

NAAC Accreditations

Education is one tool that can transform a whole society in the shortest possible time. India had been at the centre of education, with Takshila University leading the way. But with time, India lost its sheen. A country with thousands of years of civilization and Vedas and Puranas does not have a single educational institution in the top hundred. Things get more complex with the mushrooming of educational institutions with little focus on infrastructure, research, curriculum, and so many other factors, and the net result is further degradation of education standards. From time to time, Gol comes up with some checks and balances; the process takes some time to be implemented, but still, education standards are not up to the mark. Keeping this in mind, Gol charted out a separate organisation for UGC to monitor different aspects of educational institutions and rank them accordingly. Thus came into existence the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous organisation established by the UGC in India to access and accredit institutions of higher education. Its accreditation process evaluates various aspects of an institution, such as its curriculum, teaching and learning, research and innovation, governance, and infrastructure. The mandate of NAAC is clear: it makes quality assurance an integral part of the functioning of higher education institutions. But unfortunately, universities and colleges seem uninterested in accreditation; otherwise, there is no reason why only 418 universities out of 1113 universities and only 9062 colleges out of 43796 colleges opted for NAAC accreditation as per the information shared in the Parliament. This itself depicts the sad state of our education right now. This is despite the best efforts of the Gol, which is trying its best to transform the Indian education sector with numerous measures to somehow streamline the system NEP 2020 is one of them, with the goal of making courseware more user-friendly for students' holistic growth in education and as human beings. A whopping 353 universities and thousands of new colleges have come up in the last nine years. Despite the best efforts of the Government, if almost 62 per cent of universities and almost 80 per cent of colleges are without NAAC accreditation, then it is a serious matter by any standards. On one hand, the Government is planning accreditation of schools to also have uniform standards of education under NEP 2020, and on the other hand, so many higher education institutions are not interested in accreditation.

The Government plans to make all higher education institutions accredited in the next fifteen years, but the process seems not to be picking up as quickly as new colleges will come up. The lack of uniformity in colleges makes some colleges perform excellently, producing marketable, employable pass-outs, while other, more moderate ones have pass-outs with no future. Students must get a true picture of the college, a proper choice of facilities and curriculum related ready to access data to decide which college to choose. But with the present accreditation rate, students don't have much choice except to leave it to their fate. Gol's intentions are clear, but they still have to enjoin universities and colleges to go for NAAC accreditation.

RDD's Social Audit recovery performance

In today's world, it is difficult to commit bungling at any level, but still, certain Government offices don't want to follow the set procedures. The Rural Development Department is one such department where, despite clear-cut instructions that social audits and subsequent recoveries are mandatory, the staff is least bothered about compliance. Using technology, Gol has put in numerous checks and balances to counter any ghost work being done. Geo-coordinate-tagged photographs are a must to get bills cleared. There are always efforts to check the work done on the ground, and one such check is a social audit. Under audit, the work on the ground is being cross-checked with the bills raised. This is a specific example of the MGNREGA scheme, which is intended for the poor to provide them with a minimum number of days of work to sustain themselves. An astonishing social audit of around seventeen hundred panchayats was done in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019-20; as many as 352 cases of fraudulent works were reported, and a recovery of around sixty lakhs was recommended, but to date, no action has been taken. The importance of both the social audit and subsequent actions has been undermined. Sensing the seriousness of the issue, the Commissioner/ Secretary to the Government, Department of Rural Development, has rightly directed to recover the said amount, and the respective officers in charge are responsible for recoveries. It is a serious matter that in the Rural Development Department, which is the backbone of Government-sponsored development schemes, such malpractices are going on despite checks and balances. All carrots and no sticks don't work in such cases.

Poonam I Kaushish

The more things change the more they remain the same. An adage which resonates in the corridors of power when it comes to dispensing the rewards of office. Whereby handpicked trusted loyalists are appointed as Governors who will do whatever their mai baaps sitting on India's Raj gaddi want.

The latest in this rajnitik ring-a-ring-a-roses, the President appointed 6 new Governors, and reshuffled 7 others of which Meghalaya and Nagaland are election-bound States. Clearly the rejig marks the beginning of a long electoral season which will see nine Assembly polls this year. Besides, it comes at a time of friction between some State Governments and Governors.

