

## Mission all weather roads

National Highways and other roads are getting total transformations in both the UTs. Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Road Transport and Highways announced series of projects for all weather and safe road connectivity for Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The most important is a 670-km, four-lane Green Field Expressway from Delhi to Katra. It is expected to significantly reduce travel times between Delhi and Katra, which could boost tourism and a manifold increase in trade and commerce. The construction of the highway will create employment opportunities in the region. This new highway will divert traffic away from existing congested routes, which could help reduce traffic congestion, especially in Jammu City, resulting in a better air quality. Modern safety features, such as crash barriers and lighting will improve safety for road users.

Another important project is the 78-km, four-lane ring road around Srinagar. The new ring road will provide an alternative route for traffic, reducing congestion on existing roads and improving connectivity between different parts of the Kashmir valley. Fast and easy mobility will lead to increased trade and commerce between different parts of the Kashmir valley. It will provide better access to emergency services, with the most important being no traffic jams during VIP convey movements. Decongestion of traffic is also important for security and the environment, particularly for improving the air quality in Srinagar City.

There is proposal for a tunnel between Sheshnag and Panjarni on the Amarnath yatra route, reducing the yatra time from the current three days to just nine hours and will bring improved access to the pilgrimage site, improved safety, better emergency services, and environmental benefits. This whole stretch is a heavy rain catchment area, and the project is going to reduce the number of temporary suspensions of the yatra. The hardships of pilgrims will be reduced to an extent.

Similarly, a tunnel at Pir Ki Gali on the Mughal Road, connecting Poonch in the Jammu region to Shopian in the valley, will be an effort to make it an all-weather road, making quick nomadic movement between winter and summer zones possible and providing an alternative, reliable connectivity between the Kashmir and Jammu divisions.

For the UT of Ladakh, the completion of the Zojila Tunnel is one of the most anticipated happenings. This tunnel is going to be a game changer for the UT with much-needed all-weather connectivity, much-reduced travel time, resulting in fuel savings, and most importantly, a quick movement for army convoys and equipment. No more being cut off for months from the rest of the country. Students and patients will get much relief. A major boost to tourism and economic activities. The tunnel will also make the region safer by reducing the number of fatal accidents that occur in the inhospitable terrain near the Zojila Pass.

All 19 tunnels, which are under construction, will make travel possible in the hilly terrain of the region even during harsh weather conditions. All-weather roads help to maintain connectivity and reduce the isolation of various regions by facilitating the movement of goods and people, which helps stimulate economic activity in the region and improve investment and tourism potential. A quick emergency response during natural disasters or any other crisis will be possible now.

Jammu-Srinagar NH 44 was just a two-lane highway with poor reliability during rains and snowfall. No previous government in the past had understood these aspects, but now record budget allocations are there for tunnels and roads, much improvement in the last nine years. The credit goes to the present government as reduced distances and express highways will bring more industries to the Jammu region. The administration is thinking about people and ways to improve their quality of life. It will take some time, but the dream of American-style roads in Jammu and Kashmir will soon become a reality.

## Strict disciplinary action against 'guilty' cops

Two Traffic Police officials, including an Assistant Sub Inspector, have been suspended and are under investigation after a video showing them allegedly accepting a bribe from a driver at Trishul Morh, Ramban, on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, went viral on social media. The Police Department has taken the matter seriously and has initiated a departmental inquiry against the suspended personnel, Selection Grade Constable and his In-Charge ASI, for their unprofessional conduct. This is not an odd case, as only a few days ago, police in the Rajouri district suspended five police personnel and initiated a departmental inquiry in response to a strange theft incident at the district court complex's high-security seizure room, known as the Malkhana. According to official sources, seized drugs, capsules, and counterfeit currency were stolen overnight on April 3 and 4 by unidentified individuals. The guard in charge and other officials were suspended for failing to fulfil their duties, and a departmental inquiry has been initiated. The investigation is ongoing, and the police expect to make progress soon.

Corruption is a serious issue, and any allegations of corruption by law enforcement agencies should be thoroughly investigated by the relevant authorities. A merely administrative suspension is not punishment as long as the person keeps getting a substantial salary without working. The police department should take strict disciplinary action against any officer found guilty of corruption. Police officers are responsible for upholding the law and protecting citizens, and any form of corruption or malpractice undermines public trust in law enforcement agencies. The police department needs to make an exemplary case of this and take strict disciplinary action against any officer found guilty of corruption. Citizens play an active role in preventing corruption by reporting any incidents of corrupt practices they witness. By working together, we can ensure that policemen uphold the law and serve the public interest with integrity and professionalism.

