

## No to Govt employees' strike

Government employees are the administration's extended arms and they are a part of it. No Government policy or scheme can be implemented without the employees' involvement. The success or failure of each administrative decision depends upon how practically employees have been able to perform on the ground. All employees are duty-bound to follow the policy decisions. It is also true that until the 1990s, the salaries were not so lucrative, but of late, the difference between Government and private salaries, specifically those of the lower cadre, is a total mismatch. In addition to salaries, the number of holidays and numerous other benefits are there, which are not there for private sector employees, especially in the unorganized sectors. The administration has already put all erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir employees on par with other UT employees, and all benefits, including school and college fee allowances for children, have been passed on. It is also true that certain Government departments and their employees work extra hours for months together to meet the deadlines set by the Government without getting any overtime or consolidated extra benefits. Practically speaking, administration and employees are complementary to each other; neither is complete without the other. It is also a fact that different employee unions exist, some of which may have an ideological alliance with the political parties not in power. Unfortunately, certain employees get carried away and indulge in protests or sit-down strikes for no reason at all. In addition to benefits, there is a proper forum and set procedure for registering the grievances of employees, and the administration is always ready to sort things out. When the administration has invested so much in them and is ready to address any genuine demand, there can be no reason for discontent. When J&K Government Employees (Conduct) Rule 20 clearly states that no Government employee shall engage himself in any kind of protest or demonstration, then why are employees flouting the rules and have been on protests for months together? However genuine the demands of employees, their absence for months at a time is not acceptable at all. Cities like Jammu and Srinagar are always witnessing Government employees' sit-in protests. This hampers the workings of the administration and planned targets overrun the assigned dates. In the name of freedom to protest, nobody can take the public for a ride.

A Government job is a privilege, but it also comes with a sense of responsibility. Any protest demonstration puts an extra burden on security agencies as well. Jammu protests have a unique flavour: blockade of the main Tawi Bridge for hours together and take the public for a ride. This blockade results in a total traffic jam, and the resultant chaos is a nightmare for patients, students, and school-going toddlers stuck in these jams for hours together. The agony is more severe during the summers. The resultant loss of work means losses to the tune of crores. No administration can afford this type of anarchy and luxury in the present scenario. Lockdown due to COVID-19 has already caused delays in numerous projects, and employee protests in the present situation cannot be allowed. The administration has rightly put the onus on the department heads as protest demonstrations are the result of accumulative resentment due to the non-resolution of demands. Administrative heads must ensure all genuine demands get redressed immediately. e-HRM has already been implemented, employees can register their grievances even online. Creating embarrassing moments for the administration under the influence of political ideology or radicalization should be avoided. Employees are paid for work assigned, not for protests. The Government has rightly warned all the employees and expects them to desist from such protests in the future. Both administration and employees must share the responsibility for cordial relations. No one benefits from a confrontationalist attitude.

## Reservation and age relaxation for Agniveers

Agniveers announcement last year created enough uproar. The Government, for its part, gave in-depth explanations. When all wings of the armed forces have already approved it, there are no further reasons for any apprehensions. In addition to the explanations, the Government had assured a 10 percent reservation for Agniveers in the Central Paramilitary Forces and Assam Rifles. Agniveers are being recruited at the young age of seventeen and a half to twenty-one years, with an initial contract of four years. After the completion of four years, 25 percent will be retained, and the rest will get preferential quotas in the police and other forces. Youth are concerned about joining the Central Paramilitary Forces because the upper age limit is twenty-three years. So practically, a twenty-one-year-old youth who served four years and left the army at the age of twenty-five cannot apply for these forces. The Government has now announced an age relaxation of five years for the first batch of Agniveers, and subsequently, batches will get a three-year relaxation. The promised 10% reservation and age relaxation notifications have been issued simultaneously, and obviously, the accrued benefits will be delivered after four years. There are enough vacancies in the Central Paramilitary Forces and Police Forces for Agniveers and the paramilitary forces will also benefit as armed forces-trained manpower joins their ranks. The additional benefit to volunteers is that they don't have to pass the physical proficiency test, which is the major reason for the rejection of candidates. The requisite Central Industrial Security Force Act, 1968, has been amended to include these clauses. The Government has now addressed virtually all youth concerns in black and white, with no exceptions. Youth are nation builders, and their enormous contribution is always the deciding factor for the country's future. Recruitment for the armed forces and paramilitary forces has begun. The mutual benefits will build a much stronger bond between the youth and the administration.