Of the 6 new appointees four are senior BJP leaders and one, a former Supreme Court judge. Justice Nazeer who retired a month back has been part of several milestone verdicts including the politically sensitive Ayodhya land dispute, triple talaq, legality of demonetisation and right to privacy. He heads to Andhra Pradesh.

Predictably, his appointment has created a huge controversy. The Congress is correct when it replays former senior BJP leader Arun Jaitley argument in Rajya Sabha 2012, "pre-retirement judgments are influenced by post-retirement jobs...It is a threat to independence of the judiciary." Of course, this is not to discredit Justice Nazeer's credentials but as a practice should be avoided.

The BJP counters by citing Supreme Court judges Fatima Beevi was Tamil Nadu Governor 1997-2001 and Saiyid Fazl Ali Assam Governor 1956-59 both by Congress. The Government had also ruffled Opposition feathers when it appointed ex-Chief Justice of India Sathasivam Kerala Governor 2014 and nominated former Chief Justice of India Rajan Gogoi who headed the Ayodhya bench to the Rajya Sabha.

I remember a famous 2004 anecdote when Punjab Chief Minister

Badal reprimanded former CEC MS Gill for accepting Rajya Sabha MP-ship from Congress. Retorted Gill: "Maine koi theka liya sau saal da".

Focus will also be on new Assam Governor current leader of Opposition in Rajasthan Assembly Kataria as it paves the way for the Party to overhaul, announce a new leadership in its State unit and resolve internal factionalism. It remains to be seen if BJP decides to implement its Gujarat elec-

Raising a moot point: Are Governors intended to be the Centre's doormats? Or are they the keepers of the people's faith as the Constitutional head of their respective States? Can India afford to allow persons holding Constitutional offices to accept political "rewards" for doing at its bidding?

tion strategy of nudging older leaders to retire while dropping a chunk of sitting legislators. The election of the next leader of Opposition will show which way the wind is blowing.

The shift from Jharkhand to Maharashtra of Ramesh Bais will also be watched closely as it marks the end of Koshiyari who had multiple run-ins with the erstwhile MVA Government alongside his controversial Shivaji comments. No matter Bais leaves unresolved a simmering row of the Election Commission's recommendation on disqualification

Gubernatorial Rejig Electoral End Game starts

demands of Chief Minister Hemant Soren over a mining contract. Ladakh's new Lt Governor BD Mishra comes amidst civil society protests.

Pertinently, the appointees have also been chosen to keep the caste balance intact. Two new appointees from UP ex-Union Minister Shukla a senior Brahmin leader goes to Himachal while compatriot Lakshman Acharya UP BJP Vice President and Varanasi MLC from the Scheduled Caste heads

tionalism and democracy. All seem to have forgotten Sarkaria Commission's two weighty recommendations. One, the Governor should be appointed in consultation with the State's Chief Minister.

Two, his five-year tenure should not be disturbed, except in rare circumstances for "extremely compelling reasons". Basing it on the premise Governor is a "Constitutional sentinel and vital link between Union and State, not a subordinate or subservient agent of the Union Government". This was endorsed by Justice Venkatchaliah National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution. All regaled to the dustbin.

Tragically, the prism of time has distorted Governor role whereby successive Central Governments have used, abused and debased this office by reducing Governors to the position of the Centre's kathputli, ever ready to destabilise the State, if desired by New Delhi. Most have no qualms of conscience in rubbishing it in personal or party interest, overlooking the Constitution's letter and spirit.

Moreover, there is a revolving door between the bipartisan role of Governor and active politics. This has tossed out the 'safety valve' envisaged by the Constitution makers of who should be appointed Governors, manner of their appointment and their role. Leaders hoped eminent individuals, preferably not those directly involved with politics should be appointed to this 'exalted' position

Plainly even as the institution is sacrosanct and important, truth is Governor's office is in shambles and is no longer playing its key role as. The quality of incumbents has time and again lowered institutional prestige. Worse, the gubernatorial office has

been unabashedly politicized over the past three decades.

