

## President's year in office

This week Pranab Mukherjee will complete his first year as the Head of the State. The 77-year old President has been in public service for 44 years occupying different positions at different times and mostly such as are considered sensitive from any standard. He ranks foremost among the most senior political stalwarts of the country who have served the nation with full dedication.

Judging him from how he has handled the high office of the Head of the State, we can say that he has been absolute stickler to the Constitution and does not deviate an iota from what the Constitution stipulates. This is not anything new about him. As an astute parliamentarian, as a minister and as a party office bearer, he has been considered a great stickler of rules and discipline, which he never broke. Whenever the Parliament went into bouts of fierce expression of sentiments, he would counsel coolness and sobriety. Thus he came to be known as the trouble-shooter of his party. Moderation has been the hallmark of his conduct of business so much so that he even advised the judiciary to avoid over reach. Going strictly by the law of the land as enshrined in the Constitution, President Pranab Mukherjee disposed off the case of the 26/11 convict Ajmal Kasab and the Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru. Much hullabaloo was created in regard to the final disposal of the case of the latter. In doing so he simply went by the decision of the cabinet.

The President, during the course of first year in the office, interacted with various sections of society at intellectual and educational level. He can make his point with extraordinary lucidity and force of conviction as he showed it when addressing convocations. He is not short of new or innovative ideas. As a man of the masses, he feels at home when interacting with people, listening to them and responding to their problems. During the first year in office, the President never betrayed any sign of having deviated from his love of feeling at home with people who have put him in the exalted position of the President of the State. Interaction with people comes naturally to him. But this does not mean that he is not conscious of the protocol which, he in his capacity as the Head of the State is expected to maintain. To him the culture of protocol is part of high discipline expected from the Head of the State. Let us put it statistically. During the last one year as the President of the country of over one billion people, he traveled to 23 States, which include five States of Northeast during which he visited 36 educational institutions.

Brought up in the strict nationalistic traditions, President Pranab Mukherjee is the first to have dropped the honorific of "His Excellency", which, of course, is the legacy from the British rule. He frankly said that he was not comfortable with such honorifics. Dropping the honorific simply meant that he wants to be treated at par with the people to whose service he has dedicated his entire life. Not only that, he has seen to it that Rashtrapati Bhavan is seen as a place of people that houses the guardian of their rights and of the Constitution. He has ordered renovation of the Presidential House to reduce maintenance and increase its utility. This is exemplified by the renovation of Durbar Hall that had fallen into disuse for some time. Its adjoining library has found a new life of activity and interaction. Latyens designed the Presidential Bhavan at a time when the British ruled India. At that time ceremonies were given more importance, and the magnificent building on Raisina hills was considered the symbol of British colonial power. But this thinking and this mindset need to be changed and the Rashtrapati Bhavan has to be taken as the symbol of the free spirit of Indian nation. It is this motivation that has prompted President Pranab Mukherjee to ask for renovation of the Durbar Hall and the Library or other changes in the historical complex. Now Durbar Hall is back to its pristine glory and fitted with an ultra-modern acoustic system to cut down the echo, which was a big problem while conducting programs in the hall with its 33 m tall dome.

A memorable decision taken by the President during the period of first year of his presidency pertains to the restoration of this heritage building of 340 rooms designed by Lutyens eighty-five years ago and spread over a stretch of 320 acres of land. The library containing rare books from 19th century was in a dilapidated shape and books were dumped in the rooms. Now these have been placed properly in the almirhas that were built way back in 1930. It has got a shape and adds to the richness of the heritage. The Morning Room, Committee Room, Garden Loggia and North and South Drawing Rooms, Library, durbar hall, museums, antique furniture and specially rare books were given carefully renovations under the guidance of specialists to bring them back to their pristine best. Likewise the audio-visual section has been given shape as it contains rich trove of speeches by eminent personalities like Lord Mountbatten, Rajendra Prasad and Dr. Radhakrishnan.

