

DPC meetings and promotions

The two are interlinked especially in the system prevailing in Jammu and Kashmir in respect of promotions from one rank or position to the other rather in the same department or from one to the other department. For the requisite exercise, it is necessary that Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs) to hold regular meetings and initiate necessary steps in this direction from an already prepared list supported by all particulars and submit the same to the designated agency, usually the Public Service Commission. This issue being not taken all in seriousness and related matters having been dwelt upon many a time by us highlighting the importance of conducting of such meetings regularly as against after couple of years in many cases, the position more or less continues to be not much changed.

However, it is a matter of concern that still there are as many as 29 such departments in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir which are yet to start conducting of the meetings of the DPCs. Though promotion is not a right of an employee per-se which can be claimed accordingly but no organisation can function in the ordinary course of business without being in a "flowing form" rather being in a stagnant form or status quo ante position. Promotion of employees means career advancement and opportunities to demonstrate one's capabilities and potential much to the benefit of an organisation, for brevity Governmental departments and other institutions run by the UT Government. Like that, an employee is allowed to grow and to develop more attachment with the activities of a particular department and deliver more and with better confidence besides feeling job satisfaction.

Let the issue be analysed the other way, denying promotion to an eligible employee even when there being enough scope for and requirement in a particular department and such denial also for years in a row plants in such an employee a sense of frustration and disinterest in the job which disguisedly has a telling effect on his or her levels of performance. In other words, promotion is a sort of major motivation correlating with higher productivity levels. Alternately, such an aggrieved employee should leave such organisation where for him there is no career building opportunities and avenues of promotions to find comparative better fortunes but given the conditions of employment "market" where supply of labour is in abundance as against demand there-for and personal limitations like age factor etc that seems to be impracticable and, therefore, difficult too unless one being a highly professional and a technical hand which continue to be otherwise much in demand.

Directives being issued to all the Administrative Secretaries to submit proposals for conducting of the DPC meetings to the Public Service Commission (PSC) after adhering to the procedures and following the devised check list by the PSC, the situation reportedly is far from satisfactory. Why should the directives not be scrupulously followed by all the 43 Administrative Departments of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir and only by a paltry number of eight. Not that superannuation of employees does not routinely take place, not that many posts are not lying vacant due to various reasons, not that many additional wings and sections of various departments are not without proper promoted cadre but an ad-hoc or in-charge system prevails, not that shortage of personnel especially wielding decisions taking powers is not in many departments affecting delivery mechanism and developmental activities but still the importance and the utility of the DPCs is not felt or the matter. Otherwise despite these factors prevailing and a general scenario of scepticism nursed by the eligible employees who feel due promotions denied to them, a casual approach of the concerned departmental heads/ Administrative Secretaries is required to be changed.

There could be also the possibilities of some technical hitches like stay orders/ pending court cases, incomplete verifications, undecided departmental enquiries into alleged misconduct of some employees and the like which need to be sorted out by heightened follow up and seeking requisite advice and support from the Law department so that promotions are not held up. It is to be underlined that promotion is an opportunity given to an eligible employee to use one's experience gained while working in the department and boosts one's sense of belongingness and creating job satisfaction which is quite useful to the department.

Enhancing "competence" through on-line mode

Reforms and innovative measures with intent to tone up and streamline the functioning of all departments must not only be at the top of the agenda of the priorities of the Government but their implementation ensured too. Such measures result in better performance of the departments and even in causing receipt of added revenues, wherever applicable, projecting, therefore, a better performance and on desired levels in an era of "perform or perish".

Geology and Mining department, very often, facing criticism on various counts related to mining issues has emerged with enviable results by causing its revenues a jump from a paltry Rs.50 crores from previous years to Rs.321 crores or in other words, a quantum jump of over 500 percent. This all could happen due to introducing the requisite reforms in tune with the demanding times by deciding to give credence to utter transparency and healthy competition in the form of e-auctioning rather than from conventional open auctioning of mineral blocks and other reforms coupled with streamlining its functioning. Again, noteworthy reform introduced by the Department is introducing single window facility to clear projects to cut on time and hassles of moving from one to the other office for the purpose. Unless innovative measures, digitization, on-line system, transparency and other reforms are mandatorily introduced in the system of working, better results shall keep eluding projections and expected target achievements.

