

Fresh guidelines for ration card and FPSs

Food security is the fundamental right of each citizen of India and present Gol has been true to its resolve to supply free ration to almost eighty-four crore citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. The free ration scheme has been extended now till 2024, an effort by the Government to support the downtrodden and provide them with two times of meals. It has cost the administration lakhs of crores per year but the Government has managed the scenario somehow. But all along this free ration comes the menace of pilferage which is still a headache for the present dispensation. From time to time scams of fraudulent entries, black marketing and the sale of ration card grains in the open market do happen. The Government is trying earnestly to somehow plug the loopholes with innovative ways continuously. The reforms include linking ration cards with Aadhaar cards, thumb based POS machines installed at FPS to plug undelivered ration among other things. Jammu and Kashmir had their own typical set of problems. Disproportionate ration distribution in Jammu and Kashmir, in one State/UT Kashmir Division users getting more ration than Jammu Division users, for reasons better known to the administration. Ghost ration cards of non-existent citizens and thousands of duplicate ration cards, practically an open plunder with little effort to plug the pilferage. Trucks of grains meant for ration depots got diverted to open market for sale. The Rs3/- per kg of rice and Rs2- per kg of wheat ration of FPS gets sold more than ten times in the open market. To plug all these ration cards was made mandatory to be issued through Jammu and Kashmir Bank Limited with proper photographs and trucks carrying ration material got fitted with GPS to monitor their movement from godowns to FPS. Another scandal was of wheat to flour scam with the exuberant rates being charged and good quality wheat transformed into inferior quality flour. Ultimately Government ordered the distribution of wheat itself instead of flour. Another scam is of APL people managing BPL cards. Gol had long ago done the linkage of ration card and Aadhaar but Jammu and Kashmir for some years disregarded the Gol directive under the pretext of special status and then when special status was gone with the abrogation of Article 370 internet lockdown was enforced. So somewhat things were not in sync with the rest of India. But the LG Administration gauged the gravity of the situation and ordered strict implementation of the set norms. Kerosene oil depots went and now the latest order for a new set of rules for ration cards and FPS. Keeping in view the terrain and practical problems minimum and maximum number of families per FPS have been set. Who will issue the ration cards and special ration cards for welfare institutions, hostels and other Government recognized institutions, all procedures have been preordained. Government officials, non-domiciles and political persons in any capacity have been barred from getting dealership of FPS. The person must be matriculated and belong to the same place. Licenses are for five years and renewed tillage of sixty-five years. Penalties for under-weight or non-POS supplies are prefixed.

Overall efforts have been made to streamline the system, get rid of old guards and political class, and provide opportunities to unemployed literate youth. Provision has been made for welfare institutions, hostels and other Government recognized institutions to apply for food grains with a recommendation from the respective Deputy Commissioner. Online easy procedures to get new ration card within a month. The department can bring more accountability and transparency in its own offices with a display of what is required for the new/ renewed ration card, more counters for a public inquiry, and names of area officers/inspectors with their contact numbers. All these will go in a long way to make visit-free hassle-free delivery of services as conceived by LG Administration.

Drop services for AIIMS patients

Providing the best, most affordable and at-door-point health services have been the dream of the present Gol. From limited AIIMS in India to now almost one AIIMS in every State/UT, the transformation has been huge with the public getting the maximum benefits, if not in their home districts but at least in their states. All these efforts have reduced the burden on AIIMS at Delhi but still, some super specialities are best at Delhi AIIMS. People of Northern and Central India still throng Delhi AIIMS for certain specialised treatments. The rush is still there with months of waiting lists but Gol is trying its best to reduce the rush and improve facilities. Reports through mobiles and online appointments are a few much-appreciated value additions and the latest entrant in value-added services is free-to-drop services for Cardio Neurosciences Centre patients. It is a blessing in disguise as patients can avail of the facility with online pre-appointment, anywhere in NCA of Delhi. One attendant can accompany the patient but a recumbent position patient is not allowed to avail of this service as it has a seating arrangement, not an ambulance service. But this goes in a long way for poor patients who cannot afford private transportation.

