



Ambedkar Times

Weekly

Editor-in-Chief: Prem Kumar Chumber

Contact: 001-916-947-8920

Fax: 916-238-1393

E-mail: chumbermedia@yahoo.com, editor@ambedkartimes.com

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Invited Editorial on Mr. K. C. Sulekh Sahib's 95th Birthday Many Congratulations: K.C. Sulekh Birthday

Sh. K.C. Sulekh (born on 20 July 1927) has completed 95 years of his productive and dedicated life to the mission of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He is one of the few of his contemporaries who has been able to acquire education (BA) against all odds. Being a conscientious mind, he got associated with the social cause of his Samaj at the very young age during his school days. Those were the days, when the historic Ad Dharm movement led by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, with the financial support of Seth Kishan Das of Boota Mandi of Jalandhar, was attracting large number of lower castes to rise against the wide spread evil of untouchability and impress upon British Government for the restoration of their long lost human rights including the right to own land, education, government service, contest election and to have their own religion. Sulekh Sahib, as a school going child, contributed in his own way to this noble cause of the Ad Dharm movement by organizing some of his like-minded fellow children into a small music group to sing hymns of Guru Ravidass and other radical Saints of the famous North Indian Bhakti movement. It was during one of such occasions that he came into the contact of Seth Kishan Das, with whom he had a long association as a dedicated Ambedkarite. It was also during his school days that Sulekh Sahib became aware of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar for the first time from his class 8th teacher. His attraction towards Ambedkar mission got further strengthened during his college days at Jalandhar where he lived at the residence of Seth Kishan Das, who was one of the pioneers of the Ambedkarite movement in Punjab. Seth Kishan Das participated along with some of his colleagues from Punjab in the Depressed Classes Conference in Nagpur in 1942 being organized by Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Sh K.C. Sulekh's close association with Seth Kishan Das brought him into mission of Babasaheb from its very beginning in Punjab. During his college education days, Sulekh Sahib became the founding editor of "Ujala", Urdu weekly paper first of its kind of the Ambedkar movement in Punjab.

He has had also the honour of being the General Secretary of the Scheduled Castes Federation of Punjab and to be the Stage Secretary during the visit of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to Punjab (October 27-29, 1951). He got the opportunity to meet many a times Babasaheb at his res-

idence and accompanied him during his three days historic visit to Punjab, travelling in the same personal vehicle of Seth Kishan Das. He was also present in the Parliament House to listen to the famous address of Babasaheb on November 25, 1949; and also at the Ambedkar Bhawan Delhi in 1951 where Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar delivered his address to the large gathering including Ambassadors of the many countries during the celebrations of Buddha Jayanti. Sulekh Sahib joined the Govt. Service in 1952 and retired as Excise & Taxation Officer in 1985. Since 1985, he has been continuously serving the mission of Babasaheb with utmost dedication through his regular columns in various missionary news-papers, magazines, Souvenirs and books. Sulekh Sahib is a living library of the ideas, thoughts and anecdotes relating to the life and teachings of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar; and the Ambedkarite movement of Punjab. He is active member of the Ambedkar Mission Society, Punjab and Ambedkar Bhawan Trust, Jalandhar. Ambedkar Bhawan Trust was built in 1972 in Jalandhar at the same place where Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar delivered his famous address on the evening of October 27, 1951.

Sh. Sulekh Sahib, who has proudly entered into his 94th year of active and dedicated life, lives in Chandigarh along with his wife, Smt. Ajit Kaur, 90 years, son Vijay Kumar, daughter-in-Laws Smt. Neelam Rani, grandsons Sumeet Kumar and Vineet Kumar. His two sons Ashok Kumar lives in New Zealand and Sanjeev Kumar in UK. He has two daughters Smt. Pushpa Rani and Smt. Sangeeta Rani.

All his sons, daughters-in-Laws, daughters and grandsons/daughters are well educated and well settled. All of them support him in his mission of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in their own valuable ways. I wish him many more fruitful years of healthy and happy long life.



Ronki Ram

Shaheed Bhagat Singh Chair
Professor of Political Science
Panjab University, Chandigarh (India)
Email: ronkiram@yahoo.co.in



Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba congratulate Sh. K. C. Sulekh Sahib

Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba congratulate Sh. Sulekh Sahib on his 95th Birthday. We wish him active healthy and charming life ahead. We are proud of him for his long dedicated efforts for the furtherance of the great mission of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar! Once again we wish on good health and happy long life on his birthday!!

Prem K. Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: "Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba"



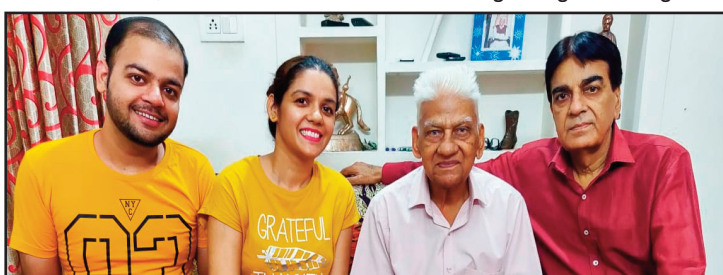
Mr. K. C. Sulekh with Dr. Ronki Ram



Mr. K. C. Sulekh with Mr. P. K. Chumber



Mr. KC Sulekh With his Son Vjay Kumar, daughter-in-laws Neelam Rani, Grandson Vineet Kumar and great-granddaughter



Mr. KC Sulekh with his Son Vijay Kumar, grandson Vineet and Granddaughter Timmy Sulekh