An audio-visual section with rare and old speeches of Lord Mountbatten, former presidents Rajendra Prasad, Dr S Radhakrishnan as well as films of Films Division archives has been set up. President Mukherjee has desired that this heritage building should become a prized possession of the people of India and as such the best way was to make their access to the complex easy. Now people will be facilitated to visit the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Mughal Gardens without many hassles.

The President was greatly disturbed by the ghastly gang rape of a young girl in Delhi last winter. That is why in his speeches at the convocations and other educational functions he urged the student and teaching community to place high value to moral aspect of life.

The year that has gone by has been full of noble acts for the President of India and we are hopeful that in the years to come, the President will give a new shape to the high office that he holds. Hopefully he will prove to be the man of the masses.

# Now 'Garibi Hatao' by Congress?

Sunil Gatade

With Lok Sabha polls less than a year away, Congress has brought out the Food Security Bill like a magician pulling a rabbit out of his hat.

As a variety of scams and scandals has hit the UPA-II regime, the Grand Old Party has been desperately searching for an issue that could clinch the 2014 Parliament election for it.

It is certainly not an out of the box thinking, but the ruling party was badly in need of an idea through which it can approach people, especially those who vote. The Rs 70,000 crore farm loan waiver had done the trick for the Congress in the last Lok Sabha polls as it raised its tally substantially and even crossed the 200 mark in the 543-member House.

Party chief Sonia Gandhi is believing that by promising cheap foodgrains to the poor, she can revive the "garibi hatao" magic of Indira Gandhi in the 1971 polls, projecting the party as the Messiah of the 82 crore poor Sonia's "am aadmi" plank in 2004 had worked wonders by ousting the BJP-led NDA from power when the BJP had become overconfident over its "India shining" campaign.

The Bill has got international attention with commentators seeing it is a major move forward in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. It aims to guarantee very cheap food grains to almost 70 per cent of India's 1.2 billion population. It is a unique feat and is being

praised even by UN officials who say that the ambitious move could inspire many countries to do the same thing.

Despite facing difficulties, Policymakers went for the measure after being convinced over the argument as to how can India be among the world's fastest growing economies and yet have one of the worst hunger and malnutrition levels?

The real question is not whether India can afford to have a right to food but as the Food Minister K V Thomas said in a recent interview, "Can we afford not to?"

As a commentator put it: "Nowhere on the planet, nowhere in mankind's history has such an idea taken the concrete shape in form of a law."

Nowhere at such a large extent has any government taken up responsibility of providing food almost for free. The national food security bill ordinance passed on Thursday by the government has done something impossible for any rational economist to even conceive.

According to estimate of the government, "The total estimated annual foodgrains requirement is 612.3 lakh tonnes and corresponding estimated food subsidy for the bill at 2013-14 costs is about Rs.1,24,724 crore."

Looking at it from the political perspective, it must be remembered that Congress has latched on to the issue at a time when controversial Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi is gaining centre stage after his appointment as the BJP campaign

committee chief. It is a matter of time before Modi is made the PM candidate by the BJP.

The opposition party is trying to make the 2014 Lok Sabha battle between those for and against Modi.

To counter the BJP, Congress strategy is simple. Project Modi as a divisive figure out to stir trouble for the minorities and show the Congress in an inclusive garb going out of the way to food but as the good Samaritan in the 21st century in the world's largest democracy.

That is why Gandhi has held a meeting of Congress Chief Ministers to boost plans for a quick and efficient rollout of the Food Security bill. She wants the 14 Congress ruled states to take a march over other non-Congress states in the implementation of the measure.

Party spokespersons are fanning out in different states to emphasise the significance and importance of the Food Security Bill, the pet project of Sonia Gandhi.

With the party in the government for most of the years since independence, the 127-year old organization has virtually turned into an election winning machinery and has got the knack to know as to what issue will click and what will turn a flop.

But, it is difficult to predict whether the Congress will hit the bull's eye this time as Modi could turn out to be a different cup of tea with a section of party managers conceding that the controversial BJP leader is an ideological and managerial challenge.

For Congress, there could be slip between the cup and the lip if it failed to ensure an urgent rollout of the scheme. Even party managers admit that unless people started getting cheap foodgrains at least three months before the Lok Sabha polls, it is difficult to reap an electoral dividend.

