

Jammu and Kashmir Budget 2023-2024

With the pandemic gone, efforts are on to put delayed and derailed development works back on track and the Rs. 1.18 lakh crore 2023-24 budget of Jammu and Kashmir is a step in that direction.

The focus areas that require attention and intervention have been identified and ample budget allocations are marked for these areas in the budget. The goal is to further improve the growth rate of 10% achieved in the previous year, increase revenue collection and establish associated industries to give a major boost to employment and economic growth.

Jammu and Kashmir has embraced the path of peace and the youth are in search of new avenues to come at par with the rest of India as far as sustaining a better life. For this, a massive skill development exercise has to be done, which includes the introduction of the latest streams and technologies at the college level, big industrial setups, start-ups and the exponential growth of small and medium entrepreneurs as well as self-help groups. A gender at the budget presented reveals that these are exactly the focus areas targeted in this budget. Enough budgetary provisions have been made to cater to all these aspects to take care of youth aspirations.

Clear-cut emphasis is placed on strengthening grass-roots democracy, as much attention is paid to the rural economy. Massive flows of funds have been assured for all three tiers of Panchayati Raj, with efforts on holistic improvement in infrastructure, roads, and water and setting up agro-based small-scale industries to double the income of farmers and other villagers. The Rural Development Department has also to play a major role and, as such, has been provided substantial funds. There is a vast scope in this sector and numerous schemes developed in consultation with experts are assigned to the budget.

Agriculture and horticulture are the economic game changers but have been static for quite some time. By parsing the data, root causes have been identified, and in this budget, the focus is on changing the scenario with the help of agricultural and horticultural experts. Scientific farming with multiple crops, reducing pre and post-harvest losses, financing major and minor farming equipment, and using solar pumps to reduce electricity expenses are the few targeted areas. The projected plan is to develop agro- and horticulture-based associated industries by providing easy finance and technical expertise to double the farmers' income and generate new employment avenues for the rural youth. Doubling milk production, well-coordinated milk collection through cooperatives, and poultry and sheep farming are a few other important sectors getting due attention in the budget.

Health infrastructure has been a major area of concern during COVID-19 and taking forward the good work of the new GMCs, provisions have now been made to have the requisite equipment, facilities and laboratories in these hospitals. The strengthening of rural health care has received a major impetus in this budget.

Power sector reforms and the augmentation of the distribution network will continue. The projection of doubling the electricity generation capacity in the coming years is there. Budgetary allocations are there to develop a road network with scores of bridges and tunnels to make the remotest areas accessible. Major HEPs will generate new employment opportunities for locals and change the outlook of rural Jammu and Kashmir.

With meetings of the G-20 assigned to Kashmir, major showcasing of art, culture, heritage and craft are projected. Already popular tourist destinations are stressed due to exponential infrastructure growth, and serious environmental and ecological concerns exist. The plan is to develop alternative tourist destinations and religious circuits to ease this stress. Dome trains, infrastructural development at new tourist places, conservation and beautification of lakes, and new ropeways are a few highlights. Involving women in all these activities and empowering them and local artisans is on the way. Systematically, products and projects are planned to give a major boost to the overall economy of the UT through tourism and related activities. Making pilgrimages safer, improving infrastructure, and developing proper tourism in the vicinity are also projected in this budget.

Another budget priority is border area development. Bunkers, roads, bridges, and agriculture in these areas will also get major financing this year. All PMDP projects lingering due to COVID-19 are to be completed in this financial year.

Train connectivity to Kashmir and the widening of the major portion of the Jammu-Srinagar highway will be achieved in this financial year as adequate budgetary provisions are made. The aspirations of all regions have been taken into account; there is something for everyone. Enough planning and thought have been applied to create an overall well-planned and futuristic budget that will give impetus to the economic growth of Jammu and Kashmir. Funds have been put at the disposal of the administration, and now it is the responsibility of the local officials to rise to the occasion and utilize them to achieve the projected growth targets.

'They' saw me in Kashmir but...

Shiban Khaibri

Once, one of the shrewd Indian politicians and wedded to uncompromising principles Morarji Desai, during his brief stint as Prime Minister, was asked for a comment on a statement of a (the then) young Congress leader, to which his response was "does the guy merit a response from me?" However, since the particular statement of whatever levels of mediocrity by the said leader of his Party was given in the country, he chose to remain gracefully silent not attaching any importance to that. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi had reportedly virtually snubbed a journalist in London soon after her release from the imprisonment when he asked her in a press conference, "What is your experience of prison in India?" She replied very assertively and boldly, "I do not want to talk anything bad about my country in this conference". It may be recalled that she was arrested by Morarji Desai Government on October 4, 1977 and within hours only released by the court. She definitely wore a splendid badge of the blend of courage and patriotism.

