

## Home Minister's visit

Home Minister Amit Shah's recent visit to Jammu and Kashmir can be seen in more contexts than would ordinarily appear. Not that it was his first visit after abrogation of Article 370, not that to take stock of the security scenario alone looking to infiltration of Pakistani armed men in Jammu's Poonch and Mendhara areas and hiding in dense forests to carry out cowardly attacks, not only to seek clarifications from the security apparatus in Jammu and Kashmir about perceptible security lapses that recently probably resulted in soft target killings by terrorists, not to extend his three day visit here just for a routine visit but to show complete solidarity with the people, lay stress on holistic development and extend "friendship with the youth". Besides all that, what matters most - the unequivocal message of ushering in total peace, progress and to tread the path of fast economic development - needs to be taken seriously. Developmental projects worth Rs.15000 crore having been launched in Jammu and Kashmir is a pointer towards the thrust on greater and faster development along with wiping Pakistan sponsored militancy and killing of innocent civilians.

It must be adequately noted by those elements advocating for some talks with either the sponsors of terror or even those who choose this destructive path of terror that there would be no talks with Pakistan while there were no reservations about talking to the youth of Jammu and Kashmir. His saying that there would be no dialogue with Pakistan as he would rather prefer to talk to people of Jammu and Kashmir and its youth is conveying reaffirmation in the process of dialogue and discussions within the constitutional and democratic framework. Hence, his trust in the youth and expectations of them being part-takers in Prime Minister's vision of a peaceful and developed Jammu and Kashmir stems from the fact that people particularly the youth talked more about development and economic issues including employment related ones rather than any other non productive matters. The opportunity was not momentary but needed to be seized in a positive way.

While the Home Minister might have seriously pointed out certain weaknesses in the exercise of coordination between the Police, Army and para-military forces which has been one of the chief reasons of increase in terror violence in the valley, he did the other balancing act too to boost their morale in fighting a treacherous enemy not fighting in the open. That was exhibited in his visiting a CRPF camp in Lethpora Pulwama, a militancy hotbed where he not only talked at length to the security personnel, sharing food with them but spending in their camp a full night also. This was a message to the security forces that in the pursuit of fighting terrorism and related violence, the Government was all at their back and support. Claiming it to be his "most important engagement" during his visit to the Union Territory, his assertion that Modi Government had zero tolerance policy towards terrorism needed to be read between the lines. It may be recalled that it is the same area of Lethpora where a Pakistani trained suicide car bomber blew himself up to cause martyrdom of our 40 personnel of CRPF last year. The Home Minister, at the Martyrs' Memorial, also paid floral tributes to these brave martyrs lest their sacrifices for the motherland and in the pursuit of fighting the scourge of terrorism is not, even in the least, forgotten while giving more strength to the said resolve in this respect especially on the day coinciding with 74th year of accession of Jammu and Kashmir with the Union of India. His longing for and expectations of "seeing" a peaceful Jammu and Kashmir - "in our lifetime" was emotive as well as determinative of letting it happen. Piecemeal or short lived or inadequate peace in the Union Territory should be no reason of drawing any satisfaction but his call of "total peace to be achieved" should be the aim and the vision of all.

His clarion call to the youth, "I want to be friends with the youth of the valley" (in particular) had an implicit message to come to terms in respect of throwing away any inhibitions regarding settling and resolving issues through talks. Such offers and assurances do not keep coming very frequently hence needed to be reciprocated positively. Speaking to people without a bullet proof shield, he brought home to those avowed critics about the rationale behind imposing internet restrictions and imposing curfew that as a result of exploiting the sentiments of people and abetting them to break law and order on abrogation of Article 370, they could have been harmed by being exposed to police action. Meeting people by the Home Minister in the open without any security restrictions denotes building trust in them though much needs to be done and to achieve resounding results it was imperative to subdue apprehensions and doubts of any hue. Inaugurating houseboat festival at Dal Lake in Srinagar is a symbolic commitment of tourism related activities to generate employment avenues while fighting terror side by side.

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir needs to take ahead from where the Home Minister kick-started the intention to sincerely talk to the youth, that it should take enough initiatives in taking the youth in confidence and win their trust. At the same time, the youth need to reciprocate positively, adequately and materially in isolating and abhorring militancy and related issues. Setting up of 4500 Youth Clubs wherefrom nearly over 35000 youth having been benefitted need to be expanded in number and area so as to put an antidote to the activities and the nefarious designs of Pakistan trained and indoctrinated militants. Let the sweeping of new, soothing and pleasant breeze, now be not only felt but seen too by the people in Jammu and Kashmir.

