

Money embezzled, laboratories "missing"

Unimaginable though but a fact related to how absence of any fear of the law or any immediate accountability in the system can prompt persons in Government service to embezzle lakhs of Rupees in the name of raising two Working Standard Laboratories without constructing the same as back in 2009-10, has surfaced only recently. Apart from any other things related to the entire matter, some people entering Government service with such a criminal mindset, where both the laboratories beyond appearing on papers, are nowhere to be "found" even by employing all techniques available. Even the proverbial needle could be found in a haystack but not these two laboratories at the Legal Metrology Complex in Transport Yard, Jammu as believed and as per documents and claimed by the ones who pocketed the money. Lakhs of Rupees having been released and very surprisingly, even the mandatory Utilization Certificates (UC) too submitted by the cheats in charge of these two laboratories, again raise questions as to whether any authority physically inspected the projects for which public money was spent and even Utilization Certificates submitted, were in fact erected or not and also according to plans and designs.

The fact of the matter is that under centrally sponsored scheme, six Working Standard Laboratories were to be constructed in Jammu and Kashmir, three each in Jammu and Srinagar at the cost of Rs.25 lakh per laboratory in 2009-10. The amount was released by the Central Government and additional funds for full completion of these laboratories was provided by the then State Government. How could the other three in Srinagar come up in full, reports that only two were functioning there also, perhaps, corroborates "full understanding" between those in charge of the assignment at both the capital cities. It was perhaps duly planned that instead of six, only four were to be constructed - two each in Jammu Transport Nagar and in Bemina Srinagar -but the cost of other four not constructed eaten away straightaway.

While post mortem of "how, when and where" in respect of the big fraud would be now a time consuming and a long exercise and the recommendation of the Controller Legal Metrology Department for a CBI probe or investigations by the Anti-Corruption Bureau notwithstanding, there are certain pertinent questions which need answers. Firstly, why was the fraud unearthed so late? Secondly, when the State Government kept on releasing its share of additional funds over and above the Central Government's Grant-in-Aid, did no one from the Finance or General Administration Departments conduct any physical verification and inspection to see what for the funds were released? Thirdly, is there no post disbursement scrutiny at the Finance Department to verify whether public funds were genuinely released and for the specific project only? Fourthly, what about the Central Government as beyond receiving the Utilization Certificate, no verification or inspection is believed to have been arranged to be conducted and both these lacunae in the system were fully exploited by the perpetrators of the fraud. Last but not the least, what role was played in the entire scandal by the then Deputy Controllers and Joint Controllers of the LMD - Jammu and Kashmir and if it is construed that their explicit or implicit backing was there to commit such a brazen fraud, it would not be any exaggeration.

Doubtful integrity of otherwise considered responsible officers should never be tolerated. In the instant case, such a big fraud and that too looting money just by doing some paper work, reveals how loose and in disarray the administrative system is and how much of utmost importance was frequent, intensive and professional auditing and according utmost importance to audit findings. Again, we reiterate our stand that the cost of such audits, even if outsourced, would be negligible, even of no significance, to the size of frauds and the public money involved, in its absence. Can we expect prompt, result oriented and fast enquiry in the fraud under reference and in the meantime, the suspects arrested as we shall be closely monitoring the developments in the case?

Promoting clean fuel in rural India

It is fairly known that agricultural tractors, power tillers, construction equipment vehicles and allied vehicles which run on diesel or petrol do not have proper servicing facilities in rural areas and if there are, seldom are such vehicles maintained to derive better fuel management results and in particular have a clean environment. Looking into all aspects of the issue, a timely and right decision has been taken by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to have all such vehicles retrofitted with CNG, bio CNG and LNG fuel engines. Therefore, to make it enforceable, an amendment in the Central Motor Vehicles Rules has accordingly been made.

Conversion could be by modification or replacement of engines of tractors, tillers, construction equipment vehicles, harvesters etc. Such measures were surely going to change the rural economy for better prospects as also result in creation of employment opportunities on a massive scale. Two ends were going to be achieved thus-one clean fuel and two-economical fuel. Not only that, the longevity of the vehicle engine too was going to be achieved besides less regular maintenance expenses and saving money. However, let this innovative step for hopefully bettering rural economy too not be opposed for just opposing any reform for better results.

