

## Augmentation of Health Infra

Providing affordable health infrastructure for a hugely populous country like India is an onerous task by any standard. But at present, Gol takes every challenge as a mission. Meticulous planning and initiatives taken have yielded results even beyond expectations. Starting in 2014 as Jan Aushadi Stores, rebranded in 2016 as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadi Pariyojana (PMBJP), the journey has been remarkable: from 80 stores to 8610 stores, from 7.29 crores in sales to 893.56 crores in sales, from a product basket of 300 to now 1866 medicines and 250 surgical instruments, and from one warehouse to four warehouses. By any standards, this is a real success story in the shortest time. The medicines available are 50 percent to 90 percent cheaper than commercially available branded medicines. All these medicines are WHO-GMP and NABL-certified, and in the last three years alone, 15,000 crores of public money have been saved through these Kendras.

Our own Jammu and Kashmir health infrastructure has transformed exceptionally. Around 350 health projects are in various stages of progress to give impetus to healthcare. In all, 227 Janaushadi Kendras have been opened in our UT, and to open 75 such Kendras in every district of UT is the target set by the LG Administration. Almost 32,000 patients are visiting these Janaushadi Kendras daily to get the benefits of affordable medicines. This one single scheme has changed the lives of many patients, and the interests of the poor are well taken care of in every respect.

Government hospitals are overburdened with months of waiting lists even for small surgeries, and doctor fees and operation charges in private hospitals are beyond the reach of the poor. Gol came out with a solution to this challenge as well. Gol introduced the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (AB-PMJAY), launched in 2017, much to the relief of the whole population of India, with a commitment to leave no one behind. With this attempt, an attempt has been made to make a comprehensive, need-based healthcare system. The program covers poor specifically. It is heartening to see the poorest among the poor getting immediate medical facilities not only in Government hospitals but in private ones as well, at zero cost. One has to just walk in with an Ayushman Bharat card. It is indeed an achievement that four districts of our UT have 100 percent coverage and another four have 98 percent of their population covered under Ayushman Bharat in Jammu and Kashmir. As this service has been brought under PSGA, real efforts are being made in the other 12 districts to cover 100% of the population. Jammu and Kashmir stand overall in sixth place under the larger states category of the Health Index list of NITI Aayog. The introduction of e-SAHAJ, SEHAT, Tele-MANHAS, and various other steps have breathed new life into UT's healthcare system.

The Gol and LG Administration got two AIIMS and the State Cancer Institute assigned to Jammu and Srinagar, and many GMCs have been opened. Plan for at least one in each district is there. The seats in existing medical colleges have been increased substantially and new PG streams added. This resulted in a big relief for the main hospitals of both Jammu as well as Srinagar. No doubt, the health sector of Jammu and Kashmir has improved by leaps and bounds. Every step of the LG Administration is to somehow provide healthcare services at the doorstep.

## Abolishment of vacant posts

The recent advice from the LG Administration to all the Administrative Secretaries not to refer the posts under direct recruitment quota, which have remained unfilled for the last two years, to the recruiting agencies, is of much importance. Jammu and Kashmir is already an overstuffed UT with the highest Government employee-to-population ratio. The number of employees is almost equal to that of the much larger state of Bihar, and it is an area of great concern because of our revenues and salary component. The LG Administration is trying to prune the present strength and the number of initiatives that have been taken in the past. These measures include mergers of departments, pooling of employees, inter-departmental delegations to curb expenses, and the closure of non-performing PSUs, among other things. All these measures are very important to keep the development agenda at the forefront. The message is clear: if a position is kept in abeyance or remains vacant for more than two years in any department, it will be considered abolished. In case of any contingency, the department shall obtain the prior concurrence of the Finance Department for the revival of such posts. The Administration is clear on this issue of much importance: only those deserving must get the chance, and if a department is running without the person in that post for two years, it means the post is of not that important and can be abolished. This policy decision is in the right perspective, and more such policy decisions should be taken in the interest of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

# Misleading people on Property Tax!

Raman Suri

Abrogation of Article 370, extension of 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution of India to Jammu and Kashmir and subsequently, an administrative approval by the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has paved a way for the imposition of property tax - a tax that's levied on real estate owners by Panchayats, Municipalities and Municipal Corporations to upkeep and maintain local civic amenities in every state and Union Territory (UT) including that of ours. The tax levied here is quite less as compared to elsewhere in the country, to enable our people get acclimatized to paying their dues for raising their living standards.

