

# 100 Crore milestone for India

## Institutes of Driving Training & Research

It may be recalled that a few years back it was proposed by the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways that two Institutes of Driving Training and Research and Inspection (IDTR) and certification centres would be set up each in Srinagar and Jammu but the same being mired in various hiccups like issues of land and allied matters, when actually they will be ready and operational is all not known. Jammu and Kashmir having most of the roads in hilly and mountainous terrains, the turnover of traffic having increased and frequent road accidents taking place while most of them fatal, how much important and utility oriented these centres can prove to be, could be guess of none but of great conviction of all. We need dynamic and full training to be imparted to our drivers and to fairly acquaint them with correct ways of driving for which these institutes are of paramount importance. Road safety and well trained drivers being synonymous hence cardinal for driving can safely be termed as a guarantee against none or minimal of accidents taking place. Looking to the ever increasing volume of traffic on our roads, proper and adequate measures of principle of driving need to be given all deserving attention.

Not only proper training of drivers but certification of fitness of vehicles is of equal importance. If at random checking and verification of vehicles plying on roads, especially that of heavy vehicles is done, the findings would be startling as even those vehicles would be found plying on roads where no proper servicing, less of engine care and no replacement of worn out parts and absence of other necessary requirements will be all replete. That speaks for the role to be played by Inspection and Certification Centres. In fact, where and in which respect are the important IDTR projects ailing would not be too difficult to be known. For example, in Jammu project worth Rs. 17 crore, the work on it is still incomplete even after three years and Rs.6.50 crore having been released by the Union Ministry so far while submission of mandatory utilization certificates being erratic and irregular, rest of the amount has not been released to the executing agency. At least, authorities in Transport Department should have been in close touch with the project but the paradoxical factor is their "innocence" even about when precisely the said project would be completed in all forms.

In the same way, the project in Kashmir is facing multiple issues about land, about the fate of the detailed project report with project cost on the higher side and beyond the scope of the scheme guidelines. The Administrative department directing the concerned agency to ensure that the DPR was re-prepared in relation to the assured quantum of funds to be provided by the Union Ministry. The project, therefore, is inordinately delayed. It, however, needs to be stressed upon that sheer professionalism in driving and proficiency in Road Safety were by no means to be compromised with and hence an institutional support was necessary for the purpose which the IDTR is promising. Besides technical and professional aspects which the IDTR is promising, psychological and emotional issues connected with driving also need to be touched which have a bearing on a disciplined driving culture. Those are road rage, drunken driving, hit and run, over speeding and dangerous overtaking especially on curves and blind turns. Union Transport Ministry financing the IDTR projects is primarily aimed at promoting proper skills, traits and education all about driving and road safety norms in the interests of the safety of the driver, people, vehicle, occupants of a vehicle and healthy and fit vehicles alone plying on roads. State /UT Governments, therefore, by extending all assistance to and monitoring of the IDTR projects would be contributing towards achieving its broader aims and ambitions.

## Bhaderwah -The Chota Kashmir

It is aptly said that in wilderness lies the beauty of the nature. John Milton, 17th century English Poet in his famous Epic Poem "Paradise Lost" focuses on and "Justifies the ways of God to men" and when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, fall from grace became imminent. Nature has been liberal in keeping at absolute disposal of human beings lush green forests, rivers, streams, snow capped hills, meadows, bewitching and awe striking beautiful spots and what not all for their enjoying, benefiting from, using, staying and even habituating but never violating. Kishtwar in Jammu region just 80 kms far from Batote and 210 kms from Jammu has all to offer to the visiting tourists who do through in numbers to visit the scenic town and adjoining captivating spots and as a result thereof local economic activities get generated mostly due to the tourism and tourism related activities but such a mini-paradise is put to great jeopardy just due to the casual approach and an unchanged mindset towards our duties to protect environment and thereby let such beautiful places survive as beautiful and charming ones and not turn into barren, impoverished and lifeless.

We are not here to enumerate how and why Bhaderwah is so famous and occupying a niche of its own type on the tourism canvas but which lurking and even open danger is threatening Bhaderwah menacingly and if consciously and seriously measures taken to fight this danger were not taken, then such a paradise could be lost for ever. It is the single use plastic, polythene and similar substances which are posing grave threat to the environment and causing irreversible pollution of water, local marine environment and the like in Bhaderwah. Both the local people and tourists visiting the town and other areas generate enough plastic material like water bottles, cups, pouches, straws, polythene bags and the like which gets accumulated and deposited in one or the other form only to create pollution.

