

New accommodation provisions at Bhawan

With a continuous ambition of providing added facilities to the pilgrims to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in Katra, a construction of a spacious building - Durga Bhawan to accommodate more than 2000 pilgrims on a daily average is going on with full speed. Expected to be completed before the year ending, the building when completed, will fulfil one of the basic and main requirements of staying in of the visiting pilgrims and that too at a nominal price. The project costing around Rs.28 crore is with a target to accommodate up to 2500 pilgrims on a daily basis which was bound to give a new shape and structure to the comforts and convenience of the devotee pilgrims. Free accidental insurance cover of Rs.5 lakh to each pilgrim and continuously improved arrangements along the entire track punctuated by important announcements and necessary information like for Aarti etc are keeping the pilgrims physically and mentally more relaxed with concentration on having "Darshan" at the earliest.

A notable feature in respect of providing facilities to the visiting pilgrims is a constant process of review and reappraisal by the Shrine Board of the existing support base and to ensure which types of additions on innovative basis could be arranged. That approach ensures a back to back basis to keep overall arrangements for a smooth yatra for the pilgrims. In the Bhawan which is under construction, provisions for providing locker facilities to keep valuables etc safe and secure by the staying pilgrims coupled with bathing ghats are aimed at making the stay quite pleasant and congenial. Staying without food and water etc is unimaginable which, it may be reiterated, the Shrine Board has been providing like hygienic and homely cooked like food at quite cheap rates along the tracks in its Bhojanalayas. Since the entire area is earthquake prone, necessary arrangements in that respect to ensure full protection to pilgrims like slope stabilization measures, Wire Mesh etc to lessen the impact of landslides, if any, indicate how the Shrine Board is taking each and every aspect connected with the yatra in consideration with an all pronged approach.

In this direction, constant efforts of the Shrine Board to ensure maximum infrastructural support to the existing system for making the yatra up to the last point more facilities oriented supported by introduction of digital support as well is notable. In this connection, it hardly needs to be emphasised about various online services provided to the pilgrims including for the battery driven car services for senior citizens, women and specially abled persons. These measures have been making the devotees' visit to the Holy Shrine smooth, hassles free and enjoyable. The latest one pertaining to accommodation at quite affordable cost is indeed a big step. Such steps besides, agreeably the element of increased spirit of devotion, are widening the prospects of a constant increase in the volume of the turnover of pilgrims from all over the country including from parts of other countries to the Shrine.

Such measures, on the other hand, are also in recognition of the tremendous role the pilgrimage to the shrine played to bolster the economy of the UT which is primarily tourism oriented including religious tourism, especially the local commercial activities associated with paying obeisance at the holy shrine by the visiting pilgrims. Railways, civil aviation and road transport in particular get widely benefitted due to the Katra bound passengers for paying obeisance at the shrine round the year. It is therefore imperative that not only more and more pilgrims visit the holy town of Katra for paying obeisance at the highly revered shrine but to what extent and how much maximum facilities of all hues are made for the devotee pilgrims. That way, making constant efforts in this direction are directly related to the pilgrimage in totality which goes on all the days of the year.

UT Agriculture and issues of farmers

A committee headed by former Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research constituted by the UT Government of Jammu and Kashmir to examine and make an in-depth analysis of the UT Agriculture and allied sectors, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities and how to make a planned inclusive growth and each sector to become vibrant, marketable in respect of the products etc has had several Apex Committee meetings so far and has prepared a detailed report in respect of its findings made so far. The Committee has done a SWOT analysis of Agriculture which comprises strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which in itself is self explanatory as encompassing each sector/wing of agricultural activities in Jammu and Kashmir.

The said report having recently been submitted to the Lieutenant Governor needs to be examined at an early date. More so, especially in respect of how income of marginal farmers and those with smaller holdings could vastly be improved in Jammu and Kashmir with more emphasis on backward areas. Since the approach of the Apex Committee is on holistic development, the report needs to be examined by the experts/ bureaucrats to see how this sector with vast potential but lacking the required support base of various hues including new techniques of farming. The findings and the recommendations of the Committee are important in that the income increasing prospects of a large number of farmers say over 13 lakh are involved.

