

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 1

समुचित प्रक्रिया जरूरी

लड़ाकू विमान या हेलीकॉप्टर जैसे जटिल युद्धक हथियार खरीदने का काम आसान नहीं है। नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक ने वायु सेना के लिए की गई मझोले लड़ाकू विमानों की खरीद के ऑर्डर पर 660 तथा रडार सिस्टम पर 42 विशेष टिप्पणियां की हैं। यह प्रक्रिया इतनी सीधी सपाट भी नहीं कि बिना सोच विचार पूरी कर ली जाए। क्योंकि तब अधिकांश बोली लगाने वाले एकबारगी ही अयोग्य घोषित हो सकते हैं। व्यक्तिगत स्तर पर ऐसी विशेषताएं या उत्पाद की विशिष्टताओं को महत्व दिया जा

सकता है जो यह तय करने में मदद करें कि क्या बेहतर हो सकता है और क्या नहीं? यह अक्सर निर्णय से जुड़ा मामला होता है। वास्तविक तौर पर देखें तो उपयोगकर्ता की प्राथमिकता की भी एक अहमियत होती है। वायु सेना के साथ भी यही मामला है। शुरुआती चरण में उसने बार-बार इस बात पर जोर देना जारी रखा कि उसे मिराज की आवश्यकता इसलिए है क्योंकि करगिल युद्ध में इस विमान का प्रदर्शन उल्लेखनीय रहा था। क्या 2012 में मिराज के उत्तराधिकारी के रूप में राफेल के

चयन के लिए भी वायु सेना का ऐसा ही दबाव था, हालांकि उस वक्त उसे कामयाबी नहीं मिल सकी।

यह दो ऐसी चीजों के बीच चयन हो सकता है जिनमें बहुत कम अंतर हो। यकीनी तौर पर यूरोफाइटर भी राफेल के समान ही बेहतर रहा होगा क्योंकि इसका भी चयन किया गया था, और स्वीडन की बोफोर्स गन का फ्रेंच विकल्प भी उतना ही दमदार रहा होगा। परंतु क्या यूरोफाइटर का चयन करने से उसे भारत के लिए खास जरूरतों के मुताबिक उन्नत नहीं बनाना पड़ता? और राफेल को इस रूप में ढालने में लगी 140 करोड़ डॉलर या कुछ अधिक की राशि खर्च नहीं करनी पड़ती? सबसे बढ़कर कूटनयिक निहितार्थ भी चयन को प्रभावित कर सकते हैं और करते हैं। आखिर इस बात की और क्या वजह हो सकती है कि भारवाहक हेलीकॉप्टरों की मानक दर बदली गई, वह भी बोलियां खोले जाने के बाद? ऐसे

में एक ओर जहां अंकेक्षण की बातों को गंभीरता से लिया जाना चाहिए, वहीं व्यावहारिक बातों का भी ध्यान रखा जाना चाहिए।

ऑडिट रिपोर्ट भी हथियार खरीद की जटिल रिपोर्ट से आसान नहीं होतीं। ऐसे में यह समझ होनी आवश्यक है कि आखिर क्यों सीएजी रक्षा मंत्रालय के इस बात पर जोर देने पर चुपचाप मान गया कि राफेल अनुबंध में वित्तीय गोपनीयता का प्रावधान है।

जबकि अन्य तमाम हथियार खरीद सौदों से जुड़े वित्तीय आंकड़े सीएजी की उसी रिपोर्ट में साफ देखे जा सकते हैं। यह भी जाहिर है कि सीएजी ने राफेल की वित्तीय गारंटी न दिए जाने के कारण हुई बचत की राशि का उल्लेख न कर भी सरकार को राहत दी है। अंकेक्षकों के लिए काफी कुछ है।

क्या हथियार खरीद की यह विस्तृत प्रक्रिया इसलिए कम गुणवत्ता की है क्योंकि यह इतनी

विस्तृत है? इस समीकरण में समय को कारक मानकर देखिए। कई मामलों में चयन प्रक्रिया में ही 8 से 10 वर्ष का समय लगता है और इस दौरान रक्षा सेवाओं को प्रतीक्षा करनी होती है। कई बार तो इसके बाद भी खरीद को अंजाम नहीं दिया जाता। कई बार अंतरिम तौर पर

तकनीक बदल चुकी होती है। क्या प्रतिस्पर्धी बोलियों के बीच चयन की संक्षिप्त प्रक्रिया संभव है? क्योंकि

हाल के दिनों में तो अधिकांश खरीद बिना ऐसी बोली के हुई है। जहां तक लेनदेन की बात है, शायद ही कोई होगा जो सोचेगा कि इतने बड़े पैमाने पर होने वाले सौदों में पैसे का लेनदेन नहीं होता होगा। ध्यान रहे कि ये निर्णय कई स्तरों पर, कई वर्ष में लिए जाते हैं और चयन करना इतना जटिल होता है कि इनमें हेराफेरी की काफी गुंजाइश रहती है।

इस बीच बड़े सवालों का कोई उचित जवाब



विनय शिन्हा

पाकिस्तान ने खुद पर ही चला दी बंदूक

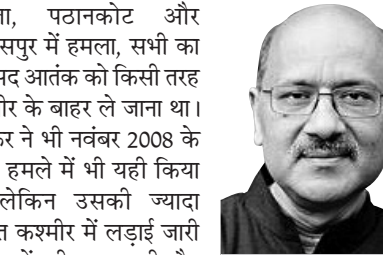
पुलवामा का आतंकी हमला पाकिस्तान के लिए काफी बड़ा दांव बन गया है। लेकिन उसने यह दांव भारत में `गलत` सरकार के दौरान खेला है।

दक्षिण एशियाई मामलों के अमेरिकी विद्वान स्टीफन पी कोहन की पाकिस्तान की सामरिक सोच को लेकर एक अनूठी व्याख्या है। कोहन के मुताबिक, पाकिस्तान अपनी कनपटी पर बंदूक रखकर दुनिया के साथ बातचीत करता है, मानो कहता हो कि ‘जो मुझे चाहिए वह दे दो नहीं तो मैं अपना भेजा उड़ा लूंगा’। फिर आपको उसकी फैलाई गड़बड़ी से जुझना पड़ता है। क्या पाकिस्तान ने पुलवामा में उस बंदूक का ट्रिगर दबा दिया है?

पहली बात, इस ख्याल को अपने दिमाग से निकाल दीजिए कि यह हमला घरेलू आतंक की उपज है। यह फिदायीन आतंकी एक मतांध भारतीय कश्मीरी था। इन वजहों से यह हमला पूरी तरह से भारतीयों द्वारा सोचा-समझा और अंजाम दिया हुआ नहीं हो सकता है:

हमले की जिम्मेदारी जैश-ए-मोहम्मद ने ली है जो पूरी तरह पाकिस्तान में स्थित और आईएसआई के निर्देशों से संचालित होने वाला संगठन है। भले ही कट्टरपंथ का असर और इसकी प्रेरणा स्थानीय हो सकती है लेकिन ऐसा कोई सबूत नहीं है कि इतने बड़े पैमाने पर विस्फोटक अनाड़ी स्थानीय समूहों के पास उपलब्ध रहा हो। उनके लिए विस्फोट ट्रिगर और टाइमर की कार्यप्रणाली को भी समझ पाना मुश्किल है। हमला अंजाम देने के पहले रिकार्ड वीडियो को देखिए। हमलावरों की भाषा कश्मीरी अवाग की शिकायतों या बदले वाली न होकर बाकी हिस्सों के मुसलमानों को उकसाने वाली है। बाबरी मस्जिद और गुजरात का जिक्र किया गया है और ‘गोमूर पीने वालों’ के खिलाफ बगावत करने की अपील ‘अपने सभी मुस्लिमों’ से की गई है। यह लश्कर-ए-तैयबा की सोच से कहीं अधिक जैश की राय है, स्थानीय कश्मीरियों की तो कतई नहीं।

यह हमला जैश के पिछले कारनामों की शैली से पूरी तरह मेल खाता है। वर्ष 2001 में श्रीनगर में विधानसभा पर आत्मघाती हमला, उसी साल संसद भवन पर आतंकी



राष्ट्र की बात
शेखर गुप्ता

हमला, पठानकोट और गुरदासपुर में हमला, सभी का मकसद आतंक को किसी तरह कश्मीर के बाहर ले जाना था। लश्कर ने भी नवंबर 2008 के मुंबई हमले में भी यही किया था लेकिन उसकी ज्यादा ताकत कश्मीर में लड़ाई जारी रखने में ही लग रही है। वैश्विक दबाव में लश्कर के सैन्य हुक्मरान उसे पाकिस्तानी राजनीति में लाना चाह रहे हैं।

वहीं जैश आकार में छोटा होने के बावजूद अधिक खतरनाक, साधन-संपन्न और पाकिस्तानी खुफिया एजेंसी आईएसआई का चहेता भी है। जैश ‘असददार’ हमलों के चयन में भी अधिक सजग रहा है। हम आईसी-814 विमान कांड से ही जैश की साधन-संपन्नता को जानते हैं। उसने काठमांडू से उड़ान भरने वाले इस भारतीय विमान को अगवा किया और सुरक्षित पनाहगाह कंधार तक ले गया। उसने यात्रियों की सुरक्षित रिहाई के एवज में भारतीय जेलों में बंद बड़े आतंकी सरगनाओं की रिहाई की मांग रखी। कई अनुसंधानों में यह बात पुख्ता हो चुकी है कि अपहरणकर्ताओं को काठमांडू तक पहुंचाने, कंधार में तालिबान के जरिये अजहर की सुरक्षित रिहाई तक की समूची प्रक्रिया की निगरानी आईएसआई ने ही की थी। पाकिस्तानी सत्ता प्रतिष्ठान और आईएसआई के लिए मसूद अजहर एवं जैश की अहमियत लश्कर और हाफिज सईद से कहीं अधिक है। जैश उसकी ताकत बढ़ाने वाला मुख्य संगठन है। चीन भी इस बात को मानता है इसीलिए वह शर्मनाक ढंग से उसका बचाव भी कर रहा है।

पुलवामा हमले के आत्मघाती युवक का स्थानीय होना कोई अचरज वाली बात नहीं है। अब तक के अपने सभी हमलों में जैश ने भारतीय कश्मीरियों की अहम भागीदारी रखी है। संसद हमले में शामिल रहा अफजल

जवाबी कार्रवाई के बौर ही निकल गए हैं, हालांकि कुछ गोपनीय सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक जरूर हुई। वाजपेयी और मनमोहन सिंह के दौरान भारत बाध्यकारी कूटनीति, पाकिस्तान पर वैश्विक दबाव बढ़ाने और मूलतः शांतिवादी रवैया रखने वाली सामरिक मनोदशा के चलते अपने गुस्से भरे दौर से निकलने में सफल रहा था। भारत की सोच यही थी कि किसी भी उकसावे की कार्रवाई का हद से ज्यादा जवाब नहीं देना है। लेकिन मोदी सरकार में ऐसा धीरज नहीं है। यह सरकार मनमोहन और वाजपेयी समेत पिछली तमाम सरकारों को उनकी ‘कायरता’ के लिए जिम्मेदार मानती रही है। उड़ी में सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के बाद मचे शोर और उससे हासिल राजनीतिक पूंजी को देखें तो इसकी कोई उम्मीद नहीं है कि वह खुद पर लंबे समय तक काबू रख पाने में सफल होगी। पाकिस्तान को जवाब मिलने जा रहा है। यह कोई नहीं जानता है कि ऐसा कम, कहां और कैसे होगा लेकिन इसमें लंबा वक्त भी नहीं लगेगा।

जवाबी कार्रवाई जल्द ही हो सकती है। यह सबकी नजरों में आने वाला, गहरे शोर

वाला और विजयी बदले के दावों में लिपटा होगा। भारत में चुनाव अभियान शुरू होने में अभी कुछ दिन बाकी हैं। ऐसे में मोदी नहीं चाहेंगे कि दोबारा सरकार बनाने के लिए जनता के बीच जाने के पहले उन पर पुलवामा का दाग लगा रहे।

कानाफूसी

क्रिया-प्रतिक्रिया

पिछले दिनों समाजवादी पार्टी के संस्थापक मुलायम सिंह यादव ने संसद में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की तारीफ करके और उनके दोबारा प्रधानमंत्री बनने की कामना करके राजनीतिक जगत में हलचल मचा दी थी। इसके बाद लखनऊ में ऐसे पोस्टर लगे देखे गए जिन पर लिखा था कि देश के 125 करोड़ लोगों की भावनाओं को लोकसभा में रखने के लिए मुलायम सिंह यादव का धन्यवाद। उसी दिन बिहार की पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री और मुलायम सिंह यादव की रिश्तेदार राबड़ी देवी ने उनके बयान पर निराशा प्रकट की। उन्होंने कहा कि यादव ने जो कुछ भी कहा उसकी आज की राजनीति में कोई प्रासंगिकता नहीं है। उन्होंने तो यहां तक कह डाला कि अब मुलायम की स्मृति उनका साथ छोड़ रही है।

किशोर का विस्तार

प्रशांत किशोर की इंडियन पॉलिटिकल ऐक्शन कमेटी (आई-पैक) राजनीतिक सलाह मशविरे के क्षेत्र में बहुत तेज गति से अपना कार्य क्षेत्र बढ़ा रही है और दिलचस्प है कि इसका किसी राजनीतिक विचारधारा से न जुड़ाव है और न ही दूरी। जानकारी के मुताबिक महाराष्ट्र में आई-पैक को शिवसेना के साथ काम करने का प्रस्ताव मिल चुका है जबकि कई अन्य राज्यों में होने वाले विधानसभा चुनावों में उसे भारतीय जनता पार्टी के साथ काम करना है। जानकारी के मुताबिक आई-पैक केप्टन अमरिंदर सिंह के नेतृत्व वाली पंजाब सरकार को नीतिगत सुझाव देने का काम भी करेगी।

आपका पक्ष

बेरोजगारी का स्थायी समाधान जरूरी

बेरोजगारी भारत की सबसे बड़ी समस्या बनकर उभर रही है जिसे हल नहीं किया गया तो इसके नतीजे भयानक हो सकते हैं। इस समस्या का समाधान करना सरकार के लिए बड़ी चुनौती बन गया है। इसके लिए सबसे बड़ी बाधा हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था है जिसमें बदलाव लाने होंगे। कॉलेज में सिद्धांत आधारित पढ़ाई होती है लेकिन उद्योगों के हिसाब से केवल सिद्धांत की पढ़ाई कारगर नहीं हो सकती। नौकरी और पढ़ाई के बीच यह खाई काफी गहरी होती जा रही है। असंगठित क्षेत्र में ठेकेदारी भी एक बड़ी समस्या है। इसके जरिये कामगारों का शोषण होता है और कम कर्मियों के सहारे अधिक काम कराया जाता है। कर्मियों और ठेकेदारों से जुड़ी प्रत्येक जानकारी एक ऑनलाइन पोर्टल पर दर्ज होनी चाहिए। ग्रामीण



क्षेत्रों में कई एकड़ सरकारी जमीन वंजर पड़ी हुई है। सरकार इसे पर्यटक स्थल या दूसरे कामों में उपयोग में ला सकती है और स्थानीय बेरोजगारों को काम दिया जा सकता है। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में कई दूसरी समस्याएं भी हैं जिसके चलते गांवों से शहर में लगातार पलायन

होता रहता है। सरकार भले ही प्रत्येक गांव तक बिजली पहुंचाने का वादा करती रहे लेकिन उसके

बेरोजगारी दूर करने के लिए असंगठित और ग्रामीण क्षेत्र की समस्याओं का निदान जरूरी है

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड लिमिटेड, 4, बहादुर शाह जफर मार्ग, नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bmail.in
उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।



मीडिया मंत्र

वनिता कोहली-खांडेकर

बड़ी कंपनियों (स्टार, जी, सोनी और वायकॉम) के भीतर ही रहेगा। आज कोई भी इलेक्ट्रॉनिक मीडिया कंपनी 20 फीसदी बाजार हिस्सेदारी के स्तर तक नहीं पहुंच सकती है।' फिर तो हमें 6,500 करोड़ रुपये वाले सोनी और 3,105 करोड़ रुपये वाले सन ग्रुप की तरफ से थोड़ी धक्केबाजी पर नजर रखनी होगी। इन दोनों कंपनियों के विलय की चर्चा काफी पहले उठी थी लेकिन कुछ ठोस सामने नहीं आया। चर्चा यह है कि सोनी अपना विस्तार करने के लिए बाजार पर नज़रें टिकाए हुए है। उसे जी में एक संभावित निवेशक भी बताया जा रहा है।

दूसरा, इस घटनाक्रम से ऑनलाइन वीडियो परिसंपत्ति खड़ी करने की जंग तेज होगी। याद रखें कि अमेरिका में नेटफ्लिक्स, एमेज़ॉन प्राइम वीडियो और अन्य खिलाड़ियों के विकास ने दुनिया के सबसे बड़े मीडिया उद्योग को भी झकझोर दिया है। अकेले नेटफ्लिक्स ने कंटेंट निर्माण पर पिछले साल 8 अरब डॉलर खर्च किए। ऐसे में परंपरागत मीडिया फर्मों को प्रसारण सामग्री खरीदने के लिए कॉमकास्ट, नेटफ्लिक्स, एमेज़ॉन या ऐपल के बरक्स कड़ी मशक्कत करनी पड़ेगी। यह उन बड़े कारणों में शामिल रहा है जिसके चलते रफर्ट मर्डोक ने 30 अरब डॉलर वाली अपनी कंपनी ट्वेंटी फर्स्ट सेंचुरी फॉक्स का मोटा हिस्सा पिछले साल डिज्नी को बेचने का फैसला किया था।

हालांकि भारत इस तरह के हालात पेदा होने से काफी दूर है। वर्ष 2018 में भारतीय बाजार में टीवी दर्शकों की संख्या 13 फीसदी बढ़ी। बार्क के आंकड़ों की मानें तो टेलीविजन दर्शकों की संख्या 83.6 करोड़ हो गई जबकि वर्ष 2016 में यह 79 करोड़ थी। ब्रॉडबैंड कनेक्शन वाले 44.7 करोड़ भारतीयों ने ऑनलाइन

समय को लेकर कोई भी गारंटी नहीं ले सकता। 10-12 घंटे तक लगातार बिजली गुल और एक बार खराबी आने पर 2-4 दिन तक बिजली का ना आना ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में आम बात है। सरकार को इसका तत्काल समाधान करना चाहिए जिससे ग्रामीण, खासकर किसानों की स्थिति में सुधार होगा। सरकार के इन प्रयासों से नवयुवक रोजगार के लिए अपने पैरों पर खड़े होंगे।

रविन्द्र कुमारवत, खरगोन

भवन निर्माण प्रक्रिया बने दुरुस्त
मकान बनाने के लिए उपयोग में लाई जाने वाली सामग्री की बढ़ती कीमतों के चलते केंद्र सरकार की

वीडियो देखने में करीब 50 मिनट लगाया जो टीवी देखने में प्रतिदिन दिए जाने वाले वक्त 3.45 घंटे से काफी कम है। वर्ष 2018 में ओवर-द-टॉप (ओटीटी) ऐप के रफ्तार पकड़ने के बावजूद फिल्मों ने बढ़िया कारोबार किया था। असल में, ऑनलाइन वीडियो प्लेटफॉर्म का उदय फिल्म कारोबार के लिहाज से पूरक ही साबित हुआ है।

यहां एक और पहलू पर नजर डालनी होगी। नेटफ्लिक्स ने अमेरिकी बाजार में 8-12 डॉलर मासिक के किराये पर दस्तक दी थी जबकि उस समय औसत किराया 40-80 डॉलर चल रहा था। उसकी तुलना में भारत में टीवी देखने का मासिक खर्च अब भी 2-5 डॉलर ही है। इस तरह भारतीय बाजार में एक वीडियो ऐप को जीतने के मामले में कोई विशेष स्थिति नहीं हासिल है। हालांकि बाजार नियामक ट्राई के चैनलों का मूल्य तय करने वाले नए आदेश के बाद टैक्सीर थोड़ी बदल सकती है। नई व्यवस्था में दर्शकों को हरेक चैनल अलग-अलग लेने के लिए बाध्य किया जा रहा है जिससे टीवी देखने का खर्च बढ़ जाएगा।

भुगतान राजस्व आने में वक्त लग सकता है लेकिन ऑनलाइन ऐप पर विज्ञापन जोर पकड़ने लगा है। गोयनका कहते हैं, ‘औसतन एक ओटीटी प्लेटफॉर्म लागत प्रति हजार के संदर्भ में 4-5 गुना दे देता है।' बड़े ऑनलाइन ऐप पर दिखने वाले विज्ञापनों की संख्या को देखें तो एक नया समानांतर कारोबार आकार लेता हुआ नजर आता है। कॉमस्कोर के आंकड़ों के मुताबिक, जुलाई 2018 में यूट्यूब के मासिक दर्शकों की संख्या 25.4 करोड़ और हॉटस्टार की दर्शक संख्या 7.9 करोड़ तक पहुंच गई थी। जी के ओटीटी ऐप जी5 ने दिसंबर में 5.6 करोड़ सक्रिय उपभोक्ता होने का दावा किया है। भारत में तकनीक, मीडिया एवं दूरसंचार कंपनियों की तरफ से वित्त-पोषित करीब 35 वीडियो ऐप हैं। ऐसे में टेलीविजन बाजार के मुकाबले में विजयी होने वाले खिलाड़ियों के नाम तय होने में लंबा वक्त लगेगा। इसका मतलब है कि आने वाले वर्षों में इस कारोबार में बड़े पैमाने पर धन लगेगा। इसके लिए कर्ज या इक्विटी का रास्ता अपनाना पड़ेगा जिससे बाजार एकीकरण भी होगा।

गुरदयाल सिंह, जम्मू

भारतीय सेना को इतना मजबूत बनाएं कि दुश्मनों में दहशत हो

पुलवामा में हुए कायराना फिदायीन हमले में देश के 40 से अधिक जवान शहीद हो गये . इस घटना ने देश को स्तब्ध कर दिया है . दुखी और आक्रोशित कर दिया है . जरूरी हो गया है कि अब सुरक्षा नीतियों की समीक्षा की जाये, सैन्य बलों को मजबूत किया जाये और आतंकियों को उनकी भाषा में जवाब मिले . इसके अलावा, इस बात पर भी गौर किया जाये कि बदले की कार्रवाई व युद्धोन्माद के बीच शांति बहाली की राजनीतिक प्रक्रिया के रास्ते भी कैसे निकाले जा सकते हैं . इन्हीं बातों के मदेनजर आज की विशेष प्रस्तुति ...



