

Additional medical seats

The National Medical Commission has recently published an updated list of approved Medical Colleges in Jammu and Kashmir. This revised list includes the inclusion of two new Government Medical Colleges in Handwara and Udhampur, contributing 100 seats each to the overall number of seats available for Foreign Medical Graduates and the regular annual intake capacity.

Previously, the NMC had listed 540 seats available for FMGs in J&K. However, the new list reveals an increase to 700 seats, indicating a rise of 160 seats for FMGs. The increase in medical seats helps address the healthcare needs of the population in J&K. By expanding the capacity of medical colleges, more doctors can be trained and deployed to serve communities, particularly in areas that may have faced a shortage of healthcare professionals. The availability of additional seats enhances access to medical education for aspiring students in J&K. It provides more opportunities for local students to pursue their dream of becoming doctors without having to compete for limited seats elsewhere in the country. This helps retain local talent, as students are more likely to stay and practise medicine in their home region after completing their education. It contributes to strengthening the healthcare infrastructure and services in J&K. The healthcare sector often faces a shortage of doctors, especially in remote and underserved areas. By increasing the number of medical seats, there is a higher likelihood of producing a greater number of doctors who can be deployed to these areas, improving access to quality healthcare services for the population.

A well-functioning healthcare system is crucial for the overall socio-economic development of a region. By increasing the capacity to train medical professionals, J&K can strengthen its healthcare sector, attract investments, and create employment opportunities in the healthcare industry. It contributes to the overall economic growth of the region. Seats have increased, and now the onus lies with the administration and students to grab them and perform. It is a significant step towards enhancing the healthcare infrastructure and services in the region.

e-buses for Jammu

Under the Smart Urban e-Mobility Project of Jammu Smart City Limited, one hundred e-buses are set to commence operations in Jammu in August this year. The necessary infrastructure is being created and Tata Motors has been instructed to initiate vehicle deliveries by mid-June. This initiative marks the first time that fully air-conditioned e-buses will be deployed in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir under the gross cost contract model. This model, already successful in various metro cities, requires the operator to procure the e-buses and establish the charging infrastructure. The operator is then compensated based on the number of kilometres the e-buses travel.

Electric buses contribute to a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to their diesel or gasoline counterparts. By running on electricity, they help improve air quality and mitigate the environmental impact of transportation. Electric buses offer potential cost savings in the long run. Though the initial investment is higher, electric buses have lower operational and maintenance costs compared to conventional buses powered by fossil fuels. Electric buses also benefit from Government subsidies and incentives, which make them more financially viable. Electric buses are known for their quieter operation, providing a more comfortable and peaceful journey for passengers. Additionally, the absence of engine vibrations and reduced noise pollution enhance the overall experience. One of the notable advantages of electric buses in India is the elimination of the need for traditional petrol pumps and the associated issues of fuel theft.

However, challenges such as high initial costs, limited charging infrastructure, and range limitations still need to be addressed for wider adoption. Efforts are being made to overcome these challenges through increased investments in charging infrastructure, Government support, and collaborations with technology providers.

Overall, the ongoing progress signifies a positive shift towards cleaner and greener urban mobility. Jammu is poised to join the trend of electric buses, and it is hoped that this initiative will be a resounding success and pave the way for a comprehensive transformation towards electric vehicles on all routes.

A strong message from Hiroshima

Col B S Nagial (Retd)

Japan hosted the G-7 leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the UK and the US for the 2023 summit. In addition to the members, other invitees were Australia, Brazil, the Africa Union Chair, the Cooks Islands, India, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Republic Of Korea. Various UN agencies and other international Organisations also participated. The summit was held from 19-21 May 2023.

The symbolism and the location were both powerful as well as thoughtful. An atomic bomb destroyed the city in 1945, the first-ever use of nuclear weapons. This horrible history led the people of Japan to bid for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation to make this world safe without nuclear weapons. Hiroshima's past must remind us that when peace and good global order break down, it leads to conflict, instability, chaos and destruction. When the world is drifting away from peaceful co-existence at this juncture of history, this reminder holds good for the world.

As the only country to have suffered atomic bombings, Japan has led the international discussion on disarmament and non-proliferation. Japan has promoted real change by calling on all nuclear weapon states to take measures toward nuclear disarmament while increasing transparency in military armaments.

The world is at momentous junctions, facing severe crises such as climate change, disruption of supply chains after the pandemic, food shortage, the Ukraine-Russian conflict, and the Sudan crisis. These complexities shook the world. Thus G7 meeting was held against this backdrop and showed their determination and grit to uphold the free, fair and rule-based world order. Also, it is impossible to neglect



the Global South's aspirations. At the same time, the world has to address the devastating impacts created by the Ukraine-Russia conflict. The world can't ignore these just objectives any more.