The realization about the care being taken by the government cannot come if there is a faulty rollout or if there are glitches in the implementation of the mammoth scheme.

Though Congress has put the best foot forward, the fact of the matter is that the UPA-II rule left much to be desired. People have been increasingly fed up with the rising prices coupled with corruption. It was also afflicted by what has come to be known as policy paralysis syndrome.

As the UPA-II tenure began, the Congress lost the plot in the midst of growing scams and scandals and has failed to gain the initiative. It has not been able to resurrect the economy and put it back again to a high growth path despite an economist-Prime Minister at the helm.

While the Congress and the Government has set out an ambitious task in the slog overs in matters economic and in reaching out to the poor, it remains to be seen as to how it would actually perform.

While Sonia Gandhi has become alive to the task ahead, an electoral hatrick would literally require a tall performance when opposition is leaving no effort to end its bad patch.

# Remembering Motial Ji

Ravi Rohmetra

"Tu nahi teri ulfat abhi tak dil me hai"  
"Bujh chuki hai shamma, Roshni abhi tak mehfil me hai"

Duggar land has produced politicians, academicians, Social workers and leaders of caliber. Prominent amongst them is Mohan Lal Motial. This is the tale of a towering personality who worked selflessly for the cause of the people. A personality who shared wear woes of needy. He was a friend, a guide and a social worker.

Ch. Mohan Lal Motial a man of strong will power, conviction, honesty, dedication and social justice, a crusader who at the tender age of 18 years was turned out of his family kitchen because of his involvement in anti-untouchability and anti-conversion activities. One of the pioneer of Arya Samaj movement and insurance business in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Born in the year 1897 at Rajouri he married to Smt Rameshwari at the age of 14 years only. He had been close associate of Sher-e-Duggar Lala Hans Raj Mahajan a great

social reformer, and had complete faith in his theory of social justice and social reforms. He was true believer of women education, liberty and equality and that is why he got all his six daughters highly educated and married in quite educated and socially upright families. He was father of three sons also who are placed quite high in the society.

Although he was born in an orthodox hindu family, he was a secular person in true sense. He had very strong ties with many Muslim and Sikh families with whom he had sisterly and brotherly relations which remained intact even after his death.

Himself being a student of Urdu, he was a great protagonist of Hindi language which he loved and adored very much. He got all his children educated in Hindi in their earlier years of education. He wrote good number of poems in Hindi and also remained President of All J&K Hindu Sahitya Mandal. For his service to Hindi Language he was honoured and awarded by the Revenue Minister of J&K State.

A staunch Arya Samaji he fought against the menace of conversion and untouchability for which he braved couple of threats to his life also. He remained President of J&K Arya Pratinidhi Sabha a governing body of all Arya Samaj Units of the state.

He had been chairman of Shri. Sunder Singh Gurudwara Trust and did a commendable job in the improvement and maintenance of the property of that Trust both at Jammu and Haridwar.

Throughout his life he remained associated with RSS movement and had been their karyavah and sanghchalak at different times. For 28 long years he single handedly with the personal legal help of Lala Suraj Parkash advocate, he fought the case of prime property of Balmiki community upto supreme court, which is under the illegal possession of Christian community and won the cases for that neglected community.

He was jailed during emergency because of his nationalistic and democratic views. He had always been concerned about the upliftment of downtrodden people and with the help and inspiration of his wife solemnized the marriages of many orphan and handicapped girls.

After the partition of the country, the Pak army in the garb of invaders, invaded a large part of our state resulting into capturing the areas of Mirpur and Kotli besides other areas by them. They also succeeded in occupying Rajouri for some time. At Rajouri many people killed themselves by performing "Hara Kiri". The refugees from these areas who could survive during that carnage reached Jammu for refuge in very bad condition both physically and financially. Mr. Motial offered all of them his house and households for shelter by shifting his own family to some other place. He later on, donated most of his ancestral property at Rajouri for the benefit of civil society and social organization.