However, when any statement and of sensitive nature but wholly concocted is given on a foreign soil by a leader of the Congress who even was its President and the narrative parking at nothing less than denigrating his own country, it hurts and must hurt every patriotic Indian. It must hurt and deeply anguish the people when the narrative is all quite far from the truth and smelling seriously of something fishy, the sole intent, however, being to show the country's Prime Minister down but in the process, projecting a very poor and pathetic picture of the country before the select audience. In the present highly digital era of fast information technology, the narrative spreads like a wild fire especially when India under the present leadership is transforming and leapfrogging in growth and progress in every area even to the envy of the most developed countries of the world. Hence, it

seems well calculated and planned which smacks of utter hypocrisy and parks at the fallacy of parroting any love and "concern" for this country. It is, therefore, definitely a serious phenomenon as already there are various disruptive and secessionists elements raising head to weaken this country even daring to breaking it. BBC, Soros, New York Times, different toolkits and the like are apparently active to weaken this country, its unity and integrity, its sovereignty and territorial integrity and derail its speeding engine of growth and development. That must never be allowed to succeed by the people who are witnessing the rise of a new India, a powerful India and a vibrant India.

During the so called "Bharat Jodo Yatra", many statements given by Rahul Gandhi under the garb of promoting his "Mohabat Key Dukaan" in the monopolistic market of "Nafra Ka Baazar", merit at best to be taken just in a lighter vein but many of those ones spoken having connotations of many hues cannot be just written off. For example "With Pandavas (of Mahabharata period) there were people of all religions" and his question "Did Pandavas ever implement demonetization or press for any wrong GST?" The history is thus pathetically distorted and that too knowingly by peddling "People of all religions" when there was only one religion - the oldest of the mankind - the Sanatan Dharam - followed by both Kauravas and Pandavas. What does he actually want to convey? How could Pandavas implement the demonetization and thrust on people the GST? You have habitually to attack the two most important and earnestly required economic reforms because you want, by any count, to criticise the PM, you can do that but giving fallacious analogies turns the intended criticism into nothing less than pieces of amusement or comedy. Politics is serious business where amusement, comedies and wild imaginations play spoilsports.

Cambridge University "campaign" had some sprinkles of the culmination

of the so called "Bharat Jodo Yatra" in Kashmir which Rahul Ji shared with the audience. One of those had more interesting but very serious nuance and undercurrent. With the audience he recalled how he once "faced" terrorists when the "yatra" had entered Kashmir. Says he, "...the man pointed towards some nearby people and revealed they were all terrorists and I thought I was in trouble but they did not do anything because (according to him) it is the power of listening." Well, either he was narrating a story of fairies and golden birds and of fancy to some children or a thing woven in imagination to the listeners' expected kudos and all praises to be showered on him but they perhaps weighed it in the perspective as the Congress leader had tremendous heavy security cover. However, the question remains as to who pointed to some "nearby people" who were terrorists and when exactly he "revealed" it to the Congress leader. Why as a responsible citizen and an MP, he did not pass on the sensitive information to the security apparatus that was with him. Why, alternately, he did not use the "power of listening" to persuade them to shun the path of militancy and join the mainstream. He did neither yet he claims some heroism about it. This "encounter" with the terrorists is containing the same levels of truth and purity as much as his allegation containing about the functioning microphones being "silenced" in the Lok Sabha against the opposition. These serious aspersions on the highest seat of our democracy came from him while "addressing" a group of British Parliamentarians in the Grand Committee Room of the House of Commons. He also levelled allegations to this extent that "opposition voices are stifled in India and that happened to me a number of times while I was speaking."

The Vice President of the country and Chairman Rajya Sabha Shri Jagdeep Dhankar lambasted Rahul Ji's such wild allegations by saying, "If I observe silence on this orchestration by an MP outside the country which is motivated,

I will be on the wrong side of the constitution and how can I sanctify the statement that microphones in the Parliament are put off?" Deputy Chairman Rajya Sabha Hariyansh refuted Rahul Gandhi's allegation by saying, "It is absolutely false, baseless, nothing can be more false than this, I have been in Parliament for the last 9 years and not even once have I heard anything like that from anyone." He further aptly clarified that "The Indian Parliament is being run with the same principles and traditions that it followed in 1952 when the first Lok Sabha was constituted after the independence. As regards the charge of he not being allowed to speak in the Parliament is as much true as someone would say that sun dips in ocean during the night to cool down. He did not share with the group of British Parliamentarians that on Rafale fighter jet deal, he had declared that as he would speak for just 15 minutes in the House, tremors could be felt far and wide and that "the Prime Minister would find no place to hide". He in fact spoke for double the time but no tremors were felt.