Mr. KC Sulekh with his wife Smt Ajit Kaur

Punjab Economy: Status and way ahead

Present status of Punjab economy

Both in terms of growth rate and per-capita income Punjab is now a laggard state whereas it used to be the front-runner state from early 1970s to early 1990s, both in terms of growth rate and per capita income. However, since 1992, Punjab's growth rate has been below the national average and now ranks at 17th rank among the states. Punjab's per capita income rank slid down from 1st till the end of 1990s to 19th amongst all 28 States of India during 2019-20. Significantly, among the 17 major states (non-special category or general states) Punjab's rank (in terms of year-on-year growth rate) was 13th during 1992-97, 14th during 1997-02, 16th during 2002-07 and 17th during 2007-12. During 2013-14 and 2017-18, Punjab ranked between 18th and 24th among all the 28 states. In 2018-19, Punjab stood at the 11th rank from above. In terms of net per capita income Punjab started lagging behind Maharashtra in the year 1995-96. Leaving aside Goa, Punjab stood at the 2nd or 3rd rank during 1996-97 and 2002-03. Punjab's rank during 2004-05 and 2010-11 oscillated between 4th and 7th rank. But during 2011-12 and 2018-2019, Punjab's rank remained between 11th and 12th position among the states of India. It further slipped down to 19th rank among the states.

The growth rate of agriculture, industry and services sector has been below the national average for a long period. The agricultural growth rate of Punjab has been below the national average since 1992. Out of 39 years (1980 to 2019), secondary sector's growth rate in Punjab has been below the national average for 28 years. The story of Punjab's tertiary (services) sector's growth rate is not much different from the other two sectors. Over the last 40 years, the growth rate of Punjab's tertiary sector lagged behind the national average. Lack of 'political-will' and lackluster economic policies and misplaced development priorities of the successive governments, inter alia, have been mainly responsible for Punjab's contemporary socio-cultural and politico-economic ailments.

It is a known fact that the decade long militancy period changed Punjab's orientation from development to non-development (mainly law and order). This is evident from the declining proportion of development expenditure in the total budget expenditure on revenue account. As compared to 72 percent share of development expenditure in 1980-81, it declined to 66 percent in 1990-91. During the first decade of 21st century it remained between 42 percent and 46 percent. Thereafter it oscillated between 48 percent and 51 percent. In terms of capital expenditure Punjab ranks 11th from above among all the 17 non-special (general) states. In terms of per capita capital outlay, Punjab's rank is 17th. During 2011-12 and 2020-21, capital expenditure was mainly around 0.7 percent of

Punjab's GSDP. Due to under mobilization of revenue and ever increasing debt, Punjab's revenue deficit is highest and fiscal deficit is the second highest among the 17 general category states.

The above scenario necessitates a serious review and informed debate on the development policies and priorities of Punjab so that we may comprehend the fundamental reasons for Punjab's slide down in terms of growth rate and per capita income vis-a-vis national average and other states of India. No denying the fact that being a border state, Punjab has some inherent developmental constraints but it must not be a major reason behind Punjab's relatively declining position among other states of India.

Punjab is passing through a serious financial crisis being reflected in the low own tax-GSDP (gross state domestic product) ratio, rising debt-GSDP ratio, increasing interest pay-



ment and other committed expenditure liabilities. Not only there is grave under mobilization of financial resources, their injudicious/discretionary use, irrational and untargeted freebies/subsidies, financial mismanagement and often off-the-mark development priorities have been mainly responsible for such a dismal scenario. A plethora of election promises (including free electricity, old age pension and financial benefits to women and a lot more) would further aggravate the financial crisis which in turn would impair governance and economic growth in the state.

There has been a huge investment deficiency in the state which in turn had adverse impact on development and employment. Compared to the all India average, Punjab's investment-GSDP ratio has been much below the national average since 1996-97. Had the investment-GDP-ratio of Punjab been equal to the national average there could have been an additional annual invest to the tune of of Rs. 4257 crore during 1996-97 and 1999-2000. The corresponding figure during 2001-02 and 2018-19 could have been Rs.45781 crore.

Paradoxically, all political parties have been indulging in a competitive populism (in terms of low financial resource mobilization, illogical freebies/subsidies and discretionary expenditure) instead of

following a credible road map to raise GSDP growth rate and mobilizing additional financial resources and increasing investment-GSDP ratio. This has led to a continuous rise in debt over the years. The outstanding debt on the government increased from Rs 83099 crore (31.17 percent of GSDP) to Rs. 2.58 lakh crore (42.54 percent of GSDP) and to around Rs.3 lakh crore in 2021-22. It is approximately 4.4 times of the current account revenue of the government of Punjab. The amount of debt-servicing (sum total of repayment of Principal and interest payments) increased from Rs. 8955 crore in 2011-12 to Rs. 32080 crore in 2020-21. Debt-servicing consumed Rs. 32080 crore (99.44 percent) of the gross borrowing of Rs. 32258 crore in 2020-21. In 2021-22 it has reached to Rs. 36512 crore (Principal Rs. 17359 crore and Interest payment Rs. 19153 crore). Debt-GSDP ratio in Punjab is around 45 percent and according to Reserve

dends, rich soil and water are our most important strengths. As such we need to strengthen our strengths and minimize our constraints which would be

possible only by focusing on judicious and efficient use of our strengths and must develop agro-based industries so that we have value addition, accelerate growth rate and employment. This would require sustainable development of the rural non-farm sector. In view of the depleting water-table and deteriorating environment we also promote environment friendly sustainable development. Unfortunately, for the last around more than three decades the successive governments have been mainly pursuing development through ad-hoc policies. Till date the state does not have any agricultural policy. The state's water development and regulatory policy needs a serious review. Even the industrial policy is not focused on the strengths and challenges of the state. The tertiary sector is no exception.