Waste material generating activities near rivers and other beautiful spots in Bhaderwah besides brazen dumping of waste generated from households and shops etc adds to the problem although Municipal Committee Bhaderwah and Bhaderwah Development Authority are responsible for waste management but looking to the unchanged habits, casual approach and perhaps ignorance towards environment concerns of tourists and the general public, the problem of single use plastic causing damage to environment could be enormous. Unless we, whether as tourists or ordinary people of the tourist areas specific, realise our duties towards protecting such captivatingly beautiful spots by saying "no" to plastic use, the days are not far when it would be too late to "regain" the Paradise lost. We need to preserve, protect and sustain the environment of Bhaderwah and for that purposes all places to make nature's boons retain their sheen and charm.

Narendra Modi

India completed vaccination of 100 crore doses on 21st October 2021, in just about 9 months since starting vaccination. This has been a tremendous journey in dealing with Covid-19, especially when we recall how things stood in early 2020. Humanity was dealing with such a pandemic after 100 years and no-one knew much about the virus. We remember how unpredictable the situation appeared then, as we were faced by an unknown and invisible enemy mutating rapidly.

The journey from anxiety to assurance has happened and our nation has emerged stronger, thanks to the world's largest vaccination drive.

It has been a truly bhagirath effort involving multiple sections of society. To get a sense of the scale, assume that each vaccination took just 2 minutes for a healthcare worker. At this rate, it took around 41 lakh man days or approximately 11 thousand man years of effort to reach this landmark.

For any effort to attain and sustain speed and scale, trust of all stakeholders is crucial. One of the reasons for the success of the campaign was the trust that people developed in the vaccine and the process followed, despite various efforts to create mistrust and panic.

There are some among us who only trust foreign brands, even for simply everyday necessities. However, when it came to something as crucial as the Covid-19 vaccine, the people of

India unanimously trusted 'Made in India' vaccines. This is a significant paradigm shift.

India's vaccine drive is an example of what India can achieve if the citizens and the government come together with a common goal in the spirit of Jan Bhagidari. When India started its vaccination program, there were many people who doubted the capabilities of 130 crore Indians. Some said India would take 3-4 years. Some others said people will not come forward to get vaccinated. There were those who said there will be gross mismanagement and chaos in the vaccination process. Some even said that India will not be able to manage supply chains. But just like the Janta Curfew and subsequent lockdowns, the people of India showed how spectacular the results can be, if they are made trusted partners.

When everyone takes ownership, nothing is impossible. Our healthcare workers traversed hills and crossed rivers across difficult geographies to vaccinate people. Our youth, social workers, healthcare workers, social and religious leaders, all deserve credit for the fact that India faces minimal vaccine hesitancy when compared to even developed nations.

There was a lot of pressure from different interest groups to give preferential treatment to them in vaccination. But the Government ensured that, like our other schemes, there is no VIP culture in the vaccination drive either.

In early 2020, when Covid-19 was rampaging across the world, it was clear to us that this pandemic will have to be eventually fought with the help of vaccines. We started preparing early. We constituted expert groups and started preparing a roadmap right from April 2020.

Till today, only a handful of countries have developed their own vaccines. More than 180 countries are dependent on an

population and how many years would that have taken? It is here that credit should be given to Indian scientists and entrepreneurs for rising to the occasion. It is due to their talent and hard-work that India is truly Aatmanirbhar when it comes to vaccines. Our vaccine manufacturers, by scaling up to meet the demands of such a large population, have shown that they are second to none.

form of institutional assistance, scientific research, funding, as well as accelerated regulatory processes. All ministries of the government came together to facilitate the vaccine makers and remove any bottlenecks as a result of our 'whole of Government' approach.

In a country of the scale of India, it is not enough to just produce. Focus has to be on last mile delivery and seamless logistics. To understand the challenges involved, imagine the journey taken by one vial of vaccines. From a plant in Pune or Hyderabad, the vial is sent to a hub in any of the states, from where it is transported to the district hub. From there, it reaches a vaccination centre. This entails the deployment of thousands of trips taken by flights and trains. During this entire journey, the temperature has to be maintained in a particular range which is centrally monitored.

For this, over 1 lakh cold-chain equipments were utilized. States were given advance notice of the delivery schedule of the vaccines so that they could plan their drives better and vaccines reached them on the pre-decided days. This has been an unprecedented effort in the history of independent India.