How come he thought of floating this piece of "a thing which was not" and for what purpose, needs to be asked. Not only that, Rahul Ji further declared that democracy was dead in India and that it was strange that United States and European countries were not intervening. The country where from Indian democracy got thus insulted had seen five Prime Ministers changing one after the other during a span of less than last 7 years and where democracy was itself seen getting weakened. On the contrary, how Indian democracy progresses and flourishes can be seen by the number of people participating in it. In 1951 a total of 45.6% people had cast their vote, in 1962 it rose to 50% followed by in 2014 by 66.4% and in 2019 by 67.5%. The present government was not installed but elected twice by the people of India democratically and constitutionally. If someone feels that its party is in the opposition, it is so on account of the people wishing it. It sounds ludicrous that a feeling should be given as if it is through

of power forcibly or by employing unconstitutional means. Why is it so that some Congress leaders go out and in foreign countries, seek their help in interfering in our transparent and impeccably clean democratic setup is hard to comprehend. Mani Shanker Aiyer told in Pakistan, "Inn ko hatao aur hamen lao" and Rahul Gandhi has now become a somewhat habitual to do it. Last year in May, again from the same foreign soil, he had told that BJP had "poured" kerosene oil all over India and one spark will land "us" in big trouble. This time, he disregarded all boundaries of his duty as a responsible patriotic citizen and an elected MP to this country by saying that "Modi does not recognise Muslims, Sikhs and Christians as citizens of India and that he is "breaking" India".

There can be no parallel to the gumption of peddling such a canard which is ostensibly with the only aim and purpose of attacking Modi Ji but in the process rather innocently, going against the interests of the unity and integrity of the country in itself as it is tantamount to spreading hate between communities thus clearly deflating the claim of his opening of "Mohabat key dukaan" etc. By such a negativity the aim is ultimately to seriously attempt to influence the electoral choice of a major portion of Indian electorate in 2024. Why cannot this unsubstantiated statement be particularly ruded by those countrymen whom he sought to prove as "1st class citizens" being thus in all comfort, contentment and solely enjoying all luxuries, benefits and pleasures under the present government in the country? He nowhere even casually mentioned about the persistent plight of 32 years of the indigenous inhabitants of the place - Kashmir - where he culminated his "yatra" and reaching where he sought to connect his roots. Was speaking about that "connection" just a rhetoric? For this allegation, he has won plaudits not from all his well wishers and followers within the Party which can now fear to lose more support from the general Indians.

JKPSC gives momentum to the change with enviable benchmarks

Anika Nazir

Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing a history in the making. The administration under Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha is rewriting the norms for the new normal which marks the turnaround after the revocation of Article 370.

The Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) recently issued recruitment advertisement for the 2022 Jammu Kashmir administrative and police services in less than 24 hours after it received the request from the government. It set even higher standards of efficiency and commitment by declaring the result for the 2021 JKPS examination within three hours after the conclusion of the interview of the last candidate. Further, entire process for filling up the vacancies for the post of Veterinary Assistant Sur-

geons in Jammu and Kashmir was completed in a record time of six months!

The promptness with which JKPS is doing its job cannot be seen in isolation. The entire Jammu and Kashmir administration is at work. The administration under LG Sinha is committed to deliver on promises and meet the expectations of the people with respect to welfare measures. The promise to provide employment and timely delivery of services both require filling up of government posts.

The government has directed identification of vacancies in various departments that need to be filled to ensure efficiency in governance. An elaborate exercise is being carried out by various government departments and reportedly over 26,000 posts, including non-Gazetted posts, have already been identified. A large number of these vacan-

cies will be referred to the JKPS.

The task is not easy. Apart from meeting the deadlines, the Commission has to win the confidence of the people by making the process fair, impartial and transparent. The commission has already geared up to meet the challenge.

To ensure objectivity in the selection process, the Rules were recently amended to provide for a written examination and reduce the weightage for interview to do away with the element of subjectivity which has plagued the system so far. The Commission has already demonstrated that it will be able to do away with the delay and backlogs.

The Commission had been able to conduct only the preliminary test in one full year for the 2021 PSC examination. But subsequently it prioritized the process after the 2022 PSC vacancies

were announced. It conducted the main examination which was followed by interview and the result for the 2021 PSC examination was declared on January 19, 2022 within three hours after the conclusion of the interview.

