

GI registration of items

It looks strange that despite ample opportunity given by the Industries and Commerce Department, those departments in the UT that are directly related to have locally goods and products with Geographical Indication (GI) tagging have, so far not submitted the requisite details of the identified items. It is to be appreciated and in that context the importance thereof understood as well that such tagging of the local products which are saleable and in good demand in international markets, need such tagging. In other words, not only would exports to such countries increase but the growers and producers of such items stand benefitted enormously. The Geographical Indication is nothing but a mark to identify such goods which could come under the categories of agriculture, natural or nature gifted, manufacturing, hand made and carved etc in a particular locality, area, territory etc where alone such goods could be attributable to particular geographical origin. The GI, in simpler parlance is, therefore, a sort of certification by the Government to have the trust reposed of a buyer in a particular good from such identified geographical location and thus buy the same.

With the availability of the requisite data and information, the chances of more of such goods coming under the umbrella of such tagging by the Government are bright and thus providing benefits to the growers, producers, artisans and all others engaged in making or growing of such goods. As on date, there are only 9 GI tagged crafts and the prospects of more getting such tagging being really high could only be possible by submitting the requisite information to all concerned. Even in opportunities of better and assured marketing on international basis like the one under reference, evoking little response is neither warranted nor justified in any case. Besides, the importance of furnishing data and information in respect of issues with sensitive connotations need to be realised and in that spirit analysed that withholding or delaying any such information in the present era of information technology, where collating information and compilation of data needs immediate attention for specific planning purposes. How can the Industries and Commerce Department of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir furnish the said information to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry when it gets none from the concerned departments?

When Union Ministries are out and out to extend help to the UT for the benefit of the identified groups or people like the one under reference, why should at our level such a slack and casual approach be there, is a moot question. If it is said that the tagging is a sort of offering protection to the identified agricultural products, food stuffs, handicrafts and other local cottage products and that is why the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industries advising the UT Government a year ago about furnishing details of such items, who is "sitting" over it and why should such information be not furnished? What is so much of intricacies involved in this perhaps "stupendous" task, is beyond comprehension. Today is the era of competitiveness and in International markets, there are opportunities for all to press their products for sale in the salesmanship spirit for which even counter branding could be resorted to which the Geographical Indication (GI) tagging would protect. Since Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has been taking keen interest in the subject matter as he has many a time laid stress on immediate GI tagging of those products of Jammu and Kashmir which require such tagging, it is hoped that the desired information reaches the Industries and Commerce Department at an early date.

Who 'heads' Yousmarg Dev. Authority?

We had earlier also, through these columns, voiced concern over the waste treatment plant at Yousmarg in Budgam district of Kashmir being not made operative and the accumulated waste in the area - a picturesque tourist spot - posing danger to the environment as most of it being dumped in the forest areas thus disturbing the ecological equations of the spot and making the beautiful area vulnerable to all hazards associated with untreated accumulated waste material. There could be certain administrative problems but how long under the cover of that alibi, nothing to be done - could be justified? Curiously, the Yousmarg Development Authority is without Chief Executive Officer and being "Headless", proper decisions are not taken for the betterment of the said tourist destination.

However, we suppose the guidelines prescribed by the Statutory Body - The National Green Tribunal (NGT) - in respect of issues concerning the environment and related matters are mandatorily to be adhered to but in the instant case, the same are caused to be flouted. Besides, the meadows, the parks and the pathways are all not properly cleansed and are found littered here and there. That such a promising natural tourist place cannot be properly maintained let alone making it a top tourist destination by the Tourism Department and other Government agencies, is deplorable.

AIIMS Jammu: On the path for global healthcare

Dr Shakti Kumar Gupta

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is a name synonymous with excellence and quality in healthcare delivery. It has become a global brand and leveraging on the existing AIIMS. Government has stepped ahead to shape up a group of premier public health medical institutions in India which will be forerunner in the field of quality medical education training and providing robust patient care to millions of people. In a series of establishing 'AIIMS-like' organizations all over the country, the legacy has now reached at the doorstep of people in Jammu & Kashmir with establishment of this prestigious institute in Vijaypur town of Samba district - a first of its kind and the first of two proposed for erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir including Ladakh region. A big moment of glee was felt around AIIMS, Jammu when first batch of 50 MBBS students were enrolled for session 2020-21 who are undergoing teaching at AIIMS Rishikesh the erstwhile mentor institute. The next batch of 125 MBBS students are expected to join in the month of October, 2021.