Congress rebellion all but over

Anil Anand

Congress is not new to in-house rebellions and every time the party was reborn with changed profile, and at times changed nomenclature but with a renewed vigour. When a Group of 23 leaders or G23, led by veteran party-person Ghulam Nabi Azad rose in revolt not too long back, both friends and detractors of the party sorrowful and happy respectively, imagined that it was a deadly blow dealt at a time when the Congress is beset with a serious existential crisis. Some even saw the hidden hand of the ruling BJP's top brass in fomenting fresh crisis in Congress to further weaken it, which was difficult to rule out.

Nothing of the sort happened. The party stays where it was, intact and indecisive-self at its best which is confirmed by further postponement of the president's election and no action against some of the leaders during the top leadership with impunity only for self-aggrandisement and nothing else.

Has the rebellion-2021 come to a full circle without creating any ripples? The answer lies in Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi's recent decision to set up a 13-member taskforce headed by none other than Mr Azad to organise and oversee the party's COVID relief work. Mr Azad accepted the offer quietly.

Not only that, she appointed another committee tasked to analyse the reasons behind Congress' dismal performance in recently held assembly elections to four states and one Union Territory, which had another rebel leader and Lok Sabha MP from Punjab, Mr Manish Tiwari as its member.

And who can forget another G23 leader and a rank follower of the Gandhi family, Mr Mukul Wasnik, who for reasons best known to him had joined the rebellious camp. It is another matter that he quickly backtracked and has now become member of the assembly elections fact-minding com-

mittee as well.

Not with standing the series of interviews that Mr Azad gave to different newspapers and channels after the revolt barely nine months back baring his teeth, reality seems to have dawned on him. He is neither in the bracket of the Congress syndicate of the 1960s that had stalwarts such as Mr Morarji Desai, Mr S Nijalingappa, Mr Ashok Mehta and many others including some strong regional leaders, nor has the guts to manoeuvre his way up like V P Singh, though briefly. It is a different matter that these moves either could not succeed or had limited success as in the case of Mr Singh.

The COVID-19 pandemic situation has provided an escape route both to the party leadership and the rebels particularly Mr Azad. The Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting held on May 10, 2021 in the midst of pandemic, was all set to announce the election programme. Naturally, the conditions were not ripe and it was unanimously resolved to further postpone the election with even CWC members belonging to G23 and led by Mr Azad also gleefully concurring.

The seasoned campaigner that Mr Azad is, he or his ilk would not have liked to be seen further precipitating the crisis by insisting for the election when the country is fighting against the COVID-19 virus though Mrs Gandhi had expressed her willingness to announce the election schedule. The reality is that the G23 rebellion though had pleased quarters in the ruling BJP, failed to get much traction or support for the team Azad within the Congress. That is how the current situation provided an escape route to both the party managers as well as the rebels.

The offer to announce the elections provided an opening both to the leadership and the G 23 to find ground for a truce. The rebellious group having fallen into pieces could not have got a better escape route than the pandemic conditions to first

agree to postponement of the party president's elections for at least two months, and then Mr Azad and his compatriots accepting the assignments as a mark of goodwill. Clearly he seemed to have assessed his strength and in no mood to take the battle forward.

From all available indications Mrs Gandhi had come prepared to the CWC to announce the election schedule as drawn by another committee of party leaders who had sometime back given their report to her. Ostensibly, the CWC managers must have visualised that the G23 would be in no position to accept the schedule for June, 2021 election in view of the prevailing pandemic conditions which would have further impaired their capability to either field a candidate or canvass vigorously for their nominee across the country under these circumstances. So Mrs Gandhi made an offer to announce the schedule and take a high moral ground.

The G23 rebellion is all but over. It was expected not to last long or would not have made any difference, but for psychological reasons to aid and abet the BJP's "Congress Mukh Bharat" campaign to some extent. However, it should not push the party decision makers (read Mrs Sonia Gandhi and her aides) further into the rot of complacency and indecisiveness.

Having withered the storm, they should use this as an opportunity to first hold the organisational elections as soon as the circumstances permit and not shirk from taking tough decisions. This should include sidelining or chucking out the vested interest both at the centre and states levels, give more opportunities to young, new and promising faces, and at the same time utilising the experience of the old-guard more so in the role of mentors. The writing must be clear on the wall and those who fail or ignore to read it should be dealt with accordingly - elections or no elections.

