

Implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission, SBM-G

Why are various flagship schemes of the Union Ministries not implemented satisfactorily in the twin UTs of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh when the same are funded by the Central Government , should be a cause of concern to the administration. The Standing Committee on Water Resources comprising 31 Members of Parliament has found and accordingly filed in its report unsatisfactory performance for implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and Swacch Bharat Mission - Gramin (SBM-G) in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh UTs. It speaks volumes about total recklessness at all levels responsible for implementation process that under JJM scheme as on date, only two districts of Jammu and Kashmir have become "Har Ghar Jal" districts. Are targets under the schemes set and seriously advised to be met and if not , how can the performance of implementation be assessed? If on the other hand , targets are duly fixed and expected to be fulfilled within specific timeline , why accountability is not fixed for failure in achieving such targets? Ordinarily , that should be the type of the work culture in the Government departments.

We have these schemes with noble and cherished aims to progressively change for the better the face of rural landscape whereby every rural household is to have assured potable water supply through taps reaching right from the supply lines. The aim of achieving open defecation free villages under the Swacch Bharat Mission -Gramin (SBM-G) scheme by improving the overall cleanliness through solid and liquid waste management activities is such a cause where concerted and sincere efforts are needed to be invested but in this area too instead of the Parliamentary Panel lauding the efforts of the UTs , unsatisfactory levels of implementation have been observed , reports on which have been tabled in the Parliament. Timelines set for both the Union Territories for achieving set targets under these two schemes must be arranged by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation of the Jal Shakti Ministry is what the Parliamentary Panel has desired while painting a dismal picture about overall performance in implementation process in both these schemes in respect of both the UTs.

In the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, usually the immediate and the ultimate alibi for poor or under performance of works on the flagship projects had routinely been 'paucity of funds' and now that two UTs are carved out , it is quite astonishing that funds allotted and provided by the Central Government are "poorly utilized" -is what the Standing Committee has observed. It is unbelievable that in progressive UT like Jammu and Kashmir, large number of schools and Anganwari Centres are still without piped water supply. Are authorities of the concerned departments so much "busy" as not to pay visits occasionally to such centres to take stock of the position of at least about the piped water supply which they are entitled to ? Again, the ratio of allotment of funds to releasing the same on the two important flagship schemes is dismal . Is the paucity of the meagre marginal share to be borne by the UT as "state share" to total cost of implementation of the schemes under reference, coming in the way to totally render such projects to virtual non entity and keep them in virtual dormancy?

The need to bring about a perceptible improvement in implementation process needs to be made not only known but felt too by the concerned authorities. More of field visits by field personnel and taking stock of the position on the spot could prove of immense help to stem the rot in the system which is laden with working lethargy. The areas of gross shortcomings as pointed out by the Standing Committee need to be attended to on priority and we reiterate that unless targets oriented approach is adopted and accountability for failure to meet those targets is fixed , much improvement could not be expected and such unsatisfactory performance reports would continue to be there perhaps like a routine.

Jamboo Zoo at Nagrota

There are, unfortunately, lesser places of amusement, entertainment and interest in Jammu city especially for children and even adults and if one is undertaken to be erected, lot of time is taken to complete it. Ropeway trolley- cable car project, Tawi Artificial Lake project, Tawi Riverfront project on Sabarmati pattern and the like are examples to bring home the point. However, the news about the much awaited Jambu Zoo at Nagrota expected to be completed by November this year and thrown open to public is going to fill the peculiar void which in its absence was increasingly felt.

A zoo in stricter sense is never treated as being complete because of the circle of housing the wild and adding to their number and even bartering them with different species etc from outside the UT continues on a regular basis. However, we expect that the quality and the set standards which a Zoo must be possessing shall all be ensured by the concerned department and reports that the work presently going on in "building " the zoo being on international standards deserves all encouragement .

Facilities for visiting men, women and children must be of equal standards whether pertaining to ticketing , cafeteria, trekking , public utilities etc which all are reportedly going to be outsourced for better performance while the main Zoo shall be looked after and managed by the J&K Wildlife Department. Zipline swings, battery operated cycles and small vehicles to move around the area of the zoo would definitely be of much amusement and interest otherwise required as added facilities. Let us all wait for the 'special' day in November 2021.

