

Road network transforming rural J&K

The Lieutenant Governor inaugurated several development projects executed by the Public Works (R&B) Department in both the Jammu and Kashmir divisions. All these projects will contribute to the prosperity and well-being of citizens in remote areas, enhance tourism potential, and connect important commercial centres. The Lt. Governor highlighted the administration's infrastructure policy, which aims to create high-quality assets, improve user-friendly facilities, and integrate rural areas into the mainstream economy. The inauguration encompassed 75 development projects worth Rs 186.14 crore, including road connectivity initiatives in Reasi, Udhampur, Doda, Samba, Kathua, Kulgam, and Baramulla.

The development of road infrastructure is connecting remote and far-flung areas of Jammu and Kashmir to major cities and towns. This connectivity is reducing travel time, facilitates the movement of goods and services, and improves accessibility to essential amenities such as healthcare, education, and markets. It is bridging the gap between urban and rural areas, ensuring that the benefits of development reach every corner of the region. Jammu and Kashmir is known for its picturesque landscapes, cultural heritage, and religious sites. The improved road network is attracting more tourists to the region. This influx of tourists contributes to the growth of the tourism industry by creating employment opportunities and boosting the local economy. The road network is vital for the movement of goods and plays a crucial role in trade and commerce. With better roads, the transportation of agricultural produce, handicrafts, and other local products becomes more efficient. This facilitates the growth of industries, promotes entrepreneurship, and strengthens the local economy. It also encourages investment in the region, as businesses can rely on reliable transportation infrastructure. The development of road infrastructure is positively impacting the socio-economic development of Jammu and Kashmir. Improved connectivity stimulates economic activities, encourages investments in various sectors, and creates job opportunities. It enables people to access better healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and markets, improving their quality of life. The road network also facilitates Government schemes and services to reach remote areas, ensuring inclusivity and equitable development.

The new roads in Jammu and Kashmir have brought significant benefits to Gujjar Bakerwals, farmers, and other marginalised communities in the region. They can now transport their livestock, dairy products, agricultural produce, and other goods more efficiently and quickly. This improved accessibility enables them to sell their products at better prices and reach a wider customer base, resulting in increased income and economic opportunities. The new roads have connected remote Gujjar, Bakerwal, and farming communities to urban centres. It also enables them to participate in training programmes, workshops, and exhibitions, which contribute to their skill development and knowledge enhancement. With better road connectivity, farmers can transport agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, and machinery more efficiently. This leads to increased agricultural productivity, better crop yields, and improved income for farmers. With better access to markets and urban centres, they can explore alternative income sources such as tourism, agro-processing, dairy farming, and handicrafts.

The new roads have contributed to the socio-economic empowerment of Gujjars, Bakerwals, farmers, and other marginalised communities. Improved connectivity allows them to participate in various Government welfare schemes and programmes, accessing benefits related to education, healthcare, housing, and social security. This empowerment enhances their overall quality of life and helps bridge socio-economic disparities in the region. The new roads have also played a role in preserving the cultural heritage of various communities.

Overall, the transformation of the road network in Jammu and Kashmir is promoting inclusive development, empowering communities, boosting tourism and stimulating economic growth. It plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between regions, fostering connectivity, and bringing prosperity to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Civil Services Examination 2022 results

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has declared the results of the Civil Services Examination 2022, and it is noteworthy that 16 candidates from the Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory have cracked the exam. A total of 933 candidates, including 613 men and 320 women, have qualified for the Civil Services Exam 2022. The top 25 candidates consist of 14 women and 11 men; women have secured the top four ranks. The success of so many girls in the UPSC examination is indeed a matter of pride and celebration. It signifies a significant milestone in promoting gender equality and empowerment. The achievements of these girls demonstrate their exceptional abilities, dedication, and hard work in preparing for one of the toughest competitive exams in the country. By having more women in administrative services, there is a greater representation of diverse perspectives and experiences, leading to more inclusive and balanced decision-making processes.

The significant number of UPSC candidates from Jammu and Kashmir is indeed a matter of pride for the region, with two candidates in the top 20. The success of these candidates reflects their dedication, hard work, and determination to excel in one of the most prestigious examinations in the country. It is an accomplishment that showcases the talent and potential present in Jammu and Kashmir. The achievements of these candidates not only bring recognition to their individual efforts but also highlight the quality of education and the nurturing environment available in the region. It serves as an inspiration and encouragement for other aspiring youngsters in Jammu and Kashmir to pursue their dreams and strive for excellence.

