

## Integrated development of Patnitop

That various ills plaguing the administrative mechanism in Jammu and Kashmir could have been increasingly averted on consistent basis had there been a culture of inter-departmental understanding and cooperation cultivated, strengthened and hence remaining ever existing. In other words, that denotes better understanding of all vital and developmental projects underway or likely to be undertaken by a particular department which in fact without the "help" and close co-operation of the other, could not be easily accomplished. The glaring example of such a scenario existing between the UT Revenue and Tourism Departments can be seen in a case where a cabinet decision taken way back in the year 2005 remains to be implemented and hence fate thereof continuing to be hanging in balance. This type of scenario can, perhaps, be witnessed only in Jammu and Kashmir.

It may be appreciated that decisions taken by a Government in power, unless there being sufficient reasons and circumstances on the contrary, have got to be honoured and implemented by the next or any subsequent Government in power. Logic and prudence say that the sole responsibility and authority of a Government is to make binding decisions in a given system and have them implemented. Therefore, a due sanction having been accorded by the (then) State cabinet in 2005 for transfer of 7000 kanals of state land in favour of Patnitop Development Authority, as the same was found sufficiently required by the said Authority to develop the famous tourist spot of Patnitop, has not been transferred so far. This is just an instance from out of innumerable ones of total indifference towards developing tourism in Jammu division.

A period of 16 years is no insignificant period for the red tapped system having made deep inroads in the system especially vis-a-vis the officers concerned in Revenue Department, to be unable to honour the cabinet decision especially when it was all concerned about developing one of the most enchanting tourist spots in Jammu region which otherwise also due to a heavy footfall of tourists, is in dire need of development in a comprehensive way. In the absence of the availability of the land, lot many proposed projects which would have bestowed added charm and eco-friendly massive development on the entire area and resulted in added economic and commercial activities, have been badly affected and perhaps indefinitely prolonged and postponed. Development denied means progress denied for which reasons ought to be found out and accountability duly fixed. Not only have any type of denial of due revenue or earnings for whatever reason to be viewed seriously but the accruals too on account of likely not commissioning of a new project or venture due to the reasons as under reference, to be reckoned and equally accounted for.

Unless there are necessary formalities completed in respect of transferring the title of the land by proper mutation in revenue records, no land can be claimed to be legally owned by anyone even if consideration clauses may have been duly fulfilled. The land measuring 7000 kanals falls in areas like Sudmahadev, Kariah, Kud, Pichote, Katwail etc and it is amazing that while obtaining revenue extracts from village Kud from revenue officials of the land purported to have been transferred to Patnitop Development Authority (PDA), it transpired that the title of the land had not been transferred in its name after so many years. The other part of the story is that just by coincidence, the PDA came to know about it and why all these years, the matter was not followed by the former CEOs, at least ascertained, whether the title had been duly passed on to the PDA or not. In other words, in a matter of so much of importance, the PDA should have, as can normally be expected, followed up the matter right from the year 2005 and no doubt, things would have been quite different than they appear to be as on date. Kettle, therefore, cannot call the pot black and not do self introspection.

### “What is in a name....?”

China mischievously "renaming" Arunachal Pradesh, a state in India and different areas etc in it, should not be treated lightly even though it made no difference to our country as such but the mechanisations of that country and hostilities, in one or the other form, kept simmering against India need to be taken not any casually. We may brush it aside and even laugh it off but these are indications of establishing of that country's hegemonies in the region and attempts in vain to cow down and keep under perpetual stress and scare this country. Claiming in the wilderness an area of 90000 square Kms of the territory of Arunachal Pradesh, China has been in vain resorting to flexing muscles in this way even objecting to Indian top leadership periodically visiting that inalienable part of the country.

The best response to such diabolical moves is and should be to make the country a military and an economic giant in which efforts, there should be no let up or any sort of complacency. Agreed, China now "tastes" India quite different from what it used to in the past, which is indicative of no compromise by this country of any sort whatsoever on the eastern Ladakh border where India has, not in the least, made any concessions, let alone adopt any soft attitude in its stand to defend our territory from an expansionist and usurper belligerent neighbour. We, therefore, rubbish and reject its Land Border Laws at least in the context of extending their "applicability" towards even an inch of our state of Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, what is in a name in the context of China calling Arunachal Pradesh by any other?

