



Powering up food

Augmenting foods with nutrients can improve overall health, but it must be regulated

Since a diversified diet that meets all nutritional requirements is difficult to provide, fortification of food is relied upon by many countries to prevent malnutrition. The World Health Organisation estimates that deficiency of key micronutrients such as iron, vitamin A and iodine together affects a third of the world's population; in general, insufficient consumption of vitamins and minerals remains problematic. Viewed against the nutrition challenge India faces, processed foods with standards-based fortification can help advance overall health goals, starting with maternal health. It is imperative, for a start, to make iron-fortified food widely available, since iron deficiency contributes to 20% of maternal deaths and is associated with nearly half of all maternal deaths. The shadow of malnutrition extends to the children that women with anaemia give birth to. They often have low birth weight, are pre-term, and suffer from poor development and lower cognitive abilities. Low intake of vitamins, zinc and folate also causes a variety of health issues, particularly when growing children are deprived. Fortification is a low-cost solution. The benefit is maximised when there is a focus also on adequate intake of oils and fats, which are necessary for the absorption of micronutrients and something poorer households often miss in their diet.

The efficacy of the fortification standards introduced by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) will depend on enforcement. It is important to ensure that all sections of producers meet the norms, since the FSSAI plans to get local flour mills to add premixed nutrients. Making affordable, good quality fortified foods widely available is the key. Only such standardised processes can provide micronutrients to women, and in turn to breastfed children in the first six months after birth. A well-functioning public distribution system is the best channel to reach precisely those sections that need fortified food the most. In the case of children, recent studies show that adding zinc to food during the six months to 12 years growth period reduced the risk of death from infectious diseases and all causes put together. Fortified food, therefore, provides near to medium-term gains, and addresses micronutrient malnutrition concerns at the population level. Yet, as the WHO points out, in the long term, public health goals on prevention and elimination of nutritional deficiencies should aim at encouraging people to adopt a diversified and wholesome diet. Children, including those in school, should get a wholesome cooked meal that is naturally rich, and augmented with vegetables, fruits, dairy and other foods of choice. Fortified foods can help fill the gaps, particularly in areas that are in need of speedy remedial nutrition. It is also vital that food regulation views the issue of affordability as a central concern, because unaffordable fortified food would defeat the very purpose of fortification.

Turkish detour

Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit highlights the need to refresh bilateral ties

There is usually a heightened exchange of diplomatic niceties between two countries just before a high-level bilateral visit. However, the optics and the statements issued by India and Turkey just ahead of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit were distinctly undiplomatic. Just ahead of his trip to India, his first bilateral visit since 2008 when he was Prime Minister, Mr. Erdogan chose to make comments guaranteed to strike a discordant note in New Delhi. He said the Kashmir issue could be resolved through "multilateral negotiations", and offered himself as an intermediary with Pakistan. Mr. Erdogan knows the region well, and is aware of India's consistent position on resolving the Kashmir dispute bilaterally. That his comments came on the heels of his visit to Pakistan last year where he pledged Turkey's support to the host's position on Kashmir made them more pointed. New Delhi also made what could well be considered as a provocative gesture by inviting Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades just days before Mr. Erdogan was due, while Vice President Hamid Ansari made a previously unannounced visit to Armenia. The decision on the visits related to two countries that Turkey doesn't maintain diplomatic ties with was described by India as a "coincidence".

Given this backdrop, Mr. Erdogan's visit did manage to meet the somewhat lowered expectations. His rapport with Narendra Modi is strong, and much bonhomie was on display. Both countries pledged to revive bilateral trade, which has been declining, besides improving air connectivity and increasing tourist arrivals. Mr. Erdogan's comments on supporting India's bid for the UN Security Council membership came with the rider on other countries being included, and for the Nuclear Suppliers Group with the caveat of support for Pakistan. But it is certainly a start that could lead to deeper engagement on the two issues. Significantly, while condemning terrorism he mentioned only Naxal violence and did not refer to terrorism emanating from Pakistan. India-Turkey ties date back centuries: Mughal rulers and the Sultans of the Ottoman Empire exchanged diplomatic missions. The poet Rumi and the Sufi movement there found easy synergy with the Bhakti and Sufi movements here. In the 20th century India's freedom fighters supported the Turkish independence movement. Turkey under Mr. Erdogan has in recent years turned away from the old equation, as he sought to bolster his image as a leader of the Islamic world. It is to New Delhi's credit that it chose to persist in its diplomacy with this important West Asian country, with the hope that sustained contact will refresh the relationship in a way that reflects shared concerns and is not hyphenated with ties with Pakistan — as India has been able to do with the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Winning back the Valley

Delhi must make an open appeal for peace in Kashmir accompanied by consultations with all segments



M.K. NARAYANAN

The deteriorating situation in Jammu and Kashmir, together with strained relations among the Agenda for Alliance partners in the State, obviously prompted the meeting between Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The April 24 meeting covered various measures to deal with the violent protests that have rocked the Valley lately, but the main outcome seemed to have been that the Bharatiya Janata Party-Peoples Democratic Party alliance would continue.

