

## Sugar lobby cracks the whip

Centre's sugar policy has taken a sudden shift. Reasons are not known. Nevertheless, political commentators know the role of sugar lobby in national politics. Fluctuation in sugar prices does happen very often but a major shift in the policy is something that has puzzled the consumers and the States, which are affected by the new policy. So far the levy sugar provided to our State would come through the distribution system of Food Corporation of India (FCI). Transportation, storage and supply were the responsibility of this organization. This system had been in place for many years and nobody had any complaint against it.

In the third week of May last, a Cabinet meeting of the Union Government asked all the states including J&K to make arrangements of lifting the levy sugar from the mills at their own and also reduce the subsidy on the levy sugar. In all probability this could be an indication that the Government might lift the subsidy on sugar after elections. Observers are of opinion that this decision is going to benefit the millers/producers while a burden is added to ordinary consumers. In the process of making the policy shift practicable and smooth, it is apprehended that consumers may not get their quota of sugar ration for the months of June and July. According to Government, there may be some delay for releasing the quota for June but it will be only delay. Some CAPD outlets are projecting only delay and no suspension of the quota. Variation in sugar price is of considerable significance. The cost of sugar for the millers is Rs. 32-33 per kilogram while it sells in open market at Rs. 40 per kg. The subsidized levy sugar supplied by CAPD is Rs. 13.50 per kg.

One cannot explain the reason for a hurried and sudden decision of the Union Cabinet to make a drastic shift in sugar policy. Very short notice has been given to the states, including J&K, to make arrangements for lifting sugar on their own and not wait for the FCI. It was only on 22 May that the State Government was informed of the decision. Surprisingly, the decision had fixed June 1 as the date for stopping supply of sugar through FCI to the State. The entire process of buying, transporting and distributing sugar among the consumers is a complicated and also a lengthy exercise that consumes time. Himachal Pradesh, too, has expressed this difficulty. The right thing would have been to give sufficient notice to the state governments that they should lift sugar quotas on their own and not depend on any distributing agency.

The State Government anticipates many difficulties, which the UPA government's decision about suspension of supply and distribution of sugar through FCI is likely to give rise to. Withdrawal of levy would mean the State shall have to invest 600 crore rupees a year on this item, which will be too hard for its meager resources. The Government had appointed a committee to visit the mill owners on spot and report how the question of supply of sugar to the state would be regulated. Its report should be a good guideline for the State authorities to proceed in the matter.

All that one can say in this matter is that our State consumes 7,000 MT of sugar in a year. Additional expenditure of fifty crore rupees a month is a burden which ultimately the ordinary consumers will have to bear. The State authorities are trying to convince the consumers that they will be spared the hardship of non-availability of sugar. But the situation on ground is not very clear since the dealers of Public Distribution System are pessimistic about any quick solution of the problem.

The Union Government would be well advised to re-visit the time schedule of the implementation of revised policy of supply of sugar to our State. It should be gradual and smooth and leave no chance for apprehension of inordinate delay. It has also to be noted that hundreds of thousands of pilgrims will be visiting Kashmir in a few weeks time on pilgrimage to the holy cave of Swami Amarnath in the Himalayas. The State Government is eager to provide them all facilities. The Union Cabinet should have taken this into account while fixing 1 June as the cut off line for introducing new sugar policy.

## Energy conservation ordinance

It is said that one becomes wiser after the act. We cannot assume that all the wisdom rests in one person or one organization howsoever reputed and well intended. This axiom applies to Government's handling of the endemic issue of power development and distribution in the State. Power issue has been a source of embarrassment to all successive Governments. Each Government tried to tackle the issue in its own wisdom but still things remained amiss. PDD has come under severe criticism and even censure. After all it is a department that has direct public dealing and the public is unsparing when put to inconvenience. On the count of power there is a big gap between supply and demand. Pilferage and transmission losses have been the impediments in the way and a foolproof mechanism of overcoming them has not been found so far.

However, a recent development raises the hope that may be at the end of the tunnel a flicker of light might appear. Exasperated by the endemic public resentment to power crisis, and inability of the PDD to respond to the situation, the State Government took the cue from the Union Government and enacted the Jammu & Kashmir Energy Conservation Act on 23 April 2011. The main purpose of the Act was to bring about efficient use of energy and its conservation. It carried many wishes and hopes, of course with good intentions. But although more than two years are gone yet the Act has not brought any cognizable change in the prevailing power scenario. The situation has worsened in some cases.