Politics over investment summits in Jammu and Kashmir

Harsha Kakar

The Jammu and Kashmir Government notified that 70 acres of land, already in possession of the army in Gulmarg and Sonamarg, have been declared strategic enabling it to begin construction of dwellings on it. Mehbooba Mufti tweeted that such permission in tourist destinations implies that the centre is converting Jammu and Kashmir into a military state. Possibly her most illogical and desperate to stay relevant statement in recent times. She should be aware that the Indian army does not run tourist destinations as the Pak army does. It appears these comments were made solely to incite local sentiments against the very forces responsible for bringing normalcy in the region. She has for some time been attempting to break the bond established between security agencies and local populace resulting in increased successful encounters.

In end December 2021, the Jammu and Kashmir Government held its 'Real Estate summit 2021' in Jammu. In this summit 39 MOUs worth Rs 18,300 crore were signed. These include investments in residential, commercial, infrastructure and film sectors. This was the first such summit post abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. The investments mainly covered the Jammu region. The next summit involving Indian investors is scheduled to be held in Srinagar in May 2022.

Regional parties of Jammu and Kashmir condemned the summit mentioning that the state has

been put for sale. Omar Abdullah tweeted 'investors will buy up land in Jammu long before Kashmir.' Mehbooba Mufti asserted that the region's special status had been revoked to 'dehumanise, dispossess and disempower the only Muslim majority state in India.' She added, 'Government of India's brazen loot and sale of our resources shows that the sole motive is to annihilate our identity and change the demography.'

Addressing a rally in Bijbehara she mentioned, 'Kashmiris, Dogras, Bakerwals and all others must get united at this stage and if they won't unite now, local youth will find it difficult to step out as no land will be left for them.' She was attempting to incite people on the pretext that land allocated for development would be detrimental.

A few days earlier the Central Government had confirmed in Parliament that post abrogation of article 370 only 7 plots had been purchased by non-residents in the UT and that too in the Jammu belt. It displayed that despite relaxation in laws there is hesitancy to invest in the region possibly due to ongoing militancy. Most investors within India fear that investments in Kashmir could be counterproductive as passions may be whipped up by local politicians or enterprises targeted by terrorists.

In Oct last year, the Jammu and Kashmir Government signed an agreement with the UAE for investing in the UT. As a follow up, last week there were a series of MOUs with the Government of UAE and companies within. The Lulu group proposed to

invest Rs 200 crore in establishing a food processing and logistics hub in Kashmir. This was followed by agreements with AI Maya group, MATU investments, Century Financial and others for investing in multiple spheres of development, mainly in the Kashmir valley.

The Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir stated, 'due to transparent policies and ease of doing business we were able to clock investment proposals worth 45,000 crore and an additional 18,500 crore in the real estate sector. The Government could take this step based on an improved security environment in the valley.' In an interview with Gulf News, the Lt Governor stated, 'things on ground are not bad as is being propagated by certain vested interests. There are people who want to keep it like that, and they are doing this to give a negative perception to the world.' He added that people in the valley are, 'fed up with violence and want development.'

The Indian and UAE Governments could reach the stage of investing in the valley based on the improved security environment. It is due to efforts of security forces and cooperation of the local populace that such an environment has been created. Hence, ideally, the benefits of development must flow to them.

There were no adverse comments from valley politicians on MOUs being signed with UAE based concerns. Mehbooba and Omar need to be questioned on whether investors must possess specific parameters and investments made from specific regions to be beneficial to the valley. What the PDP and NC had

failed to do for decades the Government has done in a couple of years and maybe this is hurting their prestige.

A fact not being discussed is that investments flowing from the UAE, backed by their Government, send a few major signals. The first is that they have accepted the fact that Kashmir is not disputed territory. As a corollary, they have discarded Pakistan's claims on Kashmir. This will mean that any demands for an OIC meeting on Kashmir will not be supported by them. Secondly, any attack by terrorists on their infrastructure would not bode well for Pakistan-UAE relations, as terrorism is controlled from across the LOC. Finally, they back the Indian Government's policies for the region. Pakistan would have been hurt by this action, however, since it survives on largesse by the UAE it would not comment.

For decades Kashmiri politicians exploited the state exchequer but ignored the masses. They built palatial residences at state cost. Now the only option open for them is to enhance divide within the region and display their relevance. The reality is that people are far more aware than Mehbooba's and Omar's consider them to be and desire development over divisive politics. For Pakistan, it is time to accept that their support base has receded and even allies are dumping them in favour of India. For the Indian and Jammu and Kashmir Governments, it is time to pat their backs.

