

E-ISSUE

BORDER AFFAIRS

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Editor Pushp Saraf

Our failing concerns over rising threats

Pushp Saraf

About three years ago after a meeting of the governing council of Ashoka Mission in the national Capital I asked Mr P. Thungon about the situation in Arunachal Pradesh. He had been a former Union minister as well as the Chief Minister of the state and my inquiry was specially related to the audacious Chinese incursions there and the local people's response. Mr. Thungon expressed serious concern over the developments.

I asked him whether he could write down his impressions for *Border Affairs*. He did not make any commitment. He did not say it but his immediate priorities seemed to be to clear the corruption cases and inquiries launched against him.

Off and on I kept trying to get someone to put the situation in Arunachal Pradesh in the correct perspective. But that was not to be. Limited financial resources dissuaded me from embarking on an on-the-spot investigation on my own.

In the meantime the disturbing reports continued to pour in. There was a suggestion, at least once, to sacrifice the Tawang Valley in the state to bury the hatchet with China. That scared me. It was extremely alarming that the Chinese ambassador in New Delhi felt emboldened to declare Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of his country. I was equally amazed by our own Army chief, General Deepak Kapoor's television interview that there were different perceptions of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh and India would be "as much blameworthy" as the Chinese side for incursions on the two sides. This was baffling.

Lest there be a false impression it needs to be clarified that Ashoka Mission has nothing to do with Arunachal Pradesh. The Mission is devoted to the welfare of Buddhists and is run, with rare zeal, by Lama Lobzang, a former member of the National Scheduled Tribes Commission. Its other leading lights are Rajya Sabha member Nirmala Deshpande, Mr Thupstan Chhewang, Lok Sabha member from Ladakh, and strategic expert P. Stobdan, besides Mr Thungon. Former Union Home Minister T.N. Chaturvedi was

too an almost regular participant at its meetings before he become the Governor of Karnataka.

In February, Mr Arun Shourie, wrote an illuminating article on Arunachal Pradesh in the *Indian Express*.

He referred to a meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party members of Parliament in November last year at which two of his party colleagues Mr Tapir Gao and Mr Kiren Rijiju, representing Arunachal Pradesh, had made startling revelations. They said the Chinese incursions into their State were becoming more frequent and the Chinese soldiers were coming in deeper into our territory. They quoted an official as having disclosed that there had been 146 incursions in 2007 alone. The two MPs said the Chinese writ ran over some of our grazing lands and they were supplying goods to local people from their shops. An equally serious disclosure was that the Chinese troops had blown up a Buddha statue inside Indian territory.

Mr Shourie drew the attention of the meeting to a paragraph in a book "*Why Geography Matters*" authored by well-known geographer Harm De Blij, which read: "In 1993 I received a book titled *Physical Geography of China*, written by Zhao Songqiao, published in 1986 in Beijing . On the frontispiece is a map of China. But that map, to the trained eye, looks a bit strange. Why? Because in the south, it takes from India virtually all of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, plus a piece of the state of Assam. Now this book is not a political geography of China, nor is the matter of appropriated Indian territory ever discussed in it. China's border is simply assumed to lie deep inside India, and the mountains and valleys thus claimed are discussed as though they are routinely a part of China. Make no mistake: such a map could not, in the 1980s at least, have been published without official approval. It should put not just India but the whole international community on notice of a latent trouble spot."

Mr L.K. Advani, presiding over the meeting, was concerned. He asked Mr Shourie to accompany the two Arunachal MPs and inform the media about the prevailing scenario in the north-eastern state at the party's regular daily briefing. The attempt to raise a national issue, however, was lost in queries virtually questioning the motives of the BJP in doing so. Mr Shourie's subsequent experience with a television news channel was equally distressing as the anchor while talking about Arunachal Pradesh was least interested in presenting a complete picture and, in the midst of conversation, switched over another "breaking news" about a film actress.

I must admit that I was not shocked by the media response. Over the years it has become a tendency to dismiss serious issues rather lightly. The present trends in Delhi's English press are particularly noticeable: obedience

to political authority; light stories in the name of competition with television — film stars (to be distinguished from a serious study of the film industry), sex and page 3; coverage of stock markets misleading small investors; surrender to television networks with editors indulging in self-aggrandisement; editors taking pains to exhibit their proximity with political leaders/ film stars and several people holding key editorial positions with hardly a written word to their credit.

The casualty in all this is: serious political reporting, balanced coverage of proceedings of legislatures, justice to the developing rural India and the “other half” of the population which is out of film industry, stock markets and page 3, the exposure of killings by terrorists/Naxalites/Maoists unless these are on a massive scale and integrating national influences.

On the other hand the political parties have their own angularities. Having closely watched my home state of Jammu and Kashmir I have noticed that each of them has its own perception. The Congress has not been averse to foisting its puppet regimes and shutting its eyes to their corruption. Indeed, it is amusing that the BJP raises slogans about Kashmir being an “*atoot ang*” (inseparable part) of the country from Jammu which is about 300 kilometres away. It appears to have closed its eyes to even such healthy influences as Kashmiri society’s Sufi traditions and respect for the Prophet’s hair. The National Conference keeps changing its stance from one extreme to the other. The less said the better about the Communists. Having failed to translate their international vision into a reality in the state in the turbulent 1940s their present local leadership has evidently given up what is interpreted as their ideological aversion to religion.

There are certain other features as well. Like, for instance, a section of intellectuals mostly educated in the United States that tries to put the Socialists and the Communists on the same platform. Obviously they don’t know that the former have been in the vanguard of opposing the Communists’ machinations in Kashmir in particular. At a wider level the Socialists have provided leadership to other forces including the Jan Sangh in battles against such draconian measures as the Emergency. Before the virtual demise of the Centrist politics in the country they were the only ones pointedly referring to the Union Government’s flawed approach towards the North-East, including Arunachal Pradesh. This is evident from a perusal of Parliamentary proceedings.

It is not my intention to condemn any party. I simply wonder why partisan interests can’t be overlooked when it comes to preserving national interests of which geographical contours are a significant aspect.

I decided to follow up Mr Shourie’s critique and lend the space of this modest journal to one of the BJP MPs from Arunachal Pradesh to

write what they could not speak at the media briefing. Since I did not know either of them I telephoned Mr Chhewang (MP from Ladakh) sharing my idea with him and seeking his cooperation in persuading Mr. Tapir Gao or Mr Kiren Rijju to do the needful (all of them are the members of the Tribal MPs' Forum, a unique entity cutting across party lines).

Mr Chhewang fixed an appointment with Mr Kiren Rijju and three of us met at Parliament House. I explained to Mr Rijju what I was looking for. He sounded positive. I asked him whether it was true that the Chinese had destroyed a statue of the Buddha because, although I had some contact with the Buddhist society, I had not read or heard about it. He simply nodded his head. I told him that the edition was already late and I would appreciate if he could write the article soon. I also offered that in case he had any difficulty in writing he could merely narrate the facts and I would put pen to paper for him.

He told me that he would let me know through Mr Chhewang. He also mentioned in passing that he was leaving for Meghalaya as he was the party's in charge of elections in that state.

This created doubts in my mind; it was unlikely he would oblige. After waiting for some days I gave up the idea.

It was just a coincidence that I had a meeting with Mr Thungon again. This time he was fuming. He had issued a statement condemning the Chinese criticism of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Arunachal Pradesh in January this year but it had been completely blanked out by the media. I urged him to put his thoughts together for *Border Affairs*. He agreed (he appeared relaxed having been cleared of all major charges against him) but said that to write a comprehensive script he needed some documents from his state. He relented when being told that more details could be carried in a subsequent issue. For the immediate purpose he could base the article on his personal recollections born of his long experience in public life.