सेना को जरूरी सैन्य-संसाधन दिये जाएं

जब भी इस तरह का कोई बड़ा हमला होता है, तो इसमें कहीं न कहीं चूक जरूर होती है. यह चूक अब एक इन्कवायरी (जांच) का मुद्दा है. मोटे तौर पर देखें, तो जब भी सेना के जवानों का इस तरह कोई कॉन्वॉय (काफिला) होता है, तो जहां से चलना है और जहां जाना है, वहां तक चाकचौबंद सड़क व्यवस्था के साथ संदिग्ध गतिविधियों पर सेना की नजर रहती है, ताकि कोई चूक न होने पाये. यह एक लंबी प्रक्रिया है. जाहिर है, इस प्रक्रिया को पूरा नहीं किया गया होगा, तभी चूक की स्थिति बनी होगी. यह सब एक बड़ी जांच का विषय है, क्योंकि आम तौर पर इतनी बड़ी कॉन्वॉय को नहीं चलाया जाता.



अजय साहनी
आंतरिक सुरक्षा विशेषज्ञ

क्या सरकार ने भारतीय सेना को इतना मजबूत बनाया है कि जवान पाकिस्तान में घुस कर लड़ाई लड़ सकें? नहीं! सरकार ने सेना को कमजोर बनाया है. इस देश में तमाम सरकारें झूठ के आधार पर नीतियां बनाती रही हैं. बीते तीस साल से यही हो रहा है.

देशभर में चारों तरफ से प्रतिक्रिया आ रही है कि अब भारत सरकार कुछ करे. मुझे समझ में यह नहीं आता कि सरकार को अभी कुछ क्यों करना चाहिए? सरकार बीते पांच साल से क्या कर रही थी? या पिछले दस या पंद्रह साल से क्या कर रही थी? सरकार यह कम समझेगी कि आंतरिक सुरक्षा में बहुत साधन-संसाधन लगाने की जरूरत है? दरअसल, इंटरनल एजेंसीज में, एक्सटर्नल एजेंसीज में, कोवर्ट ऑपरेशंस (गुप्त ऑपरेशनों) में पैसा लगाने की जरूरत है और यह काम सरकार को दशकों पहले से ही करना चाहिए था. बीते कई सालों से सरकार हमेशा रक्षा के क्षेत्र में कम पैसा खर्च कर रही है, इसका खामियाजा यह है कि हमारी सेना के पास सैन्य-संसाधनों की कमी है. हर साल सरकार रक्षा बजट में मात्र पांच-छह प्रतिशत बजट बढ़ाती है, जबकि आज इतना प्रतिशत तो मुद्रास्फूर्ति है. इसका मतलब साफ है कि सैन्य-खर्चों में बढ़ावोरी करने की बजाय लगातार कटौती हो रही है. और सरकार यह कहती है कि वह

बहुत तैयारी कर रही है. आखिर किस चीज की तैयारी कर रही है यह सरकार?

पिछले साल पार्लियामेंट की स्टैंडिंग कमेटी ऑन डिफेंस के चेयरमैन थे आरसी खंडूरी, जिन्होंने रिपोर्ट दी थी कि भारतीय सेना के 68 प्रतिशत सैन्य-उपकरण इस्तेमाल के काबिल नहीं हैं. खंडूरी ने रिपोर्ट में लिखा था कि भारत के पास इतना सैन्य-संसाधन नहीं है कि वह दस दिन तक कोई लड़ाई लड़ सके. इस रिपोर्ट पर ध्यान देने की बजाय सरकार ने खंडूरी को ही चेयरमैन पद से हटा दिया. क्या यही है सेना को मजबूत करने की तैयारी? सरकार इस रवैये से सेना को कैसे मजबूत करेगी, हादसों को कैसे रोक पायेगी?

कोई भी रणनीति सेना की क्षमता पर निर्धारित होती है. सेना के पास ताकत होगी, उसी आधार पर वह ठोस रणनीति बना पायेगी. मंहगे रफायल खरीदकर निजी कंपनियों को फायदा पहुंचाने की बेईमानी से फुरसत जब किसी को मिले, तब तो वह किसी सैन्य-क्षमता या रणनीति पर काम करेगा! जब रणनीति नहीं होती है, तो सरकारों के पास नौटंकी होती है और बड़े-बड़े बयान होते हैं कि हम ये कर देंगे, वो कर देंगे. रोज सीमा पर हमारे जवान शहीद हो रहे हैं, और देश के भीतर नेता वाहियात बयान देते फिर रहे हैं. इन बयानों से सेना का मनोबल कभी नहीं बढ़ सकता. उसके लिए चाहिए कि सेना को जरूरी सैन्य-संसाधन मुहैया कराये जायें, ताकि जवानों का कोई वार खाली न जाये.

इस सरकार ने पिछले पांच साल में ऐसा कोई तंत्र या रणनीति नहीं बनायी, जो ऐसे हादसे के बाद 24 घंटे के अंदर-अंदर जैश-ए-मुहम्मद के सरगना को धर दबोचे. जैश सरगना मसूद अजहर हो या हाफिज सईद, ये सब पाकिस्तान में खुलेआम घूम रहे हैं. क्या सरकार ने भारतीय सेना को इतना मजबूत बनाया है कि जवान पाकिस्तान में घुस कर

लड़ाई लड़ सकें? नहीं! सरकार ने सेना को कमजोर बनाया है. इस देश में तमाम सरकारें झूठ के आधार पर नीतियां बनाती रही हैं. बीते तीस साल से यही हो रहा है. हर हमले के बाद झूठे नेता बयानवीर बन जाते हैं और कहते हैं कि अब ऐसा आगे कभी नहीं होगा. हमले पर हमले होते जा रहे हैं, लेकिन ये सरकारें सेना के नाम पर वोट बैंक की राजनीति कर रही हैं. इस तरह से राष्ट्रनिर्माण संभव नहीं है और न ही इस तरह देश सशक्त बन पायेगा.

(बातचीत : वसीम अकरम)

इस मॉड्यूल का पर्दाफाश जरूरी

कुछ तो जो चूक थी, वह स्वाभाविक थी. चूंकि, एक एमपीवी हाईवे से काफिला जा रहा था, जो हद से ज्यादा बड़ा था और बहुत धीमी गति से चल रहा था. नियमानुसार, जब ऐसा काफिला जा रहा होता है, तो किसी भी अन्य वाहन को बीच में आने नहीं दिया जाता. लेकिन, लंबे समय से ऐसे खतरे का कोई अंदाजा नहीं था, और हालात सामान्य चल रहे थे. ऐसी स्थिति में अक्सर ऐसा देखा गया है कि निजी वाहन धीमी गति से चल रहे काफिले से आगे निकल जाते हैं और कोई उन्हें नहीं रोकता. इस दृष्टि से देखा जाये, तो चूक तो हुई है. नब्बे के दशक में जब फौज और पैरामिलिट्री जवानों के काफिले चलते थे, तो उनके बीच में आने की किसी को इजाजत नहीं मिलती थी और सबको सख्ती से रोक लिया जाता था. इस सख्ती को दोबारा लागू करना पड़ेगा, अगर ऐसे हालात जारी रहे.



सुशांत सरीन
रक्षा विशेषज्ञ

नब्बे के दशक में जब फौज और पैरामिलिट्री जवानों के काफिले चलते थे, तो उनके बीच में आने की किसी को इजाजत नहीं मिलती थी और सबको सख्ती से रोक लिया जाता था . इस सख्ती को दोबारा लागू करना पड़ेगा, अगर ऐसे हालात जारी रहे .

दूसरी चूक खुफिया एजेंसियों के फेल होने के रूप में हुई है. जब भी इस तरह का बड़ा हमला होता है, बहुत सारी चीजें शामिल होती हैं, उन्हें सक्रियता से सफल बनाने में, कहीं से बारूद आता है, कहीं पर उपको रखा जाता है, कोई वाहन की व्यवस्था करता है, फिर कोई बारूद से बम बनाता है और वाहन में प्लांट करता है. सुसाइड बॉम्बर को ट्रेनिंग दी जाती है, उस पर निगरानी रखी जाती है, उसे लगातार इस कृत्य के लिए प्रेरित किया जाता है. फिर एक आदमी सारी जानकारी जुटाता है, रेकी होती है, कहीं से अंजाम पूरा करने के लिए पैसा आता है. ये तमाम बातें आतंकी घटना को अंजाम देने से पहले होती हैं. ये मान लेना कि अचानक किसी

के दिमाग में आ गया कि मैं फिदायीन हमलावर बन जाऊंगा, ऐसा संभव नहीं है. यह संभव इसलिए नहीं होता, क्योंकि बाकी चीजें इकट्ठा किये बिना इस तरह का बड़ा आतंकी हमला हो ही नहीं सकता है. चूंकि, इस तरह के हमलों में कई सारे लोग शामिल होते हैं,

तो जानकारी लीक करने के और किसी को इस गतिविधि की भनक लगने का चांस बहुत बढ़ जाता है. इसीलिए, कई बार हम देखते हैं कि सुरक्षाबल किसी को हिरासत में लेते हैं और उसके ऊपर यह इल्जाम लगता है कि किसी न किसी दहशतगर्दी की कार्रवाई में वह शामिल था. ऐसा इसीलिए होता है, क्योंकि पहले से भनक लग जाती है. लेकिन इस मामले में, आपको कार्नाकान खबर नहीं हुई. शायद, इस प्रकार की कोई जानकारी मिली थी कि कोई हमला हो सकता है. लेकिन, इसे पता नहीं लगाया जा सका कि कौन इसमें शामिल हो सकता है. कई बार आपके पास इंफॉर्मेशन आ भी रही होती है, लेकिन कहीं कुछ छूट जाता है और जबकुछ पता नहीं चल पाता, फिर किसी को आप पहले पकड़ भी नहीं पाते. हादसा जब हो जाता है, तब आप वापस जाकर देखते हैं कि क्या-क्या इंफॉर्मेशन मिली थी और आप उसके आधार पर कार्रवाई करना शुरू करते हैं. लेकिन, सैन्य संबंधी गतिविधियों में इस तरह की घटनाएं होती हैं. ये उम्मीद पाल लेना कि आपको फौज सौ फीसदी सफल ही होगी, बेमानी है. लेकिन, कोशिश की जानी चाहिए कि ऐसे हादसे न हों. इस लिहाज से चूक तो हुई है.

अब कार्रवाई शुरू होगी. फिलहाल, हमें यह भी नहीं पता कि विस्फोटक सामग्री क्या थी. क्या वह आरडीएक्स था, टीएनटी जैसा मवाद था, या फिर रोजमर्रा के घरेलू सामानों, जैसे डिटजेंट पाउडर आदि चीजों से बना बम था, हमें अभी तक यह जानकारी नहीं मिली है. जब यह जानकारी मिल जायेगी, तब भी यह अंदाजा मिल जायेगा कि असल में चूक कहाँ हुई है. उम्मीद तो है कि इस तरह की गतिविधियों के मॉड्यूल का पर्दाफाश किया जायेगा, लेकिन समय लगेगा.

(बातचीत : देवेश)

सुरक्षा प्रोटोकॉल को सख्ती से लागू कराएं

कश्मीर के पिछले पंद्रह-बीस सालों के इतिहास पर नजर डालें, तो छिटपुट आतंकी हमले होते रहे थे. लेकिन, धीरे-धीरे ऐसे हमले घटते गये थे. बड़े हमले भी हुए, लेकिन कुछ वर्षों का अंतराल बना रहा. साल 2007-08 के बाद सेना पर बड़े हमले कम होते गये, खासकर साल 2009 से लेकर 2013 तक कैजुअल्टीज कम हुईं. साल 2014 के बाद से एक बार फिर से ये आंकड़े बढ़ना शुरू हुए. सेना पर छोटे हमले बढ़े, आम नागरिकों की मौतें ज्यादा होने लगीं. इन बातों को ध्यान से देखने की जरूरत है. पुलवामा में जो हुआ है, वह भयानक है. इतनी बड़ी मात्रा में विस्फोटक सामग्री गाड़ी के साथ काफिले के बीच में पहुंच गयी और किसी को भनक नहीं लगी. खबर है कि इसे स्थानीय स्तर पर बनाया गया था. पुलवामा के इलाके फौज और पुलिस की बहुत सारी टुकड़ियां हमेशा रहती हैं और सक्रिय रहती हैं. फिर क्यों नहीं इसका पता चल सका पहले, यह सवाल है.

राज्यपाल ने खुद स्वीकार किया है कि हमसे गलती हुई है. पुलिस ने एक हफ्ते पहले ही आतंकी हमले की चेतावनी दी थी. इस चेतावनी को सीआरपीएफ और राज्यपाल ने क्यों संज्ञान में नहीं लिया? इस समय सिक्योरिटी हेड खुद राज्यपाल ही हैं. फिर इतनी बड़ी गलती कैसे हो गयी? नागरिक वाहनों को क्यों इजाजत दी गयी काफिले के गुजरने के दौरान? आंकड़े बताते हैं कि जब शांति प्रक्रिया जारी थी और बातचीत चल रही थी, सेना पर हमले भी घटते गये और लोग भी कम हताहत हुए थे. लेकिन, बातचीत खत्म कर दी गयी और अब फिर से वही खूनी मंजर जारी है. सबसे बड़ी त्रासदी यही है कि सरकार बातचीत ही नहीं करना चाहती, जिसका परिणाम हिंसक और वीभत्स रूप में हमारे सामने है, हमारे इतने सुरक्षाबलों की जाने जा रही है, आम नागरिक मारे जा रहे हैं. इंसानी जान की इतनी सस्ती कीमत कभी नहीं होनी चाहिए. सरकार को अपनी राजनीति के लिए सेना के जवानों को तबाह नहीं करना चाहिए. देश की जनता को खड़े होकर कहना चाहिए, आपको एक भी जान के साथ खिलवाड़ करने का हक नहीं है. देश में कोई ऐसा विपक्ष भी मौजूद नहीं है, जो शांति कायम करने के लिए प्रयास करे और बातचीत शुरू करे. बदले की बात करने से किसी का फायदा नहीं होने वाला. खैर, सरकार से इतनी उम्मीद तो कर ही सकते हैं कि सुरक्षाबलों को मजबूत वाहन दें, उन्नत श्रेणी के सुरक्षा कवच प्रदान करें और सुरक्षा प्रोटोकॉल को सख्ती से लागू करायें.



राधा कुमार
लेखिका एवं विश्लेषक

सरकार से इतनी उम्मीद तो कर ही सकते हैं कि सुरक्षाबलों को मजबूत वाहन दें व उन्नत श्रेणी के सुरक्षा कवच प्रदान करें .

इंटेलिजेंस की नाकामी का परिणाम यह हादसा

यह आतंकी घटना सुरक्षा एजेंसियों की चूक का परिणाम है और निसंदेह इस गतिविधि में पाकिस्तान का हाथ भी शामिल है. बहुत सीबी-समझी साजिश के तहत इस शांति ढंग से इस घटना को अंजाम दिया गया है. यह देश की सुरक्षा पर सवाल खड़े करने वाली घटना है. इंटेलिजेंस के लोगों ने कैसे उस वाहन को काफिले के बीच में आने दिया, यह बड़ा सवाल है. ऐसे कैसे कोई कार 100 किलो विस्फोटक सामग्री लेकर चली गयी और उसे कोई चेक करनेवाला भी नहीं था. गवर्नर साहब ने खुद स्वीकार किया है कि आतंकी घटना खुफिया एजेंसियों की नाकामी का परिणाम है. मुझे आश्चर्य इस बात की भी है कि जिस तरह अमेरिका में 9/11 की घटना हुई थी जिस पर बात होती रहती है, कहीं अमेरिका ने दूसरा 9/11 तो नहीं होने दिया था. यहाँ हमें सावधान होने की जरूरत है. हर बार जब भी हम इन एजेंसियों या सरकार में बैठे लोगों से बात करते हैं, तो वे कहते हैं कि हमने बहुत सी घटनायें होने से रोकी हैं, यह एक चूक हुई है बस. ऐसा हो सकता है कि वे सही ही हों, लेकिन उनकी इस बात से कोई प्रभावित नहीं होता है.

यह आतंकी घटना देश के लिए झटका है. अगर सरकार को कुछ करना है, तो उन्हें तुरंत करना चाहिए. अगर दो दिन और निकल गये तो उस गतिविधि का महत्व नहीं रह जायेगा. कश्मीर घाटी में जैश-ए-मोहम्मद की सक्रियता का पता सबको है और सबको यह भी पता है कि पाकिस्तान उसका पूरा सहयोग कर रहा है. जैश-ए-मोहम्मद का कश्मीर में नेटवर्क बहुत तगड़ा है, सब जानते हैं. यह सब कोई नयी बात नहीं है. कश्मीर में राज्यपाल शासन लागू करने का मतलब ही था कि सरकार यह मानकर चल रही थी कि सब ठीक कर देंगे, लेकिन फिर भी यह घटना हुई. जबसे हमने यह ज्यादा कहना शुरू किया है कि पाकिस्तानियों को हम ठीक कर देंगे, कश्मीरियों को ठीक कर देंगे, तबसे ज्यादा समस्या शुरू हुई है. सुरक्षा मसले पर केवल सैन्य कार्रवाई से कुछ सुधार नहीं रहा है. हम अपनी नीतियों से केवल यह दिखा रहे हैं कि हम दोनों जगहों पर सबको बराबर कर देंगे और हम किसी की परवाह नहीं करते हैं. लेकिन, इसका कोई असर नहीं हो रहा है. चाहे फौज के जनरल कश्मीर जाकर बोलें या हमारे राजनेता, स्थिति सुधरी नहीं है और खराब ज्यादा हो गयी है. अब चुनाव नजदीक है, तो चुनाव तक कोई शांति प्रक्रिया भी देखने को नहीं मिलेगी. चारों तरफ प्रचार होगा कि हमने थपड़ का जवाब मुक्के से दिया है.