# Through inclusive and transparent Governance, J&K is moving beyond a script of despair

Manoj Sinha

"Nothing more widely distinguishes man from man than energy of will." In 1830, in one of her essays, Margaret Fuller, American journalist and women's rights advocate, called for imagination, perseverance and confidence to build a bright future. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir's resolve for people-centric growth too hinges on a pragmatic imagination, perseverance and confidence.

The pandemic inflicted immense harm on humans. The resilience of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, however, has helped us in government to bounce back. J&K's story is no longer cast in despair and despondency. The UT's milestones and achievements are adding up to the mood of the country celebrating Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav. It shows that J&K is not just steadily adopting the principles of good governance but also bringing a seismic shift in addressing the concerns of the most vulnerable sections of society.

The numbers reflect the reality on the ground. We have managed to reverse the trend of the past seven decades by pushing targets for economic growth and employment. Alongside is the exponential augmentation in infrastructure. The growth in the business sector was also at unimagined speed, and within seven months, J&K was able to clock Rs 45,000 crore worth of investment proposals from various industries.

The first-ever real estate summit brought 39 MoUs worth Rs 18,300 crore. Our aim is very clear - build an industrial base for the economy and strengthen local enterprises and social stability. We have completed 21,943 projects in the last year alone - an unparalleled feat in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance, the Centre is building robust infrastructure for the Union Territory. Twenty-one mega projects under Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP) have been completed and nine more are likely to be completed by the end of the current financial year; power generation capacity is set to be doubled in the next five years, and road and tunnel projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore are being imple-

mented. Eleven thousand vacant government posts were filled with complete transparency and on merit - another record in Jammu and Kashmir's history. J&K is on a mission to renovate, reinvent and take a quantum leap from being a de-industrialised region to one of the fastest-growing areas in the country.

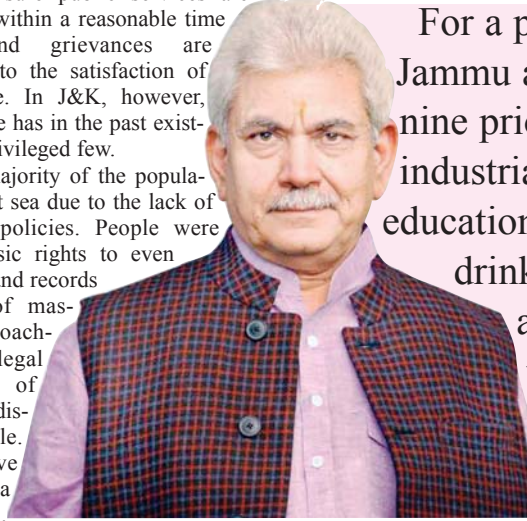
Fulfilling aspirations and needs is not a favour to citizens. It is the duty of the administration to ensure public services are delivered within a reasonable time frame and grievances are redressed to the satisfaction of the people. In J&K, however, governance has in the past existed for a privileged few.

The majority of the population was at sea due to the lack of inclusive policies. People were denied basic rights to even see their land records because of massive encroachment, illegal transfer of land and distress sale. We have started a campaign, called "Aapki Zameen Aapki Nigrani", in every village to ensure all landholders are able to access their land records. It is aimed at empowering people through the removal of encroachment and illegal entries.

One of the key principles of good governance is openness and transparency. I believe people should have access to all the information regarding development projects and 100 per cent open bidding of work must be mandatory to enable transparency in the system. The entire information is now available at the click of a button. BEAMS-EMPOWERMENT, a simple process of accessing online details of all ongoing works in an area, has been made available to inform and solicit people's participation in the overall development process and for offering corruption-free and clean governance.

With an extraordinary policy framework and stated outcomes, we are making a collective effort that will change the destiny of the UT. We have also taken several important steps to decentralise powers with the sole objective of accelerating people-centric policies, whether it is about infrastructural development or agriculture reforms, village-level entrepreneurial programmes or creating opportunities for rural women.

