

## Digitization of record

The fire that broke out in an annexe of the Secretariat in Srinagar on 11 July has catalyzed digitization of entire record for future security and safety. At least that is one of the good things the Government could have learnt from the fire incident. Although in the first instance, and perhaps by way of experiment, only four Departments will be taken up by the digitization agency, it is believed that in due course of time entire secretarial record will be digitized. That is a good thing but at the same time, secrecy of the content of documents, too, has to be maintained. The Department of Information Technology has prepared the blue print for the task of digitization and Chief Minister has given his consent to the scheme. This is bound to revolutionize the system of maintaining record in trim and making it handy. While this is being done, it is important that the digitized record should not be available to unconcerned people or visitors and that hacking is made impossible. The data has to be entered and saved with utmost care and there should be good mechanism to ensure correct entries into computer.

We are disposed to think that in case digitization of entire Secretariat record is done successfully and within the stipulated time, the Government should think of carrying the digitization movement to district level administration also. That would immensely increase output of work in the district office and also will contribute to smart handling of record at the State level.

## Panchs still vulnerable

Security scenario in the valley is still uncertain and unpredictable. Militants often change only tactics. The question is closely connected to the withdrawal of AFSPA and reduction of the presence of armed forces in the valley. Reports pouring in from reliable sources as well as from army intelligence reveal that infiltration activity from the other side of the LoC continues unabated. There is no sign of relent in Pakistani jihadis trying to sneak in along the long and porous border, particularly Krishna Ghati in Poonch and Mendhar areas. No less are Tithwal and Karen areas, the Tootmar and Nuthatches Gali whetting the appetite of the jihadis to infiltrate now that snow has melted over the passes. The traditional methods of infiltration, meaning infiltrating under cover of fire from Pakistani military, continue as usual.

From early days of terrorism in 1990, jihadis have made Sopore and its hinterlands their base in the valley. We know that prior to the jihadi attack on Khazir Muhammad, Sarpanch of Krankshavan in Sopore area, three more Sarpanchs were attacked following which many of them resigned. The militants want to create disorder and frustration among the people.

The Government has taken some measures to counter the threat. But it seems that more effort has to be made. Though it is not possible to provide personal security to all of the 34000 elected members of the Panchayats in the entire state, but it should be possible to register the support of the people who have voted for their Panchayati members. They have to become part of security arrangement for their respective Sarpanchs and Panchs. After all they have voted the most popular parsons to the local Panchayat just because they feel their chosen persons are capable of delivering goods. The assailants in the case of Khazir Muhammad of Krankshvan village carried arms and rode a motorcycle. Obviously, they came from some distance and from some specific direction. The local people must have known and seen them. They have to be instilled with confidence and security and asked to find out the clues or report to police whenever they find jihadis roaming in their localities. Security agencies have to lend their support to them. Instead of making it unavoidable for the security forces, police and the army to cordon off the village or locality where attack took place, the people in the locality have to play their role. It is the local party men, MLAs and other political and social activists who have to step in and play a role. Such situations cannot be left entirely to the care of the security forces. Local population and civilian personalities have also to cooperate with the security forces. It is the duty of the ruling coalition to ensure that there is robust relationship and connectivity between the masses of people and the political leadership.

Moreover, a solitary case here or there, should not deter the Government from taking a strong view of security scenario. Even the smallest incident of militancy has to be responded to so that the militants do not get the impression that they can indulge in subversion and then run scot-free. The MLAs of the border districts of the valley, should come together to hammer out common strategy for the security of Panchs in their respective constituencies. If need arises, they can also request the State Government to lend them good offices of the security authorities for guidance and good will.

A large-scale concerted effort by the elected representatives should be able to produce fool-proof security mechanism for the Panchs.