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Reserve Bank must prevent capital flight

Bharat Jhunjhunwala

Data provided by the Reserve Bank of India tell us that the capital account of the country has been negative over the last three years. This means that the amount of capital that has come inward is less than the amount of capital that is gone outward from the country. Indeed, the negative account has been greater during the months of the Corona crisis. However, that does not explain the capital flight from the country because other countries were equally affected by Corona pandemic at those same times. Therefore, the flight of capital from Corona-affected India to another Corona-affected country cannot be because of Corona pandemic. There is a need for the Reserve Bank to work-out policies to prevent this capital flight because, just as a family becomes poorer when an earning member of the family leaves, similarly, the flight of capital from the country will make India poorer.

Despite this hard reality, a Committee established by the Reserve Bank has giving four arguments to allow free movement of capital from- and to India to foreign countries. The first argument given by the Committee is that free movement of capital will increase the availability of capital in the country. It will encourage foreign investors to invest in India. However, this alleged benefit is disproved by Reserve Bank's own data that shows that the capital account has been continuously negative in the last 2 years. The free movement of capital is leading to the flight of capital from; not be other way around.

The second argument given by the Committee

is that free movement of capital will reduce the cost of capital. This too is not correct because the outward flow of capital is reducing the availability of capital in India and accordingly the cost of capital in India is rising, not falling. The third argument is that it will make it possible for Indian companies to borrow in foreign countries and diversify their borrowing. This is correct. However, the fact that the more capital is going out of the country means that the diversification is not proving helpful in attracting foreign capital. The fourth argument is that free movement of capital will allow Indian investors to diversify their investment portfolio. At present an Indian investors may be investing in property and in share market in India. After free movement of capital the Indian investors can invest in property in New York and in shares in the New York Stock Exchange. This benefit is correct. However, this is only beneficial for the richer section of the society because they alone have the capacity to invest in foreign countries. Outward foreign investment can prove beneficial to them but not to India. The arguments given by the Committee of the Reserve Bank in favour of free movement of capital are certainly not beneficial for the country. Contrary to Reserve Bank's harmful policies, the International Monetary Fund has advocated that the developing countries should consider imposing restrictions on free movement of capital to foreign countries in situations such as Corona pandemic. They have referred to the experience of Korea and Peru that have imposed such restrictions with beneficial results.

Free movement of capital can be much more

harmful in the present situation. The United States' Federal Reserve Board has adopted an easy money policy in the last few years. It has made available loans at an interest rate of 0 to 0.25% per year. It is profitable for investors to borrow in the United States and invest that money in India at these low interest rates. The Federal Reserve Board has indicated that it is soon going to back track from the easy money and it is likely to reduce the money supply and that will in turn lead to increase in the interest rate. If the interest rates in United States increase then it will be no longer be beneficial for foreign investors to borrow in the United States and invest in India because they have to pay high rate of interest in United States. On the contrary, such an increase in interest rates in the United States may lead to them to withdraw their money from India and repatriate it to the United States. Therefore, there is the need for the Reserve Bank to reconsider its policy urgently in view of the impending increase in the interest rates in United States' economy.

The policy of the Reserve Bank is also against its own recommendations. The Committee has said that it is necessary to contain the fiscal deficit along with allowing free movement of capital. We know very well that the fiscal deficit of our country is increasing rapidly since the Corona pandemic. On the one hand, the Reserve Bank is saying that free movement of capital should not be allowed if fiscal deficit is not controlled; but on the other hand it has increased the limit of the money that an Indian national can remit to the foreign countries for invest-

ment under the Liberalized Remittance Scheme despite the increase in the fiscal deficit.

An article in the Journal of Indian Association of Social Science Institutions has given four reasons for the flight of capital from India. First is corruption. The cost of doing business in the country is higher if there is corruption and foreign investors do not want to invest here. Second is increase in Government debt. This means that (1) the Government will have to borrow more money; (2) the Reserve Bank will have to adopt easy money policy to make available the money that is borrowed by the Government; (3) this will lead to inflation and to the devaluation of Indian rupee; (4) reduce the value of the investment that the foreign investors may have made in India leading to loss for them. Third is negative capital account. A negative capital account leads to more outflow—somewhat like herd immunity. One foreign investor follows the other in taking capital out of India because negative capital account leads to devaluation. Fourth is the adoption of free trade. Reason is that if our economy is not competitive then we will lose our ground in the global market and this will lead to capital flight. I would like to add a fifth reason which is social conflict in the country. The social atmosphere has become so negative that foreign investors may not like to come. The time is at hand for the Reserve Bank and the Government of India to reconsider the policy of free movement of capital, which is leading to capital flight and lower rates of growth in the country.