# Indo-Japan Security Cooperation

Col B S Nagial

Indo-Japan relations are embedded in history. Exchanges between the two countries started in the sixth century BC when Buddhism travelled from India to Japan. Since establishing diplomatic ties, the two countries have enjoyed cordial relations. In 2008 India and Japan signed a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation. Since then, Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meetings, annual Defense Ministerial Dialogue and Coast Guard-to-Coast Guard dialogue are some of the defence and security measures adopted by the two nations. The Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement came into force on 11 Jul 2021. So long as China remains both countries' foremost and impending security concern, India and Japan, who have no issues in their bilateral relations, must further their partnership and deepen their security ties.

Hon'ble Prime Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, visited India almost same time about one year ago. This visit was against the backdrop of the start of the Ukraine-Russia conflict. He is again here from 20-21 March in Delhi for bilateral talks with Hon'ble Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi. This time discussion is believed to be focused on areas such as defence, security, economic ties, skill development, clean energy, etc.

This meeting between two Prime Ministers is very consequential, especially when India and Japan hold the presidencies of G20 and G7, respectively. So this meeting offers an opportunity to discuss how G20 and G7 can collaborate on converging priorities on critical issues such as defence & security, health, energy and economic security.

The Hon'ble PM of India is likely to visit Japan in May this year to attend the G7 meeting as a guest country on the invitation of the Hon'ble PM of Japan. The Ukraine-Russia conflict and its effects on geopolitics will also form part of the agenda. There are differences between India and Japan on the issues related to the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Japan's opinion more or less aligns with the west-dominated led by the US.

Both countries are likely to unveil a free and open Indo-Pacific region plan. It is believed that Japan's plan is expected to include providing non-military equipment and infrastructure support for the countries facing Chinese imminent threats, especially in the South China Sea. Making such an announcement in Delhi attaches importance to India.

As per the reports published on 20 Mar 2023, the major areas on the agenda during the meeting between the two Prime Ministers will be:

1. Defence and security. Both defence and security have become essential pillars of cooperation between the two countries and are crucial in maintaining peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region. In Jan 2023, the first joint fighter aircraft exercise called 'Veer Guradian' was conducted in Japan, which was a great success. It was followed by the army exercise 'Dharma Guradian'. Maritime security has also seen

energy resources and technologies to ensure energy security, carbon neutrality, and economic growth.

Importance of Indo-Japan ties. Highlighting the importance of Indo-Japan ties to ensure peace and progress in the Indo-Pacific region, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Japan wrote in Indian Express on 20 Mar 2023 that it gives him immense pleasure to the land (India) where the dynamics of the world converges. Both countries argued that any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo in the world is unacceptable and



progress between the two nations. In Sep 2022, a joint Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMESX) was conducted. In Nov 2022, India participated in the International Fleet Review in Japan and the Malabar exercise off-coast of Japan.

2. Trade and economic ties. The bilateral trade between the two countries stood at \$20.75 billion in 2022. Both countries signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2011. This agreement encompasses trade in goods and includes services, people-to-people contact, intellectual property right, customs, and cultural ties.

3. Partnership in clean energy. This was launched during the annual summit last year. The aim is to promote energy cooperation by utilis-

ing a peaceful resolution based on the rule of law should take precedence. The present situation in the world makes more sense to gear up our efforts to achieve a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' region. India and Japan are the two leading democracies in Asia as well as in the world; thus, they are the guardian of peace and security in the region. As India and Japan assume the presidencies of G20 and G7, respectively, they have opportunities to make an impact on the geopolitical situation.

The significance of the India-Japan strategic ties is even more reflective in a world where 'change and uncertainty' only endure. The old symmetry has been disturbed even though a new equilibrium is yet to rise. We might even

have arrived at a century of protracted ambiguities.

One of our most propitious bilateral ties of the 21st century is the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. It is a special relationship in many ways and global in its consequences. Our relations stand primarily metamorphosed in recent years. Asia, home to 60% of the worldwide population, has done remarkably well on the economic front to appear as the new pivot for international economic growth. The continent is perceiving the concurrent economic rise of several powers, together with some of the highest military expenditures in the world. Nevertheless, a stable regional security construction has yet to emerge. The absolute leap at which China has heightened its all-inclusive national power has also led to questions about the future's shape in this region.