# Contours of poverty

Shiban Khaibri

The government claims that the level of poverty has come down in the country from 37% to 22% even at the level of Rs.27 per day per person in rural areas and Rs.33 that in the urban areas respectively, being sufficient for human sustenance. The two figures, despite being based on assumptions, are otherwise also not uniformly spread among the people under such income brackets. As per a startling report, there are vast segments of the poor who have not still managed to even reach the "magical" benchmarks of survival fixed by the planners sitting in our Yojna Bhavan of Rs.27 and Rs.33 respectively. Such segments manage to survive on Rs.17 per day in villages and on Rs.23 in urban areas. Though one third of the world's poor live in our country, yet it is difficult to imagine as to how such vast segments can even touch the barest minimum required calories intake of 2400 and 2100 per day in rural and urban areas respectively. The survey report further says that 5% of the population at the bottom level had an average monthly expenditure of Rs. 521 in villages and Rs. 700 in urban areas. Again, on an average, on all India basis, monthly per capita expenditure was around Rs.1430 for villages and about Rs.2630 for urban India.

The question, however, is as to how can the figures of the government that claims a climb down to poverty percentage to 22% are taken on its face value since the biggest and tallest flag ship of food security law provides for 70% rural and 45% urban coverage? The two view points are contradictory as on the one hand, the present dispensation is eager to show in its performance chart that the poverty line has gone down but on the other hand, wants vast identified spectrum from the

poor to come under the coverage of the Food Security Bill as the benefits there-under, can influence vast spectrum of the electorate to vote to power, the Congress led coalition government as they are claiming to be the authors of the scheme. In other words, this government is bound to show actual number if not more, as poor to impart the "benefit" of the scheme to repeat the fruits of MGNREGA. There is the other side of the picture and that is, if at all it be agreed that the level of poverty has come down, it is, however, neutralized by the addition in the number of the unemployed. The two must be interrelated as when the rate of growth shows an upward trend, there is bound to be an increase in employment levels and also increase in wages but reverse results were observed. According to a report, there has been a loss of nearly 5 crore jobs or the absence of as much opportunities of employment, during the period 2005-10. That the country was sitting on what is called the "unemployment volcano" was revealed by an economic survey conducted by the government in Feb 2013 wherein it was admitted that the number of jobs had registered an alarming downward trend. The last two years have shown that economic slow down and fall in exports have resulted in the number of jobs going further down. The report further predicts unavailability or loss of as many as 28 lac jobs more till the year 2020. We are experiencing a scenario of growth sans employment. That casts gloom not only on the challenging economic front, disparity in developmental levels among the sections of the society but it could pose a social and a political problem with spurt in cynicism and discontentment.

The government has invested in sectors like infrastructure and services which contribute to

growth leading to marginal reduction in poverty levels on short term basis but is not commensurate with the increase in the employment opportunities. It is a big challenge for our policy planners and economic and financial experts. Idle man power is not only wastage of productive resources but also a potent danger to law and order problem and tranquility in the societies.

It is amusing to see the politicization of poverty rather than addressing it more seriously. Noble laureate and a noted Economist Amartya Sen lays stress on development through social reforms such as education and public health. More spending on health and education sectors is cardinal to the spurt in economic development but does it not look strange that the population factor which is a neutralizing factor in the development, be nowhere discussed. In 1948 we were 38.90 crores and were calling this country as overpopulated especially in comparison to availability of food and employment. Presently, we have crossed 122 crores and now should be calling this country as hyper sensitively overpopulated. All the spending on the welfare measures of the poor sections and on infrastructure and other sectors like agriculture, industries etc; are showing little results or far from expected ones for the simple reason of over population. The gains felt through economic growth and development of the people gets neutralized or not reaching upto the desired levels by the ever increasing swarms of the population. Can any policy planner or an Economist ever contest this fact that over population is leading to the mess of almost all projects of development concerning the citizens of this country in terms of availability of food, water, shelter and employment? The assertion of Amartya Sen is uncontested

that the country's development strategy remains fundamentally flawed. Perhaps, that is the reason that in fighting poverty and malnutrition, we could not do as expected all these 65 years. It would be in the fitness of things that the Noble Laureate Sen's economic developmental model, to fight poverty and attaining inclusive all round growth, is adopted in India to reap the desired results. While praising development through market economic expansion in Gujarat, he finds enough not having been done in education and public health there. Again the elements of corruption rather massive corruption, adulteration, failure to take timely decisions and mismanagement have not been touched by Sen as being responsible to a large extent to derail the developmental process. Just the train of events of mid-day meal food poisoning of school children surfaced during July alone can prove the point. Just instances of fake and sub-standard medicines administered to patients in many cases and worst many safai karamcharis and rickshaw pullers doubling up to doctors and administering life saving, read life snatching, injections to patients in hospitals. These may be sporadic incidents but are symptomatic of prevailing mismanagement and corruption.