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Imran Khan Pontificates

Physician heal thyself

B L Saraf

Some days back Pakistan PM, Imran Khan, issued a statement alleging that minorities in India are being targeted by the extremists groups and warned that such an agenda "is a real and present threat to the regional peace." He took to the twitter to launch the charge in the wake of alleged inflammatory and provocative speeches made against the minorities at an event in Hardiwar, Utrahand. He called upon the international community "to take note and act." Last month, Pakistan Foreign Office summoned Indian Charged Affairs and conveyed its concern over the alleged hate speech made in Hardiwar conclave.

Imran, for that matter anyone from the Pakistan establishment, is the last person to make a comment on India's settled policy of secularism which it has been following since the dawn of independence. His rant is nothing but "Devil quoting Scriptures". He is the protégé of the elements in Pakistan which are detested world over for the violent and sectarian political game they play. Khan survives on their tender mercies. No wonder he had to give in to the fanatical Tehreek e lab-biek (TEL) and release their thousands of workers held up earlier, including the head, Saad Hussain. They were arrested following protests that erupted on the appointment of new ISI Chief. Imran Khan presides over a regime whose main constituents revel in honoring even the murderers. Who can forget the rousing reception, with profuse showering of rose petal, accorded by the Bar Association Lahore to the assassin of the then Governor

of Punjab province, Salman Taseer, whom he was duty bound to protect. Felled Governor's only fault was that he spoke in favour of the poor Christian lady, Aisya Bi, who faced allegations of having committed a nonexistent crime of blasphemy.

Pakistan Prime Minister must know that it is not what the fringe in India says that poses threat to the "peace in the region". The horde of armed mercenaries his establishment exports to our part of Kashmir to create mayhem are, by their avowed sectarian policy and the belief in violence, real threat to the peace and stability of the region. Imran Khan should stop shedding crocodile tears for Indian Muslims, rather be sincere to his country's defense policy unveiled lately, which lays emphasis on economic development and good neighborly relation, and speaks of "no war with India for the next hundred years."

We may leave Imran Khan to his rants and ravings but we will be doing great disservice to our heritage and culture if we fail to appreciate a concern, poetically, expressed by another Pakistani, Fahmida Riyaz. Making a reference to the dismal situation her country has gone-and is going through she, in a lament expressed in a poetical vein, cautions us that we are on the verge of treading her country's inglorious path and in veiled way exhorts us to retract steps:

*Tum bilkul hum jaise nikley
Voh murkhta voh ghumand
Jis mein hum ney sadian ganwandi
Akhar pohncey dwar tuhari
Arey badhai bhuat badhai*

Addressing us Indians she says -Loosely translated it would read: You have come out

exactly like us: the foolishness and hubris which wasted our centuries; has at last reached your door; stay felicitated - immensely

No doubt India's secular moorings are firmly rooted in the heritage and indelibly enshrined in the Constitution yet on occasions fringe elements -with the tacit support of some in the mainstream political establishment - ignite tremors which have a potential to cause cracks to these traditions. Alleged Hardiwar cry to purge motherland of the "undesirables" and actions of a few to "purify the land of pure" don't go well with the pluralistic ethos of our great nation and the glorious image which makes India shine in the galaxy of countries, dotting world map. Sectarian and hate loaded cries don't add feather to India's cap. Such actions are, on one hand, fraught with the danger to rip apart society and, on the other, have grave implications on our national security. Some Armed forces Veterans have put it succinctly in a letter addressed to the President and Prime Minister. While expressing anguish on the Hardiwar development their note of caution on the national security front is palpable;

"In view of the current situation on our borders, any breach of peace and harmony within the Nation will embolden inimical external forces. The unity and cohesiveness of our men and women in uniform, including the CAPFs and Police forces, will be seriously affected by allowing such blatant calls for violence against one or the other community in our diverse and plural society."

The need of the day is that often made elaboration of India's pluralistic ethos and references to the secular practices enshrined in the Preamble Of the Constitution must come out of the

realm of rhetoric and take head on what, unfortunately, we have been witnessing for some time now. This being the election season every section of the society and the instrumentalities of the State like Police, Judiciary and, more importantly, the Election Commission, have to be on guard to check the menace of hate.