The result is the lead of this issue. He makes sense when he argues that a countrywide movement should be launched to educate the people about the Chinese threat to Arunachal Pradesh. He has been able to put the picture in correct perspective. If we dig more into Ahom *Buranjis* (chronicles) there is every possibility that we get more evidence of our historic ties with the areas constituting the present Arunachal Pradesh.

China's aversion to recognising Tibet as a separate nation is an old story. Why should it bother us? It did not trouble Lord Curzon in the beginning of the 20th century when he set in motion a process that culminated in the demarcation of the McMahon Line. It is quite relevant to

quote one of his pithy observations: “We regard the so-called suzerainty of China over Tibet as a constitutional fiction, a political affectation.”

For us in this country there is a lot to be learnt from Mr. Khushwant Singh’s following portion titled “*India we do not know*” in his widely-read column: “*With malice towards one and all*”: “General J.J. Singh, retired Chief of Army Staff, who was recently appointed Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, happened to be on a visit to Delhi. He sent me a note regarding his Memoirs he is writing, saying he would get in touch with me on his next visit to the capital.

“I thought it was wise to ask him to let me know about it well ahead of time. I addressed my letter to the Raj Bhawan but the name of the Capital of Arunachal Pradesh eluded my memory. I rang up my secretary Lachhman Dass. He replied: ‘I will check up and ring back.’

“I rang up my neighbour Reeta Devi who is Assamese, married to a Cooch Behari and has lived closer to the region. She replied: ‘I am not quite sure. I will give you a ring in a few minutes.’

“Then I rang up my granddaughter who is a bit of a *Sabjanteewalee*. She replied: ‘It is Itanagar. You check up.’ Lachhman Dass rang back: Eye Tee A Nagar. So did Reeta. It all went to prove how little Indians know their own country. I feel ashamed of myself.”

This in turn reminds me of three instances: (a) a senior person in the Prime Minister’s Office once wanting to know where Leh is actually located; (b) a journalist itching to go straight to Gulmarg after disembarking at the Jammu railway station thinking that the famous hill resort is next door; and (c) an editor boasting that he includes only Srinagar in his newspaper’s weather chart and not Jammu obviously ignorant that Jammu is the only city in the north of India which is visited by close to seven million pilgrims/ tourists every year. It is precisely utterances like these that remind one of Albert Einstein: “Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I’m not sure about the former.”

Chinese incursions continue
**Create awareness to
save Arunachal**

P.K. Thungon

I wish I were born in Kashmir and not in Arunachal Pradesh. It is not because I don't love my home state. My affection for it in fact actually knows no bounds. It is as picturesque as any other place in the country. My grudge is that threats to it are not taken seriously especially by the media. The moment Pakistan opens its mouth about Jammu and Kashmir there is furore in the country. At least that has been the state of affairs till recently.

We have the Dragon next door. As and when it likes it keeps spreading its wings. We are worried. We cry foul. Not a word is printed or broadcast anywhere.

The latest incident is self-explanatory. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Arunachal Pradesh on January 31. Very rightly he stated during his tour that the state was "our land of rising sun." About a week later China protested. It considers Arunachal as its integral part. I issued a statement strongly condemning the Chinese reaction. It was just ignored by newspapers and television news channels.

I have been a former Chief Minister and Union Minister and having represented Arunachal in Parliament I feel I do have the requisite standing to be heard and noticed. False Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Income Tax cases against me have been given credence. All of them have failed to stand a judicial scrutiny. The people of Arunachal don't have to pay income-tax; they are exempted from it like their counterparts in other North-eastern states and possibly Leh in Jammu and Kashmir. Yet, it was made to appear as I have defaulted on its payment!

Well, that is a different story. For the moment I am angry that my patriotic sentiments have been overlooked. I have consistently maintained that China has no claim to my state which is part of India. There is historic evidence to support my contention.

I am quite happy that the Union Government has taken an unambiguous stance in this regard. Its written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha is self-explanatory: "China has raised the matter of Prime Minister's visit to Arunachal Pradesh with Government. The fact that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India has been conveyed to the Chinese side. China disputes the international boundary between India

and China and illegally claims approximately 90000 square kilometres of Indian territory in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The Special Representatives of India and China are discussing a framework for settlement of the boundary question that is fair, reasonable, mutually acceptable, and based on the Agreement on Guiding Principles and Political Parameters signed in April 2005.”

I quote from my unpublished statement issued immediately after China had criticised the Prime Minister’s visit to Arunachal: “Enough is enough. The Chinese interference in the internal affairs of India with particular reference to Arunachal Pradesh should be condemned to the hilt. Indian Prime Minister has the right to visit any part of his country. China has no right to poke its dirty nose in such matters. It is known to the world that they have the habit of going back on their words. They are unreliable and cowards.”

I have pointed out that one of the clauses of the 2005 Agreement is: “On reaching a boundary settlement the two sides shall safeguard the due interest of their settled population in the border areas.” Clearly the Chinese don’t want to abide by it.

If China can treat as recent an accord as the one signed just three years ago with such disdain it is not surprising that they feign forgetfulness about the one signed way back in early 2000s. Its eagerness is to swallow the Tawang Valley in particular.

It is part of history, however, that on July 3, 1914, British Foreign Secretary Sir Henry McMahon and the Tibetan government representative Lonchen Shatra signed the Simla Convention. They accepted the McMahon Line, which accorded Tawang to British India, as an officially accepted boundary between the two nations. The actual map showing the McMahon Line as a boundary between Tibet and India was published by Survey of India in 1937. In 1944 the British established their administration in the area which became part of independent India in 1947. China was also represented in Simla. It initialised the main document but did not ratify it.

China’s difficulty is that it has never recognised Tibet. How can we be faulted for it? In any event how can China overlook the existing reality that the people of Tawang like the others in Arunachal Pradesh consider themselves an inseparable part of India?

Mahabharata has references to Arunachal Pradesh. That the parts of it were also a constituent of the Ahom kingdom is evident from *Buranjis* (Ahom chronicles). The Ahoms ruled from 1228 to 1826. Their empire was called “Asam” (now Assam) the subjects as “Assamese” or “Axomiya”.

There were several local chieftains in Arunachal Pradesh. I myself belong to one such family. Tawang also had its chieftain. I am tempted again

to refer to my unpublished statement: “Historically there were number of independent local kings, councils for centuries in Arunachal Pradesh. They were sovereign until the British expeditions and then they became part and parcel of India after Independence. It is high time that we quell the croaking voice of China. They are trying not only to be deceptive and browbeat the Government of India but also trying to confuse the people of Arunachal Pradesh and thus to destabilise the state. Particularly we the people of Arunachal Pradesh must realise their designs to harm us. By creating confusion in the minds of the people they are trying to instigate our youth to be secessionists and terrorists. We need to be careful... We should not tolerate further.”

The present scenario is that there are repeated Chinese incursions into Arunachal Pradesh. They have developed first-class infrastructure in terms of mainly roads in the territory between Tibet and the state. Their road network is better than ours. Even Defence Ministry A.K. Antony and Army chief Deepak Kapoor have admitted it. It must be said that the people of Arunachal Pradesh are patriotic to the core. Mahatma Gandhi may have never visited the state. But he is a highly revered figure. So are Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.

I have two proposals to make: (a) We should take to development works on a large scale. Let there be top-class infrastructure; and (b) more importantly, an awareness campaign should be launched within the State and the country about the Chinese designs. It has to be a people’s movement. It is absolutely essential to inform the countrymen about the threat prevailing in one of their regions howsoever remote it may be. They should be fully prepared to meet any emergency.

Our Armed Forces are doing an excellent job. Their duties are well defined. We can make our own contribution by calling the Chinese bluff and nailing its propaganda.