All these efforts were com-

plemented by a robust tech platform in CoWIN. It ensured that the vaccine drive was equitable, scalable, trackable, and transparent. This ensured that there was no scope for favouritism or jumping the queue. It also ensured that a poor worker could take first dose in his village and the second dose of the same vaccine in the city where he works, after the required time interval. In addition to a real-time dashboard to boost transparency, the QR-coded certificates ensured verifiability. There are hardly any examples of such efforts not only in India but also the world.

In my Independence Day Address in 2015, I had said that our country is moving ahead because of 'Team India' and this 'Team India' is a big team of our 130 crore people. People's participation is the biggest strength of democracy. If we run the country through the participation of 130 crore Indians, our country will be moving ahead 130 crore steps every moment. Our vaccination drive has yet again showed the power of this 'Team India'. India's success in its vaccination drive has also demonstrated to the whole world that 'democracy can deliver'.

I am optimistic that the success achieved in the world's largest vaccination drive will further spur our youth, our innovators and all levels of government to set new benchmarks of public service delivery which will be a model not only for our country, but also for the world.

(The author is Prime Minister of India)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi showing thumbs-up sign to encourage health workers during a visit to Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital on the occasion of India's achievement of 100 crore vaccination, in New Delhi on Thursday. (UNI)

extremely limited pool of producers and dozens of nations are still waiting for the supply of vaccines, even as India has crossed 100 crore doses! Imagine the situation if India did not have its own vaccine. How would have India secured enough vaccines for such a large

In a nation where governments used to be known as a roadblock impeding forward movement, our government has instead been an accelerator and enabler of progress. The government partnered with the vaccine makers right from day one and gave them support in the

advance notice of the delivery schedule of the vaccines so that they could plan their drives better and vaccines reached them on the pre-decided days. This has been an unprecedented effort in the history of independent India.

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## Only if KMs welcome KPs

Ashish Kaul

The roar of the wind is making me anxious. There is something in the air that makes me restless. I know what it is, it's Kashmir! Kashmir ensanguined with bloodstains, be it of Kashmiri Pandits or of teachers singing 'Jana Gana Mana'. Kashmir, Saluting the bravery and martyrdom of our soldiers and often defeating the cruel intentions of terrorists to disrupt its peace. The scarlet luster of the valley has never gone, but now it's the blood that falls, but chinar leaves. Voices can be heard against this bloodshed, showing empathy and asking justice for the victims, playing politics over the death of non-Kashmiris.

Just like, no control over price hike and inflation, despite various claims, there are still over 150 cases of infiltration reported in the valley amidst the news of peace being established in the valley. Stone pelting may have stopped but firings are on a surge. Once again target killing are making a buzz in the streets. Terrorists are waiting for the right moment. It may not be as heinous as as 1990s but, it is true and must be taken care of. While the event loving government is celebrating the revocation of Article 370, it requires an immediate action.

A dream of 'New Kashmir' has been promised. People believe that now the government has finally made it come true. Now Jobs, Business, Profits, identity, security will be given to every individual Kashmiri. Even those who had to leave their motherland could come back and relocate. The people who call them also make claims that everything is fine and peaceful. Then it is promised that when they return, the government will not let them lack anything, they will get jobs, their lost home and they will be welcomed with open hands. And all

this is happening only because Article 370 has been removed. Is it really? Is the government really doing justice to the world's most educated Kashmiri Pandit community, who have given them a place in the fourth-class jobs that too with a 'compulsory' clause that forces them to serve in Kashmir only? Those who themselves cannot stand in Srinagar without security, with what confidence are they not only calling back Kashmiri Pandits, but also claiming employment arrangements for them in the interior areas of Kashmir. Is there a single politician or a Government who can move freely around in the valley sans security? Even with a cloud of commandos, the politicians cant admit the role of local onground terrorists in Kashmir. Therefore, forcing aboriginals to return and serve is like a hobsons choice. First and Foremost there should be arrangement for the security of Kashmiri Pandits. Why doesn't the government create a Kashmiri Pandit regiments on the lines of Dogra and Madras regiments and then make them serve in the valley. A common Kashmiri Pandit will protect the country and himself and will also earn his livelihood.

I have said this before too, article 370 is a peculiar irony for Jammu and Kashmir which has projected the Muslim society as a vilian, and on the other hand blocked the way for the development of areas like Jammu, Poonch, Rajouri, Kishtwar, Ladakh. What has been promised by abrogating article 370, will that really happen. Will the root problem of Kashmir be solved? Will Jhelum be called Vitasta again? Will Kashmiri Pandits be able to live peacefully in their streets again? Will every displaced who has lived 700 years in the shadow of Islamic terror, will be able to roam in Kashmir with the tricolor in his hand?