It does no good to the nation's reputation to be in the global headlines for all the wrong reasons. The world still sees India as a progressive, democratic and a pluralistic nation which is ruled by the Constitution. Our soft power characterized by religious and linguistic diversity and richness, Ayurveda, Yoga, tourism, specialization in the fields of medicine and engineering, Bollywood etc help drive the impression. People may dismiss the hate speeches as an act of the fringe. But if the undesirable activity goes on unchecked and is not repudiated by the men in authority in Delhi same people will soon be forced to realize that, in India, the 'Fringe' has metamorphosed into the 'Vanguard'. That will be calamitous for us-as the nation.

It is heartening to note that the Supreme Court has taken cognizance of the development that happened in Hardiwar. But, primarily it is duty of executive to stem the rot that is about to set in. The people at the helm must, therefore, start acting tough on these stray elements, lest we step in to the world of radicalization. In this regard, any inaction on our part would unwittingly grant "Sainthood" to the "Followers of Hate" living across the Western border. And, there will be very little left in our moral armoury to challenge them.

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(The views expressed by the authors are their personal)

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Speak in Mother tongue

Sir,

Language is the fundamental tool of human communication which distinguishes it from other living creatures. The mother tongue is a system of communication used by a particular community, or a region, or even a country. Language plays a vital role in shaping of a cultural and traditional heritage.

It is the means with which we keep our identity unified. Encouraging and appreciating the young generations and infants to learn their mother tongue would help them to develop the moral values, confidence, self-esteem, and their unique identity within a multicultural society. For example, people of Jammu district speak Dogri and are identified as Dogras, Kashmiris by Kashmiri, Pogal by Pogali, etc. Languages own the heritage of a region. By the introduction of mother tongue as a medium of communication and instruction it will help us to improve our educational standards and will help to mitigate high drop out rates

because of the fact that they have a positive impact of their mother tongue. They can express their problems and solution in more lucid ways as their innocence and natural thought process has been built in their mother's womb. Recently Government of India has come up with a new educational policy which stresses upon local and regional languages to be the medium for learning and now it is the prime responsibility of local administration to identify and give a place to local languages of the area. Due to lack of administrative and parental interest the craze for mother tongue is vanishing. Some people even feel guilty and shameful in expressing themselves in their mother tongue. They prefer English, Hindi or Urdu as a medium of communication with their families and relatives. We should feel proud while speaking and expressing ourselves in our mother tongue.

Jugesh Singh Thakur
Jammu

Contingency plan to combat COVID

Sir,

With the third wave of COVID-19 rising exponentially across India many stringent curbs have been imposed on various economic activities, which are likely to be made more stringent within few days. Consequently, the already deteriorating labour market is likely to deteriorate further, and domestic workers and daily wagers would suffer the most as we have already experienced during the first and second waves of the pandemic.

As the cases of infection started rising again, domestic workers are increasingly losing their jobs because they are being asked by their employers to stop coming to their houses for work till further easing out of the pandemic. Many markets have been already shut down, establishments closed, educational institutions put on holidays, and the presence of physical workforce reduced to half or even

less both in government and private establishments, have started disrupting economic activities and movement of the people. Daily wage earners are already seen to be affected the most, and if the pandemic worsens they would be in great trouble. Both the domestic workers and daily wage earners in large numbers might soon find themselves without any economic source to even feed themselves.

2022 has begun with such a high rate of infection of COVID-19 that the country has never seen before threatening overwhelming of our medical facilities once again in the near future, making the revival of the economy uncertain. The economy has just been recovering from the adverse impact of the first and the second wave of the pandemic but could not be able to sufficiently revive the labour market.

Thus the majority of the workers, especially the daily wage earners and

domestic workers, will have to suffer greatly in case the pandemic situation worsens, which seems to be most likely the case. It should be therefore most wise decision on the part of the Centre and the states if they prepare themselves with contingency plans to save our working people on priority basis not only from the COVID-19 virus but also from the impending loss of livelihoods. The painful experience from the first and second waves and consequent lockdowns and containment measures must not be allowed to reappear again. It's an extraordinary time and therefore we need extraordinary measures that too within a few days before the third wave peaks up disrupting the economy and the labour market. Social security measures need to be strengthened at war footing.

Dr Gyan Pathak
On e-mail

Readers Write