In Hiroshima, a strong message was sent to Russia to end the hostilities immediately, resolve issues through dialogue, and withdraw its troops from Ukraine territories controlled forcibly. It was further reiterated that Russia's aggression against Ukraine is problematic not only for the West or Europe but also for the rest of the world. Russia's unilateral actions go against the basic foundation of the UNO Charter, to which Russia is a responsible signatory. It was further said that if Russia succeeds in Ukraine, then it sets the wrong precedence for others, which could undermine the peace and stability in Europe and the Indo-Pacific Region. Also, nuclear rhetoric by Russia is unacceptable, and Hiroshima has a message for them. Hiroshima Action Plan enshrined to make this world free of nuclear weapons.

In these times of uncertainties and tension, preserving, resourcing, and strengthening the existing regimes is

paramount. The G7 urged all nations to take their responsibilities seriously to meet the highest safety and security standards to safeguard and promote the non-violent uses of nuclear energy, science, and technology, including those related to invoking next-generation nuclear technologies. They also emphasised that the transparency of the management of civil plutonium must be maintained. They vehemently oppose any attempt to produce or support the production of plutonium for military programs under the guise of civilian programs, which undermines the objectives of the NPT, including the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In this regard, they underscore the importance of implementing the Guidelines for managing plutonium.

Japan is also uniquely positioned to advocate for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Region for the nations in this region and the rest of the world. The world's fate is attached to the future of the Indo-Pacific Region. Therefore cooperation, not confrontation and division, is the need of the hour. However, Indo-Pacific Region navigates the world economy but unfortunately is faced with many hurdles and secu-

rity challenges.

During his recent visit to India, Fumio Kishida, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Japan, officially laid the vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Region and underlined the importance of rule-making through dialogue which enshrines the historical and cultural diversities of the nations in the region. G7 countries discussed the issues related to Indo-Pacific Region and deepened their concerns. Many countries in the world align their concerns about Indo-Pacific Region.

It is a matter of concern for Japan and the rest of the world that China is increasing its economic and military activities in the Indo-Pacific Region. This poses significant security threats to the global community and needs to be addressed immediately.

The severe challenges China poses in the Indo-Pacific Region could be addressed through robust national buildings of nations, cooperation among like-minded countries and serious dialogue with China. Peace and stability could be maintained by building constructive and stable relations among all the stakeholders in the region. Uniting nations everywhere is essential to defend the region's free-

dom and territorial integrity. QUAD and AUKUS are critical initiatives in this direction.

The Hiroshima Summit was an excellent opportunity to discuss and address the issues that concern us all. Countries can work together to leverage public-private partnerships, especially in sustainable development projects, global supply chains, energy supplies, enhancing economic resilience and security, etc. Nations must address risks to our financial security and vulnerabilities in global supply chains through diversification and technology.

Energy security is essential for all of us, and the Ukraine-Russia conflict has further reinforced the importance of energy security for the nations. It is imperative to explore various pathways toward a resilient energy transition. Once again, it was reiterated that a free and open international order is paramount and can't be compromised.

The Leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) met in Hiroshima for the annual summit from 19-21 May 2023, more united than ever in their resolve to meet the global challenges and set a course for a better future. Their objectives are deeply rooted in the Charter of the United Nations (UN) and international partnerships and alliances. The international community is now at a historic turning point, having experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, being faced with Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the threat to safety and security posed by the crisis in Sudan. All these events have stunned the world and threatened the foundation of the international order. Maintenance of the international order based on the rule of law and outreach to the Global South were the two perspectives highlighted during this meeting. Gender, Human Rights, Digitalisation and Science and Technology was also highlighted during the summit.

Antimicrobial Resistance - The Silent Pandemic

Dr. Shashi Sudan Sharma

Sustainable access to effective antibiotics is essential for the functioning of all health systems. Antibiotic resistance is threatening a fundamental component for universal health coverage. Otto Cars - Founder of ReAct

Imagine a battlefield. A battlefield where the human race is fighting against the subtle and the invisible yet having the capacity and power to wipe out the entire human race from the scene of the earth, a battlefield where we know we can only delay the defeat, a battlefield where the enemy is getting the answers as quickly as the weapons to get them eliminated are made by the human race, a battlefield where the attacks are tremendously and awfully much more than the defenses against the enemy. This is the battle against superbugs.

