

Free ration to the poor

The Scheme of the Union Government of providing free ration to people who are from less privileged sections and duly categorised for purposes of eligibility criteria, benefitting a total number of 80 crore of beneficiaries across the country, was slated to be over by September 30 this year. It is now proposed to be continued for another three months. Needless to add, this figure of beneficiaries of 80 crore exceeds the total population of the UK and Brazil put together and, therefore, on the face of it, cannot be treated just an ordinary scheme. Prior to it, an extension of six months was given to this scheme in March this year costing Rs.80000 crore to the Government. The scheme has now been extended to the period ending December 31, 2022. In this connection, when we look at the position of Jammu and Kashmir in this regard as to how many beneficiaries from the poor sections were going to be benefitted, it comes to over 6 million people.

There are two categories of ration card holders in Jammu and Kashmir - falling under Priority House Hold (PHH) and Antodaya Anna Yojna (AAY) who are eligible and have been getting free ration since the inception of the scheme in April /May in the year 2020. The need, therefore, is not only proper identification and making suitable changes, wherever required, in the number of beneficiaries but making available such ration without any hassles at the identified ration depots where a general complaint usually remains about either non availability of the ration or its delayed distribution and in both the cases, the basic purpose of the scheme as such gets defeated. In fact, the COVID pandemic and its aftermaths dealt a severe blow to the poor categories especially those who earn on daily basis and had virtually no work on account of imposition of lockdown and other restrictions of "closing down" to fight the dreaded virus .

Providing free ration for eight months to 80 crore initially and extending it periodically , now up to ending December 2022 is the only instance in the world where such a basic sustaining help has been provided to the most deserving categories especially the migrant labourers by the Government whose coffers itself suffered on account of the closing of major economic activities during two severe waves of the pandemic . A rough estimate of the cost of such free ration during the pandemic period alone was over Rs.2 lakh crore ending July 2021 and an estimate of cost of the scheme randomly reckoned works out to be Rs.4 lakh crore till date .

If an analysis of the factors leading to a shaky situation in this vital area for the last many years is made, it will be observed that while on the one hand food production and stocks kept increasing year by year thanks to the hardest work by our farming community, the agricultural scientists, timely credit facilities from the banks etc but still the position of malnutrition in millions and near starvation in many did not improve. That amply shows that "food for the poor" scheme, was either on papers or was not properly implemented. Besides, various instances in states of mass siphoning of the ration for the poor to the black markets led to denial of the ration to larger sections of the poor categories. Hunger anyhow may have been conquered as the present Government claims a commitment of "going to sleep not hungry" but malnutrition still remains to be eradicated. Although crops of new varieties are encouraged to be grown across the country which are rich in proteins, zinc, vitamins etc and Anganwari workers are playing their considerable part in fighting malnutrition, yet lot remains to be done.

Whether providing free ration to such a whopping number and for nearly over three years across the country amounts to giving "freebies", divergent views can be expressed. While most of the people will not agree looking to the new trend in freebies lavishly promised and on questionable factors and avoidable grounds merely for votes, economists on the other hand will argue for a system to empower economically the prospective beneficiary in such a way that one was able to buy on one's own instead of giving it all free . Since that entailed a time factor of years, people worst hit by COVID pandemic needed two square meals on immediate basis to put their body and soul together.

Akhnor-Poonch National Highway

A good news for the people in Jammu division especially living along Akhnor to Poonch sector is that for the project to upgrade, widen and making two lane system strong with paved shoulder the Akhnor -Poonch National Highway and to give a push to the ongoing work, the requisite financial support stands not only granted amounting to Rs. 563 crore but released too. That pointedly means work on the project shall be expedited. Once completed, the project was going to enhance connectivity between and to various border villages. This work under the 'project Sampark' is going to be executed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) known for its commitment to speed, quality and maintenance. The mode of such work will be the principle of Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) which in other words means measures to cut down on delays and hence cost escalation by adhering strictly to the timeline. Infrastructure projects show wonderful results on account of EPC mode.