सख्ती से दिया जाए जवाब

पाकिस्तान की नीतियों में कोई परिवर्तन नहीं आ रहा है और आतंकवादी संगठनों को वह खुला समर्थन अभी-भी दे रहा है. इसी का वीभत्स रूप पुलवामा में देखने को मिला है. कश्मीर और पाकिस्तान को लेकर हमें अपनी नीतियों की समीक्षा करनी होगी कि आखिर कमी कहाँ रह गयी. कहीं तो कमजोरी रह गयी है, जिसका फायदा उन्होंने उठाया है. लोग शांति की बात करते हैं और इतने जवान मारे जा रहे हैं. अब अगर इसका सख्ती से जवाब नहीं दिया गया, तो देश में संदेश जायेगा कि यह कमजोर सरकार है. चूंकि चुनाव भी नजदीक हैं, इसलिए सरकार जरूर सख्त कदम उठायेगी. अब पाकिस्तान को उसकी ही भाषा में जवाब देना पड़ेगा.



प्रकाश सिंह
पूर्व डीजीपी, बीएसएफ

साजिश है, जो आनेवाले चुनाव में प्रभाव डालेगा . ऐसा कहकर ही पाकिस्तान सरकार अपनी जिम्मेदारी से पीछे हट रहा है .

जम्मू-कश्मीर, राजाव और राजस्थान में सुरक्षा और भी बढ़ानी होगी, ताकि आगे ऐसे हमले न होने पायें . सुरक्षा बलों और खुफिया संगठनों के बीच बढ़िया सामंजस्य की आवश्यकता है . ऐसे संकेत में एक-दूसरे पर दोषारोपण की बजाय हमें अपनी कमियों को दूढ़ना चाहिए और उन्हें ठीक करना चाहिए . आनेवाले दिनों में, भारत सरकार को ऐसे आतंकवादी संगठनों द्वारा हवाला फेंड के हस्तान्तरण की जांच करनी है . इसलिए, भारत को सारे अंतरराष्ट्रीय आर्थिक संगठन और खुफिया संगठनों के साथ मिलकर काम करना होगा . ऐसे संकेत इन आतंकी संगठनों को आर्थिक हताशा मिलती रहेगी, ऐसे हमलों को रोक पाना मुश्किल होगा . हमें सतर्कता बढ़ा देनी चाहिए .



डॉ ध्रुवज्योति भट्टाचार्य
रिसर्च फेलो, इंडियन काउंसिल ऑफ वरल्ड अफेयर्स, दिल्ली

पाकिस्तान को कड़ा संदेश देना अब जरूरी हो गया है

जम्मू-कश्मीर के पुलवामा जिले में हुए फिदायीन हमले से एक बार फिर यह बात साबित हो गयी है कि पाकिस्तान एक ऐसा देश है, जो आतंकवाद और आतंकवादी समूहों का समर्थन करता है. पाकिस्तान स्थिति संगठन जैश-ए-मुहम्मद के आतंकी आदिल अहमद डार ने इस आत्मघाती हमले को अंजाम दिया. इससे यह बात साफ हो जाती है कि पाकिस्तान में खुलेआम घूम रहे आतंकी भारत के खिलाफ साजिश रच रहे हैं. यह हमला भारत के खुफिया विभाग के लिए भी एक बड़ी विफलता है, क्योंकि वह इतने बड़े हमले के बारे में पहले से कुछ भी खबर नहीं दे पाया.

अब यह देखना जरूरी है कि इस बार भारत सरकार किस तरह इस हमले को अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर पेश करती है. भारत के पास यही मौका है कि वह पाकिस्तान को एक जबरदस्त संदेश दे, ताकि पाकिस्तान सरकार को यह मानना पड़े कि ऐसे मानव-

Kashmir’s troubled future



TICKER
MIHIR SHARMA

In the aftermath of the bloodiest attack in the Valley’s history, there are several points that could be made about what it implies for the future. None of them are anything other than deeply disturbing.

The first is that there has been a steady increase in violence in the Valley since 2014. This has multiple reasons, but the fact that New Delhi has squandered the gains from the 10 years of relative quiet prior to 2014 is perhaps the biggest. Rather than trying to integrate more Kashmiris into the mainstream in the years since then, the central government has turned Kashmir into a political issue that it wishes to use to win votes in the Hindi heartland.

The Valley was no paradise prior to 2014, but the escalation in violence since then is starkly visible in the data. The number of terrorist incidents, according to the Union home ministry’s numbers that were presented to Parliament, has risen steadily — from 222 in 2014 to 614 in 2018. The number of security force personnel killed has similarly shot up, from 47 in 2014 to 80 in 2017 and 91 in 2018.

When the current government came into power, it abandoned the long-standing ceasefire protocol on the Line of Control. This was meant to combat infiltration. Not only has it clearly not reduced the number of incidents, it avoided the real problem. And that is that, once again, we are seeing local young people “taking up the gun”, in the phrase that became so tragically common in the 1990s. Rather than worrying about foreign militants, we should have been worrying about the radicalisation of locals like the 20-year old who drove the Pulwama car bomb. The return of home-grown militancy is the second point. While the low-level brutality of an intrusive police state through the 2000s and 2010s — which used detention and checkpoints as a matter of course — may not compare in numbers with the out-and-out anti-insurgency tactics of earlier, it did suffice to ensure that an entire generation of Kashmiris has been lost to the Indian state. We will now have to deal with the consequences of this.

The third worry is the changing nature of the Islamists’ tactics. Tactics can easily be copied from insurgents and terrorists across the world. Intelligence about this attack came in as a “Syria-style car bomb”. Kashmir has seen few suicide attacks — in fact the Jaish-e-Mohammed pioneered them in an attack on Srinagar’s Badami Bagh cantonment in 2000 — and no car bomb of this size. The bomber, in the video released after his death — again, something familiar from the bloodstained recent history of the Middle East — specifies the “defeat” of the United States by the Taliban as his inspiration. A Valley full of IEDs and car bombs and suicide bombers is a very different proposition from what security forces have had to face before.

Fourth, the strategy of the militants has also changed. The jihadists have sought to target military or police targets specifically. Partly as a consequence, more civilians are sympathetic than in the 1990s. Combined with increasing religious radicalisation — the replacement of local religious traditions with harder, more nihilistic imports from the Middle East — this means that the army and the paramilitaries have a far harder job. They have already complained about civilian crowds forming to protect areas where militants have reportedly holed up. Fighting terrorists is one thing. Fighting insurgents is worse. Fighting a population is worst of all.

Fifth, the impact of neighbourhood developments can clearly be felt. The United States’ promise of a precipitate withdrawal from Afghanistan is dangerously stupid; not only will it inspire jihadists everywhere the same way that the USSR’s defeat by the mujahedid did, the confidence of the Pakistani military establishment given this expected departure and the solid support of Beijing has soared. The last time Pakistan-backed jihadists were at a loose end after a superpower withdrawal, three decades ago, the Valley exploded. We should deeply fear the consequences of an easing of pressure on Pakistan’s western border.

Sixth, Kashmir is oddly distant from the conversation in Pakistan itself. That country is currently obsessed with its cricket league and with the forthcoming visit of Saudi Arabia’s strongman (for which, apparently, 3,500 pigeons are being procured). Kashmir is far less of a headline in Pakistan now than it was a couple of decades ago. Yet little has been done to take advantage of this decline in the domestic political use of the Kashmir issue there.

Seventh, Kashmir is a live political issue in India in a way that it never has been before. The India of the 1990s had to deal with an insurgency and managed without worrying about national machismo. This is no longer the case. Kashmir is used as a metaphor, a threat, and a rhetorical battleground by such politicians as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath. This is a vast and worrying change.

We do not face an insurgency of the sort that erupted in the 1990s. Thanks to shocking mismanagement, radicalisation and politicisation, the danger is a great deal worse today.

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The ‘call’ of the fields



PEOPLE LIKE THEM
GEETANJALI KRISHNA

This week, whilst in the boondocks of Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh, I had this strange feeling that something was off. Soon I realised what it was. While everywhere there were large billboards emblazoned with slogans of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and newly constructed outdoor toilets were visible in many houses — I saw a disproportionate number of people emerging from the woods carrying that telltale empty plastic bottle. Women chattered gaily in large groups that periodically disappeared discreetly behind the trees and into the mustard fields. Young boys were playing cricket with the bottles they had just emptied. In the meantime, the toilets constructed

by the government stood there, unused.

Don’t they work? I asked Lalit Kumar, my local host. The famous Awadhi hospitality immediately kicked in. “You want to go,” he asked. “Please use it, it’s very clean.” And clean it was. Why didn’t they use their lovely new loos, I asked? Kumar laughed good-naturedly. He took me to the local tea shop where dozens of people offered dozens of reasons why they preferred to answer nature’s call in natural surroundings instead of in toilets.

“Over 75 per cent of our village likes to go to the fields,” Ram Pal Rawat, a farmer said. “That’s what they’re used to and that’s what they like.” In fact, their neighbouring village had even more toilets than they did. “There too, most prefer not to use them,” he said. What about the women? I asked. The government had built pink toilets for them everywhere and called them *samman ghar* or honour houses. “Our daily gossip sessions in the field would come to an end if we started using bathrooms,” an old lady exclaimed. “Besides, outdoors is much cleaner than indoors.”

As we drank steaming cups of tea, someone came up with the strangest reason for using his loo only sparingly. “When the weather is good, I insist that my family defecates in the open so that

we can make our septic tank last longer before it overflows,” said Tej Narain, another farmer. It turned out that many others also used their loos only when the weather was bad or if they were sick. Soon, the people who liked to do their “jobs” outdoors anyway, said that preserving their septic tanks was the reason why they didn’t use their toilets.

I hastened to point out that the new toilets had been built on the twin pit composting technology. They could use their loos all the time and they’d never fill up. Narain said that he’d heard about this but didn’t quite believe it. “Long ago, a septic tank overflowed in the village,” he said. “No labourers were available, so we had to clean it ourselves and I’ll never forget the stink.”

His friends and neighbours concurred. “Who knows how long these composting pits will work anyway?” one said. “Even if they work, who’ll use that compost anyway?” asked another.

Just then lightning lit up the clouds overhead and it started raining. The tea party broke up as we all hastened for cover. As we left, I saw the light in an outdoor toilet come on. “See! We do use toilets when we have to,” said my host. “The rest of the time, we go to the fields behind the toilet and praise Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.”

An evening to remember



PEOPLE LIKE US
KISHORE SINGH

Why did the waiter fall into the swimming pool? Witnesses heard a shout and a splash, and then the cry “Man overboard!” Okay, I made up the last bit, but an “Oh! Oh! Oh!” surrurred through the party. Something had happened, and as Indians, everyone gawped as the poor young lad, shocked into silence and speechless with the cold, tried to find a footing on the pool’s floor. His platter of kebabs floated surreally to the bottom of the pool, there to rest like corpses. Another waiter pulled him out, slipping and sliding. As he stood dripping on the pool deck, a towel was handed to him. Guests stood around sipping their cocktails, marvelling that he hadn’t turned blue.

“He needs a change of clothes,” my wife said, stepping forward to take charge. None of us had clothes to spare at the cottage — we still carried clothes to and from the farm, not keeping any in storage yet — but quick thinking led her to head for the caretaker’s hut. Having seen her take charge, everyone went back to drinking and dancing, and I went back indoors to check on the food arrangements. A few moments later, my wife stormed into the living room to ask why I couldn’t have taken the waiter to get changed. It turns out, the caretaker wasn’t in, so my wife had to forage through his clothes in absentia to find some that would fit. “I had to find him underwear,” she remonstrated with me later, but how was I responsible for that?

But why did the waiter fall in the swimming pool in the first place? He hadn’t been drinking, or so we were told. And since his scope of work was the grill counter and not the bar, he couldn’t have been tipling surreptitiously. We hadn’t factored in anyone falling into the pool but my son had had the forethought to have it filled. “Just in case,” he’d said then, which I had imagined to imply someone wanting to go skinny-dipping under the moon. Now he was gloating. “Told you,” he said. Without the water,

we would have had someone with broken bones. Now, at worst, we had no more than a case of sniffles and some embarrassment.

Witnesses disclosed the waiter’s crime was one of impropriety. His eyes were temporarily distracted by a young lady’s passage, causing his humiliating fall from grace to disgrace. “Serves him right,” said the young lady in question, when she heard. Perhaps she spoke too soon though. By the time the evening was over, we had a list of casualties that was as long as it was varied. One friend had walked into a glass door. (The door survived.) She sat with a packet of ice clutched to her forehead for the rest of the evening. Another fell on the dance floor, earning himself a slash across his nose.

A further inventory is required to list the demeanours of the evening. Five youngsters threw up, all of them inside the cottage. The smell is still lingering some days later. An equal number passed out — on sofas, beds, on the lawn. Some had to be carried to their cars (fortunately, none of them was driving). The Party Smart tablets they had consumed were clearly not working. The leftovers filled the fridge to overflowing because no one ate (they only drank). We ran out of Disprins.

WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

Fix the process

It can be no one's case that buying complex weaponry like fighter aircraft or helicopters is easy business. The Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG's) report on air force purchases mentions 660 specifications in the medium fighter order, and 42 for a radar system. Nor can it be a cut-and-dried process — for that might lead to all bidders in most contracts being disqualified at the outset. Besides, the relative importance given to individual specifications or product features can significantly affect judgements on what the best offer is — and (let's face it) these are often matters of judgement. In the real world, there would also be user preferences — as with the air force, which kept insisting in the early stages that it wanted the Mirage because of its performance in the Kargil war. Did similar air force pressure explain the choice of the Rafale (Mirage's successor) in 2012, though the aircraft did not qualify?

The choice can be between tweedledum and tweedledee. The Eurofighter must have been as good as the Rafale, since it too was shortlisted; and, earlier, the French alternative as good as Sweden's Bofors gun. But would choosing the Eurofighter have obviated the "India-specific enhancements" and its bill of \$1.4 billion or more, incurred basically to make the Rafale meet the required specifications? On top of that, diplomatic considerations can and have influenced choices. What else can explain why the benchmark price for heavy-lift helicopters was changed after the financial bids had been opened? In the end, therefore, while audit strictures must be taken seriously, real-world perspectives do intrude into the frame.

Audit reports themselves don't do much better than the more complex business of buying weapons. It passes understanding, for instance, as to why the CAG acquiesced to the defence ministry's insistence on financial secrecy with regard to the Rafale contract, when all the financial numbers are laid out for all the other weapons acquisitions reviewed in the same CAG report! Also, it is obvious that the CAG has given the government a free pass by not putting a number to the amount that the Rafale was allowed to save by avoiding financial guarantees. So much for auditors.

Are the elaborate processes and procedures for buying weapons sub-optimal precisely because they are so elaborate? Put into the equation the time factor, for it takes eight to 10 years in many cases for a selection process to be carried through while the defence services wait. Indeed, in the end there may be no acquisition at all (as with the AgustaWestland), or technology has changed in the interim. Is a simpler, shorter process possible for choosing between competitive bids? After all, most acquisitions in recent years have been done with no competitive bidding at all. As for the perennial issue of pay-offs, only the naive would think there are none when the purchases are so large that they can make or break vendors, when decisions are taken at multiple levels over years, and the choices are so complex as to be capable of endless fiddling (an air chief faces charges for allegedly having fiddled one number).

Meanwhile, there are no real answers to the larger questions. There is, for instance, no satisfactory explanation why only 36 fighter aircraft were ordered when the air force needed 126 — necessitating now a second round of bidding for the same kind of aircraft and possible delay of several years in getting the balance aircraft. The defence ministry's response on the issue (says the CAG) is that light combat aircraft were also being ordered. That treats medium and light aircraft as interchangeable. But with the Tejas also making slow progress, the air force is now trying to get hold of extra Sukhoi-30s, which are heavy aircraft! On top of this haphazard building of the fleet, we have the air force's seemingly ingrained distaste for putting in the effort to support a domestic aircraft manufacturing industry (such as the navy has done for shipbuilding). So the country gets locked into permanent import dependence of the kind that no other country with a large defence budget (other than Saudi Arabia) is exposed to. Something sure is rotten in the state of Denmark.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA



Pakistan has pulled the trigger on itself

Pakistan has taken too much of a chance with Pulwama — with the wrong government in India, and at the wrong time

Stephen P Cohen, the noted American scholar on South Asia, has a genius description for Pakistani strategic thought. Pakistan, he says, negotiates with the world by holding the gun to its own head: Give me what I want, or I will blow my brains out. You then handle the mess. Has Pakistan pulled that trigger in Pulwama?

First, get any notion that this was a purely indigenous act of terror out of the way. The suicide terrorist was a radicalised Indian Kashmiri. But count the reasons why his couldn't be an entirely Indian planned and executed operation:

■ The Jaish-e-Mohammed has claimed responsibility. It is purely a Pakistan-based and ISI-controlled organisation.

■ While radicalisation and motivation can be local, there is zero evidence that this volume of high explosive (most likely RDX or RDX-mixed) is available with usually amateurish local groups, along with skills to rig the trigger-timer mechanism.

■ See that last video the bomber recorded. He is reading from a pre-written text from a board placed in front of cards held by someone. The language isn't so much about Kashmiri grievances or revenge as to instigate Muslims in the rest of India.

Babri Masjid and Gujarat are invoked, and "all our Muslims" exhorted to rise in revolt against "cow-urine drinkers". This is precisely how the Jaish, even more than the Lashkar-e-Taiba, thinks. Not local Kashmiris.

This action fits perfectly the pattern set by the Jaish in the past. The suicide bombing of the Assembly in Srinagar in 2001, the attack on Parliament later in the same year, raids on Pathankot and Gurdaspur have all had the same objective: To somehow take the terror fallout beyond Kashmir. The Lashkar did so in Mumbai (26/11), too, but much of its energy and manpower is still used in fighting in Kashmir. Under global pressure, it is also being mainstreamed by its GHQ patrons into Pakistani politics. The Jaish, much smaller but enormously more vicious, resourceful and an ISI

favourite, is more selective with "impact" attacks.

How resourceful the Jaish is we know from the IC-814 hijack. It could get an Indian plane hijacked from Kathmandu and taken to safe harbour in Kandahar to trade hostages for their key leaders jailed in India. It's been established repeatedly in subsequent research that every step in that hijack — from facilitation in Kathmandu to negotiations in Kandahar using the Taliban, and then safe "recovery" of released Jaish chief Masood Azhar and others — was overseen by the ISI.

To the Pakistani establishment and ISI, Azhar and the Jaish are much bigger assets than even the Lashkar and Hafiz Saeed. The Jaish is their main force-multiplier. The Chinese also acknowledge it, which is the reason they are shamelessly complicit in protecting him.

That this terrorist was a local Kashmiri is no surprise. In each of its actions so far, including IC-814, Parliament and other attacks, the Jaish has had key participation of Indian Kashmiris.



NATIONAL INTEREST
SHEKHAR GUPTA

Afzal Guru, remember, was Indian. Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, one of the other two jailed terrorists traded for IC-814 passengers, was Kashmiri. We have enough evidence, therefore, to stop wasting time in local, root-cause theories and giving Pakistan any deniability, however implausible.

Why do we raise that question? Has Pakistan finally pulled that trigger into its own head? Because, all the earlier Jaish and Lashkar attacks passed without a publicised retaliation, although we know about some secret "surgical strikes" in the past. Between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, India was able to ride out the moments of anger with coercive diplomacy, global pressure on Pakistan, and a strategic mindset that was fundamentally pacifist, and believed in responding no more than proportionately to any provocation.

The Modi government has no such pretence. It holds both Dr Singh and Vajpayee and other governments of the past in contempt for what it sees as their

"pusillanimity". Further, having made such noise and political capital from the post-Uri surgical strikes, there is no way it is going to be able to hold fire or restrain itself for long. Pakistan has it coming. Where, how, when, nobody knows. But it can't be long.