The 2022 PSC examination is expected to conclude by July 2023. Thereafter, the avowed target of making selections on an annual basis is likely to be achieved.

The Commission had recommended thousands of appointments in record time, apart from conducting departmental examinations and promotions to do away with stagnancy in service. In many departments, there had been no promotions since decades. The motivation of the existing work force in various departments will go a long way in building a new J&K.

The change in the selection procedure will enable the government recruit

the best and transform the work culture. So far, the selection was on the basis of academic record and interview. In the absence of uniformity in marking across universities, many talented candidates were not even shortlisted for interview and many others missed the bus with scope for subjectivity at the stage of interview.

The transformation of JKPS left the past behind. It has reinvigorated the government machinery and has also strengthened the confidence of the people in the system. The overhaul of the Commission clearly seems to be at the centre of Lieutenant Governor Sinha's blueprint for a new beginning for Jammu and Kashmir.

(Anika Nazir is a Srinagar-based political commentator and social activist. Her Twitter handle is @_anika_nazir. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not represent the stand of this publication.)

Strategies for Rural Transformation

Dr. Banarsi Lal

Agriculture is the largest sector of the Indian economy. Presently this sector contributes 19.9 per cent to the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This sector is very important for the social security in terms of food, nutrition and employment. This sector employs the largest workforce although there is less income as compared to services and industries. The farm sector is often confronted with the crops productivity shocks. The climate change has adverse impact on the farm sector and the farmers do not get adequate support. Extreme climatic events are on the rise and there is need of strenuous efforts for the well-being of the farmers. Several reforms are needed for the technology generation and technology dissemination so that the income of the farmers can be increased.

The rising demand of food grain production and other commodities should also be kept in mind. The food grains in 2021-22 was 315.72 million tones. With the present status of food grain production, the demand of food grains is likely to be met except some deficiency in pulses, but a major deficiency is expected in edible oils and vegetables. In order to increase the crops productivity development efforts are needed. Agricultural efficiency and occupational diversification should be promoted. Special efforts are needed to build institutions and delivery system to develop different states as the food grain bowls. The farmers should be supported to

mitigate the agricultural risks by diversifying the agriculture. The government of India has started innovative solutions to mitigate the problems of farmers. Government has included better production avenues with more area under irrigation and availability of quality agro-inputs. The focus has been given on farmers' empowerment against risks of crops failure and price fluctuation with more incentives for crops insurance and national agriculture market.

The diversification of agriculture with high value organic and natural farming, livestock, fishing and traditional farming is also on top priority of the government. Kisan TV Channel was launched by the government of India to update the farmers with the latest agricultural technologies. During the last few years' various new schemes have been launched by the government of India for the betterment of the millions of the farmers of the country.

The Government of India launched Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana in Kharif 2016 by replacing the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS). In this scheme 2 per cent premium has been fixed for the Kharif food grains, pulses and oilseed crops, 1.5 per cent has been fixed for the Rabi food grains, pulses and oilseed crops and 5 per cent for the horticultural and commercial crops. All the states are implementing these schemes for the insurance of different crops to provide benefit to the farmers. It is hoped that this scheme will bring

relief to the farmers whose crops are damaged due to the natural calamities. In India 55 per cent of the area is under rainfed conditions.

The farmers well-being can be achieved by more Crop Per Drop and Har Khet Ko Pani. Recently government has launched a scheme known as Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY). The priorities have been set up for the PMKSY. Many states have started innovative practices for water conservation and harvesting. Maharashtra government has started Jayukta Shivar Scheme which channels the funds of Corporate Social Responsibility for the creation and restoration of water bodies. Karnataka government has increased the subsidy on micro-irrigation by topping up the central subsidy to make it 100 per cent for the drip and sprinkler systems. Gujarat government has also institutionalized a unique system of hand holding with the farmers for micro-irrigation. Various other states have also implemented many innovative practices for water conservation, water harvesting and efficient use of water.

After Green Revolution the farmers across the nation indiscriminately used the chemical fertilizers. In the early 70s, the average proportion of N, P and K was 6:1.9:1 and in 1996 it was 10:2.9:1. With the excessive use of fertilizers the soil health has been deteriorated. Soil health card helps to inform the farmers about nutrient level of his/her farm so that he/she can make the judicious use of the fertilizers. Soil Health Card

scheme is an innovative scheme for the benefit of the farmers. In order to increase the yield in rainfed areas now government is promoting organic farming and natural farming. For this purpose, government has launched two important schemes. First is Parmparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana which will bring 5 lakhs acres' area under organic farming in three years and second is Organic Value Chain Development.