We take the political angle, there are no budgetary provisions, non availability of massive funds for implementation of food security but all shall be arranged irrespective of what collateral damage is suffered by the economy. At least, that can fetch votes in tons like NAREGA a few years back. Some leaders then shall still project the price of "Bhar Pet Thali" at less than Rs.12, Rs. 5 and even Re 1 at Maharashtra, Delhi and Kashmir respectively. Poverty must flourish till vote banks are secured and strengthened.

## Time to stop politicising tragedies

Kalyani Shankar

Should political parties play politics over tragedies and natural calamities? Only last month, we witnessed the political blame game after the Uttarakhand tragedy in which many were killed and thousands left homeless. Now the same is happening in Bihar where 23 children were killed eating poisoned mid-day meal provided by the government. The rival political parties in the state are indulging in a game of passing the buck. Knives are out to strike the Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar who was showing off his achievements in Bihar on many fronts including the Bihar development model. His rivals and critics who were looking for some issue have found the mid-day meal tragedy as a godsend and try to beat him with it.

No doubt that the intent behind the mid-day meal scheme is noble which is to lure hungry children to school with free lunches and achieve the dual goals of nourishment and education. This scheme aims to provide 450 calories and 12 grams of proteins for children studying in primary level and 700 calories and 20 grams of proteins at the upper primary level to boost their nutritional level. The centre feeds children in 13 lakh schools at an annual cost of Rs 10,000 crores. While the state governments are entrusted with the responsibility of its implementation, the centre provides dry ration and financial assistance. While the numbers are impressive, but the problem lies in its implementation.

The scheme was popularised by the then Chief Minister K Kamaraj in the 1960s in Tamil Nadu and later expanded by the M G Ramachandran Government in 1982 with an eye on poll but it got such rave reviews that even the World Bank praised the scheme. Finding its advantages, Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao thought of the 'National Programme for Nutrition Support to Primary Education' in 1995.

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But look at the ground level situation. Since 2005, cooked mid-day meals have been served in schools in Bihar. The primary school, where the incident took place was established in 2010 with no infrastructure or adequate staff or storage facility. Presently 89 children are registered with the school. It is atrocious to find that the state, district, and block monitoring authorities, mid-day meals administrators, district education officer, block education officer and block resource person have never visited this school. So far, only 55-60 per cent of allocated money has been utilised.

On that fateful day, the children were served soya beans, rice and potatoes. When the children complained of some odd taste, the headmistress rebuked them. Later, the police said that a forensic report confirmed that the cooking oil contained very toxic level of monocrotophos, an agricultural pesticide.

The initial response from the state government was shocking when the Education Minister of Bihar PK Shahi stated, 'It is a very daunting task to provide freshly cooked quality meals in 73,000 schools.' The minister also hinted at the involvement of opposition RJD in the tragedy though he did not make any direct reference. Does it remind one of the 'foreign hand theories of Indira Gandhi for every failure of the Congress? Now, even the chief minister Nitish Kumar and others have joined the chorus and hint at sabotage theory. They allege that the husband of the headmistress of the school, who has been now arrested, has links with the RJD. The JD(U) also alleges that the RJD and the BJP have combined together in attacking the government.

The RJD chief Lalu Prasad has made a virulent attack on Nitish pointing out that it was his government's failure. This incident has given him a handle to attack Nitish as Lalu is fighting a battle for survival in the state.

The BJP, which was the partner in the government until May, has suddenly started playing the role of the opposition. The BJP finds the Bihar government lacking in governance forgetting that till now it was a partner with the JD(U). The BJP is looking at the 2014 elections and it is clueless whether the separation form the JD(U) is going to help the party and also whether the Modi magic would work in the caste-ridden Bihar.