Challenges before Punjab

Punjab is facing multi-dimensional socio-cultural and politico-economic challenges which need to be addressed in a missionary mode. The foremost challenge is to bring more additional financial resources in the consolidated fund of the state. This needs to come out of the denial mode and address the challenge from the front. Efficient and judicious use of financial resources (not the mismanagement of public resources) is another serious challenge before the state. This would require shunning the cheap and illogical competitive political populism. Third challenge is raising investment-GDP ratio and accelerating economic growth and development. This would require an investment friendly; public as well private including NRI investment. Another very serious challenge is huge unemployment and migration of youth and drug menace. All these are intertwined and need a comprehensive solution. Huge external debt, depleting water table, crop-diversification and conservation of environment and natural resources are also very serious challenges before the state. The pre-requisite condition to address the above challenges is to have a compatible political will.

Sector-wise suggestions

Agriculture

Agriculture is facing serious challenges in terms of depleting water table, shrinking employment and declining trend growth rate in net



Dr. Ranjit Singh Ghuman *

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per hectare income and thereby shrinking household income and increasing debt. Increasing suicides by farmers and agricultural labourers is the manifestation of agrarian crisis and farmers' distress. This needs generating employment for the surplus workforce in agriculture which is possible by developing non-farm rural sector with a focus on agro-processing industries, value addition and employment generation. For addressing the depleting water table we shall have to go in for crop diversification aiming at shifting substantial area from under paddy. This would require R&D in developing high yielding seeds and MSP for alternative crops. Besides the state must have well-defined agricultural policy and water policy. Allocating of funds to R&D, crop diversification, and water saving technologies and environment issues is also needed in the budget. The budgetary allocation of Rs. 11560 crore (besides Rs. 200 crore for paddy-straw management and Rs 450 crore for MSP to Moong dal) in the 2022-23 budget is only 4.51 percent (Rs. 483 crore) higher than revised budget of Rs. 10713 crore for the previous year. Enhancing allocation is good but would not be able to address the challenges.

Industry

The industrial sector is almost stagnating both in terms of its share in GSDP and employment. This would require a comprehensive industrial policy with a specific focus on micro, small and medium industries. Significantly, there are nearly 14.65 lakh micro and small units in Punjab out of which 14.56 lakh are micro units which provide employment to nearly 25 lakh persons. These units are facing financial constraints (particularly institutional credit), old technology and skill. Skill-mismatch is the general problem. If these problems are addressed the industrial sector's contribution to state's income and employment can be increased.

Unemployment Scenario in Punjab

Unemployment rate is highest (nearly 8 percent) in Punjab and has emerged as a serious problem. The youth-unemployment rate is 22 percent. Some years ago a note presented in the Assembly indicted that the total unemployment in Punjab is 15 lakh. However, according to my estimates the number of unemployed person in Punjab is between 22 lakh and 25 lakh. The huge number of unemployed persons along with drug menace is behind the main reason for youth's emigration to foreign countries. In view of this the budget is expected to address these issues. The recruitment on basic pay or on contract at lower salaries needs to be on full pay if we want to improve quality of employment. The budget must have adequate allocation for generating employment. The decision to fill-up 26454 vacant posts in the government and to regularize 36000 contractual workers is appreciative but needs to be done more efforts on this front.

Education Sector

Over the period education sector has been the victim of financial crunch (perhaps being the soft target). The budgetary allocation to education was between 16 to 19 percent during 1980-81 and 2001-02 but it declined to 12.37 percent in 2018-19. The budget must enhance the budgetary allocation to at least 20 percent. There has been hardly any regular recruitment in government colleges for the last more so many years. After a gap of about nearly 25 years, the government recruited 1158 Assistant Professors (by taking the selection process out of the PPSC purview) in 2021 but most of them are sub-judicious. As a result large number of teachers' positions is lying vacant. Nearly 35000 positions of school teachers are lying vacant. The situation is no different in universities, ITIs and polytechnic institution. The universities, including PAU, do not have adequate fund to undertake research. Even the regular recruitment is being done on the basic pay which is not a good model of employment. All the vacant positions of teachers at all levels of education must be filled-in on regular basis and on full pay. The proposed budgetary allocation in the FY 2022-23 of Rs. 14668 crore is just 6.44 percent (Rs. 888 crore) higher than the revised estimate of Rs. 13780 for the previous year and not 17 percent as claimed by the finance minister in his budget speech. Enhancing allocation is good but would not be able to address the challenges. The enhanced allocation to technical education (by 48 percent) is appreciative. However, instead of establishing 'eminent schools' there is a need to strengthen the 'adarsh schools' and meritorious schools.

Health Services

Health services, like education, have also faced the heat of financial crunch. The budgetary allocation to health sector declined from 5.49 percent in 1980-81 to 5.13 percent in 2001-02 and further to 3.11 percent in 2018-19. This needs to be raised to at least 8 percent so as to provide efficient health services to all. Rural health infrastructure needs more streamlining. A good number of medicos and paramedicos' positions are lying vacant. All the vacant positions of in the health sector must be filled-in on regular basis and on full pay. The allocation of Rs. 5077 crore, as compared to health in the 2022-23 budget is just 7.61 percent higher (Rs. 359 crore) than Rs. 4718 crore (revised estimates) in the previous year. Enhancing allocation is good but would not be able to address the challenges. The enhanced allocation to medical education (57 percent) is appreciative. However, opening of 16 more medical colleges and establishing of 117 mohalla clinics needs a considered review. Instead of establishing such a huge number of medical colleges the existing medical colleges need to be strengthened. Similarly, instead of mohalla clinics there is a