Harsha Kakar

The QUAD leaders, post their meeting last Friday, published an opinion piece in the Washington Post. It stated, 'we are striving to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is accessible and dynamic, governed by international law and bedrock principles such as freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of disputes, and that all countries are able to make their own political choices, free from coercion.'The statement released after the meeting read, 'We reaffirm our strong support for ASEAN's unity and centrality as well as the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific. Full of potential, the Quad looks forward to the future; it seeks to uphold peace and prosperity and strengthen democratic resilience, based on universal values.' The QUAD finally arrived on the global stage.

PM Modi, in his opening remarks stated, 'We are united by our democratic values and our commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. Our agenda today, covering areas of vaccines, climate change and emerging technologies make the QUAD a force for global good.' Similar views were echoed by other leaders. Indo-Pacific and ASEAN were referred to at regular intervals. The message was clear and unambiguous. The QUAD was pushing back against China in Asia.

This informal grouping of like-minded democratic nations had finally received directions

and were now seeking to work towards a common goal, China.Officially, the message was more than just China. As the US NSA, Jake Sullivan, stated after the summit, 'The four leaders did discuss the challenge posed by China, and they made clear that none of them have any illusions about China, but today was not fundamentally about China.'

Every member of the QUAD has some or the other issue with China. The India-China border standoff continues with no end in sight while Japan and China face territorial disputes over Japanese controlled Senkaku Islands, now being claimed by China. Australia and the US have trade disputes with China as also the US sees China as a threat to its power. While the statement discussed multiple issues, seeking to take the fight into spheres of Chinese domination, the crux was pushing back.

For China, the message was that the four major democracies and powers in the region are joining hands, formally at the apex level, to challenge its writ. The challenge would come in every sphere, diplomacy, technology, vaccine diplomacy and military. The Chinese reaction to the summit began even before it commenced. Apart from commenting on the summit, It chose to target India, mainly because India is also a member of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India,

QUAD is moving forward

China and South Africa), SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), and Russia-India-China (RIC) groupings with China.



The Chinese foreign office spokesperson, Zhao Lijian, stated a day before the QUAD summit that exchanges and cooperation between nations should contribute to mutual understanding and trust among nations, rather than targeting a third party or damaging the interest of a third party. He stated, 'We hope that relevant countries uphold the principles of openness, inclusiveness and win-win results and refrain from pursuing exclusive blocs and do things that are conducive to regional peace, stability and prosperity.'

The Global Times aimed its guns directly at India, when in an article it stated, 'It seems India has failed to understand China's goodwill. India takes all support from China for granted. It is, in fact, carrying out a kind

of strategic blackmail against China.' It further stated, 'BRICS and the SCO have fallen into stagnation since the Doklam standoff in 2017... India has attached more importance to Quad and is very sure about its core demands of the US' Indo-Pacific Strategy-to counterbalance, contain and deter China.' It also forewarned that India is being exploited by the US. Comments by the Global Times are illogical as India's relations with all countries have remained on an even key or enhanced, except with China, which by its aggression, has pushed relations back.

The QUAD summit announced its intention of challenging Chinese domination in the ASEAN region, where almost all nations are involved in a dispute with China and an area which China considers as its backyard. Unless nations from ASEAN join the QUAD initiative, China cannot be pushed back. Most ASEAN

nations considered the QUAD as an organization seeking to enhance tensions in the region, which could impact their security and development. Hence, a sole military grouping was not the solution.

Therefore, the summit considered additional aspects including vaccine diplomacy, climate change and emerging technologies. India would produce one billion vaccines, funded by US and Japan and distributed to ASEAN, Pacific and Indian island nations.This was the soft power of QUAD, on display for the first time, seeking to win over nations in the region from China. This would challenge Chinese vaccine diplomacy in the region.

The second initiative announced at the summit was concentration on emerging technologies. This is also directly aimed at countering Chinese superiority. A study group being created for this would concentrate on cooperation on telecommunications deployment, diversification of equipment suppliers, and developing future telecommunication technologies through close cooperation with private sectors of the four countries.In short, the aim is to counter Chinese monopoly in this field and provide alternatives to Chinese equipment and technology, which have resulted in many nations, including all members of QUAD facing

Chinese launched cyberattacks. The QUAD, as it currently stands has not proved to be an effective organization as its concentration was solely on military aspects, in a region, dominated by China. It had sought to counter China in the Indo-Pacific but failed to draw in nations from the region into its fold. Even the Philippines and South Korea, both US allies, have stayed away from actively supporting the grouping. Hence, enlarging the scope from its current military perspective and raising interaction levels to that of national leaders, the message has gone strong and clear that the group means business and would support nations of the region in their disagreements with China.

