to urban areas has made problems more complex and often more complicated. It was as early as in 1972 the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi made Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) mandatory for projects. Finding and implementing solutions to environmental problems is need of the hour. It needs cooperation among all the countries whether rich or poor and assist each other in reducing environmental degradation. What I feel in the present circumstance is that development and maintaining of ecology can move together if there is will and determination among the Nations and mere rhetoric and slogan mongering should end. There is a pressing need for a new world order where economic and techno barriers are removed.

Yours etc...  
S N Raina  
Jammu

**PNB fraud**

Sir,

From the street to the country's highest court, all feel extremely concerned over the alleged loot of Rs eleven thousand four hundred crores by Nirav Modi, a businessman of a wide stature. Financial indiscipline and corruption are cousins (co-related) in many ways. Role of corruption before and after such cases is considered significant even to affect investigation and inquiries. Had stringent measures taken to bring to book people like Vijay Malya and numerous others in the list of such guys, the current loot of hundreds of crores of rupees wouldn't have taken place. The country, like ours, is unable to bear such irreparable losses. On one side, the masses are unable to meet both ends in these hard days, and on the other side, there are scams and embezzlements in crores. How the condition of the masses will improve remains a big question? Such an erosion in character and moral values, is greatly disturbing and distressing. If even small scale corruption and financial irregularities are detectable, it is surprising how such big frauds can go unnoticed for years together. To curb such tendencies, all sort of measures are considered inadequate if the economy of the country is to be kept unharmed. The case should be taken as an eye-opener for the times to come.

Yours etc...  
Keshwa Nand Sharma  
Salehri (Sunder Bani)

**Reforms in education**

Sir,

Education plays an important and judicious role in bringing social, economic, civic and political reforms in our vast society. Right from the ancient times to present day, education has contributed at lot for development in all spheres. But something pains us now, when we listen to Television, read the newspaper or come in contact with other sources of information about murders, rapes, killings terrorism and so many types of crimes, happening now-a-days. If we seriously study the basic causes behind this, we will find that certain draw backs in our education have made it somewhat dull, as it does not create the true spirit of sympathy politeness in behaviour, respect for all in society, merciful attitude for others tolerance and love, equal human feelings, devotion and dedication which are considered to be the real blessings of it. Our society, our children and young community is coming under the grip of various evils like corruption, loot, easy money making, killings, smuggling dereliction of duty and misbehaving with others and so on which is quite unacceptable to a civilised nation.

Education is a means and a vital remedy to wipe out all this rubbish from the society by giving new direction, thought and sensitivity to learners by introducing certain particular moral values, teachings of great persons, saints and gurus.

In short, a large scale change in ideology of the people, particularly the young generation is only possible if proper education is imparted to them.

Yours etc...  
Som Raj Gupta  
Chenani

Readers Write