# Baisakhi : The Birthday of the Khalsa

Inderjeet S Bhatia "Prince"

Baisakhi, also pronounced as Vaisakhi, marks the onset of spring season in India and usually signifies the end of the harvest season. It falls on 1st day of the month of Vaisakh and is one of the most awaited major festivals of North India especially in Punjab, Haryana and J&K. Since Baisakhi festival marks the time of harvest of Rabi crops, it is time of tremendous joy and festivities for farmers. The people celebrate the day with a lot of enthusiasm and gaiety by performing "Bhangra" and "Gidda" in the open fields. Other than marking the season of harvest, Baisakhi also has religious significance for the Sikhs. On the occasion of Baisakhi festival in 1699, a revolution occurred in Punjab. The Khalsa Panth was born on this day under the 10th Sikh Guru, Shree Guru Gobind Singh Sahib Ji at Keshgarh Sahib in Anandpur Sahib in Punjab. That was the Baisakhi festival of 1699 when 10th Sikh Guru, (then)Guru Gobind Rai Ji sent special messages to Sikhs all over India that they would meet at Anandpur Sahib on the auspicious occasion of Baisakhi.

On this occasion, after the Gurbaani recitation was over, Guru Ji went to the stage in an unusual mood, drew his sword and called for a brave Sikh to come forward to offer his head to the Guru. This unexpected call was answered with complete silence from the audience. The Guru raised his voice and repeated his words, demanding the head of a Sikh. At this, Bhai Daya Ram ji, A Khatri from Lahore calmly came on the stage. Guru Ji took him to the nearby tent and came back on the stage again with bloody sword in his hands to ask for another head of a Sikh. This was done for a total of 5 times and five Sikhs came forward one by one. Bhai Daya Ram ji, a Khatri of Lahore, Bhai Dharam Chand ji, a Jat from Delhi, Bhai Himmat Dass ji, a washerman of Dwaraka, Bhai Mohkam Chand ji, a calico printer of Puri, Orissa, and Bhai Sahib Chand ji, a barber from Bidar in Karnataka state offered their heads one by one to Guru Ji. Then, to the surprise of the whole congregation, all 5 Sikhs were brought back on the stage, alive and dressed in special clothing. They were dressed like their master, in saffron garments. Their faces dress and appearances were like their master's. Guru Ji, then prepared AMRIT for them by reciting from holy Gurbaani, the five compositions: Japu, Jaap, Swayas, Chopai and Anand Sahib ji. The water kept in an iron vessel was stirred with a double edged sword and was sweetened by adding sugar.(Pattass), in it. The "AMRIT", thus prepared was administered to those chosen 5 to whom Guru Ji called as "Panj Playrey", the five beloved ones. They were given a common surname, Singh, and were to be called as "Khal-



sa." They were told that from onwards, they were no more Jats, Khatri, high or low caste people. The divine message of Guru Ji was "Maanas Ki Jaat, Sabhe Eke Peachanbo" (All human beings created by the almighty were equal). There should not be any discrimination on the basis of caste, colour, creed and gender. One should not have any fear except the fear of the Almighty who is the sole creator of this universe. Everyone was

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equal and they were all like brothers. Anyone accepting "Amrit" became a Singh and the Singhs in a group were given the name of "Khalsa." They have the full authority to take decisions regarding the situation and problems faced by the "Khalsa Panth". The decisions have to be taken in accordance with the directions of the holy Guru Granth Sahib Ji and are to be respected and obeyed by all the Sikhs.

Guru Ji paid the the greatest tribute to the Khalsa when he said: "Khalsa Mero Roop Hai

Khaas, Khalsa Mai Main Karu Niwaas"(The Khalsa is my own image and I reside in the Khalsa) It is written in Sarb Loh Granth Sahib ji as under: "Khalsa Akalpurkh Ki Fauj, Pargatiyo Khalsa, Parmatam Ki Mauj" (Khalsa is the army of eternal Lord, raised by him out of his pleasure). Their distinguishing features were their uncut beard, unshorn hair (Kesh)with a Turban (Pagri), an iron bangle