Opening-up of this AIIMS indeed does reflect commitment of the Government to mobilize national resources to augment the existing medical facilities and bridge gaps in the field of healthcare delivery. A long standing demand of people for treatment of serious ailments now seems fulfilled; the locals will no longer need to travel to far flung cities of Chandigarh, Amritsar or New Delhi. The new AIIMS, Jammu will not only establish itself as a centre of higher learning and healthcare services for thousands of native populace, but shall also open up immense academic and occupational opportunities. Prestige of AIIMS-like institutions is derived from their 'Trinity of Mission' - Training, Patient Care & Research. Autonomy of planning curriculum, selecting best of the students from entire country and impeccable research infrastructure have earned a reputable pedestal for these institutions at international level. This region is now going to be immensely benefitted from quality patient care as a reward of this repute that the insti-



Work in full swing on site of AIIMS Jammu in Vijaypur.

tion carries.

For a long time, Cancer patients or any other serious cardiac or neurologic patients were forced to venture in places like Chandigarh and New Delhi for specialized medical and surgical treatment; many did succumb to diseases for want of affordable treatment. The new 750 bedded AIIMS institution in Jammu excluding dedicated Daycare beds for Chemotherapy, Hematology AND Rheumatology has turned out to be a blessing for such patients as it has dedicated Cancer care units of 16 beds each in departments of Surgical and Medical Oncology. Besides that, it will provide multispecialty care including 106 ICU beds of various specialties, 48 beds each of basic care like General Medicine, Orthopedics and Obstetrics & Gynecology, superspecialty care of Cardiology, CTVS, Neurology and Neurosurgery with 16 beds each, a Nephrology and Urology unit with 08 bed-

ded dialysis unit, a 12 bedded Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit and dedicated AYUSH block to name a few.

Although it is a momentous chapter for the existing healthcare infrastructure; the legacy doesn't stop here as a similar institute is proposed for Awantipura Kupwara Division of Kashmir. An uphill task for everyone involved lies ahead till such time these are fully operational. It is important to envisage the greater good for common people, the academicians and the new generation of doctors of this region. These humongous infrastructures will certainly open floodgates to knowledge and prospects of vast academic interactions among the healthcare fraternity. Such interactions are central pillars on which the success of modern healthcare depends and it will require spirited people who will act in the right direction with same zeal, hard work and enthusiasm as has been invest-

ed by committed men and women over decades to bring AIIMS, New Delhi to its present stature. It is indeed heartening that AIIMS Delhi has been chosen as the mentor institute for this coveted AIIMS. Experienced doctors and faculty who are going to join here in coming time will steer away from conventional methodology to remain well-informed with the latest developments in the field of treatment modalities coupled with technology and explore new avenues in healthcare teaching for proper nurturing and mentoring the transitional generation - the one which has witnessed terrorism and resource scarcity. This will pave the way for a bright future full of confident, competent, reformed and able doctors coming out from this region.

AIIMS Jammu will have a Global Village, international students Counseling & Study Centres and Internationalization of various training programs. The Institute plans to develop academic programs in close synergy with other Institutions like IIT-Jammu, IIM-Jammu, Central University, Jammu University, Indian Institute of Integrated Medicine the erstwhile Regional Research Laboratory and of course our Government Medical College Jammu to name a few. Such a consortium of premium institutions will facilitate a free exchange of ideas and innovations leading to profound academic outcomes. Recent times have unfolded the fact that modalities for delivering future education will be online teaching programs with equitable use of technology. Authorities at AIIMS Jammu have therefore set their eyes on developing Centers for Distance Education and Simulation Laboratory for academic excellence as part of the 'Digital AIIMS Jammu' initiative.

