

Celebrations at CRPF commando's house

Son of the soil and a courageous CoBRA commando of the CRPF, constable Rakeshwar Singh Manhas was released by Naxal insurgents from their captivity. The happy news has not only given a respite and relief to the countrymen who otherwise are indignantly shocked at the martyrdom of our 22 brave hearts on account of three pronged treacherous attack in ambush on a patrol party of the CRPF by Naxals at Tekalgura - Junagadha village in Chattisgarh but has provided a tremendous reason of joy and relief to his family members amidst an element of uncertainty and even fears in respect of the safety of Rakeshwar Singh. In the attack by the heavily armed Naxals, thirty jawans too had been injured besides in search operations, Rakeshwar Singh was found missing. For the release of the constable, the insurgents had laid the condition of a mediator by the Government which was done hence the release without any delay. Safe release of the constable, therefore, has turned the otherwise gloomy and apprehensive family members into a sort of festivities and celebrating the event. Not only the family members, relatives of the family and neighbours were seen rejoicing but for that matter, everyone would go in for jubilation for getting our jawan back, safe and unharmed.

The family members who not only were increasingly worried and even had protested for his early release, perhaps nursing the notion that the Government was not doing more for his release, however, have thanked the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and the media. The issue is not what strategy was employed by the Government in pressing for the release of the jawan but the ultimate results bearing fruits in getting our brave heart released from the ruthless and heavily motivated Naxals so as to join his anguished and worrying family members, is all important and a matter of great relief and satisfaction. We also note that the Union Home Minister enquired of the released jawan about his welfare especially on account of his six days captivity and talked personally to him too.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the release of our jawan from the treacherously cold blooded and stone hearted Naxals was no easy and smooth job as these ultras, who do not hesitate to kill their own country's security persons for no reason or for any cause which they and their some over ground supporters especially from the intelligentsia may hard try to justify, have all along proved elusive in their aim, intent and purpose, thus continuing with their insurgency though having been largely contained over the years. They, on the one hand feign to complain of social injustice and inequality but on the other, are creating every type of impediments in the process of development and opening of schools, hospitals, constructing railway stations, building roads and electrifying villages as all these developmental measures are antidote to their falsehood and the cause of being trigger happy. It is not that good sense is not prevailing in most of them as they keep on surrendering and joining the mainstream intermittently while most of them are getting killed in encounters but fresh recruitments and getting lethal and sophisticated arms are keeping them still very organised in deep jungles, far off villages, ravines and the like.

No sympathy for or any type of negotiations with them can be there as their demands, if any, are neither political nor economic and not even social but they tame and feed a frenzy and a commitment towards hard core extreme communist ideology coupled with Maoist fascism and, therefore, not in the well established and adopted democratic system of the country where people choose their own Government and decide how to run affairs and develop areas even at and from gross root levels. More concerted efforts, as the Home Minister has given indications, were bound to give good results in fighting them to surrender and live a normal life or get liquidated in encounters so that this menace is got rid of sooner the better.

Problems faced by Hot Mix Plant Owners

Owners of Hot Mix Plants in Jammu and Kashmir have raised certain demands having a direct bearing on their working and have appealed to the Government to be facilitator like, realistic and responsive to the difficulties faced by them in respect of the new order about construction material as a result of which they do not get the required material at all. Whatever hurdles, as alleged by the President of their Association, in the way of execution of their works faced by them, need to be genuinely removed.

On the one hand, there is uncontrolled loot of the river mineral wealth by unscrupulous people and mafia, on the other hand stone quarrying from populated and residential areas troubling the people around and other reasons being behind the Government coming out with certain regulations, were necessarily going to have some minor short term difficulties in matters of availability of the requisite material but the Government needs to look into what best could be done to resolve the issues raised by the owners of Hot Mix Plants. Availability of the material like sand, bajri, stones and at reasonable prices should be the points needed to be attended to by the Government. The other problem, that of payment of their pending bills from the Government too need to be expedited, on merits.