With all humility I think that my vast experience in the region makes me eligible to make these suggestions. From 1972 I have been politically active in the area as a member of the Congress which has strengthened patriotic fervour in my part of the country. From a local councillor I have grown up to be the Chief Minister and Union Minister. I have always remembered my humble role in facilitating the creation of separate state of Arunachal Pradesh in 1987. The task of nation-building requires that we keep an eagle eye on our borders even as we leave no stone unturned for our economic development.

****The writer is a former Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh and has also been Union Minister thrice.***

POLITICS, PERCEPTIONS, PERSONALITIES

Ahmad Rashid

It is *Aya Ram Gaya Ram* season in Kashmir these days. Every day local newspapers are filled with reports of political activists switching from one party to the other. Dozens of National Conference (NC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) workers and middle-rung leaders have crossed sides. PDP president Mehbooba Mufti has a convincing explanation for the people leaving and joining parties: it is election year.

The Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir are scheduled in September-October this year but the pre-election activities have already begun. The pro-election parties — Congress, PDP, NC and other groups — are busy framing strategies shedding unwanted baggage and wooing people. The Congress is out with Prof Saifuddin Soz as the new Pradesh chief. The PDP has expelled one of its founding leaders Ghulam Hassan Mir who, according to the party, had become a liability for his contradictory views on every crucial matter. Mr Mir, for his part, is trying to get together disgruntled elements in different parties to form a third front.

Anti-election groups — particularly Hurriyat faction led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani — are readying to make their presence felt in the face of challenge posed by pro-election parties.

The shape of things to come will be gradually clear. For the time being one can say with confidence that the coming Assembly elections will be different from those held in 2002. Voting pattern is bound to be quite revealing.

Prof Saifuddin Soz

Prof Soz faces the test of his life and leadership. In his entire political career he has never faced a situation like this. He is leading a party for the first time and that too in an election year. What makes his task challenging is that he heads a party that lacks popular base in the Valley and is ridden

with dissensions. In the past the electoral successes of the Congress have been mainly in alliance with the NC. Its major problem is that it is remote-controlled from New Delhi. Local leaders and cadres have little say in running its affairs. Last month when Prof Soz's name was yet to be cleared by the Congress high command *Border Affairs* asked a party vice-president (it has six vice-presidents): who is going to take the reins of the party?

"When did Delhi ask us? It would be decided in Delhi (10-Janpath)", pat came the reply.

There are then the leaders like senior vice-president and Social Welfare minister Abdul Gani Vakil who regard Prof Soz as an outsider in the party. They would find it unpalatable to accept and abide by Prof Soz's authority. Mr Vakil is among a few Congress leaders holding some personal influence in their respective constituencies. He is capable of taking strong personal positions as he had demonstrated in the 2005 by-elections.

The Congress tried to put up a demonstration of unity when its leaders and workers gathered in good numbers to receive Prof Soz on March 12 on his maiden visit to Srinagar as the PCC chief. There was a rally at the Municipal Park in Srinagar. One could notice the simmering discord with separate

Every inch of body is sore with wounds

Ahmad Rashid

"Politicians are predisposed not to see spending Other People's Money as a problem, because spending Other People's Money is what politicians do for a living. If politicians thought there was something wrong with it, they would be in a different line of work" ... Michael F Cannon.

When Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad took over as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in 2005, he described corruption as a bigger threat than militancy. Mr Azad placed rooting out this pest from political and administrative ranks as his No 1 priority. He declared an open war on corrupt officials and gave the State Vigilance Organisation (SVO) a free hand to book them. Indeed, many officials accused of corrupt practices were booked and jailed.

Mr Azad's campaign against corruption has now entered third year. One of his own Cabinet colleagues, Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed, who was also the Pradesh Congress chief, has fallen to the allegations of corruption. An

groups shouting slogans in favour of their own leaders. Prof Soz promised to build the party and felt indebted to Ms Sonia Gandhi for the trust she had put in him. He can't be ignorant of the reality that so far as building the organisation is concerned in the Valley it is easier said than done.

Prof Soz tried to strike an emotional chord by asking Hurriyat leaders to resume dialogue with the Union Government. He offered to work as a facilitator between Hurriyat and New Delhi.

In a veiled reference, he offered to quit the poll arena if the Hurriyat Conference was interested in the elections. But the separatist sections straightaway ignored his call describing it as "non-serious". However, this is all what a naked eye could see. There are sections who believe that there is something more to it all than meets the eye.

Prof Soz is reported to be in constant touch with the Mirwaiz-led Hurriyat ever since he brokered first ever talks between them and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in September 2005. Keen observers are keeping their fingers crossed about the emerging scenario.

Ghulam Nabi Azad

Ever since Prof Soz has been appointed as the State Congress chief, Mr Azad has maintained a low

independent legislator, Mr Shoab Lone, accused Peerzada of taking Rs 40000 as bribe from him for carrying out one of his recommendations. Peerzada had to put in his papers after an uproar in and outside the State Assembly. While fire caused by accusations against Peerzada was still smouldering, another disclosure embarrassed the Chief Minister.

A committee, headed by Mr B. R. Kundal (now Chief Secretary of the state), investigating bungling into the forest department found two senior ministers — Mr Tariq Hameed Qarra (Finance Minister) and Qazi Afzal (Forest Minister) — of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) scandalously involved along with a number of officials and contractors in the loot and plunder of the Valley's sylvan cover. The revelations brought the State Legislature, which was in session, to a grinding halt with the main opposition National Conference (NC) demanding heads of "corrupt" ministers. The NC built on so much pressure in the Assembly that the Speaker had to call off the session 10 days before schedule. A report prepared by another high-level Government committee under Mr Najamus Saqib, IAS, who was a former Forest Commissioner/

profile. He does speak little on political matters. He is also little seen in the Valley these days. Frequency of public appearances has come down compared to the past. His area of activities has shifted now to Jammu, mostly his home districts of Doda and Kishtwar. It is only well known by now that Mr Azad was interested in keeping the post of party chief with himself. He is reported to have lobbied hard for it but could not succeed.

A strong section of the Congress, which is loyal to Mr Azad, had pleaded that he was the best choice in the given scenario. It had argued that Mr Azad had led the party to victory in the 2002 Assembly elections too.

Former chief minister and PDP patron Mufti Mohammad Sayeed is reported to have played spoilsport. He is said to have argued with the Congress high command that the PCC president should be someone could keep the coalition together.

Despite being alliance partners in power, the PDP and the Congress have shared bitter relations. There have been umpteen battles between them beginning with security perception about legislators and covering such wide spectrum as the demand for withdrawal of troops and special powers to armed forces, forests and ministerial portfolios. Of late Mr Azad has told the party workers to keep silent about

Secretary, to ascertain the colossal loss of about 50 lakh cubic feet (cft) timber in the Doda region also became a public document. The report had details of connivance aimed at plundering the green gold in Doda, mainly contracted by three or four influential people including the Chief Minister's brothers. The report, among other things, revealed that the Chief Minister's brother, Mr Mustafa Azad, had been paid Rs 22 lakhs as extraction charges for the 60000 cft timber, which never reached the depots. The timber was reported to have gutted in fire incidents in compartments 36 and 39 of Paddar after extraction. The report also said that an arbitration award for recovery of Rs 60 lakhs from the Chief Minister's late father, Rehmatullah Bhat, had been lying in a state of limbo for many years.

There were more skeletons to tumble out of the cupboard. A House Committee of the Legislative Council found sweeping irregularities and misdeeds in allotting custodian land and buildings to relatives and favourites by Transport Minister Hakim Mohammad Yasin during his stint as the Revenue Minister.

There is yet another murky instance of which I have personal knowledge. For family reasons a

matters involving coalition partners. This is regarded a subtle hint to his loyalists to see the writing on the wall. With Prof Soz's entry into the field and the Mufti going along with him there is a greater possibility of the two parties entering into a pre-poll alliance. There are many who think that Mr Azad should consider it a blessing in disguise.