The bugs or the microbes have moved in parallel to the human evolution through time and space and have caused sufferings to the humanity by causing varied diseases of antiquity that are still imbedded deep in the memories of collective consciousness of the entire human race. There have been excruciating pains through wounds of the past that attained the magnanimity of being grave pandemics that existed through centuries in the form of dreadful diseases like tuberculosis, Leprosy, Syphilis, Anthrax, Small pox, Cholera, Influenza, AIDS and the rest that add to make the list much longer. Humans remained totally unaware of the agents that caused these diseases for centuries of their existence on the planet until the 19th century that marked the discovery of most of them and in the third decade of 20th century the key to these locks was obtained by Sir Stephen Fleming in the form of an accidental discovery of what came to be known as antibiotics. This was a hope that made

humans overtly enthusiastic about the elimination of all bugs from existence. The story however turned some uglier pages sooner or later when these bugs rather started transforming to superbugs to bring another dimension of misfortune to the human race. The overt use and misuse of these weapons called antibiotics had turned the bugs stronger as if the monsters were refusing to die.

Superbugs have covered a distance less through history and more through global spread. There travel through time may be short but they have emerged very fast just over a century through a mechanism of their escaping the attacks by antibiotics known as antimicrobial resistance (AMR) which has emerged as a global crisis and calls upon urgent action. Excessive use of antimicrobials not only in humans but also in animals has led to the emergence of selected multidrug-resistant microorganisms, which led to untreatable infections, more in vulnerable patient population. Healthcare facilities are high risk environments for the development and spread of drug resistance and frequently have the highest burden of multidrug resistant organisms.

WHO has declared that AMR as one of the top 10 global public health care threats being faced by humanity. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global health and development threat that requires urgent multi-sectoral action in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2001, the WHO member countries agreed on global strategy for containment of Antimicrobial Resistance. During World Health Assembly in 2015, all the member countries committed themselves to the Global Action Plan (GAP) on AMR and agreed for the development and implementation of multi-sectoral National Action Plans (NAP).

In the same year WHO launched the Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS) to continue filling knowledge gaps and to inform strategies at all levels. GLASS progressively incorporates data from surveillance of AMR in humans, surveillance of the use of antimicrobial medicines, AMR in the food chain and in the environment. GLASS provides a standardized approach to the collection, analysis, interpretation and sharing of data by countries, territories and areas. It monitors the status of existing and new national surveillance systems, with emphasis on representativeness and quality of data collection. India got enrolled in GLASS on 21st July 2017.

Government of India launched a "National Program on AMR Containment" during the 12th five-year plan (2012-2017) which is being coordinated by NCDC.

The main objectives of this program are:
* Establish a laboratory-based AMR surveillance system in the country to generate quality data on antimicrobial resistance.

* Carry out surveillance of antimicrobial usage in different health care settings.

* Strengthen infection control practices and promote rational use of antimicrobials through Antimicrobial stewardship activities.

* Generate awareness amongst health care providers and community on antimicrobial resistance and rational use of antimicrobials.

The GMC, Jammu is one of the earliest enlisted centre for this program and the department of Microbiology has been part of this laboratory based AMR surveillance since 2018 under which seven high priority pathogens and identified emerging AMR alerts are to be reported to the national AMR surveillance coordinating centre at NCDC from where data is sent to Global AMR Surveillance System (GLASS),

using WHONET, a microbiology data management software.

Another important component of this program is to monitor the Antimicrobial Consumption Trends. GMC, Jammu has been one of the earliest National Antimicrobial Consumption Network (NAC-NET) site under this program. The monitoring of trends of Antimicrobial Consumption in our hospital started in 2019 and data is being shared to AMC Program Management Unit of NCDC via antimicrobial consumption tool since then.

Another method for monitoring trends of Antimicrobial Consumption is PPS and today we are rolling it out in GMC, Jammu. Soon prescription audit and linking of Antimicrobial consumption and resistance data will be done. This would be a breakthrough in the journey of profound growth experienced over the past so many years by this institute of repute and excellence. We as the institute of service and integrity are standing in ethical solidarity for the benefits and protection of our community and the world at large. However all the steps taken will be fruitful only when each one of us as the wise world citizens contemplate on their own roles and responsibilities and do whatever is needed to correct the situation. This becomes more valid when the standard reports from WHO alarms us about just 32 type of antimicrobials in the pipeline with just 8 antimicrobials that could get through to reach the market as against countless number of strains of bacteria that are becoming superbugs each coming day. How long these 8 soldiers will last to fight the battle is the question of the hour.

"If we use antibiotics when not needed, we may not have them when they are most needed"

- Dr. Tom Frieden, Former Director U.S. CDC
(The author is Principal GMC, Jammu)

Resolving Russia-Ukraine conflict

Sudhanshu Tripathi

The ever degenerating grim scenario where no end to Russia-Ukraine war looks in sight, the world today stands on a nuclear volcano which may blast any day due to slightest spark set on fire by any nuclear power. That, if so takes place, will inevitably lead into worldwide chain reactions of nuclear explosions to result into unimaginable and irreparable destruction. Hence the global community, irrespective of individual preferences, must unite to immediately devise ways and means to protect the innocent humanity from approaching nuclear holocaust as IIrd World War.