The achievements of these UPSC candidates from Jammu and Kashmir deserve to be celebrated, as they not only bring pride to the individuals and their families but also contribute to the overall development and progress of the region. Their success serves as a testament to the potential and talent that exist in Jammu and Kashmir and can inspire others to aim high and work towards their goals.

Karnataka experiment as a trendsetter?

Shiban Khaibri

At the outset, it is an admitted fact that Congress won the Karnataka Assembly elections and the BJP lost - much against the general expectations and rather, to utter bewilderment of many people not only of Karnataka but of many parts across the country. Achieving success by employing whichever means, prima facia, is a success - other things remaining the same. Whatever transpires later or comes to the fore cogently cannot be sidelined nor ignored either. Hence a critical analysis of Karnataka elections is necessary as these elections were special, contested intensely but laced with inelastic standards of desirable democratic norms. Not only that, various endowments and factors too got cobbled by the main opposition party to score a win, on the other hand - the Prime Minister who worked hardest and campaigned on the issues of development and eradication of corruption was more or less unfortunately humbled and rejected by the people. The "people" herein means beyond the BJP's traditional vote share. It is this factor of "the people" who made an experiment and succeeded to build up a trend setter for 2024 general elections to defeat Modi Ji. Can these ones really succeed in that mission? Can these people be allowed to succeed in that mission as we find no cogent reason to replace Modi so earnestly although no one is indispensable? Why to be so much obsessed by the "need" of opposition getting combined as one entity with only and only aim of defeating Narendra Modi. This type of scenario, presently under process, cannot be taken just lightly as the question arises as to why so much hate and prejudice against PM Modi when the country is peacefully marching ahead, undergoing fast development and transformation under his leadership and even the international community is applauding the role of his qualities and statesmanship. More points and issues sprout which call for proper analysis and appraisal.

However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in highest traditions of democratic values, lost no time in saying "congratulations to the Congress Party for their victory in the Karnataka Assembly polls - my best wishes to them in fulfilling people's aspirations." This message came from the PM shortly after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi thanked the people of Karnataka for "shutting down the market of hate" and "opening the shop of love". The so called market of hate, however, is as elusive, confusing, misleading and fraught with catering to the psyche

of forces believing in and employing the doctrine of religious identity and communal politics as it is an open encouragement to oppose anything that is needed for parity and equality between different sections of the society so as to have oneness and fast development of this country. It is also and mainly so against slight revival of this country's ancient cultural identity and traditions with which are associated Hindus of this country, and faint traces of the renaissance thereof taking place. That is a stark fact and in veiled form that is what is most unfortunately referred to as "hate politics", "divisive politics" and being against the "diversity" of this country. Recall while participating in no confidence motion against Late Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Congress leader and PM late P.V. Narasimha Rao had started his speech with "fortunately or unfortunately India is a Hindu majority country" ... What was there to say "unfortunately" is as disgusting as it denotes the peculiar secular policies of the Congress particularly related to Hindus who very broadly opted for a secular set up and not for a theocratic Hindu state in 1947 taking cue from and in response to how, why and what for Pakistan was created. That great political and historical fact is conveniently ignored.

Therefore, so called opening of the shop of love in Karnataka is like the new fancy clothes and embroidered drapes of the emperor who, in fact, never wore any but his courtiers resorting to cheap sycophancy, were projecting and feigning all types of accolades for the maker of those royal accoutres for him to make him "look" so much conspicuously special with wearing "the best" in the land. Karnataka factor, when analysed deeply, reveals more than what meets the eye which is far beyond strengthening values and considerations considered healthy for democracy and the country at large. The experiment is a partial success but cannot be considered as a trendsetter for 2024 elections. Analysts predict that BJP's defeat shall prove a blessing in disguise.

