

Incomplete Jhajjar Bridge

Jammu and Kashmir has faced many infrastructure challenges over the years due to various factors such as natural disasters, political unrest and limited resources. In the past, there have been reports of several bridges and roads being left incomplete or in disrepair in Jammu and Kashmir. The reasons for this can vary, ranging from inadequate funding and lack of resources to corruption and mismanagement. Additionally, ongoing conflicts in the region have also contributed to the difficulties in completing infrastructure projects. But the bridge in question is a span motorable bridge at Jhajjar Nallah at Kakryal. This 160-meter double lane span bridge over Jhajjar Nallah on Panthal to Jhajjar Road via SMVD University at the take-off point at Jhajjar, is for connectivity to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Narayana Hospital and several villages in the vicinity. The foundation stone was laid in 2018 with a time limit of 24 months for completion. But five years later, except for the pillars, little has been done. In reality, the contractor has abandoned the work and despite repeated reminders from the Roads and Buildings Department, the contractor has not resumed the work. Even District administration intervention has not yielded the desired result. This bridge was sanctioned under the Central Road Fund (CRF) and many such projects are stalled as funds have lapsed. Five years have gone and the department is still unable to cancel the contract and tender it for reasons better known to the department. The matter is serious and requires proper investigation. What were the penalty clauses in the contract? Why is the department so lenient towards the contractor and were there enough safeguards in tender clauses? All these relevant questions have to be answered by the department. Despite so many conferences being held at SMVDU and even visits of the President and PM for conconvocation and still, this vital link has been a victim of departmental apathy.

On the one hand, the administration is putting all-out efforts to meet the deadlines to complete almost 70,000 projects with a record number of roads, bridges and tunnels and on other hand, certain elements in the department are least bothered about the completion of even five-year-old projects. Time and again these types of complacencies have been highlighted but no action has been taken against the erring department and officials. With time, grants are being denied, costs are escalating, and the result is incomplete projects with precious taxpayer money going wasted. With e-Governance successfully implemented in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, the administration should seriously consider directing departments to upload all incomplete projects with complete details of the delays. A proper audit of all projects, including those that have been abandoned, must be conducted. After the consolidation of the record for all pending works a proper estimate with cost escalations must be sent to the finance department for the necessary fund approvals. All these projects are of the utmost importance and the administration must ensure time schedules are adhered to. All reasons for delays like limited resources, political instability, natural disasters, security issues, corruption and mismanagement are things of the past. The present administration, with consistent efforts and enough budgetary support, is trying to complete long pending mega and small projects. Many efforts have been made to improve infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir over the years, and progress has been made in several areas. Various government organizations have undertaken initiatives to improve road and bridge networks in the region, to increase connectivity and promote economic development. Hundreds of crores have been spent to establish hospital and university but basic connectivity is missing. The administration has to look into the matter of the present bridge in question and ensure that work starts without further delay. Stumbling blocks, if any must be removed through the proper channels.

Drug licensing in online mode

In this digital age, time and ease of services are the main focus areas. The administration has innovated ways to make things simpler and more effective. Each department is working overtime to make offices paperless to reduce face-to-face interactions. In this internet era, nobody has time and money to submit and follow up applications physically. From ITRs to airport check-ins to bank statements everything is online. One such effort is from the Online National Drug Licensing System (ONOLS) which has provisions for online registration submissions related to sales licensing, fresh manufacturing licensing for drugs and cosmetics and various other related product endorsements. The J&K Drugs & Food Control Organization (DFCO) immediately directed the UT manufacturers and dealers to comply in this regard by the end of April this year. The application process for online registration of drugs and cosmetics manufacturers in India involves filling out a web-based application form. This is followed by the submission of the required documents and fees. The application form is available on the CDSCO website. The documents required for online registration include proof of address, proof of identity, and proof of ownership/lease agreement of the manufacturing unit. In addition, they include a list of products the manufacturer intends to produce. CDSCO fees are also payable online. Online registration processing is generally around 30 days, although it may take longer sometimes. The CDSCO may also request additional information or documentation during the registration process, which may further delay the process. Drug and cosmetic manufacturers in India must register online for five years, after which they must be renewed. The renewal process is also done online, requiring updated information and documentation submission. Online registration portals provide several benefits, including convenience, time-saving, transparency, increased efficiency, cost-effectiveness, accessibility and the administration has rightly extended the services to Jammu and Kashmir manufacturers and dealers. There is no local interference now, and transparency is the hallmark.