need to strengthen the existing health delivery system

Central Schemes

It is a known fact that due to lack of contribution (which is mainly due to financial crunch), Punjab is lacking in availing the full benefits of central schemes. MGNREGS is a typical example. There are about 21 lakh job card holder families under MGNREGS and all can be give 100-days guaranteed employment (in 2020-21 just 39 days employment was given) then the government will only have to contribute Rs.1000 crore annually, an additional annual amount of Rs. 600 crore which is nothing for a state like Punjab who, inter alia, is ready to pay Rs. 12000 crore annually to women above 18 years. So it would make sense that just by contributing 10 paise in 100 paise, Punjab can invest Rs. 10000 crore (out of which Centre's share would be Rs. 9000 crore) annually; Rs. 6000 crore as wages and Rs. 4000 crore on material. This would give employment to 21 lakh families (21 crore man-days) in a year would give between Rs 700-750 crore GST to the state. Similarly, there are other central schemes which need attention.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

During the last about 5 years, Punjab on an average got an annual compensation to the tune of Rs 11724 (total Rs. 52758 crore from July 2017 to December 2022) crore. Punjab got Rs. 16575 crore as GST compensation in 2021-22. With the ending of compensation provision with effect from 1st July 2023, the state will lose this amount. This means the Punjab government would have to mobilize additional financial resources to compensate this financial loss.

Allocation of funds for research, generation of data and information

Research and development (R&D) and generation of data and information are sine qua non for formulating informed policies and thereby for socio-economic development. So the budget must have adequate funds for R&D and generation of data and information across all the sectors. The involvement of universities and research institutes would be most useful for this purpose.

Freebies and Subsidies

Given the acute financial crisis and already in debt trap, Punjab government must have a rational approach towards all the freebies and subsidies across the board. All freebies and subsidies must be revisited so that all those who are in a position to do without freebies and subsidies could be identified and pushed out of the purview of freebies and subsidies. Illogical, irrational and untargeted freebies and subsidies is not a good economics and are having an adverse impact on economic growth and employment. Instead of giving freebies (excluding distressed and deserving sections of population) every other person/family must be charged; though at a differentiated/progressive charges. The existing freebies/subsidies and the newly 'committed' free-

bies/subsidies and financial help to some sections are likely to eat up approximately 30 percent of the total revenue return of the government. The interest payment on debt is already eating up nearly 20 percent of the total revenue returns of the government. What is left will not be sufficient to meet other committed expenditure, such as salaries and pensions, not to talk of capital expenditure. In such a scenario, the government would have to raise additional debt resulting into higher debt service. The ground reality is very frightening as freebies and subsidies would eat up Rs 28962 crore in 2022-23. It does not include free bus travel to women. The debt service will eat up another Rs. 36009 crore. Salaries, pensions and retirement benefits will consume Rs. 46317 crore. The total comes out to be Rs.1,11,378 (116.78% of the total budgeted revenue of Rs. 95378 crore). It means there will be revenue deficit of Rs. 16000 crore but it will go up if the budgeted revenue could not be collected.

To stem the rot, consolidated fund of Punjab needs to be augmented by exploiting the entire potential of financial resources. In fact, availability of finances is the necessary condition for resurrecting Punjab economy. Transparent and effective governance, along with taking all the stakeholders on board and firm-political-will, are the sufficient conditions to have the desired results. Further, instead of spending the additionally mobilized financial resources on freebies and subsidies across the board the government must spend on development, education, and health and employment generation. Though taking care of poor and marginalised sections of population is the duty of a welfare state yet freebies and subsidies should be given only to the really deserving sections of the people.

Scope for additional financial resources

Exploiting the full potential of financial resources is sine qua non for increasing investment-GSDP ratio which in turn pre-requisite for economic growth, and generation of additional employment and effective governance. In the run-up to the Assembly elections, the AAP has been claiming that there is huge scope for additional resource mobilization and the same would be exploited and used to give more freebies and subsidies across the board.

My own estimates also show that there is huge scope of mobilizing additional financial resources in Punjab which is as under:

A. Additional financial resources to the tune of Rs 28500 crore annually can be mobilized (without imposing any additional taxes/duties) simply by strict compliance and plugging the loopholes.

B. The break-up is as follows: Rs. 5000 crore excise duty; Rs. 9000 crore GST; Rs. 2000 crore stamp and registration; Rs. 3000 crore mining; Rs. 3000 crore property tax; Rs.

(Contd. on next page)

Update on Cannabis Sales in Sacramento County

Two months ago I wrote a commentary in the Ambedkar Times to explain that the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors would be holding a vote in July on whether or not to place a local tax measure on the November ballot that would allow the County to open up Cannabis retail stores in the unincorporated parts of Sacramento County and receive an extra tax from those businesses. I asked the community to write to me to let me know their thoughts on this, and I promised to report back after the vote. On July 12th that vote took place, so I would like to use this opportunity to fill you in on what happened.

After I wrote that commentary, I was flooded with responses. Broadly speaking, the responses I received on social media were largely in favor of allowing a November vote, and the responses I received via phone calls, e-mails, and physical letters were largely opposed to it. My main takeaway was that the community was fairly evenly split on this issue, which tracks with the responses I have received over the years when I ask about this topic in my yearly community survey.