The Congress-led UPA, which was trying to lure the JD(U), has distanced itself from the scandal, blaming the state government for the tragedy. The Congress was all out to woo Nitish till now hoping for the JD(U) support in Parliament and also for a possible post-poll alliance after 2014 elections.

The Bihar tragedy should be a wake up call to have a relook at the mid-day meal scheme. No doubt that the children who ate the poisoned platter were victims of carelessness and callousness and the Bihar government, which is the implementer of the scheme, has much to answer. Nitish Kumar also has to accept the blame and punish those who were guilty. He should take up on an urgent basis to streamline the mid-day meal system so that tragedies of this kind are averted. We need to have a stronger system of checks and balances, and a system of accountability as well.

The sad thing is that while there is a race for populist programmes, the ruling as well as the opposition parties never make mid-day meals their political agenda. They do not play any constructive role in its management and improvement of any welfare schemes though they take political mileage and advantage of such issues. Political parties should learn a lesson or two that they can't come to power stamping on the bodies of the victims. People can see their vote bank politics and stay away from them sooner than later. (IPA)

## Listen to deaf and dumb

O.P. Sharma

Deaf and dumb are in deep plight but they are more than sore as the Government has also closed its eyes and ears to their miseries. A sizeable number of such unfortunate boys and girls can hardly look forward to a lively future without any institution of suitable education, rehabilitation framework for improvement of their lot. Certainly, such persons with hearing or speech impairments can be bettered significantly through specialized services and education by specialists. Worldwide the persons with such impairments can be rehabilitated and brought into the main stream of the society as self-reliant and useful members of the society.

In Jammu and Kashmir, there is serious problem of a large number of deaf and dumb girls and boys and their number is increasing especially in the remote areas and weaker section of the society. Strangely, there have been no authentic periodical surveys about the existence of their population and the scientific information about the nature of their impairments. At the bottom of this problem is lack of scientific data as well as lack of sensitivity of society for these sections and the core issue of absence of centers for their education, rehabilitation and vocational training or provisions of avenue of job opportunities.

This policy and programmes in India as also elsewhere in the advance nations across the globe have amply established that even such handicapped persons do possess sometimes rare talents and dedication for reasonably good life and also for playing their role as useful citizens. So it is incumbent upon the Central as well as the State Governments to chalk out suitable programmes focusing attention on the deaf and dumb. So far, the Government have been eyes and heartless to this gigantic problem. It is worth mentioning

that physically or mentally disabled do not need mere sympathy or lip services but as the individuals are entitled to solid support of both the society as also the Government. It is high time that the Government and the civil society joined hands to tackle this humanitarian problem to enable deaf, dumb and other such persons, young or old get socio-economic justice.

It is a sad commentary that there is no suitable school for deaf and dumb in twin capital

fresh look to make it more effective and efficient for opening a window of opportunity for such handicapped persons in Jammu and Kashmir.

Sometime back, a delegation of deaf and dumb comprising young boys and girls including their parents sent a detail memorandum to the Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah strongly pleading for opening of specialized separate educational institutions and vocational centres at Srinagar and Jammu to start with

humane consideration.

Deaf and dumb need to be protected against neglect and exploitation. All deaf and dumb require special treatment, education, rehabilitation and care for the physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed or mentally retarded children, priority in protection for them in times of distress or natural calamity, identify, encourage and assist gifted ones. There should be special programmes for general improvement of their health standard.

Sustained efforts should also be made to strengthen and expand institutional and non-institutional services to cater to the requirements of deaf and dumb in Jammu and Kashmir.

**Upgrade Welfare Services**  
The programmes and services for welfare of handicapped should be accorded the highest priority in Jammu and Kashmir as a vital component of the planned development of social services, which are understood to mean "an organised attempt that aim at helping towards a mutual adjustment of individuals and their social environment".

A well-developed institutional service presupposes development of suitably trained personnel and provision of facilities to meet the specific needs of the particular category of beneficiaries. In more specific terms, the managements of these institution for deaf and dumb, the delinquent or the homeless is bound to throw up problems. Special care covers a range of medical, educational and social provision and includes special treatment, special education, vocational training, personal guidance, strong support.