For a prosperous and equitable Jammu and Kashmir, we have nine priority areas - agriculture, industrialisation, employment, education, healthcare, tourism, drinking water, urban renewal and modern infrastructure. Poor infrastructure is the biggest barrier to growth.



I believe participatory policymaking is a search for social equity. That's why funds, functions and functionalities have been developed to strengthen and stabilise grass root institutions. More than 4 lakh women have been federated into 52,000 self-help groups to provide them employment and dignity. We have taken the historical step to empower Scheduled Tribes by implementing the Forest Rights Act that was earlier denied to them. Similarly, a large number of communities (like Mahajan, Khatri) who were earlier barred from owning agricultural land have now been permitted to buy and claim a title. Small and marginal farmers earlier barred from the high-density plantation of fruits have been given the rights of cultivation.

There were no institutional arrangements to rectify the mistakes of the past. The J&K administration, however, is determined to deliver jus-

tice to all. It launched the Kashmir migrant portal to return the immovable assets to rightful owners, who were forced to flee in the aftermath of the spread of terrorism in the Valley. It has enabled a large number of people to register complaints about distress sales, encroachment or other grievances regarding property.

The UT has to de-hyphenate itself from certain legacies. We want to assure people that violence and subversion attempts will be dealt with firmly. The ecosystem of terrorists and their sympathisers will be completely uprooted.

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Nevertheless, we have been relentlessly working to scale up infrastructure - be it of power, roads or warehousing. Several schemes for people living in border areas have been started so that these villages can catch up with the better-off towns in a short period. It is this collective effort that has contributed to the unprecedented increase in tourist influx last year.

Under the guidance of the PM, we have been able to transform the healthcare sector and Jammu and Kashmir is today a role model for managing global pandemics. The health crisis, however, is still not over and I urge everyone to follow Covid protocols and help the administration. I am hopeful the New Year will bring hope and a new dawn in everyone's lives.

An unfortunate incident took place at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in the night leading to the New Year. We are heartbroken but we stand by the families in grief. I can assure people that prompt action would be taken on the basis of an inquiry.

(The Writer is Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir)

Courtesy: The Indian Express

## Communicating Braille with Technology

M Ahmad

World Braille Day on January 4 is celebrated to honour the birth of Braille's inventor, Louis Braille. Braille's gift to the world has brightened the lives of millions of people around the world who are blind or visually impaired, and they benefit from his work every day. The day also acknowledges that those with visual impairments deserve the same standard of human rights as everyone else. The term 'Braille' was dubbed after its creator. Louis Braille was a Frenchman who lost his eyesight as a child when he accidentally stabbed himself in the eye with his father's awl. From the age of 10, he spent time at the Royal Institute for Blind Youth in France, where he formulated and perfected the system of raised dots that eventually became known as Braille in 1824. Louis Braille the inventor of the Braille literacy system died in 1852, and unfortunately wasn't able to witness the impact it had on society at large and especially the visually impaired and legally blind community. Briefly, after his demise, France's Royal Institute for the Blind Youth endorsed the Braille curriculum and by 1916, educational institutions.

Digital Assistive Technology (DAT) has further enabled braille use to become an efficient part of daily life for people with braille literacy. Braille notetakers and braille displays are a fast and efficient means of writing and transcribing braille. This braille technology requires knowledge of reading and writing braille in order to use it and get the maximum use out of it. Electronic braille notetakers (a BrailleNote) can be used to take down notes - whether in a lecture at college or university or in a meeting in the workplace. Some people also find braille notes useful to refer to when giving a presentation or speech. An accessible workplace should provide the means

and facilities for blind and partially sighted employees to utilise braille, audio and assistive technologies in the ways that suit them best.

Technology can potentially supplement Braille - after all, it multiplies the modes of interaction with the world, and hence enables visually impaired people to parallel sighted people in communicating with each other. Advances in technology have made braille more widely available and accessible than it might've been in the past. Easy Converter Express toolkit software is affordable and simple to use, converting Word documents to accessible information in Braille on demand and in seconds.