Such innovative models can be implemented in Jammu and Kashmir also where the private ambulance mafia is prevalent with no checks or balances. For even critical patients either the Government, ambulances are not available or simply not ready to provide free services. The situation becomes more complicated for far-flung areas, more specifically for neo-natal special requirements. With our own upcoming AIIMS out of city limits, these free drop services will be of much help. Parking of even GMC Jammu has no visible parking area for even ambulances outside even emergency. Those in charge must think and plan their priorities, a proper parking is the need of the hour or a magnificent gate outside the hospital. Profligacy must end and simple value additions of AIIMS type must be incorporated to serve humanity.

Dr. Banarsi Lal

Every year 26th of January is celebrated as the Republic Day in India. On this day we celebrate the anniversary of the Constitution of India and the transition of India from a British Dominion to a republic on 26th January, 1950 across the nation. On this day we proudly fly our tricolor flag, sing patriotic songs and pay tributes to our freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the nation. The word democracy has been derived from the Greek word 'demokratia' which consists of the two components namely 'demos' meaning people and 'kratos' meaning rule. Together we mean people's rule. The western scholars such as Bertland Russell and Will Durant trace the origin of the democratic to the city of Athens in Attica which flourished in the fifth century B.C. The word 'Republic' is of Latin origin meaning a state in which the government is carried on by the people or through their elected representatives. The essence of an ideal republic is free and enlightened citizenship. In such a republic, the citizen is a sovereign and subject. As a sovereign he enacts laws, as a subject he obeys them. The corner-stone of a republic is equality and its prime essentiality is equality.

The Sanskritologists believe that the republics first came to India. The Lichhavis and the Mallas of the pre-Mauryan India of the Buddhist times were the earliest republics of the time. Even much before Lichhavis and Mallas, there were Panchayat republics in the Vedic Age. The Vedic Sabha and the Vedic Samiti were not only elected but also representative in character with full voting rights to women. These institutions were probing the conduct of kings, abuse of power by the powerful and misdeeds of the ministers. The 73rd and the 74th Constitutional Amendments derive their inspiration from the village republics of ancient India. The Greek and the Roman city-states were different from the Indian republics known for their high political morality and ethical standards besides people's participation in governance. The Greek Gen-

Spirit of the Indian Republic

eral, Alexander was surprised by observing the tough resistance by the Indian small republics. He realized the strength of those small republics, the village Panchayats whom no invader could subdue. Almost all the foreign travellers from Magesthenes to Faehein, Hieun Tsang and Alberuni paid glowing tributes to the resilience of these small states which upheld the integrity of the nation and contributed their full might to the march of the Indian culture. In the ancient republics of India there was constant communication between the Government, the legislature and the citizen.

The Indian republic stood not only for welfare but also for human development. The concept of limited monarchy also arose from the Indian soil. There was no such thing as monarchy in ancient India. When we became independent in 1947, we abolished the value of sovereignty centered in the far-off person of the king of England but not the value of sovereignty itself which our Constitution gave its people. In our country there is equal opportunity for all right from the ancient times. In the similar way, there is always the freedom of speech. The Guru-Shishya Parampara while acknowledging the authority of the Guru admitted the right of dissent of the Shishya. Budha tells his followers "Don't follow me blindly. Verify the things for yourself". The verification of knowledge and transparency of facts is Vedanta. Constitution of India is Indian in spirit and Indian in content. It is some total of the best in Indian culture which is many centuries old. Before adoption of the Constitution of India i.e. on November 25, 1949, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and the architect of the Indian Constitution said that we should not be content with the only political democracy. He said that the idea behind the Indian Constitution was not only holding elections, it was the social and economic democracy. Our political democracy should be of social type. Political democracy cannot last unless social democracy lies at its base. Social democracy means, a way of life which recognises equality, liberty and fraternity as the principles of life. These three principles should

not be treated separately. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to leave one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It is this democracy to which India is committed culturally as well as constitutionally.