Emperor Lalitaditya Muktapida of Kashmir

Autar Mota

Lalitaditya Muktapida (c. 724 CE-760 CE) was a powerful Kayastha ruler of the Karkota dynasty of Kashmir. Kalhana, the 12th century chronicler, calls him universal monarch or the conqueror of the world, crediting him with far-reaching conquests from Central Asia to shores of Arabian sea in India. According to Kalhana, Lalitaditya defeated King Yashovarman of Kannauj, and then marched to eastern and southern parts of India. Art historian, Hermann Goetz writes that Lalitaditya's kingdom stretched from the Hindu Kush mountains in modern day Afghanistan to Assam, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and parts of Central India and even to some parts of southern India. Lalitaditya went up to the shores of the Caspian sea and crossed Pamirs. He marched to Tibet and China. Wherever he went, he proved victorious.

The art historian, Hermann Goetz writes:- "Lalitaditya had to make use of artists from wherever he could find them, and in an empire extending from Bengal to the borders of Arab caliphate and from Central India to the borders of China proper, these artists had needs to be of many nations and traditions. This possibly was the reason behind heterogeneous styles and elements in Kashmiri art assimilating elements of Gandharan, Gupta, Chinese, and even Syrian-Byzantine origin."

Lalitaditya is now accepted as the most powerful king of his dynasty. He built the largest empire after Ashoka. He is believed to have driven away the Arabs from north-western India and conquered Tokharistan (North Hindukush) to control the international trade routes from Tokharistan to China by repeatedly defeating the then powerful Tibet. He checkmated China with his diplomacy. A conqueror, builder, lover of fine arts, a tolerant king who commissioned a number of shrines in Kashmir, including the now-ruined Martand Sun Temple. He also established several towns, including a new capital at Parihasapura. He constructed massive edifices which have challenged the vagaries of time and stand out even today.

MARTAND SUN TEMPLE

King Lalitaditya built the Martand Sun Temple in Kashmir on the plateau near Mattan town in South Kashmir. The location of the temple proves the skill and expertise of Kashmiri artisans of the period. It is said that from this temple, one could see the entire Lidder valley and the Shikhar of the demolished Vijayeshwara Shrine near the present-day Bijbihara town. The Martand Sun Temple is enclosed in a courtyard of columns and arches forming the covered passage all round it. The temple has 84 carved pillars many of which lie broken. Exquisite images carved on stones were used in the construction of this imposing Sun Temple. King Lalitaditya was a sun worshipper and a follower of the Vaishnava cult devoted to the worship of Keshva Vishnu. Accordingly, many three-faced Vishnu and some Chaturbhuj Vishnu figures were prominently carved on the walls of this temple. Most of these images are disfigured due to neglect and weathering. A central water tank with narrow water channels can be seen on the ground to this day. In the right panel of the eastern wall of the ante-chamber of this temple, an image of Aruna (sun god) carved elegantly was faintly visible when I saw it in 1998.

PARIHASAPURA

Lalitaditya founded the township of Parihasapura on a plateau near Srinagar city. This township had many temples with images of Vishnu, Shiva, and Buddha. According to the verses, 136 to 216 from Taranga fourth of Kalhana's Rajatarangini (R. S. Pandit's translation), the temples in this township complex had images of Parihaskesha, Mukta Keshwa, and Goverdhanadhara all done in shining silver and gold with a Garuda (an emblem of Vishnu). Further, Verses 201 and 202 from the fourth Taranga of Kalhana's Rajatarangini explicitly mention that 84000 Tolas of gold were used for the statue of Mukta Keshwa and an equal silver by weight was used for the statue of Parihaskesha. The statue of Goverdhanadhara was also cast in pure silver. The flattened walls and ruins of the Raj Vihara and the Buddhist Chaitya can be still identified on the ground.

Kalhana writes that apart from Parihasapura,

Lalitaditya established many cities and towns. These could be listed as under:-

1. Sunishchita-pura.
2. Darpita-pura.
3. Phala-pura.
4. Parnotsa.
5. Lokapunya.

M. A. Stein has identified this place with near present-day Shadipura town in Kashmir.

M. A. Stein has identified this place as present-day Poonch town.

M. A. Stein has identified this place as present-day Lokabhavanta town in the Kashmir valley.

Apart from this, Lalitaditya also built the Muktasvamin shrine at Hushkapura (present-day Ushkur). The shrine had many idols of Vishnu made of gold and silver. He also built a large Vihara with Stupa at Hushkapura (present day Ushkur). The remains of this Stupa and Shiva shrine have also been discovered by archaeologists.

Lalitaditya's queen, Kamalavati established Kamalhatta where she built a shrine that had idols of Kamala-Keshava. Kalhana mentions that Lalitaditya also built the present temple structures at Wanganth and made huge offerings at the shrine. In Kashmir, some more ancient shrines, temples and Viharas are also believed to have been built during the rule of Lalitaditya Muktapida.

