

Army's LAC preparedness

Upgradation and modernization are the hallmarks of any army in the world. Presently, Gol has everything in mind and they are taking every step to keep our army's numero uno status. Rafale advanced fighters were purchased, the LCA Tejas was also inducted, an indigenous helicopter manufacturing plant was inaugurated, and work on the Tejas Mark II was already underway, as was research into stealth aircraft. The thrust is on "Make in India" to not only save billions of dollars of precious foreign exchange but to remove dependency on any foreign country in case of any eventuality. From armoured vehicles to the latest automatic firearms to tanks, every effort is being made to indigenously develop and manufacture warfare material. Night vision devices, anti-drone technology, the latest radars, and transport planes to carry even tanks—each requirement of the forces has been kept in mind and procured.

Drones are the latest weapons that have changed the meaning of modern warfare. Drones can perform any task, from surveillance to arms carrying to attacks on advanced enemy positions or installations. There is no need to send teams of soldiers to physically check the movement of the enemy; all can be done by surveillance drones. Keeping in view the importance of drones in modern warfare, the Gol has also procured drones for all three wings of the forces, each capable of covering a distance of 50 km and carrying a payload of 1 kg to 5 kg. Kamikaze drones with a 100-km range are the latest addition to our army, able to select highly valued enemy targets and then crash to destroy them. The utility of drones doesn't end here only, high-altitude drones, and desert drones are being procured. Every effort is being put forth to safeguard the 3500-kilometre Line of Actual Control from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. With temperatures in the minuses, meters of snow, and treacherous mountains, it is not an easy border to guard. Ground patrols are compensated by satellite images, remotely-piloted aircraft, and modern radars; practically, no one can escape our ever-vigilant army. Modern machinery for road and tunnel construction has been deployed to speed up road connectivity, along with heavy snow clearance equipment. Not only surveillance but attack ammunition is also being upgraded with the induction of K-9 Vajra track guns to the Pinaka multi-rocket launch system. Long- and short-range missiles have been deployed to counter any mischief along the ALC.

Almost one lakh crore has been spent on force modernization, which is enormous by any standard when combined with the border infrastructure development budget. Advance landing grounds, a fibre optic network, all-weather bunkers, the deployment of advance fighter aircraft squadrons, bunkers for tanks-Gol is setting up everything. Thirty-three months of the standoff with China have made us much more alert and confident, and efforts are on to plug shortcomings on a war footing. The Indian Army has an unparalleled track record, and with the all-out support of the present Gol, our army is well prepared for any type of situation at borders. Our army is one of the best battle-tested armies, an expert in terrorism, desert warfare, and high-altitude warfare, and has historically safeguarded the highest battlefield of Siachen against all odds. It is always the man behind the machine who matters most. The present situation is not that of the 1960s; every requirement of the army is being met, in routine as well as in an emergency. With upgraded fire-power and infrastructure, our army is just like a tiger on the prowl, ever ready to defend its territory.

Puran Chand Sharma

The whole universe comprises five essential elements sans which life is not possible such as 1. Earth 2. Water 3. Fire 4. Air 5. Space. Unarguably all are vital components but water is indispensable for survival of life on the earth planet. Almighty GOD, the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient has created the universe for all living species specified as Human kingdom, Animal kingdom, Flora and Fauna etc.. Out of all living beings, the humans are intellectually fully developed species imbued with immense thinking power and wisdom to distinguish and decide as to what is right and wrong for them vis-a-vis their co-travellers. The Supreme Being has created diverse Nature along with her immeasurable bounties for use of human beings to conduct their life in this world quite sensibly and purposefully without harming other species beyond their reasonable needs. At this critical point of time we observe that the most enlightened Human kingdom have deviated from their divine call and their conduct has turned disproportionately lopsided in relation to other kingdoms. Nature has enough in her kitty to meet all genuine needs of man but not to satisfy his inflated greed. According to one well thought out opinion based on deep analysis it has been observed " It is not nature that dic-

tates the injustices happening in the world every single day. However, it is the work of people. The world is what we make it." In view of the changing global scenario wherein the exploitation of water resources has increased manifold inclusive of our own country, author would mainly deliberate on excessive misuse and wastage of water in our country in various forms and at different levels and what we can do to save water for survival of our future progeny. Certainly it may not be happening out of evil intentions of anyone but probably due to lack of awareness, ignorance and self centred approach etc. Let us have a look into this conundrum with a prying eye as it does not augur well for survival of our future generations. We start with family, the basic unit at the village level wherein the things have changed a lot. Undesirable urbanization is happening at a rapid pace. The designs and structure of residential buildings have undergone tremendous modification. It is all concrete and allied materials ruling the roost everywhere. Wells, ponds and other small wetlands have gone dry in most of the villages. Rivers and Naalas are also drying by inches without adequate water, sand and stones. People are indulging into illegal encroachment of riverbeds and the adjoining land. Almost every household has installed submersible pumps which are not being used with a sense of responsibility leading to profuse wastage of water. Further because canal water as well as rain water is deficient for irrigation purpose, people in the villages are resorting to use of water pumps for irrigation. In the given conditions this is utmost need of the farmers but it is not sustainable for long. Solution lies in proper help and monitoring by the Govt. agencies and farmers complying with the moral checks and accountability for conservation of water resources. Let us now turn focus on the urban areas wherein, the scenario is no different and flagrant exploitation of water is occurring either