A retaliatory response could come soon. It will also be visible, high-decibel and wrapped in claims of victorious retribution. India is in the early days of its most vicious election campaign yet. Narendra Modi will not go seeking a second term with the taint of Pulwama.

It will then be for Pakistan to decide whether to leave it there or respond to its own popular compulsions to begin a retaliatory cycle. It could, besides whatever happens militarily, end this tenure of Imran Khan. History tells us no Pakistani leader can go to war, big or small, with India and survive. Ayub Khan (1965), Yahya Khan (1971), Nawaz Sharif (Kargil, 1999) tell us that. Three instances, as we say in journalism, is a straight line.

There can't be much argument over the essential reality of Pakistan: That Imran will not have a decisive say in what happens next. He might ultimately pay for the army/ISI bullheadedness as Nawaz Sharif did for Kargil, and he will need enormous skill and luck not to become that scapegoat. No elected prime minister has the final word on such issues in Pakistan and Imran, if anything, is among the weakest in some time. The call to engage in an immediate escalating cycle or not will be his army's. Could he even counsel them against it? We can't be sure. They will decide whether to blow their brains out or not. He's a loser either way.

Besides the difference between Mr Modi and his predecessors, there are two other important distinctions now. One, that it is a world radically different from what we left behind in 2008 (26/11) or 2001-02 (J&K assembly and Parliament attacks). Then, top American and European leaders would come flying in, heads of states would make phone calls, Russia, China would all weigh in to calm things down, calm and reassure Indian public opinion by expressing solidarity with us and condemning Pakistan.

That world doesn't exist anymore. It unravelled the day Donald Trump was elected US president and kept his promise of making America great again by withdrawing and leaving the rest of the world to its own devices. If stuff hits the fan in the subcontinent now, he may not even bother tweeting restraint immediately. The modern world's oldest antagonists can set their region on fire now, without the comfort of the American/global fire truck waiting at our door.

This has also diminished, if not eliminated, the subcontinent's old leverage with the world: Come and stop us or we will nuke each other. Mr Trump may be the one we blame but there is generally a wariness about the region holding the world to blackmail after claiming to be responsible nuclear weapons powers.

Of course, it applies much more to Pakistan than India. Because, in the subcontinent, the nukes are the preferred weapon of the weaker power, the likely loser. Beginning with V P Singh's spineless year in 1990, Pakistan has used the nuclear deterrent entirely to its own advantage, keeping its provocations within that threshold, ruling out any sizeable retaliation from India. Obsession with tactical nukes tells us that the Pakistanis have probably not reviewed that position. If they haven't, they will get a disastrous surprise. This Indian establishment no longer sees nukes as only one side's deterrence. If you take chances with it, and that too in election weeks, you might as well have pulled that trigger.

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The rise of xenophobia across the world



VIEWPOINT
DEVANGSHU DATTA

There is a common thread running through the rise of the right wing across the world and that thread is xenophobia. The fear of the outsider, laced with a cocktail of racism and religious bigotry, have been skillfully used by right-wingers in various places to manipulate varying political systems in order to take and consolidate power.

This has happened through democratic means in many places. Consider Donald Trump with his "wall" and his broad categorisation of Latin Americans, Muslims and all non-whites as criminals. Mr Trump still has roughly 40 per cent approval, despite children being forcibly separated from their parents, and dying

in government custody.

Consider Brexit, with its "Leaver" campaign founded on fears of Britain being overrun by foreigners. It is only now that the average Briton is realising the enormity of the cost of leaving the European Union. Similarly in Hungary, where Viktor Orban won an election by orchestrating a campaign against the "invasion" of asylum seekers. Or France, where Marine Le Pen took over her father's mantle as the dark angel of the far right. Or India, where the BJP's re-election campaign mixes majoritarian rhetoric, with bigotry and dog-whistling.

It's all about the fear of the outsider. It is easy to rationally dismiss xenophobic rhetoric. Immigrants tend to work harder than the locals. They take the dirty, low-paid jobs. They tend to generate more in taxes than they cost in terms of social welfare.

In the US, an immigrant is far less likely to commit a random mass-shooting than a citizen born and bred. In Britain, the National Health Service will likely collapse if Brexit results in all the foreigners leaving. France would never have won either of its World Cups without the footballing skills of immigrants from its former colonies.

But the fear of the foreigner is atavistic

and widespread. The campaigns referred to above were all based on large dollops of fake news and fake premises, and each was manipulative in the extreme. But each of these campaigns was successful because it tapped into an extant wellspring of bigotry and xenophobia that affected a substantial chunk of the local electorate.

In every case, there were historical causes for the fears. Those fears may no longer be rational but there was a time when they were. Modern India is a country created by waves of large-scale migrations and invasions, and it endured two hundred years of colonialism. That makes it easy to trigger majoritarian sentiments and xenophobia.

Britain was a relatively small country that suffered the threat of catastrophic invasions by Napoleon and Hitler. The White Anglo Saxon Protestant (WASP) settlers who are the single-largest American demographic achieved their pre-eminent position via the genocide of the original settlers, alongside the import of slaves. Some WASPs are terrified of possible pay-back if they cease to be a majority.

Xenophobia was actually rational back in the colonial era. The Native Americans and the Africans of the Slave Coast were absolutely right to fear the Europeans.

The technological superiority of Europeans enabled them to brutally subjugate populations that outnumbered them by orders of magnitude.

Xenophobia is less rational in the 21st century because easy global information flows make it hard to create and maintain the technological asymmetry required to keep populations in subjugation. But getting a plurality of the world's voters to recognise that xenophobia is irrational, may admittedly, be difficult.

Oddly, xenophobia might become entirely rational again if homo sapiens do become space faring animals. Suppose that we encounter an alien civilisation vastly superior to us, technologically. Those aliens may enslave us, or exterminate us, for much the same reasons that humans have enslaved, or exterminated other humans. The aliens may even eliminate humans purely because we represent a potential threat. And if we encounter an alien race technologically inferior to us, we may decide to exterminate them before they do it to us! That's the "Dark Forest" theory, which sees the Universe as a dark forest, where predators lurk everywhere. It is a horrible thought.

Twitter: @devangshudatta

Voters' dilemma: BJP? No. Modi? Yes.



LINE AND LENGTH
T C A SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

Two weeks ago, a very senior member of the Congress publicly said the BJP would lose 135 seats in the 2019 general election. I thought this was a very precise number, based possibly on some internal estimates of the party. He did not, however, say how many the Congress would win.

Should this happen — and that huge a fall seems unlikely — the BJP will come down to 147 seats from the 282 it won in 2014, and 133 from its current position of 268 in the Lok Sabha.

This is very close to the 138 seats it had won in 2004.

Meanwhile, the Congress itself does not believe that it will get more than 125 seats, which is around three times what it won in 2014. Less hopeful and more realistic estimates place its tally at around 100. That will be enough for it to cry victory and hail Rahul Gandhi as a champion.

If we take the most optimistic estimates of the Congress — BJP 133, Congress 125 — who will the president invite to form the next government? This question has only one answer.

Then, whoever the prime minister is, we will have to see if he gets 1996'd. Remember how Atal Bihari Vajpayee was unseated after just 13 days in office? That too could happen if the BJP loses more than 100 seats.

Also if, as seems more likely, the BJP and the Congress between them manage to win only around 280 seats, the rest of the parties will account for the

remaining 264 seats. In 2014 BJP+Congress was 326 seats, which left the rest with 218.

So regardless of who leads the next government, we are going to have a weak or a very weak government after five years of a very strong one. For this not to happen, the party that leads the next government will have to win at least 210 seats because it is only then that its foundational weakness diminishes sufficiently.

We have the experiences of 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2004 as witness. Each of these governments was hostage to regional parties. True, the Congress won 206 seats in 2009 and was less of a hostage than in 2004, where it had won 145. But it squandered the opportunity.

Caste, community, inflation

So, what are we in for? Politics in India is about two things only — 90 per cent of it is about social policies and only 10 per cent is about economic policies. And, most regrettably, 90

per cent of the 90 per cent is about caste and community while 90 per cent of the remaining 10 per cent is about inflation.

It is also true that for their own reasons both the BJP and the Congress have avoided using caste as their main driver. The BJP has tried to unite the Hindus and the Congress has tried to unite the minorities.

This is perhaps the only good thing they have in common. On bad things they are peas of a pod. Take out the family from the Congress and the RSS from the BJP and the two could unite.

Thus, after 2004, the Congress focused on community — recall the 2015 Antony report, which said it had bent too far in favour of Muslims — and neglected inflation and caste. The BJP, on the other hand, has always focused on inflation and community while neglecting caste.

The result has been a walkover for the caste-based parties. These could well account for

around 50 per cent of the seats in the next Lok Sabha, which is likely to be the real bad news of the 2019 election.

What we should expect

Experience since 1989 shows that whenever the central government is highly dependent on caste-based parties, national governance goes for a toss because the domestic agenda is driven by very narrow issues. This, I fear, is what we are in for even if the BJP manages to keep its losses down to 80-100 seats.

But if you speak to its functionaries, they tell you it is expecting to keep its losses down to just 50 seats by making up in states where it had not done well before. But that may well turn out to be just a fond hope.

There is finally the Modi factor, down perhaps but not out. In that sense, the 2019 election could well become a referendum on Narendra Modi, in which case the BJP could prove all its critics wrong.

orders from a woman commander. Apparently, when it comes to the show of power, it is pretty good to make a woman lead an all-men Army services contingent on the Republic Day.

Contrary to man, no matter how high-ranking officer a woman becomes, her gender never leaves her. This reminded me of the time, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while his visit to Bangladesh, praised his counterpart by saying that Sheikh Hasina was tough on terrorism, "despite being a woman."

A few weeks ago, Congress president Rahul Gandhi sparked a controversy with his remark, "The watchman with a 56-inch chest ran away and told a *mahila*, defend me," he said. The use of the word *mahila* for Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in a demeaning manner angered many women activists. If you have seen the video in Rajasthan, where Gandhi was giving his speech, the mic also captured the obvious loud cheering from audiences after his remark.

In one of the scenes, during duty on a check-post at night, the police officers stop the car of a drunk Navy officer. Being a senior on the duty, Soni tells the officer to come out of the car. Her anger shoots up when the officer holds her hand. She throws him out and beats him up. She had to face repercussions for her decisions and being her boss, Kalpana, too. When Soni is attacked at home, her estranged husband tells her had he been living at home, no one would have dared to do this to her.

Throughout the film, Kalpana's junior officers call her 'sir' which seemed to be a practice in the police department. She scolds here juniors for not following the protocol of giving women officer to an abandoned girl, found by a constable. In one of the scenes, Kalpana's husband, who is also a high-rank police officer, asks her why did she even choose to become an IPS officer, when she can't behave like one? Despite being dismissed as someone soft and weak, she does not stop dealing with people with empathy. Sometimes I feel that in the fight of feminism and equality, women have been so busy proving themselves to be tough that no one now gives importance to this quality empathy anymore.

Soni comes home after the spat with the Navy officer. Her neighbour gives her ultimate solution to her problems. "Start wearing *sindoor* (vermillion). People will stop misbehaving with you." On the other hand, Kalpana teaches her 13-year-old niece to confront the students who made fun of her periods at school. Maybe women helping women will make this world a little better.

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Weak demand, keen competition hit earnings

IT firms are a saving grace, else, the December 2018 quarter would have been a washout for India Inc

AS THE HEADLINE numbers show, it has been a disastrous earnings season, leaving India Inc in deep distress. Profits for a universe of 1,995 companies fell 30% y-o-y in the December 2018 quarter although revenues were up a decent 19% y-o-y. The simple fact is raw material costs and other expenses remain elevated but not too many companies are able to pass these on to consumers or end users because demand is so muted and the competition intense. The shortage of liquidity since September appears to have pushed up the cost of finance hurting the demand for consumer durables, while subdued investments in projects by the private sector and sluggish construction have left the demand for materials such as cement weak.

The telecom sector, in particular, has been badly bruised by the heightened competition after Reliance Jio entered the market in September 2016. But even rivals Bajaj Auto and Hero MotoCorp have been compelled to get into a price war to protect market share. The abundance of capacity in the cement sector, at a time when there is little activity in real estate, has left realisations of players like Ultratech weak. In the absence of adequate pricing power, profit margins are getting squeezed. For instance, gross margins at Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) fell 160 basis points y-o-y due to raw material cost pressures even as inventories remained high. At Ultratech, standalone revenues were a good 16% y-o-y higher but net profits were up just 7% y-o-y, due to higher-than-expected costs.

In some sectors of the economy, recent policy changes have impacted demand adversely. For example, the changes in the axle load norms have hurt the demand for trucks of a certain size; Ashok Leyland reported a 12% y-o-y drop in revenues in Q3 FY19, with volumes falling and the company not able to command pricing power. Again, the more expensive insurance policies have stymied demand for both cars and two-wheelers. In fact, the automobile sector is yet to recover from what was a very dull festive season; dealers confirm demand for cars, UVs and two-wheelers is still lacklustre and that inventories are at levels that are much higher than those typically seen at this time. Auto major M&M reported a very weak set of numbers for the December 2018 quarter with operating profit margins falling 150 basis points y-o-y.

To be sure, there were some bright spots; Larsen & Toubro delivered a splendid set of numbers, posting a 24% increase in revenues and a 27% increase in ebitda on the back of some strong project execution. While the fall in order inflows was a slight disappointment, the backlog is healthy. But core sector players, such as power generator Tata Power, are grappling with several problems and the company reported a 68% drop in consolidated profits hurt by the weak performance of its coal and infrastructure companies even as losses at its Mundra UMPF remained high. Amongst the consumer pack, Asian Paints was able to cash in on the festive season as was TVS Motors. However, management commentary has been very circumspect given how difficult it is to pass on costs to consumers. Even heavyweights such as Hindustan Unilever are not able to price products as they would like to. Had it not been for the IT firms, which are doing well in challenging conditions, the season would have been a complete washout.

Where are the edu reforms?

Many hyped announcements, no real action

FROM THE CENTRAL Advisory Board of Education (in 2005) to industry (the 2003 Ambani-Birla report on education) and the NITI Aayog (in 2017), many have argued for granting greater autonomy to higher education institutes and universities, especially the top-rung ones. So, a HRD ministry committee arguing for greater autonomy for IITs may seem like another iteration of the same logic. But, given how the government has been pussyfooting on higher education autonomy so far, every such recommendation should serve as a reminder of how urgently this reform is needed. The IIM example should serve as a strong example of the government's reluctance to give up control. Though the government passed the IIM Act in 2017 to give the premier management education institutions unprecedented autonomy, it never freed them of the shackle of reservations. And, as reported by *Mint* last year, the government is not truly ready to relinquish control of the IIMs. After seemingly having removed the government fetters on academic, administrative and financial matters, the government last year reportedly wanted to amend the 2017 Act to force the IIMs to implement virtual fee caps—ironically, “without flouting the autonomous spirit of the IIM Act”. And, this was despite the IIM Act itself having provisions placing reasonable restrictions on the IIMs' use of surplus revenue. The government also wanted the IIMs to increase their intake, which, surely would have come at the cost of student-quality that is maintained through the rigorous admission procedure. This shows the government, despite all the right noises it has made on autonomy, is only too willing to burden higher education institutions—when it should be funding the creation of more IIM-like institutions, it would rather have the existing institutions dilute their standards.

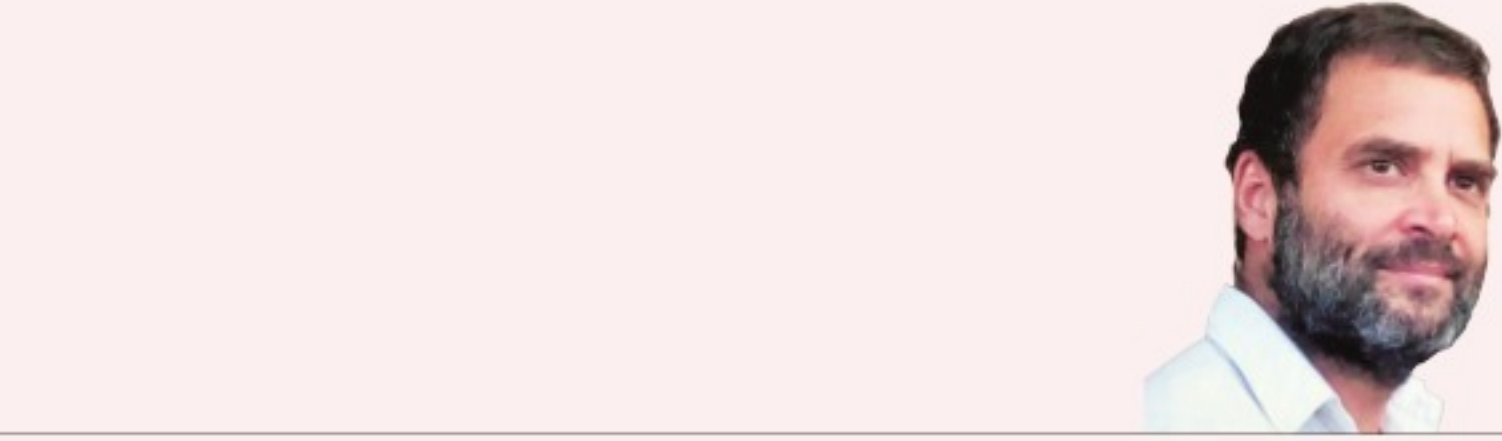
It is not just autonomy for higher-ed institutions that is the problem. In fact, very few of the big education reforms the Centre has announced have materialised. The New Education Policy—that is expected to outline the overall reforms vision for the education sector—is now stale business. Two committees have submitted reports, and yet none have seen the light of day. A truncated version of the first was released by the government before it was junked altogether. The second one was submitted in October last year, and yet the draft remains to be tabled. Similarly, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), that was supposed to replace the inefficient UGC regime, is nowhere on the horizon. The government had announced the Diksha initiative to facilitate the training of untrained school teachers; but, as an analysis of Budget numbers over the Modi years, published in *IndiaSpend*, pointed out recently, the allocation for teachers' training is a fraction of what it was a few years ago. The Higher Education Funding Agency, that was supposed to finance infrastructure development—from an overall corpus of ₹1 lakh crore—at “all educational institutions under higher education, school education and institutions under ministry of health which is referred by the concerned ministry” under RISE 2022 had managed to approve projects worth only ₹10,000 crore by November last year, and that too only exclusively to top-billed institutions. It is futile to expect this inertia to change this late into the term of the present government. The next government will need to hit the ground running on education reforms; else, it will only mean squandered potential and productivity.

Flagging Misuse

The campaign to hoist BJP flags on the houses of govt-scheme beneficiaries is unethical and, indeed, unacceptable

THE BJP'S HIMACHAL Pradesh unit, as per a report in *The Indian Express*, wants beneficiaries of Central and state government welfare schemes in the state to fly flags of the party atop their houses. As per the report, party workers will be expected to approach each of the 8.5 lakh such households in the state and try and convince them to support the BJP—and proclaim the same from rooftops—in the run up to the general elections this year. This is envisaged to be part of the the party's nation-wide campaign *Mera Pariwar, Bhajapa Pariwar* (my family, a BJP family). As part of this campaign, five crore BJP workers in the country will also fly party-flags atop their houses. But, the problem is, while the party can ask its workers to fly its flag, coaxing government-scheme beneficiaries to do this is unethical, and downright unacceptable. Coaxing beneficiaries to consider their entitlement as a party's largesse is political sleaze of the worst kind. Government funds belong to the people, and government programmes are mere channels through which these funds are deployed for the people's benefit.

Public funds are not to be leveraged to consolidate votes. It is an elected government's solemn responsibility to benefit citizens, irrespective of their political allegiance, while not shoring up its vote-bank among the electorate. The usage of public funds to further the political goals of a party is gross misuse of them, and the Election Commission should make sure that this doesn't happen. Politicising government schemes in the manner that the Himachal BJP has reportedly proposed sets a precedent for parties and future governments to colour entitlements of the people as party largesse, and that is a rabbit-hole no party would want to go down.