The constitution of India came into force on 26th January, 1950 and India became a republic. The Indian constitution is constituted of 395 articles and twelve schedules. With that the Government of India Act 1935 and the Indian Independence Act 1947 were repealed. The soul of the Constitution lies in its Directive Principles. The Directive Principles are directives to the State about its objectives, goals, and the line on which it is to grow. If there are Fundamental Rights, there are Fundamental Duties also for every citizen of the country. In ancient India, the democracy was a free gift of its rulers to the people, while in modern India, the people themselves resolve to constitute India into sovereign, socialist, democratic republic, secular and to secure for all its citizens social, economic and political justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of opportunity and status and to promote the fraternity among the people assuring the dignity, unity and integrity of the nation. One of the Directive Principles of the State Policy enunciated in the Constitution of India is the separation of the judicial powers from the stateside Executive Powers. Judiciary is the shield of innocence and impartial guardian of every private civil right. Judiciary plays a vital role in a federal system. At an apex is the Supreme Court of India. Then there are High Courts at the state level and a subordinate court below them. The power is transferred to the successive governments. We have the largest number of voters in the world. Now the voting age is 18 years of old. The electronic voting has been successfully introduced and every voter has an identity card. The multi-party system has contributed significantly to the growth of opposition in India. The Parliament Committee System

has ensured the accountability of the Government. The Comptroller and Auditor General Annual Reports keep the Government alert and responsive. In our Constitution there are Group Insurance and Welfare Fund schemes. The laws passed by the Parliament and the state legislatures provide social security and social justice to the people. Our labour laws provide the medical care, maternity protection, provident fund injury compensation and pension for the industrial workers.

The 73rd and 74th Amendments in the Constitution have heralded a new chapter in the process of democratic decentralisation. By making regular elections to the Panchayat Raj/Municipal bodies mandatory, these institutions have been given due place in the democratic set-up of the country. Secularism is the symbol of our composite culture. In our country it is both tradition and commitment. It is observed that the Indian secularism is different than the western model. While the western secularism rejects all religious systems, Indian secularism accepts all religions. While the western secularism stands for improving material conditions of the human beings, in the Indian model it is the mind which rules the matter.

Education and culture, the two most effective components of human development have been completely democratised. Education is the fundamental right of every child in India up to the age of 14. Culture which was a preserve of the last six decades ago is the concern of the common man today. The benefits of the Republic have reached more than 94% of our country children and adults through 'Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan'-a scheme to remove illiteracy and elementary education. For the average Indian Republic means the onward march of the Indian civilization, the cultural continuity of India, its integrity and solidarity. Democracy in India is not mere casting of franchise, holding elections and declaring results. It is a way of life leading to the reorganisation of civil order. Now the people in India are anxious to participate in the processes which shape their lives and destinies.

UN-appointed observers must quit Kashmir

K N Pandita

In 1948, India approached the UN Security Council with the request that Pakistan has armed and abetted an attack on the State of Jammu and Kashmir with the motive of annexing it. The State formally acceded to the Indian Union on 26 October 1947. The Security Council's mandate is that an illegal occupation of the territories of another country will be vacated and towards that end, the UN will provide the necessary support to the aggrieved party to recover its lands.

India approached the SC on 1 January 1948 requesting that the State of Jammu and Kashmir, a part of the Indian Union by the ruler signing the Instrument of Accession, has been attacked by the gunmen armed and abetted by Pakistan, should be got vacated.

To the great shock of Nehru and the Indian nation, the SC blatantly favoured Pakistan and made her a party to the dispute instead of declaring her an aggressor.

Politicizing the issue

The reason why the Anglo-American bloc gave outright support to Pakistan was that Pakistan had aligned with the capitalist bloc and India was close to the Soviet bloc. The capitalist bloc wanted a foothold in the sub-continent to disallow the Soviet Union to expand southwards to reach the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. The Soviet expansion theory was a figment of the imagination of the capitalist bloc.

Resolutions

The SC deliberately politicized the Kashmir issue and made a mess of the whole thing by equating the aggrieved with the aggressor. In 1948 and 1949 two consecutive resolutions were passed by the SC. The most important clause of the resolution was that Pakistan will withdraw all its fighting forces from the territory of the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir; India will reduce the number of her combat forces and leave behind only such numbers as would be required to maintain law and order to run the administration smoothly. Once that was done, the SC would appoint a Plebiscite Administrator to conduct a plebiscite in the state to ascertain to which dominion the people of the State would like to accede.