The BJP-PDP 'soft alliance' may have survived another rough patch. Kashmir, however, does not seem to be going anywhere. This may be par for the course as far as J&K is concerned, for in the evaluation of sceptics the future of Kashmir is almost always more of the same. The argument is that Delhi is, by and large, uninterested in changing its course, and is content with providing puerile explanations for the lives lost and the recurring crises that afflict the State. For alliance partner PDP, having lost its way as far as governance is concerned, it is currently more intent on clinging to the Alliance and the Srinagar gaddi. The future of Kashmir, hence, is nobody's concern.

More complex yet

If, during the latter part of 2016, Kashmir was portrayed as confronting one of its gravest crises ever, the situation in the Valley today is to all intents and purposes far more complex. The violent protests, with a high number of killed and injured, have hardly come down; the patterns set following the death of Burhan Wani in an encounter in July 2016 also continue.

No one in the Establishment, either in Srinagar or in Delhi, seems to know why the violence is continuing. The unchanging nature of the Kashmir scene since late 2016 and extending into 2017 is beginning to worry even those who

have for long been inured to violence and ideas of a change in plan, their sole concern having been ensuring that Kashmir remains an integral part of India.

Today it is not so much the dreaded foreign militants as the 'unattached militants' who are responsible for the bulk of the current wave of violence. They do not appear to have a direct link to pro-Pakistan militant outfits such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, though some linkages with the local Hizbul Mujahideen may exist.

The leaders are unrecognisable, and specific causes undecipherable. Pakistan has not moved away and continues to instigate violence, the latest attack being on an Army camp in Kupwara (in which three Army men were killed), patterned on earlier attacks in Uri and Pathankot. The new threat comes from an entirely different source.

Consequently, the refrain of external instigation and Pakistan's role is inadequate to explain the current imbroglio. Urging the security forces to exercise restraint and avoid collateral damage during operations also makes little sense. The issues are far deeper than urging all stakeholders to allay the apprehensions and misgivings of the Kashmir youth. Something very different has occurred and something new needs to be attempted.

The unorganised - and even divided - nature of the protest movement carries the danger that it could turn into an Intifada, a kind of people's uprising with no known leaders, and increasing numbers of trouble-makers, all portraying themselves as leaders of the movement. It carries deep risks for both domestic and international reasons. It is something that India must prevent before it actually takes shape, and 'martyrdom' becomes the new normal.

The moot question is whether India can, and is willing, to handle the truth - bite the bullet in other words. India could continue to acknowledge that those responsible for the past violence have not abandoned the scene, but will need to admit at the same time that a change is taking place behind the scene. New faces of militancy had emerged. Amongst these are a large number who were previously



seen as India's hope in the battle for normalcy in Kashmir, and were willing to stake their future in India.

Since 2008, the Valley has witnessed several waves of unrest. In 2008 and 2010 Kashmir went through a particularly difficult period, but the main instigators then were those who were trained by Pakistan, and the bulk of those involved were inspired by Pakistan. Since 2016, however, it is the 'unattached militant' who has been in the forefront of the struggle. What could be the explanation for this?

As in many other areas, truth tends to be sporadic here, and reality obscure. It would seem that after the dangerous 1990s, militancy has once again regained social acceptance. To an ever increasing number of youth, the profile of violence stands in contrast to the hypocritical utterances of the authorities in Srinagar and Delhi.

As of today, the Agenda for Alliance, the PDP, Hurriyat leaders like Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Mirwais Umar Farooq, the erstwhile secessionist leaders like Yasin Malik all stand marginalised. Anger is the dominant sentiment, as epitomised by the violent protests and the near total boycott of the recent Srinagar poll. The message sent out is clear. Peace cannot be enforced by authoritarian means or by fiat.

Episode upon episode, Kashmir is steadily unravelling. Normalcy is tending to be episodic. Over and above this is the emergence of what can only be termed as 'stra-

tegic falsehood'. Social media tweets and retweets are altering ground realities. Hyperbole is making a mockery of truth and providing scope for still more lies. The only realities are: the dead, the wounded, the martyr and, of course, the authorities who are the villains.