India, by attending this summit, has announced its intentions of being an active member of the US camp and willing to join a coalition seeking to challenge China in its backyard. India's participation will impact its relations with China and possibly slow down the disengagement process in Ladakh, though not enhance security concerns.

Ultimately, decisions taken in the summit must be implemented at the earliest to convey to ASEAN nations that the QUAD is not aimed at enhancing tensions in the region but to provide them support against Chinese aggressiveness. The message to the globe is that the QUAD has finally got directions, an aim and is here to stay.

(The author is Major General (Retd) feedbackexcelsior@gmail.com)

Movement to restore abandoned lakes

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

When Manzoor Ahmad Wangnoo a noted Kashmiri businessman and Chairman of Nigeen Lake Conservation Organization (NLCO) was asked during a TV show few months back to give his concluding remarks within 20 seconds on how to conserve Kashmir's water-bodies especially lakes ,he uttered a word "Ehsaas" . In his concluding remarks Manzoor Wangnoo said unless people have concern and sensibility towards protection and conservation of Kashmir's water-bodies, they can't at all be restored ? The very next day Mr Wangnoo visited Khushaal Sar and Gilsar lakes in Nowshera area of Srinagar's old city . These two small lakes which were once known for its best fish and lotus stems (nadru) are now on the verge of death. Mr Wangnoo was infuriated to see the condition of the water-body as it has almost been choked now with trash , silt and other kinds of solid and liquid waste.

"I felt depressed to see the condition of this lake after visiting the site. I could only see trash, plastic waste and filth everywhere. Immediately I went to meet Divisional Commissioner Kashmir to seek his cooperation so that I would initiate Gilsar clean up drive under Mission Ehsaas. Divisional Commissioner gave me his full support and came personally to the site along with other officers. " said Manzoor Wangnoo

Whose baby is Khushaal Sar and Gilsar ?

Khushaal Sar and Gilsar have now turned into a cesspit. Calling it a sar is an insult to this name (sar) which means a lake. Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LWDA) which is responsible to look after lakes and waterways of Srinagar has abandoned Khushaal Sar and Gilsar. Similarly Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) and Urban Environmental Engineering Department (UEED) too have not taken steps to restore these lakes. In the recent past some work was done in 2013 but the muck and trash excavated was dumped

on its eastern shore which should have been taken out. Locals told me that whenever anybody around the Khushaal Sar or Gilsar tries to undertake any sort of construction , the officials of LWDA are the first to come to the spot. The intention of the officials is not to stop the illegal construction or ensuring protection of Gilsar or Khushal sar but to extort money from the persons undertaking construction of shops , houses etc

" The officials of LWDA come and issue notices when people start illegal construction. In many cases they demand bribes. People who have encroached the Gilsar and Khushaal Sar have bribed LWDA , SMC and Revenue department officials during the last 30 years or more. There are encroachments happening just behind Zadibal Police station , but who cares ? Had the illegal constructions not taken place around these water-bodies (sar's) they would not have been in such a pathetic condition" said Fayaz Ahmad while interacting with me

When people went to Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LWDA) in the past in connection with cleaning up of Khushaal sar or Gilsar, the officers avoided them by saying the area does not come under their jurisdiction. If the area is not under the jurisdiction of LWDA then why do they intervene when illegal constructions come up in the area ? Had LWDA , Revenue Department or even SMC been proactive in stopping these illegal constructions , it would have been appreciated but this hasn't happened at all. Gilsar and Khushaal sar have been choked from its eastern and western shores and above all the trash and solid and liquid waste has destroyed it completely. Let the Government make it public which public authority is responsible for upkeep of Khushaal sar , Gilsar and other water bodies (lakes) of Srinagar which have been completely abandoned.

Lakes filled with trash and muck

Large areas of Khushaal Sar and Gilsar lakes have been filled with muck, silt and plastic trash. There is a land mafia working in the area in league with

Government officials. They need to be taken to task. Several drains from adjoining areas empty into these lakes . This liquid waste with a lot of silt and filth is also destroying the water-body. Until the mid-1990's Khushaal Sar and Gilsar were in better shape but it became a victim of corruption and human greed. Not only solid or liquid waste can be seen in abundance in these lakes but even the animal carcasses are seen floating here. The water of these twin lakes is not only unfit for human consumption but even this cannot be used for animals now. The chemical parameters of the lake water have far exceeded the permissible levels more than a decade back. This has snatched the livelihood of local fishermen as well as the population of fish has almost perished in the area.