He was a highly esteemed and respected personality of the state who believed in doing his duty towards the organization he belonged to in particular and society in general without caring for the reward or position as it is evident that Bakshi Gulam Mohd, then Prime Minister of J&K offered him reward in shape of two big plots at Gandhi Nagar and permit for two heavy vehicles which was considered to be a big favour at that time for his social contributions, but Mr. Motial politely refused this gesture saying that "Whatever he does is his duty towards humanity and nation which does not deserve any remuneration or reward".

He always believed that service to humanity is service to God. This the basic reason that the poor masses remember him as their God father and his name is being taken with great love, respect and honour. During his life time he was counted amongst great personalities of Jammu. He would always prefer Gandhi cap and Khaddar Pajama kurta throughout his life and was a sevak of Mahatma Gandhi. He was like a saint and had settled at Purani Mandi Jammu.

No doubt Mohan Lal Motial ji is not with us but his selfless service for mankind his name will remain always alive in our hearts. He is still remembered among his friends and by those who were associated with him in his social activities for his untiring and selfless work for the cause of people. He will always remain alive in the hearts of those associated with social activities as their "Guiding Star" Sh. Motial the elevated soul who fought for the betterment of the people of J&K all along his life proved himself a best guide. His departure from this world is great loss for the state.

## Gool incident

# Side effect of elusive insurgency

B L Saraf

The unfortunate firing incident in Gool area of Ramban district consumed four human lives. Very rightly, it evoked resentment and indignation among various sections of the State's populace. Whatever may be the provocation, death of unarmed civilians in a police firing is unacceptable. The loss of four precious human lives has added up to the list of thousands of innocents who have perished in the wanton killings of the last two decades. In normal times it is difficult to explain a killing. But then we aren't living normal times. So, everybody who considers himself somebody has a readymade explanation. Some say the Ramban tragedy is the symptomatic of the larger problem faced by the J&K State, where every corner is a powder keg ready to explode any time. Unless the 'basic cause' is removed, they argue, incidents like Gool will continue to happen. It is a tragedy that we find a basic difference - often contradictory - in the narrative of various sections of population to define the 'basic issue'. And whoever comes within his kind of definition seems to have a point.

The space will not permit a discussion on various contours of the 'basic issue'. Suffice it to say that those who have invented the 'basic issue' in a chosen form, can't have its resolution their way. The geographic and demographic complexities of the State, international permutations/calculations and the regional realities won't allow it. Something has to be said on the Gool tragedy. As stated, the deaths of the civilian protestors cannot be condoned. The incident, however, needs to be analysed in the backdrop of the terrorist activities which have been rebuilding in

Kashmir in the past couple of months. Army convoy was attacked in the outskirts of Srinagar, half a dozen JK police personal were killed across the Valley, a noted physician is battling for life consequent upon a terrorist attack on him, wherein his two local police guards lost lives and a Himayat beneficiary - a central sponsored scheme to tackle the unemployment problem in the Valley - was gunned down in Sopore. Thus a situation waiting to be

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exploited stood created by those to whom the continued spell of peace in the State sounds death knell. In such a situation a kind of helplessness creeps in the mind of the security forces and they tend go berserk. Though in case of trained and disciplined forces the unruly behaviour can't be accepted. The unfortunate Gool like incidents come handy to the disruptive elements. No wonder we notice a sense of elation among the militants and their sympathisers in the death of innocent Gool residents, wherein they see an opportunity to fan the dying flames of militancy in the State.

It is inappropriate to draw parallels only to belittle the

effect of tragedy that has befallen the grieved family, in consequence of an unfortunate event. However, on some occasions it becomes unavoidable. Commenting upon the disappearance and death of hundreds of young persons in Baluchistan (Pakistan) columnist Irfan Hussaan writes in Dawn (Karachi) "It is usually thus in most insurgencies where organised Armies, frustrated by the elusive nature of their adversaries, tend to lash out at the

Some, in the Valley tried to explain the dastardly assault as an act of collateral damage, in the long drawn battle for the 'freedom'. Collateral damage can, also, occur while saving the innocents. It is a logical outcome of the atmosphere of hate and terror built up in the State since 1990, wherein gun and not the reason rules supreme. But, all is not lost in the Valley. There are number of well-meaning persons in the Kashmir civil society and amongst the common citizenry who sincerely want the end of the bloodshed. It is true of Pakistan civil society also. Their effort must be reciprocated.