What next? Sadly, all lament decline of the Governor's office but continue to misuse and abuse it for personal and Party ends. Not only does it generate bad blood between Lilliputian politicians but in its wake demigrates the Constitution. High time for it to be revamped and restored to its old glory as he/she has a distinct role in ensuring the country's unity and well-being of people. Governors need to remember that democracy means respecting the Constitution and upholding established conventions

Undoubtedly, we need a new method of appointing Governors. One way is Rajya Sabha should screen prospective candidates who should be interrogated, investigated and judged on suitability before confirmation. The President too should not just act on the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers but could lay down guidelines wherein he is not misled about a person's political affiliations and politics and only those citizens appointed who are politically neutral.

Undeniably, all eyes are on what role these seasoned politicians who now adorn gubernatorial hats will play prior to general elections next year and upcoming State polls. True, politics is important but so is governance. It will be the Governors duty to ensure that as the electoral heat rises, the latter does not recede into the background.

Public office has a lot to do with perception. Thus, it is time to rise above politics, provide dignity to this august office and restore Governor's office to its old glory. This calls for fairness, uprightness and adherence to Constitutional values and conventions.

It is now imperative that leaders and Parties who postulate the Constitution what they solemnly preach. The Governor must not be reduced to the level of a glorified doormat or a who's who to who? who? Remember, what matters are not men but institutions (INFA)

How the US looks at relations with Pakistan

K N Pandita

US-Pak relations had plummeted to a nadir during the closing days of Imran Khan's government. The successor government was conscious of it. Therefore, among other things, the Shahbaz Sharif government very much liked to reset relations with a country about which a former military dictator had once said that "Pakistan is more aligned to the US than the allies".

There has been an exchange of high-level visitors from both sides but with a difference. The rest of the relations appear to have a low trajectory in the sense that the sides are looking for the basis of a partnership that is de-hyphenated from Afghanistan as well as India.

This is for the first time in Pakistan's history of independence that a delink from both of her neighbours is under consideration. The implication of de-linking means that Pakistan can no longer use the lever of Indian threat or Afghan involvement to secure hefty military grants from the US as in the past.

Pakistani circles have been interpreting the exchange of visits as a strong indication of Pakistan tilting away from China. There is nothing as yet to make us imagine the cooling of relations between Pakistan and China. Nevertheless, China not coming to rescue Pakistan from economic and financial collapse and Beijing sternly demanding Pakistan to ensure the security of Chinese nationals deputed to work on various projects in Pakistan, are no insignificant clues to what could be the nature of the Sino-Pak relationship in days to come.

Observers have quoted unnamed sources that during his September 2022 visit to Washington,

the then Pakistani COAS General Bajwa had expressed a desire for a South Korea-like alliance with the United States

Commenting on the suggestion of Pakistan military man, the Asia Times of February 1 wrote, "But the United States has no interest nor needs to play such a role in South Asia. Pakistan is not a pivotal state for the US and other great powers, but rather an economically unstable nation that is beseeching great and regional powers for economic support."

Why have the goalposts changed and how

Commentators think that given this scenario, relations between the two countries will be limited to the non-strategic domain. "For Washington, Islamabad will occupy a regional status akin to that of Dhaka, not New Delhi--- albeit with a greater security dimension."

come a country once the apple of the eye of the US has fallen low in its estimation? A dispassionate analysis of Pakistan's recent history will show that a disastrous domestic policy with widespread ramifications has been the root cause of Pakistan's misery. Seldom does a country raise fundamentalists and jihadists to be used as the instruments of State policy. Pakistan chose to ride the tiger and she has to pay a price for getting down it. The Taliban are her creation, the TTP was her choice and sheltering Osama was brandished as Islamic pride.

Perhaps Pakistani leaders have begun to realize how they isolated themselves from the international community which had always been adhering to a legal and constitutional dispensation.

Pakistan's strategic community has skillfully managed resistance from great powers to achieve the national aim, including its nuclear weapons Programme. The powers were aware of what Pakistan was trying to achieve secretly, and, therefore, as she was basking in the American sunshine, no notice was taken of the right or wrong acquisition of nuclear capability.