LALITADITYA IN CHACHNAMA OF SINDH

Chach-nama also known as the Fateh-nama Sindh (story of the conquest of Sindh), and in Arabic as Tareekh al-Hind wa a's-Sind (History of India and Sindh) is one of the main sources for the history of Sindh in the seventh to eighth centuries C.E. Written in Arabic and later translated into Persian, the Chach-nama takes its name from Raja Chach of Sindh, whose son Raja Dahir stood against the Arabs under Mohammad bin Qasim. Chach-nama narrates the Arab incursions into Sindh of the 7th-8th centuries A.D. It chronicles the Chacha Dynasty's period up to the Arab conquest of Sindh by Muhammad bin Qasim in 8th century A.D. A letter written by Raja Dahir of Sindh finds a place in Chach-nama. There is a passage in this letter that makes mention of King Lalitaditya of Kashmir. The particular passage reads this:-

"If I had sent against you the King of Kashmir on whose royal threshold the other rulers of Hind had placed their heads, who sways the whole of Hind, even the countries of Makran and Turan, whose chains a great many noblemen and grandees have willingly placed on their knees."

The king of Kashmir referred to here is none other than Lalitaditya.

In her book 'The Penguin History of Early India', Romila Thapar writes this:-

"Kashmir had come into prominence with Lalitaditya of the Karkota dynasty in the eighth century, and through gradual expansion and conquest it had come to control part of north-western India and the Punjab. Lalitaditya, ruling Kashmir in the eighth century, took his armies briefly into the Ganges Plain, and also stopped Arabs forces from overrunning the Punjab."

Unfortunately, history books have ignored Kashmir's glorious emperor Lalitaditya Muktapida. He does not find proper and much-deserved space in our history books. Lalitaditya brought many skilled artisans, artists, philosophers and scholars to Kashmir wherever he could find them. The ancestors of Abhinavagupta, a renowned philosopher and Shaivacharya, came to Kashmir at the invitation of this illustrious king. Al-Biruni mentions a Kashmiri King Muttai having defeated Momin, the governor of Bukhara. Muttai is most probably Lalitaditya Muktapida. Muttai appears to be the Apabhramsha form of the word "Muktapida". I end this brief write up on Lalitaditya with lines from the poem 'History' composed by well known Bulgarian poet, Nikola Vaptsarov. I quote some lines from the poem:-

"History, will you mention us in your faded scroll?"

For the hardship and affliction we do not seek rewards, nor do we want our pictures in the calendar of years. Just tell our story simply to those we shall not see, tell those who will replace us - We fought courageously."

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J&K needs cement concrete roads

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

Few years back while traveling around Vidhar region of Maharashtra I saw concrete roads being constructed in many districts especially in Nagpur division. I remember around year 2000 when I was a college student and happened to go to Mumbai, I saw cement concrete being used in road construction. Initially I could not believe that the construction workers were using cement concrete for road construction but after visualizing it myself on famous Cadel Road, it made me believe that concrete material can be used for road construction as well. For more than 20 years a question would always come into my mind why the Jammu & Kashmir Government was not using cement concrete for road construction as the traditional Bitumen roads get damaged every year during winter snowfall with sub-zero temperature?

During last summer a 9 1/2 kms road stretch from Bonyar to Goggee Pathri via Bonen Kutbal in Surasyar block of district Budgam was constructed under PMGSY. Locals told me it was a Rs 14 crore project. I could not cross check this as PMGSY J&K has no official website nor are DPR's available on the respective district websites. People were overwhelmed when they saw Bitumen layers being spread on this village road and road roller leveling the same. Blacktopping of a road surface was happening for the first time on this road. People enjoyed the ride on this road

Road landscape

It has now become a trend to blacktop road surfaces without even scarifying the surface. This has destroyed the road landscape in almost all the areas of Srinagar and major towns. The boundary walls around residential houses located on main roads look short and shabby now as continuous bitumen layers have elevated most of the road surfaces. Scarifying is breaking up hard or compacted materials to create enough space for material to settle down. Just placing Bitumen filling material on a damaged road surface to fill the ruts and potholes is a temporary fix. The bitumen material does not bind in the ruts and potholes. This only increases the height of the road and makes the surrounding

landscape shabby. The proper way to reshape the damaged road is to scarify the surface to the depth of the depressions. This breaks up all the compacted surrounding surface materials. After scarifying the material, the Bitumen can settle down properly. Cement concrete roads cannot be built at all unless the road surface is not scarified 2 to 3 feet deep. Thus