# Martyrs Day Celebration at Qila Darhal

Dr Mandeep Azad, Dr Manmeet Motan

28 Oct is celebrated every year as 'Annual Martyrs Day' (Shaheed Diwas) to pay homage to the martyrs of Qila Darhal. The people of Qila Darhal fought with invaders on 28th Oct 1947 bravely with Pakistani tribesman and attack was repulsed. The martyrs of Darhal Qila halted the advancement of Pak raiders/Qabailis and inflicted heavy casualties to Qabailis. Jathedar Ram Singh and his men fought bravely and repulsed the attack from September 4, 1947, till the arrival of Indian Army. Every year Martyrs Day is celebrated in the area. Nowshera (alternatively spelt Nowshera and Nausheera) is a town and tehsil in the Rajouri district. It is a small town located on the bank of Manawer river just 4 kms inwards from the Manawer bridge on Jammu-Poonch national highway. It is a border tehsil of Rajouri district with a vast areal and demographic extent. It is a beautiful place with a number of tourist attractions including the fort of Mangla Devi, holy cave temple of Mangla Mata, Central Gurudwara of Sikhs in Nonial, Qila Darhal and other Dargahs and temples. Similar to battle of Saragathi on 12 September 1897 wherein an estimated 12,000 - 24,000 Orakzai and Afridi tribesmen attacked Saragarhi, cutting off Fort Gulistan from Fort Lockhart. The Afghans attacked the outpost of Saragarhi where thousands of them swarmed and surrounded the fort, preparing to assault it but the brave sikh soldiers led by Havildar Ishar Singh, the 21 soldiers in the fort-all of whom were Sikhs-chose to fight to the death, in what is considered by some military historians as the greatest last stand in history. The post was recaptured two days later by another British Indian contingent. Similar to such battle was fought in Qila Darhal where in brave civilians held the ground from September 04th 1947 to October 28th, 1947 till arrival of the Indian Army. They decided not to run but to fight till the last breath. This kind of heroism is not normals it needs special level of patriotism and love for your motherland. Qila Darhal a small village 20 kms northwest of Nowshera was inhabited by the Sikhs and majority of them were the retired Army soldiers or large number of them had taken part in second world war. Their decision to save their land gives a big message of nationalism to all of us today.

On 17 June 1947 Indian Independence Act was passed by the British Parliament for granting independence to India and the partition of the country into two sovereign states of India and Pakistan. At

the time of partition of the sub-continent there were 562 princely states ruled by the Maharajah and Nawabs. Such states were asked to accede to either India or Pakistan or remain independent. Among such princely states was the state of Jammu and Kashmir ruled by a Maharaja Hari Singh having Muslim majority population. Though all the states acceded to India or Pakistan on various dates before or immediately after 15th Aug 1947, the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir delayed his decision in regard to accession. Maharaja sought from both the Dominions a standstill agreement to come into effect on 15 Aug. 1947. However only a few days after Pakistan accepted the standstill agreement, it was on 4th September that raids from Pakistan side

essential commodities to Kashmir were cut off. Communications were tampered and free transit of people was hindered. These raids grew into a regular warfare. The enemy captured Muzaffarabad and Baramulla in October. Seeing this Maharaja signed the instrument of accession with Government of India on 26th Oct 1947 and Indian forces came to J&K on 27th Oct 1947.

Suspecting the future dangers in the month of October, the residents of Qila Darhal started preparing for their defence and save their motherland. The people of Qila Darhal, Lam, Rajua, Jajote, Seri, Sarila, Tatu, Hill Kayla and Andruath assembled in the fort in first week of September 1947 irrespective of caste and religion. They start-



ed the preparations for their defence in the hour of attack and arranged the ration and other commodities for a period of 6 months. The tribesmen from Pakistan attacked the fort of Darhal. The people of Qila Darhal fought with invaders on 28th Oct 1947 bravely and attack was repulsed. While the enemy captured Rajouri and reached Nowshera, numerous attacks were repulsed in Darhal by the brave civilians as they held the ground from September 04th 1947 to October 28th, 1947 till arrival of the Indian Army. A fierce battle ensued in the area of Darhal Fort wherein heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy. During this battle, Jathedar Ram

Singh, Hukam Singh, Sohan Singh, Suchan Singh and Pritam Singh laid down their lives. There were many injured in this battle but all fought bravely and ensured that they won't let them in the fort till their last breath. Young, old, irrespective of their religion, even women being led by Sardarni Bhag Kour fought with enemy very bravely from the top of Fort. This fort has now become an integral part of the sacrifices made to preserve Independence.

