

Founder Editor S.D. Rohmetra

History made at Pir Panchal

We would have very much appreciated if the Banihal-Qazigund rail tunnel link had been brought to completion much earlier. Nevertheless, the nation is grateful to 1500-strong team of engineers, technicians, skilled and unskilled labourers who worked tirelessly for seven long years in harsh climatic and physical conditions to bring a marvel of engineering to completion. Kashmir Valley now stand linked to the outside world through railway, though, of course, we have to wait for three more years before the remaining gap of Banihal-Udhampur rail link is connected. Jointly flagging off the first ever rail through the heart of the Pir Panchal, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi made history on the declensions of a mountain that hides in its bosom the millennia-old tumultuous saga of Kashmir's relations with the world outside.

Sonia Gandhi made it known that New Delhi was fully aware of the needs and aspirations of the people of Kashmir and was determinedly responding to them. The subject of providing quality education and employment opportunities to the youth and freedom to the women of Kashmir for participation in building new society were the goals that UPA Government was trying to reach. She took the occasion to shower all praises on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and his Government for the achievements NC-Congress coalition Government has made during its ongoing tenure in the office. She referred to various centrally sponsored developmental projects for the State like PM's Gramin Sadak Yojna that would connect far-flung areas of the state to road network grid. This included construction of the Mughal Road and widening of the existing NH to four lanes and many other internal links.

Both UPA Chairperson and the Prime Minister publicly assured the people of the State that Central Government would provide its full support to the J&K State for development and prosperity. It goes to the credit of the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to have created space for the coalition Government at the highest level and won the goodwill of the Prime Minister and the UPA Chairperson. Nearly 64 developmental works were sanctioned for the State out of which 32 are reported to have been completed and the remaining are in a process of completion. Assurances of support given by the PM and Sonia Gandhi should help the State Government in formulating new schemes of uniform development in all the three regions of the State.

It is a historical day in the sense that it puts end to thousands of years of history of isolation of Kashmir owing to physical barriers. With the coming of railway, indeed a revolution is in offing that will change the economy, life style and also the frozen mindset of the people. It will open up vistas of vision and future prosperity on the people of landlocked valley. The sense of isolation or alienation will gradually disappear and a New Kashmir will be born in real sense of the term. As the top leadership in the country is committed to providing all possible support to the progress of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, the onus is now with the State Government and the people to make the best of this opportunity. A number of centrally sponsored projects remain incomplete. Many other projects launched by the State Government with its own resources or through grants and loans from the Central Government have become victims of mismanagement and incompetence. It is the State Government that has to do good homework. Just asking for and receiving more funds means little if these are not properly utilized within the time frame. There is still about an year left for the parliamentary and Assembly elections and the State Government should accelerate the pace of development, bring pending projects to completion, tighten accountability and streamline good governance. People should not be given opportunity of labeling the largesse of the central leadership as election oriented move. Achievements are appreciable only when they reach and touch on the common man. Government's attention has to be focused on some vital services like power, health, education, accountability etc. Never before were relations between the State and the Centre as cordial as these are today. As such the State Government should try to avail of this opportunity in building a new and prosperous State of Jammu and Kashmir.

In Kishtwar on the occasion of inauguration of 850 mw Rattle Hydroelectric Power Station, Prime Minister declared more relief to the State by increasing the power quota from Northern Grid by 150 mw to meet the shortage. Reacting to recent attack on an army vehicle the PM said the nation was united against terrorism and our democratic system was powerful enough to meet any threat. The Prime Minister and the UPA Chairperson, both have exuded praise for the State Government and the impression is carried that in all probability the two parties will develop understanding of strategy in conducting parliamentary and assembly elections in near future. However, at the same time he hinted at the need of better financial management in the State. In his power point presentation the Chief Minister reiterated various suggestions about internal security and external policy affecting Kashmir situation. The presentation was effective and naturally it should pave the way for concretizing relations between NC and Congress and chalking out future strategy of cooperation and collaboration. The Chief Minister had a right to claim some meaningful achievements during past few years of his Government like the holding of panchayat elections, passing several laws lending to good governance, bringing in certain measures aimed at reforming institutions etc. Prime Minister announced sanctioning of some major plans like electric transmission lines to Ladakh at a cost of over 1659 crore rupees besides many other projects.