JK economy : Setting the record straight

Vishal Sharma

J&K's economic growth story over the last three years has been remarkable. The story's been remarkable in that even at the peak of covid pandemic, the economic growth never slipped into the negative territory. J&K has seen many upheavals during the last 30 years and every time it has come out stronger. However, it was never expected to hold out on the economic front in the midst of what was a perfect economic storm. But it did!

If GSDP numbers (at current prices) from the fiscal year 2018-19 (Rs 159859 cr) to 2022-23 (209752 cr) are anything to go by, then J&K's economy is not only resilient, but also one that can bounce back and progress in difficult times quicker than that of most other State/UT economies, because, as the cliché goes its fundamentals are strong. GSDP during this period grew phenomenally at around 23%.

In fact, during the past decade, GSDP has grown substantially. From Rs 98367 cr in the fiscal year 2014-2015, GSDP at current prices in the year 2022-23 (IR) is expected to be Rs 209752 cr. This represents an increase of 53%. GSDP is projected to grow at more than 10% in the next fiscal year and is projected in absolute terms to be Rs. 230727 cr.

Although, there may be an argument that GSDP at current prices may not reflect the true economic growth in the J&K as it is not inflation adjusted, the gross capital formation, which represents outlays on addition to fixed assets and net changes in the levels of inventories has shot up from Rs 8251 cr in the year 2018-19 to Rs 9739 cr in 2020-21.

GSDP growth is a function of growth in public and private expenditure. This is, therefore, best captured by higher than normal public and private sector spends over the same period. While capex in public sector from 2018-19 (Rs 11114 cr) to 2021-22 (Rs 35208 cr) has registered an increase of 68%, which is the highest increase in the last 10 years, private sector spending has also moved toe to toe with the public sector capex.

This is borne out by the private sector contribution to gross value added (GVA), which is tentatively expected to be 75% (assumed figure) in the year 2020-21. This figure was 63% in the year 2019-20.

Consistent GSDP growth has expectedly made J&K richer. Today the per capita income of J&K is Rs 165755, which is roughly equivalent to 2072 USD. Per capita income in 2018-19 was Rs 118828 which roughly equals 1747 USD at the conversion rate in vogue then.

An epoch making event in Jammu and Kashmir

K N Pandita

The epithet "land locked" has remained a permanent attribute of the geographical entity called the State of Jammu and Kashmir (now UT). That is what the underbelly of the great Himalayas is; the epithet is rightly coined by historians and geographers. The mountainous grid-lock has been a boon and a curse both for the people of this fabulous land.

It is a boon because it provides perennial water - the life line of agrarian populace and fertile valleys and verdant dales --, and it protects the land from icy winds and blizzards coming from the Siberian archipelago.

But it is not true to say that the great Himalayas protected the luxuriant Kashmir valley against the incursions and rapacity of the wild and fearful nomads from the great Central Asian Steppes. No, the Himalayas did not. The rapacious Turushkas (of Rajatarangini) meaning the Turkistan hordes and hordes from so many tribes in Central Asia including the Mongols and Tartars invaded Kashmir from time to time to disrupt life in the quiet and drowsy valley. That is the reason why two Kashmirian kings namely Lalitaditya (724 CE-760 CE) and Sultan Shihab-ud Din (1354-1373 CE) carried out expeditions deep in the Central Asian and Tibetan regions to chastise the rapacious groups and warriors of those regions so that they do not dare to repeat the incursions into Kashmir.