RESILIENCE AND PERSISTENCE
Rahul Gandhi, president of the Congress

The aim of terrorism is to divide this country and we are not going to be divided for even one second, no matter how hard people try

● RATE TRANSMISSION

LOWER RATES DO NOT LEAD TO HIGHER INVESTMENT. THIS IS DEPENDENT ON THE STATE OF THE BANKING SYSTEM AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Analysing the impact of lowering of the repo rate

WITH RBI SIGNALLING a change in stance to the lowering of rates and some banks

decreasing their lending rates, there is a positive sentiment in the market. Interest rates were hiked twice during 2018 which had put industry on the back foot as procuring funds became expensive. Banks as well as borrowers have always been talking of interest rates to be lowered and hence should be satisfied that there can be more rate cuts to come in the coming months if inflation remains range-bound. How exactly does this translate into higher investment growth?

Theoretically, lower interest costs provide an incentive to companies to invest which in turn helps to foster growth. It also brings down the interest cost for companies which helps in stabilising profits. This will vary across industries as the interest-to-turnover ratio averages around 2-3% for non-financial companies and could stretch to around 10% for capital intensive industries. This looks logical.

The attached graphic juxtaposes the movement in weighted average lending rates of banks (WALR) on new loans given for the last five years along with growth in credit to various sectors to ascertain if there are any connections. Interest rates have actually come down by 210 bps since 2013-14, with the fall being 220 bps by 2017-18 before the repo rate was increased by RBI. Therefore, there has been a tendency for banks to lower rates continuously over this time period. As of March 2014, the repo rate was 8% after which it has come down without any upward revision to 6% by March 2018. In a way, it can be concluded that the transmission has been quite efficient as lending rates on new loans have come down in a commensurate manner. This is significant because, often, it has been argued that banks have not been proactive in terms of lowering their lending rates when RBI takes such an action.

Now, the pattern of growth in bank credit is quite interesting. The rate of growth has actually been declining or unchanged in 3 of the 4 years leading to 2017-18. Secondly, the rate of



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Views are personal

growth in credit-to-industry, which is what one can relate directly with investment, has been coming down and turned negative in 2016-17, before recovering with an anaemic 0.7% growth in 2017-18. This sector constitutes around a third of total credit and is hence quite dominant. Typically, the lowering of cost of capital should have led to higher credit flow to this sector.

Thirdly, growth in credit-to-agriculture has been buoyant in 4 of the five years which, again, is driven more by statute as it comes under priority sector lending. Fourthly, retail loans have been growing at the highest rates, which is positive for the household sector and has supported both the housing and auto sectors. Also, in the last couple of years, there has been a tendency for even PSBs to concentrate more on retail loans and hence build up a better portfolio given that NPAs tend to be lower in this segment.

Fifthly, the service sector has witnessed a mixed growth pattern and declined to 5.7% in 2014-15 before recovering in the next two years and then slowing down, again, in 2017-18. Here, NBFCs and trade are the two leading sectors which account for around half of credit to the services segment. Lastly, in 2018-19, growth in credit has picked up across all the



sectors which is contrary to what conventional wisdom would support as this was a period when interest rates increased.

What this data indicates is that merely lowering rates does not lead to higher growth in credit across the sectors. It is most effective for the home segment which is also preferred by banks. In case of industry, a lot would depend on the state of capacity utilisation and investment opportunities that are there. Lowering interest rates works in case there is appetite for investment. In FY19, for example, RBI data shows that capacity utilisation rates have been improving and was at 74.8% in September from 73.8% in June. Therefore, some industries were in a position to scale up by borrowing more even though interest rates had increased. In the preceding years, this rate has hovered between 70-72%, which in turn proved to be a deterrent even though the cost of borrowing had come down.

The services sector needs further probing. NBFCs are re-lenders as they borrow money from banks and use the same for onward lending. Here they would tend to switch across different sources like corporate debt and CPs. Lower interest rates, for example, tend to feed into the market-driven instruments at a faster pace thus making

such switches attractive. Interestingly, the weighted average 10-years GSec yield had come down from 8.54% in 2013-14 to 6.89% in 2017-18, which is a drop of 165 bps. Corporate bond yields for AAA-rated paper came down from 8.92% to 7.57%, which is a drop of 145 bps while that of AA paper was around 75-80 bps.

Another issue which becomes important is the willingness of banks to lend. Here, the reference is to the NPA issue where the overhang has made banks cautious on the lending side. This has tended to be concentrated in sectors like power, steel, telecom, etc., where the demand for fresh funds has also been subdued as companies try and sort out the resolution issues.

The fallout of the declining interest rates scenario has also meant that it has had an impact on growth in term deposits. The chart below shows how the growth rate has been coming down quite sharply over the years, from a range of 17% to a low single-digit rate in the last 3 years. Now this is a concern for two reasons. Firstly, from the point of view of banks, this is something which can pressurise liquidity, which, in turn, will call for affirmative action from the central bank in the form of support from OMO and term repos. Secondly, at the broader level, this has an impact on financial savings. The overall savings as per CSO is down from 33.1% in FY13 to 30.1% in FY18 which is a concern. Further, within financial savings, migration to the capital market through the mutual funds route or direct equity has also increased the risk taken by households which can be volatile depending on market conditions.

The issue of low interest rates is often looked at from the point of view of borrowers. While lower rates do cause cost of funds to come down, it is not necessary that it will lead to higher investment. This depends on the state of the banking system as well as opportunities for growth. Continuous reduction in rates also flags the possibility of banks finding it harder to garner deposits, which is also the case today where RBI intervention has been almost relentless. Therefore, there are trade-offs to be chosen as savers, too, would have their preferences.

The GST math conundrum

Even if there is no further rate rationalisation or relaxation in compliance requirements during FY20, the budgeted growth target of almost 20% for GST collections can be described as ambitious

BASED ON THE Interim Budget, the aggregate GST collection (Centre and states) for FY20 would be ₹13.71 lakh crore, which is almost a 20% growth over revised estimates for FY19. The budgeted aggregate GST collections for FY19 was ₹13.47 lakh crore which has been revised to ₹11.47 lakh crore (based on figures from the receipt budget of the Interim Budget). The average monthly collection in the first year of GST was ₹90,000 crore and for the second year, FY19 till January, it is ₹97,000 crore, which is below the estimated monthly average requirement of ₹1 lakh crore. The monthly GST target for FY20, translates to ₹1.25 lakh crore. The Interim Budget has set a very steep target for GST.

The Interim Budget did not provide a clear roadmap on how this boost in GST collections would happen. The assumption could be that, with the introduction of other fiscal measures, economic activity will pick up and will lead to higher GST collections. GST collections show an upward swing of 8% in FY19, a year in which there were two rounds of rate rationalisation and the recent announcements of raising exemption and composition scheme limits. The impact of the latter on GST collection will only be known from February 2019 onwards. The government has consistently maintained they would look at further rate rationalisations and hence this is also a real possibility. A group of ministers is currently reviewing the taxation of the real estate sec-

tor. Even if there is no further rate rationalisation or relaxation in compliance requirements during FY20, the growth target of almost 20% can be described as ambitious.

Anti-evasion measures like e-way bills and tax deducted at source/tax collected at source have been introduced in FY19. These measures have, to some extent, contributed to the upswing in GST collections. E-ways bills are still unable to curb evasion and technology intervention, such as the mandatory RFID tag introduced by UP, may assist in better tracking of movement of goods.

There are two other anti-evasion measures which have not been implemented and can assist in improving GST collections. The first is the reverse charge mechanism (RCM) for purchases from unregistered dealers and the other, the back bone of the GST law, is the input tax credit (ITC) matching mechanism which is, for now, not functional on GSTN. The RCM is significant, considering the doubling of the exemption limits in most states. The lack of a functional ITC matching mechanism has, as per media reports, led to a number of cases of fraudulent ITC credit claims, some of which have been detected over the past couple of months. The new compliance process, which is to be implemented from April 2019, may address the ITC matching requirement. All these anti-evasion measures, along with a pickup in economic activity, may help in realising

the goal of 20% growth in GST collections.

An improvement in GST collections is required not only to meet the budget estimates but also to enable a more uniform GST implementation across all goods and services. Though GST has brought in the concept of 'one nation, one tax', for most goods and services, there is a large portion of the economy that is still outside of the purview of GST. Crude oil, natural gas, petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel are still outside the ambit of GST. This exclusion continues to create distortions in the tax value chain as taxes on these products are not creditable under the GST law. The key reason for keeping the 5 petro products outside of GST are revenue concerns and hence an upswing in GST collections will enable these 5 petro products to be included within the GST law.

Another concern, and one which we have seen playing out in the past, is that very high revenue estimates can give rise to an aggressive tax regime in order to meet the collection targets. Such actions may lead to temporary gains but, in the long-term, do have an adverse impact on compliance and collections. Another major fallout of lower collections is the delay in processing and payment of refunds which is a key concern today and can get aggravated in the future. Hence, the need for a roadmap and timely interventions, to achieve the budget estimate, is even more imperative and urgent.

BELA SHETH MAO

Partner, Deloitte India

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Fidayeen attack

The attack on a CRPF convoy by a Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) 'fidayeen' bomber near Awantipora on the Srinagar-Jammu Highway that left 44 jawans martyred and scores of others seriously injured are reminiscent of the dark days of the militancy in the valley. The blast which blew the bus to smithereens is the first of its kind in Kashmir and the worst-ever in terms of casualties. While our hearts go out to the gallant soldiers who lost their lives and limbs, it is obvious that our intelligence and security personnel need to pull up their socks and be more vigilant — Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

Courting controversy

Considering and quantifying in money terms, the huge dilutions of securities made in finalising the murky Rafale deal and the major unprecedented concessions made to the French, like the waiver of a government guarantee and accepting of a letter of comfort which has no legal binding on the French supplier and the French government, the 2.86% gain in price boasted by the CAG is minuscule. The CAG should have played in its report what the actual cost of the Jets would have been if such dilutions and concessions were not conceded. That the government preferred to table the CAG report only on the last day of the Parliament session certainly courts further controversy — Tharcus S Fernando, Chennai

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The setting up of income-earning criteria of ₹8 lakh per year as the eligibility for the proposed reservation is a serious issue. This high limit will bring almost the entire general category households under the reservation ambit and would also cost more to the system and households for generating/getting EWS cards

The floating of the reservation card

THE ACT OF providing 10% reservation to the economically weaker sections in the general category is historic, in the sense it was passed in both houses of Parliament without any opposition. The entire Opposition acquiesced either for the fear of being dubbed anti-poor in the forthcoming general elections, or they believe the economic parameter matters for addressing backwardness through reservation. The legal experts, on the other side, refer it a 'cynical fraud on the Constitution'. This is because the genesis of reservation in India addresses the caste- and occupational-based historical discrimination/injustice faced by some communities or groups rather than economic backwardness.

Social exclusion has been the central rationale for reservations in India until now. On this basis, the reservation was first given to the scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST); it was then extended to other backward classes (OBC) in the 1990s (after 1989) under Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution. In several judgments, notably *Indra Sawhney 1992*, the Supreme Court reaffirmed the principle that "no classification could be made for reservations by relying exclusively on economic criteria" and reservation cannot exceed more than 50%. The recent Constitutional (124th Amendment) Bill 2019 deals with the new classification called 'economically weaker sections' of citizens. On the above two grounds, it may get struck in the court or the court might take a holistic view via referring Article 46 under the Directive Principles of State Policy, which speaks about promoting, with special care, the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people. How it would be conceived, one has to see in the times to come.

But in the current dynamic world, it is true that the economy is progressing in such ways that is generating glaring economic inequalities. The Oxfam inequality report 2019 highlights that the wealth of the nine richest Indian individuals is equivalent to the bottom 50% of the country. The inequalities are not only deep-rooted, but are also growing at faster rates over the period across castes. The mobility of economically backward

people to a better-off state is largely dormant. The caste of the poor generally does not help them get out of poverty or from accessing basic amenities. The economically weaker sections of citizens have largely remained excluded from attending (or retention in) the higher educational institutions and employment on account of their financial incapacity to compete with the persons who are economically more privileged.

Our estimates from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) 2012 show unequal opportunity in employment and education across castes and classes—unequal opportunities due to both social and economic reasons. Brahmins/forward castes, no doubt, have more than twice salaried

employment and higher educational attainment than the group currently having reservation on social background. But when we classify all social categories by their levels of income, we observe a similar pattern in employment and educational attainment at different levels of income across social categories. A low-income-household person has 4-5 percentage points less salaried employment and higher educational attainment than the one from high-income households across all forward and backward castes. Reservation can be an effective affirmative action to address unequal opportunities across different classes in the society only if the real needy poor are targeted for its benefit.

SHAILENDER KUMAR HOODA

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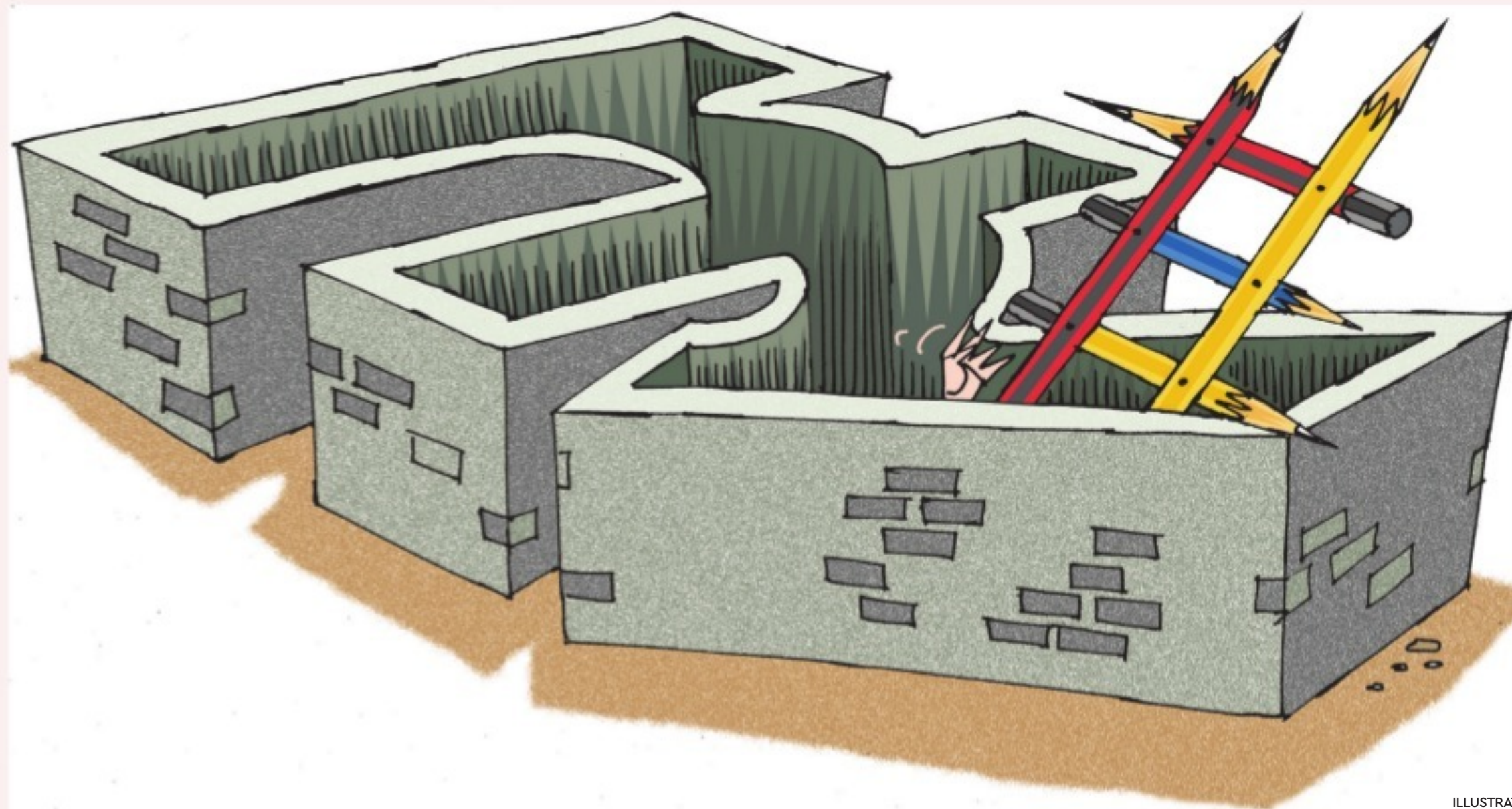
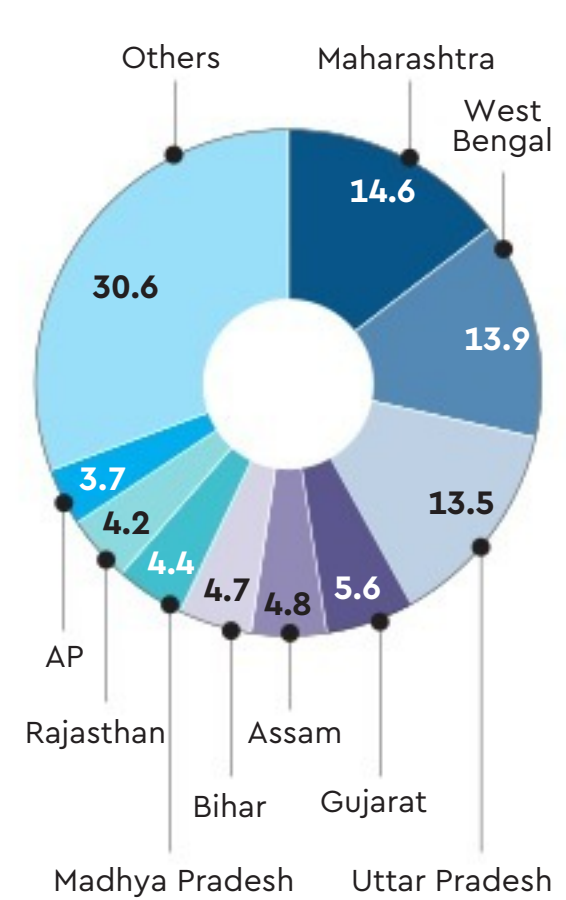


ILLUSTRATION: ROHIT PHORE

Distribution of persons age 16-40 (potential beneficiaries of 10% quota) across states



No exclusion at all

Given such evidences, the setting up of income-earning criteria of ₹8 lakh per year as the eligibility for the proposed reservation is a serious issue. Such a cut-off has been used for creamy layer among the OBCs—the income cut-off was initially kept at ₹1 lakh per year in 1993, which was raised to ₹2.5 lakh in 2004, ₹4.5 lakh in 2008, ₹6 lakh in 2013, and ₹8 lakh in 2017. It's important to note that this cut-off is used for extremely well-off households, while it will decide the level of poverty in the current Act—which is a contradiction. This high limit will bring almost the entire general category households under the reservation ambit and would also cost more to the system and households for generating/getting EWS (economically weaker section) cards. As per estimates from IHDS 2012, the entire forward castes come under 10% quota, except for only 2.28% forward castes that have more than ₹8 lakh income. This consists of 6.9 crore households (1.2 crore brahmins, 5.37 crore other forward castes, and 0.37

crore from others) and 32.3 crore persons (5.9 crore brahmins, 24.9 crore other forward castes, and 1.5 crore from others). The general category population constitutes around 27.3% share in India's total estimated (121 crore) population in 2012. The size of population/households would be a little more if one extrapolates it with the current population level.