For the implementation of the Act and discharge of all the functions, the establishment of the Bureau of Energy Efficiency was imperative. After fondling with the idea for nearly two years, the PDD has come up with a report that the constitution of BEE is a very complex and time-consuming process and beyond the scope of the PDD. A question may be asked why PDD took two long years to come to the conclusion that establishing BEE was a lengthy and complex process and that it was not capable of delivering the goods. It could have done so just by going through the story of the Union Power Ministry that had already established the BEE as an adjunct of the Energy Conservation Act of the Union Government.

It finally dawned upon the Government that the only option left was that of extending the jurisdiction of the BEE of Government of India by carrying out certain amendments in the Act. As the Assembly is not in session, the Government has to take recourse to the issuance of an ordinance by the Governor of the State.

As per the Act, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency is to specify norms for process and energy consumption standards, prescribe guidelines for energy conservation building codes, develop testing and certifying procedures and infrastructure, specify qualification for accredited energy indicators and lay specification procedure for energy manufacturers etc. Moreover, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency is also having the powers to carry out verification, monitoring and analysis of use of energy including submission of technical report containing recommendations for improving energy efficiency with cost benefit analysis and prepare an action plan to reduce energy consumption.

# MGNREGA The right to work

**Ram Rattan Sharma**  
The right to work is a basic human right. This concept emphasizes that the people have a human right to work, and they should not be prevented from doing so. The right to work is enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights of the UN and the same in corporates the vision for the economic, social and cultural development. In the Indian constitution the right to work has been referred under the directive principles of state policy article 39, and it urges the state to ensure that the citizens, men and women equally have the right to an adequate means to livelihood and that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Further article 41 stresses that the state shall with in the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing right to work.

Acting in the true constitutional spirit, the Govt. of India enacted legislation in the year 2005, named the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which was renamed on 2nd October 2009 as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The act is job guarantee scheme which promises 100 days of employment in a financial year to per household, whose members volunteer to do unskilled manual work of minimum wages. The MGNREGA aims to achieve the twin objective of rural development and employment. Thus MGNREGA is a pioneering legislation and is the first committed step towards giving the poor a living wage, and that too as a right. Never before in the development history, has there been an initiative of the nature and magnitude. The scheme envisions transforming the developmental scenario in India. Thus the beauty of the scheme is that it is serving multiple stakeholders in multiple ways. Foremost, it creates social security net by providing

guaranteed employment. Secondly, it creates equity by giving right based wage employment programs. Thirdly by giving priority to the natural resource management and emphasizing the creation of durable assets such as water conservation and harvesting, afforestation, rural connectivity, flood control and protection such as construction and repair of embankments, etc, it holds promise for transforming the rural economic growth. It has the in built mechanism for governance reforms, as it operates around the idea of decentralization and promotion of transparency and grass root democ-



Since the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was launched in 2006. We think it is an appropriate time to look down the line and analysis what this grand project has achieved and where it is lacking. It has a positive impact on the lives of millions of poor people living across our country. It is successful in providing livelihood and security to the targeted group. Another notable achievement of the act is at least one third of the persons to whom work is allotted are women. The scheme is a milestone in enhancing the decentralized planning process in country and bringing the marginalized sections of the community in the planning process. The scheme highlights the need to regenerate our natural

resources under MGNREGA, water and soil conservations, plantation and afforestation has been given priority. We can rate the programme as one of the finest designed employment oriented programme in the world. As has always been the tragedy of well intentioned welfare programmes in India, the MGNREGA also suffers from various institutional failures and weaknesses. The procedure for getting employment under the MGNREGA is lengthy and is riddled with many bureaucratic procedures. Labours are made to fill many forms and since most of them are illiterate, it becomes very difficult; officials con-

cerned with the programme consider MGNREGA as the employment of the last resort than as anti poverty programme; various cases have come to the glare of the public where officials have been caught while maintaining fake muster rolls of the labours; they inflate the muster rolls and indulge in corruption of the highest order; lack of information regarding the right to work - various labours are ignorant about their basic rights, which keep the doors open for their corruption, case studies taken in some state have revealed that huge sum of money have been embezzled of the funds of MGNREGA. The social audits in various states have brought to light many cases where the labours were being paid less wages. Another serious conse-

quences of shortage of professional staff is that there is little effort at social mobilization without which there is no chance of MGNREGA emerging as a people centred programme, productivity is seen hampered at man work sites. Inadequate implementation of the transparency safeguards like social audit and RTI.