Since the ceasefire had been announced on midnight of 31 December 1948, the SC decided to appoint an observers' group to monitor that the ceasefire was not violated along the Line of Control in J&K. It was called United Nation's Military Observer Group for India and Pakistan or (UNMOGIP). The SC appointed the group mostly

from the European member countries.

Abuse of office

Hindsight shows that this group, instead of honestly monitoring the situation on the ground, indulged in clandestine activities like spying on Indian troops and their movement etc. The truth is that the Indian government, already having burnt its fingers, was reluctant to accept the group. It was thrust on her. Even a Plebiscite Administrator viz, Admiral Nimitz, was also nominated by the capitalist group without the clauses of the Resolutions of SC having been fulfilled. However, India put its foot down and refused to accept the nominated Plebiscite Administrator on technical grounds.

Notwithstanding the unwillingness of the vast political leadership in India including those from the ruling class, the Government of India provided all facilities as were admissible under the protocol to the Observers Group. They had the freedom of crossing the LoC without obstruction. They lived a luxurious life with all facilities provided by the Indian government. More often than not they submitted false and fabricated reports to the Secretary-General castigating the Indian army for violating the ceasefire and other things.

The headquarters of the observers' group became a hotbed of intrigues particularly when the armed insurgency broke out in J&K in 1990. The insurgent groups and their sympathizers among the majority population made it their practice to gather huge crowds of slogan chanters and bring them to the headquarters of the UN Observers, hand over petitions and fabricated reports of atrocities on the civilian population by the security forces. These false and fabricated reports were forwarded to the SC which found material to malign India.

Several times India lodged complaints with the Observers Group and with the SC averring that the group had no business to respond to the petitions and protests of the civilian population of Kashmir and that they should restrict themselves to the mandate given by the SC.

As a result of India's persistent complaints and also the group indulging in unwanted and unsolicited activities, the number of observers was reduced and only a small number was left behind.

Justification

There are reports that the External Affairs Ministry of the Government of India is proposing to ask the observer's manpower to quit India. There is justification for that.

Firstly, the Kashmir question as was propped up by the security council is almost dead. It is dead because Pakistan has abused the Plebiscite resolution since it has not withdrawn its fighting forces

from Kashmir and has not vacated the part of J&K illegally occupied by it.

Secondly, Pakistan handed over more than 5,000 sq km of J&K State territory to China in 1963 which is an illegal act. The SC Resolution of 1949 states that no change will be made in the geography of J&K. Hence the Resolutions of the SC are null and void because the SC has not taken any action against the defaulter.

Thirdly the Kashmir issue is dead as far as the SC is concerned because under the various clauses of the UN Charter if two warring states enter into a negotiated bilateral deal, the SC loses the right to dispense with the dispute. This was categorically stated by Kofi Anan, the then Secretary General of the UN, when he was on an official visit to Pakistan. India and Pakistan have signed the Shimla Agreement in which they have committed to resolve the Kashmir issue bilaterally and through negotiations. This dispenses with the role of the SC and also the UN Observers in J&K.

Fourthly, although India is not obliged to undertake a plebiscite in J&K in the light of Pakistan having trampled the resolution of 1948 and 1949 under foot, even then India brought democratic dispensation to the people of J&K. Ever since the independence of India in 1947, no fewer than eight elections to the legislative assembly and as many elections to the parliament have been conducted in J&K. Most of these elections were witnessed by correspondents and observers from different countries and organizations like the European Union and the British Parliament. Therefore, as democracy has stabilized in J&K, and the Kashmir issue is dead for the UN, there is no logic or justification in asking the UNMOGIP to continue to be in the state with no assignment to complete or mandate to adhere to.

Pak's abortive resolution

The tailpiece brought to this narrative is most interesting. In February 1994, Pakistan, incited by the capitalist bloc at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, brought a resolution against India highlighting the so-called violations of human rights in J&K. Pakistan, prompted by western godfathers, managed to rope in the OIC countries and left no stone unturned to pillory India. The situation was critical and the western bloc was happy that India would receive a thrashing.