It is a strange delusion and misogyny that the abrogation of Article 370 will give the Kashmiri Brahmins their abandoned land and roof and end terrorism from the Valley. The religious demographic of the entire Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh province has changed. Today Jammu region, Poonch, Rajouri, Ladakh almost the whole area has been converted to 50 percent Muslim population. Wherever you see, you will find close to 50 percent Muslim community! The presence of the Gujar and Bakarwal community settled on the land across the Tawi river is neither officially acknowledged by the government nor the administration but you cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that their presence also changes the demographics. The day is not far when the indigenous Kashmiri Pandits and Muslim community of Jammu will together oppose the abrogation of Article 370. And Kashmiri Hindus who are celebrating the withdrawal of 370, their identity will be crushed right here.

Don't know what makes the governments go to contemplation camps as soon as 'Kashmir' is disturbed. Worrying lines are visible on everyone's forehead, but on the ground no one is seen doing anything except the army. The problem is that unless the government accepts the Kashmir problem is a religious one, the hopes of a solution are blurred. Because not recognizing the problem, even after recognizing is the real problem. Then the second thing is that if the government considers Kashmiri Pandits a part of the problem, then why are they not part of the solution? Why does everything remain as a ritual?

Only a Kashmiri can cure terror in Kashmir, no government. Together, Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims can travel to the destination of

peace. Kashmiri Muslims should also now understand that their existence is incomplete without Kashmiri Pandits. The path of return of Kashmiri Hindu with or without article 370 originates from the heart of Kashmiri Muslims.

If Kashmiriyat is to be kept alive, then the Muslims living in the valley must understand that the religious terrorism evicted Kashmiri Pandits from their own land in 1989. If then the common Muslim Kashmiris had stood with the Pandits and protested, they would have saved Kashmir from the fire of terrorism. Now if they can openly welcome their Kashmiri Pandit brothers and sisters, considering and correcting the mistake, then and only then real peace will be restored.

Like Abhimanyu, the hero of my book 'Refugee Camp', I also firmly believe that peace in any society can be brought only by the people of that society, neither the government nor the police can play any big role in it.

The hype around abrogation of Article 370 is far from reality. It lies in the womb of future that what benefit Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh will get from this. For now, the removal of this one section, will neither revoke terrorism, nor guarantee peace for the Kashmiri Pandits. It is for Kashmiris themselves to decide whether they want terrorism or Kashmiriyat and peace co-existing with Kashmiri Pandits.

There is no doubt that these days Kashmir, which is stained with the blood of Hindus, Sikhs and non-Kashmiri citizens, can walk the path of peace not on the basis of symbolic events and festivals, but only on mutual reconciliation, understanding and discussion. Until then, keep singing this iconic Bollywood song, 'Kasme, waade pyaar, wafa sab baat hai, baton ka kya'.

(The author is a senior media person and doctoral research scholar)

## India's Urban Environmental Challenges

Ram Rattan Sharma

It is expected that by 2030 about half of the Indian population will be residing in urban areas. This pace of urbanization is already being accompanied by problems of water supply. Sewage disposal, municipal waste, the lack of open land scaped spaces, air and water pollution, and public transport alongwith others. Most of these environmental problems have their origin in the planned development of cities leading to higher use of resources, such as land and water. Many times, there is not even consensus as to which challenges are more important and need to be addressed. It is therefore, necessary to have an understanding of India's serious urban environmental challenges alongwith empirical evidence to enable policy makers to examine them. Leading urban environmental challenges faced by India are changes in land use/ land cover as urban population increases, the demand of land for various urban activities also increases. Forests need to be cleared, grasslands ploughed or grazed, wet lands drained and croplands are encroached upon due to expanding cities. This is a challenge because it reduces green cover and increases the consumption of fossil fuels and leads to increase in surface temperature, solid waste generation, collection and its management is a major challenge, because a large amount of solid waste is left by the side of streets to decay, which is a major source of health concerns. Further, there are no appropriate mechanisms to collect and dispose off the waste. Thus generated, poor sanitation is a challenge, because there is still a large proportion of population which practices open defecation, hence this plays a role in the pollution of surface and ground water sources.