"Many have suffered from several ailments like Pyrexia, Ascariasis, liver and lung ailments plus other gastro-intestinal diseases in the past. This continues even now. The pungent smell emitting from the lake is increasing day by day due to increased methane concentration. The pollution load as a result of flushing of Dal Lake into Khushaal Sar and Gilsar via Nallah Amir Khan has not only deteriorated the water quality of all the lake but has posed a serious threat to the people dependent on their waters" said Dr M R D Kudangar a noted Limnologist of Kashmir. Most of the trash goes into Gilsar via Amir Khan nallah. The residents of Nallabal and Batakhpura also dump trash in the nallah. SMC needs to provide them with a facility of door to door collection of household waste.

Mission Ehsaas's sustainability

Being a welfare state it is the responsibility of the Government to clean up Khushaal sar , Gilsar and other lakes , canals , rivers and streams . We must appreciate good Samaritans like Manzoor Wangnoo and his team having volunteered to clean Khushaal Sar and Gilsar lakes . I am hopeful that Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) under the leadership of a young and energetic Commissioner will devise a mechanism

to retrieve and rescue these twin lakes. A dedicated dredger should be put into place that will clean the lake on a weekly basis.

More than three weeks have passed , a lot of solid waste has been dredged out from Khushaal Sar . The dredging machine has been hired by Mr Wangnoo. The machine easily dredged muck and plastic waste near the lake banks , but the real challenge is to excavate waste from the middle of the lake. The Mission Ehsaas team brought a Pontoon (steel platform like boat) towards the site with great difficulty. This will help to transport waste from the middle of the lake to the banks. Even the boats couldn't move in Khushaal sar or Gilar until recently , but now water is flowing smoothly.

Mission Ehsaas is a step to inculcate the habit of realization among public, administration and other stakeholders to work in close coordination ensuring safeguarding of our natural resources which is in fact our heritage as well. In the past NLCO with the help of Kashmir Welfare Trust rehabilitated 100 plus flood victim households. After setting an example in Nigeen Lake in creating public awareness, NLCO made sure that the lake is restored like it used to be in the 60's or 70's free from plastic and other biodegradable and non- biodegradable waste. It is due to public participation that today Nigeen lake is comparatively cleaner than other water bodies and we must give its credit to Wangnoo brothers and their neighbors.

The ongoing Mission Ehsaas is an arduous task and needs massive public participation and constant Government support. It seems administration is concerned towards the revival of water bodies and in this regard the water sports wing of Youth Services and Sports is planning to start water sports activities in Pokhribal (also called Chota Nigeen) so that this water-body remains clean and healthy. Apart from that we urge Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LWDA) to start massive cleansing of Nallah Amir Khan - Khoj Yarbail - Naidyar streams and interiors of Dal

Lake.

Choked Springs

I was informed by the senior citizens of the area that a chain of fresh water springs existed in the area around Gilsar until a few years back which unfortunately have been filled up. These springs should be retrieved immediately and geo-tagged and further developed into heritage sites.

Recommendation

Mission Ehsaas is not a permanent solution. This is the kick start of a public campaign. It will continue for another month but after that who will ensure upkeep of Khushaal Sar or Gilsar ? I was overwhelmed to notice that people living around these town lakes are fully involved in this campaign by providing all moral support and encouragement to the Mission Ehsaas team. Let Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) en-cash this public sentiment and make the work sustainable by undertaking door to door collection of waste in a segregated manner from Zadibal to Nowshera plus areas located on western shore of Khushaal sar and Gilsar like Zoonimar, Tengpora, Kokerbagh etc. SMC has started source segregation of waste some days back in four wards of the city like Karan Nagar , Shalimar , Soura and Humhama, let few more areas around Gilsar be included. Source segregation of waste is in fact needed in these areas. I appeal to Commissioner SMC to involve local youth of the area along with Mohalla Committees who can ensure segregation and collection of the municipal solid waste at household level. Monthly meetings should be held in the area to get public feedback. Masjid Imams, community leaders should be involved in the campaign. Lastly both Khushaal sar and Gilsar need to be demarcated. Illegal encroachments should be removed forthwith and land - mafia taken to task.