The G23 rumblings should be taken as a wake-up call by the party and its withering as an opportunity to restore the inner party democracy, quick decision making and devising a system of duties accompanied by a strong sense of accountability. Lack of accountability has been the bane of Congress' current pathetic condition.

Everyone, particularly those among the old-guard wanted power/ responsibility, but refused to be accountable. In fact those who repeatedly honoured them with assignments never asked for accountability. It is so because there has been no system of fixing either accountability or assessing the performance being it being the ministers or while holding the party posts. The buck clearly stops at the table of the party president.

The self-perceived sense of indispensability, G23 was the outcome of this notion, has to go. This notion which has its genesis in status quo approach followed by the party over the decades, has widened the scope for manoeuvres and black-mailing which in turn has seriously harmed the organisational structure and stopped the process of grooming new leaders. Rather, perform or perish should be the underlying principle now.

On the hindsight the party should be thankful to Mr Azad and his grouping for dealing a direly needed jolt, whatever was the G23's motive. Truce should not mean that they have been given a clean chit as it would be fraught with dangerous consequences in future and could encourage more rebellions.

The rebellion must come with some cost. It does not mean hard punitive measures. Certainly, a message should be sent loud and clear that the party discipline was as important for the senior/veteran leaders as for the rank and file and those found violating would be dealt with strongly even if it involved showing them the door.

No free lunches please.

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Menace of Beggary

Chetan Prabhakar

Whenever you go to a market to eat or buy, can you eat or buy anything without encountering beggars with miserable faces, who come in a row in a well-planned manner starting from children to old men/women with small kids to handicapped men/women? Is there some kind of Mafia running this show? Otherwise, how can these beggars come to the market places to beg in a well-planned manner from the people eating or buying things from the stores? I remember many instances of the last lock-down, when I was fooled by these beggars who are experts in making miserable faces to gain sympathy. Whenever used to go out to buy fruit-sand vegetables, almost after we were about to conclude our purchases, these bidders in a row used to come and plead for some alms because they have not eaten anything and out of sympathy, we used to buy something to them or give some money, in turn feeling great as if we have done a great deed of charity.

These kinds of incidences kept on happening with me till a couple of months back when I ultimately realised about the fact that these beggars are a part of organised begging mafias or cartels who are placing them at several marketplaces and then, they start begging in a well-planned and well-designed manner with duly following their protocols

There are many questions which I really ask myself? Who are these people? Who bring them to these markets? Who plans where to beg and how to beg? Because a couple of days back, I along with my father went to buy his medicines during the current lockdown. Most of shops were closed and only medical shops and street vendors selling vegetables and fruits were open. My father went to take his medicines while I was waiting for him in the car and suddenly, a middle-aged woman knocked the window of my car for some alms. I said no to her as now I considered myself a little wiser than earlier, as now I do not get fooled easily by their fake miserable faces. Thereafter, one small girl came for alms, I said no. Then, a woman with kid came, I said no and then, again an old woman came, I said no and thereafter, one middle aged woman came with a miserable face and this time, I blasted at her in irritation.

The question is how they have changed the places from well-known grocery stores, sweet shops, bakery shops, eatery jointsets, to big medical stores? How have they become so aware that now they have to beg at these big medical stores? Why in such a critical situation they are freely roaming on roads in large groups? Why our administration is not doing anything? Why police authorities are not doing anything? Why our government authorities are not notice-

ing them and taking any action in this regard for the safety of all during this epidemic?

We, the people of Jammu are equally responsible for this beggary menace, because we also promote beggary by giving to these people as charity out of our kindness considering these as pious deedsto wash our sins, without realizing that giving beggars money or anything else



is promoting beggary mafias and cartels. These cartel and mafias in their pursuit of begging, kidnap small kids.

As per the Jammu and Kashmir Prevention of Beggary Act, 1960, which is an Act for preventing beggary and making beggars good citizens, defines begging as (i) soliciting alms in a public place, or in or about a temple, mosque or other place of public worship, whether or not under any pretence; (ii) entering on any private premises for the purpose of soliciting alms; (iii) exposing or exhibiting with the object of obtaining or extorting

offence and If any person is found begging, he/she shall be guilty of an offence under this Act and any Police Officer or other person authorised in this behalf by the District Magistrate may arrest without a warrant any person who is found begging and they have to be detained in a Sick Home, Beggar's Home or Children's Home for the first time and when a person is convicted for the second time, the Court shall order him to be detained in a Sick Home, Beggar's Home or Children's Home, as the case may be, for not less than seven years.