It is now evident that development of healthcare is getting a strong support and seems to be getting immense attention from the present Government. Establishment of premiere institutions like AIIMS Jammu is stepping stone towards the path for India to evolve as a superpower in Global Knowledge development towards providing excellence in Medical Education, Research and Patients Care.

(The author is Executive Director and CEO, AIIMS, Jammu)

feedbackexcelsior@gmail.com

Back to Village and Unfulfilled Promises

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

It hardly believe in superstitious ideas, but the way construction of a small low cost steel footbridge connecting a beautiful playground in Budgam district with main land has been delayed for almost 50 years, it sometimes makes me believe this prolonged delay is accused by someone! Every year the Government spends billions of rupees on developmental works in J&K but I can't understand why authorities at helm are not able to spend mere Rs 10 to 15 lakhs on a steel footbridge? In remote and inaccessible areas of Budgam district or far off places like Kishtwar or Kupwara, black-topped roads and huge bridges were constructed during last 20 years but on the other hand a long pending public demand of around 30 to 40 villages and towns around Wathoora is not fulfilled by Government. Even during the back to village meetings, the officers promised to make the bridge operational within months but now more than 18 months have passed and nothing has happened on ground.

Case study from Budgam

At a time when we are losing playgrounds and green spaces in villages and towns due to massive urbanization, a 100 kanal (Shectares) Kahcharai land is still protected by the local youth of Wathoora, a semi-urbanized locality in Srinagar outskirts in district Budgam. Wathoora is only 11 kms from Srinagar city center and just 5 to 6 kms from many uptown posh colonies like Rawalpora, Chanapora, Hyderporaetc.

Cricketers from most of these areas and even Srinagar old city continue to play cricket at Wathoora. The problem with this cricket ground is that it is an Island and has no direct access via road. On the other hand the ground has many advantages as well like better water absorption capacity and being safe from land grabbers etc. On the front side of the ground (eastern area) we have Doodh Ganga and towards its south we have Shali Ganga which joins Doodh-Ganga near the southern tail of this ground. There are some irrigation canals and Khulstowards the north and eastern side of the ground. Cricket lovers enter this play ground through Shahpora locality of Wathoora-which is located on Srinagar-Chadoora - Charar e Sharief road.

Entry into the ground

Having spent my childhood near this cricket ground, I along with many village kids would swim in Doodh Ganga locally called Chaz Kull. We would take a sunbath on its banks connecting the ground which had a lot of clean sand until 10-15 years back. As a kid, on Sundays and holidays, I would often carry a lunch box from home for my uncle's playing cricket across. When I grew up I also played cricket on this ground which is locally known as WatalWaen. Although I was not a good cricketer, I loved the game and always tried my best to get a bridge constructed when I grew up. I never succeeded till date. Today my 10 year old son is asking me why there is not a permanent bridge so that he could go across and play cricket or football? Same question my father, my uncles and myself have raised in the past?

Local residents tried a lot to ensure construction of a bridge but at the last moment something happens and work never gets executed. Almost 45 to 50 years back when the professional cricket was introduced in our area, people, especially local

Chaz Kull rises during summer rains, the makeshift wooden bridge gets washed away and that is the most tragic time for those youth who make best use of their skills, time and energy erecting the makeshift-bridge. It takes lots of efforts to get a

main road and reach a small hamlet Banhaar and then cross small canals and enter the ground from its northern side.

Drowning incidents

The absence of a permanent foot bridge is not only frustrating the sports lovers, morning walkers or joggers but several cricketers and locals have been drowned in Doodh Ganga river while they tried to cross the river by walking through it. During the last 10-15 years at least 3 to 4 persons died while crossing the river thinking that water level was less. Some years back a cricketer from Srinagar got drowned when he was chasing a cricket ball that went into Doodh Ganga. He died on spot.

Promises during Back to Village

During the Back to Village-I (B2V-I) programme June 26-27 2019, a large number of officers had come to Wathoora. MrSarmadHafeez, the present TourismSecretary who was the then Secretary Youth Services and Sports was the designated Visiting Officer for Wathoora. I am quoting his words when he addressed a gathering of locals and sportsmen on the day II of B 2 V programme while inaugurating a cricket match

"I am leaving highly inspired. The stadium of this size and beauty is something that caught my eyes. We will definitely work to encash its size and beauty to develop it. So I would request the concerned DC to handover this stadium to

the Youth services and sports department."