Developments in technology mean it is now often cheaper to read through a computer using screen readers or audio files rather than braille. However, this doesn't replace the need for braille, in the same way as using computers hasn't replaced the need for us to learn to write

### World Braille Day

by hand. The arrival of portable wireless devices that scan text and translate it to soft (refreshable) braille will mean greater access to written information in a range of new environments. Likewise the emergence of portable electronic books may make it easier to access information in braille and other accessible formats.

The braille embosser is a printer attached to a computer which is used to produce a braille copy of text. A braille embosser may also be attached to braille note taking devices for the same purpose. With the use of a braille embosser, a student is able to print a braille copy of his or her personal notes and written work. The embosseres require heavy-weight paper and most models print on just one side. Interpoint printers emboss braille on both sides of the page, conserving paper, but are much more expensive. Smaller volume production

embosseres are less expensive than larger volume production models. In order to translate a computer file into a braille document, it is necessary to also purchase a braille translation program.

Electronic braille note taking devices, like this one from Freedom Scientific, may be used by a student to take notes in class using either a Braille or standard (QWERTY) keyboard. Those notes may then be transferred to a computer for storage, or printed in either braille or print formats. Many note taking devices have word processors, appointment calendars, calculators or clocks, and can do almost everything a computer can do. Some note taking devices have a speech program with braille input and some also feature a refreshable braille display. The note taking devices generally are the size of a book and are easily carried and used by the student. Besides allowing us to carry out routine tasks at work and school, assistive technol-

ogy also enables people with visual impairments to be more independent at home. We can now read the mail, listen to audio books, get step-by-step walking directions to unfamiliar places, record important information and so much more with special standalone devices designed for people with no or low vision. There are also devices like talking watches, thermometers, scales, blood glucose and blood pressure monitors that help us live independent and healthy lives. Various mobile phones have now Braille Keypad, large keypad with large buttons, large display fonts and comes with talking keypad. Medicine Reminder, Hearing Aid, Magnifier, Speed Dial Voice Assistance for Incoming call.

Screen Reading software and special talking and Braille devices allow those of us with no vision to use computers, cell phones and other electronic devices independently. Similarly, people with low vision can use screen magnification software and devices that will allow them to see letters, pictures and other objects without having to struggle or strain their remaining vision. This technology - commonly known as assistive or adaptive technology - is continually evolving, and has removed many access barriers for people with vision loss.

Technological developments in the computer industry have provided and continue to expand additional avenues of literacy for braille users. Software programs and portable electronic braille devices allow users to save and edit their writing, have it displayed back to them either verbally or tactually, and produce a hard copy via a desktop computer-driven braille embosser. Because the use of computers is so common in school, children learn both the braille contractions and also how to spell words out letter for letter so they can spell and write using a keyboard.

There is a dire need for teachers to have sufficient preparation and resources in Braille to meet the needs of an inclusive teaching methodology that also takes into account the visually impaired students. There are several initiatives and approaches to bringing about an inclusive learning experience, such as teacher preparation programs that can help train existing or bring in well-trained braille literate instructors. In spite of the low numbers of visually impaired students, there aren't sufficient numbers of teachers to address the scope of these students' needs.

World Braille Day reminds of the responsibility we have as individuals to not just respect people who are blind or visually impaired but also facilitate and support them in each step of the way taking note of the modern technology.

(The author is Incharge Abhedananda Home- Higher Secondary Institution for Specially-abled Children, Solina, Srinagar, J&K)

Bharat Jhunjhunwala

The GST collections are buoyant, share market is rising, rupee is stable and India has been recognized to be the fastest growing economy among the major economies of the world. However, despite these achievements the total consumption in the economy is less than the pre Covid levels and the Prime Minister himself has said that unemployment is one of the greatest challenges facing the country. The roots of this problem lie in the thinking of the Niti Ayog. In 2018 the Ayog had come up with a document on the vision of India at 75 years of Independence which placed two objectives in front of the country. The first objective was to promote labour-intensive production. The second objective was to encourage formalization of labour. These two objectives are contradictory in our situation.