To fondly remember and commemorate the heroic deeds of civilians and army personnel for saving the day, 28th October is celebrated as Qila Darhal Defence Day ever since. In the memory of the supreme sacrifices made by villagers & army Personnel, a memorial has been made to immortalize the sacrifices. Shaheed Garh (Qila Darhal) War memorial made at some distance from Fort stands tall as a testimony of bravery and sacrifices. The twelve feet high marble and granite super structure on a four feet high platform showcases the names of all army personals and civilians who achieved martyrdom in the areas of Jhangar and Lam since Independence. It's a fact that Fort of Qila Darhal has played an important role in safeguarding the independence of region. Sikhs have sacrificed their lives for the protection of the oppressed, the helpless and other religions. While various communities across the country have contributed to meeting these challenges, the Sikh community's contribution has been disproportionately large relative to the small size of its population. The Sikhs fought gallantly on numerous battlefields in the First and Second World Wars. In all, 83,005 Sikh soldiers made the supreme sacrifice on the battlefields of the two World Wars; another 1,09,045 were wounded in battle. While the Sikhs from Punjab, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir serve in large numbers in the Punjab and Dogra regiments and other fighting arms like the Regiment of Artillery and the Corps of Engineers. The battle of Qila Darhal also depict the bravery and valour of the sikh along with the residents of Qila Darhal who fought with enemy and made them step back. In spite of this Qila Darhal having such an important significance, the fort is neglected and not in a good condition. We should try to save our heritage places to give a message of bravery and sacrifice made by our great ancestors. History needs to be preserved to boost patriotism in the younger generation. We should make sure to tell our younger generation about these incidents of heroism to infuse a sense of nationality and patriotism.

## The world is looking at India

Harsha Kakar

Till a few decades ago, India was considered a land of snake charmers and elephants. The world considered India synonymous with poverty. The change began in the early nineties when Narasimha Rao with Manmohan Singh as his finance minister, opened the Indian economy. India in 1991 was compelled to mortgage 47 tonnes of gold to the Bank of England and Bank of Japan to raise just USD 400 Million. Since then India has steadily grown into an economic powerhouse and would by Mar 2022 be the world's fifth largest economy ending up as the third largest by 2030. Those nations which looked down on India are currently running to Delhi to sign trade deals. Every nation is aware of the power of the Indian market. India, which once depended on doles, is economically supporting weaker nations.

As recent as April this year, in the midst of the second COVID wave, India was projected as a nation which had lost the battle, its masses had suffered, and its economy was on a downslide. Indian healthcare

systems were on the verge of collapse. Indian media personalities writing for US journals including the Time Magazine, New York Times and Washington Post, ridiculed the national leadership on its handling of COVID and posted pictures of burning pyres to justify a collapsed India. Factual reality projected by Jaisankar in a discussion with the Hoover institution, 'We are giving free food to as many as 800 million people. We've put money into bank accounts of 400 million,' was ignored.

Last week, India crossed the 100-crore mark in vaccinations. For a nation which has a low per-capita income this is a remarkable feat. India is amongst the few nations which developed its own vaccine. The Indian economy has bounced back and as per the IMF is expected to grow at 9.5% this year, the fastest globally. During 20-21, India attracted the highest FDI inflow of USD 82 Billion. Only proves that the world knew India would rebound.

As PM Modi stated, 'COVID-19 affected the economies of the entire world, including that of India. But our economy has

recovered more strongly than it was halted by the pandemic.' None of those who criticized India's handling of the pandemic and its economic downturn have commented on its rebound or its successful vaccination program. They suddenly seem to be in hibernation.

India is the largest producer of vaccines in the world. Its supplies would enable WHO to control the spread of the virus. The QUAD, which is undertaking vaccine diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific is dependent on Indian vaccine production. Having achieved the 100-crore-mark, Indian exports and gifting of vaccines would help a number of smaller nation fight the pandemic.