A few days before the meeting when the final language of the proposal was given to me, I was rather conflicted on what I would do

as I could sympathize with both points of view. Those who wanted me to vote in support noted the medicinal benefits of cannabis and how the people should be allowed to vote on the issue - and those who wanted me to vote in opposition noted the



public health and public safety concerns. But as I reviewed the proposal, two major things stuck out to me that swayed me to vote in opposition. First, while the proposal would only allow this cannabis tax in the unincorporated portions of the county, it allowed every citizen, whether they lived in the unincorporated portions or not, to vote on this. That struck me as extremely unfair, especially given that only roughly one third of the people in the county live in the unincor-

porated area. So a strong majority of the unincorporated residents may oppose this, but it could still pass. For good reason, we don't allow residents of Nevada to vote for California Governor, and we don't allow residents of Canada to vote for the President of the United States - and we shouldn't allow residents of Sacramento City to vote for an issue that only impacts the unincorporated areas.

Second, the money that would be collected by this tax would have gone directly into the county general fund, and could be spent on whatever the Supervisors deemed fit. There are no guarantees that the money would be spent to help solve problems that would sprout up as a result of opening these stores in our local communities - problems like the need for extra law enforcement, and the need for more education to the youth about cannabis. I believe that when taxes are imposed, it is the duty of the government to very clearly define where that money will go. Government has a transparency

problem, and levying taxes without any explanation on how it will be spent only furthers that problem.

The vote to place it on the November ballot needed four votes in order to pass, but it only received three votes so it failed. Immediately afterwards, one supervisor proposed that at the end of July we should revisit this issue and try to fix some of these issues that were presented in the meeting. At that meeting I will once again come with an open mind, and do my best to represent the best interests of my constituents. Thank you for reading - and as always, if you want to contact me, call me at 916-874-5491, or e-mail me at SupervisorFrost@sacounty.net.
Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost represents the 4th District, which includes the communities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, Orangevale, Antelope, North Highlands, Rio Linda, Elverta, and Rancho Murietta.



Sue Frost

Sacramento County Supervisor

Punjab Economy: Status and way ahead

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1500 crore professional tax; Rs. 1500 crore power theft; Rs. 2500 crore transport and cable; and Rs 1000 crore pilferage in the social welfare schemes.

C. Another Rs. 10000 crore can be added to it by moderately rationalizing the tax regime, freebies/subsidies and discretionary spending by the Chief Minister, Ministers and MLAs.

D. Thus in all there is a potential to mobilize additional financial resources to the tune of Rs. 38500 crore. But it requires strong political-will.

E. Merger of Finance and Taxation Ministries in one ministry may be some help in this direction.

F. Besides, every penny should be first brought into the Consolidated Fund of State and the expenditure should be approved by the State Leg-

islature.

G. One MLA-one pension is a good step and would save some financial resources but their income tax should be borne by them. It would be better if the pension is given at the age of 58 years which is the retirement age of the government employees.

H. Judicious and efficient use of the consolidated fund and all other financial resources at the disposal of the government is most essential condition.

I. Discretionary spending should be done only under abnormal circumstances.

The state has witnessed enough of populism; we now need economic rationality to prevail upon political irrationality. The onus of realizing entire potential of financial resources and making judicious and efficient use thereof lies on the AAP

government as people of Punjab has given their unprecedented mandate for the 'change' and the real change would be departure from the past political policies. Preparing a vision for rejuvenating and resurrecting Punjab is an urgent need. That is possible only if the state formulates informed development policies based on the real time data and information and an honest and effective implementation of those policies. It would require an in-depth understanding of Punjab's socio-cultural and politico-economic scenario (past as well contemporary) as without the reliable data and information no informed policy can be prepared.

The government must layout a roadmap for socio-economic development and accelerating economic growth, employment generation, augmenting investment and creating investment climate and tapering off

the unsustainable debt burden. The involvement of domain experts with deep understanding of the socio-cultural and politico-economic ground realities of Punjab (rather than depending only on bureaucrats and seeking advice from the 'so called experts taken on deputation' from Delhi who have shallow understanding of Punjab's issues and no commitment to the people of Punjab), is sine qua non for putting Punjab on the path of all round development.

The people of Punjab shall have to be vigilant about their enlightened self-interest rather than getting into the vicious trap of illogical-competitive-political-populism, otherwise they will have to repent.

* Professor of Eminence,
 Punjab School of Economics,
 Guru Nanak Dev University,
 Amritsar, (Punjab), India



Dr. Paramjit S Takhar, MD

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Goodie Takhar, PhD

FLORAL TRIBUTE TO MATA BACHIN KAUR BIRDI JI

MATA BACHIN KAUR BIRDI PASSED AWAY



Shrimati Bachin Kaur Birdi, wife of Late Shri Lachman Das Birdi, passed away on Sunday, July 10, exactly two weeks before turning 82 years of age, concluding her successful journey through life. Bi Ji was a sibling of 4 - one brother lives in Canada and one sister is in India.

Bachin Kaur Birdi was born in village Patara, Punjab, India, on July 24th, 1940. She added 'Kaur' to her name after her marriage. She was married in India at age nineteen, where her six children were born. (Harbans Kaur + Kamal Jit, Jai Paul + Nirmala, Surinder Paul + Jaswinder, Dev Raj + Harjit, Gurdeep Lal + Narinder, Meena Kumari + Balbir).

Bachin's husband Lachman immigrated to Victoria, BC in 1972 and in 1973 called Fort St. James his home. Bachin Kaur joined her husband in 1976 flying from New Delhi.

She grew up in India, where she was unable to receive an education and even so, there was only one school in her village which was an all-boys school. In Canada, Bachin worked hard and got her driver's licence and was the operator owner of her building maintenance company. She raised and educated the family, and contributed to society in

many meaningful ways. She along with Lachman continued to visit Jalandhar during the winter months and established a school where they financed the education of those less fortunate, as well as provided countless scholarships to promising youth. Bachin also supported a number of other charitable causes that work towards the eradication of poverty and improving education globally.