However, the Himalayan mountain ranges encircling Kashmir forced the local people from establishing regular contacts with the people and their societies that lay and flourished outside the mountainous ramparts. The Kashmiris remained isolated for centuries. It created in them a sense of isolationists and separatists. It was a life of self-sufficiency which, in historical and circumstantial sense is not without periodical perils like

natural calamities, famines, floods, and other forms of devastation. This isolationist module created few negative aspects in their character. They suspected everything and anything that came from outside the mountain fortification.

I am not going into the politics of the region. I confine to connectivity. The routes leading to the world outside the valley were tortuous, full of hazards and forbidding. Anybody proceeding on travel to any part of the Punjab was almost dead to his home people and in many cases his death rituals would be performed assuming that he would never return due to the perils of a dangerous travel.

During the times of the Sultan and the Mughals, Pathans and Sikhs the route mostly used for entry into Kashmir was what we today call the Mughal Road which has been upgraded, macadamized and made transportable in recent years. But when the Dogras conquered Kashmir in about 1845-46, they used the Srinagar - Rawalpindi route generally called Jhelum Valley Road. Simultaneously, they opened the cart road via Banihal to Jammu. Gradually this road became motorable. Even then, the maximum traffic was conducted along the JV Road which was much more dependable and safe than BC Road.

In 1947, when India was divided, the Maharaja of Kashmir signed a standstill agreement with the newly formed domain of Pakistan. One of the important reasons for the Maharaja to conclude a standstill agreement was the road connectivity which meant the then existing JV Road. But Pakistan broke the standstill agreement within a month and with that JV Road came to a final end never to open again.

From 1947 up to this day in 2023, the ancient Banihal Cart Road, now turned into four-lane highway through the hills and gorges remained the only link of Kashmir with the world outside. This road is over rocky as well as sandy moun-

tains with loose soil. With a little shower in summer or winter these mounts allow huge chunks of soil and stones slip down and block the road for days at end. The road blocks during rainy season have become a routine resulting in blockade of the highway which is the life line for the people of the valley and Ladakh region. Road blockade is a serious blow to easy flow of economy and tourism.

Ultimately, the policy planners in New Delhi thought of providing railway connectivity to Kashmir valley with Jammu and the rest of the country. Great discussions and proposals to bring Kashmir Valle on the rail map of India were held and finally it was decided to conduct a survey of the entire topography that could be considered feasible for laying railway line. The railway had already come to Udhampur and Katra, and the most difficult area through which the railway would pass lay ahead in Reasi district. The survey showed that there would be the need of a railway bridge over the River Chandrabhaga or Chenab that passed through deep gorges of the Pir Panchal and Shivalik ranges.

A formidable task lay before the Indian policy planners and engineers. Neither the track between Udhampur and Banihal was easy nor was the building of railway bridges over the Chenab less than a miracle. But hats off to the dedicated and patriotic engineers of highest calibre that we have, they examined the site, discussed among them. They invited advice from some top engineering companies of the world, especially those in Switzerland and Austria. These discussions went on for more than two years before a blue print of the bridge would be approved for financing.

The highest railway bridge in the world will become functional in January 2024 as the trial ride has been successfully completed a few days ago with the Union Railways Minister Piyush

21 and to 106.78% in 2021-22.

Higher GST collections are reflective of higher than normal growth of businesses and businesses grow only when they have consumers to serve! No business grows to create idle capacities or inventories, which are not routinely getting replaced.

The naysayers though would have us believe otherwise. Those with a little or no knowledge of fiscal numbers and the intricacies of the GSDP, headcount ratio, tax rises etc, would say that these numbers tell half the story or no story at all. They say that J&K's economy has shrunk and that people have become poorer! Where are the stats to support that argument?

There is another argument that is made by these people about unemployment rate in J&K being the highest it's ever been. This can't be far from truth!

MOSPI data on unemployment in J&K reveals a declining trend from January -September, 2022. While unemployment rate in J&K has decreased from January 2022 onwards, the national unemployment rate painfully has gone in other direction, albeit not linearly, over the corresponding period. This is as per the CMIE data, which is often used by some people to clobber the government.