Indian military power has witnessed a quantum leap since it faced defeat at the hands of China in 1962. Currently, India is considered the only country capable of challenging China in Asia. Its resounding victory in 1971 and 1999, displayed that the Indian armed forces have changed for the better. The Global Firepower ranking, based on 50 individual factors, in its assessment for 2021, places Indian military power fourth, after

the US, Russia and China. Presently, every major power projecting force in Asia seeks military cooperation with India.

While India has no external designs, it has developed its military capabilities to handle its own regional threats. Hence, when the Chinese intruded into Ladakh last year, India announced that it needs no global support in containing the Chinese. Blocking Chinese forces and occupying Kailash Ridge, India has displayed its military prowess. While it seeks a resolution through talks, India remains prepared for any Chinese misadventures. The cross-border strike and Balakote have both displayed Indian resolve of not backing down to terrorism. This has enhanced India's global standing.

India remains an important member of all global economic and military alliances. It has shifted its stance from non-alignment to pro-Russia to pro-US. It is the backbone behind the QUAD, second in military power to the US. India not joining the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) has impacted the organization. There

have been a series of requests for India to reconsider its stand. India currently conducts military exercises with multiple nations. Indian soft power has changed global perception of the country.

All the above have contributed to the rise of Indian diplomatic power. India is a nation which has a respected global voice. It participates in multiple global outreach programs. Simultaneously, its ability to support and assist weaker and smaller nations has led to enhanced goodwill. This rise in diplomatic power has made India immune to global critics, who believe third world countries must act as per their whims and fancies. India's refusal to change decisions, whether on Kashmir or Citizenship Amendment Act, despite criticism from so-called global watchdogs or select elected representatives of the western has hurt privately funded influential organizations, many of whom control media houses. India is unconcerned.

There remain shortcomings which need to be overcome. Militarily, India is still a major arms importer. No nation can be a

global power if it is largely dependent on imported military hardware. Indian technology levels need to grow especially in terms of cyber defence and warfare. The Indian defence industry must be given a boost and supported as it develops. India still has to lift large masses from poverty and improve its healthcare systems. The religious divide within the country is impacting India's global image of secularism and tolerance. Unless this is attended to Indian reputation will be impacted.

However, the world looks upon India as a nation which has demonstrated that sound policies can change fortunes of nations. Its power makes it a nation of choice which world leaders seek to embrace. PM Modi's statement in the UN General Assembly in September holds true. He stated, 'When India grows, the world grows. When India reforms, the world transforms.' Nation's which partner India grow with it, while nations which oppose it realise that India is no pushover and can stand on its own. India is now on the world stage to stay.

*The author is Major General (Retd)*

Dr. Satwant Singh Rissam

Every Congress party office bearer says that Congress is ready to take on BJP. But Congress which is even not ready to handle its own internal crisis, how will it fight BJP and dream of running the country again! We have seen what Congress has gone through in Punjab. This reflects that Congress in present political scenario cannot even run states which it has already won. The impact of this is now visible within the non-BJP and non-Congress parties as all such parties are slowly going away from Congress. In past few weeks, many political leaders including from Congress, have started siding with Mamta Banerjee led

TMC. The truth is that until and unless the infighting and the differences are sorted out within the Congress party, there can be no good political results for them. The quicker they get together under the leadership of Sonia, Rahul or Priyanka only then political situation will start changing for Congress. 'Dharnas' and 'protest politics' won't bring change in Congress fortunes.

However, this won't be easy as the Gandhi's themselves are in dilemma as to which Gandhi should lead the Congress in prevailing internal crisis. On the

## Gandhis must decide

other hand, the problem facing the Congress party is the 'floating idea' that it needs someone outside of Gandhi family to lead it. Because by now Gandhi's are unable to win many elections and leaders belonging to G-23 group are openly raising voices for this change.

The members of this G-23 group aren't the only ones in the Congress party who want change in the party, many others support same thought but they aren't raising voice. Furthermore, adding to all this trouble is that Sonia Gandhi in this crucial period isn't willing to give

leadership to someone outside of Gandhi family. All Congress leaders want a full time president for the party as the term 'interim president' itself gives out a negative signal and has helped in creating various factions within party. And interestingly Rahul Gandhi isn't ready to take the charge as a full time president. Amid all this, the leaders of G-23 group aren't ready to give up their demand to change president, as every now and then they raise voice against top leadership and it was evident during their Jammu visit too. All leaders of G-23 have practical-

ly become inactive across country and even Ghulam Nabi Azad who is also member of this G-23 group has gone silent on political matters raised by Congress high command in J&K.