(Kara), a small sword (Kirpan), dangling on the left, an underwear (Kachhara), and a small comb (Kanga), in the hair. They were meant to be legions of the timeless God, commissioned to establish the rule of Dharma on our motherland and uproot all evil. The Guru Ji himself joined them to fulfill this mission. Guru Ji held his Chosen five in so high esteem that he knelt before them and asked them to initiate himself in to the "Khalsa Panth" in the same way he had done them before. The Guru Ji was then admin-

istered "Amrit" in, the same manner and was given the surname "Singh". Guru Ji, thus, became Guru Gobind Singh Ji from Guru Gobind Rai Ji (Guru Ji's previous name) The Khalsa, with God's light shining within was meant to be a global society. They were not to form a separate denomination, as that was totally against the Guru Ji's concept of universal brotherhood. The creation of the Khalsa was, thus, the crowning event of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib Ji's life from the stand point of both organisation and ideology. Ideologically the creation of the Khalsa aimed at a well balanced combination of the ideals of Bhakti and Shakti of moral and spiritual excellence and militant valour and heroism of the highest order.

Sri Aurobindo, a great Indian philosopher said, "Guru Gobind Singh Ji picked up five souls from the multitude and breathed fire of faith in to them. The creation of the Khalsa Panth by the 10th master was a marvel by itself. At the age of 33 years, Guru Ji got 33000 people gathered on the day of Baisakhi in 1699 at Keshgarh Sahib in Anandpur Sahib, Punjab and called five Sikhs to give life at the feet of Lord. What a submission, dedication, and devotion indeed!" In the words of J D Cunningham, another historian, who authored "History of the Sikhs" in 1849, "The creation of the Khalsa ideally transformed the life, outlook and aspirations of the people and imparted a new direction to Indian history." Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore held that, "Guru Gobind Singh Ji appeared on Indian National scene with the message of militarism of the community for the defence of social equality and religious freedom.

In order to execute his plan, Guru Gobind Singh Sahib Ji unified the Sikhs, taught them how to face any crisis calmly and boldly and generated a new hope and confidence." Incidentally, Baisakhi, in its local flavor, is also observed in different parts of India by its diverse names. In Bengal, it is called as Pohela Boishakh, Bohang Bihu in Assam, Puthandu in Tamilnadu, Bihu in Uttarakhand, Ugadi in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Pooramvishu in Kerala and Maha Vishuva Sankranti in Odisha. Sadly, Baisakhi is also commemorative of the fateful Baisakhi day of 1919 when an uncouth colonial British officer, Gen. Dyer opened fire on thousands of innocent Indians at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. The death of thousands of festive revellers by the haul of bullets shocked the entire world and also set the narrative for independence from the foreign rule that finally came by in 1947.

Rajja Sourav Singh Sarmal

In Indian subcontinent, the Calendars we're familiar with are the Gregorian, Vikram, Saka and Hijri. All the popular cultures and civilizations who had their own independent existence and glorious past had calendar of their own. It will surely fascinate everyone that the mighty Dogras too had their own calendar which was later replaced by Vikram and Gregorian. The calendar which our ancestors used to follow is one of the oldest in world and was known as Shastra (Shastri) Samvat or Dogra - Pahari Samvat. It had been frequently used in documents, letters and treaties exchanged between the lords of Dogra Hills as late as the first half of the nineteenth century after which Vikram Samvat alongside Gregorian became more relevant and Shastra era was almost replaced. In pre-muhammadan inscriptions, we never find the Vikrama or Saka eras used side by side with that of Shastra Era in Dogra region; even if we find such then they were in less number. Of the epigraphical records, the rock inscriptions are the oldest and least numerous; the oldest dating of such inscription where Shastra era was being used was from the seventh century. Most of these slab inscriptions are found on flat stones, covered with grotesque figures, which

## Basoa (Baisakhi)- The New Year Festival of Dogras

originally formed part of elaborately carved panthars or cisterns; erected in the olden times, chiefly by the Ranakas and Thakkuras in memory of their deceased relatives, and for their spiritual bliss in the next world. The carved slabs are all through the hills of Durgaradesh, but the inscribed stones seem to be peculiar to Chamba.

As of now, 2022 years have passed away since commencement of Gregorian Calendar whereas

we were strategically sidelined.