As far employment initiatives undertaken by the government, around 21000 youth have been absorbed in the public sector in the last two years. In addition, 202749 self-employment opportunities have been created so far during the current financial year and this number is expected to rise by the time the current fiscal year draws to a close. In fact, there has been a steady increase in the creation of self-employment opportunities in J&K from 2017-18 (40723) to 2021-22 (217864).

How would an increase in employment on sustained basis be even possible if J&K was not growing? And to those who are saying that there has been no employment created in J&K, well, they only need to look at numbers. Pythagoras reminds us that numbers rule the universe. He also has a word for those who don't rely numbers to make their case: "Be silent or let thy words be worth more than silence." There's a message in this for all, but for this though they will have to look beyond rhetoric!

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Politics of Climate Change Science

R K Ganjoo

All appreciation goes to the Indian glaciologists and geoscientists who stood by their scientific work and interpretations throughout the controversy, the famous "Climategate", over the disappearance of Himalayan glaciers by 2035 published in IPCC Assessment Report 4 of 2007. Most of the scientific data and interpretations of Indian scientists were based on field work and stood the test of time. For months together the glaciologists and geoscientists with bare minimum logistics toiled hard and trekked the glaciers up and down to physically verify the changes occurring from year to year. It is this hard work and their confidence in the data that made them stand against the strong wind of "global warming" whipped up by the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The then IPCC chief had the checks to dismiss the research work of Indian glaciologists and geoscientists compiled by Sh.V.K. Raina, a renowned glaciologist, as "school-boy science". The then IPCC chief repeatedly and vehemently emphasized on the point that the "Himalayan glaciers: A state-of-art review of glacial studies, glacial retreat and climate change - A MoEF Discussion Paper" published by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India should be peer-reviewed before accepting the results therein. Ignorant of the fact that most of the work compiled in the "Discussion Paper" on Himalayan glaciers is derived from the research published in peer-reviewed scientific journals in India and abroad. The then IPCC chief was hell bent upon somehow dismissing the document of MoEF. The IPCC chief did not realize that his own house was in a shambles. The IPCC report 2007 itself had been compiled on the basis of work mentioned in magazines that are not peer-reviewed. Who was doing the "school-boy science"?

At last, the IPCC chief had to accept and apologise for the serious mistake that occurred in the IPCC Assessment Report 2007. The admission that the year 2035, given in the said report, for the complete melting of Himalayan glaciers is wrong, and exposed the casual scientific attitude of 2500 scientists, who were involved in the preparation of the report. It is hard to believe that a "blunder" of this magnitude escaped scrutiny by a large contingent of scientists. Was the mistake deliberate to attach significance to the IPCC

report or was it under the dictation and influence of certain corporate or countries? The truth is yet to come out. The IPCC chief had no other choice than to accept the "blunder", perhaps to cover it up and avoid any further snowballing of the issue that would have risked the existence of any corporate /country behind the 'mistake'.

As early as 2008, Professor A.D. Ahluwalia of Panjab University, Chandigarh at the International Geological Congress held in August at Oslo, Norway, openly ridiculed former Vice-President Al Gore and IPCC. Ahluwalia, during a question and answer panel discussion, said "I am really amazed that the Nobel Peace Prize has been given on scientifically incorrect conclusions by people who are not geologists.". Henrik Syensmark of Danish National Space Centre and Bob Carter of James Cook University, Australia, outspoken critics of Gore and IPCC, were also participants at the panel discussion. There is convincing evidence that the then IPCC chief was already in the know of the errors in the report much before the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) meeting at Copenhagen. It is now corroborated by Pallava Bagla, a science journalist, in his interview for Science Magazine with Dr. R.K. Pachauri, the then IPCC chief. The claims made by Indian glaciologists and geoscientists on the impact of global warming on Himalayan glaciers received credit at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) meeting of experts at the Energy Resource Institute (TERI), New Delhi, on December 28-29, 2009 where vital questions that followed the glacier controversy were discussed threadbare. It was agreed upon by the experts that changes in Himalayan glaciers are varied and complex. Some glaciers show change in length with respect to area and mass whereas some glaciers show variation in thickness and not in length. It was, therefore, emphasized upon by the experts that more study of the glaciers in the Himalayas is required to pinpoint the causes for change.