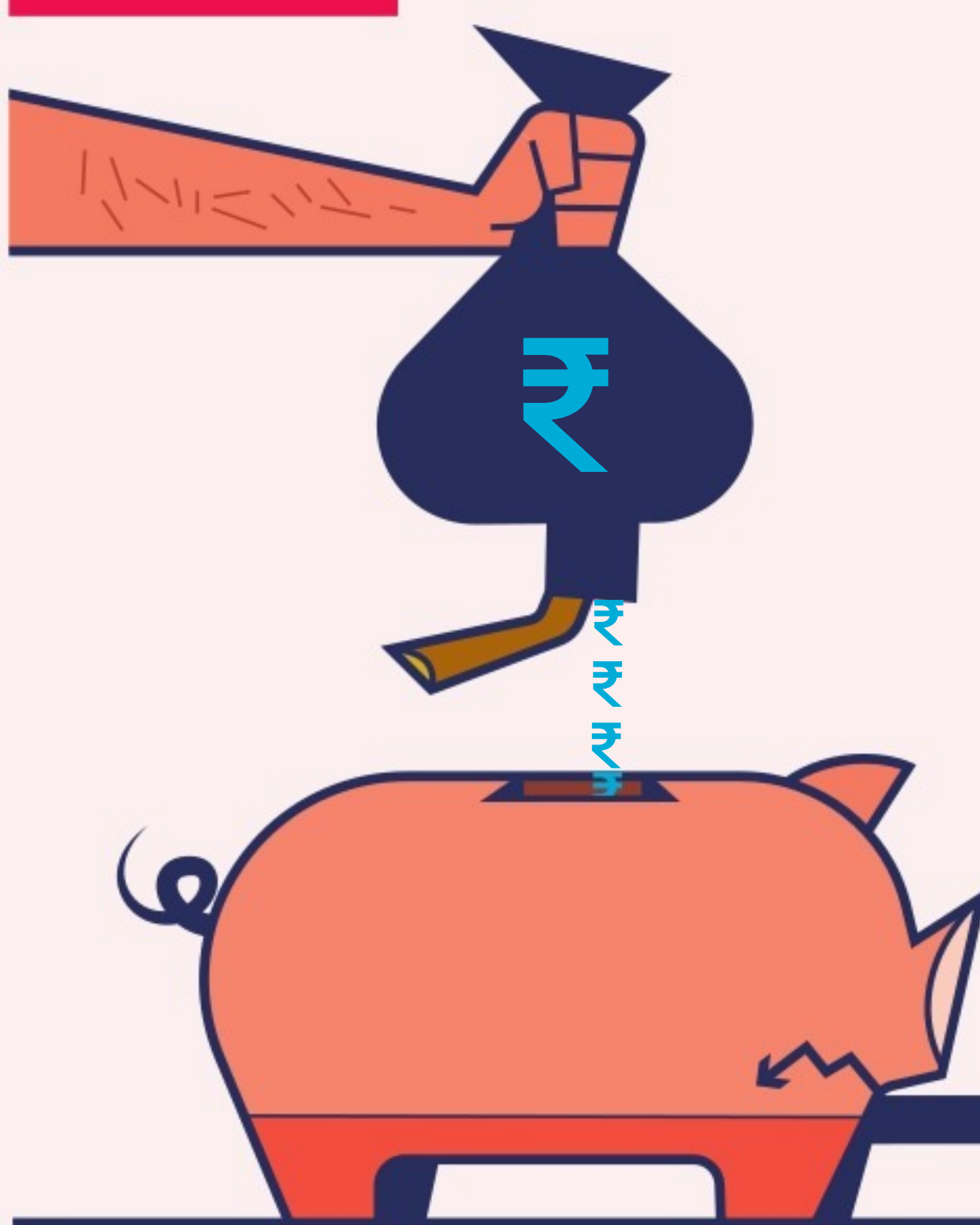
The major worry here is that the high limit will lead to unequal opportunity between households having low income (say, ₹1 lakh or less) and those earning ₹8 lakh. The experience from earlier affirmative actions reveals that high-income households received highest benefits in both education/employment as compared to low-income ones. The deserving poor receive the minimal benefit. The income criteria, thus, needs to be rationalised and fixed carefully, otherwise the proposed 10% quota will fail to address the problem of unequal opportunities.

The intended beneficiaries at aggregate level as well as those aged 16-40 (who are potential job- and admission-seekers in higher educational institution through reservation) are expected to be

high from West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra (around 40%), as per estimates from IHDS data—if population growth rate remains the same across states. The intended households benefiting from this quota would be almost 13% from metropolitans, 29% from urban, 25% from developed villages and 33% from less developed villages.

Of the total intended beneficiaries, almost 70% are aged 18 years or more—the potential voters. But whether all of them will consider it a progressive move is difficult to say, as a majority of job opportunities in the emerging market economy are in the private sector, rather than in public. Another important aspect is that, until now, 50% seats in jobs in open category were open to everyone including STs, SCs and OBCs. Since the new Act will now reduce the 10% job/education opportunities for these groups, how their voting pattern behaves is difficult to predict. The floating of the reservation card may not be a win-win situation in the forthcoming general elections, but it would generate enough debate around the existing affirmative action in India.

DATA DRIVE



Declining savings hit investment

DOMESTIC SAVINGS, as a proportion of the gross domestic product at current prices, declined to 30.5% in FY18 from 34.6% in FY12, stymieing investment significantly. Household savings, the largest contributor to savings in the economy, plunged to 17.2% of GDP in FY18 from 23.6% in FY12. While private corporate sector savings stagnated, public sector savings rose marginally, according to data from Central Statistics Office.

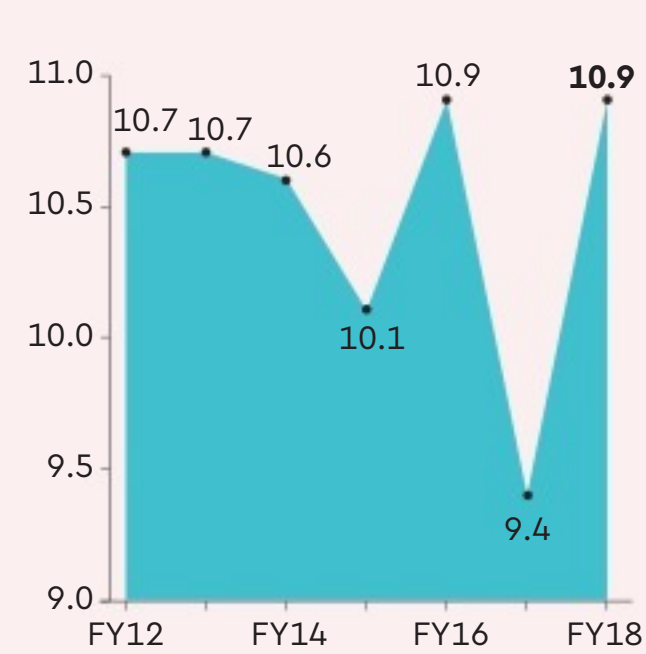
The declining trend of household savings from a high 25.6% of GDP in FY10 to 18% in FY16, 17.1% in FY17 and 17.2% in FY18 has affected overall investment, which has dropped from 34.3% of GDP in FY12 to 28.7% in FY16, 28.2% in FY17 and 28.6% in FY18.

Net financial savings of households

have come down from 7.4% of GDP in FY12 to 6.6% in FY18 because of a rise in households' financial liabilities. Gross financial savings, which touched an all-time high of 12.2% of GDP in FY10, dropped to 9.4% in FY17 and inched up to 10.9% in FY18.

Investment by households has fallen from 15.7% of GDP in FY12 to 10.3% in FY18 and the share of households in capital formation has slipped from 45.9% of GDP in FY12 to 35.8% in FY18. As household savings are a major source of funding investment in the economy, the declining trends seen after the twin policy shock of demonetisation and implementation of goods and services tax coupled with rising liabilities will pose a serious challenge to investment and employment generation.

Negligible rise in gross financial savings of households (% of GDP)



Net financial savings drop because of rising liabilities (% of GDP)



Falling domestic savings hit investment (Gross fixed capital formation (GFCF), % of GDP)



Investment by households drops the most (% of GDP)



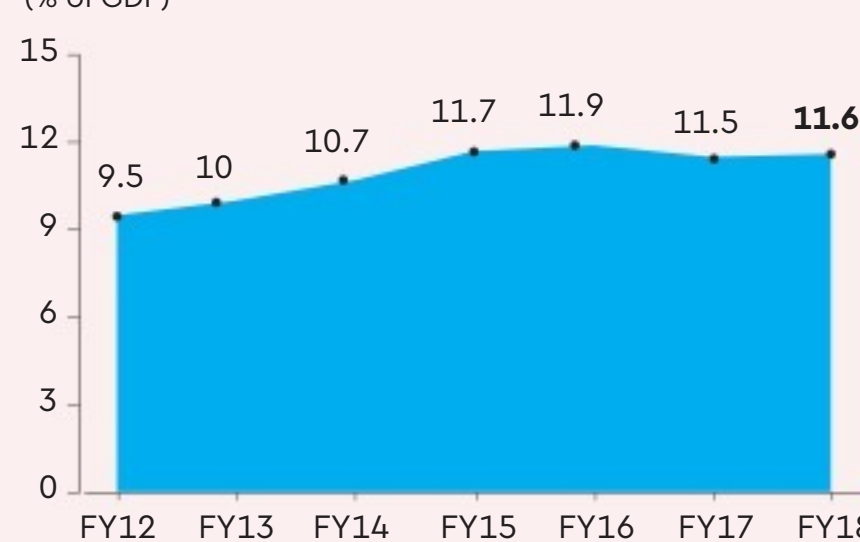
Domestic savings decline (Gross domestic savings, % of GDP)



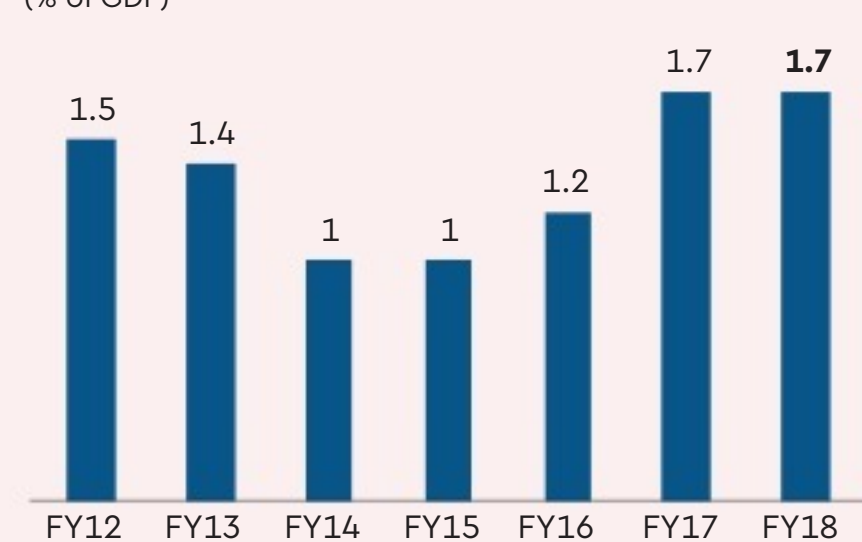
Household savings take a hit (% of GDP)



Private corporate savings stagnate (% of GDP)



Public sector savings rise marginally (% of GDP)



Corporate, government investment remain stagnant (% of GDP)



Source: CSO

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

DON'T BE TERRORISED. DON'T LET FEAR RULE YOUR LIFE. EVEN IF YOU ARE SCARED.

— SALMAN RUSHDIE



FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Politics, but no politics

Deteriorating situation in Valley can't be delinked from abdication of political responsibility by governments in Delhi



SHYAM SARAN

THE LATEST TERRORIST outrage in Kashmir underscores the nature of the war against terror. The terrorist has to succeed only occasionally to negate, in public perception, the scores of successes security forces may have achieved in preventing or forestalling similar previous attempts. It is to the credit of the security forces, including the Indian Army, the BSF and the CRPF, that they have undertaken many successful operations in the recent past to neutralise terrorist elements before these could perpetrate lethal damage.

The number of terrorists who have been eliminated in recent operations has increased significantly. While we must identify any lapses in Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) or intelligence failures which may have enabled a major attack to be mounted against the CRPF convoy, one must acknowledge that there will always remain a possibility that someone, somewhere, sometime will manage to breach even the most forbidding of defences.

There is a limitation of resources, making it difficult to put in place the most advanced and relatively robust anti-terror measures. There is a constant compulsion to minimise inconvenience and the potential harassment of ordinary citizens. There is always a trade-off between enhanced security and the public's freedom of mobility and access to public spaces. One may lessen risks but their total elimination is not possible. Before rushing to judgement on what may have gone wrong and fixing accountability, it is important that we do not lose sight of the complex political and security environment, particularly in Kashmir, that our forces have to operate in.

In the present case of a suicide bomber jamming his explosive-laden SUV into a CRPF troop carrier which was part of a long convoy, several points are noteworthy. The attack occurred on the Jammu-Srinagar highway, which is the only major artery leading into the Valley. This is used by civilians as well as the security forces. To close off the highway whenever it is being used by security forces is simply not feasible. It would have an adverse impact on the state's economy. This compulsion created the opportunity for the explosive-laden SUV to drive alongside and jam into one of the CRPF vehicles. Could the troops have been moved by air instead? Yes, but this would have been a major expense and if included in the SOPs for the future, will necessitate a huge increase in the security budget.

The use of a suicide bomber for the operation, and that too, a local youth, is ominous. It represents a deliberate escalation and points to growing radicalisation of Kashmiri youth.

There is talk of intelligence failure. Those familiar with intelligence work know that the agencies are inundated daily with a large volume of information picked up from human and electronic sources, including communication intercepts. Intelligence alerts may be issued on this basis but alerts are not the same as precise intelligence indicating the place, time and nature of a planned attack and who may be intending to carry it out. In the present case, too, there were vague "alerts", but to allege intelligence failure because these alerts did not lead to apprehension of the attacker before he carried out his murderous attack, may be misleading.

Being aware of the very real limitations, technical and political, under which security forces operate, one must be prepared to deal with a likely breach. Our reaction when that happens should be balanced and nuanced. Morale should not be undermined by the failure to prevent one such incident when many more successes have been achieved. Additional measures should be put in place but only after careful evaluation rather than as a knee-jerk reaction. Nor should additional measures put even more onerous restrictions on normal daily civilian life.

The deteriorating security situation in the Kashmir Valley cannot be delinked from the abdication of political responsibility by successive governments in Delhi. The security forces have repeatedly restored relative peace and stability enabling political processes to be activated and more enduring political solutions to be found. But each time, relative peace has only bred complacency in the political leadership creating the setting for renewed bouts of violence and local disaffection. In a highly polarised pre-election environment, political parties must not engage in a high-decibel blame game. They must come together to deal with what is a festering wound which could spread its toxin in the entire body politic.

What is happening in Kashmir and in other disturbed parts of India is only the more acute manifestation of a national malaise whose symptoms are rising communal, parochial and sectarian confrontations which

often erupt into brutal violence. While the state has to deal with such violence and restore safety and security, the only sustainable answer is addressing, through constitutionally-mandated political processes, underlying political, economic and social grievances that are drivers of these multiple mutinies. To treat each such manifestation as a law and order challenge is to enmesh the state in an action-reaction process where violence born out of disaffection and state suppression follow in mutually escalating and destructive steps.

Kashmir cannot be isolated from the rest of India and its alienated population brought to heel through imposition of ever stricter security measures. To accept this logic is to open the door to citizens in other parts of the country being subjected to the same oppression in the name of safeguarding the state if they express dissatisfaction and dissent.

The Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) based in Pakistan has claimed responsibility for the latest attack. There are already demands that Pakistan be punished for aiding and abetting the terrorist group in undertaking cross-border attacks against India. This could take the form of another round of "surgical strikes" and/or heavy artillery fire directed against Pakistani targets much like what we witnessed after the Uri terrorist attack.

There will be renewed attempts to mobilise international opinion against Pakistan on the terrorism issue, including by persuading China to withdraw its objection to declaring JeM leader Masood Azhar a global terrorist at the UN. We should bear in mind their failure so far to change the strategic calculus in Islamabad. Will more of the same work, and if significant military escalation is proposed, can the inevitable risks be contained and managed?

We must also acknowledge that external forces will continue to exploit the disturbed situation in Kashmir to undermine India's security. What we need is a strategy which takes into account both the domestic and external dimensions of the Kashmir issue. Unless a security perspective is accompanied by a willingness to use democratic political processes to chart a path towards normalcy in the state, the precious lives sacrificed by the security forces will continue to be in vain.

The writer is a former Foreign Secretary and currently Senior Fellow, CPR

PUNISHING JAISH

Masood Azhar and his outfit must be brought to book. To ensure that, China must rethink its position

ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER a suicide bomber rammed into a CRPF convoy in Awantipora, killing at least 40 security personnel, the Pakistan-based terrorist outfit, Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), claimed responsibility for the terror strike. The attack bore the JeM's signature. Since 2000, when a 17-year-old blew up an explosive-laden Maruti car which he had driven to the headquarters of the Army's 15 Corps in Srinagar, suicide strikes have been one of Jaish's preferred methods. The 2000 Srinagar attack had announced the arrival on the terror stage of Maulana Masood Azhar. Released a few months earlier, in late 1999, from an Indian jail in exchange of the crew and passengers of an Indian Airlines aircraft that was hijacked and taken to Kandahar in Afghanistan, Azhar took the help of the Afghan Taliban to form the JeM. Its attack on Parliament in 2001 almost pushed India and Pakistan to the brink of war. A few months earlier, Islamabad had used the term "terrorism" to condemn a JeM attack on the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly. However, even though it outlawed the outfit in 2002, forced in large measure by international pressure, Islamabad has allowed it to operate under different names — Afzal Guru Squad, Al-Murabitoon and Tehreek-al-Furqan — while Azhar remains under nominal house arrest in Bahawalpur. Pakistan's denials of his involvement in terror flies in the face of the JeM's ownership of Thursday's attack. Its ally, China, has stonewalled India's attempts at the UN to have Azhar declared a global terrorist.

After lying low for nearly 10 years, the JeM has upped the ante in the last three years. In November 2015, it claimed responsibility for an attack on the Brigade Headquarter at Tangdhar, very close to the LoC in Kupwara district. India has also blamed the outfit for the January 2016 attack on the Pathankot airbase, in which seven security personnel were killed and the September 2016 Uri attack which claimed the lives of 20 soldiers. In the last two years, security forces have killed at least two JeM commanders in the Valley.

Thursday's attacks should bring into focus India's security challenge in the aftermath of US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw his country's troops from Afghanistan. With Kabul's current regime under President Ashraf Ghani sidelined in the peace talks, the Taliban, which currently holds sway over 45 per cent of Afghanistan, looks set to return to the country's political centrestage. The outfit has maintained it will not go back to terrorism, but that could be a bargaining ploy. On its part, the JeM has never shied away from its umbilical connection to the Taliban. Russia and China, both of whom have advocated a role for the Taliban in Afghanistan, have condemned Thursday's attacks. But it is evident that the first step towards addressing India's concerns would be bringing Azhar to book. It is time China reconsidered its position on the matter.

RE-IMAGINING DELHI

Centre and Delhi government face-off must be addressed through a new idea of statehood

THE BATTLE OVER the legislative and executive control of the National Capital Territory of Delhi remains unresolved. The split verdict by a two-judge bench comprising Justices A K Sikri and Ashok Bhushan has, in essence, affirmed the power of the Union government (through the office of the lieutenant governor) over the elected state government on crucial matters: The Centre remains the cadre-controlling authority in Delhi and the Delhi Anti Corruption Branch cannot investigate central government officers. The two judges, however, differed on whether the state government can manage cadre below the rank of joint secretary and the matter will now be referred to a larger bench. Not surprisingly, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal expressed his displeasure at the verdict while the BJP celebrated it.

Part of the blame for the conflict and theatrics over governance in the capital lies with the current cast of political actors. The AAP has certainly been more shrill than its predecessors, choosing spectacle and agitation over quiet and patient negotiation. Equally, the Centre, through successive LGs and the home ministry, has tried to hobble a government with an impressive mandate using Delhi's constitutional peculiarity — it's legally a Union Territory with an elected government whose powers are circumscribed. But it is only through a mature politics that the root cause of the over-politicisation of governance, playing at least since 2015, must be addressed. The courts are limited by the letter of the law, by the contours of the distribution of powers laid down in the Constitution and previous judgments. What Delhi needs is a bold re-imagination of the skewed federal contract that currently determines its executive and legislative boundaries.