While speaking of background of our own calendar (Shastra Samvat) then it goes back to the period to whom Hindus says "Doapar Yuga". When only one hundred seventy-five years were remaining for beginning of Kali Yuga, Raja Shakti Karan who was the descendent of legendary Dogra Raja Jambulochan became the

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2079 of Vikram, 1944 of Saka and 1443 of Hijri have gone away; but how many years have elapsed as per Dogra-Pahari Calendar? If we will ask this question to someone then he wouldnt

ruler of Jamboo Kingdom of Durgara. By 37 years of his rule, he was able to exhibit his suzerainty over all the rulers of Durgara and many other neighbouring Kingdoms. He being wise and

conversant with the as Shastras, acted according to them in all affairs because of this became to be known Raja Shastri.

He introduced a number of innovations and the Dogra alphabet (prior to Dev?e?e?) was invented by him. Somewhat prior one hundred thirty-eight years of Yudhishthira era all the Janpadas of Dogra hills accepted him as their overlord; then in all correspondence, records and accounts he introduced his own era (Shastra Era) by taking the permission of Maa Kalka Bawe Wali and remitted all the taxes of his subjects. He started it all from the day of conjunction of the Sun with the constellation of Aries (Mesha means the day of Baisakhi or Basoa) and officially announced himself be the Durgarashwara which meant "Lord of Durgara states and it's chiefs". As he started it on day when the sun enters the sidereal Aries, that's why in this calendar the change in months too takes place with the transmigration of the Sun from one Rashi (constellation of the zodiac) to the next (Sangrand).

By now, five thousand two hundred and ninety-eight years of this calendar have passed away and the year 5299 started today.

Dr Sundeep K Pandita

Globally millions of people are affected by disasters, thousands are killed, physical infrastructure worth billions is damaged and economy of nations is destroyed by these unfortunate events. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is prone to many hazards and has been affected by various disasters including earthquakes, floods, landslides, snow avalanches, cloud bursts, terrorism etc. These disasters have killed thousands of people and damaged lot of physical infrastructure.

In the March issue of the Journal of the Geological Society of India, Dr. Harsh Gupta, a renowned seismologist, has dealt in detail with the ramifications of an earthquake of high magnitude in his write-up titled "If a magnitude of about 8 earthquake occurs in India today" to draw the attention on the possible consequences of such a disaster in India. This write up is based on the write-up written by Dr. Harsh Gupta to highlight the earthquake hazard in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

In the Himalayan region six big earthquakes have struck which have devastated areas of their influence. These are Shillong (1897, 8.7 magnitude, 1550 deaths), Kangra (1905, 8.20000), Bihar-Nepa (1934, 8.15000), Assam (1950, 8.7, 4800), Muzaffarabad (2005, 7.6, 87000) and Gorkha-Nepal (2015, 7.9, 10000). During the last 125 years 90 earthquakes (including 16 with > 7.5 magnitude, 21 with 7 - 7.5 and 53 with 6.5 to 7 magnitude) have struck the Himalayan region. Comparing the devastation and loss of human life in these earthquakes it can be interpreted that the increase in the human lives lost is consistent with the increase in the population.

The recent earthquakes of 7.8 and 7.5 magnitude that struck Turkey on 6th February 2023 killed about 58000 people in Turkey and Syria and the estimated damages are about 110 billion US\$. More than ten thousand aftershocks have been recorded in the region. But a silver lining in the region is Erzincan town where no deaths occurred and no buildings collapsed except minor damages in these powerful earthquakes. The local people in Erzincan credit a long-standing determination not to allow constructions in violation of the country's building codes and where ever violations of building codes are detected, these buildings are got demolished.

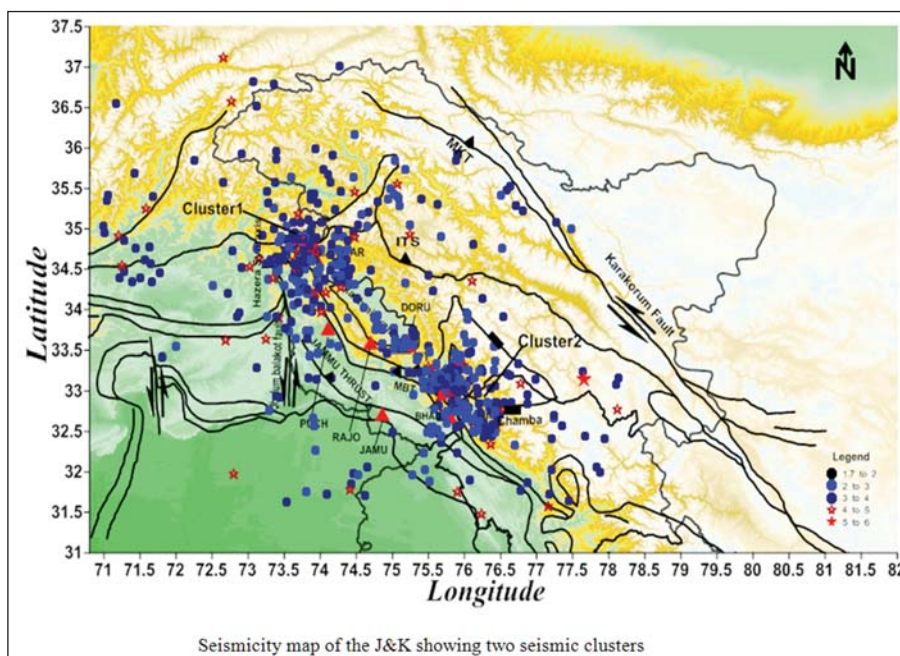
Jammu and Kashmir is classified as Zone IV and V in the seismotectonic map of India which