Advantages

Concrete roads have a long service life which can last between 35 to 40 years whereas roads made up of Bitumen last for around 10 years in areas with no snowfall, but in a place like Kashmir or Ladakh where the temperature drops down to sub-zero and there is heavy snowfall as well the roads get damaged within 2 to 3 years

less fuel consumption by the vehicle operating on a concrete road leads to little pollution as well. Bitumen is made from imported petroleum products which is the non-renewable source of energy. If we constantly use these products a day will come when these natural resources will be finished. On contrary to this concrete is produced from abundantly available limestone. Cement factories also lead to air pollution, but in comparison researchers say that concrete material is still better than bitumen.

Involve Hot-mix plant owners

On the basis of initial cost of pavement the Concrete Roads are reported to be around 15 to 16% costlier than the Bituminous Roads, but on life cycle cost basis the cement concrete roads, due to their long life of 35 to 40 years and better durability, the concrete roads are estimated to be around 25-30% cheaper when compared with Bitumen roads. On the long term basis cement concrete roads are actually more economical. To compensate the hot-mix plant owners who have invested a lot in setting up of these plants in J&K, the Government must involve them in construction of cement concrete roads so that their economic interests are also safe-

guarded.

Gadkari on concrete roads

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari in 2017 said all the roads in the country would be converted into cement-concrete to ensure their stability and durability. During a function he had said that cement concrete roads built 20 years ago in Mumbai are still in good shape but some political leaders, bureaucrats and contractors were against concrete roads. Gadkari said that cement concrete roads would last for 200 years. The minister was speaking while inaugurating Prawnas 2017-India International Bus and Car Travel Show in Mumbai on July 29th 2017. In fact Gadkari has ensured construction of concrete roads in nook and corner of Nagpur as he seems to be the biggest proponent of these roads.

Conclusion

This season's harsh winter taught us many lessons. Most of our road surfaces in Kashmir and even in many places in Jammu division have been damaged. Even roads blacktopped last summer have been damaged. Huge waterlogging and potholes can be seen everywhere. Jammu & Srinagar cities are messed up due to bad roads. The Government without wasting any time must start construction of cement concrete roads in J&K so that taxpayer's money is not wasted every year on the bitumen roads.

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concrete roads have this advantage. In J&K we can restore the lost glory of roads and surrounding landscape if concrete road projects are taken up. On pilot basis two stretches have been constructed in Srinagar from Iqbal park area to Rambagh bridge and around Pir Bagh area near Police Headquarters. I would suggest the Government take up more such projects next financial year in Jammu, Srinagar and other districts.

During the service life concrete roads do not require frequent repairs or patching work like macadamized roads. The vehicles that run over a concrete road, consumes 15-20 per cent less fuel as compared to roads made of asphalt-bitumen. This is because of the fact that a concrete road does not get deflected under the wheels of loaded heavy vehicles. During the processing of bitumen lots of toxic gases are emitted from these plants and subsequent

long life of 35 to 40 years and better durability, the concrete roads are estimated to be around 25-30% cheaper when compared with Bitumen roads. On the long term basis cement concrete roads are actually more economical. To compensate the hot-mix plant owners who have invested a lot in setting up of these plants in J&K, the Government must involve them in construction of cement concrete roads so that their economic interests are also safe-

Empowering Technocrats in Agriculture

C M Sharma

All over the world, people in respective departments are recruited at the bottom of the ladder. From there they earn their promotions up to the top in the hierarchy. N.C. Asthana, a retired IPS officer, who had been the Director General of Police (DGP) Kerala and a long-time ADG CRPF and BSF, has mentioned in an article published by The Wire in February 2020, that "The present New York Police Department Commissioner, Dermot F. Shea, had joined the police as a patrolman (that is, at the bottom of the ladder) in 1991. He became a sergeant in 1995, a lieutenant in 1999, a captain in 2003, a deputy inspector in 2008, an inspector in 2010, a deputy chief in 2013, the deputy commissioner of operations in 2014, the designated chief of crime control strategies in 2017, the chief of detectives in 2018 and the New York City police commissioner in December 2019."