Protection of interests of minorities in J&K

Col B S Nagial (Retd)

Jammu and Kashmir is known for its diverse ethnic, religious, and linguistic composition. In J&K, minority communities include Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs, and several ethnic and linguistic groups. The Constitution of India acknowledges these communities as minority groups and provides for certain protections for their rights and interests. For example, the National Commission for Minorities Act and the Minorities Educational Institutions (Reservation of Seats) Act provide for the reservation of seats for minority communities in educational institutions and for the protection of their rights. However, despite these provisions, minority communities in Jammu and Kashmir have faced several challenges, such as discrimination, poverty, and marginalisation. There have been instances of violence and conflict between different minority communities, as well as between minority communities and the majority population.

According to the 2011 Census of India, the population of J&K was approximately 12.5 million. The Muslims, with 67.16% of the population, are in the majority and Hindus, with 31.17% of the people, are in the minority. Most of the population comprises Kashmiri-speaking Muslims, who form a majority in the Kashmir Valley, and Hindu-speaking Dogras, who form a majority in the Jammu region. In addition, several minority communities, including Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs, and several ethnic and linguistic groups. The ethnic and linguistic diversity of Jammu and Kashmir is reflected in several regional languages, including Kashmiri, Dogri, Ladakhi, and Pahari, among others. The state's religious diversity is reflected in various religious communities, including Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Christians.

The Indian Constitution recognises this diversity and provides several benefits to minority communities in the country to ensure their welfare and development. Some of the key bene-

fits include:

Economic benefits: The Indian government provides various schemes and programs for the economic upliftment of minority communities, including minority-specific scholarships, credit facilities, and entrepreneurship development programs.

Social benefits: The government provides several social welfare schemes for minority communities, including health care, housing, and education. Additionally, the govern-

ment has established special educational institutions for minority communities to help them improve their educational standards.

Religious benefits: India is a secular country, and the government recognises the right of individuals to practice their own religion. The government provides financial assistance to repair and maintain religious places of worship belonging to minority communities.

Political benefits: The Indian Constitution provides particular representation to minority communities in the country's political process. This includes reserved seats in the Parliament and state legislatures and the appointment of minority representatives to various governmental bodies.

Several political benefits are provided to minority communities to ensure their representation and participation in the country's political process. Some of the critical political benefits for minorities in India include:

Reserved seats in the Parliament: The Indian Constitution provides reserved seats in the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) and state

legislative assemblies for members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who are considered to be among the most marginalised communities in India.

Representation in government bodies: The Government of India appoints members of minority communities to various governmental bodies, such as the National Commission for Minorities and the State Minorities Commissions, to ensure that their voices and concerns are heard.

Political quotas: Some states in India have implemented political quotas for minority communities, which provide for a certain percentage of seats in the legislative assemblies to be reserved for minority candidates.

Right to vote: All Indian citizens, regardless of their minority status, have the right to vote and participate in the country's political process. The government has taken steps to increase the political participation of minority communities, such as increasing voter education and awareness programs.

The Constitution of India does not define the word 'Minority' and only refers to 'Minorities' and speaks of those 'based on religion or language'. The rights of minorities have been spelled out in the Constitution in detail. The Constitution provides rights for minorities which can be placed in the 'common domain' and 'separate domain'. The 'common domain' rights apply to all our country's citizens. The rights which fall in the 'separate domain' are those which are relevant to the minorities only, and these are reserved to protect their identity. The distinction between 'common

domain' and 'separate domain' and their combination has been well-kept and protected in the Constitution. The Preamble to the Constitution declares the State to be 'Secular', which is particularly relevant for Religious Minorities. Equally relevant for them, especially, is the declaration of the Constitution in its Preamble that all citizens of India are to be secured 'liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship and equality of status and opportunity.' The Constitution,

the community is numerically smaller than the rest of the population in that state and is socially and educationally backwards. The list of state-level minorities varies from State to State and may include communities not recognised as national-level minorities.