There is some evidence, that there is steady erosion in the land cover of some cities in the country such as Bangalore. Experts find a 46% increase in the built up area of Bangalore from 1973-2007 leading to a sharp decline of 61% area in the water bodies mostly due to the intense urbanization process. They also find that there was a decrease in the proportion of vegetation in the city from 68% in 1973 to only 25% in 2007, with progression in the built area. Similar evidences are available from Delhi. The city is

developing very rapidly mainly in the west, South-west and eastern sides. There was a reduction in the agricultural land because of urban expansion in the fringe areas. The major cause of this decline in area under agriculture was due to an-increase in urban area. There was also a considerable decrease in the ridge, considered as the lungs of Delhi, from 6.7% in 1992 to 5.5% in 2004 because of continuous illegal tree cutting, quarrying and construction activity.

*The millennium development goals enjoin upon the signatory nations to extend access to improved sanitation to at least half the urban population by 2015, and 100% access by 2025.*

Solid waste is a major source of environmental pollution in Indian cities and towns. The energy and resources institute has estimated that by 2047, waste generation in Indian cities will increase five-fold to touch 260 million tons per year, implying that the current solid waste generation is over 50 million tons per year. A study by the world bank, puts India's annual generation of municipal Solid waste to be somewhat lower, i.e. in the range of 35 to 45 million tone, amounting to about 100,000 to 120,000 metric tonnes every day. It is estimated that annual increase in the quantity of solid waste in India's cities to be at the rate of 5 percent per annum. Further disposal practices of the solid waste open dumping sites are highly unsatisfactory. The poor management of solid waste has led to contamination of ground. Water and surface water through leachate and pollution of air through unregulated burning of waste, unscientific practices in processing and disposal com-

posed the environmental hazards posed by solid waste. It is estimated that anywhere between 30-35 percent of the total waste remains uncollected from the city roads. Similarly, the waste disposal services in most cities and towns are archaic and inadequate and carry high environmental risks. The combined effect of the inefficiencies in collection and inadequate and unsafe disposal is evident in wide spread insanitation, contaminated water and high incidence of chronic respiratory and communicable diseases found in India's cities. Amore recent analysis of the trend in waste disposal in 22 of India's cities by the federation of Indian chambers of commerce and industry shows that 14 out of the 22 cities send more than 75% of their waste to dumpsites indicating a lack of adequate treatment and disposal facilities, even larger cities like Delhi and Mumbai, which ought to have better and more scientific treatment facilities have resorted to unscientific dumping of waste.

Open defecation is wide spread in urban areas of India. This situation is typical of India as well as other developing countries. In India roughly 12.4 million urban households do not have access to latrines and defecate in the open. Approximately 5.40 urban households use community latrines and 13.4 million households use shared latrines, the status with respect to the urban poor in even slums without latrines is 17 percent and 51 percent respectively. In respect of septic latrines availability is 66 percent and 35 percent. More than 37% of the total human excreta generated in Urban India, is unsafely disposed. This imposes significant public health and environmental costs to urban areas that contribute more than 60% of the country's GDP. Impacts of poor sanitation are especially significant for the urban poor, women, children and the elderly. The loss due to diseases caused by poor sanitation for children under 14 years alone in urban areas amounts to 500 crore.

A task force on governance, transparency and participation in the environment and forest sector was setup by the planning commission in August 2006. One of the major recommendations of this

task force was that the Govt. should immediately activate or reconstitute the National Land Use Board and charge it with the responsibility of developing a policy and long term perspective plans, which guides the process of conservation and sustainable use of land and water across the country. Such a National policy and perspective plan on land and water use should be mandated by appropriate law and specify map of lands/water for specific uses, including biodiversity conservation subsistence and domestic, commercial and industrial/urban use by local communities. Clear priority needs to be given to ensuring ecological security and the livelihood security of those most depended on biodiversity. As far as desired level of service is concerned with respect to solid waste, various committees have recommended 100 percent collection of the generated waste, with its proper disposal.

The millennium development goals enjoin upon the signatory nations to change to improved sanitation to at least half the urban population by 2015, and 100% access by 2025. This implies extending coverage to households facilities in public places to make cities open defecation free. Sanitary and safe disposal of 100% human excreta and liquid wastes must be disposed of safely.

The Govt. of India recognizes that sanitation is a state subject and on ground implementation and sustenance of public health and environmental outcomes require strong city level institutions and stake holders. Each state and city needs to formulate its own sanitation strategy and their respective city sanitation plan respectively in over all conformity to the national policy.

We find that India's major urban environmental concerns pertain to change in land use cover, solid waste management and better management of sanitation to make cities open defecation free. Finances still are the biggest constraint for management of India's urban environmental concerns. However, there is hope. There are large no of win-win situations such as roping in private sector partners for better solid waste management and sanitation.

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