Special care, which is the responsibility of the State Government, and the society for persons who are deaf and those with speech defects. (Starline Syndicate Service)



cities of Srinagar and Jammu. The fate of such unfortunate in the far flung hilly areas in Jammu & Kashmir can be well imagined! In view of the prevalence of this handicap, the society has to be sensitized about the needs, and various dimensions of the problem to enable such persons to be self-reliant and contribute their mite to the society. In Jammu city, there is one school for deaf and dumb run by J&K Samaj Kalayan Kendra, a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) and doing a commendable job in a limited way due to scarcity of funds and proper school facility.

**Institutional Framework**  
First of all, the State Government has to take a thorough review of its entire policy and programme for the physically and mentally disabled persons and draw up a new blue-print plan. The crucial enactment for the disabled must be given a

and subsequently in other districts in a phased manner. This delegation also called on the J&K State Chief Secretary, Iqbal Khandey who listened patiently to the deputationist and assured them of prompt appropriate action. Will the Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, Minister for Social Welfare, Sakina Itoo, the Chief Secretary, Iqbal Khandey and other high-ups in the administration now listen and understand the deaf and dumb ones in Jammu and Kashmir. It is expected that the policy decisions will be taken up by the State Government to tackle this problem in a humane way at the earliest.

**Prompt Action Needed**  
The deaf and dumb should be protected with out any religious, gender, regional or any other form of discrimination. They should be brought up in a spirit of understanding patience and

## Educate women

Sir,

A lot is said about how women should change by wearing full length clothes instead of skirts and tops and by not going alone anywhere at the night-time. Yes, for all seasons, women have been denied of their wishes and proper in the society. Especially in orthodox societies, like ours. As for a woman, it is not easy to survive in a male dominated society where so many rape cases are emerging day after day. For all, the reasons is men consider women as weak and fragile till now.

They (some of men) consider women merely as an instrument to satisfy their erotic desires. Why they consider women merely a sexpot, totally go over the head. There is a lack of moral values in the men. If a woman is ambitious about her goals, then why is she considered as selfish? There is a superior feeling in men over the women. Why is she considered as birdbrain in the society? All these questions needs to be answered.

For a woman, it is never easy to stand on her own. Only proper education will help and a lot is needed to be done by all for the amelioration of the women in the society. For a satisfactory position and welfare of women in the society, a thorough change in the attitude of the people is required.

Yours etc....  
Anshika Mahajan  
Udhampur

## Poll freebies

Sir,

Please refer to the letter "Poll freebies" by Mohan Lal Sharma, and the article "FDI is losing sheen as a panacea" by S. Majumdar, D.E. July 9, 2013.

As a matter of fact the population of India is growing at an alarming rate and everything in huge quantity is required to sustain so huge a population. The Govt has neither a vision, nor a road map nor honesty to lead India, properly. Indian ruling classes have benefitted enormously from freedom and democracy and are worried only about attaining or retaining political power.

Most of the political parties are adept in the art of making a fool of Indian voter. They know that by distributing bicycles, T.V. Sets saris and cheap almost free ration to Indian voter can lead to their getting maximum votes.

Unfortunately common man is unable to realize that all these items are purchased with the money which is collected through more than fifteen types of taxes imposed by the Government.

Yours etc.....  
Avtar Singh  
Simalbari Camp  
R.S. Pura

## Readers Write

### Increase in suicide incidents

Sir,

There seems to be no end to suicide wave in the State. Every day, one or two people commit suicide for one reason or other. The increasing graph of suicides is quite alarming. The National Crime Report Bureau has noted that almost 20 percent of suicides in the country are committed by youth aged 15-30 years. The reasons cited are: love affairs, poverty, career failure, poor, academic results etc.

To stop this trend, social scientists, sociologists and psychologists can play a great role. They will have to come forward to guide the society at this hour.

Besides, parents and teachers too should step into check this trend at their own levels.

The suicide trend quite clearly indicates that society is still in grip of certain social or economic evils which need to be get rid of by the society at the earliest.

Otherwise, it will be social chaos everywhere.  
Yours etc.....  
Meenakshi Mahajan  
Kathua