The authorities are losing the propaganda war. Social media is putting out its own account of events and encounters, aided and abetted by several thousands of social media accounts operating from across the border. This is what is providing oxygen to the 'unattached militant', and more significantly, leading to a 'rainbow coalition' between the 'unattached militant' and the 'Deep State' in Pakistan.

Councils of despair are not of any use. Putting the blame on the ruling coalition for the present morass in Kashmir, as former Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah has done recently, hardly helps. His assertion that India is heading towards disaster is again of little use. The suggestions that he has to offer are a repeat of what has previously been said and tried.

Restraining and restricting Pakistan's ability to fish in troubled waters will not be easy. Any expectation that the U.S. would lean sufficiently on Pakistan to impel the latter to avoid meddling in Kashmir needs to be given up. Pakistan is crucial for the U.S. to sort out its Afghan imbroglio. Within Kashmir, the Hurriyat has, today, lost much of its relevance. The PDP-BJP alliance is floundering and has few

real insights into what is taking place. Delhi seems far removed from the reality of the grim scenario unfolding in the Valley. Leaving matters to intelligence and security agencies, and the Army would be the least viable option.

Where do we go from here? To begin with, policymakers must ponder deeply as to why ordinary citizens are prepared to gravitate to areas where actual encounters are taking place risking death and injury even though they are not involved in the protests.

Resorting to pyrotechnics such as the novel idea of tying a security vehicle and driving it through a crowd of agitators are best avoided. Today's agitators are angry and reckless, but it is they who are redefining the nature of protests and reshaping the contours of the movement.

Back to the drawing board

The situation thus demands a complete makeover. There is a need to go back to the drawing board and effect changes in Kashmir's Constitution that were introduced post the 1960s. This would help establish a measure of credibility to India's claims that it is not seeking to undermine the autonomy that Kashmir prizes so much. What these are will need to be carefully worked out by teams of constitutional and other experts.

Immediately, however, what is most crucial is to make an open and impassioned appeal for peace in the Valley accompanied by meetings and consultations at several levels. No segment should be excluded, including separatists and the Hurriyat. Some of the ideas set out in the 'backchannel' proposals (2005-2008) should be revived. Jobs for Kashmiri youth must be a priority and a massive job-oriented programme launched. India could consider swallowing its pride and reopen talks with Pakistan, not so much hoping that Pakistan would cooperate but to assuage the 'hardliners' in Kashmir. Detaching from a muscular policy to a more reasoned one has become essential.

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Refuge from the sinking islands

We need an international forum to help small island nations threatened by rising sea levels

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Tuvalu is a small island nation in the South Pacific and home to about 10,000 people. It is likely to be under water in less than 70 years. Due to the rising sea level caused by global warming, other low-lying island nations such as Kiribati, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, Micronesia and Nauru are destined to suffer the same fate.

The 52 low-lying vulnerable island nations sustain 62 million people and emit less than 1% of global greenhouse gases (GHGs), yet are among the first victims of climate disruption. High sea levels have already resulted in displacement of people in several small island nations. These island nations require immediate remedies, including migration, compensation and reduction in GHG emissions.

Broad but urgent remedies

More people are likely to migrate due to slow-onset processes of en-

vironmental degradation such as inundation, desertification, soil erosion and changing coastlines than sudden-onset events like storms and cyclones.

The total population in the South Sea region is projected to reach in excess of 18 million by mid-century, which could result in between 665,000 and 1,750,000 people migrating to other regions of the world. A sea level rise of 0.5 to 2 m could leave between 1.2 and 2.2 million people displaced from the Caribbean Sea and the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This will set off domestic as well as cross-border migration.

The international community does not yet realise its responsibility to enable such migration. For example, on request from Tuvalu's Prime Minister, New Zealand agreed to allow a meagre 75 Tuvaluans to relocate annually to their country, a migration that should stretch over 140 years. Australia refused to make any offers when approached similarly.

The cost of adaptation is bound to be exorbitant. The capital cost of sea level rise in the Caribbean Community countries alone is estimated at \$187 billion by 2080. The Pacific Possible programme of the World Bank predicts the cost of adaptation to be \$18,500 per person for Marshall Islands and \$11,000 for Solomon Islands over a period of 30 years from 2012. Legal analysts are considering the possibility of an international compensation commission which could address the burden of adaptation expenses on the island nations through an international fund.

With the policies in force today, GHG emissions are projected to grow by 50% by 2050. Any amount of decrease in GHG emissions cannot save the islands from sinking, but a significant decrease in emissions could delay the island nations from becoming uninhabitable, thereby postponing the burden of accommodating mass migration.