However, Why did not Modi Ji complain about the usual whipping boy, targeted always by the vanquished side in this country - EVMs manipulated - as he and his party lost Karnataka Assembly elections, is very important. Put it in reverse perspective, viz had Congress lost and the BJP won, much of hullabaloo would have been around and all constituents of the Nitish Kumar conceived and built "Gathbandhan" would have been up in arms against the entire election process. So, as long non-BJP parties

win elections albeit the EVM mode, everything is fine and EVMs are the best but not when it is the obverse. The question or the doubt that how can the government in power complain about the EVMs must be countered with - why not? That is precisely because Election Commission is an independent constitutional body under Article 324 and as much independent, strong, impartial and autonomous for the opposition as it is for the government in power. Thank providence and thank the rich returns of the appeasement policy, generating much fear and hate for the BJP during campaigning and promising people the moon etc in return of voting to power, that the EVMs this time, proved their innocence, chastity and unblemished built in characteristics. Hell would have otherwise broken loose in case the BJP would have won.

Did Karnataka people really distance themselves from the "poison" and the "serpent" (the extent of fear planted in them) or were lured by promise of freebies and largesse or both, needs to be analysed. Also did the repeated tirade by the Congress party of "the BJP doing, Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Muslim and being anti Muslims..." and aligning with forces and ideologies who immediately somehow wanted to "get rid" of the dangerous, communal and divisive BJP and, therefore, wholesomely vote for the Congress, succeed? What was the trend of community wise vote share, as a result, needs also to be analysed.

At the outset, there should have been no considerations of going in for community wise, caste wise, religion wise, region wise etc for analysis but all these 72 years, Indian politics has very unfortunately sustained and revolved around the axis of religion - majority, minority, caste, sub caste, backward castes, anti backward castes, forward castes etc etc hence lavish and intense use thereof in elections. That is unhealthy and unfortunate. It has, therefore, assumed the status of an irreversible established norm and an unwritten tradition. Therefore, it needs to be appraised and analysed accordingly. The traditional vote share of the BJP despite the voters of majority community not coming out for voting cent percent unlike other communities, has more or less remained the same. Last time with 36.2% it bagged 104 seats and now with 35.8% it won only 65 seats, why and how? Should less than 1% play such a havoc? The king Maker JD(s) lost 18 seats as compared to 18.36% vote share when it had won 37 seats last time to 19 seats this time with 13.3%. So a fall or shift of 5% to Congress Party plus less than 1% of the BJP

resulted in the win of the Congress. Who overwhelmingly and under a planning decided to adopt this strategy and why and how with such a precision, though fairly surfaced, raises many questions although the verdict and the choice of the people is supreme in democracy. However, the revelations and thus demands of Muslim Waqf Board Chief Shafi Sadi cannot be ignored. He demanded a Muslim Dy. CM plus plum five ministries including Home and Education headed by Muslims on quid pro quo basis claiming 72 seats' net gain to Congress and "Jo diya hai, badley main kuch lena bhi hai" and "Congress should thank us" - all spills enough beans.

On the other hand, promise of free electricity up to 200 units, free 10 kgs ration to every member of the family every month, Rs.2000 to every woman, again every month, Rs.3000 to every unemployed graduate and Rs.1500 to every unemployed Diploma Holder, free travel in buses for women, 500 litres of tax free diesel annually for deep sea fishing, Rs.6000 to all marine fishermen during fishing holidays etc etc, promises by Congress has also worked. Just calculate cost of only two items - cash payments and power subsidy - it costs Rs.63000 Crore a year more than 22% of the state budget while the state has a fiscal deficit of Rs.61000 crore. Wishing best luck to the prospective beneficiaries of these freebies but they should get a feedback from Himachal Pradesh in this respect as well.

Immediately after winning by Congress, most of the photos and symbols of Bajrangji Baba were reportedly removed from various spots where those were raised in the state exposing those who feigned reverential faith in him as, such Netas are called as "Chunavi Bhakts". Meanwhile, Maulana Arshad Madani recently has cautioned Congress to immediately ban Bajrang Dal as promised otherwise the "trust" will be broken. He has wondered as to why the Congress did not ban it 70 years ago although the Dal was formed only in late 1984. Needless to add, Congress must fulfil its poll promises now and create an example of its own kind in translating into practice what it says and promises. Let poll prospects and sound economic considerations be at total "cross roads" and clash too inter-se but keeping in consideration the bigger goal, the grand agenda of the Ghatbandhan for 2024, everything is "fair and proper" for it. People, however, are to put final stamp of acquiescence and agreement or total rejection and refusal as they are supreme in our democratic set-up.