However, the regional political parties joined by Congress are opposing this levy of property tax in Jammu and Kashmir for multiple reasons, their survival being the prime one. Despite knowing that Form 'H' of the Office of Assessing Authority, Urban Immovable Property Tax in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was used to file property tax by people till 1997, these people are deliberately misleading the common masses. According to property tax statements filed by individuals, Section 3 of the Jammu and Kashmir Urban Immovable Property Tax Act 1962 enabled authorities to assess tax on properties here in J&K.

These political parties, during their regimes, had been asking for money from respective Union Governments and never cared to even submit the utilisation certificates after spending that money lavishly. This money was in addition to the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) that used to come to the erstwhile state for managing our affairs. Today, when efforts are afoot to make Jammu and Kashmir self-reliant and help it earn and spend on its own, a huge hue and cry is being raised and people are being misled for their vested interests. This is also being done to prick the Union Government, which is trying to bring an order into the system of governance.

Now that every single service including water and electricity supply besides better civic amenities have started surfacing in the Union Territory (UT), taxes like property tax, door to door collection charges, GST besides income tax are being levied nominally to make the system function properly and most importantly, to make the UT

become self-sufficient. Those opposed to these developments are trying to create a ruckus and misguide people so that they do not pay taxes, which will ultimately lead to disruption of development in cities and towns.

Let's have a look at the mindset of these political parties to reveal more facts and find who is opposing property tax and misguiding people?

**Aam Admi Party (AAP):** Turncoats, who have joined AAP, are vocal against property tax in J&K while maintaining a criminal silence on the same being levied in their own ruled states like Punjab and UT of Delhi. They are on the forefront of this opposition of misleading masses by making a huge hue and cry despite the fact that their Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is collecting taxes from people and Bhagwant Man is collecting property tax through local bodies in Punjab.

**National Conference (NC):** This political party, which is being run by a family since decades, was the first to delay local body polls in Jammu and Kashmir and when in power, it never cared to extend the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution of India to Jammu and Kashmir and if at all it was done, the same was not implemented in its letter and spirit. Strangely, these dynasts who were always against decentralisation of powers, even went to the extent of boycotting 2018 Panchayat polls merely because they never wanted democracy to percolate down up to the grassroots level.

Expecting these politicians to educate masses about paying their taxes to enable Jammu and Kashmir become self-reliant or see massive development is like swimming against the water current. The same National Conference (NC) had also boycotted the 1996 Indian General Elections, and also allowed elected municipal corporations to lapse without holding elections to the same in 2010 when Omar Abdullah was the Chief Minister. These people who did not care to decentralise powers when in office just can't be expected to ask people to pay their property tax. Ask them from where will River Tawi view front in Jammu or amazingly re-done Lal Chowk in Srinagar maintain itself?

**Indian National Congress (INC):** Way back in 2005, elections to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) were held in Jammu and Kashmir after a gap of

23 years. These bodies were supposed to go to polls in 2010 but the then-Minister for Housing and Urban Development Department (H&UDD) Tara Chand did not care to hold elections to 74 Municipal Committees, 6 Municipal Councils and 2 major Municipal Corporations knowingly that it will empower common people and dilute his own powers.

The Congress leader, during the tenure of these ULBs, also did not bother to implement property tax or convince people to pay their taxes on time and make such institutions self-reliant bodies. The 73rd and 74th amendments extended to J&K was also a half-hearted effort wherein property tax was deliberately ignored and the Congress government always banked upon central funds to even buy the machinery needed for cleaning roads or managing civic amenities in ULBs.

**People's Democratic Party (PDP):** Going against the very essence of democracy, PDP chief, another dynast chose to boycott the last ULBs for a simple reason that she too never wanted powers to go to the people. Late chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was quite assertive in holding elections to the Panchayats but he too ignored empowering the local self-governing institutions and kept them as mere dummies.