As per the Act, begging is an

In April 2015, in a Public Interest Litigation filed by Advocate Parimoksh Seth before the Hon'ble High Court of Jammu for implementation of the provisions of the Prevention of Beggary Act, 1960 and Prevention of Beggary Rules to stop the menace of begging especially organized begging in the State of J&K, the Division Bench of Jammu High Court comprising Chief Justice N Paul Vasantha Kumar and Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur in the said PIL directed the State to construct adequate number of beggar's homes/children home/sick homes within a period of six months from the date of receipt of the order. But this order does not seem to have been implemented as there are no sick home/beggars' home/children's homes in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

Aside, vide a Judgement dated 25.10.2019 the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir in a PIL filed by one Advocate Suhail Rashid Bhat declared the provisions of the Jammu & Kashmir Prevention of Beggary Act, 1960 and the Jammu & Kashmir Prevention of Beggary Rules, 1964 as unconstitutional and after pronouncement of the aforesaid Judgement, the menace of beggary seemed to have increased in the UT of Jammu & Kashmir. The UT of Jammu & Kashmir has not challenged this Judgement before the Supreme Court of India which it ought to have done but may be due to pressure from

human rights activists have not challenged it before the Supreme Court of India. It is my humble request to the Government of UT of Jammu and Kashmir to challenge the Judgment dated 25.10.2019 which declared that the provisions of the Jammu & Kashmir Prevention of Beggary Act, 1960 and the Jammu & Kashmir Prevention of Beggary Rules, 1964 as unconstitutional before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

By way of this article, it is my humble request and appeal to the government and administration of the UT of J&K to curb the menace of beggary and beggary mafias for us to have a safe and secure Jammu & Kashmir by immediately challenging the Judgment dated 25.10.2019 before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India or enacting a new law to prevent organised beggary and beggary mafias in the UT of J&K and also implement the Judgement dated 21.04.2015 of the Hon'ble High Court of Jammu & Kashmir in its letter and spirit and construct adequate number of beggars' homes/children' homes/sick homes which will help in curbing the menace of beggary in the UT of J&K and also help the innocent children and other people who are in grip of these cartels/mafias to become good citizens and have a life of dignity and self-respect.

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Mental pollution can be calamitous

Abid Hussain Rather

Mental pollution is bewildering and perplexity in the thinking process which ultimately leads to stress, anxiety and tension in our lives. It is the amalgam of preoccupied imaginary negative thoughts, apprehensions and speculations which psychologically haunt our mind. With the advancement of science and information technology in our lives, we have oceanic information available with us. This information contains main mental pollutants in the form of sexual, horrible and violent video clips which contaminate our mind and adversely affect our decision making and learning process and weaken our memory. Mental pollution can also be caused by some criticism, disfavor, dishonor, an unpleasant situation or relationship. Pride and inferiority complex is also a kind of mental pollution. All those people who give preference to their personal gains without caring for others are actu-

ally involved in a kind of mental pollution. As our body requires clean, nutritious and balanced diet to remain healthy similarly a healthy content is required for a healthy mind. Anxiety, depression, jealousy, illogical and negative thoughts, immoral actions and fear of future are some of the adverse effects caused by mental pollution. Mental pollution is also harmful for society as it leads to all sorts of evils in a society like robbery, rape, murders and other crimes. Modern man is living in a lustrous imaginary world because of easy availability of technology where he imagines that everything is under his control. He has forgotten that God has created different people with different abilities. This forgetfulness has resulted in jealousy, competition and negative thoughts, avariciousness and egoism which in turn has resulted in mental pollution.