Mr Sarmad Hafiz along with DG Youth Services and Sports Saleem Ur Rehman were mesmerized by the beauty of the playground. The officer on spot directed for construction of a steel footbridge.

Rural Development Department (RDD) was to take up the project. It has been almost 2 years now, nothing has happened. Infact Director Rural Development Department Kashmir told me several times that money has been allocated for the project but we see nothing happening on the ground.

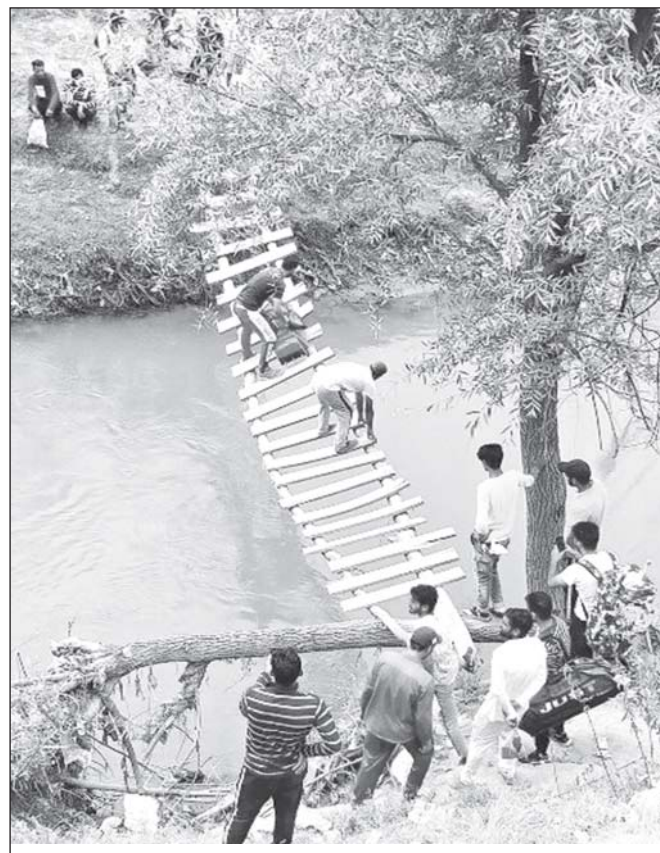
Ironically, that the guy who constructed the wooden makeshift bridge that day on the request of local BDO was not paid his dues by District Administration for almost a year. He kept moving from pillar to post for a year, I am still not sure whether he got that money or not?

Conclusion

People who began demanding a foot bridge in the late 1970's and early 80's are now old. Now their grandsons and grand-daughters are urging authorities to fulfill the promise. I along with many local friends have been trying our best to highlight the issue for the last 15 years or more. Recently, I posted the pics of the youth making the makeshift bridge on social media with the aim that it would shake the conscience of authorities. Under the Khelo India programme, so many stadiums were built during the last 4 to 5 years but Wathoora continues to be deprived.

(The author is Founder & Chairman of Jammu & Kashmir RTI Movement)

feedbackexcelsior@gmail.com



youth would construct a makeshift wooden bridge (30 to 40 feet long) to help players and spectators go into the ground. This has been a constant affair for the last many decades. Wathora and adjoining area have produced great cricket players. When the water level in

new makeshift bridge installed. Every year at least 5 to 6 makeshift bridges are constructed at Wathoora which get washed away when water level in Doodh Ganga goes up. Another way to enter the play-ground is to walk a 1 km distance from ShahporaWathoora

Encroachments of Roads

Col Shiv Choudhary (Retd)

Kudos to JMC for issuing a public notice No DIP/J-330-P/21 dated 17 Apr 2021 for removal of encroachments by way of "installing temporary counters, flexi-boards, displaying of articles, Iron structures, electric generators and planting trees in enclosures outside the boundary walls" within seven days. Indeed a welcome notice for all rational thinking citizens and future habitats. One hopes that many other encroachments like hugely elevated drive ways, extended roofs, parking enclosures and prayer places would surely be falling within the ambit of said notice and abenito dealt accordingly.