The factors that favoured him in 2002 in the Jammu region no more exist.

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed

In our July-September 2007 issue, we had, among other problems, projected Mr Muzaffar Hussain Baig and Mr Ghulam Hassan Mir — two founding leaders of the PDP— as the major headache for Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. Both Mr Baig and Mr Mir were angry that they were not given their due in the party.

The Mufti recalled them from the Cabinet quite unceremoniously. The two belong to north Kashmir and have powerful base in their respective constituencies; there was all likelihood that the treatment meted out to them could have driven a north-south wedge in the PDP.

This assessment was not entirely misplaced. Despite being arch rivals, they had one plank to get together — opposition to the Mufti. They did move in that direction. After

Government employee did not want to go to Jammu during darbar move (the shifting of the Secretariat from Srinagar to Jammu during winter and vice versa during summer). He wanted to be transferred to a department which was not covered with this exercise.

He approached a journalist friend for help. The journalist having known the minister in charge of his department from the days when he was a little-known politician offered to do his best. He approached the minister who in turn asked his staff to do the needful. But when nothing happened for days together the journalist met the minister again and reminded him of his commitment. This time the minister called the senior-most official in his staff and assigned him the task of executing his promise. The official in turn asked the journalist to send the concerned employee to him. The latter on carrying out this advice was asked to give the choice of his posting. When he did so he was told that it would cost him Rs one lakh!

On learning about this the journalist was infuriated. He called on the minister and told him about corrupt dealings in his own office even in matters concerning his personal

maintaining distance from one another for about two years, Mr Mir and Mr Baig had one-to-one meeting at the formers' house.

This virtually put the Muftis — father and the daughter — on their toes and they had to think of alternative plans.

The Mufti wooed back Mr Baig by sending him to the Cabinet as Deputy Chief Minister leaving Mr Mir alone. This further annoyed Mr Mir. He has since been trying to come up with a new platform to hit back at the Muftis.

While being in the party he raised voice against the Muftis and pleaded for establishing a third front as an alternative to the PDP and the NC. This gave the Muftis a handle to hit back. They expelled Mr Mir from the party at a time when there were few takers to his ideas. Mr Mir might have been expecting good support from a section of party leaders. He has instead been left to fend for himself at least for now. Mr Sarfaraz Khan, MLA Beerwah and a former minister, is the only leader to have come out publicly in favour of Mr Mir. Mr Khan, however, is considered a spent force and his popularity graph in his constituency has drastically declined. Sources in the PDP say that the Mufti has not let off Mr Baig fully. He is keeping a close eye on him. For his part Mr Baig has correctly read the situation. Unlike

instructions. The minister showed a mixed sense of guilt, anger and embarrassment and assigned the task to another staffer. The journalist thought that the days of the bribe-seeker were numbered and he would be either sacked or transferred. Nothing of the sort happened. Had his friend misled him? Did the minister's staffer have another version? Such thoughts cropped up in the journalist's mind. To satisfy his curiosity he straightway rang up the concerned official and asked whether he had indeed asked for money. Expecting a no for an answer the journalist had the ground knocked off his feet when conveyed: "So what. After all, the employee would have made money in his preferred place of posting."

The shocked journalist mentioned the incident to a Union Minister and also to the minister's party leadership. He hoped against hope that some corrective measure would be taken but in vain. The journalist enjoys an impeccable reputation of integrity. In his anguish he took me also into confidence and left me equally bewildered.

Another happening is even more flabbergasting. Recently the Government promoted some junior engineers of a particular department as assistant

in the past, he tries to remain close to the party leadership.

In his earlier stint as the Deputy Chief Minister he would maintain an individual profile independent of the party and its leadership. He had formed his own equation with the Chief Minister much to the chagrin of Muftis. It was this approach that had previously cost him his prestigious assignment apart from a dent in his personal status.

Ghulam Hassan Mir

Mr Mir is an old horse in Kashmir politics and his anger against the Muftis is not something new. He revolted against the PDP in the 2006 by-elections when party against his wishes nominated Mr Baig's nephew Javed Baig as its candidate in Sangrama constituency which had fallen vacant following the killing of Minister of State for Education Ghulam Nabi Lone in a suicide attack by the militants at his official residence at Srinagar's high-security Tulsi Bagh in October 2005.

Mr Mir had suggested fielding Mr Shoaib Lone, son of the slain leader. Defying party discipline, he fielded Mr Shoaib Lone as an independent and supported him publicly. Mr Shoaib Lone won while the PDP's official candidate was defeated.

Mr Mir was suspended from the party but had his suspension revoked simultaneously with the

engineers. When the file of the promoted engineers came to the concerned Minister of State he wrote a note to put the case on hold till the secretary of the department, who was on Haj pilgrimage, returned from leave. This was despite the fact that the secretary had already cleared the file. This made the promoted engineers uneasy but they got the message. They applied behind-the-scene therapy and within a few hours the MoS forwarded the file to the Cabinet minister with a fresh note of approval.

Anyone can check this file: the stains of fluid applied to erase the earlier note can be seen.

These are not just isolated incidents as the Chief Minister would like us to believe. It is indeed a pattern that reigns through in every administrative organ in Jammu and Kashmir. Corruption is a culture in Kashmir. Bribe is demanded as a right. This was all the more evident when Finance Minister Tariq Hameed Qarra openly defended corrupt officials of the Valley after the State Vigilance Organisation carried out raids in Srinagar in pursuance of its duty. He accused the Chief Minister of following double standards by targeting Kashmiri officials while sparing their Jammu counterparts. Strangely, the Chief Minister did

recall of Mr Baig to the Cabinet in 2006.

Mr Mir is trying to face the Muftis. He may find support to his proposal for forming a third front from Transport Minister Hakim Mohammad Yasin, MLA Bandipore Usman Majeed and CPI-M leader and MLA Kulgam Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami. Former minister Sonallah Dar of Pulwama is also reported to have agreed to be part of this conglomeration. He has been out of active politics for over 20 years and wields little influence at this moment. How credible can this front be?

Ashok Khajuria

Whatever the reasons for the surprise victory of Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Kulvinder Gupta in the election for the post of Mayor of Jammu the credit goes to Mr Ashok Khajuria, young president of the state Bharatiya Janata Party. The party did not have requisite numbers in the Municipal Corporation. Yet, it pulled off a triumph over the Congress. Mr Khajuria has been working hard to do justice to his post in an organisation that has many senior leaders not all of whom are fond of him. He is discreetly dealing with his opponents within while openly matching every move of the rivals outside within the framework of the party's ideology. He is also proving lucky. Long before the

not utter a word in this regard. Mr Qarra belongs to the PDP but his party's leadership also maintained silence.

What was more stunning was that the local newspapers highlighted the Finance Minister's "pro-Kashmiri" statement with multi-column headlines but ignored its implications. It was disappointing. Nobody had the pluck to pull up the Finance Minister for carrying the theory of regional discrimination to a ridiculous level. If there were 100 or 1000 corrupt officials in Jammu should the Valley too have the same share? Shouldn't Valley be cleared of dishonest and shady ones?

This erosion of moral values in society is widespread. The silence observed by the educated elite is most galling. Ordinary people are no less to be blamed. After being stripped of both his ministerial and organisational responsibilities in the wake of corruption charges when Peerzada arrived in Srinagar from Jammu on March 3, around 3000 Congress workers and supporters welcomed him at the airport. Waving his hands towards his admirers from an open vehicle, Peerzada seemed to have no sense of guilt or remorse for his action. In October last year, three days after the Jammu and

victory in the Mayoral elections the BJP has also been assured of total support by its parent body Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) which in an unprecedented move had deserted the party in 2002 to back the Jammu Mukti Morcha with disastrous consequences for everyone concerned.