The visit of the Prime Minister, the UPA Chairperson and the entire official entourage to Kishtwar also shows the interest Congress party is exhibiting in that region's development since the Chenab Valley had remained somewhat neglected during the past decades. The visit augurs well for expeditious and uniform development of all the three regions of the State. This, indeed, is an achievement of the coalition Government and the Chief Minister in person.

Where was the Govt of Uttarakhand?

It is time to start asking hard questions about the horrible tragedy in Uttarakhand. The question that has remained uppermost in my mind is why there has been no sign at all of civilian governance ever since the disaster began? I can understand why the government needed help from the army and air force to bring down people trapped by landslides and ravaged roads in the higher reaches of the Himalayas. And, I can go no further without saying first that every man who risked his life to save the lives of others deserves a Bharat Ratna. The helicopter crash that killed rescuers last week underlines, if there was any need for underlining, the life threatening risks that came with every sortie. To come back though to what I believe is a question we must start asking now is why have we seen no sign whatsoever of the elected representatives of the people of Uttarakhand in the past few days? Television reporters have managed to reach villages to which there were no roads left and have reported that there was no food and clean water left in these villages.

They have reported that disease has begun to spread because there have been dead bodies and the carcasses of animals left uncremated. They have sent pictures of half dehydrated children lying in small clinics and talked to doctors who admit that there could be epidemics in the hills. But, in almost not a single story that I have watched on television have I seen an MLA or MP interviewed. Where are they? Why are they not in those villages helping the people who elected them? If ordinary teashop owners can undertake the task of feeding 800 stranded pilgrims in a village near Uttarkashi surely every MLA can do the same and every MP can do more. Where is the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand? Where is the leader of the opposition? Why do we no sign of their involvement in

relief work? And, incidentally, since these are hills in which exist the most sacred pilgrimage spots of the Hindu faith where are the Hindutva types? Where are the owners of ashrams? The supposedly dedicated public servants of the RSS?

The real responsibility though has to be laid at the door of the Government of Uttarakhand because after those initial interviews to visiting television

the higher reaches and so, as most experts have pointed out, this was a disaster waiting to happen. And, it was only when it did that we noticed that the Uttarakhand government had not even the faintest trace of a contingency plan. Pilgrims come every year at this time.

The numbers have increased hugely in recent years so that according to one estimate more than 2 crore pilgrims and tourists

their eyes to what was happening either for reasons of greed or some other form of self-aggrandizement. When it comes to this it would be true to say that the BJP and Congress compete for first prize. If we needed proof that our two main political parties are bringing the wrong kind of people into politics it stares us in the face in the wreckage of Uttarakhand. For my part every time I turn on the television news I find myself asking why if reporters and cameramen carrying heavy equipment can walk seven hours to get to remote villages Uttarakhand's MLAs cannot do the same? Sonia Gandhi ordered every Congress MLA to donate a month's salary to the relief effort which in the end will be no more than tokenism.

Instead, why does she not order every MLA to go to his constituency and provide relief in villages where there is no food and water? Why should we need the Air Force to ferry firewood for mass cremations when it should be much simpler for local officials to make arrangements? But, then is this not exactly what always happens? In Mumbai after 26/11 the first people to vanish were local officials and political leaders. Not one of them organized even the smallest little tea stall or soup kitchen for those rescued from the city's hotels after several hours of terror. And, long ago in Bhopal when poisonous gas spread across the city in the dead of a cold, winter night the first people to flee was the elected Chief Minister and his staff. What makes the Uttarakhand situation more poignant is the manner in which soldiers and pilots from our armed forces have risked their own lives to save people while the civilian administration disappeared without a trace. It is time for all of us to start asking why this happened or it will continue to happen. Again and again and again.

ON THE SPOT TAVLEEN SINGH



anchors there has not even been any sign of the Chief Minister. This leads inevitably to the real reason why disaster struck so horribly: criminal negligence on the part of the governments that have ruled Uttarakhand. As someone who visits the state at regular intervals, because I have close family living there, I can say with firsthand knowledge that before my eyes I have seen how this criminal negligence works on the ground.

Having spent my school years in Dehra Dun I remember the towns of Uttarakhand as they used to be before corrupt politicians allowed reckless urbanization to ruin them and pave the way for the disaster that has now ruined so many lives. Reckless, unplanned urbanization was allowed in towns all the way up to the sacred temple towns up in

visit a state whose population is half that size. Why are permanent special arrangements not in place? Or even temporary arrangements of the kind that are made whenever there is a Kumbh Mela? Before these special arrangements it was routine for disasters of one kind or another to happen during the Kumbh. They rarely happen now.