It is indeed one of the best needed welfare programmes for rural India. The only thing our administration and the policy makers need is to plug the loopholes immediately. To eliminate misuse and leakages from its flagship rural employment programme. India could introduce biometric aided identity checks that can be verified remotely. This step would result in checking the misuse of the muster rolls, which is the most prominent draw back in the implementation of the programme. To ensure transparency and accountability, the use of social audit measures should be strengthened. Social audit will ensure peoples involvement is a must and it will trickle down to the lower levels only when the process of social audit is adopted and done through citizens groups and grama sabhas. The MGNREGA programme reformed on these lines holds a bright prospect of not only transforming livelihoods of the poorest people of our country but also heralding a revolution in rural governance in India. MGNREGA is one of the finest pro-poor programmes designed to alleviate the living standards of our village counterparts. MGNREGA will not only empower our rural youth economically but also help in creating sustainable assets. It is not surprising that there has been a steady increase in the number of households benefited by the scheme and no sooner than later our govt. should bring a similar scheme for our urban unemployed youth.

(The Author is former Dy. Librarian, University of Jammu, A Social Activist)

## Create opportunities first

**Dr Bharat Jhunjhunwala**  
Centres of youth graduate every from our schools and colleges. Many remain unemployed, however. Industry complains that youth with proper skills are not available. The Government is seized of the problem and has recently increased the numbers of Central Universities, IIMs and IITs. This resolve is wholly welcome. But why has the development of capacities during the last sixty years of Independence not led to the removal of unemployment? It is also seen that educated youth often become a burden on their families. While waiting at the Lucknow Railway Station this author came across a science graduate who had come for an interview in the silk department of the UP Government. He had been applying for jobs for the last ten years with no success. His capacities were surely more developed than say 95 percent of the people but he was not able to make any contribution to national progress. Rather he had become a burden on his family. Such youth are not inclined to take up their traditional occupations and they do not find jobs that would be suitable for their enhanced capacities. How will further enhancement of capacities help in the progress of the nation when millions of such youth are already languishing on our streets?

There is a need to understand the global politics of capacity building. This idea has been put forth most forcefully by Amartya Sen. One of the main principles of economics is that of utility. It is assumed that one who has two cars is at a higher level of utility or welfare

than one who has one car. But Sen raised a valid objection. A youth who has two vintage cars may yet not be happy. He may want a fast moving modern sports car instead of the vintage cars that he has got. There are two qualities of the car-it's being 'vintage' and its moving fast. The car should have the desired quality in order for it to enhance the welfare of its owner. Thus, concluded Sen, it is not sufficient to have goods in larger quantities-they should also have the desired qualities. Next, Sen asks, of what use is a fast moving car if the lad does not have the capability of driving it? It is necessary, therefore, that people's capacities are developed so that they can function the things they have in a desired way. This is the logic for the developing the capacities of our people in order to increase their welfare.

But it seems to me that it is not necessary that a person's welfare will be enhanced even if he has the requisite capacities. Take a young man who has latest fast-moving car and who also knows driving. He has goods of desired quality and also the capability to operate them. He may be yet unhappy though. He may want a Lamborghini or a Ferrari. Sitting in his air-conditioned sedan, he may dream of a Ferrari and be unhappy. I had a motorcycle while I was going to College in 1967. I was the only student in the class who had a two-wheeler. But I was often unhappy. I wanted a car. Then someone asked if you cannot be happy with a motorcycle when others have only bicycles; then you will also not be happy with a car. This advice changed my attitude and I started to enjoy

my motorcycle. The point is that capacity can create unhappiness if the cultural values glorify consumption.

The problem with the thinking of Prof Sen is that he stresses the development of capacities but remain quiet on the parallel need to provide the goods to enable the functioning of the capacities. He is also quiet on the need to create a satisfaction-oriented culture. He is in favour of providing freedom to big companies to play in the domestic markets and produce goods at the least cost. He is not concerned that big textile companies are rendering millions of weavers' jobless. The weavers have the capacity but not the resources to function and they are dying. The solution Dr Sen would suggest is to retrain them for working in call centers. But he is forgetting that there already exists a long waiting list for employment in the call centers. The enhancement of capacity of more numbers of our youth in speaking English, therefore, only makes competition worse. Previously one having a second-class degree would get a job in the call centers. Now, courtesy, capacity development, only first-class student will get the job.