RSS as vanguard of Indian Nationalism

Harihar Swarup

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's vijaydashami speech exhibited the confidence of the organization and its strong desire to intervene in the contemporary social and cultural churning in India. RSS's ideological shadow has spread beyond its organizational reach and cadre. Sontosh Yadav, the chief guest at the function on October 5, said, "she was called 'sanghi' despite her unawareness of the Sangh". The Sangh's new venture is to hold serious cultural dialogue with so called minority communities, especially Muslims and Christians, on the question of what constitutes Indianness and Hindu Rashtra.

Earlier too, RSS Chief M S Golwalkar, Balasaheb Deoras and K S Sudarshan held interaction with minority groups. However, the new initiative aims at more constructive results. Bhagwat's emphasis on the role of social power is an acknowledgment of limits of political power in resolving vexed historical question. The Lucknow pact of 1916 signed by M A Jinnah and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, representing the Muslim League and the Congress was a blunder. Instead of bringing the two communities together, it sanctioned the dichotomies between them. Lessons from pre-partition histo-

ry must be heeded.

Bhagwat has signalled a further need for dialogue to accomplish two objectives. The primary goal is to remove the perception, based on conspiracy theories, that the RSS is not a

delegitimized by the masses. As the largest and more effective ideological force in the country, the RSS has a moral responsibility in making the forward movement.

Once criticized as an enemy

aged to tide over the occasional dissent by evolving a collective will and following it in letter and spirit. This is what makes the RSS exceptional. It succeeded in spreading the message of resurrecting India's civilizational glo-

by the CPI (M) in its 'organizational and political report, 2008'. The report stated that "apart from RSS front organisations, like the BMS and ABVP and VHP, many other front organisations (like Seva Bharti, Vidya Bharti and

B G Kher, a Congressman warned "Calling them (RSS activists) fascist and communal and repeating the same allegations hardly serves any purpose."

The content of critiques of the RSS has, however, remained unchanged for decades. This happens to social and cultural movement when the political class enjoys a convenient majority and intellectual legitimacy. The Nehruvian regime had both the things. Its successors fail to realize their shrinking base and continue to practice ideological unreachability towards the RSS. Nehruvians have borrowed the western phrase "post truth" to demean the popularity Prime Minister Narendra Modi enjoyed. Debates on news channels on social, religious and cultural issues add fuel to fire. Many BJP leaders say there is much to show that RSS' role in history has been wrongly presented by the Nehruvians and Marxists. In a debate on the ideology and organization of the RSS in the Legislative Council of Central Provinces in March 1934 M S Rahman contested the government's allegation that it was a communal organization. All the 14 members who participated in the debate vouched for its tradition as a cultural organization of Hindus. (IPA)



threat to minorities. So dialogue with elite is required. This is to be followed by a cultural discourse on nationalism and the Hindu civilization with masses. This may seem utopian to those who failed to see the emerging social realities. It is also true that the task is riddled with complexities and risks. But letting anarchists and political class occupy this space will worsen the situation. For instance, on triple Talaq and Article 370, the elites were

of India's diversity, the RSS is projecting itself as vanguard of social and cultural pluralism. Its expansion has not been based on emotional appeals and has not been motivated by the desire to capture state power organisations or movements that works on lines that are vulnerable to power dynamics.. The growth of RSS has taken place in the face of contempt by those favoured by the state. In its history of more than 97 years, the sangh has man-

ry-this ethos is the soul of the RSS's ideology and programmes. By working without a rigid blueprint, the Sangh interprets, contextualizes and redefines its ideological understanding.

According to the present RSS leaders, the RSS's sense of purpose has led to the organization being accepted among the working class, slum dwellers, women and tribal, traditional the left's domain. This was acknowledged

Vanvasi, Kalyan Ashram) are working systematically to penetrate new sections of the people in new areas.