But salutes to the then Prime Minister late PV Narasimha Rao, who played his cards like a veteran politician. He met the challenge on two fronts. One was that he brought a resolution in the parliament in which the government said that PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan are the territories of the Indian Union and Pakistan has forcibly and illegally occu-

ried them since October 1947. India resolves that it has the will and strength to retake the part of its territory. This resolution has immensely impacted India's Kashmir policy. The Reorganization Act of 2019 is its by-product of the same Resolution.

The second masterstroke played by PM Narasimha Rao was to send post haste a very important emissary (name will not be disclosed) to Iran to apprise the government of Iran about the truth of the Kashmir dispute. The emissary succeeded in his mission and just one hour before the debate on the draft resolution would begin, Iran declared its withdrawal from supporting the resolution. With Iran taking the decision, the OIC members fell one by one indicating to the chairman of the session that they were withdrawing their support to the resolution. In this way, India overcame a difficult situation, thanks to the late Narasimha Rao.

Pakistan's effort of defaming India in the comity of nations has been defeated by the unilateral decisions about the governance of the J&K. Under that logic, India is perfectly right in demanding that the Observation Group winds up in Kashmir and the sooner the better.

Time to act

There is another aspect to the issue. Everybody knows that owing to the political, economic and social failure of Pakistan, that state is on the verge of dismemberment. For many years in the past and more particularly during six months, there have been massive anti-Pakistan protests in PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan demanding India take back PoK and GB as it is legally her territory and they want liberation from the tyrannical and discriminatory rule of Islamabad. They are raising Indian flags and enclomiums for Prime Minister Modi.

We will recall that during all these decades of the Kashmir dispute, Pakistan has been invoking international law for extending "moral, political and diplomatic" support to Kashmiris. India should also shed all inhibitions and come out openly in support of the freedom of oppressed people of PoK, Gilgit-Baltistan and Baluchistan from the stranglehold of the Punjabi bureaucracy and army.

It may be said in passing that the Narendra Modi Government has been repeatedly saying that it has the agenda of implementing the Parliaments' unanimous resolution of 22 February 1994 and it is looking for an opportunity to take back the territory usurped by Pakistan. The Army Commanders have said that they are ready to march to Muzaffarabad, once instructions come from the Defence Ministry. We hope the Government of India will not waste more time because this is the perfect time for action.

Pakistan's peace offer to India

Colonel B S Nagial (Retd)

The relations between India and Pakistan are so desolate that an iota of perceived positive development generates a long wishful list of hopes. Speaking in an interview with Dubai-based Al Arabiya TV, Pakistan sought the intervention of UAE ruler Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to bring India and Pakistan together for talks. It is believed that he said that he had given his 'word of honour' that he would talk to the Indian side with complete 'sincerity of purpose'. He added that India and Pakistan are nuclear power nations, and if war breaks out, there will be no one to tell what happened. He emphasised that India and Pakistan must sit at the table and seriously attempt to address the burning issues like Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

Yes, peaceful co-existence is essential because it allows for cooperation and diplomatic relations, leading to economic and cultural exchange and preventing conflicts and war. Additionally, friendly ties can promote stability in the international community and create a more secure and prosperous world. If we look at remarks in the complete interview, there is no sincerity for yearning for peace, but rather bits of history polished with the threat of 'nuclear arsenals'. Later on, it was clarified by the PMO of Pakistan that talks are only possible if India revokes its decision on Article 370 and invokes it again for the State of J&K. And that the settlement of the issue of J&K must follow UN resolutions and wishes of the people of J&K.

Presently, Pakistan is besieged with numerous problems. There is political instability and widespread polarisation, and the election will be held this year. Former Prime Minister Imran Khan staged nationwide rallies against the coalition government and military. He demands an early election, but the present govt is in no mood to do so. The power for struggle continues unabated.

Pakistan's economy is in shambles and was also hit by floods. Inflation was at its highest point, the currency depreciated sharply, and foreign reserves were just enough for one month. There is a high possibility of Pakistan defaulting. Pakistan's economy doesn't produce enough but spends too much, thus being mainly dependent on foreign aid and assistance. Every successive government is worse than the previous one due to mounting debts.