Political parties like People's Conference (PC), National Panthers Party (NPP), Awami National Conference (ANC) or Democratic Azad Party (DAP) are non-entities and if they too are opposing property tax, then they must explain to the general masses as to why the people of Jammu and Kashmir who have their homes, apartments, flats, plots, shops or business establishments in Noida, Gurugram, Dwarka, Pune, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Mumbai, Bangalore, Delhi, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Kharar, Mohali, Panchkula, Palampur or any other city of India are paying property taxes without uttering a single word.

Chamber of Commerce and Industry Jammu (CCI, Jammu) and the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), BAR Association Jammu (BAJ), too are opposing the levy of property tax knowingly that there is no other way to generate revenue to make ULBs self-sufficient so that the much-needed beautiful

cities are developed. KCCI has a plea that the economic scenario is not conducive to burden people. KCCI must realise that there would never be a right time for anything and for any good to take place, a beginning has to be made.

The kind of facilities that Jammu and Kashmir has started getting post abrogation of Article 370 were never there before. Today, cycle stands have come up, roads with beautiful flower beds are in making, ornamental street lights and steel bins are adding to the beauty of cities besides mega projects are in the offing. Money for these is sure to come from all of us and anyone opposing these taxes is doing no good to the nation as well as our UT, which has come out of the shackles of dynasts and is witnessing massive development at par with any other developed state and UT in the country. Once the people of Jammu and Kashmir begin to pay their taxes, a major share of central funds for urban development will also start to percolate here.

The concerns of CCI Jammu, KCCI, BAJ or any other political party that poor should be exempted, or taxes must not be levied on old-age homes or places of worship besides crematoriums and graveyards are no concerns as the government had taken care of these beforehand only. The government must also simplify the process, leaving no scope for harassment of the common man. Besides, it should follow the pattern of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) to develop heritage areas in the city and exempt those buildings that have heritage values. Property tax will also be beneficial in maintaining residential areas as commercial activities there will either decrease or cease to exist. This will ensure everyone living in a pure residential area has been asking for as well.

LG Manoj Sinha too has already clarified that out of 5.20 lakh houses in Srinagar, Jammu and other municipal areas, 2.06 lakh houses are below 1,000 sq. feet, meaning they won't be taxed or 40% of the people already stand exempted. So, from 1st April this year, people must not get fooled but should act wisely as this 1st April is going to become a wise day for Jammu & Kashmir.

(The writer is Bharatiya Janata Party J&K Executive Member)

### Squadron Leader Anil Sehgal

He was not a doctor as we all know who a doctor is. He never attended a medical school. He had no formal training in any system of medicine; be it allopathic, ayurvedic or Unani. Yet, he dispensed medicines, which had no names. And suffering masses thronged to him. Day after day. Everyday.

Have you come across the famous adage: there is no such thing as a free lunch? In simple words, this popular proverb conveys the idea that it is impossible to get something for nothing. In other words, it means that you pay a price for everything you get.

But, I am going to tell you a story about a healer who charged nothing for his services. Not a single pie. Not only that, he even gave you free medicines!

Yes, he was unique and we have not heard about another of his kind. This Dogra healer or vaidya charged no money for a medical consultation and even gave you medicines free of charge.

Everyday, a long queue was seen outside the chamber of the healer who was like a true messiah. He had no greed for money and, in letter and spirit, followed the Hindu dictum "sarve santu niramayah", which means let everybody be healthy, and may no one suffer from illness!

The health seekers or sufferers came from all stratas of life, from richest to the poorest, from scholars to the illiterate. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and what not!

This healer was very popular in Jammu during the period from sixties to the nineties. He used to dispense medicines sitting in a temple of Bhagwan Krishna, in the Purani Mandi area of the old Jammu city.

Every morning, there used to be a long queue of the sufferers outside the temple. They were given a token number as they arrived so that they could be admitted to the Hakeem Ji's chamber strictly in accordance with their number in the queue, on "first come, first

served' basis.

As the crowd kept swelling, his followers prescribed a token fee of two anna ( 12 Paisa) to give the system a sense of propriety and inculcate a sense of responsibility in the health seekers.

"This was done by his admirers even without taking his consent", informs Ashu Tosh Magotra, his son who ascended the "throne" after the demise of his father in 2006.

Thereafter, the Hakeem Ji was popularly known as "Dwaani Wala Hakeem", which means the healer who charges two anna. In times to follow the health seekers paid 12 Paisa for each day's medicines.