The agricultural marketing systems suffers because of various distortions in the market. These markets are not transparent and uniform across the nation. There remain some serious restrictions on the movement of agricultural commodities. Karnataka government has developed a model which integrates a number of markets into a single licensing system with a joint venture of state government agency and NCDEX spot exchange which offers automated auction and post auction facilities.

Considering this model as a base, the government has launched a scheme known as National Agricultural Market (NAM) scheme through Agri-Tech Infrastructure Fund for implementation. This scheme provides the scope for a Pan-India Electronic Trading Portal which will network selected Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees market yards to create Unified National Market for Agricultural Commodities.

The e-platform will be implemented in selected 585 regulated whole sale markets across the nation. Agricultural prices are not stabilized. Price Stabiliza-

tion Fund (PSF) scheme has been launched for the procurement and distribution of perishable agriculture and horticultural commodities.

Livestock contributes 25 per cent of Gross Value Added in agriculture sector and provides employment to about 21 millions of people. It is one of the fastest growing sectors of agriculture. Rashtriya Gokul Mission was launched by the government in 2014-15 for the conservation of indigenous breeds. The mission envisages establishment of Integrated Cattle Development centres to develop indigenous breeds. National Kamdhenu Breeding Centres for development, conservation and preservation of indigenous breeds are being set up in India to develop and conserve indigenous breeds in holistic manner. A nucleus herd of all the indigenous bovine breeds, Mithun and Yak will be conserved and developed with the objective of enhancing their productivity and upgrading genetic merit. The centre being a repository of indigenous germ-plasm will also be source of certified germ-plasm. Elite certified germplasm for artificial insemination and natural service, heifers, male and female calves, semen doses and embryos will be made available to farmers and breeding organizations. Keeping the scope of fisheries in view the scheme on Integrated Development of Fisheries has been launched under blue revolution. It is hoped that all these schemes will bring prosperity for the farmers and help in rural transformation.

Pay Property Tax

Sir,
In the recent order by the J&K (UT) Govt. regarding levying a minimum house tax in J&K many political parties and NGO's have started protests against much house tax.

I would like to lay down that all the residents of cantonment area of Jammu have been paying heavy house tax since 1854. When our room owners have been paying much tax due to which our area people have never encountered cleanliness, clearance of drains and nallahs problems. Other required facilities are also being provided.

All political parties such as NC, Congress, PDP, BJP were approached by the cantonment dwellers for remission of such house tax but no one heard our plea since 1954.

I appeal to the public that we must contribute towards nominal house tax for better facilities and such so called NGO's and political parties should end their politically motivated protests.

**K S Jarsotia
Ex-Member
National Groundwater Advisory
Council Government of India Ministry
of Water resources.**

Sir,
We are glad to know from your public address to the public of Jammu on 7th March, 2023 that the UT Government of Jammu & Kashmir is taking several steps for the welfare of DPs from POJK in 1947. But is sad that DPs living outside J&K have always been neglected in the following matters:-

- * DPs living outside J&K are double victims of displacement in 1947. Firstly, the Pak Army brutally displaced and killed many of them from their native place in POJK. Secondly, after reaching Jammu, the then State Government did not allow them to settle and were sent out of the State.
- * DPs living outside J&K were neglected for consideration

Plea to LG from POJK families

of compensation under the Prime Minister Relief Package, 2015 under which DPs settled in Jammu were paid an amount of Rs.5.5 Lakhs per family. DPs living outside J&K were not made eligible for this compensation.

* This Society filed a Writ Petition before the Hon'ble High Court of Jammu in 2017 requesting to make eligible the DPs living outside J&K for this relief. On 10th March, 2022 the UT Government of J&K filed a report before the Hon'ble Court stating that they now intend to pay this relief to the DPs living outside J&K also. On 14th March, 2022, the Hon'ble Court directed the Union of Government to file their response in this matter. On 23rd February, 2023, a delegation of Mirpur Balidan Bhawan Samity met the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Union of

India on this matter, almost one year has elapsed but no action so far.

* Hardly 2 to 3 percent of actual victims of displacement in 1947 are presently surviving and others lost their lives during last 75 years in the hope of any compensation from the Government. Surviving victims also may have the same fate if no action is taken at the earliest.

* The Samity requests to treat the DPs settled outside J&K at par with the DPs settled in Jammu especially when they have been granted Domicile Certificate by the UT Government of J&K

**Madan Mohan Gupta
General Secretary
Mirpur Balidan Bhawan Samity, New Delhi**