With the notification of the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019 No.34 of 2019 (Sr.No.63), the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992, as applicable in other parts of the country, has also been extended to the UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The abolition of Article 370 has removed the obstacles in the path of progress and prosperity in Jammu & Kashmir and Leh-Ladakh. 170 Central laws, which were not applicable earlier, have now been made applicable in this region. Out of the 334 State laws, 164 laws have been repealed, and 167 laws have been adapted, according to the Indian Constitution.

But the issue of minorities has not been settled so far. According to the 2011 Census, the Hindu population in eight States is as follows- Lakshadweep (2.5%), Mizoram (2.75%), Nagaland (8.75%), Meghalaya (11.53%), J&K (28.44%), Arunachal Pradesh (29%), Manipur (31.39%) and Punjab (38.40%). A PIL was filed in the Supreme Court in 2020 praying to declare Hindus as minorities in the eight above states. So far, with subsequent developments, the matter is under subjudice.

Conclusion: A historical coincidence brought ethnic communities under the Dogras in 1846. Factors such as geography, language, race, religion and culture separated the three distinct regions—Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. But they were woven in a common thread through Dogra rulers, who tried to rule justly.

At the independence, a wise and constructive leadership with vision would have dampened and smothered the rough edges of ethnic and religious differences. But a particular brand of democracy was popularised, which became a hotbed of religious and regional tensions and rivalries. Thus minorities suffered.

The declaration of minority status is essential because it gives minority communities certain constitutional protections and gives them special assistance and support from the government to promote their education, culture, and socio-economic development.

therefore, speaks of Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes and makes - or leaves room for making - for them special provisions of various natures varying import.

According to the Constitution of India, the central government has the power to notify a community as a minority if it is satisfied that the community is numerically smaller than the rest of the population and is socially and educationally backwards. In practice, the government has notified five communities as minorities: Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Parsis.

The declaration of minority status is essential because it gives minority communities certain constitutional protections and gives them special assistance and support from the government to promote their education, culture, and socio-economic development.

State-level minorities are minority communities recognised by the state government in a particular state. The state government can notify a community as a minority if it is satisfied that

A budget with a futuristic vision

Biju Dharmapalan

As the proverb quotes, "Where there is no vision, the people perish". The vision of a country rests with the people who govern the country, the policymakers. Humanity is going through a difficult phase where the population is exploding and resources on the planet are shrinking, and whatever rest on the planet Earth are overexploited by Homo sapiens. As India moves to the Amrit Kaal the country has to address a lot of challenges faced by our citizens in the next 10 to 20 years. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has addressed these issues well in her budget speech. She termed the priorities as the Saptarishi or the 'seven sages'. Saptarishi or the 'seven sages' is a group of seven sages who direct humanity and help build the foundation of Dharma according to Indian culture. The seven priority areas identified are inclusive development, reaching the last mile, infrastructure and investment, youth power, unleashing the potential, green growth and the financial sector.

There is no doubt that our land resources won't increase on this planet and we and our future generations have to live with the limited resources that our predecessors left out. With growing urbanisation day by day and agricultural lands shrinking, we have to find efficient methods to use our minimal resources available. We have already done maximum harm to our mother Earth through various types of pollution and over-exploitation in the name of development. Through unscrupulous use of chemical fertilisers, we have destroyed the soil biota that inadvertently affects productivity. The budget proposal to launch PM-PRANAM (Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth) will incentivise States and Union Territories to promote alternative fertilisers and balanced use of chemical fertilisers. Similarly budget proposes the setting up of Bharatiya Prakritik Kheti Bio-Input Resource Centres to facilitate natural farming. These centres will create a national-level distributed micro-fertiliser and pesticide manufacturing network.

Similarly, 500 new 'waste to wealth' plants under GOBARdhan (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan) scheme will be established for promoting a circular economy. These will include 200 compressed biogas (CBG) plants, including 75 plants in urban areas, and 300 community or cluster-based plants at a total investment of ₹ 10,000 crores. The scheme aims to positively impact village cleanliness and generate wealth and energy from cattle and organic waste. The scheme also aims to create new rural livelihood opportunities and enhance income for

and economic transition. This budget builds on our focus on green growth. Alternative clean energy sources like hydrogen and solar should be utilised to reduce environmental pollution. The recently launched National Green Hydrogen Mission, with an outlay of ₹ 19,700 crores, will facilitate the transition of the economy to low carbon intensity, reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports, and make the country assume technology and market leadership in this sunrise sector. Our target is to reach an annual production of 5 MMT by 2030.

Most of the environmental destruction is caused by industries. For a sustainable future, we need to run industries without causing much damage to the environment. A Green Credit Programme will be notified under the Environment (Protection) Act to encourage behavioural change.

farmers and other rural people.

It's a pity that manual scavenging is still commonplace after 75 years of independence. The economically backward Dalit community still bears the stigma of being stereotyped as sewer cleaners. In our journal towards 'Amrut Kaal' we need to stop this inhuman practice of a particular sect carrying the waste of his fellow beings. The budget give high priority to urban sanitation. All cities and towns will be enabled for 100 per cent mechanical desludging of septic tanks and sewers to transition from manhole to machine-hole mode. More focus will be provided for the scientific management of dry and wet waste.