## Earthquakes and the Society

represent severe and very severe intensity zones where possibility of striking high magnitude earthquakes has been highlighted by the seismologists. The recent research work published by the Geology Department, University of Jammu has highlighted two seismically active clusters representing erstwhile Doda district and Uri and Tangdhar areas of J&K (Fig). The 2005 Muzaffarabad earthquake devastated Tangdhar and Uri areas and killed about 1400 people in our part of

destruction of an earthquake of magnitude 7 or more in Jammu and Kashmir where we have poor building structures, varied topography and high population density.

We know that till date no technology has been developed which can help in predicting an earthquake well in time. But efforts are being made to develop earthquake warning systems so that people are alerted in case of an approaching destructive earthquake waves to minimize pos-



Seismicity map of the J&K showing two seismic clusters

Jammu and Kashmir and about 85000 in Pakistan and Pakistan occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Strong shaking of buildings was observed in the whole of Jammu and Kashmir and many buildings developed cracks during this earthquake.

In 2013 Doda region witnessed increased seismic activity with a main shock of 5.8 magnitude on 1st May followed by many aftershocks. Many houses developed cracks and people were panicked. Keeping in mind the impact of these earthquakes one can easily foresee the possible

damage. The epicenter of an earthquake is located using a local network of seismic stations, and its magnitude is estimated within seconds using earthquake generated primary waves. The destruction is basically caused by secondary shear waves that travel slower than the primary waves. So, depending upon the distance of a location from the hypocenter of the earthquake, the destructive waves would arrive later and this time interval is useful to take up preventive measures, such as switching off the electric and gas supply, stopping of lifts and vehicular traf-

fic etc.

In India, the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee has successfully tested and validated an Earthquake Early Warning System (EEWS) in Uttarakhand. The system consists of 169 seismic stations in the central seismic gap of Indian Himalaya. Three moderate earthquakes of Magnitudes 5.8, 5.4 and 5.8 occurred in Western Nepal region on November 9 and 12, 2022, and January 24, 2023 respectively. The central server issued notifications and warning alerts to the public of Uttarakhand on the mobile app, 'Uttarakhand BhookampAlert' installed by them. Such system of issuing alerts to the citizens through an EEWS can be replicated in other parts of Himalaya especially in the Jammu and Kashmir region.

Students are one of the most vulnerable community in an earthquake. It is important to educate these young people about what to do and what not to do before, during and after an earthquake. Mass awareness programmes about the earthquakes is the need of the hour to develop an earthquake resilient society. The students can be made familiar about the guidelines, fundamentals of seismology through awareness camps and practical demonstrations in schools and colleges.

The Geology Department, University of Jammu has conducted many such awareness workshops in schools of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of country under the "School Education Programme" and it was very encouraging to note the interest of the teachers and students in learning ways and means to be protected against the earthquakes. Overall, this has been a very successful initiative and needs to be perpetuated.

To keep the citizens aware about the threat of earthquakes we need to institutionalise Earthquake Safety Day as is being done in Nepal every year on 16th January. Training of students about earthquake safety, mock drills, strict implementation of building codes and deployment of Earthquake Early Warning System are the most important steps to be taken in a time bound manner to safeguard the life and physical infrastructure. There is a need to invest in preparedness and prevention rather than spending more money on relief after a disaster.

"Earthquake safe infrastructure, the basis of safe life"

(The author is Professor of Geology, Department of Geology, University of Jammu)