For this end, the role of United Nations and global movements like the Non-aligned Movement can prove to be meaningful to resolve this monstrous challenge amicably. The UN General Assembly must come forward to ensure immediate cessation of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war by re-invoking the Uniting for Peace Resolution (UPR) which was first used during Korean crisis in early 1950s. Though it is difficult for the UNGA today, given the five permanent members viz. the US, Russia, China, England and France, enjoying veto powers in the Security Council.

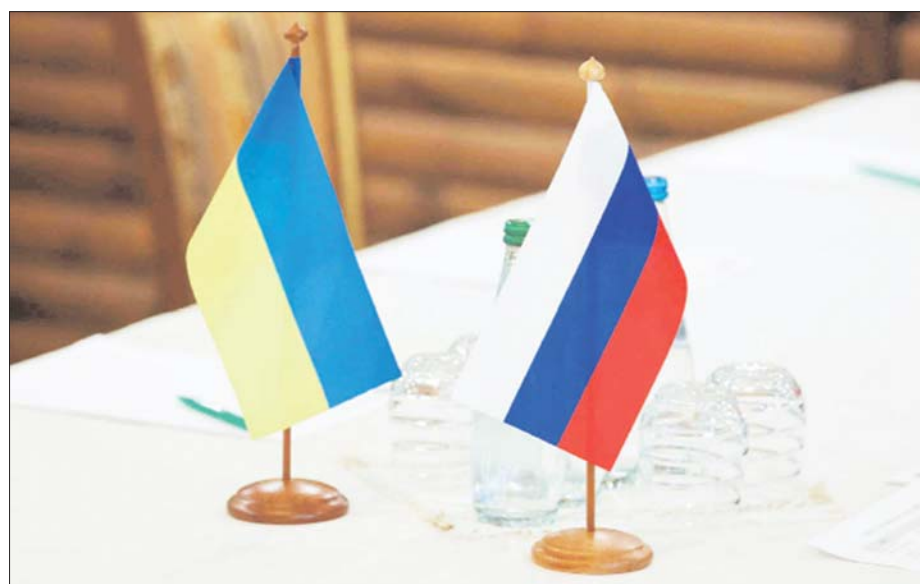
And anyone out of these five members can use veto power to forestall such proposal in its own interest. In the present case, Russia will obviously use its veto power over the above-mentioned UPR just to decisively defeat Ukraine possibly with limited nuclear strike, given the power asymmetry between them and also the expanding time period to much of Russian embarrassment. Evidently, Moscow has its

ulterior motive to reemerge as an undeterred global hegemon or as the erstwhile super power emerged immediately after the IIrd World War.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid technical dif-

of the present Russia-Ukraine continuing war?

Obviously because Russia in itself is a party in this war! But for that the UPR be so amended by the UNGA as a special case to debar even a permanent member of the UNSC from exer-



faculty, the prevailing situation is almost the same as that was during Korean crisis. But now the UN stands as mute witness since the very outbreak of the ongoing war. The UPR had then enabled the UNGA to call for immediate cessation of hostilities between two Koreas along 380 parallel and that had been successful in ensuring armistice between the two belligerents. Why not the same UPR is being invoked again in case

cing its veto power if it is a party in an armed conflict. Why can't the UNGA do this again in right earnest? After all unusual circumstances demand equally uncommon provisions or even draconian laws too in the common interest of humanity, because their very future is at stake today. And that had always been upheld by the non-aligned movement since its very inception.

In such a volatile situation when many pow-

erful states are armed with lethal nuclear weapons, all peaceful and independence loving nations must come forward to discuss the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war in the UNGA and must collectively pressurize the global assembly to invoke the aforesaid UPR to ensure immediate armistice.

Further, both belligerents be motivated to come to talks under auspices of the UNGA so that their differences may peacefully be resolved. Also, all external players viz. the US, China, Teheran, North Korea be restrained from adding fuel to burning fire just for fulfilling their own selfish interests like arms trade or maintaining sphere of influence or establishing regional or global hegemony etc..

Also the cases of war crimes and violation of the Laws of War be framed against the aggressor state by the UNGA and be referred to the International Court of Justice for arbitration, and suitable compensation to the victim state be realized from the aggressor state, apart from punishment for war crimes. Further the ongoing trilateral fierce power-struggle involving the US, Russia and China be also discouraged by the UNGA.

Thus the overall global scenario is becoming increasingly worrisome and fearful with the passage of each day, as Russia continues to threaten the western powers to exercise nuclear option if they continue providing support to Kyiv. And that may possibly push Moscow to resort to limited nuclear strike on Ukraine. This must be stopped by all saner minds in the world as nothing is beyond human endeavour.

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