India and Japan must endure for peace, progress and development. World can't afford to have neo-colonial sorts of economic or security domination. There are numerous prospects for India and Japan to work together based on their national interests.

Conclusion: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to India could be a turning point in bilateral relations between India and Japan. We have many common points to take our economies to further heights. Combining Japan's capital and technology with India's rich human resources and skills could become a robust and persuasive combination. As the growth in China declines, India offers Japan a suitable alternate global hub for starting a competitive manufacturing base for tapping international markets.

India and Japan have accomplished noteworthy progress in their cooperation in defence, space, cyber, digital, energy, artificial intelligence, education, agriculture, health, disaster risk reduction, waste management, infrastructure, and urban renewal.

The dynamics in the Indo-Pacific now extend far beyond economics, with a new security dimension as China's rapid military growth brings disturbances to the existing equilibrium. India is approaching this situation by establishing a vision for the Indo-Pacific as an open and inclusive region. The evolving geopolitical scenario has made Japan more interested in defence and security cooperation. Japan has amended its arms control policies and demonstrated the willingness to work with India in all possible fields and support India at political forums.

## Chief Justice strikes a cord of empathy

B L Saraf

Honourable Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh Union Territories, N Kotiswar Singh has struck a powerful cord of sympathy with the peoples of two UTs. It is quite in fitness of things for an incumbent head of the state judiciary, who has to preside over the justice delivery system of a place, to strike an emotional bond with the people living there. But coming from a person who belongs to Manipur, people where of have undergone trials, tribulations and suffered trauma similar to those which the erstwhile J&K state have gone through, the words of Honourable CJ carry a great deal of sincerity.

As reported, while felicitating journalists for the good job done, the Honourable CJ said to a gathering assembled in the Press Club Jammu "I have come from Manipur. But I can understand your feelings the trauma you have gone through because of the inimical forces. Nobody wants violence but it has been thrust upon us." And added further "I fully understand and appreciate the problems and issues faced by the people here. It has always been my understanding that the judiciary has to full fill its constitutional obligation to give speedy justice to poor and marginalized." Though spoken to a select gathering, these words will, no doubt, resonate far and wide in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Indeed, a pleasant way to commence the tenure!

Benjamin Disraeli, speaking in House of Commons in 1851, said "Justice is truth in action." For us the Truth at the moment is that most people in J&K are desperate and helpless. Made so, essentially, by what Hon CJ has rightly called "inimical forces" and partly by the elements in Nature. Our High Court recognized this truth. The way it dealt with the after effects of the 2014 flood fury in the State and tried to come to the rescue of the devastated population,

meaning of the Disraeli's words came alive in flesh and blood. In the sensitivity shown and humane approach adopted by the High Court then we have had a glimpse of a rare aspect of justice delivery system revealing itself. Earlier, we witnessed such activism in 2005, when many parts of the state were devastated by an earthquake. Rather than making a sufferer of the

judgments have expanded the boundaries of human rights, cemented the democracy and reaffirmed faith in secularism. It will be appropriate to recall what the Hon Supreme Court said on 27th Feb while dismissing a petition which sought a direction to restore the names of places changed by the foreign rulers. The two judge bench said "a country cannot remain a

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floods and the tremor to wait in a long queue to claim compensation from various state or non-state organizations, payable under law and then come to the courts, doors were thrown open to the new avenues' of judicial redressal, without waiting for a formal prayer. In the minds of those affected by the calamity this move of the Court made a favourable impression.

It is to state obvious that over the years Indian democracy and its constitutional ideals have been served well by the country's Apex Court and other constitutional courts. Their

prisoner to the past and court should not be an instrument to create havoc." It went on to say that India is wedded to the rule of law, secularism, constitutionalism of which Art 14 stands out as a guarantee of both equality and fairness in state actions.

For variety of reasons, in J&K basic human rights of the citizen have come under a great strain. Then, various communities of the society have to confront myriad community specific issues. The internal displaced Hindus of Kashmir have to contend with existential issues.