Biji fought pancreatic cancer for two years. Bachin Birdi will be sadly missed by family and friends including 10 grandsons, 5 granddaughters, and 1 great grandson. Multi-faith funeral services and final prayers were held on July 15th.

There are not enough words that can describe just how important our mother and Bibi Ji was to us and what a powerful influence she continues to be. Biji left many fond memories. She was a very strong and respected human being. Biji will be fondly missed.

With regards,
Family Sources:
Birdi, Badhan, Jassi, Ghera,
Mehmi and Jhally Families



Left to right: Mr. Manish Indian Consul General (Vancouver), Mr. Jai Birdi and his mother Mrs. Bachin Kaur Birdi and his wife Mrs. Nirmala Birdi

Our ("Ambedkar Times" & "Desh Doaba" Weeklies (California) USA) heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and floral tribute to the departed noble soul of Shrimati Bachin Kaur Birdi, wife of Late Shri Lachman Das Birdi, who passed away on Sunday, July 10, 2022. Mother of six children, grandma of ten grandsons, five granddaughters and great grandma of one great grandson, Mrs. Bachin Birdi was only two weeks to compete before she entered 82th year of her fulfilled life on July 10, 2022.

Though she could not become formally literate in her native home town, Mata Bachin Birdi did not allow that to disrupt her journey towards her grand successful professional life in Canada where she contributed a lot in making her large family educated as well as building family business. Mrs Bachin Birdi will be remembered fondly for the cherishing legacy she left behind for her proud family in particular and the vast thriving community in general!

Prem Kumar Chumber
Editor-in-Chief
"Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba" Weeklies
Sacramento (California) USA

Mata Bachin Kaur Birdi's Family and Social Activities in pictures

"BE HUMANE, SERVE THE DESERVING."
Dr. B. R. AMBEDKAR
Educational Organization (Regd.)
(REGD. NO. : DIC/JAL/192 DT. 30TH OCT. 2003)
Head Office : Floret Public School, Ram Nagar, JALANDHAR CITY - 144008 (Pb.) INDIA
Cell No. : Special Mourn - 5
MOBILE : 9810-2078

Dated: 15/07/22

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Educational Organisation is Social Organisation. Besides other social activities from time to time it is running three branches of schools (Floret Public School) in rural areas and Urban slums for benefit of poor students belonging to down trodden, depressed and oppressed.

All members of "Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Educational Organisation (Regd.), students and staff Floret Public School mourn the sudden demise of Smt Bachan Kaur Birdi.

Birdi's family had been very helpful in running these schools esp branch at Ram Nagar Gandhi Camp Jalandhar city an Urban slum.

To mourn the demise two minutes silence was observed in morning prayer of school at Ram Nagar Gandhi Camp Jalandhar city.

Death was also mourn in meeting of A.E.O. CDR B.R. Ambedkar Educational Organisation.

We all pray to almighty to provide sufficient power to near/dear of departed and Birdi's family to bear this loss.

Dr. J. N. Jaiswal
GIDHARTH HOSPITAL



Sri Lankan Crisis and India – An Overview

India – Sri Lanka relations are rooted in shared history. Geography made both the countries 'near abroad' as 'extended neighborhood' - Sri Lanka is separated from India by a narrow channel of sea formed by the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar. Both the countries have democratic polity with composite culture and demography with; India – Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and others and Sri-Lanka – Sinhalese (Buddhists), Tamils (Hindus), Christians (both of Sinhalese and Dravidian extraction), Muslims (Moors) among others. Both India and Sri Lanka got independence almost together in 1947-48. In spite of shared history and shared values, there have been occasions of concern and worry in the relations of both, since independence from the colonial rule, like unexplainable bitterness or family discord

ularly with regard to the Tamil issues. India always, as a matter of policy, respected sovereignty and integrity of India while appreciating aspirations of Tamils of Sri Lanka to assuage and addressing the ruffled sentiments of Indian Tamils.

I have shared this narrative not as an expert on Sri Lanka but as a humble functionary of Indian diplomatic machine who had seen some of the happening first hand when I was posted in Kandy, a beautiful hill resort of picturesque Sri Lanka in the latter half of 1980s. The main task of our Mission in Kandy was to implement Srimavo-Shastri Pact of 1964 to register and repatriate so called stateless Indian Tamils in the central region of Sri Lanka; Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Ratnapura etc. It was a difficult time in the hitherto friendly relations with Sri Lanka. Sinhalese-

halese Sri Lankan soldier (Incidentally, I was an eye witness to this unfortunate happening as a part of the media handling team) – In the wake of curfew and internal violence, we were struck in Colombo for a couple of days - on our request to the High Commissioner JN Dixit, he arranged our helicopter lift to Kandy with the help of Sri Lankan authorities - there was a grenade/bomb attack on our office in Kandy by the terrorists in the bee hours of the night – on getting the information, I rushed to our office in my personal car without giving thought to the security considerations. Later, I was advised that I should not have done that as anything could have happened. The rest is history. There are numerous cherished memories of Kandy – The Kandy Lake where I had lessons for my driving license sandwiched by the

ation those days in Colombo, are adorning high offices and social status in India, are still around name ly; EAM Dr. S. J a i Shankar, Minister Hardip Singh Puri, Ambassador Lakshi Puri among others and are fully engaged in helping Sri Lanka to come out of the current crisis. With this personal background, I come to the current crisis of Sri Lanka and role of India in helping our next door neighbour to overcome these difficulties and be a stable and vibrant partner in development.