SEPARATIST CAMP

There is silence in the separatist camp which seems to be a result of circumstances more than anything else. Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the most vocal anti-India voice, has spent most of the winter this year in New Delhi because of his bad health. The Mirwaiz has also been out of the country pursuing his studies. Moulvi Abbas Ansari is acting as chairman of the Mirwaiz-led Hurriyat.

For all practical purposes, however, Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) chief Shabir Ahmad Shah is directing the amalgam. Mr Shah joined the Mirwaiz a few months back. He was expelled from the Hurriyat in 1997 after he had a meeting with then American Ambassador Frank Wisner in violation of the organisation's decision to boycott him.

Mr Shah has been working to get all separatist leaders and cadres under one banner and in pursuance of this goal he has been having one-to-one meetings. His efforts have, however, failed to click so far with

Kashmir High Court indicted the Central Bureau of Investigation for not proceeding against Transport Minister Hakim Mohammad Yasin for his involvement in the infamous 2006 sex scandal, around 4000 people gathered at the airport road to receive him on his return from 'Umrah'.

On March 12, former minister and Congress leader Ghulam Ahmad Mir (MLA of Dooru) was applauded and cheered by hundreds of supporters for every word he uttered during a rally organised to welcome new PCC president and Union Water Resources Minister Saifuddin Soz in Srinagar. Only last year Mr Mir had to spend nine months in jail for his alleged involvement in the sex scandal. The trail against Mr Mir and others involved in the scam is on in a court in Chandigarh.

The list is long and the stakes are high. We have plummeted to the nadir of corruption in public life. "Pamba Kuja Kuja nahum ki tann hama daag daag shud" (Every inch of the body is sore with wounds. I am in a fix where to apply the balm). What has gone wrong with the paradise on the earth? Who will like to go to the heaven if it is a replica of our state?

*

the Geelani-led faction refusing to join hands with those who ‘participated in 2002 assembly elections’. Mr Geelani had walked out of the united Hurriyat along with a dozen other groups infuriated that one of the constituents of the conglomeration, Peoples’ Conference, had participated in the 2002 Assembly elections and the Mirwaiz and his colleague had not campaigned for the boycott of the polls.

Mr Shah has since been doing what Syed Ali Geelani used to do. He led a strong procession of separatists on February 11 to the Sonawar headquarters of United Nations Military Observers Group demanding that the remains of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front founder Maqbool Butt be returned to the Kashmiri people. Butt was hanged to death in New Delhi’s Tihar jail on February 11, 1984.

Mr Shah has the active support of Mr Javaid Ahmad Mir, one of the pioneers of Kashmir militancy and a former commander of JKLF, Mr Nayeem Ahmad Khan of the National Front and Mr Zaffar Akbar Bhat, chairman of the Mass Movement and a former Hizbul Mujahideen commander.

Mr Javaid Mir is known in many circles as “protest man” for his everyday protests. He split from his old associate Mohammad Yasin Malik and formed a separate group Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Forum, which is part of the Mirwaiz faction of the Hurriyat. Mr Khan and Mr Zaffar Bhat are also Hurriyat members.

Ater his three-month long *Safar-e-Azadi* from one corner of the Valley to the other, Mr Yasin Malik wanted to go ahead with the same exercise in Doda district but he was prevented by the authorities from doing so. Since then he has rested himself before making his presence in New Delhi with a successful exhibition of video and photographs of his *Safar-e-Azadi*.

(with inputs from Pushp Saraf)

A picturesque rangeland with tremendous possibilities

Changthang needs to balance continuity and change

Tsering Phunchok

This paper aims to present the multifarious activities, opportunities, weakness and strengths of the rangeland production system in eastern Ladakh (Changthang) which is a huge area, spread over 22000 sq kms, comprising of two administrative blocks namely Nyoma and Durbook. The area falls under one sub-division and most of the people are nomads. The area is a typical cold desert and offers very limited scope for economic activities except livestock husbandry which is the mainstay of economy of the people as agriculture farming is not viable in most parts of Changthang. The rangeland of Changthang is a huge resource but the production system is still very traditional. The interventions of the Government and other agencies have not been able to bring about the envisaged impact on the production system and the economic well-being of the nomads.

Nomadism is a very rich and complete cultural identity in itself. Its multi-faceted values have to be seen in the right perspective to understand its dynamics. The intellectual property assets in the form of indigenous knowledge and the power to run a successful production system in one of the most inhospitable places on earth are just mind boggling for outsiders. The wisdom of the nomads to face and overcome unfathomable natural and other odds and economic blows at the hands of fate and nature are exemplary and enviable. The vulnerabilities are many for the nomads and nomadic areas but the resolve to face and defeat the challenging situations found inbuilt in the nomadic tradition are equally enviable and astounding. Invaluable livestock perish, sometimes in their thousands but the nomads rise up again from the ruins of bad luck to continue with the production system again to succeed and sustain.

All activities and development initiatives in future will have to be directed at system innovation, blending the traditional way of life with modern ideas and making the production system highly viable and sustainable for the people. Meanwhile the living standard of nomads needs to be improved through appropriate interventions and by providing adequate basic life amenities in the Changthang wilderness. Now the times have changed and the nomads find themselves at a crossroad where they

tend to question their very wisdom of adhering to the basis of an economic activity which failed to give them a life of decency and honour because the outsiders look at their livelihood activities as polluting and degrading. Obviously the people do not respect a profession which strikes at the very vitals of their self-esteem because of its failure to give them a decent living standard proportional to the level of hard work, toil and pain put in sustaining that livelihood activity. Hence, reforms are needed. It is under the back drop of these facts that it is appropriate to describe the production system in Changthang.

Introduction

Ladakh forms the northernmost tip of the Indian sub-continent. It is located between 32°-15' and 36°-0' north latitude and 75°-15' and 79°-0' east longitude. It is situated at an altitude ranging from 8500 feet (2600 m) to 15000 feet (4600m) above sea level. It occupies every strategic position as it is bounded in the north and east by China, in the north-west by Baltistan (Pakistan-occupied territory) and in the south by Himachal Pradesh. It has a geographical area of about 82665 sq km (including the area under the occupation of China). The climate of the region is harsh — - dry cold and arid. The average temperature ranges between -40°C to + 37°C and the humidity level has been recorded to be as low as 24 per cent. But during the month of December the humidity level goes up. The annual precipitation is less than 100 mm.

For both human beings and animals, the threshold of survival in the region is high, determined as it is by the severity of the climate and the scarcity of feed resources including the means of subsistence. Both animals and humans are finely adapted to ecological peculiarities of the area. The pattern of living and of rearing animals including the choice of which animals to rear are based on the tested experience of thousands of years.

Animal rearing played a very pivotal role in the economy of Ladakh from times immemorial, as the nomadic as well as the sedentary populace reared animals in good numbers for meat, fibre, milk and also as a subsidiary activity to agri-farming. Animal manure played a significant role for enhancement of yield from the limited agriculture land holding which supported a subsistence economy in the agro-pastoral areas. It is also a known fact that agriculture is possible only for a short part of the year and the people have to remain idle there after for the whole year. On the contrary livestock rearing can be carried out for the whole year as a very good economic activity.

The people of Ladakh, traditionally rear ponies/donkeys for trade; yak and crosses for meat/ milk/ fibre and draught; sheep for meat, wool

and transport; goats for meat, milk and pashmina; and also some camels for meat, transport and fibre. The nomads depended and still continue to depend only on livestock husbandry to sustain a subsistence economy in the heights of Changthang.