Long back, Prof. S.I. Hasnain, Head of the Glacier Research Group in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, declared that Gangotri glacier (source of river Ganga) is melting at the rate of 30m/year because of global warming and due to the continuous pressure of pilgrims, the glacier will vanish in the next couple of decades. Prof. Milap C. Sharma of Jawaharlal Nehru

University, New Delhi, has been studying the changes in Gangotri glacier for the past more than a decade and his scientific work has proved it beyond doubt that the changes in Gangotri glacier are exclusively a result of change in climate and not anthropogenic.

The jury, headed by former Chief Justice of India Justice J.S. Verma, decided to withdraw the Corporate Award, given by the President, to one of the nationally known hydel project corporation for exemplary work on catchment area treatment, muck disposal and compensatory afforestation. The withdrawal of award by the jury followed the complaints of shoddy work done by the hydel project corporation. The award to the hydel project corporation, for exemplary work, subsequently turned to be manipulated and misleading information provided to the highest office of the country.

Glaciers in Alps advanced in the 1750, 1820 and 1850, and between 1885 to 1890. Rapid retreat in Alpine glaciers, not correlatable with any periods of carbon dioxide accumulation, is noticed in the 1930s and 1990s. No match can be drawn between the behaviour of Himalayan and Alpine glaciers because global temperature is not the main control. Evidence now prove that the icecaps of Greenland and Antarctica are growing rather than shrinking. Global warming has not been held the culprit for melting of snow and ice on Mount Kilimanjaro, rather, it is decrease in precipitation. It is also true for the Himalayas, where changes in large-scale circulation patterns (subtropical Jet Stream) over a long period of time have caused reduction in the precipitation. This change is linked to inter- and intra-annual variability in precipitation and not to global warming. Though it is premature to link shrinking of glaciers in the Himalayas to any specific cause, yet the plausible explanation is lack of adequate snow accumulation during the winter season.

In the year 2001-2002, when most of researchers in the world, including India, had joined heads to understand the causes for the failure of the monsoon in India and prolonged droughts in other parts of the world, Dr. R.K. Pachauri, then IPCC head, arrived at the conclusion: "There is a high probability that the freaky weather we are seeing this year, especially in India, has a direct relationship with the phenom-

enon of global warming that we have been screaming about!". It was certainly not acceptable to meteorologist, Dr. G.B. Pant, the then Director of Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune. He pointed out that monsoon in India exhibits cyclical variation of normal spell of monsoon for 13 years followed by spell of bad monsoon.

The credibility of the IPCC report 2007, once again, was under scan on the issue of claims about the demise of Amazonian forest due to global warming. It has been learnt that the claims are exaggerated and based on papers that were published in non-peer reviewed magazine on mountaineering and dissertation of a geography student.

Measurements of CO2 from air trapped in polar ice cores over tens of thousands of years shows that atmospheric CO2 concentrations typically vary from about 270-285 ppm, averaging about 280 ppm. Atmospheric CO2 concentrations have been stable at ~280 ± 10 ppm during the past millennium until the industrial revolution when it rose gradually. In 1945, CO2 began to increase rapidly. Atmospheric CO2 levels rose to ~370 ppm in 2000. However, from 1945 to 1977, while CO2 levels rose from approximately 300 ppm to 330 ppm, the global temperature rise reversed and cooled about 0.2 degrees during the same period. The increase in CO2 considered as main culprit for warming is not absolutely true.

While in-depth studies of glaciers, snow pack, and permafrost have been carried out in some areas, they have been scattered widely in space and time. There have been few or no detailed investigations of snow and ice processes or their relevance to climate in the high mountain ranges, and there are very few baseline studies and little long-term monitoring of perennial snow and ice.

The demand of the time is credible, salient and legitimate knowledge that can lead to good national and international policies on climate change. By credible we mean knowledge that has been derived from field observations and tested by scientists and users; salient information is immediately relevant and useful to policy-makers; and legitimate information is unbiased in its origin and creation and both fair and reasonably comprehensive in its treatment of opposing views and interests.