Ramesh Chander
Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired)
91-99885-10940



between brothers or friends – India as big with 1350 million and Sri Lanka with only 22 million people as a small a country. Sri Lanka is a small island in the Indian Ocean with a land area of 25,000 square miles. The first matter of concern and worry arose from the Sri Lankan decision to de-franchise some of the Tamil migrants which resulted in 'stateless' status for lakhs of Tamil labour force working in the tea estates of Central region of Sri Lanka. It had a direct bearing on the socio-economic scene in the Southern states of India, particularly Tamil Nadu. India being a big neighbor showed magnanimity and agreed to list those 'stateless' Tamils and allow them to migrate them to India under the Srimovo-Shastri pact of 1964 signed between PM Sirimavo Bandaranaike and PM Lal Bahadur Shastri. India, as it is obvious and evident, always tried to consider and accommodate Sri Lankan concerns – socio-cultural on one hand and economic-political on the other. But the inimical forces in the periphery; Pakistan and China particularly always remained busy and engaged in fishing in the troubled waters – aspirations of Tamil minority, SAARC issues among others with a view to trouble and contain India. India always stood by Sri Lanka; be it development assistance, help and support in solving the ethnic conflict with Tamils, natural calamities like Tsunami, economic and commercial cooperation etc. In the process, India faced undue hostility and blame too as the internal politics of Sri Lanka needed to oppose the Indian role and motivation partic-



Tamil hostilities were occupying the peaks of beautiful Sri Lanka. Indian concern and involvement was obvious and perhaps unavoidable – India decided to send humanitarian assistance by boats in the wake of blockade of Jaffna and other northern districts to control the LTTE by Sri Lanka by armed force – Indian humanitarian gesture was misunderstood and thwarted – India resorted to air-dropping of humanitarian assistance and there was expected hue and cry – we were advised to leave our residences and shift to hotels because of security reasons – PM Rajiv Gandhi visited Colombo and signed agreement with President J.R. Jayewardene for the deployment of the Indian armed forces - IPKF to control the deteriorating situation in the LTTE controlled areas in the northern region of Sri Lanka – PM Rajiv Gandhi was hit in the head by the butt of a gun in the Guard of Honour by a Sin-

majestic Dalada Maligawa (Buddha Vihara where the tooth relic of Lord Buddha is enshrined and the Office of the Assistant High Commission of India, the only diplomatic mission in Kandy at that time – Perahera; the annual event in Kandy when the Tooth Relic is taken out in a colourful procession on an elephant; traditionally by Raja, the elephant gifted by PM Jawaharlal Nehru. Raja was declared the national asset by the Sri Lankan Government. Incidentally, when Raja passed away sometimes in 1988-89, it fell on me to represent the High Commissioner and the Government of India to lay wreath on the dead body of Raja at the Dalada Maligawa – The serene and historical Peradeniya University offered heavenly fresh air and academic excellence. It is a matter of satisfaction to note that some of my senior colleagues, who were engaged, hands on, in diplomatic handling of the situ-

Sri Lanka is a beautiful country with enough natural agricultural sources, including tea and spices, to sustain. It is a touristic destination with excellent beaches and green hill resorts with friendly people to man and run the hospitality sector. Sri Lankans has an 'Island culture' of fun and frolic. Over the decades, the Tamil issue resulted in racial and ethnic problem. The alleged Sinhalese chauvinism to ill treat the minority Tamils tormented the successive governments and retarded socio-economic development of Sri Lanka. To cut the story short, of late, politically strong family of Gotabaya Rajapakse and his brother Malinda Rajapakse and other siblings succeeded in decimating the LTTE and Tamil rebellion in the Northern districts of the country with a heavy hand militarily in 2009. China, as usual, played a part with their ill designs to lessen the traditional Indian influence and say in the matter as a well meaning neighbour. Sri Lanka fell prey to these machinations. China succeeded, ostensibly, in making Sri Lanka a client state with its policy 'debt for assets'. Chinese vested interests and ill advised 'organic farming' destroyed the 'self reliance' for food at the grass roots paralyzed the economy. The Covid pandemic resulted in losses in the tourism sector. The political greed and corruption further aggravated the situation which resulted in unprecedented economic shut down beginning 2019. The main economic sectors of the country - tourism, tea export, apparel, textile, rice

(Contd. on next page)

Sri Lankan Crisis and India – An Overview

(Continue from page 6)
production and other agricultural products suffered huge set back. In addition to these economic sectors, overseas employment contributed highly in foreign exchange earnings but dried down because of job losses with 90% of expatriate Sri Lankans residing in Middle East. Both these economic contributors got hit badly and resulted in economic difficulties for the people. The subsequent economic hardships resulted in popular resentment and protests in 2022. PM Mahinda Rajapakse had to leave making way for Ranil Wickremesinghe. Towards the mid-July, 2022 the situation went out of control with protesters entering the Presidential Palace and residence of the PM. President Gotabaya Rajapakse fled the country to Singapore via Maldives and resigned. The constitutional process to appoint the new President has started would be completed in a week's time, hopefully.

What is the way out? Political stability with democratic credentials and economic recovery with the help of big neighbours like India is the only answer.