Environmentalists have called what happened in Uttarakhand a 'manmade disaster'. They are right but for the wrong reasons. They would like all dams on the Ganga stopped and all development stopped as well. Not only is this not possible but it was the dams on the Ganga that have prevented the flash floods from flooding the whole of Uttarakhand. The reasons why the disaster is 'manmade' are because politicians have closed

Modi faces strong challenge ahead

Brij Bhardwaj

All those who had hoped for a joy ride and victory march for Narendra Modi after he was selected to head the campaign committee for coming elections to Lok Sabha are disappointed today and busy fighting those outside and trying to contain the damage within their own ranks caused by a revolt by no less a person than the party nominee for the top job of prime Minister in 2009 elections.

Mr Advani has withdrawn his resignation from party posts following intervention by RSS chief, but the opponents of Mr Modi have not been silenced. A new salvo was fired by Mr Sudheendra Kulkarni, who was an important person during the time when NDA ruled Delhi with Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Prime Minister. Mr Kulkarni has not only called Mr Modi an "authoritarian" but also criticised party chief for being "foxy" and as one who also has ambitions to be Prime Minister.

Mr Kulkarni criticised party members for humiliating and marginalising senior most leader of party, L.K Advani, who had built BJP as a major force and has the ability to contribute in future. According to Mr Kulkarni there is only one choice for opponents of Mr Modi to either oppose his induction openly or retire. Even Chief Minister of Goa Manohar Parikkar in an interview with a national daily called handling of

riots in Gujarat in 2002 as an administrative failure. This makes it clear that as the poll campaign picks up Mr Modi will be repeatedly asked to explain why Gujarat Government failed to check riots for so long in 2002 and will continue to haunt them as Mr Modi boasts of providing good governance, but has no explanation for this gross failure.

While the fight goes on to

that BJP prospects have been greatly affected in important State of Bihar.

The more important signal coming out of recent happenings after Mr Modi was made chief of election committee and more likely their candidate for Prime Ministership is that it would be difficult for BJP to pick up any allies in 2014 poll. At present they can depend only on two small players in

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contain the dissidents and present a united front in BJP its ability to get allies has been undermined with Janata Dal United second large party in BJP led National Democratic Alliance walking out with the result that a seventeen year old alliance which had won the poll twice in Bihar has broken down. Mr Nitish Kumar continues to rule Bihar as he has a majority in State Assembly with help of four Independents and four Congress members. The result is

Maharashtra and Punjab while in days of Mr Vajpayee they could boast of allies in double figures and had declared that the days of their isolation were over for good.

The writing on the wall for BJP leadership in 2013 is that it will have to fight a lonely battle in case they project Mr Modi as their choice for the top job. The alternative is also not very attractive as no other leader can enthuse the party cadre to the extent Mr Modi can do, but

there are serious doubts if he could help BJP win nearly 200 seats in Lok Sabha to make it attractive for fence sitters to join them after the poll. In any case much of gains made are being washed away with growing criticism of Mr Modi model of development which is described as elective instead of being inclusive. He also faces criticism for being a candidate of corporate world.

Mr Modi certainly enjoys the support of corporate world who feel that he could bring about economic turnaround through good governance. He also has the support of middle class and has strong support from social media. The biggest challenge facing Mr Modi and his supporters will be to overcome the impression that BJP is a house divided. In case they fail to bring around Mr Advani he is capable of inflicting serious damage on the BJP campaign.

The other handicap will be repeated talk of lack of governance in 2002 and anti-minority image of Mr Modi. It is much easier to polarize minority vote while majority Hindus are divided on caste basis particularly in States like U.P, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and others. There is also a question mark on the ability of Mr Modi to influence voters outside Gujarat. His record with respect of Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh has not been inspiring. (IFS)

Technology transfer for rural reconstruction

Dr. Banarsi Lal and S. Satbir Singh

Spectacular progress has been achieved in agricultural production in the country during the last five decades which has been globally recognized. We have achieved record production of 252 million tonnes of food grains in 2011-12 which was only 50 million tonnes in 1960. Now we have huge buffer stocks of food grains. In the oilseed sector, there has been a quantum jump ushering in the yellow revolution increasing production of oilseeds to 35.6 million tonnes in 2011-12. The dairy sector has witnessed a white revolution. In inland fisheries, the country has registered an unprecedented compound growth rate of 10% bringing in blue revolution. The growth in poultry production and horticulture sector is also appreciable. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) mandate is to plan, undertake, promote and coordinate education, research and its application in agriculture and allied sciences. Now the population of India is over one billion, the remarkable achievements made in green, white, yellow and blue revolution need to be increased. Now we need not only more food but also calorie availability and food security. There is need for reorientation of both research and extension to function in an appropriate manner.