If humans have to survive, we must prioritise Green Growth. Prime Minister of India has given a vision for "LiFE", or Lifestyle for Environment, to spur a movement of an environmentally conscious lifestyle. India is moving forward firmly for the 'panchamrit' and net-zero carbon emission by 2070 to usher in a green industrial

The Himalayan mountains make it difficult to connect the Ladakh region to the main national grid. Historically most electricity was created using diesel generators. However, Ladakh has been called the 'roof of the world' with abundant sunlight and clear air making it unusually suitable for solar energy technologies. The Interstate transmission system for evacuation and grid integration of 13 GW renewable energy from Ladakh will be constructed with an investment of ₹ 20,700 crores, including central support of ₹ 8,300 crores.

Most of the environmental destruction is caused by industries. For a sustainable future, we need to run industries without causing much damage to the environment. A Green Credit Programme will be notified under the Environment (Protection) Act to encourage behavioural change. This will incentivise environmentally sustainable and responsive actions by companies, individuals and local bodies, and help

mobilise additional resources for such activities.

Another noteworthy recommendation is 'MISHTI' (Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes) for afforestation along our coastlines. Mangrove afforestation has been given prominence till now. Even during the tsunami that struck us in 2004, we have seen the effectiveness of mangroves in protecting our shores. Similarly, the conservation of wetlands is much needed for human survival as they are the world's cradle of biodiversity. The government will promote their unique conservation values through Amrit Dharohar. This scheme will be implemented over the next three years to encourage the optimal use of wetlands and enhance bio-diversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities. Wetlands are vital ecosystems that sustain biological diversity and play a vital role in the hydrological cycle. If these are lost, it will affect the whole human species.

Artificial Intelligence dominates today's world and we can see its influence in our day-to-day activities. From the simple ALEXA that you can talk to from across the room to play music, get the news, set timers, make hands-free calls, etc., to robotic surgery, AI has touched almost everything humans used to do manually earlier. AI will also control future ware fare. So it is of high necessity that our country becomes a superpower in AI technologies. To realise the vision of "Make AI in India and Make AI work for India", three centres of excellence for Artificial Intelligence will be set up in top educational institutions. Leading industry players will partner in conducting interdisciplinary research, developing cutting-edge applications and scalable problem solutions in agriculture, health, and sustainable cities. This will galvanise an effective AI ecosystem and nurture quality human resources.

In short, we can see that this is the first budget of its kind that focuses on issues that concern not only the development of our country but the survival of the whole of humanity.

(The author is a science communicator and academic.)

Save water



with connivance of authorities or lack of necessary awareness. We also need to have look at very small domestic chores and routine activities going on in our households in the cities. Family structure and life style have undergone a sea change. The work of washing the used utensils, dusting, cleaning multi story houses as well as washing of clothes frequently through the medium of washing machines have been causing sizeable wastage of water, which may not be intentional but on account of improper monitoring as a responsible citizen. Maids or domestic helps while cleaning the utensils keep the full tap opened till the whole process is over and it happens in many other in-house activities such as shower baths, toilets, floor, car and bikes cleaning etc. Substantial quantity of water can be saved if one and all in the family take up this challenge as good human beings and dedicated citizens. Bit of communication and pep talk would also inspire our young ones in the families. Firm resolve and meticulous execution would generate the desired change.

At this point of time we have Jal Shakti Vibhag in place to streamline the supply and distribution of water to public and all other establishments. They might be doing it to the best of their strength and efficiency but there is always a room for improvement. They are expected to take special care of leakage of water from their

supply pipes in the urban areas. While moving around in different localities here and there people do find spectacle of recurrent leakage in different areas. It has also been observed that people have been installing Bore well system through fair or unfair means which is tantamount to undue exploitation of water resources. Jal Shakti Department need to keep proper vigil with their vigilant eyes for better results. This is not a big deal for them. They can do it in large interest of the society.

Above all the Union Govt together with State Governments do owe greater responsibility to the Nation for conservation of water and to plug all loopholes of exploitation of water, the loxir of life despite vote politics being in the centre stage wherein various people of divergent views, ideas and beliefs have to be taken on board to notch up the seat of power but that is not meant solely for enjoying the fruits of power but also for the ultimate welfare of people. Therefore, Power always comes with high sense of responsibility and service. They must urgently act on this vital issue and put a cap on the mushroom growth of palatial political, Business, social, religious establishments wherein the wastage of precious bounty of Nature goes on unregulated and uncontrolled. Common masses would follow suit. Remember, " Jal Hi Jeevan Hai."