Encroachments are neither incidental nor par chance. These are a regular feature everywhere due to absence or connivance of the anti encroachment JMC staff designated for each area, failure of the Residential Welfare Societies and residents. Surprisingly everyone silently watches such encroachments. JMC has been carrying out anti encroachments drive in the recent past at various places.

Barring aside some justified voices, there is always a malicious propaganda accusing JMC of tinkering and harassing residents under the garb of threat to trees, green belt and threatening environment. Sad reality is that the green belt is generally destroyed by the very residents only.

It seems that few violators raise voices with an aim to pressurizing and hinder the Government authorities from carrying out legitimate anti encroachment drive. One also hopes that JMC does not act symbolically for publicity and tokenism as often seen and accused of. It instead acts impartially, irrespectively and decisively. Any justified actions should curve an unending desire for encroachments.

In many residential complexes, the supply of water and electricity remains erratic, uncertain and unpredictable even in over 50 years old colony in Jammu. People demand that JMC should first provide adequate water, electricity and drainage before any anti encroachment action. Shortfall in these services is a service deficiency, but this does not

entitle few people to encroach upon common user's roads, paths and areas not falling within the boundary wall of the plot/house. The deficiency in services and encroachments are two widely different issues and cannot be linked. Linking both issues is like saying, "don't catch lion till you catch a tiger".

pet cages, pet pooping corners and waiting and resting sheds along the roads. Residents must appreciate that the private vegetable gardens maintained on the encroached land/ roads are not in order. Residents must urbanize their thought process and living style.

The self proclaimed belief

The UT of J&K High Court has already passed an order for the concerned authorities to prevent / remove illegal / unauthorized encroachments including parking. It is thus unavoidable for JMC to implement such clear orders for ameliorating the miseries of the common people. Local society bye laws cannot be used to hedge much needed legal actions.

We all must appreciate that any housing complex is meant for better living, systematic plantation, and hassle free roads for future expansion, decongestion, growing population and traffic. There would always be requirement of separate tracks for transports, two wheelers, cycles, battery carts for aged, path for pedestrians and pets,

of having exclusive rights over all existing roads and paths within a cooperative registered housing society is also misplaced albeit borne out of ignorance. People expect JMC to metal their roads and provide facilities, but wish to deny JMC the right to remove encroachments in spite of residential complexes falling under the

municipality jurisdiction. Social forestry dept too cannot not be blamed for planting certain trees at roads since it plants each tree at the place pin pointed by the residents.

The habit of encroaching bigger chunk on a bigger road must cease forthwith. Some responsible and self conscious residents have already started dismantling all sorts of structures and plinths built over encroachment areas at their own to avoid embarrassment at the hands of JMC squads. Nothing could reflect a more responsible character of such self conscious residents by their actions. Their actions should accelerate similar actions by others too. The biggest challenge for the JMC will be removal of grown up trees existing over encroached areas.

We must remember that all residential complexes are planned for future living. In this regards a reputed colony like Sainik Colony Jammu too was planned in line with the design of 'City Beautiful' Chandigarh with its 'sainik character' in mind. How much erosion and damage to the originally

mapped colony has been done to this dream colony is for anyone to judge.

The UT of J&K High Court has already passed an order for the concerned authorities to prevent / remove illegal / unauthorized encroachments including parking. It is thus unavoidable for JMC to implement such clear orders for ameliorating the miseries of the common people. Local society bye laws cannot be used to hedge much needed legal actions. Roads are for general public usage and cannot be claimed by the residents once the colony is under municipality jurisdiction. Any further erosion must be checked.

A residential complex is an institution, and all residents have a moral and social duty to contribute towards solidifying such Institution. A living abode is for future generation and it is for us to decide what sort of abode we would like to pass on to the future generation. An individual effort can only awaken conscious, but collective efforts can make for a better future living. Time for a reality check.

(feedback 9419168833)

(The views expressed by the authors are their personal)