As Hakeem Ji learned of this practice of charging a fee enforced by his followers, he started doling out the fees thus collected to the needy and the poor.

With this princely sum of money, 12 Paisa, you could barely buy a cup of

roadside tea or a humble samosa in those days!

Hakeem Ji dispensed ayurvedic medicines, most of which were made in the temple itself. He would dole out the raw ingredients of the medicines to his devout followers who would keep pounding them to a desired state of pulverisation, sitting in a corner of his consultation chamber.

The healer would check the quality of the work of these bhakts in between dispensing the medicines. He worked every day for about eight to ten hours.

Could you believe, these ingredients were, many a time, very valuable pearls or precious stones like emerald, diamonds and rubies!

Evidentially, the dispensed medicines were very expensive to make, yet these were given out in charity! This baffled most of the observers.

Well known theater director Deep-

## A strange healer



ak Kumar is a great admirer of Hakeem Ji, and spent many spare hours of his youth in the temple as a devout follower.

Says Deepak : "Once, a patient requested he be given medicines for a

cious stone Neelam ( blue sapphire).

"Where did you get it?  
"It is all I have as an inheritance.  
"Why have you brought it to me?  
"I was directed in my dream to bring it to you. I was told you needed it more than me.

"And, thus, the poor man gifted about 20 kilograms of uncut and unpolished raw blue sapphire to this divine healer,"

"Since I had myself lifted and deposited the bag containing raw blue sapphire, I can safely say it would be more than 20 kilos", exclaims the well known theatrewala of Jammu.

For the uninitiated, price of one gram of cut and polished refined Neelam would be around five lakh rupees today!

Hakeem Ji was a lean and thin, short statured gentleman, dressed in ordinary clothes, wearing no ornaments like

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long time as he was to travel out of the city. Hakeem Ji scribbled the name of the medicines and asked him to buy them from the market.

"The poor patient soon returned complaining the chemist was asking for a sum of 1600 rupees for the medicines for a week! I was shocked to realise that Hakeem Ji was charging less than a rupee for the same medicines!"

So, then, what was the source of his largesse? How could he manage his finances?

Deepak narrates an incident to give you a clue to the financial management of this charity run by a poor vaidya.

"In my presence, once a simple looking middle aged man came to the temple with a small bag and placed it before Hakeem Ji.

"Hakeem Ji asked him what was inside the bag.

"The man informed it was the pre-

rings and gold chains; not even a chain of the holy rudraksha. A big red tika of red sandalwood on the forehead was his only ornamentation.

The only known indulgence of his was smoking the saunf ( fennel ) flavored beedis, that he smoked during the breaks he availed in between attending to the scores of patients who flocked to the temple every day.

I learn from his admirers that the vaidya used to spend most of his time in the temple. He would not return home for days and weeks in a row.

The temple management had allotted him a small Pooja room to worship. To this day, this room is kept untouched. I have been to this prayer room and can vouch it has divine vibrations. I for one sobbed bitterly as I bowed my head in reverence to pray....

Ashu Tosh tells me that the ayurvedic practice was first started by

his grandfather Madan Lal Magotra who had some inborn skills to treat the sick, in his village in Bishnah, district Jammu.

His son Ram Dutt Magotra, the protagonist of this write-up, followed in his footsteps without any formal education in any system of medicine.

Ashu Tosh adds that no formal education in medicine was ever obtained by his grandfather or, later, by his father. It was by observation and apprenticeship or hit and trial method that the skills of a medical practitioner were honed.

Senior writer, broadcaster Rajinder Motial knew the vaidya well. He informs that the legendary vaidya had attained divine powers through his prayers to Mother Kali.

"He was never short of the funds required for providing medicines to his patients. He was a true fakir in his personal capacity. He was a giver who never accepted any gifts for himself", informs octogenarian Motial.

"Whenever he needed money, he would simply ask his deity, and, lo and behold, the help would arrive soon enough. The deity would invariably direct someone to go and help the healer. And soon enough help would reach him through some unknown source! There are any number of tales to support this," says Rajinder Motial.

Rajinder also recalls how once, short of funds, the healer went inside his chamber and prayed the whole night. When he emerged from the prayer chamber in the morning, he was holding a large garland of precious stones!