It is only the Congress which can take on BJP due to its presence across the nation and with 2024 approaching time is running out for Congress to settle its internal problem. There is one thought prevailing among the voters and supporters of Congress party that like Indira Gandhi, who had split the Congress to take on internal infighting and later revived party,

approved by Govt of India up to year 2037 will attract huge investments into J and K and Govt is aiming at providing employment for at least 10 lakh youth. The Govt is appreciative of providing funds to the tune of Rs 2386 crore for education and sports which itself speaks about the Govt's commitment to bring out the best talents to the fore front. It is urged upon to the youth to stay away from drugs and other social elements which are being smuggled into JandK to destroy the growth of our Youth and we need to tackle this menace collectively. I call upon the youth to use their talent for the good of the society and contribute in nation building.

*(The author is In charge Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, UT, J&K.)*

## Empowerment of J&K youth

Prof. P L Kaul

Youth is the future of our Nation. It is investment through education in these young minds that will determine the course of their future and that of the country and the world. We need to empower our youth with the knowledge of skills that will enable them to find their place in tomorrow's World. Each period of man's life has its own specialities. Childhood is known for its innocence, adolescence for spurt in growth and for dreams but youth is the best period of life, because it is full of energy, enthusiasm and will to fight and win over difficulties and to take bold initiatives. Youth is the strength and life line for any nation. Young minds alone can

solve the problem and generate innovative ideas and resources to confront the challenges. Young population is the true maker of a society. We have the greatest youth power to exercise, the values, morality and ethics for progression of peace, prosperity and development. Youth is a power house to generate ideas and resources to confront the future challenges. Under the leadership of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Jammu and Kashmir, is moving ahead on the path of progress and development, keeping in mind the expectation and aspirations of the youth.

The youth has to play main role in Government's developmental agenda and as such several reformative measures are being taken by the Administra-

tion to address the concerning issues of the youth and utilising their full potential for developing a peaceful and progressive Jammu and Kashmir.

J&K, youth have priorities to get jobs, to become entrepreneurs, access to skill based education, good governance, elimination of corruption and to lead a healthy, peaceful, safe and secure life. UT administration has assured that the continuous efforts are being made in different sectors to provide a conducive system for proper channelization of youth power by creating a host of opportunities in the field of education, employment, health care, security and many other avenues. There is no dearth in talent in JandK but it needs good grooming and we

have to encourage innovations, entrepreneurship, up skilling and developing scientific temper amongst the youth right from the beginning so that they can meet the requirement of the Nation and the World. Our main focus is to empower the youth of J and K and to make them an active partner in making prosperous, powerful and self-reliant Jammu and Kashmir.

Host of youth oriented schemes like, Mission youth, youth clubs, women entrepreneurship programmes like Tajewini, Hausala, Saath, Parwaz and many others, the Govt is providing a vibrant medium for youth engagement and empowerment. Mission youth is an ambitious initiative of Govt of JandK for the youth. It aims

to provide skill development training, professional counselling, employment opportunities and other avenues. Youth in the age group of 15 to 25 are engaged. It covers youth of all 20 districts of Jand K, with setting of youth centres. Mission youth is headed by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and for which Rs 200 crore funds has been approved by the Central Govt towards the mission and Rs 100 crore has been contributed by the UT in the mission, taking total funding of Rs 300 crore. UT is witnessing industrial revolution which will go long way in creating jobs and sustained livelihood opportunities for the local population and youth. With Rs 28,400 crores worth new industrial development scheme,

approved by Govt of India up to year 2037 will attract huge investments into J and K and Govt is aiming at providing employment for at least 10 lakh youth. The Govt is appreciative of providing funds to the tune of Rs 2386 crore for education and sports which itself speaks about the Govt's commitment to bring out the best talents to the fore front. It is urged upon to the youth to stay away from drugs and other social elements which are being smuggled into JandK to destroy the growth of our Youth and we need to tackle this menace collectively. I call upon the youth to use their talent for the good of the society and contribute in nation building.

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