RSS sources say that no India-centric alternative to the RSS understanding of nationalism, culture has been proposed. Many in the Constituent Assembly, and later in the Congress and Socialist Movement, showed partially or full solidarity with the Sangh. In an article in the Mahratta on November 18, 1949,

Ignore Pak's calls for talks

Harsha Kakar

Addressing the 6th summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif stated, 'I am absolutely ready and willing to have a serious dialogue and discussion with our counterparts, Indians, provided that they show sincerity of purpose, and they show that they are ready to discuss issues that have really kept us at a distance over decades.' He added, 'Pakistan desires peaceful relations with all its neighbours, including India. However, until India brings its atrocities in occupied Kashmir to a grinding halt, just and lasting peace will remain elusive.'

Without mentioning J and K, no Pak leader's speech is ever complete. Pak believes they have global support while the reality remains that India cannot be coached, pushed or pressured. It has displayed it multiple occasions, the latest being Ukraine. As expected, Shehbaz placed the onus on India to create the environment. To satisfy his country folk, he tweeted, 'I explained how India uses the mantra of democracy to hide its gross human rights abuses. The world should recognise brutal nature of Indian policies in J and K. The terrorised valley of Kashmir is manifestation of bullet being a preferred Indian policy than ballot.'

Minister of State for External Affairs, Meenakshi Lekhi responded, 'I advise Pakistan to dismantle terror infrastructure in their country and get on the better side of law and order, then you can have a conversation with India. We want good relations with all our neighbours including Pakistan but not at the cost of India's integrity.' She also called on Pakistan to stop 'grave and persistent human rights violations in Pakistan occupied Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.'

A few days ago, while addressing graduating students at the Pakistan Military Academy at Kakul, their army chief, General Bajwa mentioned, 'We must give peace a chance by developing a mechanism to resolve all our bilateral issues peacefully. I must highlight here that our desire for peace must not be construed as our weakness.' The message was to India, without it being named directly. Bajwa has been promoting his doctrine of shifting Pakistan's global strategy from geopolitics to geoeconomics.

In both cases, Shehbaz and Bajwa, there was no mention of revocation of article 370, a stand down from their earlier position. There are also

reports that Pakistan is permitting import of 6 million mosquito nets from India. Pakistan's change in stance followed visits of Bajwa and Bilawal Bhutto to Washington where they would have been prodded to seek dialogue. The US would have conveyed, in no uncertain terms, as to what would be the limit of support Pak could expect

about the attempts by India to formalise annexation of Kashmir.' India was compelled to respond. These clashes, though meaningless, occurring on a global platform demand a rejoinder. Pakistan falsely harping on human rights in Kashmir, is intended to hide its own violations in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. India never raises

ing of Kashmir and seeking dialogue was excellently summed up by Michael Rubin of the American Enterprise Institute, in an article titled, 'Pakistan's Worst Nightmare: Indian Kashmir Thrives,' published by 'The National Interest.' Michael based his article on his recent travels through the valley. He stated, 'While Kashmiris under Pakistani control remain bound by a moribund economy and suppressed by Jamaat-e-Islami extremism, Kashmiris in India have security, taste freedom, and thrive.'

He summed up Pakistan's dilemma by stating, 'Islamabad and the separatists and terrorist groups it sponsors may say India denies Kashmir freedom, but reality increasingly suggests otherwise. Pakistan may claim to be the flagbearer for Kashmiris, but Indian Kashmir's great leap forward economically, socially, and politically can only embarrass Pakistan, for it both shows the failure of Islamabad's stewardship and highlights its cynicism.' He added that more Kashmir develops and moves towards peace the more Pakistan loses its grip and support.

Pakistan is aware that it cannot convince the world on Kashmir as tourists are flocking the region from all parts of the globe, carrying back fond memories. Its biggest concern lies in the fact that as the leader of the G 20, India will conduct a few preliminary meetings of the organization in the Union Territory. Once these are held, it is fait accompli on India's position. Its only hope is that Turkey and China could push India to change venues.