Then there is the threat ever-increasing insecurity in the country. Pakistan is experiencing the heat of homegrown terrorism. Main terrorist groups such as TTP and ISIS-Pakistan are steering attacks on Pakistan. Separatist militant groups conducted terrorist attacks against Pakistan in Balochistan and Sindh provinces. Terrorists used various tactics to attack targets, including IEDs, VBIEDs, suicide bombings, and targeted assassinations.

Also, Pakistan's relations with the Afghan Taliban have worsened substantially over various issues, including the border dividing the two countries. Pakistan, anticipated as the big winner after the US's sudden withdrawal from Afghanistan, is now realising the hazards of affiliating with the Taliban regime. Pakistan is facing an absolute tempest coming out of the self-engineered problems deteriorated by the invisible hand of external forces.

Pakistan has highlighted two fundamental issues: restoration of Article 370 to J&K and follow-up of UN resolutions on J&K. One of the most vigorous roots of separatism and alienation in J&K lies in Article 370, which had granted special status to the erstwhile state of J&K. The people with vested interests misused it and aligned with the power elites. It kept the ideology of the two-nation theory alive and suffocated the idea of India as one nation. Definitely, it suited Pakistan. On 26 Oct 1947, when the Instrument of Accession was signed between

Maharaja Hari Singh and the Government of India, the jurisdiction over the three subjects: Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communication, was surrendered to the Government of India. It was decided that the Constituent Assembly of J&K would take the final decision on the Accession. Therefore Article 370 was granted for the intervening period. The Constituent Assembly of J&K ratified the Accession of J&K to India in Feb 1956. Logically, Article 370 should have been scrapped then and there only, but it was kept alive for the vested interests. After the abrogation of Article 370, the focus is shifted toward Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoK).

The truth behind Pakistan's assertion is that India must follow the UN resolutions on J&K. Since 1947, Pakistan has, unfortunately, been selling the wrong narrative about J&K to the world community. On 30 Dec 1947, the Indian Government referred the matter to the UN under the provisions laid down in Articles 34 & 35 in its charter, which says that member states may bring any situation to the UN whose continuance could endanger the peace and security of the region.

The Indian Government declared that the plebiscite should later confirm Maharaja's decision of Accession and its endorsement by Sheikh Abdullah. But this offer was conditional, which stipulated that invaders are driven out of the J&K first, but this was not fulfilled as Pakistan army supported these invaders. UNCIP resolution of 13 Aug 1948 states that all forces, regular and irregular, under the command of both sides, shall agree to a ceasefire. Pakistan would withdraw its troops from J&K, and tribals and Pakistan nationals should vacate the territory of J&K. India will only withdraw the bulk of its forces on confirmation from UNCIP. Further, it was stated that India's sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir

would not be questioned. There will not be any recognition of the so-called 'Aazad J&K government'. It was Pakistan who did not follow the UN resolutions, not India.

Discrete, negotiable differences do not drive the security competition between the two nations. Instead, the differences are deeply rooted in age-old ideological, territorial, and power-political resentments fuelled by Pakistan's irredentism and its military's yearning to disrupt India's predominance as a great power. Also, Pakistan's military wants to take revenge for past Indian military victories and aspirations to be treated on par with India despite their considerable differences in capabilities, achievements, and prospects.

Pakistan's inconsistent behaviour is further strengthened by Pakistan Military's determination to keep its supremacy in domestic politics. Furthermore, its control of nuclear weapons has allowed its military and intelligence authorities to endorse a crusade of jihadi terrorism envisioned to pressurise India with the expectation that Pakistan will remain primarily unsusceptible to any worthwhile military retaliation. This hostility toward India makes any diplomatic solution satisfactory to Pakistan and India highly evasive. Even shoddier, the Pakistan Military feels bolstered by the global calls for bilateral engagement. It has faith that its nuclear coercion strategy successfully invites foreign pressure on India to make concessions on territory and other issues thus far out of reach.

India's evident geopolitical, economic, and military superiority implies that Pakistan cannot compel it to revise the status quo by force. Nor does India have to offer any compromises to procure peace because it is both a satisfied and leading power. Pakistan must understand that terrorism and talk can't go together.

(The views expressed by the authors are their personal)

feedbackexcelsior@gmail.com