Now the front line transfer of technology of the ICAR includes a network of farm science centres commonly called as Krishi Vigyan Kendra's (KVKs) in all over the country and also 8 trainers training centres. At present, the KVKs activities include skill training of the farmers by providing work experience following the principle of learning by doing in agriculture, on farm testing to identify the location specificity of technologies, in service training of extension personnel to update their knowledge in agriculture, layout front line demonstrations to establish production potentials on farmers' fields and provide feedback. Now almost every district of the country is having one KVK and establishment of two KVKs in each district is in pipeline. KVKs have served the society in general and the Indian agriculture in particular. The front line extension projects were designed by the Council to organise front line demonstrations by the scientists to show the production potential of new agricultural technologies on farmers' fields, testing the technologies for their location specificity, organizing extension activities in selected areas by the institutions, developing extension approaches and methodologies for field workers and getting feedback for improving research and extension.

ICAR has initiated many extension programmes over the years. The National Demonstration Project was initiated in 1965 to demonstrate the production potential of technology packages on major crops, to provide the researchers a firsthand knowledge of the problems faced by farmers in adoption of the technologies and to influence the extension system in the country by demonstrating the yield gaps and indicating the operational constraints. The Operational Project was initiated in 1975 to identify technological and socio-economic constraints and to formulate and implement the technologies modules on target group basis. ORPs broad objectives were to test the performance of new research results at farmers' fields under their existing resources, socio-economic and cultural conditions. The problems identified by the ORPs include salinity and sodicity due to improper water use in new irrigation systems and use of brackish sub-surface water, flood prone area; heavy pest incidence and environment degradation due to indiscriminate use of pesticides. Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes areas have the complex problems in terms of socio-economic constraints. Keeping this in view, ICAR started the programme on the basis of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes in 1979. The objectives of this project were to identify the technologies which were appropriate to existing socio-economic and agro-ecological situation and to establish link between the people and various developmental agencies.

The ORP on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes were an interface project with combination of both research methodologies and extension techniques. In 1979, as a part of Golden Jubilee Celebration, ICAR initiated Lab-to-Land Programme to transfer low cost technologies in agriculture and allied enterprises. The basic objective of this programme was to bring the scientists and farmers into close contact and to introduce appropriate technologies facilitating in diversification of labour use and creating supplementary sources of income in the fields of agriculture and allied enterprises. In 1992-93 all these projects were merged into KVK. In 1990-91, as part of Technology Mission on Oilseeds and Pulses, the Council took up front line demonstration on improved production technologies of oilseeds and pulses with a view to demonstrate its production potentials on the farmers plot and to organise need-based training for both farmers and subject matter specialists. In 1995 ICAR launched an innovative technology assessment and need-based refinement programme called as Institution Village Linkage Programme. It is based on participatory mode ensuring greater scientist-farmer linkage in bottom up approach. This programme is funded by World Bank under National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP).

In order to meet the changing needs, trained, equipped and committed to serve the society 'Technology Agents' are essential. Some KVKs of the country have already trained unemployed rural youths in vocational activities such as mushroom cultivation, sericulture, poultry production, nursery management etc. It is believed that integration of science with rural development activities would enhance the functional capability and required impact of extension activities. The KVK should not work as an independent agency rather other programmes in the district should be integrated to make it more useful and holistic. Present age is an age of information package and its dissemination is equally important. The establishment of Agricultural Technology Information Centre provides such mechanism beyond individual units of research institution.

All these initiatives will require a strong interface between the research organizations and development departments at the centre, state and regional levels. An inter-divisional effort between crop science and extension division of ICAR has led to formulation and implementation of a project on Technology Evaluation and Impact Assessment through 60 KVKs covering 17 crops. Such mechanism has provided the first hand knowledge through on-the-job handling of promising technologies in the pipeline at the final stages of their testing before release and feedback to researchers from extensionists and the farmers. The new initiatives at the state level to own these KVKs will further strengthen the transfer of technology mechanisms at the grassroots level. The farmers in the world have a tradition of experimentation and developing indigenous knowledge for solution to many of their agricultural problems in harmony with nature. The researchers, policy makers and development professionals began recognizing the value to such knowledge. The key features of such indigenous knowledge are reducing risks, affordability, availability, compatibility with current practices, visible results within a reasonable amount of time and overall satisfying multiple needs. Documentation of such indigenous knowledge resources will provide a base to the agricultural researchers and extensionists.