Simultaneously, the Pak establishment spreads fake news on Kashmir amongst its domestic audience solely to save face. It cannot admit it has lost the Kashmir plot after investing billions in creating terrorist infrastructure. For years Pakistan equated Kashmir to Gaza but accepting that both are vastly different would damage their egos.

With the US making clear their limits of support and advising it to resolve its differences with India, Pakistan has possibly begun seeing light and advocating talks with almost no preconditions. Rhetoric on Kashmir will continue solely for domestic consumption. India must ignore Pak's mention of dialogue unless there is verifiable proof of a change in policy. With a change in Pak army chief in Nov, elections in Pak next year and Indian elections in 2024, neither side would be willing to risk a start and collapse of dialogue.

The author is Major General (Retd)

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from them, considering its growing strategic relationship India.

While the Pak government's stance appears to be mellowing down, raising Kashmir in global forums continues. India and Pakistan have been clashing regularly at the UN and almost every other global body on Kashmir. Pakistan raises Kashmir even if the subject has no link, only to keep the pot boiling.

Last week, post the UNGA vote on Ukraine, the Pak ambassador stated that Pakistan looked forward to, 'similar concern and condemnation

Kashmir in bilateral and global platforms.

India refuse to relent from its stance of terror and talks being unacceptable. It demands verifiable proof of Pakistan acting against terrorist groups and their leaders prior to even considering dialogue. Simultaneously, India refuses to normalize ties with China unless the border situation reverts to pre-Apr 2020 positions. India has conveyed globally that it will not bow to any pressure on what it believes to be the right approach. This is Indian national power at play.

The desperation for Pakistan's increased rais-

Food insecurity and malnutrition

Dr Tasaduq Hussain Itoo

Rising food insecurity is emerging as a global issue of social cum public health concern that needs serious attention and redressal. While food is one of the most essential requirements for the sustenance of human life, the World Food Day observed every year on 16th of October -- highlight and emphasize on the millions of people worldwide who couldn't afford a healthy diet and fulfill the need for regular access to nutritious food.

The developmental, economic, social, and medical impacts of the global burden of food insecurity are serious and lasting for individuals, families, communities and countries. Having said, unhealthy diets and poor nutrition are among the top risk factors for diet-related non-communicable diseases including cardiovascular diseases, certain cancers, and diabetes.

One of the important consequences of rising food insecurity is the development of malnutrition in general and undernutrition in particular - in all its forms (including wasting, stunting, underweight, inadequacy/deficiency of vitamins and minerals).

As per World Health Organization (WHO) data of year 2020, globally around 149 million children under 5 years of age were estimated to be stunted (too short for age), 45 million were estimated to be wasted (too thin for height), with around 45% of deaths among children under 5 years of age - linked to undernutrition. Childhood overweight and obesity that attribute to other forms of malnutrition are also on the rise.

While every country in the world is affected by one or more forms of malnutrition - the major impact is found to occur in middle and low income countries, including India. As a result, combating malnutrition in all its forms is becom-

ing one of the serious global health challenge. Undernutrition makes children in particular much more vulnerable to disease and death.

Broadly understanding the forms of undernutrition - wasting, which means low weight-for-height. It usually indicates recent and severe weight loss, because a person has not had enough food to eat and/or they have had an infectious disease, such as diarrhoea, which has caused them to lose weight. A young child who is moderately or severely wasted has an increased risk

ic conditions, poor maternal health and nutrition, frequent illness, and/or inappropriate infant and young child feeding and care in early life. Stunting holds children back from reaching their physical and cognitive potential.

Low weight-for-age is known as underweight. A child who is underweight may be stunted, wasted, or both. Moreover, micronutrient-related malnutrition can occur due to inadequacies in intake of vitamins and minerals often referred to as micronutrients. Micronutrients



of death, but treatment is possible.

Low height-for-age is known as stunting. It is the result of chronic or recurrent undernutrition, usually associated with poor socioeconomic

enable the body to produce enzymes, hormones, and other substances that are essential for proper growth and development - their deficiency represents a major threat to the health and devel-