While these are broad remedies that the sinking island nations im-

mediately require, they are hardly exhaustive. There is a need for a wide range of varied remedies, mostly adaptive, such as coastal protection, population consolidation, rainwater harvesting and storage, alternative methods of growing fruits and vegetables, human resource development and research and observation. However, in any remedial adaptive mechanism employed, high costs are unavoidable.

A single-purpose forum

The only practical way to attain these remedies seems to be to reinvigorate political pressure and negotiate globally to arrive at a forum that could deal with the issue.

The primary focus of the forum so created must be to ensure adequate and appropriate remedies as discussed above. The forum must enable negotiations regarding the legal status of migrants and develop adaptive strategies in the destination country to guarantee and to protect dignity and cultural iden-

tity of the displaced in the destination country. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) obligates countries to provide finance to resist global warming. By extending such existing obligations through political pressure and diplomacy, the forum could ensure compensation to the island nations in the form of contributions from party countries by managing a fund created in this regard.

Lastly, the forum would require a tribunal to assess the case presented by each island nation and to decide whether help from the international community is required. The tribunal could then invoke appropriate measures such as multilateral negotiations or directions that enable migration, compensation and other remedies that could save the people of the sinking small island nations.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Soldier deaths

The gruesome act of killing of our jawans, committed allegedly by Pakistani troops, was an act of extreme savagery and barbarism ("Pakistani troops kill, mutilate two jawans," May 2). Having coming out of its 'silence mode', India now believes in retaliatory action. That its condemnation is not empty rhetoric was demonstrated last year through surgical strikes across the Line of Control. We hope the sacrifice of these soldiers, who died in service of the nation, does not go in vain and that our forces show determination in avenging the deaths.

N. VISVESWARAN,
Chennai

It looks like the Pakistan Army's barbarity knows no bounds. While India's response should be

proportionate, that by itself will neither restore normality along the LoC nor deter the rogue Pakistan Army from repeating such acts. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Narendra Modi does not seem to have a credible action plan to either rein in Pakistan or calm the Valley. The footage of young girls in school and college uniforms hurling stones at our security personnel should be a wake-up call for our leaders. Mr. Modi must listen to saner voices and resume meaningful political initiatives to defuse the situation.

S.K. CHOUDHURY,
Bengaluru

Such incidents are always followed by a demand that India sever all diplomatic relations with Pakistan and use pressure to isolate the neighbour internationally.

We should ponder over whether this would actually result in a solution to the hostility between the two nations. Keeping away from the discussion table has only intensified the mistrust and hence avenues for dialogue need to be kept open at all times. China stands firmly with Pakistan and recently even Russia has sent signals that it is not averse to a good relationship. The U.S., though it reprimands the country time and again, continues its financial aid. Under the circumstances, isolating Pakistan is not going to be an easy task. Only uninterrupted diplomatic efforts will bring in sanity in its behaviour.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

In the name of cows

India has been witness to several incidents of

communal violence in the name of the cow, beef and cattle since 2014, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government came to power ("Two suspected 'cattle thieves' lynched in Assam's Nagaon," May 2). No strong action is taken against the vigilantes, making the common man feel that by normalising the violence of non-state actors, the ruling party is sponsoring an assault on the Indian state itself. It has become very easy for some of the so-called 'cow protectors' to kill Muslims and later justify it, knowing that the law enforcement machinery will back them and will take action not against them but, on the contrary, against the victims.

If this flirtation of the state machinery with vigilantism continues, India, like Israel and Pakistan, could soon

become a democracy that provides unequal treatment to different communities.

IMTIYAZ SHAMIM,
Aligarh

Korean Peninsula boils

Noam Chomsky reminded recently in an interview that an attack on North Korea would unleash massive artillery bombardment of the South where 28,500 American troops are stationed. The U.S.'s military manoeuvres near the North are highly provocative and have exacerbated an already explosive situation. North Koreans have much to fear. We must keep in mind that U.S. aircraft carpet-bombed North Korea in June 1952 and then proceeded to destroy the Sui-ho Dam, releasing a huge quantity of water that destroyed villages and crops. Destroying a dam is a

serious war crime for which it was never held accountable.

A solution should involve de-escalation from both sides. North Korea should be forced to freeze its nuclear programme and, as a quid pro quo, the U.S. should halt its joint operations with South Korea and gradually withdraw its troops from the Korean Peninsula and Japan. There is universal revulsion for the North Korean leadership but its basic instinct for survival is understandable. It must be having in mind the fate of Muammar Qadhafi of Libya who paid the ultimate price after he gave up his nuclear programme.

TEJINDER UBEROI,
Los Altos, California

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