To those, who in J&K continue to repose faith in the gun, it must be read what the respected Pakistani columnist, referred above, had for the Bloch freedom fighters. In the same column he writes: "Another reality Bloch fighters need to face up to is that the Army and the state of Pakistan can sustain the current level of violence for a very long time. Just as the Indian Army has outlasted the Kashmiri freedom struggle, so too does the Pakistan military have the means and the will to absorb the relatively low casualties the nationalists can inflict. "The learned writer then makes a point that no country is willing to fight for an independent Baluchistan. That holds good for J & K also. Coming from a Pakistani scribe, one hopes that our gun wielding friends will listen and abjure violence; stop fighting for a losing cause. They may have a grievance. Some people have issues with the Centre and the State governments. They can be sorted peacefully. The State should out with a positive response. Hopefully, then we will see the end of Gool like incidents.

(The author is former District & Session Judge)

## Release pension arrears

The State Government employees and pensioners have been striving since 2009 to impress upon the Finance Minister to accede to their genuine demand of releasing the 6th Pay Commission's arrears in favour of them either in one or two equal installments right in the manner of the Central Government.

The Finance Minister knowingly turned down this genuine demand of the employees and pensioners by presenting a 'Road Map' for making payment of their arrears in five equal installments over a stipulated period of five years.

According to this decision, the payment of two installments has been made. As the 3rd installment has not been released yet, the pensioners appeal to the Finance Minister to release the remaining three i.e. 3rd, 4th and 5th installments in favour of them either in one go or the payment of the same be made to them with interest whatsoever is admissible to them under the Civil Services Rules.

The pay arrears amounting to Rs. 2200 crores are still lying with the Government. The Government itself is taking huge interest, on the money of the employees and pensioners, which perhaps goes in crores every year. Had the Finance Minister released the pay arrears in one or two installments, the pensioners and the employees would have deposited the amount in the Bank to earn interest. But it could not happen so. Justice has not been done to the employees and pensioners.

As the demand of the pensioners is quite genuine, they appeal to the Finance Minister to reconsider the demand of the pensioners without any bias and prejudice. It is fervently hoped that the Finance Minister will certainly release the remaining three installments of the pay arrears in one go to his pensioners at the earliest.

Yours etc...  
Jagdeep Singh  
Rehari Colony, Jammu

## A role for Panchayats

Refer article 'Panchayats and child sex ratio' DE July 19.

Panchayats which are gradually evolving as administrative units in the State can emerge as centres for socio-economic change in our rural areas. The suggestions as has been put forth by the author in the article are of great help. Panchayats can play an important role in tackling child sex ratio at grass root level.

The recent decision of Khap Panchayat in Haryana that female foeticide should be stopped forthwith has received wide appreciation from length and breadth of the country. This decision will certainly help in reducing child sex ratio in the State.

Panchayat members being fully aware of the local issues and customs will be more successful than any foreign agency or NGO working on the same mission.

There is urgent need to entrust Panchayats with this social responsibility also, so that a society where equality is ensured to both sexes takes birth.

Yours etc...  
Ravinder Rasgotra  
Jammu

## Beware of cheaters

Uttarakhand calamity has sent shock waves throughout the country. The natural calamity has exposed the eco-fragile regions of the country. There is urgent need to adopt short term and long term measures to protect the environment from the challenges of natural calamities in the future.

As a fact of the matter, people in India in general donate generously to help the needy people in case of natural calamities etc.

But it has been observed that on such unfortunate occasions some anti-social elements and cheaters try to mint money (easy money) illegally on the name of donations for the calamity victims.

The concerned administrations need to keep close watch on such suspected individuals, NGOs and educational institutions etc. while collecting donations for the calamity hit victims. People need to be careful and aware of such cheaters and verify them properly before paying the much needed donations.

Yours etc...  
Aatar Krishan Razdan  
Lale Da Bagh  
Jammu

Readers Write