The conditions today are different. The US has withdrawn from Afghanistan. The war on terror has almost faded. Whatever terror is left in the region is Pakistan's creation and she must

resolve the juggernaut. It does not affect any great power much less the US. Thus, Pakistan's geopolitical importance is reduced. Today's geopolitics is not determined by military prowess but by energy resources and knowledge economy-driven technologies like artificial intelligence. Pakistan lags in these paramount services.

But the question is whether Pakistan's policy planners are prepared to come to terms with her growing geopolitical irrelevance. When they are attempting a rejig of relations with the US, they cannot ignore this vital deficit.

Pakistan has to realize the fallout of rebalancing relations with the US and its implications for its relations with China. As we understand there may be a genuine desire in the Biden administra-

tion to normalize relations with Pakistan, but the question is what will be the level of these relations. The ceiling will be low, in any case. As of today, Pakistan's relations with the US are modest but her relations with China are very significant. Pakistan is in no way capable of making a U-turn in its relations with China because of the enormous debt burden. A low ceiling means that Pakistan does not enjoy the previous preference for enormous military aid from the US. Interestingly, Ukraine which has taken the place of Pakistan as the US' proxy to confront Russia is receiving arms and ammunition from Pakistan.

Asian Times writes, "But now there is little appetite for directing large sums of aid or bureaucratic bandwidth toward Pakistan. Resentment toward Islamabad is pervasive in Washington as its military is seen as a major cause of the United States' failure in Afghanistan."

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In the final analysis, Pakistan is not in a happy position and seeking American patronage is out of the question. The blame has not to be brought only to Imran Khan but largely and essentially to making terrorism an instrument of state policy. The time has gone when this malady could have been rectified. The stark history looks straight into the eyes of Pakistan and what can rescue her is astute leadership with a global vision that can pull her out of the shenanigans of the medieval ages.

Impact of climate change on agriculture and livestock

Dr. Vivak M. Arya, Tamanna Sharma

One of the world's largest problems right now is climate change. The phrase "climate change" represents a change in long term weather patterns. It is characterised by major shifts in precipitation, temperature, snow and wind patterns over a long stretch of time. Climate change basically means a change of climate which is directly or indirectly attributed by human activity that alters the composition of global atmosphere. According to recent studies, increased human activity that affected the composition of the earth's atmosphere caused major changes in climate at the global level. Since 1750, greenhouse gases like methane, carbon dioxide, and nitrous oxide have increased in concentration by 150%, 40%, and 20%, respectively. Fossil fuel combustion produces greenhouse gas emissions that serve as a blanket around the planet, trapping heat from the sun and increasing temperatures. This phenomenon is known as Greenhouse effect. Carbon dioxide and methane are two examples of greenhouse gas emissions that are contributing to climate change. Since 1975, the average global temperature has risen at a consistent pace of 0.15-0.20 °C each decade, and by 2023, that rate is predicted to climb to 1.4-5.8 °C. The urgency of the problem is very well recognized by not only the scientists and policy makers but also by the leading business magnate. Bill Gates, a multibillionaire philanthropist and co-founder of Microsoft, has invested in an Australian climate technology start-up that plans to minimize the methane emissions of cow burps. He also stressed that we need to eliminate global emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 by developing affordable renewable energy options. He further said that cooperation among all the countries from the world is required to combat climate change. The relationship between agriculture and climate change is entwined in many ways since the climate change is the primary driver of the biotic and abiotic stresses that have a negative impact on a region's agriculture. While the agriculture industry contributes significantly to climate change

through greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, it also suffers greatly from the effects of a changing climate. With frequent dry spells, heat waves, and erratic rainfall, climate change is also endangering India's agricultural development. Additionally, the cropping cycle and farm activities have been negatively impacted by the changing rainfall patterns, which take the form of delayed onset or early withdrawal. The major impacts of climate change on agriculture are as follows:

*** Impact on Food security:** Food security is affected by climate change in a very complex way. It reduces agricultural production both directly by disrupting the agro-ecological environment and indirectly by placing pressure on economic growth and income circulation, which in turn increases demand for agricultural products. All four components of food security-amount of food available, price of food, food quality, and stability of the food system-are predicted to suffer from the effects of climate change. Due to changes in biogeochemical cycles and global warming, fisheries have already suffered a decline in catch in several locations. The maximum catch potential is reduced by warmer waters in conjunction with overfishing. Insect pests of crops will also benefit from more favourable climatic conditions brought on by temperature instability, increasing their ability to survive in cold temperatures and then reappear in springtime outbreaks. Although some C4 plants like maize, millets etc. will benefit by high carbon dioxide concentrations but overall most of the crops will have a negative impact, thereby reducing their yield and productivity. Wheat (C3 plant) is expected to experience the most negative effects on yield, followed by sweet potatoes. In South Asia losses of many regional staples such as rice, millet and maize could top 10% by 2030. According to IPCC's Special Report on Climate Change and Land, food prices will rise by 80% by 2050 which will likely lead to food shortages. Food shortages will affect poorer parts of the world far more than richer ones. A large part of the arable land in India is rainfed, so, the productivity of agriculture in these areas is solely dependent on rainfall and its

pattern. There would be a decline in the productivity of rabi as compared to kharif season crops. Food security is incredibly important for people all around the world. Thus, the security and safety of the world's food supply have been negatively affected by all of these problems.

Impact on livestock: The degree of heat stress depends on the ambient temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, and radiation. The main effects include: abnormal gametogenesis, folliculogenesis, and ovulation; decreased male and female sexual behaviour; increased embryo and pregnancy loss; a delayed postpartum recovery period; increased calving intervals; decreased perinatal vigour; and increased perinatal mortality and morbidity, etc. Low productive-reproductive performance of animals after birth is related to the epigenetic changes in the maternal womb due to nutritional deficiency and exposure to stressors. Both male and female animals' reproductive systems are negatively impacted by high temperatures. Males may experience temporary or permanent infertility, while females experience lower conception rates and early ageing of the egg. Animal sexual behaviour is affected by high environmental temperatures. Animals under heat stress may also lose their embryos too early. Therefore, 60% of the world's livestock population suffer from heat stress, which results in significant economic losses.

***Impact on water supply and irrigation:** Some areas rely largely on glacial meltwater flow that occurs during the hotter summer months. As a result, if glaciers continue to retreat as is now observed, the glacial ice will eventually disappear, which will decrease or completely stop runoff. Reduced runoff will make it more difficult to irrigate crops and will lessen summer stream flows that keep dams and reservoirs replenished. If the world warms by 1.5 °C, the ice mass of Asia's high mountains would decrease by roughly 29 to 43%, which will have an impact on populations that depend on glacier and snowmelt waters for their livelihoods. These mountain water resources in the Indus River watershed support up to 60% of irri-

gation outside of the monsoon season and an additional 11% of crop production overall. The major rivers of Jammu and Kashmir such as Chenab and Jhelum relies heavily on Himalayan glaciers. As a result, water availability for various agricultural, hydro-electric and industrial purposes will get reduced. It will change the livelihood of millions of people as it provides about 8.6 million cubic meters of water per annum to Asian countries. Recently, Sonam Wangchuk, an environmentalist and innovator, has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to act quickly to safeguard Ladakh. He also reported that 25 glacial lakes and other water bodies in the Himalayas have shown a rise in water spread area since 2009. Further he said that "These glaciers will not live anymore if we continue doing such hazards to the Earth". The Thajwas Glacier, a popular tourist destination in Kashmir's Sonamarg, also known as the "Hidden Jewel of Kashmir," is melting rapidly. A serious environmental problem has also been witnessed in Indo-Gangetic plains whereby different rivers (including Kosi, Ganga, Son, Indus and its tributaries) changed their course a number of times. This has resulted in devastating floods in many areas.

Conclusion: The world is alarmed by climate change because it affects agriculture and the products produced by it. Considering the catastrophic nature of global warming's repercussions and the fact that human activity is mostly to blame for them, saving "Mother Nature" requires collective responsibility. Failure to do this can result in a variety of disastrous events that will severely jeopardise the health of both current and future generations. All industries will need to contribute to mitigation and adaptation measures in the fight against climate change. By improving the knowledge and abilities of our farmers, it will be possible for agrarian nations to raise productivity without increasing the environmental impact of agriculture. Climate change is the most difficult problem mankind is facing but collectively we have the ingenuity to solve it.

(The authors are from SKUAST- Jammu)