It has been observed in a research that out of almost 6700 languages spoken in the world more than 2000 languages are spo-

ken in the continent of Africa where educational standard is very low. Furthermore; as per the reports of Centre for Advanced Study of African Languages, almost 75-80% Africans are multilingual and can speak 12-15 languages as either their first or second language. Since Africa is world's least developed continent where people are living in very poor and impecunious condition as they have no availability of scientific and industrial resources. They have no access to multimedia videos, books, dictionaries and internet services. On the other hand people in developed and civilized regions of the world can hardly learn a single foreign language in their lifetime though they have access to all these aids and helping tools. According to experts, the absence of mental pollutants in the environment enables an African to learn and speak an average of 13 languages. Researchers believe that besides socio cultural and psychological factors, absence of mental pollu-

tants in the form of violent and sexual images and videos coming from various media sources can play a vital role in learning foreign languages. Intentional or unintentional encounter with various mental pollutants in the form of movies, programs, pictures, posters, advertisements can trigger the brain hormones and disturbs the biochemical system of our body which results in the arousal of various emotions like anger, frustration, fear or sexual thrill. Such emotions weaken our memory power, imbalance our thoughts and make our mind unable to concentrate and focus on new things and hinder our learning and other cognitive processes. Researchers are of the opinion that during the ancient periods despite the unavailability of science and information technology and powerful tools, people were having sharp memory power and they were masters in many fields and languages due to absence of mental pollutants in the atmosphere which could weaken their learning

process and other mental abilities. It was observed during a survey conducted by some experts in Faith University of Turkey that people who spend most of their time in front of TV or computer screens because of their work, entertainment or some other purpose are involved in some kind of mental pollution irrespective of their age, sex or occupation. According to this survey the level of mental pollution of an individual depends upon the amount of time he spends in different media forms.

It is pertinent to mention here that media and communication is not the only source of mental pollution but any process, event or episode which confuses our mind, diverts our attention or disturbs our concentration can decrease our mental abilities and result in mental pollution. As positive comments and applauses from people can give a person happiness similarly their inexperience criticism, negative behavior can clog our

mental capabilities. So we should always avoid people who have negativity in their ideologies so that our mind could remain free from any kind of pollution.

It is need of the hour to aware people about the ill effects of misuse of modern technology. The sole purpose of technology is to make our life easy and comfortable instead it should not take away the peace of our mind by polluting it. It will be time consuming and difficult for us to learn new things and processes if we will fail in controlling the different factors which result in mental pollution. Overuse and misuse of media and information technology will result in wastage of time instead of saving it and can deteriorate mental health. We should take every possible step to curb mental pollution and keep our mind clean and healthy as nothing can harm an individual as much as such as an unhealthy mind can harm him.

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(The views expressed by the authors are their personal)

Online studies

Sir,

COVID 19 has transformed all the things be it economy, lifestyles or vision. Everything has changed as we are fighting with the virus since last year. From manual work to digital work we have moved on. In present scenario everything be it business, investment, studies has been digitalized. It is time to introspect one most important parameter that is Online studies. Technology has become now need of the hour. Every Indian parent be it poor, middle class or rich never tried to compromise with studies of his children. So Covid has given access to almost majority of students to keep an android phone for online studies. It is a good thing that earlier students had not been aware with development across the globe but now with the help of mobiles they are being well versed. Moreover enhancement of personality also took place because students are using various platforms like zoom, google, webinar etc to connect with studies thereby creating a sense of confidence among them.

However, these phones have become a headache for every parent now a days. Mostly children are using mobile while eating, writing, walking even in wash rooms thereby making them chronic users. Late night sleeps and late morning starts has become a habit. Can we visualise what would be the effect on children when they have to get back to normal offline studies because till then they will become so habitual and it will be a challenge for parents. Parents will be left with no other option rather than to provide phone even to a kid studying in LKG which is definitely not a right age to use mobiles. Apart from praying everyday to save humanity from this deadly virus we have to pray for the positive grooming of our future generations and hopefully this online mode will be taken over by offline mode.

Nidhi Badyal
Jammu

Readers Write

Feeding stray animal

Sir,

Due to COVID 19 Pandemic, there is complete lockdown and closure of restaurants, dhabas, shops, eateries, food points in all districts of J&K. Many stray animals depend on these outlets for their survival and now due to their closure, many stray animals are starving and finding it difficult to survive on their own. So we appeal to people of J&K to feed stray animals of your locality.

Kindness and compassion is the first religion of all. Animals cannot transmit Corona virus infection to humans as per WHO and other health experts.

Last, keep humanity alive by feeding these voiceless beings.

Vishal Khajuria
Honorary Animal Welfare officer for
Animal Welfare Board of India