Improving and adding roads infrastructure was essential in hassles free connectivity of areas and places besides a strong pillar for economic growth and prosperity. Jammu and Kashmir needing more of such infrastructural projects having been duly realised by the Central Government, therefore, projects like the one under reference shall prove to be a major step towards that direction. We need more flyovers especially in Jammu city which is facing problems on account of increasing traffic load on the roads and in this connection, it is heartening that the flyover on Jammu - Akhnor Road is completed and scheduled to be inaugurated by the Union Home Minister this week.

India gradually becoming 'World Guru'

Abhinav Sharma

Inspired by the strong resolve of the Prime Minister of the world's largest democracy, India today aspires to become a Vishwaguru and global powerhouse by attaining unprecedented heights of prosperity and ensuring overall rural and urban growth in each and every sector. To achieve this difficult yet not impossible task there has to be a combined endeavour pursued with full enthusiasm and vigour by the people as well as those in governance playing a proactive role in the direction. The aspirations are all the more at peak today especially in view of the fact that the world including the people of India can feel India's resurgence in this direction at the global level under the par excellence leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has the distinction of being at the top of the list of the world's most popular leaders according to surveys conducted by the recognized and reliable surveyors across the globe. It is a fact that during the first and ongoing tenure of PM Modi led Govt relentless efforts have already been carried in the direction of making India the 'World Guru' with history being scripted with grit, resilience, ambition, and confidence. Despite multiple challenges and setbacks like the economic challenges and the Covid-19 setback the PM Modi led government has been able to make giant strides in all spheres from education to health, agriculture to science and technology, social welfare to foreign relations, economy to philanthropy, and entertainment to besides the nation having become an entity to reckon with in the international arena where he is today the most sought after world leader to for discussing the most significant global

issues. The domination and influence of India is increasing due to Narendra Modi's policies, politics, economic and peaceful coexistence ideology which is evidenced by the fact that it is for the first time that a government promotes Yoga, Ayurveda, Food, Literature, Tradition, Knowledge and Experience not only at home but across the globe. Last

international level which is evident from the top global leaders exchanging pleasantries by greeting each other with Namaste. It is an acknowledged fact that it is due to the strong and impressive leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the voice of the World's largest Democracy has been heard effectively and will continue to be heard with much more attention and keenness

Narendra Modi's dream of making India a \$5 trillion (Rs. 350 lakh crore) economy has already taken wings and despite the heavy jolt due to the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic the nation continues to surge ahead towards fulfilling this dream.

In this regard a meticulous strategy is being followed and relentless efforts have been initiated to ensure that India's economy grows at a healthy annual average. The nation's GDP figures for the first quarter in the current financial year 2022-23 are highly optimistic in this direction. These reveal that GDP has increased by double digits. According to the preliminary estimates issued by the National Statistical Office, India's GDP increased by 13.5% in the current quarter. Given the enforcement of the strict economic/ financial discipline during the BJP led Modi regime, besides augmentation of various schemes in every sector, there should be no doubt that the nation is poised to reach \$5 trillion (Rs. 350 lakh crore) sooner than later. The credit in this regard undoubtedly goes to PM Modi and his team of financial experts. When seen in totality it



but not the least India's ages old philosophy emphasizes on being in contact with the entire existence and aiming at greater consciousness. India has been a source of knowledge for world civilization since the beginning. The nations across the world admiring the rich culture of India have adopted Yoga Day, Ahimsa Day, besides the Ayurveda. Not only this, even Namaste tradition has also been adopted at the

by the world in all times to come. Be it the G20, Climate Conference or other forums India leads from front. Moreover, it has achieved unprecedented milestones in development plans, the successful fight against the Corona epidemic crisis, establishing ties between India's domestic and foreign policy and last but not the least on the economic front. It would not be out of context to mention here that Prime Minister

can be said without a second thought that Modi Government is determined to prove that he is second to none across the world. He has proved that every Indian tradition is most useful to the world humanity and India instead of retaining these exclusively for itself shares every such tradition with the whole world humanity. In this regard it would not be out of context to mention that during the peak pandemic days

India despite its enormous population pressure provided the much needed vaccine to a substantial number of nations across the globe.