The agro- pastorals of lower Ladakh rear a variety of livestock for different reasons but manure always occupied the position of primary consideration for livestock husbandry. This may sound strange but this is true for many other agriculture societies in the Himalayas and other places. The eighties saw a very huge change in the perception and approach of the people, as lot of other vistas for economic growth were thrown open to the people of Ladakh. Roads, buildings and bridges started coming up and the public distribution system came to be in place almost every where in Ladakh. Food security could no more be seen as a problem and new possibilities provided better opportunities for all. Even the traditional organic farming ideology underwent a huge degree of transformation, as chemical fertilisers were supplied through agriculture and cooperative departments. Tractors are now being used in good many places and threshers have been in use over the last decade on good scale.

Processed butter, tinned milk and wool/synthetic items are found in the market on reasonable/cheaper rates. Obviously, the livestock production system, which is a very difficult and unattractive proposition for economic betterment, had to suffer huge pressures due to the sudden and rapid new developments every where. The schooling system improved a lot and education became a necessity and also a passion for people. The young generation started leaning more towards education and the age old Ra-rays (community shepherding) system, which was mostly carried over by the young people and very old people, subsequently suffered tremendously.

As the earlier generation has become very old in most of the villages and there are not any young people for grazing livestock, the traditional livestock rearing and production system has become a very un-attractive proposition in many parts of Ladakh. The community shepherding on roster basis was a time tested effective system to graze sheep/goats but this system has almost crumbled in view of the changes in the priorities of the people.

Education has been made compulsory and programmes like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan stipulates 100 per cent literacy in the age range of 6-14 years. If one goes by a statement by the Executive Councillor (Education), LAHDC Leh, there are only 180 children in Ladakh in the school-going who are still outside schools. They are mostly in the nomadic areas. Of late, a very discouraging trend has set in, especially in the central Ladakh areas where the people have almost left livestock husbandry and adopted

easier means of economic activities. Future years will be very challenging for the livestock husbandry sector. The schemes of the department will have to be in tune with time and lot of innovations shall be needed. The future will be the time of the entrepreneurs and traditional farming system will have to give way to the modern system of husbandry for maximum economic benefit to the breeders.

Subsistence farming will not be able to make the profession attractive. A genuine entrepreneur will have to explore the complete potential from livestock husbandry for remunerative earning. It is possible in Ladakh because of the capacity of the place to produce animal fibres of the most superior qualities. Ladakh provided raw material for the world famous Kashmiri shawls for national and international trade for centuries. The Pashmina from Ladakh happens to be the best in the world because of its fineness, staple and other desirable qualities. The hugeness of Ladakh adorned with enormous sizes of grazing land and water resources offers tremendous potential for livestock productions but economic production by adhering to the traditional methods can never be possible as traditional production system had evolved for a subsistence economy. Bold initiatives shall be required for which new and promising systems shall have to be evolved.

It will be important to maintain the tempo of livestock rearing in maximum parts of Ladakh especially Changthang during the present phase of transition wherein people's priorities have shifted dramatically from livestock husbandry. The vision for the future should therefore look for a complete new approach for which the success stories of similar areas in the Hindukush Himalayas shall have to be replicated in Ladakh.

Ladakh is home to the best pashmina producing goat in the world and future years may belong to Ladakh in spite of the limited production because the germ plasm can be the greatest asset of Ladakh.

Changthang lies in the south east of Ladakh and is an extension of the Tibetan Changthang with which this area is contiguous. This may be the reason for designating the area as Changthang (northern plain) although it is in a different direction. "Chang" means nomadic in Changthang (Ladakh) and the nomenclature can mean a plain plateau where the nomads live. The people living in this sub-division are called Changpas (residents of Changthang) or pastoralists and sometimes Dogpas (residents of highland areas) but Changpa is the commonly used designation to describe the people of Changthang in Ladakh.

The people are Buddhists by faith and practice the Tibetan style of Buddhism. The Changpas of Nyoma block are affiliated to Hemis and Chamray monasteries, which are from the Drugpa school of Tibetan Lamaist

tradition. The Changpas of Durbok are affiliated to Shachukul Monestry which is from the Dikungpa school of Tibetan Lamaist tradition.

The nomads call any one holding cows and doing some agriculture activity a Rongpa and not a Changpa in the true sense because the true Changpa rear only Yaks, Sheep, Goats, horses and no cows.

The Changpas are a very traditional society with lot of place for superstitious and myths. They have huge understanding of environment and conservation issues. Their indigenous knowledge base (to handle all situations) is extensive. They have good understanding of pasture grasses and the rangeland production system followed by them for ages. The society is run through a complex system of customary traditions of reciprocities, rules and regulations, which are never violated. The elders have final say over issues when conflicting situations arise in view of hardened postures of youngsters. The women folk do not exercise much influence in decision-making in the community. (Now the women are being organised into groups for securing equity and rights in all fields). The nomadic areas suffer from social, political and economical vulnerabilities, which threaten the very structure of nomadic life and system in one of the most inhospitable places on earth.

The nomads practice livestock husbandry for economic sustenance and the livestock numbers and category is regulated keeping in mind several important issues. The number of goats increases when pashmina fetches good price and the strength of sheep goes up in every flock when the return is not appreciable. Good rainfall in early spring and snowfall during late autumn and early winter are considered beneficial for good livestock rearing because of pasture growth and preservation. The late autumn snowfall covers slopes and conserves grasses for winter and makes grazing available for young kids during early spring when the plains in the winter reserve pasture area is over grazed and devoid of grasses. Snowfall in late spring or rainfall around early summer makes pasture growth bountiful and a good lamb/kid group is anticipated for the coming season. Lambs are born in December and kids a month later.

This is planned because the nomads believe that lambing and kidding should take place when the dams are still healthy and can nurse the young ones better. Incidentally, these two months are the coldest part of the year and any outsider would prefer avoiding this period to plan kidding/lambing but the decision of the nomads has lot of logic and practical implication.

There are usually some cases of death of young ones due to cold but the nomads feel more comfortable with this situation as they believe

that losing a few is far better than losing all. The nomads of Durbook block and even the agro-pastorals from the area keep a lot of single rig animals (rams with one testicle outside and one inside) believing that single rigs causes females lamb to be born. Calamities are always taken as nature's wrath for the actions of the people or the wrath of some local and personal deities/spirits. People conduct a religious activity to ward off the effect of the wrath of nature and to regain their losses.

At the same time the people watch and improve their own actions and try to adhere to the religious principles. The myths are also used to conserve environment, bio-diversity and other precious resources like water.

The village headman/nambardar is selected on a roaster basis but the person's personal qualities are also kept into consideration. The institution of the headman used to be very strong earlier especially before independence of India, but the post-independence era made this position very weak although this position is still the link between the community and the revenue authorities.

In fact, the revenue department still pays nambardar a paltry honorarium if his appointment is duly endorsed by the Revenue department of Leh.

In the past the nambardar used to collect a fixed amount in cash (kind also) from every family per year to entertain visiting officials and also for his own travel expenses because he had to go to Leh at least twice a year. (In some villages, the visit of the nambardar to Leh used to be an yearly big occasion for the village when the whole village would assemble in pomp and show to see the nambardar off on his journey to Leh (I saw it myself in my village Skurbuchan in lower Ladakh during the sixties).

The nambardar's tenure used to be for at least three years but there can be instances when someone has remained nambardar for many years together. The family's name, in that case, is gobapa/nambardar's family, in such villages. The Rupsho Goba (headman of Korzok) used to be very strong in the Changthang region. He was, more or less, a chieftain in the area and wielded considerable de-facto powers especially in the pastoral areas. The empire (chiefdom) of Rupsho Goba extended from the Himachal border to areas under occupation of China, now in the western Tibetan region. The communities in this vast area used to pay pasture royalty to Rupsho Goba.

At Koyul, an old man narrated the story of Ropsho Goba's visit to his village in past and remembered those days with awe. The locals of Korzok trace the lineage of the Rupsho Goba to a prince from Lhasa by the name

Chang Gyalpo who left his native place after a domestic problem within Lhasa.