Formalization means that instead of working on standalone individual basis like a street corner momo seller, the workers may be made part of a formal system such as fast food centers located in a shop. The difficulty is that formalization leads to an increase in the cost of labour. For example, if we bring all the street corner momo sellers under a formal umbrella and require them to register with the Government then they would have to comply with weights and measures inspectors, health inspectors, adhere to timings, use better packaging material, pay provident fund for their helpers and follow minimum wage requirement. This will lead to increase in cost of the momos produced. The advantage that the non-formal street corner Momo vendor enjoys today vis-a-vis the momos of the same quality manufactured by large companies by automatic machines will be eroded. Today, the cost of momo produced by a street corner vendor may be Rs 5 while that produced in a formal shop may be Rs 7. The customer may want to buy momo from the street corner seller because it is of

## The Challenge of 2022: Inequity

same quality but cheaper. The cost of the momo produced by the street corner momo shopkeeper may now become more than the cost of momo produced by a formal shop. Thus, the formalization of labour leads to an increase in the cost of labour and makes the formal shop competitive. These shops employ lesser number of workers for the same amount of production because of the use of machines like dish washers and automatic ovens. In the end, formalization leads to erosion of the competitive advantage of labour and forces the economy to move to capital intensive production. This leads to increase in unemployment as has

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been highlighted by the Prime Minister.

Demonetization and GST have not helped. The small standalone businesses came to halt for about two months after demonetization. One driver of Ola confided to me soon after demonetization that he had been earning his livelihood for the last thirty years by employing three women to do embroidery. This came to a halt because he could not obtain payments in cash; and the buyers were not willing to make payments by cheque. He had to close down his business and survived by becoming a driver. Therefore, formalization is against labour intensive production and it is leading to death of employment itself. The choice is actual-

ly between non formal employment at a low wage of formal unemployment. Confronting this problem is the major challenge before the economy in 2022.

The second challenge is that of environment. I am told that the price of tomato in the recent times has increased because global warming has led to damage to the crops. Such has been seen across the world. Indeed the Government cannot directly prevent global warming within our country since it is a global phenomenon but, at the same time, there is much that it can do within. For example the Gov-

ernment has recently diluted the norms for pollutant emissions by thermal power plants. Thinking is that allowing thermal plant to pollute the air will reduce the cost of pollution control equipment and will enable these plants to produce cheap electricity and will help obtain economic growth. This much is true. However, the same higher level of pollution imposes three types of cost in the economy. First, it leads to more global warming and economic disasters and the Government has to spend larger amounts to provide compensation to the affected persons.

A Minister from Maharashtra said that the payment of such compensation had become a major burden on the budget of the state in 2021. Second,

the production of certain produce like tomatoes decreases. This directly leads to lower growth because agriculture adds less to the GDP. Additionally, this leads to increase in the price of tomatoes and inflation. Third, pollution imposes a huge health cost on the people. Peoples living near Singrauli in Uttar Pradesh are suffering from multiple diseases such as bronchitis and cancer because of the high level of air pollution from large number of thermal power plants in that area. This loss of health reduces their capacity to produce increases in the cost of treatment. (As an aside, the increase in cost of treatment adds to the GDP for a short time). The challenge before the Government is to implement such policies that assess the costs and benefits of pollution comprehensively. That is, the costs of disasters and health and the benefits of cheap electricity. Then then it will become clear that many policies supposedly leading to economic growth are actually leading to lower economic growth and more human distress.

The challenge of 2022, therefore, is twofold. First, the infatuation with formalization of economy should be abandoned. Our conditions are different than those of the developed countries. We have a large workforce which cannot be employed in the formal sector. We should give more respect to the non-formal sector and enable people to earn their livelihood so that the cost of momos produced by them is less and the GDP increases. Second, the Government should make comprehensive assessment of the costs and benefits of policies such as lower pollution norms from thermal plants so that the damage to the economy because of pollution is averted and the GDP increases and human distress is reduced.

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