I have presently visited the house of the vaidya near the temple. His son Ashu Tosh stays there with his family. It is a nondescript ramshackle construction that is in dire need of repairs.

Only a fakir is expected to live in this house which is devoid of modern basic civic comforts. But, the inhabitants do not appear to be complaining!

This family belies the proverb that the money makes the mare go. What gives them happiness is when they help the fellow beings without expecting anything in return. Like father, like son.

## Glaucoma- Know it to, defeat it

Nitin Kumar

World Health Organization estimates that about two billion people worldwide are either blind or have some form of visual impairment. Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of blindness and visual disability. In fact, the visual loss secondary to glaucoma is irreversible. As far as the scenario in our country is concerned, an estimated 12 million patients are suffering from glaucoma. An estimated, 40 million people in the age group forty and above are either having glaucoma or are susceptible to develop the disease. These numbers are alarming; also a high proportion of the population has undetected disease.

In developing countries, about 90% of the cases are undetected. About 50% of patients detected to have glaucoma have never had an eye examination in the past. This is due to the fact that the disease has almost no symptoms and the awareness about the regular eye examina-

tions is lacking. As most of the patients remain asymptomatic even up to the late stages of the disease, glaucoma is known as a "Sneak thief of sight." A low level of awareness among the masses is a major cause that such huge numbers of patients have an undetected disease. The need of the hour is to make people aware about the disease, its early detection in populations and timely initiation of treatment. World Glaucoma Week is being celebrated in the month of march, every year, to raise awareness about the disease and motivate the people to get their eyes checked for the disease. The Theme for the World Glaucoma Day 2023 is "The World is Bright, Save your Sight".

**What is Glaucoma?** Glaucoma is an eye disease characterized by chronic, progressive damage to the optic nerve secondary to an increase of the intraocular pressure (IOP), leading to the loss of vision. The normal IOP is in the range of 10-21 mm Hg and varies from person to person. The two major sub-types of



glaucoma are Primary-open angle glaucoma and Primary angle closure glaucoma, these two can be differentiated by performing a gonioscopy test by an ophthalmologist. Also, certain glaucomas can develop in patients with lower pressures also due to increased susceptibility of the optic nerve. The angle closure type of glaucoma can present with an acute intense pain

with redness of the eye, blurred vision, high IOP nausea and vomiting. In such a case, immediate attention should be sought from an ophthalmologist. Certain forms of glaucoma can present in conjunction with other eye diseases like cataracts, diabetic retinopathy and systemic diseases. A special mention of congenital glaucomas is pertinent which presents with the newborn

children having watering from eyes, a large appearing eye and cloudiness of the front part of eye. These cases require emergent care to protect the vision of these newborns.

**Screening:** Glaucoma does not produce any symptoms and most of the patients present late with advanced visual loss and visual disability. So, it is imperative to screen patients who at risk, as to detect the patients early. Risk factors for glaucoma include age more than 40 years, significant family history of glaucoma, high refractive errors, and use of certain drugs like steroids.

**How will your doctor screen you for Glaucoma:** A comprehensive eye examination including IOP measurement, dilated examination of the optic nerve can help to detect glaucoma? Specialized tests like gonioscopy and visual field examination can help to make specific diagnosis.

**Treatment:** Unfortunately, there is no cure for glaucoma, but early treatment can preserve vision. The treatment if started in time can stop the progression of the disease and prevent further damage to vision. The treatment

strategies include pressure lowering drops, laser therapy and surgery in advanced cases. The drops used for glaucoma bring the IOP down in a range which can be tolerated by the optic nerve, the laser treatment is commonly used for the angle closure type of glaucoma, while surgery is resorted to in cases where drug and laser therapy fails to control the eye pressure.

**Importance of Celebrating Glaucoma Week:** Celebrating glaucoma week gives us an opportunity to disseminate knowledge and make people aware about this dreaded disease. The promotion of, at least, one yearly comprehensive eye examination by an ophthalmologist can go a long way in helping to preserve the vision of our patients. Also, motivating family members of the patients with glaucoma to undergo eye examination is important, as the disease may run in families. Timely diagnosis and initiation of treatment will help us to prevent the irreversible blindness caused by Glaucoma.

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