Development of capacities in an environment of shrinking opportunities acts like fuel in fire. The competition among the unemployed for the limited number of jobs becomes more intense. A post-graduate is now willing to sweep the floors. The level of dissatisfaction among our people and the level of frustration in the society increases. The recent spurt in Naxalite violence in the country is partly explained by such a growth of capacity with ever less opportu-

nities to operate them. One can see hoards of skilled workers such as carpenters, masons and painters standing on the main crossing in every city. They have capacities but are forced to work at a meager wage of Rs 300 because there are few opportunities. The upper class benefits from this high-capacity low-wage combination. They get a skilled worker at Rs 300 instead of Rs 5000.

The same logic applies at the global level. The development of capacities of the Indian people benefits, among other, the MNC employers and the American economy that gets cheap educated labour that is embodied in our exports. MNCs also get cheap skilled workers such as software programmers and nurses. Secondly, the scarce resources of the Government of India are used up in building the capacities of its people and fewer resources are left for building roads and building factories. That leaves open the field for predator MNCs to enter into virtually virgin area. The ultimate beneficiary of capacity enhancement when undertaken without development of indigenous opportunities is, therefore, the upper class including foreign countries and MNCs.

It is understandable that Prof Amartya Sen would plead the cause of MNCs and rich countries. He has worked four long decades for the universities in these countries. But why should an economist Prime Minister of the country ignore the fact that educated youth do not have employment and add fuel to fire by making policies that throttle their opportunities and leave the field wide open for the MNCs?

### Issuing of ration cards

Sir,  
At present ration is issued on the ration cards made on the basis of 1991-92 census. Ration cards issued on 2001-2002 census basis have not been operationalised by the CAPD department. Consequently, names of all those left this world during 1991-92 to 2011-2012 or born in the intervening period haven't either been deleted or added in the ration cards which looks highly absurd. Since ration is a prime concern of every human being and many certifications stand attached with ration cards, such irregularities pose serious problems. Therefore, for updation of ration cards, the CAPD department is required and requested to kindly direct all TSOs to issue ration cards on the basis of 2011-12 census so that the masses aren't made to suffer.

Yours etc...  
Keshwa Nand Sharma  
Salehri (Sunderbani)

### A big threat

Sir,  
Naxalism seems to be biggest threat to india. It is spreading very rapidly throughout the Indian territory. Common man is suffering because of the violence caused by Naxals. Civilians have lost their lives. Public properties like railway lines, Govt. offices, roads etc. are being destroyed. They are a big threat to the peaceful living.  
Government has many times tried to listen to their problems and is still is trying to sought out this danger, but they need to solve this problem as soon as possible. Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Singh said that Govt. will not bow down in front of naxals, hopefully this brutality done by naxalites gets them their punishment.

Yours etc.....  
Neha Sharma  
Jammu University

### Rescind circular

Sir,  
Kindly refer the circular issued by the Finance Deptt of J&K Govt in which the pensioners of JK State were, asked to present themselves before concerned authorities for verification.  
It may be said here that the Central Govt Pensioners present themselves once a year before State Bank. of India authorities for verification.

It is appealed to the Finance Minister to rescind the present circular and ask the Pensioners to present themselves before the Manager of J&K Bank for verification where they get monthly pension.

Yours etc....  
P K Peshin  
Jammu

## Media's growing concern about Women

Prof Javed Mughal

Someone's aptly written verse, "Adhi rait se baher hun mein, Adhi rait mein ghari hun : Adhi Maan chuki hun uski, adhi baat pe adi hun" is enough to hold a mirror to the of-late plight of our women-folk in India particularly at a time when the humanity claims to be enjoying at its best in the fresh air of democracy. The verse tells a tale of long-protracted struggle by this feminine gender to find an independent space in the society down the decades and even centuries and now they reached a stage where they can claim to have attained some success. If we look backward in vale of twenties or thirties, our hearts sink down in despair to come across the abject predicament our woman passed through. What our women are getting today was due to them long before. It was all due to the conservative mindset of this country who, misinterpreting the concept of Parda, subjected the women-folk almost to the domestic incarceration. Education, socio-political exposure and Govt. Job were far-off and impractical dreams for them.