Least Literate State

Sir,

Refer news item 'JK least literate among Northern States' DE June 11. The news item seems unbelievable. One did not expect that a State like Jammu and Kashmir will figure among the least literate among northern States keeping in view the thrust the successive Governments had been laying on education. The State has the distinction of providing free education to students upto university level. Besides, it has been receiving liberal financial assistance from the Centre. Many schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhyas are in operation to promote the cause of education. If such is the status of education in J&K, it is quite dismaying. The census report 2011 reveals that the State has 76.8 percent literate male population and 56.4 percent of female population which is below national average both in males and females.

The report is an eye-opener for the Education authorities in the State and they should go for introspection in this matter.

Yours etc....
Vinod Kalsotra
Udhampur

Showcasing Ladakh

Sir,

The three day Sindhu Darshan festival which concluded recently is an excellent platform for promoting tourism in Ladakh region.

The festival has become popular among people since it was started in 1997 by the Union Tourism and Culture Ministry, with the aim of attracting more tourists to Ladakh region known for its cultural identity. Every year thousands of tourists especially from foreign countries flock this region to see its natural beauty.

The tourism industry is gradually picking up during the current season. It is presently the main stay of Ladakh economy. However, at the same time promotion of tourism industry should not be at the cost of ecology of the region. The ecology of the region is quite fragile, and any disturbance to it may wreak havoc to the region.

Therefore, it becomes quite important that the authorities strive for eco-tourism which takes care of both tourism and ecology. The protection and preservation of environment, forest wealth and water bodies should be one of the concerns of the stakeholders.

Yours etc....
Tashi Tundup
Leh

Evening clinics - The concept, the intentions and the flaws

Sir,

This is in reference to the Government proposal to start paid evening clinics at Associated hospitals of Govt. Medical Colleges of the State. People should not get swayed by this slogan as if Government is so keen to help the people. It is just not so. In fact it is to divert the attention from major issues which led to rumbling amongst the senior faculty. The authorities took a hasty decision of banning the practice of HODs without going into its implications? Moreover they also failed to fulfill the genuine demands of Faculty e.g.

* Pay parity of Medical Teachers vis-a-vis with their counterparts in neighbouring states (J&K Medical Faculty is lowest paid in the country)

* Enhancement of age of superannuation of faculty members as per MCI directive. Now a way out has been taken in the form of starting evening clinics to monetarily benefit the faculty. Medical Teachers Association has strongly opposed this move.

At the outset it is justified to charge (that too double the amount) from patients in the same hospital which is handling emergency 24x7 and also giving round the clock services free of cost with bare minimum staff available and lacking infrastructure in every sphere, whether it is doctors, nurses and nursing orderlies. Can we talk of providing such facilities to a class of people, when we don't have enough manpower to transport a sick patient for investigations or to the ward. Isn't it sickening to witness an old man/woman, without any assistance, pushing a trolley up

the ramp with his dear one on it. We don't have enough resident staff (shortage is upto 70-80 percent) to cater to the people. We have not been able to attract any senior resident - a specialist doctor for round the clock supervision - neither for GMC nor for super-speciality hospital. Doctors who sit for the interview in the morning, run away the very next moment when they come to know about meager emoluments of Rs.28,500/- per month - an amount far less than even an Ayush doctor getting in NRHM.

As per the evening clinics programme, a nurse, a technician and even a ward boy is to get a cut from the fees charged from patients. Isn't this step going to encourage malpractice by one and all in the hospitals and give a license to loot. All employees of Govt. Medical Colleges except the faculty belonging to clinical departments - who have been allowed practice in the larger interest of public - can not take any other job or resort to any means of generating money that too within hospital complex. The experiment of starting paid clinics was started at SKIMS Srinagar long back but it failed as it led to chaos, mismanagement and malpractice. Dr. M.S. Khuroo - former Director of SKIMS - has already written a detailed article in this regard - and suggested to desist from starting such a venture again. Shouldn't we focus our energy and resources to start the Super-Speciality Hospital for the larger public interest and allow the Col Chopra Nursing Home to run as per past practices with better facilities.

Yours etc....
Dr. Tariq Azaad,
President Medical Teachers Association, Jammu.