Since Independence, the National Capital Region has gone from being just the seat of power to a vibrant, growing city, its diversity enriched by waves of migration, its economy by industry and services. The tussle between the Centre and state, between the people and the law, can only be addressed through a new idea of statehood, one which recognises that sovereignty ultimately derives from the people. Delhi's exceptionalism, the power imbalance in favour of the Centre, emerges from the needs of a national capital — the seat of government and power, the nerve centre of administration. A mature discussion between stakeholders that looks beyond short-term political gains holds the potential to resolve the embedded contradiction. Both the current Union and Delhi governments enjoy impressive mandates. Unfortunately, instead of using their opportunity to bring in a much-needed redefinition of the division of powers, they have passed the buck to the courts.

WELCOME, REX

The first cricketer from Manipur to earn India U-19 stripes is an exciting addition to cricket firmament, paves way for others

THREE MONTHS AFTER he snaffled all 10 wickets in an innings against Arunachal Pradesh, 18-year-old left-seamer Rex Singh became the first cricketer from Manipur to earn the India U-19 stripes. A player from the Northeast taking baby steps in competitive cricket is an inspiring sight. It's a vindication of cricket's untapped potential in the region, hitherto a hub for combat-sports and football. The only cricket ground in Imphal is a ramshackle maidan. Rex, like most poster-boys from cricketing backwaters, emerged despite the system, not because of it.

Though the cricket board had initiated several grass-root programmes for the development of the sport in the region since the turn of this decade, Rex traced an uncharted route, shrugging off an unsuccessful taekwondo stint and embracing tennis-ball cricket before getting noticed by a neighbourhood cricket coach. Amidst strife and curfews, endemic to many Northeastern states, he was fascinated by the magical swerves and patterns of the hard, red leather ball. The rest of his game he developed watching YouTube videos. He was fortunate that his emergence coincided with the inclusion of his state in the Ranji Trophy, consequent to the board adopting Justice Lodha's recommendations.

Rex has busted the popular prejudice that the inclusion of newbies from a non-cricket playing region would dilute the competitiveness of the league. These players might not match or challenge the traditional cricketing powerhouses, in infrastructure, talent or the quality of the game, but exposure would only encourage talent. They must be allowed time to blossom. Now they have a poster boy to adore and emulate. The path from the Northeast to the Indian cricket team is no longer too long.

There is talk of intelligence failure. Those familiar with intelligence work know that the agencies are inundated daily with a large volume of information picked up from human and electronic sources, including communication intercepts. Intelligence alerts may be issued on this basis but alerts are not the same as precise intelligence indicating the place, time and nature of a planned attack and who may be intending to carry it out. In the present case, too, there were vague 'alerts', but to allege intelligence failure because these alerts did not lead to apprehension of the attacker before he carried out his murderous attack, may be misleading.

A LOOMING CRISIS

Pakistanis are sick of so-called mujahideen and want India, Pakistan to cooperate



KHALED AHMED

ADIL AHMAD DAR, the 20-year-old school dropout who led the suicide attack at Pulwama in south Kashmir on February 14, was a Jaish-e-Muhammad "fedayee" warrior, trained for the job in the Valley. He was inspired by Burhan Muzaffar Wani, commander of a Kashmiri militant group Hizbul Mujahideen, earlier killed by the Indian army; and he was also inspired by the "defeat" of America at the hands of the Taliban.

One feared the inevitable: India will associate Pakistan with Dar and Jaish-e-Muhammad, the terrorist organisation that Pakistan stupidly allows to survive in Bahawalpur, south Punjab. A lot of anti-Pakistan rage will be manufactured in India after assuming that Dar actually crossed over into Pakistan, took instructions and money from the ISI. Indian commentator Rahul Bedi's comment came as a relief, reminding India and Pakistan to take joint action instead of getting into another war of words: "Most militants in Kashmir are now homegrown."

Jaish-e-Muhammad is banned in Pakistan but its leader, Masood Azhar, is allowed to live in peace in his hometown, in his madrasa Usman-o-Ali, Bahawalpur. His terrorist group was earlier called Harkatul Mujahideen, associated closely with Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda. It became Jaish after an internal division. "Maulana" Masood Azhar had the ability

Masood Azhar damaged General Musharraf more effectively after 9/11 when he attacked the Indian Parliament and caused a military stand-off between Pakistan and India that lasted almost a year. He was put under house arrest in his hometown Bahawalpur from where he had a way of vanishing from time to time.

to raise funds all over the world. In 1993, al Qaeda was involved in the killing of 24 Pakistani soldiers in Somalia while performing duties under the UN auspices, about which Osama bin Laden was to boast later. While in disguise in India — and up to no good in Kashmir — Azhar was captured in 1994.

In 1999, an Indian civilian aircraft was hijacked after take-off from Nepal by a group of terrorists led by Azhar's brother, Ibrahim. The plane was taken to Afghanistan where the Taliban government, recognised by Pakistan, arranged for a swap of Indian passengers with the two al Qaeda terrorists, Umar Sheikh and Masood Azhar. After their release, both came to Pakistan and began operating freely. Sheikh, now in a jail in Hyderabad Sindh, came to Lahore, and Azhar went to the most powerful seminary in Pakistan, Jamia Binoria in Karachi, from where he issued threatening statements against President Pervez Musharraf.

Azhar damaged Musharraf more effectively after 9/11 when he attacked the Indian Parliament and caused a military stand-off between Pakistan and India that lasted almost a year. He was put under house arrest in his hometown, from where he had a way of vanishing from time to time. In 2009, according to a report published in London's *The Telegraph*, Jaish-e-Muhammad had acquired

a 4.5-acre compound outside Bahawalpur in addition to the madrasa Usman-o-Ali inside the city. While local authorities acknowledged that Jaish had spread out of the city, they denied that the new acquisition was anything more than a cattle farm.

In February 2014, Pakistan decided to break the unspoken embargo Azhar's movement and got him out of his ISI-protected madrasa to speak to a public gathering of thousands in Muzaffarabad. His job was to castigate India for unfairly killing Afzal Guru, a "freedom-fighter" hanged in India for allegedly helping Jaish mount an attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001.

Most Pakistanis are tired of the so-called mujahideen and want India and Pakistan to cooperate instead of notching up bilateral terrorism, India feeling righteous about the Jaish threat and Pakistan preening on having captured RAW agent Kulbhushan Jadhav "red-handed". Even if it wants to, India will not listen to good sense before the polls and Pakistan will be the hobby horse to beat up on. And Pakistan, economically belly-up and subliminally dying to "normalise" through the Kartarpur corridor, will go on mysteriously tolerating terrorists on its soil who kill its children.

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

FEBRUARY 16, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIA-CHINA TALKS

THE CHINESE FOREIGN minister, Huang Hua, will visit New Delhi this year to continue discussions on the border and other issues. Indian pilgrims may be allowed to visit Mansarovar and Kailash because the Chinese have agreed to consider an Indian proposal on these lines. Chinese leaders have confirmed a hands-off policy as far as the problems of the Nagas and the Mizos is concerned. Throughout the three rounds of talks with India's foreign minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in Peking totalling nearly eight hours, Huang did not make any negative reference to India's relations with the Soviet Union.

AFGHAN CRISIS

THE US STATE Department said that Soviet advisers present at the Kabul Hotel where the US Ambassador to Afghanistan was killed "failed to heed repeated requests" by US officials that force should not be used against the kidnappers. The acting Secretary of State Warren Christopher summoned the Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin to the department to "express in the strongest terms the shock of the US government" over the alleged Soviet role in the death of Ambassador Adolph Dubs. Dubs was killed by his four kidnappers when the police charged into the hotel room, reportedly after officers fired automatic weapons.

UP CM QUILTS

UP CHIEF MINISTER Ram Naresh Yadav resigned after losing the confidence of the Janata legislature party. He resigned after receiving instructions from Deputy Prime Minister Charan Singh. Yadav said there could be no compromise or cooperation with such communal organisations as the RSS.

JANATA PREZ ON UP

JANATA PRESIDENT CHANDRA Shekhar said every effort would be made to have a person acceptable to all sections as leader of the UP Janata legislature party. The election of Ram Naresh Yadav's successor should not be on the basis of group alliances, he added.



15 THE IDEAS PAGE

J&K and the AfPak hyphen

US-Taliban engagement in Afghanistan has emboldened groups like Jaish and Lashkar-e-Taiba. The jihadist project has also been helped by the political vacuum in the Valley



NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

IN 2008, CANDIDATE Barack Obama angered India by suggesting that the road to peace in Afghanistan ran through Kashmir. He made the case in several interviews before his election as US President that if India and Pakistan would only resolve their differences, the Pakistan army would be more inclined to heed the American call to go after its assets in Afghanistan. Some months later, when President Obama appointed Richard Holbrooke as the Special Envoy for India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, India lobbied with determination to keep itself from being hyphenated with Af-Pak, and succeeded in keeping itself out of Holbrooke's mandate.

Almost exactly a decade later, as security experts piece together Thursday's devastating suicide attack on a CRPF convoy at Awantipora on the Jammu-Srinagar highway, it appears as if that hyphenation may have returned to haunt India, albeit in a different way.

In a pre-recorded video released by Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), the group that claimed responsibility for the attack, the Kashmiri youth at the wheel of the car bomb seemed to suggest that he had been inspired by the "success" of the Taliban over US forces in Afghanistan. Reports in this paper have shown that even before the US began pushing a peace deal with the Taliban, three years ago, youth in South Kashmir spoke of how the Taliban's "victory" over US forces had showed them that they too could "defeat India". As the US-Taliban engagement gathers pace, and Pakistan claims bragging rights for bringing them together, the emboldening of the jihadist project in Kashmir, and of Pakistan-based fellow travellers of the Afghan Taliban such as JeM and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), is something India has to be ready for.

The links between the JeM and the Taliban are well-known. On October 2001, when the JeM was listed under UNSC 1267, the reasons given were that it was "participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing or perpetrating of acts or activities by, with, under the name of, on behalf or in support of, supplying, selling or transferring arms and related materiel to or otherwise supporting acts or activities of al-Qaida, Usama bin Laden and the Taliban". According to the UNSC, al Qaeda, Taliban and other extremist organisations provided finances to Maulana Masood Azhar to set up the JeM. As a member of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Azhar had also fought in the first Afghan war, and the JeM is believed to have participated in Taliban operations against US forces.

After it came into existence in 2000, it was active in the Kashmir Valley for a couple of years, and in 2001 carried out a massive suicide attack with a car bomb, similar to Thursday's strike, at the Jammu & Kashmir assembly. But the JeM lost favour with the Pakistan army, which was under US pressure after 9/11, and the group then turned against its patrons, twice even attempting to assassinate then military ruler General Pervez Musharraf.

Its comeback to the Valley in 2015 coincided with the taking shape of a new, indige-



C R Sasikumar

nous militancy in J&K, which had its origins in the 2008 Amarnath land row, followed by the 2010 anti-Machil protests, and the 2012 hanging of Afzal Guru. Its operations since then have included the terrorist strike at Pathankot Air Force base and the attack on the Uri Brigade headquarters. The unrest in the Valley since the 2016 killing of Hizbul Mujahideen militant, Burhan Wani, gave the JeM the foothold it had been looking for since 2001. Some of the confidence and triumph of the Taliban, which is hoping to make a comeback in Kabul by the middle of this year, is sure to rub off on its friend JeM as well as the LeT.

At this moment, it is all too easy for politicians to demand and promise revenge against Pakistan, but any military adventurism could have unforeseen, unintended consequences. The post-Uri surgical strike exposed the military limitations of that particular instrument. It brought no positive changes. Instead, the LoC remained hot, and Indian civilians and soldiers continued to die. Any military operation would have to go beyond the surgical strike, even for political optics, and it may still not achieve any strategic objectives. Worse, it may spin out of control. What worked in the government's favour in September 2016 was that Pakistan chose not to respond militarily. In fact, it even denied there had been any military operation of the kind that the Indian Army announced it had undertaken across the Line of Control. It may not be the same again.

What India still has is the higher moral ground against a state that is addicted to the use of terrorist groups as proxies against its neighbours. A day before the attack in Awantipora, there was an almost identical attack in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province, which borders Afghanistan and Pakistan's Balochistan province. A suicide bomber drove a car loaded with explosives into a bus carrying troops of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) near the provincial capital Zahedan, close to the Pakistan border. The attack killed 27 troops and injured a dozen other troops of the elite IRGC, close to

At this moment, it is all too easy for politicians to demand and promise revenge against Pakistan, but any military adventurism could have unforeseen, unintended consequences. The post-Uri surgical strike exposed the military limitations of that particular instrument. It brought no positive changes. Instead, the LoC remained hot, and Indian civilians and soldiers continued to die. Any military operation would have to go beyond the surgical strike, even for political optics, and it may still not achieve any strategic objectives. Worse, it may spin out of control. What worked in the government's favour in September 2016 was that Pakistan chose not to respond militarily.

the Iran-Pakistan border. The Jaish al-Adl, a successor to the anti-Iran Jundullah, claimed responsibility for the attack.

There is no overt link between the two attacks except their striking similarity. But both the JuA and JeM are Sunni extremist groups. Both are based in Pakistan. Both have flourished in the same enabling ecosystem provided by the Pakistan army. The Indian security establishment even believes that the JuA is a front of the LeT. While Iran blamed the US and its allies for the attack, it also asked Pakistan to stop sheltering the JuA. In a thinly veiled statement after the attack, the Iranian foreign ministry said the group "receives military, financial and intellectual support from certain regional states", hinting both at Saudi and Pakistan backing for the group, while the IRGC commander was more open in his call to Pakistan to shut down the group.

Whether or not the government succeeds in getting China to shed its opposition to listing Masood Azhar under UNSC 1267, and achieves its stated goal of "isolating" Pakistan internationally, what India needs to do more urgently is to acknowledge that it has failed in Kashmir, that the situation in Kashmir is much worse than it was in 2014-15. Not just because of terrorists, with or without help from Pakistan. It is so because despite being in the ruling coalition in Jammu & Kashmir, the BJP and the Modi government refused to engage with Kashmir, creating a political vacuum in the Valley. Leading lights of the BJP as well as some security experts bragged that the situation in the 1990s was so much worse that bringing the present crisis under control was going to be a walk in the park. "A three-and-a-half district militancy", they called it. It is painfully obvious now that this is not the case. Clearly, something else is required if Kashmir is not to get hyphenated with Afpak. And it is not the security forces who can provide that something to pull the Valley back from the abyss.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"More than most countries, Pakistan knows full well the wages of extremism."
—DAWN

Rash U-turns, half-baked plans

Social policy is in danger of getting lost in electoral histrionics



JEAN DRÈZE

AS THE COUNTRY inches towards parliamentary elections, a deep confusion pervades the realm of social policy. When the Narendra Modi government came to power five years ago, there were high expectations of a rollback in welfare schemes. The previous government, so went the story, had gone overboard with social spending, and Modi would set this right. In fact, the UPA government had only initiated a much-needed revamping of India's underdeveloped social sector, with some important results (as we learnt later from the fourth National Family Health Survey and other sources). But corporate-sponsored think tanks, generally hostile to social spending, preferred to argue that it was time to rein in the welfare state.

Until recently, the Modi government seemed to abide by that script. It showed little interest in social policy during the last five years. The 2015-16 Union Budget gave dramatic expression to this indifference, with deep cuts in allocations for many social programmes. True, these could be partly justified on the grounds that the states were receiving a higher share of the indivisible pool of taxes. But the cuts went further, and the axe fell particularly heavily on children, with initial cuts of around 36 per cent and 50 per cent for midday meals and the Integrated Child Development Services respectively. When I asked a very senior finance ministry official, one year later, how this happened, he first said that he was not aware of it and then explained that the cuts had been made at the last minute, without paying much attention to the details. This speaks volumes.

There are many other examples of the indifference if not hostility of the central government to social policy in the last five years. Maternity entitlements, a legal right of all Indian women (except those already covered in the formal sector) under the National Food Security Act 2013, were ignored for years and are brazenly violated to this day. The rights of workers employed under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act have also been undermined by budget crunches, erratic wage payments and the vagaries of technocracy. The central government's contribution to social security pensions for the elderly has been frozen at a measly Rs 200 per month, despite repeated appeals for more from 60 eminent economists, among others. With the partial exception of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, there have been no major initiatives in the social sector in the last five years. Most of the government's efforts have gone into promoting Aadhaar and saving money rather than protecting people's entitlements.

However, the NDA government seems to be changing gear if not making a U-turn. Suddenly, it has rediscovered that millions of poor people in India desperately need public support for their survival and wellbeing. As a starter, the government announced a grand health insurance scheme, Pradhan

Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, which claims to cover up to Rs 5 lakh of health expenditure every year for 10 crore families. It is another matter that this is actually a hospitalisation insurance scheme, with a tiny budget. In the same vein, the finance minister recently announced a mega scheme for contributory pensions in the informal sector. Here again, the claims and promises are out of gear with actual budget commitments (just Rs 500 crore for now), but they could serve the real purpose — winning votes. Meanwhile, the budget for non-contributory pensions for widows and the elderly was quietly reduced by more than Rs 600 crore.

The finance minister did allocate big money (Rs 75,000 crore) for the new scheme of direct cash transfers to farmers. This is the most tangible sign of the NDA government's U-turn on social policy. Perhaps the scheme is better than nothing — the poor in India do need income support and this is one way of going about it. But is this the best way? Quite likely, many well-off farmers (or business owners who also happen to have a little land) will take advantage of the scheme while many vulnerable groups, starting with landless labourers, are left out.

The net result of this pre-electoral frenzy is an ill-thought assortment of second-rate social programmes. The Opposition parties, alas, are adding to the confusion. The Congress, in particular, seems to be committing itself to a very strange "minimum income guarantee" scheme. The idea, according to statements from Rahul Gandhi and P Chidambaram, is that if you earn less than the minimum income, the government will pay the difference. This makes no sense. For one thing, it is wholly impractical — how is the government supposed to estimate this income gap, household-wise? For another, it would mean that anyone who earns less than the minimum income might as well give up working, since the government is supposed to fill the gap anyway.

According to some media reports, this odd idea has the support of top development economists such as Angus Deaton, Thomas Piketty and Abhijit Banerjee. This is just hot air. On further enquiry, it turns out that none of them are backing a specific proposal, sympathetic as they certainly are to various forms of income and wealth redistribution in India.

Meanwhile, no major political party has proposed bold initiatives in the fields of health and education. These are just as important as income support. In fact, India desperately needs a big national initiative for universal quality education. This is essential not only to help people out of poverty but also to deal with the country's oppressive web of economic and social inequalities. A leap towards universal healthcare, going well beyond the histrionics of Ayushman Bharat, is long overdue.

It is good both the government and the Opposition are sparing a thought for the poor. But the current scramble to win their votes is in danger of breeding half-baked plans and expensive stunts. What India needs is a well-thought out effort to consolidate the foundations of a lasting social security system.

The writer is visiting professor at the Department of Economics, Ranchi University

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SHOCK CIRCUIT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The nation mourns' (IE, February 15). The Pulwama terror attack proves beyond any doubt that the surgical strikes across the LOC to avenge the Uri Army Base attack has not deterred terrorists. It had little impact on the ground in the Valley, particularly in south Kashmir. In fact, by announcing the surgical strikes to the whole world, we got no appreciation from the global community — it only equated India with Pakistan for violations across the border instead. The Modi government should have carried on conducting surgical strikes and also denying them at the same time — which is precisely what the ISI is doing.
P L Singh, Amritsar

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The nation mourns' (IE, February 15). At this crucial juncture, we should exercise patience and restraint. The Pulwama terror attack is a heinous crime and the perpetrators must be punished after prudent preparation. All national and regional parties should cooperate to chart further course of action.
Subhash Vaid, Noida

BLURRED LINES

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Crossing the Laxman Rekha' (IE, February 15). At a time when standards of public discourse hit a new low every alternate day, this article endeavours to draw a line between acceptable and unaccept-

LETTER OF THE WEEK

POPE'S WAY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'When the road darkens' (IE, February 9). Pope Francis's acknowledgment of the sexual offence charges against the Church is a positive sign for Christianity. Whenever any wrong happens, the best way to deal with it is to accept mistakes and take corrective actions. Cover-ups do injustice to victims and the religion.
Nishant Parashar, Chandigarh

able talk in public life. Over the last decade, political debate in India has been reduced to rhetoric, mudslinging and personal insinuations. Reading this article reminded me of a debate in Parliament in the mid-90s. It was a verbal duel between the then PM Narasimha Rao, and leader of Opposition and BJP patriarch, Atal Bihari Vajpayee. They also represented two different ideologies. However, the political debate between the two was witty and loaded with information. Above all, one gave space and respect to the other's viewpoint. Compare this with the language used by political leaders now.