The institution of nambardar/goba/ headman is very weak now after the law, order and judiciary systems came in place with independence of the country. Very few people want to become goba as this position is more a headache than a benefit (social position or monetary) for the holder. Hence, the position is passed on at short intervals (sometimes after a year) to the next family under a roster system. The goba position is given to housewives if the bread-earner of the family happens to be in service and working in a distant place).

The monastery also plays a very important role in the social and economic activities of Changpas. The Hemis and Chemray monasteries exercise influence over the social and economic lives of the people. The goba and the monastery (in the nomadic areas of Changthang) collected two different kind of local taxes in earlier years. In most of the villages, the monastery has “Korbas —herder families— who tended livestock only for the monastery”. The monastery collects a set structure of tax every year from these “Korbas” even if the “Korbas” suffer heavy losses due to weather and pasture conditions.

The monastery laws are strong and can not be violated. The taxes collected in the form of butter, dried cheese, wool and even animals are taken by the “gnerpa” (treasurer) of the monastery through a chain of transport system(horse/yaks) provided by different villages. Most of the pasture land in Nyoma block belongs to the Rupsho Goba or to the Hemis monastery and the pasture taxes levied by them in a de-facto manner are honoured even to this day although the goba’s role has diminished to some extent.

The customary rules are very weak now. A consequence is that the management of resources is not done efficiently these days in most parts of Chagthang. The age-old migration rules are crumbling and easy options are tried in all situations. With this situation on the ground, the pastures are miserably denuded especially in the winter reserve areas which are generally the lake and river basins.

The average production of pashmina by each goat was estimated at 165 gms 20 years back. It is now calculated at 225 gms. Wool production is estimated at about a kg per goat/year although the wool production in Changthangi sheep ranges between 0.8 and 2.5 kgs per adult sheep. Ladakh produces 42000-48000 kgs of raw pashmina and about 1.29 lac kgs of wool every year.

A part of the wool produce is consumed locally by the respective communities but pashmina is almost hundred per cent exported out of

the area. The wool, goat guard and yak down are consumed for Goncha (local gown) making, Chhali (rough blanket) making and Pabu (shoe) making. Yak guard is also used to weave fabric for Rebo (nomadic tent). The weaving is done mostly by women but men also do weaving. Shearing of wool is done mostly by men but women do try their hands, sometimes, at Pashmina combing.

Male Yaks are kept in the wild and collected only when required for shifting of camps or for collection of wool. The female Yaks are tended and kept near the camps for milking and care of young ones. Some wool and most of the guard hair is consumed locally for a variety of handicrafts. The Changpas produce a variety of handicraft items and their knowledge about handicrafts is quite enviable. The handicraft production system is evenly controlled by both sexes. There is no system of treadle loom but back strap loom are commonly used. Spinning is done on spindles and Yogshing (stick) or a Shuru (local).

This paper deals with information collected during a case study trip of the area and the recommending/findings by successive meetings organised by the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council in collaboration with ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development) and also deals with the major ideas received from collateral partners through ICIMOD although Ladakh does not have any site where ICIMOD sponsored programmes under RRP-I & II were implemented except that ICIMOD provided training to the range workers and other workers associated with Rangeland use, planning and information gathering over the last 6 years. ICIMOD also provided funds for a case study and for holding workshop on co-management planning. These trainings have tremendously impacted the plan formulations under Sheep Husbandry sector.

Kid/lambs mortality

During bad years up to 97 per cent mortality (oral report of Taglung Morup 1998) is recorded in the flocks of nomads. The mortality is caused by the failure of dams to nurse the young ones which is the single most major problem. Calamity and disease are also responsible during some years. Lambs are born in December- January and kids in January-February every year. This period is the coldest part of the year and weak lambs and kids succumb to inclement weather conditions in cold winter. The 1962 heavy snow fall resulted into 90 per cent mortality in the general flock as stated by Meme Spalges of Rongo who had seen breeders with 300 sheep/ goats left with only 30 at the end of the calamity.

Up to 40% mortality in kids/lambs is not considered a big problem. Mortality level is low during some years when the pastures are good.

Diseases are controlled through vaccination, dosing, dipping and proper medication. Medicines alone do little benefit unless the problem of the forage is solved as a primary requirement for successful livestock production. The Government provides vaccination against PPR and FMD (foot and mouth disease). Some times vaccination against clostridia diseases is also carried out in limited flocks. The Sheep Husbandry Department arranges for all the vaccines, dosing/dipping materials in addition to feed bank facility for the nomads.

The department has 22 feed banks and sale centres where pelleted feed is brought from Punjab and dumped for use during crisis periods. The mortality of lambs/kids is also controlled to a great extent these days by providing lambing/kidding shed facility to every family where lambs, kids and even weak/sick livestock can be housed during winter. It is also a fact that livestock holding size is easily restored within 2-3 years when the conditions —especially fodder/pasture availability —are good enough.

Shortage of Winter Reserve Pastures

The nomads migrate in a vast socially demarcated area during summer and forage is not a problem in summer pastures but they have to come back at the onset of autumn to the winter reserve pasture area which is very limited. The livestock are confined to a very small area for 6-7 months of winter. It is at these pastures that the livestock lose health and the pastures are degraded beyond recognition. Before the 1962 border skirmish with China, the Rupsho nomads migrated to Skakjung on the Tibetan border for about three months in spring and came back only in summer to the Tsokar areas. The Rupsho nomads did not migrate more than four times in a year then. It was a seasonal movement. Now they migrate 9-10 times in a smaller area. The winter station is small but has to hold large number of livestock for unusually longer time. This is responsible for all problems related to pastures.

Government's intervention can not do much as the activities for enhancement of soil moisture level lead to other catastrophic consequences like soil erosion. Modern irrigation technique is very expansive and can not be viably used in the heights of Changthang.

The Sheep Husbandry Department has tried to conserve winter reserve pasture enclosures on community basis on limited scales. The idea was to provide forage to a small migrating community for some weeks when the outside areas are overgrazed and when snow covers pasture areas.

The success indicators have been encouraging so far and the programme may be implemented on full scale in future. The concept of

co-management of natural resources may have to be followed as far as possible for implementation of the winter reserve pasture enclosures. The shortage of winter pasture can be intensely felt if there is heavy snowfall, drought or any other exigent conditions compelling the nomads to obviate from scheduled migration routes at wrong times. The nomads try their level best to conserve the winter and spring pastures for wintering and for the young ones during spring.

Using spring pastures during winter and in the off-season is always seen as unwise decisions as, such a step can starve and kill thousands of young newly born lambs and kids. The locust attack of pasture areas during the summer of 2007 destroyed the winter pastures and as a result a survey team for locust and snowfall effect on winter pasture condition and use pattern found the nomads in deranged locations using spring pasture before time inviting calamity later in spring.

Marketing of products

The Changpas had been an exploited lot. Their livestock products pashmina, wool and meat did not give them the basic amenities of life but sustained only a subsistence livelihood. The products should have made them rich and their economy should have given them the amenities not known to other communities in Ladakh but the Changpas's economic activity is almost considered a polluting activity with less respect and more ridicule at the hands of others in this days of modernity.

In olden time wool and not pashmina occupied the position of importance because the number of sheep used to be more than three-fourth of the flock size the volume of Ladakhi pashmina used to be less due to better quality western Tibetan pashmina easily available in the market. But the 1962 Indo-Chinese conflict and the resultant closure of Indo-Tibetan border deprived the Kashmir shawl industry of the raw material. This happening saw a sharp but sure rise in the value and importance of the limited quantity of pashmina available from Ladakh. Ever since the pashmina price has gone up. The number of goats has also gone up at the cost of sheep in the last four decades.