It is because of these initiatives that the world attaches utmost importance to India and it would not be wrong to say that people across the world are today looking at India with quite hopeful eyes. A meticulous analysis of the developments in context of 'Vishwaguru' already reveals that India is gradually becoming a 'Global Guru' under Prime Minister Modi's leadership. Undoubtedly, given the richness of values embedded in the Indian civilization and culture besides being the only existing oldest civilization that has already proved its universality, the target being fully achieved is only a matter of some more time. The status of any nation at the global level is not measured exclusively by the enhanced infrastructure, but by the vision, character, determination and courage of the national leader and the modus operandi adopted by such leader in steering the nation forward. Observing the current status of the issue from this perspective, Narendra Modi has emerged as the most effective world leader, and has become the reason for India's genuine and just dominance in the world. Therefore, it needs to be acknowledged by one and all that the PM himself along with his government continues to bring the unbelievable treasures of the Indian Civilization alive with the contemporary rather modern references highlighting the power of India's traditional panacea and despite having resolved to achieve this target by 2047, it will be accomplished much before the aforesaid timeline.

(The author is BJP Spokesman)

Harsha Kakkur

Gen Chauhan (promoted from Lt Gen and reinstated from retirement) has been appointed as the second CDS. While many may contend that the appointment is political, the fact remains that the prerogative of appointing is solely that of the Government in power, who select an individual whom they believe will push reforms they had conceived. Possibly his tenure as the military advisor to the NSCS (National Security Council Secretariat) convinced the government that he was the right individual for becoming the CDS. Gen Chauhan has vast operational experience, as also post his stint in the NSCS, he would have a clearer understanding of the nation's security concerns, financial limitations and priorities.

Much water has flowed down the Ganges since the untimely demise of General Bipin Rawat. The army and the navy have completed their studies on theatre commands, as assigned to them, however these lie in cold storage. They would now be dusted and discussed. The navy is possibly rethinking on its maritime command as also building pressure for the approval of a third aircraft carrier, objected to by the air force, which believes that this could impact its own procurements. The air force has its own perspective on theatre commands. The air chief, Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, stated in a

The new CDS takes his post

seminar in Delhi in Jul this year, 'air defence and offensive air missions are interdependent and if executed in isolation, these would not only be disjointed but also ineffective in design or execution of the joint strategy,' basically writing off the air defence command, which was amongst the first Bipin Rawat had planned to roll out. This is in addition to it questioning division of meagre airpower resources between theatre commands, mainly on grounds of current aircraft being multipurpose.

The air force and the army also have vastly different approaches to handling threats. While the army considers the future battlefield to be restricted in space with defending land as a priority, the air force feels constricted with this concept. They believe that future wars would demand employment of airpower for degrading strategic targets and logistics dumps, thus isolating the battlefield, thereby providing the army a favourable scenario to achieve success. Some airpower resources would however be available to the army in close support. In summary, the air force believes that the army desires it to be subservient, while it believes that its role is strategic and could tilt the balance in India's favour. The air force has also repeatedly stated that it considers inte-

gration and joint ness in operations as the future however can never convincingly substantiate how it could be achieved without forces being under one commander with the power to employ them in an integrated manner. For the armed forces, the age-old worry of service chiefs losing their identity to theatre commanders remains a question mark.

Each service has its own modernization plans, which only seem to grow. While the air fleet is aging and urgently needs replacements, the navy demands a third carrier in addition to submarines. The army is desperate to upgrade its warfighting capabilities to handle a two front war including inclusion of smart weapon systems.



The defence budget will not grow. It may either stagnate or even reduce in the event of a national calamity. The government hesitates to implement recommendations of multiple finance commissions on defence budgets. Hence, managing service requirements within it will pose a challenge.

Gen Chauhan, though senior in service to the current chiefs, is the first amongst equals, as per his appointment. This implies that all decisions on integration and theatre commands have to be unanimous. As was visible during the tenure of Bipin Rawat, objections of serv-

ice chiefs were directly relayed to the defence minister leading to reassessments. General Chauhan hence will have to adopt an approach enabling him to win the trust of service chiefs.