Peace Journalism in Kashmir

Dr. Pardeep Singh Bali

Father of Peace Journalism, Johan Galtung has said 'To say something about peace journalism, something has to be said about peace. To say something about peace, something has to be said about conflict and its resolution'. In the context of Kashmir, the conflict is rooted in a complex web of historical, political, economic, and social factors. These include the region's contested status between India and Pakistan, the demands of Kashmiri separatists for self-determination, the history of violence and human rights abuses in the region, and the interests and concerns of various stakeholders, both within and outside of the region.

Without a clear understanding of the root causes of conflict and the perspectives of the different parties involved, it can be difficult to identify potential solutions and build effective strategies for peace-building. To promote peace in Kashmir, it is important to engage with these complex issues and understand the perspectives of all parties involved. This requires a willingness to listen to diverse viewpoints, challenge assumptions and biases, and seek out accurate and balanced information. It also involves recognizing the impact of historical and structural factors, such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination that may contribute to the perpetuation of

conflict.

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Peace journalism is an approach to reporting that aims to promote non-violent conflict resolution and encourage dialogue between opposing parties. In Kashmir, peace journalism can play a

crucial role in promoting understanding and reducing tensions between various stakeholders.

This form of journalism involves reporting on conflicts in a way that highlights the human costs of violence and the potential for peaceful resolution. It seeks to provide a more balanced and

debate.

In addition, peace journalism can contribute to the building of a culture of peace and non-violence in Kashmir. By promoting the values of tolerance, respect, and understanding, it can help to create an environment in which conflicts can be resolved peacefully and without resorting to violence. This is particularly important in a region like Kashmir, where the cycle of violence and retaliation has been ongoing for so long.

Moreover, peace journalism can also help to challenge the dominant narratives that often portray one side as a villain and the other as a victim. By providing a more balanced view of the conflict, peace journalism can create space for constructive dialogue and contribute to a more informed public discourse.

To conclude, it can be said that although peace journalism cannot undo the damages of the past many decades in one go, the significance of peace journalism in Kashmir lies in its potential to help create a more constructive and peaceful future for the region. By promoting dialogue, understanding, and non-violent conflict resolution, it can help to break the cycle of violence and build a culture of peace that can benefit all communities in the region.

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Pakistan is neither stable nor safe

Raman Suri

The prevailing unrest in Pakistan is a matter of concern, not for India alone but for the entire world. A virtually failed and rogue state, Pakistan, today is struggling hard to come out of its political and economic turmoil but factually speaking, no one is going to come forward to its rescue for the simple reason that no nation wants to fish in deep troubled waters. This is a lesson for Pakistan, which since ages had been irking the world, especially India by making its land a safe haven for terrorists, subversive activities and a launch pad for those trying to train and then sneak into this side of the border.

Our late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had long back said in the Lok Sabha, "We can change our friends but not neighbours." To add to this quote is the fact that if neighbours do not behave well, we can snap all ties with them till they maintain a minimum required prerequisite to conduct themselves as per the law of the land, as per the social set up or as human behaviour demands from neighbours. Pakistan, having gone against all these ethics and principles, has lost all opportunities of being a good neighbour and has today landed itself into a hot soup. This rogue state stands isolated in the world and is looking for a foothold to sustain itself financially.

India, like any neighbour, is bound to keep an eye on the developments taking place in the neighbourhood but so far as the fallout of political and economic crisis in Pakistan is concerned, we do not have to bother much as our borders are safe, economy is growing, development is going on like never before and leadership like that of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is strong enough to handle such affairs meticulously. We witnessed crisis in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and now in Pakistan but such unhealthy neighbourhood developments are not at all affecting us in any way, which means we only have to be cautious and not worried.

Just because Pakistan could not set its priorities right, it is today facing such a grave situa-

tion. Ever since it came into existence, Pakistan had been crying hoarse over Kashmir issue at all platforms and in order to keep the pot boiling, it had even been financing misadventure to the extent that it is a financially broke state now. All the subversive activities and unproductive spendings besides wrong policies made our neighbour bankrupt. Now that the Kashmir issue stands resolved with abrogation of Article 370 being the last nail in the coffin, Pakistan must reconcile and accept the fact as the international bodies have.