Hopefully, the new dispensation in Sri Lanka would understand this. The ground reality is evident. One of the commentators on the Sri Lankan Crisis, Tamanna Salikuddin has rightly said, "The Rajapaksa regime claimed close relations with China but ultimately India was most helpful in the crisis. This year, India has sent over \$3.8 billion to Sri Lanka, in the form of currency swaps, loans, food and fuel aid. Even before this week's acute political disarray, India had pledged a comprehensive plan to increase economic and infrastructure ties between the two nations, a move seen as reassertion of its historic influence in Sri Lanka and as a counter to growing Chinese influence. Other members of the QUAD alliance (the United States, Australia and Japan) have also announced various levels of support for the Sri Lankan economy. Last month at the G-7 Summit, President Biden announced \$20 million of additional humanitarian assistance for Sri Lanka, bringing the total U.S. commitments in 2022 for economic and humanitarian assistance to \$32 million. It is likely that the United States and

other QUAD allies will increase their relief packages for Sri Lankans."

India has taken a due note of the Sri Lankan crisis, obviously and the official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs said, "We are aware of the many challenges that Sri Lanka and its people have been facing, and we have stood with the Sri Lankan people as they have tried to overcome this difficult period." Maintaining that India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbour, the MEA said India has extended 'unprecedented' support of over \$3.8 billion for 'ameliorating the serious economic situation in Sri Lanka. The spokesman further added, "We continue to follow closely the recent developments in Sri Lanka. India stands with the people of Sri Lanka as they seek to realize their aspirations for prosperity and progress through democratic means and values, established institutions and constitutional framework," India cannot afford to be oblivious of the situation in its extended neighborhood. Apart from socio-economic fall out of the unrest in Sri Lanka there are

not only security concerns for India but also economic interests. If the current situation in the island nation persists, it could cause a major disruption to the normal functioning of the Colombo Port. This would be detrimental to India's interest. The port handles over 30 per cent of India's container traffic and 60 per cent of its trans-shipment.

Let us hope the people of Sri Lanka who have proved themselves a democratic lot in the ongoing crisis would succeed in bringing normalcy back to the beautiful island nation. I fondly cherish the memories of our own living in Kandy, a citadel of Buddhist cultural and spiritual serenity.

Postscript: - "From Colombo, some lesson for South Asia – Nepotism and corruption bring ruin. Closed political systems produce bad policy choices. China's economic engagement is predatory. Reckless economics will have consequences. And power is fragile."

- An article by Chanakya in the Hindustan Times of July 17, 2022.



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ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਟੈਂਪਲ, ਪਿਟਸਬਰਗ
(ਕੈਲੇਫੋਰਨੀਆ) ਦੇ ਹਫਤਾਵਾਰੀ ਸਮਾਗਮ

ਜੁਲਾਈ 24, 2022

ਸਤਿਕਾਰਯੋਗ ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਮੇਲ ਬਤਨਾ ਅਤੇ ਬੀਬੀ ਗੁਰਬਖਸ਼ ਬਤਨਾ ਵੱਲੋਂ

ਆਪਣੇ ਨਵਜੰਮੇ ਪੋਤੇ ਰਿਸ਼ਾਨ ਬਤਨਾ ਦੇ ਜਨਮ ਦੀ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਵਿਚ

ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਾ ਪਾਠ ਅਤੇ ਲੰਗਰ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ।

ਜੁਲਾਈ 31, 2022

ਸਤਿਕਾਰਯੋਗ ਭਾਈ ਲਸਕਵੀ ਰਾਮ ਸੁੰਮਨ, ਬੀਬੀ ਪਿਆਰੀ ਸੁੰਮਨ ਵੱਲੋਂ

ਆਪਣੀ ਲੜਕੀ ਬਿੰਦੂ ਸੁੰਮਨ ਦੇ ਵਿਆਹ ਦੀ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਵਿਚ

ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਦਾ ਪਾਠ ਅਤੇ ਲੰਗਰ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ।

ਅਗਸਤ 14, 2022

ਸਤਿਕਾਰਯੋਗ ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਿਆਲ ਚੰਦ ਜੀ, ਕਿਰਨ ਚੰਦ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਵੱਲੋਂ

ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੇ ਪਾਠ ਅਤੇ ਲੰਗਰ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ।

ਅਗਸਤ 21, 2022

ਸਤਿਕਾਰਯੋਗ ਭਾਈ ਚੰਚਲ ਹੀਰਾ ਜੀ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਵੱਲੋਂ

ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੇ ਪਾਠ ਅਤੇ ਲੰਗਰ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ।

SRI GURU RAVIDASS SABHA PITTSBURG (CA)

2150 CRESTVIEW DRIVE, PITTSBURG CA.94565

Reorganization of Board of Directors for 2022-2023

The term of many members of the Board of Directors of the current Managing Committee of this Sabha is due to expire in the month of August, 2022, making room for replacement with new Volunteer Sewadars.

In accordance with the provisions of the By-laws of the Sabha the reorganization of the Board of Directors will be held at Gurughar on August 28th, 2022(Sunday) after the regular weekly function.

Applications from validated new Sewadars willing to serve on the new Board of Directors duly signed by the applicant, proposer and seconder are invited from Sangat so as to reach the

Chairperson by August 21st, 2022.

Gurughar members who have not renewed their membership so far are also requested to do so by paying their annual renewal fee to the cashier immediately.

A panel of three members mentioned below who are well versed with the transitional procedure has also been constituted by the chairperson to screen the applications before final selection/election and ratification by the General body.

(1) Mr. O. P. Balley

(2) Mr. Shashi Paul (3) Mr. Balvir Mall

Kulwant Kaur Banga Chairperson, Date: July 19, 2022

“NANAK NAM CHARDI KALA TERE BHANE SARBAT DA BHALA”

Sangat De Sewadar

Chairperson
Kulwant Kaur Banga

President
Jagtar Bhatia

General Secretary
Abhishek Pal Narabut

Treasurer
Sunita K Singh

Please visit Gurughar website for information:

WWW.SriGuruRavidassTemple.com