We may compare the system with the one prevailing in various technical departments of our own Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir where, quite often, the officers from the 'elite' civil services possessing entirely unrelated qualification with lesser years of service experience are appointed as HoDs over the heads of well qualified and highly experienced technocrats in respective fields/cadres.

Rakesh Mohan, one of the lateral entrants into Government in the 1980s, while giving ace to technocracy, credits the then technocrats in the bureaucracy like L.K. Jha for being the catalysts within the government for economic reforms. He cites long serving economic advisors in the Gov-

ernment of India like I.G. Patel, Bimal Jalan, Dr. Man Mohan Singh, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Kaushik Basu, Raghuram Rajan, Arvind Panagariya and Arvind Subramanian who were lateral hires and brought in new ideas into the system.

Sushma Ramachandran, a senior journalist, advocates for reforms in human resource management by greater induction of domain experts into specialised areas of governance including the public sector. She says, "It would make sense to have technocrats heading ministries like power, telecom, coal and petroleum. Rather than generalist IAS officers who take time to learn the subject and then move on after a few years to another sector in fact, such ministries should be declared off-limits to the generalist officers." She asserts, "... domain experts in agriculture and rural development need to be placed in positions of authority so that work in these sectors can be carried out efficiently." Sushma Ramachandran is emphatic that the recruitment for the government needs to focus on those who have the required skills to facilitate development and enable a faster pace of growth, not just for the elite but for the common man."

The e-paper mint commented on the induction of former Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar into the Union Cabinet in 2019 as the Minister for External Affairs as, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has overturned perceptions of being anti-technocracy. For a Government that has been trying to get various domain experts into the ranks of the bureaucracy, this signals an emphasis on expertise as a criterion over the usual considerations."

The Corporate Finance Institute (CFI) in a comprehensive note on technocracy has revealed

that in most Governments worldwide, technocrats are selected to head key departments that require specialized skills and experts.

It is a matter of satisfaction that in both the divisions of Jammu and Kashmir, the UT Government of J&K has recently appointed technocrats only to head the Directorates of Agriculture. The move has been wholeheartedly hailed by a cross section of the UT population, particularly the farmers and the employees. It is unpropitious to note however that there are still the departments of Animal Husbandry, Horticulture, Floriculture, and many others which have non-technical Directors as HoDs.

The governments in the erstwhile J&K State generally demonstrated little seriousness in Agriculture and Allied sectors by allowing the human resources issues of the gazetted cadre to multiply and let the seniority issues to linger on over the years. Appointments and promotions to the vacant posts in Agriculture were made on ad-hoc and purely temporary basis. The mandatory annual finalization of seniority lists and granting of regular promotions to over a thousand of eligible gazetted officers at different levels, in accordance with the recommendations of the Departmental Promotion Committees/Public Service Commission, has remained hanging in balance for the last more than three decades; for one reason or the other. The Government has been appointing Heads of Departments in Agriculture, sometimes from amongst the bureaucrats and at other times from amongst the technocrats as per convenience, with no concrete HRD policy. Is there anything which can't be resolved if the government resolves?

Good times however seem to have arrived for Agriculture Production & Farmer's Welfare Department now. During the past few months, the current dispensation headed by the Lt. Governor, Shri Manoj Sinha, his Advisor (Agriculture Production & Farmer's Welfare, Horticulture, etc.), Shri Farooq Khan and the incumbent Principal Secretary (Agriculture Production & Farmer's Welfare, Horticulture, etc.), Shri Navin Choudhary appears to have finally embarked on the path of empowering technocrats. The post of Agriculture Director has been assigned to agriculture technocrats in both the divisions. The Principal Secretary on several occasions has expressed his intent to settle the HRD issues of Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Department at the earliest. Hopes have naturally grown that henceforth only the technocrats will head their technical domains.

Bureaucracy, undoubtedly at the higher echelons of power, has a clear mandate to ensure that rule of law is fully adhered to by executing departments. It must therefore see that genuine grievances of technocrats as well as the target population are mitigated expeditiously; development schemes and programmes are effectively supervised and monitored; requisite follow up action is taken in time and placement of human resource; and assignment of tasks at different levels is appropriate. An adherence to discipline will galvanize the entire administrative set up and lead to effective and enthusiastic discharge of responsibilities by the respective technocrats and bureaucrats for welfare of all the stakeholders.

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(The views expressed by the authors are their personal)