(The author is Chairman J&K RTI Movement) feedbackexcelsior@gmail.com

Socio-Economic Status of Rural Farm Women

Dr. Ruchi Thakur and Dr. Vishal Sharma

Women in India are the backbone of the society and important human resource. They play a significant and crucial role in agriculture and allied operations and household activities. Economic well being of India depends on the agricultural development since the livelihood of 60 per cent of the population is based on Agriculture and allied occupation. Women workers make a mammoth contribution in agricultural development but their socio economic condition is not quite appreciable due to cultural and political reasons. India as one such country is highly depending on agriculture resources, where the majority of its agriculture workforce is dominated by women. In India, adult population of women consists of nearly 50 per cent and about 77 per cent of the Indian adult population lives in rural areas. They contribute 75 per cent of the labour required for operations. About 36 million women are engaged in farm operations as main workers; from sowing to harvesting and storing in bins and bags.

Most women are engaged either as cultivators or helpers to cultivators or as agricultural labourers. They also participate in off-farm activities like processing and marketing of farm products. They have been active not just in crop cultivation but also in allied areas such as horticulture, livestock and fisheries. Traditionally, women have always played an important role in agriculture - as farmers, co-farmers, family labour, wage labours and managers of farms. The selection, preservation and maintenance, the development and sharing of seed stock has long been preserve of women. Women performed a majority of households' chores and also the work related to farming and agriculture. It is undeniable that women are the backbone of the agriculture workforces. Women

agricultural labours are recognized as unorganized sector. Rural women always gave a major contribution to the agriculture and allied fields and also provide contribution to the development of rural economy. Her work starts from sowing, weeding, harvesting operations, crop production and live stock production in agricultural activities. Women also work as home maker, her day starts from cleaning home, transporting water, collecting fuel and fodder, doing laundry, preparing food for fam-

Most women are engaged either as cultivators or helpers to cultivators or as agricultural labourers. They also participate in off-farm activities like processing and marketing of farm products. They have been active not just in crop cultivation but also in allied areas such as horticulture, livestock and fisheries.

ily, childcare and carrying out agricultural duties. She works inside the home and outside of home. The involvement of women in agriculture depends on a number of factors such as the type of activity, socioeconomic status of the family, the particular geographical area, and whether the agricultural production is of cash crop or sustenance. Despite their incredible role in agricultural sector, their involvement in decision-making regarding farm management still seems questionable. Most rural women do not have any role in decision making with regard to purchase/sale of farming implements, land preparation and determination of type and amount of chemicals (pesticides, herbicides)

used. Women farmers suffer from a multiple burden due to their involvement in home making, child rearing, agricultural activities and income earning responsibilities.

Women farmers are discriminated in all facets of life. The women farmers in our society are exploited and denied their basic rights. They are victimized from rigid caste, norms, values, and taboos and deprived from access to cultural, economic and political opportunities than men. Rural women's participation in farm management decision making is quite minimal. This can be attributed to the age, education, land tenancy and the wealth status of the woman. Farm women contribute significantly to family income but they should also be integrated into the mainstream through better education, health and other support facilities.

Women agricultural labors face a lot of difficulties or problems and women does not know about how to face the problem like unpaid work, wage discrimination, low wages, dual responsibility, traditional bounded, hard work, no transfer facility, low standard of living, drinking habit of husband,

lack of time, absence of decision making process, inside the home and outside the home, seasonal unemployment, male dominated society etc. Women's status is low by all social economic and political indicators. Women's wage work is considered a threat to the male ego and women's engagement in multiple home based economic activities leads to under remuneration for their work. According to our opinion government has to take interest in solving their problems government should not only invent the schemes but they have to see whether the schemes are working successfully or not. By this the agriculture women labour will come out of these problems and can lead a better life.

Women's access to basic economic resources such as land (as owners), low cost labour-saving machines, food processing machines, credit and agricultural innovations need to be improved. They need to address consideration which presents women's housewives and excluded them from being identified in agricultural statistics; underestimating the role of unpaid workers in many countries and the ignoring the role of farm women all underestimate the contribution of women to agriculture and food security. Reports on monitoring and evaluation of agricultural programs to women and women groups as feedback as this will allow equalization of the full participation of women in the entire process. This is most effective and appropriate way forward. Support systems for women farmers within a holistic gender-sensitive framework are urgently needed to form a policy development, project design and implementation agenda. Women must be directly involved with the development and implementation of the new technology.

feedbackexcelsior@gmail.com

(The views expressed by the authors are their personal)