The Government remains committed to creating theatre commands as has been announced on multiple occasions by the PM and the defence minister. If disagreements continue and the services cannot agree to a common concept, there is a strong possibility of it being bulldozed based on the perception of the Government guided by strategic thinkers. This was the model adopted by most nations, where the services disagreed on its creation.

Sadly, while each service has its own vision of their future force levels over the next two to three decades, there is no thought given for a similar vision for the Indian armed forces as a common entity. This should be a priority. All individual service visions should flow from here. Further, there is no common threat perception or strategy for handling future threats in an integrated manner. It is this which has resulted in individual services churning out their own roles in future conflicts.

Coming from the NSCS, General Chauhan would be aware of the Government's

intent. Also would be the need to set aside fears of redundancy of service chiefs with the introduction of theatre commands. Though not officially stated the Government would desire that positive progress is visible prior to the 2024 elections enabling the government to draw political mileage.

Hence, I expect Gen Chauhan's priorities to be firstly to regain control over the DMA (Department of Military Affairs). Secondly, win over service chiefs and work in unison to produce a common threat perception and vision for the armed forces. Thirdly, re-evaluate acceptable theatre command options and finally to push them through.

General Chauhan's appointment is unlikely to be smooth sailing, especially when individual services have their own views. His diplomatic skills would be paramount as challenges are rising and disagreements, which were currently simmering, now out in the open. His advantage remains the spade work done by General Bipin Rawat. An added benefit is that he has the ears of the powers that matter and can push where needed. It is equally essential for individual services to get down from their high horses and work for a solution, rather than remain stumbling blocks. Changes will happen as has been witnessed in recent government directions. It is better they flow from consensus rather than by bulldozing.

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Phone call inferred as begging?

Shiban Khaibri

"In this avaricious world, even a beggar needs money in his bowl to be heard, begging is much more difficult than it looks, and beggars cannot be choosers....."

Now that the new Government is in office in Pakistan since early April this year or in other words for nearly six months but instead of bringing in some changes, the position of the 23rd "Prime Minister" of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif and his uneasy coalition government is increasingly precarious in handling the affairs of that country especially on extremely sagging, depressing and sinking economic front not to speak of at different international diplomatic fronts . It is quite interesting that it was this very economic failure which was attributed to mismanagement of Pakistan's affairs by Imran Khan that became the cause of his stepping down preceded by series of "combined opposition" protesting on streets and heaping calumny to the hilt on Khan. Facing acute economic crisis and double digit highest ever inflation of 27.5% and devastating floods , Pakistan not only is heavily under debt but even is on the verge of gross economic default and, therefore , no international institution is lending any money to it to tide over the economic crisis over there. As is evident, Pakistan has frantically been trying to borrow from various countries but even its "trusted" friend China has not obliged it. Imran Khan , former Prime Minister of Pakistan has , as such, slammed the present dispensation in Pakistan for "running around like a headless chicken with the economy in the tail-spin".

Prime Minister Shabaz Sharif , therefore, feeling quite undone and frustrated is openly admitting the extent of economic chaos and refusal of world community to lend money to it that he recently admitted that "even friendly countries have started looking at Pakistan as a nation that is always asking for money". He further added , "Today when we go to any friendly country or make even a phone call

, they think that they have come to beg for money." He was candid in admitting "Where does Pakistan stand today after 75 years, even smaller countries have surpassed Pakistan and we have been wandering for the past 75 years carrying a begging bowl." Devastating floods , the fury of which has rattled the Government as how to manage and address the horrible devastation it has brought in its wake, has brought the entire nation to a standstill.

On the other hand while all the blame of economic ills plaguing Pakistan is put on ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan by the present dispensation, on the other hand, Imran keeps on lauding India as a "Khuddar Quam" or very self respecting people and that "No super power can dictate terms to India" and is lavishing praises on Narendra Modi , the Prime Minister of India and an important world leader. This is precisely for the reason for what "he has been doing all for his country" as against the "present PM Shehbaz Sharif who is concerned about the properties he owns outside Pakistan". Imran goes on to say further, "No other leader except Sharif in the world has properties worth billions". Earlier during his "difficult days" he was showering praises on the foreign policy of India but much to the discomfiture of many "highly secular" leaders of opposition Parties in India. Earlier, Nawaz Sharif the PM of Pakistan was removed from office by the Supreme Court of Pakistan regarding revelations from the Panama Paper case disqualifying him from holding public office and he had to quit the office in July 2017.