Their physical existence as also the spiritual one are on the verge of extinction. Similarly, POJK and West Pakistan refugees continue to struggle to have basic amenities and over the period of time their problems, instead of getting solved, got multiplied manifold. They have been looking up to the judiciary for an adequate redemption. The Hon'ble C J's endeavor to give speedy justice to the needy will certainly comfort them. In this situation, the benign intervention of the honorable High Court is highly desired. The sympathetic words of Hon'ble CJ are very appropriate and timely. Moreover, it is indicative of His Lordships concern to protect basic human rights of the people and, at the same time, shows that Court is alive to its Constitutional mandate. This may give a renewed hope to the residents that under the leadership of the Hon Chief Justice there will be push for respect for the human rights of the beleaguered people and rekindle people's faith in effective working of justice delivery system in the two UTs that their rights will be vindicated well in time.

After all, one has to have due regard for Ralph Binche - 1950 Nobel Prize winner for Peace - when he says "Inalienable rights can never be enjoyed posthumously".

Honourable C J rightly described media as a vital organ of the State and acknowledged the "stellar" role it played in chronicling the growth story. But, to a discernible there was a hint of advice also in the statement when His Lordship made a point that the media "can't afford to go wrong on facts." One hopes that this advice is taken in a right spirit. It is imperative for the media as also for the other organs of the State to be faithful to the sanctity of facts. Today, unfortunately, a section of audio-visual media is perceived to have abdicated its duty cast on it as a 4th Pillar of the State - to be the true narrator of the facts.

(The author is former Principal District & Sessions Judge)

## Time to save forests

Supriya Sharma

"Taking care of the environment is not an obligation - our environment is our life" - by Sadhguru

Forestry in India is a vital rural industry and a significant environmental resource. From the forest-rich countries of the world, India is at 10th position. These top 10 countries cover 67% of total forest area of the world. Presently, forest degradation is also the matter of serious concern.

The forest played an important role in early Indian literature. Yajnavalkya Smriti written before the 5th century AD prohibited the cutting of trees and if a tree is cut punishments were prescribed for such action. The Kautalya's Arthashastra written in the Mauryan period, says about the need of forest administration. It also says how a forest is important for a successful kingdom.

India is a huge and diverse country, its land area includes region with some of the world's highest rainfall to very dry deserts, coast line to alpine regions, river deltas to tropical islands. India is one of the 17 mega biodiverse regions of the world.

India forest types include tropical evergreen, tropical deciduous, swamps mangroves, subtropical, montane, scrub, sub-alpine and alpine forests. Therefore forest support a variety of ecosystems with diverse flora and fauna.

Forest in Jammu and Kashmir - The forests vary according to the climatic conditions and the altitude. The Jammu foot hills extend beyond Nagrota to Jharkotli and manifest a



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transition from semi-deciduous tropical. The spatial distribution of different types of natural vegetation of J&K state is divided into Temper-

ate forests, Alpine pastures and Subtropical forests.

The Temperate forest covers the northern

slopes of Pir Panjal have the dominance of deodar, blue-pine and the Jhelum Forest Division (stretching over Gulmarg and Lolab valley) is dominated by cedar, fir and spruce species of conifers. Therefore on the beneficial part, the temperate forests are utilized for timber, fuel wood, charcoal and house construction.

The lush green and nutritious grasses of alpine pastures are utilized by the Gujjars and Bakarwals (goat herders) who practice transhumance. They stay in pastures upto the middle of September, depending on the prevailing temperature and precipitation conditions.

The subtropical rain forests are confined to the Shiwaliks and lower slopes of the Middle Himalayas. Due to rainfall and favorable moderate climate and edaphic factors, there is a wide range of vegetations. The bushes and scrubs both are present in these region. The dominant species of subtropical forests are teak, sal, shisham, pipal (Ficus religiosa). Silver pine, Tun, Mohowa, Khair, thorny bushes, climbers, evergreen shrubs and tall grasses locally called as Khar. Most of these species are broad-leaved deciduous type. The trees shed their leaves in the months of January, February and March. Over the last some decades, there has been a sharp decline in forest cover in JKUT. If this is not arrested in time, it have severe repercussions for the UT. The Government and other stakeholders must therefore come together to save this wealth.

'Going to the Forest is going Home'  
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