Pakistan's past reveals that during any crisis it had always tried to divert attention of its people towards the so-called Kashmir issue but now that the Kashmir chapter is closed, Pakistan might enter into another misadventure like violating the ceasefire. This is the only effort it can put in right now for which our valiant soldiers and all the three defence forces are well-prepared. In a nutshell, we need not worry much about this situation developing in Pakistan as what it can do is what we have been countering well. Our borders are safe and secure while Pakistan is neither safe nor secure internally.

Presently, the Pakistan government is trying to take the judiciary head on and its army is trying to keep its former Prime Minister Imran Khan out of the political rink. This internal tussle is taking its toll on Pakistan's economy and its social set up to the extent that a brazen display of this unrest was watched world over when Pakistanis dared to storm the army establishments and steal whatever came their way, be it strawberries, korma, peacocks, books, ketchup and even artefacts. Shockingly, women looters too were involved in this shameful act of stealing from the homes of army officials in Pakistan.

Ever since its creation in 1947, Pakistan had spent almost 35 years under military rule. Many unsuccessful coup attempts were also made in 1951, 1980 and 1995. In such a situation, nothing much should worry India as Pakistan for the moment is struggling hard to sustain its own democracy. The worry should be that the nuclear state of Pakistan had been harbouring militant organisations and in this time of crisis, its nukes

should be in safe hands. Though we are capable of thwarting any kind of misadventure, we still should keep a watch on the developments in our neighbourhood and act accordingly.

Imran Khan, having returned to his Lahore home after having facing chaos and locking himself in the Islamabad High Court premises for the fear of re-arrest, had said, "Pakistan military should form its own political party for jumping into politics and 'think big' for saving the country from descending into a complete chaos." This speaks of the chaos prevailing in Pakistan where nothing is in order and in the tussle between the judiciary, a divided army, and an ousted Prime Minister besides ruling dispensation, all are playing their own trumpet and working hard to upkeep the sanctity of their individual institutions.

Another matter of concern for India should be the mass migration from borders, if situation further deteriorates in Pakistan. Even though our borders are well-manned and there are least chances of such an attempt, we should still stay prepared keeping in mind such apprehensions. Practically, no nation is coming to the economically failed Pakistan where the prices of even essentials are skyrocketing. Strangely, no political dispensation including the ruling elites are ready to take the responsibility of this crisis and are indulging into mere blame-game.

The reserves of Pakistan are also drying up to the extent that it is not able to import anything. If this situation persists, Pakistan will not be able to repay the debt and can slip into the defaulter list. This will further aggravate the trouble for Pakistan which will not be able to seek loan to sustain itself. This must worry Pakistan which is home to almost 24 crore people, and not its neighbours. For us, these developments are crucial only to the extent of waiting and watching but with a special focus on China, which might take advantage of a weak Pakistan.

Terrorist organisations like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Tehreek-e-Taliban had always been finding support from Pakistan and having a free run there and in the given situation, where everything there has gone haywire,

no nation in the world wants to see an unstable Pakistan for the simple reason that if this state goes into wrong hands, there will be more trouble erupting from that soil.

Another issue is that Pakistan has always backstabbed India and we just cannot afford to keep our eyes off this trouble-maker. Way back in 1999, when the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee took the first bus trip to Lahore, Pakistan ventured into Kargil but faced befitting defeat. But it didn't rest here and when in 2004 India and Pakistan resumed their bilateral talks under the composite dialogue process, four rounds of which were held between 2004 & 2008, Mumbai faced a deadly attack in 2008.

Similarly, Agra summit was organised between Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in July 2001 to reduce nuclear arsenals and resolve inter alia the Kashmir issue but negotiations broke down. The same year in December 2001, militants having their base in Pakistan, attacked the Indian Parliament which was nothing but a breach of trust on the part of our neighbour. These are the reasons the Pakistan has reached a stage of collapse today. Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi has shown Pakistan its place and concentrated on strengthening our arsenal, Pakistan is on a back foot and scared of doing any misadventure.

Pakistan for the moment should try to come out of its self-created mess, mend its ways, have a stable government, strengthen its democracy, stop aiding and abetting terrorism, flush out militancy and then think of entering into any kind of agreement with India. Meantime, this must be understood that the Indian government has given a free hand to the army to deal with any situation developing on the borders. In the words of former PM Vajpayee, who had said this on different occasions, "Our nuclear weapons are meant purely as a deterrent against nuclear adventure by an adversary. Indian democracy's greatest strength is that we have always put the nation above politics."

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