This women-folk has passed through many acidic tests and trials to exist in the social set up. Now the entire scenario is changed. It is amazing how the concept and composition of news have changed in the past two to three decades. Being a columnist or social analyst today I feel gratified that after all these centuries the world has been compelled to bring women and gender issues to the centre stage of all spheres of human activities. It was only till a few decades ago, women and gender issues were deemed irrelevant, unimportant and superfluous to men's concept of the larger scheme of things. Yet today, men have no choice but to recognize and acknowledge that women have to be made the centre of all schemes of things --- political, social and economic --- for communities and nations to march forward towards progress. Crimes against women, particularly

**This is important because normally victims are doubly victimized when their characters and personal lives, etc. are critically held under the microscope by the all-knowing public, as also to change the popular thinking that women "ask for it".**

the increasing incidence of rapes across the country have larger connotations, which can no longer be ignored. The very fact of crimes against women, at home and outside reflects society's collective victimization of the population that also holds up half the sky and no amount of ego linked with religious and cultural superiority would white-wash the abuse against women. The very fact of crimes against women, at home and outside, indicates the Government's total failure to provide human security to half the population that contributes to the nation's growth despite the country's assertions of superior political systems and a booming economy. Women were never considered fully human and their contributions were always disregarded and disdained. Therefore, women were and continue to be perceived as prey for men, who have never quite gotten out of the hunting and gathering mentality. But the world is beginning to realize that without women it cannot go forward. Yes, it is a very positive development that women and gender issues, particularly rape and other crimes against women are finding space in the front pages of our newspapers and making the breaking news in our electronic media. This would have been vehemently opposed by male Editors not too long ago because women's place in the media was believed to be the columns on cooking recipes and beauty advices. Yes, it is also very crucial that women and gender issues are front-paged because the media has enormous amount of influence on how society and state perceives and treats various vulnerable sections. Unless rapes and other crimes against women are incessantly front-paged, society and state would continue relegating half the world's population to the corners, contours and crevices of the collective consciousness. Not too long ago, women and gender issues were considered to be 'soft' issues. Thankfully, times have changed and with it the thinking, at least among those who have the responsibility of taking the nation forward, including the media.

This is a good start because to bring about change in society and state, the top leadership has to change first and lead by example. Now, regarding front-paging women and gender issues, particularly crimes against women, there is always the danger of sensationalizing such issues hence it is imperative that media personnel are sensitized on women and gender issues and educated on terminologies that would leave no space for misreading and misinterpretations. This is important because normally victims are doubly victimized when their characters and personal lives, etc. are critically held under the microscope by the all-knowing public, as also to change the popular thinking that women "ask for it". The other aspect of front-paging women and gender issues is that they are as political as much as personal and the two cannot be separated. Because all policies, plans and programmes are aimed at benefiting the people, including women, unless people are ensured of safety and security, none would be able to accrue the benefits of the best policies and plans. In any case, there cannot be any nation-building in an atmosphere and environment of fear.

If charity begins at home, nation-building also has to begin with women otherwise nation-building would be reduced to building a house without a foundation. Our media has compelled the global society to recognize the importance of woman who is the second indispensable half of the human life which is quite incomplete until a woman is clubbed with a man. Media's eagle's eye on the sufferings, exploitation and injustice to women folk by the so-called male dominated society has not only awakened the women world into the clime self-realization but has also rung an alarm bell for those who treated this creature as dust particle.

### Readers Write

## Rationalisation of pension structure

Sir,  
The other day the Finance Deptt. issued Govt. revised pay scale last held by the order No. 57-F of 2013 dated 11-03-2013 in partial modification to Govt. Order No. 86 F of 2009 dated 15-4-2009 wherein the full pension of Pre-2006 pensioners shall be further stepped up to 50 percent and 30 percent be removed and they may be given for the case/matter of Family (modifications) of the sum of minimum pay in the Pay band and Grade corresponding to the pre-amended aged/senior citizen pensioners revised pay scale last held by the pensioners.

The Finance Minister is requested to look into the matter.

Yours etc...  
Gur Nandan Singh  
Kelhi Mandi Samba