We in India , cherishing ages old civilization(al) heights of tolerance, peace, compassion, sympathy and the spirit of helping the one in distress feel bad about the devastation, floods have brought in Pakistan . India as a regional super power wants to replicate in Pakistan what it did in economic crisis ravaged Sri-Lanka by giving it an aid of \$4 billion. India, therefore, wants to bail out and help Pakistan despite its avowed and sworn policy of hatred against India but as the saying goes that one should not beg while mounted on an elephant or beggars cannot be

choosers , Pakistan has not formally requested this country for help. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto has bragged that Pakistan has not sought help from India while "many have come forward to help Pakistan".

Those ravaged by floods in Pakistan are Pakistani Hindus also who in 1948 from 22.07 percent of their population have been decimated to less than 2% and otherwise who are living a miserable life and always being under fear and being worst victims of hatred and state repression. They have been denied humanitarian aid and any type of relief or help by the local administration even being worst sufferers of the fury of floods. Discrimination with destitute Pakistani Hindus in matters of providing relief was so much that those who had taken refuge in relief camps were forcibly expelled from there once the local authorities knew about their faith. They were denied shelter, food and water just for their faith. A few conscientious Pakistani journalists reported about it. Instead of doing away with such a blatant discrimination and helping the Hindu flood sufferers out, one journalist was arrested by Pakistani authorities for reporting on open discrimination against Hindu flood victims of the Sindh province. A video of the discrimination against the Pakistani Hindus went viral on social media , the provincial Government there acted swiftly not in providing humanitarian aid to poor Hindus sufferers but by deleting the video and arresting the Pakistani journalist .

Not only that, during floods of 2010 too, Pakistani Hindus were openly refused any aid and driven out of the relief camps making them starve and suffer with no one to listen to their vows though the country being their birth place with hundreds of thousands of years of roots. The then President Asif Zardari had to intervene, such were the levels of discrimination against Hindus and he had to pass on necessary instructions to the Sindh Government. Again, nearly two years back during COVID pandemic, discrimination against Hindus was galore. Driven by faith based and ethnic discrimination, Hindus were refused aid. Pakistan's top

NGOs, the Saylani Welfare Trust refused to give ration to Hindus after ascertaining their faith from the official identity cards.

How unashamedly , flagrantly and brazenly is Pakistan crying foul over manufactured excesses committed on minorities (Muslims) in India and how it impudently talks about human rights violations in Kashmir while its hands are soaked with blood of those innocents, security forces, civilians, young and old whose blood got spilled and their families devastated in Jammu and Kashmir due to proxy war of terrorism unleashed by it against India . How its armed agents, terrorists and indoctrinated saboteurs drove out an entire original and indigenous inhabitants of Kashmir - the Kashmiri Pandits - numbering over 5 lakh only because of their faith, yet it talks about minorities in India, the ones it refers to are luckiest in the world by being citizens of India enjoying unprecedented liberty, freedom , equality and opportunities and being partakers of the economic development and beneficiaries of all schemes and programmes without a single instance of any discrimination which is in fact never in anyone's mind even. Pakistan born on hate and prejudice against Hindus and other non Muslims should not gather cheeks to even remotely refer to minorities in India . We may be having problems, we may have differences and even may quarrel for that but we resolve them too like members in a family do. Constitution of the country, the law of the land, the independent judiciary and highly tolerant accommodative, peaceful and truly secular Hindu majority community play a tremendous role in order to guarantee no discrimination with anyone on any ground . That is the greatness of this country .

Pakistan has to learn and learn and yet again learn from India rather than giving sermons on minorities or on Kashmir. A suggestion and an advice to Pakistan - "treat your religious minorities fairly and do not subject them to discrimination, repression and forced conversion , your days will change and your problems will be over to a larger extent". Converse of it can result in what hardly needs to be told to that country.

(The views expressed by the authors are their personal)

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