(to be concluded)

****The writer is District Sheep Husbandry Officer, Leh.***

Land sales in Rajasthan

Mystery continues

Narayan Bareth

The mystery about the clandestine sale of land in border districts of Rajasthan continues to prevail. The State Government did order an inquiry but investigating agencies have failed to establish reasons behind these deals.

Unknown buyers from outside Rajasthan have purchased more than two lakh bighas of land in Barmer district alone. They have not spared the field firing range of Pokhran in Jaisalmer either. What is astonishing is that the sales have also been finalised between the border fencing and zero line.

There is cause for embarrassment for the Bharatiya Janata Party Government in the western state. The party is always raising issues of security of borders. It has faltered in the one it rules.

In the broader picture are stated to be a Chennai-based buyer (in Pokhran) and a Delhi-based private company (it has struck deals worth Rs 210 crores through the son of a BJP leader in Jodhpur). In Barmer district there have been as many as 700 outside buyers and 6500 registered land transactions. The Delhi concern has made purchases in the names of its 514 employees. The possibility that some of them may be bogus is not ruled out.

The Barmer administration has filed criminal cases against 144 such buyers and issued notices to 108 to prove their credentials.

Under the law nobody from outside the border district has the right to visit it without prior permission of administration. Revenue records, on the other hand, show infringements by persons from Punjab, Haryana and Bihar. The Barmer MP, Mr Manvendra Singh, has raised voice against the land deals and is learnt to be unhappy with the pace of the progress of the probe.

The Congress has demanded an inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

**** The writer is a senior journalist based in Jaipur***

(In this column we highlight important developments across the Line of Control in "Azad" Kashmir, as the Pakistan-occupied territory is locally known, and Pakistan as reported in the media there. The following piece has been taken from the website of the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies. It is self-explanatory and is relevant to the present scenario prevailing in the sub-continent)

Fatwas on suicide attacks

After the wave of suicide attacks in Pakistan, a Karachi based Urdu daily "*Ummat*" conducted a survey for the issuance of fatwa (religious decree) against suicide attacks. Ulema from all schools of thought have declared suicidal attacks un-Islamic and forbidden it under the code of Shariah. They said that killing a non-Muslim without a legitimate cause is against the Islamic way of life.

The extract of the decrees are given below:

Maulana Ameer Hamza, Jammal-ud-Daawa

The perpetration of suicide attack is a terrorist act beyond doubt. The attacker kills himself and also accounts for the sins of those who are killed by his attack.

A *Hadith* (saying of Holy prophet PBUH) quoted by Imam Ahmad Bin Humbal says that the killed person will ask God of the crime for which he was murdered on the Day of Judgment. He said that no suicide attack is justified in a country which has Islam as the state religion, ruled by a Muslim ruler and is not under occupation by infidels.

Hafiz Hussian Ahmed, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam

Islam does not allow the killing of innocent people. He said that it is time to mull over the reasons which lead people to such extremes. No power on earth can stop suicide attacks and we can prevent them only by eliminating the causes behind them.

He said that no final Fatwa could be given at this issue because suicidal defensive strategy was adopted by Pakistan army against Indian attack at Chawinda near Sialkot in 1965 war and it had the consent of Ulema. He said that an Islamic war by the Islamic state is altogether a different case

and no parallels can be drawn of such a war with current form of suicide attacks which are targeting civilians.

Dr. Mehmood Ahmad Ghazi

The renowned Islamic scholar Dr Mehmood Ahmad Ghazi said that “a suicide attack is a clear ‘murder’ and its illegality is heightened by the fact that the ruler of the Islamic state is Muslim and the state is not under the occupation of infidels”. The people who are perpetrating this are committing a great sin. Dr Mehmood Ahmad Ghazi said that the Holy Quran regards the killing of a Muslim a sinful act and there is a warning of hell in Hadith for the doer of this crime.

Mufti Muneeb-u-Rehman, Sunni Scholar

Senior Islamic scholar Mufti Muneeb-u-Rehman said that if someone kills an innocent human being considering it unlawful under Islamic teachings, he is committing a *Kabira*(greater) sin and if some one does the same by considering it lawful according to Shariah, he is simply committing *Kufr* (transgressing the contours of Islamic faith). He said that declaring unlawful acts ‘lawful’ and vice versa is tantamount to revolting against the ‘absolute sovereignty of rule of God’ laid down in the parameters of Shariah.

Dr. Anis Ahmed, Jamaat-e-Islami

Renowned Islamic scholar Dr Anis Ahmad said that “the term suicide is very notorious in itself and we need to know the causes of such acts of extremism. The Islamic or un-Islamic status of suicide attacks is far too complex an issue to be sorted out by merely uttering ‘yes’ or ‘no’. After all, what can a Palestinian do when his parents and children have been killed, his house demolished and no means of livelihood is available anymore to him? Should he thank those who victimized him? Inevitably he has to resort to extreme measures of suicidal tactics. When he is pressed against the wall, naturally he uses his body as a tool of war. These are undoubtedly extraordinary circumstances. But in a normal situation, an ordinary reaction is also ‘indecent’ let alone the suicide attack.

Allama Qamber Abbas Naqvi, Shia Scholar

The president of Shia Ulema Council, Allama Qamber Abbas Naqvi said that killing a non-Muslim without a legitimate cause was *‘haram’*(forbidden and illegal according to religious code of conduct) and then attacking and killing innocent Muslims would be illegal to the highest degree. He said that some elements are misleading the young Muslims by presenting suicidal attacks as a service to Islam and causing disrepute to our country and religion. He said that Islam ensured the protection of life, property and honor of non-Muslims then how could it allow the killing of innocent

Muslim fellows. Those who are attacking and killing Muslims and consider themselves Mujahids' are misguided and they will be held answerable for this on Doomsday.

Allama Abass Hussain, Shia Scholar

Allama Abbas Hussain Al Husseni said that suicidal bombers are playing in the hands of western imperialist powers. He said, "Whatsoever the nature of difference, only a Qazi (a judge appointed under Shariah law) can punish the culprits of any crime and he too can not decide on his personal discretion alone, rather he must be guided by Shariah".

Allama Sheryar Aabidi

Allama Shehryar Aabidi said no religious scholar of any school of thought could justify the strategy of suicidal attacks.

Allama Shehshah Naqvi

Those who kill Muslims by brainwashing the youth are enemies of Islam and the government should take stern action against them.

Allama Ather Mashhadi

Islamic teachings can not condone any step which is also contemptible in other religions. He said that the emerging trend of suicidal attacks is un-Islamic and punishable under Shariah. The people who are perpetrating such attacks and expecting rewards from God are totally mistaken. They are causing irreparable damage to the Muslim Ummah.

Allama Jamil Ahmed Naeemi, Sunni Scholar

Allama Jamil Ahmed Naeemi cited a joint fatwa (a religious decree by authentic Muslim scholar regarding some serious matter) that was co-signed by many prominent scholars including Mufti Muneeb-u-Rehman and they all unanimously declared that the killing of any innocent human being is not condonable.

Mufti Qari Raza Al Mustafa

Mufti Qari Raza Al Mustafa Azmi said "those who are involved in this censurable act of inciting the youth to kill innocent people should shun this un-Islamic practice and beg forgiveness from God by offering penance".

(Translation By: Ahmed Yar Ranjha)

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Please add Rs. 50/-, US \$ 3 for outstation cheques
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Publisher, printer, owner and editor : Pushp Saraf.
Printed at Vashima Printers Pvt. Ltd., A-12, DDA Shed,
Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II, New Delhi-110 020, and
published from D-17, Press Enclave, Saket, New Delhi-110 017.

Editorial Office : D-17, Press Enclave, Saket, New Delhi-110 017, Ph. : 26866038

R. No. 72310/99

Price : Rs. 50.00
US \$ 5