Rishi Kaushik, Jamshedpur

Reconciliation with honour

What Ayodhya needs now is healing, not compromise



RAJMOHAN GANDHI

WHILE APPRECIATING FRIEND Apoorvanand's strictures ('A rotten compromise', IE, February 6) following my suggestion ('A new temple, a new mosque', IE, February 6) for a possible settlement in Ayodhya, and welcoming his comment as a valuable contribution to a necessary debate, I must also respond frankly to him.

Let me reproduce, word for word, the core suggestion which I had advanced in the context of the Supreme Court readying itself to hear Ayodhya's land-title dispute: "The bare bones of a settlement are not hard to identify. One, the Hindu side admits the error in demolishing the mosque. Two, the Indian state admits its failure to prevent the demolition. Three, the Muslim side acknowledges the Hindu community's wish to see a Ram temple rise on the site as also the Hindu community's belief that a temple had once stood where the Babri Masjid was built. Four, not far from the site, and yet not too close to it, space for a new mosque is made available by the Hindu side and the Indian state. If necessary, the four steps can be simultaneous. In this dream-like scenario, acknowledgment of wrongdoing and restitution leads to justice as well as reconciliation... Will Ayodhya's disputing sides voluntarily come together as I have imag-

ined? Very unlikely. But the Supreme Court can direct them to do so."

To the question that has been asked — which (or what) is the Hindu side or the Muslim side that I speak of — the answer is at two levels. For the Supreme Court, the Hindu and Muslim disputants before it would represent the two sides. In the nation generally, those Hindus who want a temple constructed at the site where the mosque had stood until 1992 represent "the Hindu side" in the dispute, and those Muslims who want a mosque rebuilt on the site represent "the Muslim side".

I recognise that a great many Hindus and Muslims in the land would agree to any settlement irrespective of where a temple or mosque is built or rebuilt, but it is the divide between the Hindu and Muslim "sides" as defined above that needs to be bridged.

An impossible goal? Perhaps. But not more impossible than the other aims that are routinely discussed — for example ending pollution, corruption, hunger and disease.

It should be noted that the word "compromise" was not used in my proposal, neither in the lines reproduced above nor elsewhere. The word "settlement" was employed, as also the phrase "acknowledg-

ment of wrongdoing and restitution". Equally importantly in my proposal is that the state would be a key party to a settlement and to the acknowledgment of wrongdoing and restitution.

Once the state, which would include the central government and the UP government, makes the proposed acknowledgment and restitution, it would simultaneously reaffirm its commitment to prevent a reenactment anywhere (in Mathura, Kashi or anywhere else) of what happened in Ayodhya in December 1992.

By making the proposed acknowledgment, the state would underline and reiterate India's Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act 1991 which "prohibits conversion of any place of worship" and "provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947". It is well known that only the disputed Ayodhya site was left out of the purview of the 1991 Act.

Acknowledgment of wrongdoing is never easy. Nor is it necessarily fruitless. A Hindu litigant admitting to the Supreme Court, "What was done in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 was wrong", would be a significant statement and could contribute to a better climate in the land.

The state acknowledging that it failed to prevent the tragedy in 1992 would also not be easy. Yet that could send a critically important message to future rulers. And the state and the Hindu side joining hands in finding adequate space for a new mosque could, God willing, turn out to be healing steps of restitution.

For the Muslim side to let go of the disputed (and despoiled) site would be very hard. Apoorvanand is perfectly right in stating that an honourable compromise is one where the stronger side yields to the weaker. But the need of the hour may not be compromise so much as healing.

I am not so naive as to think that my proposal will be accepted by Ayodhya's disputants, or by the two "sides" in the nation as I have tried to define them, or to imagine that the Supreme Court will give my suggestion serious attention.

But some individuals may perhaps ask themselves whether, as I put it in my article, it is impossible for a nation to come together to address the past's mistakes.

The writer, a grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, is research professor at the Centre for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



Terrible Thursday

As investigations into the Pulwama attack begin, Pakistan must act against the Jaish

As India mourns the death of 40 CRPF personnel in Thursday's terrorist strike in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district, it is clear that the attack was meant to provoke. The Jaish-e-Mohammed, the Pakistan-based terrorist organisation which has orchestrated numerous strikes in the Kashmir Valley, has taken responsibility for what is now the highest toll of security forces in any attack in the State. Investigations should yield a better picture, but it is a matter of extreme concern that a suicide bomber could time his attack to hit a security convoy. There is no question that Pakistan bears the onus to explain why Masood Azhar, the leader of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, enjoys such freedoms on its territory, if not outright support from the establishment. Certainly, diplomatic backing by Pakistan and China has been crucial in defeating efforts at the United Nations to put Azhar on the list of banned terrorists. Early details indicate that a sports utility vehicle laden with a huge quantity of explosives targeted the convoy of 78 buses carrying about 2,500 soldiers from Jammu to Kashmir. The video of the presumed suicide bomber too hints at an altered standard operating procedure meant to provoke and escalate tensions. Forensics teams have already begun work and answers to the disturbing questions the attack has raised on intelligence gathering, dissemination and coordination in the Valley must be pieced together.

However, if the terrorists have acted from an updated playbook, New Delhi's response must not play into their plans with reflexive and precipitate official action. India has withdrawn the Most Favoured Nation status to Pakistan in a signal that it will not wait for preliminaries in the effort to isolate Pakistan. Coercive diplomacy is likely to continue, but to be effective the effort needs a wider net, especially at a time when the U.S. is seeking Pakistan's help in firming up a deal with the Afghan Taliban. Beijing too must not, and cannot, evade questions about its previous blocking of action at the UN, specifically against Azhar. Post-Uri, after terrorist attacks the air is always thick with calls for retributive cross-border strikes. The past history of limited, if any, returns from such precipitate action must serve as a cautionary check. Instead, the effort must be to isolate Pakistan for its support to the Jaish and seek substantive action, to effectively upgrade intelligence and plug security gaps, and to win the confidence of the local population in the Valley. Thursday's attack was meant to provoke and polarise the country. New Delhi's response must, instead, be to isolate the perpetrators and keep the peace on Indian territory.

Forever president

Sisi stands to extend his reign if Egypt's draft constitutional changes go through

Egypt's proposed constitutional changes to extend presidential terms are a huge setback to the country's democratic progress. Re-elected last year, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the military leader who seized power in 2013, would be allowed to begin afresh a six-year term in 2022 under the new amendments. Another provision envisages a political role for the military as a guardian of the Constitution. Thursday's parliamentary vote initiating these changes will have to be ratified in a popular referendum, but few doubt the establishment's capacity to secure it. The 2018 general elections were held without a serious challenger to Mr. Sisi, whose rival was in effect handpicked by the regime after other contenders were forced to quit the race. The economy has returned to a growth trajectory following an International Monetary Fund loan in 2016, in exchange for cuts in public subsidies. But soaring prices and double-digit unemployment have dimmed the government's overall appeal. In the past five years, the popular upsurge that began with the overthrow of the three-decade-long autocratic rule of Hosni Mubarak in 2011 has subsided. The military crackdown has vengefully targeted Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood government of former President Mohamed Morsi, who has since been convicted. The media and political activists anxious to consolidate the gains from the 2011 Tahrir Square mass protests have not been spared the authorities' wrath either.

Egypt had begun nominal attempts at ushering in a multi-party system in 2005, when Mr. Mubarak got himself elected for a fifth term. But within a few months, he declared himself President for life. Attempts to switch to popular representative government in the latter part of his tenure were merely cosmetic. Within years, in 2011, followed the mass protests that demanded the overthrow of the Mubarak regime and formed the epicentre of the 'Arab Spring'. Today, events have turned a full circle under Mr. Sisi's firm grip on the levers of power. The military has been never so powerful since the rule of Gamal Abdel Nasser. As with several autocrats today, the Egyptian leader has leveraged the American and the Russian governments effectively, while they seem indifferent to the military's excesses. Egypt similarly benefits from the strategic partnership it signed with China, bringing trade flows and investment. But above all, China's politically hands-off approach is a win-win for both regimes. While such diversification may be smart diplomacy, it begs the question about Cairo's long-standing position as the leader of the Arab world. There is a simmering anger among sections of the youth contending with unemployment and the absence of avenues for dissent. The Arab Spring is nearly a decade behind, but the conditions that brought the multitudes to Tahrir Square still prevail.

Hindutva 2.0 is in crisis

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's winning formula of 2014 is under severe stress; can he refresh it?



VARGHESE K. GEORGE

A month ago, on January 18, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) general secretary Bhaiyyaji Joshi said in Nagpur: "When the temple will get constructed on Ram Janmabhoomi in 2025, this progress (of India) will gather further momentum... Once the Ayodhya temple is built, the country will gain the capital required for the next 150 years."

The idea that the construction of a controversial temple at the site of a demolished mosque can lead to the formation of capital in the country could be intriguing for the uninitiated. For the proponents of Hindutva, however, this notion is integral to their idea of development and progress. The proposition is that an aggressive assertion of the collective Hindu identity is an essential precondition for India's development. This is a point that pro-market supporters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi self-deceptively overlooked ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, though he himself had made his position clear. Asked whether he was "pro-business" or a "Hindu nationalist," he said in 2013: "There's no contradiction between the two. It's one and the same image."

Three contradictions

While this has been a core component of Hindutva thought for decades, it was Mr. Modi's reign in Gujarat that made it acceptable, and popular. If enough people still thought Mr. Modi's 2014 campaign was jettisoning Hindutva for deve-

lopment, it was convenient for him.

Hindutva politics over the years had suffered from three inherent contradictions that stunted its growth: friction between pro-market segments and Hindu traditionalists in the Indian right wing; contradictory requirements of the centralised, disciplinarian, ideologically rigid core of the RSS and building a mass mobilisation through a political wing; and consolidating a Hindu vote bank among a people hierarchically and oppressively divided by the caste system.

Mr. Modi's innovation to Hindutva politics since 2002 has been in reconciling these three contradictions in a sufficient measure, initially in Gujarat and then in other parts of the country to win a Lok Sabha majority in 2014. That is Hindutva 2.0 – where material progress is married to a religious social agenda; disciplined organisation and mass mobilisation are balanced; and the lower rungs in the caste hierarchy are enlisted as part of an omnibus Hindu identity in which they are offered social acceptance and political representation. All these factors that worked in Mr. Modi's favour are now unravelling, and Hindutva 2.0 is in crisis.

The circle that admirably described Mr. Modi as pro-market has shrunk very fast, and most of those who still call him so do it derisively, often accusing him of having promoted crony capitalism, and failing to deliver on job creation. Those who spoke of his managerial skills, many as a cover to mask their own bigotry, are now disappointed over the government's handling of the economy, especially demonetisation and poor implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). They may



SANDEEP SANEJA

not be cheering for anyone else, but they are no longer saying Mr. Modi is the saviour.

On the other hand, the religious right is happy. They have pushed the temple agenda to the back-burner with a new deadline of 2025, giving Mr. Modi breathing space, and have begun to rally forces behind his 2019 campaign. Yet, the marriage of material prosperity and religious nationalism is not exactly made in heaven, and is teetering.

Caste break-up

Enrolment of a critical mass of Dalits and backward caste populations into the Hindutva politics that is widely perceived as a project for the nourishment of upper caste dominance was Hindutva 2.0's second success. Mr. Modi presented himself as a lower caste leader and sought to appropriate Dalit and backward caste figures ranging from B.R. Ambedkar, Sree Narayana Guru to Ayyankali and even Mata Amritanandamayi into his politics. The idea of Hindutva is based on the premise that there is a collective interest for the community common to all caste groups. Given the social, economic, linguistic, cultural diversities within Hindus, a common thread that could unite them all is the image of a common enemy. Cow protection has been the convenient

Heralding a new dawn

India and Saudi Arabia are poised to dramatically deepen the bilateral relationship



SAUD AL-SATI

In April 2016, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gave itself a goal and a promise in the form of Vision 2030. The Saudi citizen has become the focal point for sustainable development with massive projects directed towards building a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation. The entire foundation of our Kingdom's economy is being transformed towards a post-oil age with the aim of attracting \$427 billion in private investments over the next decade to diversify the economy and create 1.6 million new jobs through the National Industrial Development and Logistics Programme.

Powered by reforms

According to World Bank's 'Doing Business 2018' report, Saudi Arabia has instituted the largest number of business reforms among countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as of July 2017. With its platform Meras, starting a business in the Kingdom now requires only one step and one day! The single-window platform Fasah has also been

launched for customs clearance and import and export procedures. The 'Doing Business 2019' report has ranked Saudi Arabia as the fourth-largest reformer within the G20. In 2018, Saudi Arabia saw foreign direct investment rise by 127% year-on-year. Global confidence in Saudi Arabia's ascent has further solidified with the International Monetary Fund forecasting increased growth for Saudi Arabia in July 2018.

The Kingdom's construction market is set to touch \$96.52 billion in 2025, up from \$45.33 billion in 2016. There are three mega-projects underway – smart city project Neom, Qiddiya entertainment city and the Red Sea Tourism Project. In 2018, we also launched FekraTech, a national initiative for digital ideas, aimed at making Saudi Arabia a global innovation hub. The Saudi Intellectual Property Authority is also working towards transforming Saudi Arabia into an advanced knowledge-based economy built on innovation and entrepreneurship.

A \$100 billion planned investment in transport projects will also occur over the next decade as we expand the railway system and introduce new light rail mass transit projects in Riyadh, Jeddah, Makkah and Madinah. The grand expansions of the Holy Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah have increased their capacity for accommodating millions of worshippers. One of the most important goals of the Vision 2030 is to increase our capacity to welcome 30 million Umrah per-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

formers every year by 2030, improve their experience and enrich it further.

Since a majority of the Kingdom's population is below the age of 30, education is a key component of Vision 2030. Over the decades, Saudi Arabia's education system has gone through an astonishing transformation. Due to generous scholarships from the Kingdom, a large number of Saudi students study overseas. By 2030, the Kingdom intends to have at least five Saudi universities among the top 200 in international rankings. Education reforms have also led to an increase in women's literacy and participation in the workforce.

With the Kingdom at the heart of the Arab and Islamic world, the changes taking place on the Saudi soil are creating positive influences for the entire Arab region. Saudi Arabia remains committed to the social, economic and political stability of the region and will continue playing a leading role in countering terrorism and establishing peace as demonstrated by the Kingdom's contribution towards

tool here. In the 2015 Bihar elections, Mr. Modi urged Yadavs to not vote for Lalu Prasad, who he said was insulting the cow-worshipping community by supporting beef eating. In his home State of Gujarat it was 'white revolution,' and cow protection, while in Bihar it was pink revolution, or a proliferation of slaughter houses, he said.

But the same cow protection that helped Hindu unity soon enough fractured it as Dalits became targets of vigilantes. "If you want to attack, attack me, not the Dalits. If you want to shoot, shoot me, not the Dalits," Mr. Modi said in August 2016, as instances of cow vigilante attacks on Dalits increased. Moreover, the gravest impact of the collapse of livestock economy is in States where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) did well in 2014, and within them, on backward castes and Dalits.

While Hindutva 2.0 offered a lot of rousing rhetoric for Dalits and backwards as quoted above, it also demonstrated an unprecedented hostility towards autonomous lower caste mobilisations. Brazenly partisan police action and the continuing police oppression of Dalit groups which organised protests, such as at Bhima Koregaon in January 2018, are signs of this intolerance of lower caste mobilisation against the Hindu right. The BJP governments in power also emboldened sections of the upper castes to seek to recapture the space lost to lower caste politics in earlier years.

The policy impact of the Modi government, ranging from the overall underperformance of welfare schemes for the Dalits, and the recently announced reservation for economically backward upper castes, is yet another source of friction. Pursuit of unity without

questioning caste hierarchy is vintage RSS, but is not very attractive to the majority among the Hindus. These contradictions are showing in regions where the BJP did well in 2014.

The iron grip of the RSS on the BJP, and the former's search for ideological purity have not only contributed to constant friction between the two, but historically also limited the electoral successes of Hindutva. For instance, while the RSS did not entirely trust Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was often accused of being a closet Nehruvian, the more ideologically pure BJP leaders did not have any significant mass appeal. With Mr. Modi at the helm, Hindutva 2.0 overcame this dilemma, combining mass appeal and uncompromising Hindutva credentials in his persona. The synergy between the RSS and the BJP has never been stronger than its is today. But this disciplined march towards the goal of a Hindu Rashtra under the command of a 'strong leader' has created a new friction within. BJP legislators, Ministers and leaders who feel suffocated and powerless, despite being technically part of the ruling dispensation, now have a limited stake in Mr. Modi's continuation in power. A large number of sitting members of the Lok Sabha are likely to be denied tickets in 2019, if Mr. Modi continues on the 'Gujarat model' for beating anti-incumbency.

None of this is hidden from Mr. Modi and his tactician, BJP president Amit Shah, and they are bound to seek measures to reverse these trends. The extent of their success remains an open question. What is, however, clear is that the three critical components of Hindutva 2.0 are under severe stress.

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the historic peace accord signed between Ethiopia and Eritrea in Riyadh in 2018. We continue to stand by our Yemeni brothers and support the Palestinian cause. Our dream is of a peaceful, progressive and a prosperous world.

In our common pursuit for development and stability, Saudi Arabia sees India as an important partner. Our ties trace their roots to the third millennium BC. Trade, science, arts, literature, languages – the exchanges between our civilisations have indeed been profound. India holds a special place for us. Nearly 3 million Indians form the largest expatriate community in the Kingdom. India has also seen its Haj quota of 1,36,020 increase consecutively during the last two years to a record 1,75,025.

India and Saudi Arabia have more opportunities today to tap into than ever before. The bilateral trade for 2017-18, in excess of \$27 billion, will accelerate as Saudi Arabia and India engage in a host of new areas such as information and communications technology (ICT), health care, defence, biotechnology, education and infrastructure among others. India is one of the top countries on the Kingdom's preferred list with great potential for investment in organic and food processing industries.

Expanding cooperation

The energy partnership between the two countries is also finding new grounds. As of October 2018, Saudi Aramco has nearly \$2 billion in material-service sourcing with Indian companies, and investing

in India's value chain from oil supply, marketing and refining to petrochemicals and lubricants is a key part of its global downstream strategy. The \$44 billion integrated refinery and petrochemicals complex at Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, being jointly developed by Saudi Aramco, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and a consortium of Indian public sector units (PSUs) consisting of Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), is yet another milestone.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2018 on the sidelines of the G20 summit and both sides agreed to set up a high-level mechanism to boost concrete actions in terms of investment, technology and manufacturing across various sectors.

As formidable economies of MENA and Asia, Saudi Arabia and India have a historic opportunity to collaborate in shaping the future of our regions, for a better tomorrow full of prosperity and promise. Combining our respective strengths will pave the way for endless possibilities and accomplishments for the benefit of our two peoples and the region. The forthcoming state visit of the Crown Prince to India presents another historic opportunity to expand collaboration between our two friendly nations.

Saud Al-Sati is Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to India

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.

Carnage in Kashmir

It is saddening that paramilitary personnel were caught unawares despite surveillance and close monitoring (Page 1, "37 CRPF men killed in J&K suicide attack", February 15). Neither Governor's rule nor President's rule appear to have resulted in any significant change in the State of Jammu and Kashmir as far as curbing terrorism is concerned. The people in the State seem to have no hope of peace. Eliminating terrorists is going to be difficult as terror elements appear to be working in isolation.

N. VISVESWARAN,
Chennai

■ Evidence points to security and intelligence lapses. Where were the explosives

sourced from? It is time the international community came together and pledged to root out terror or act against terror centres.

SACHIN V.K. JADHAV,
Lakhala, Washim, Maharashtra

■ If there is incontrovertible proof of terror outfits being involved, India should step up its efforts to have in place a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. This must be at the level of the United Nations. Reports of Kashmiri youth now being a part of terror are deeply disturbing. Sincere efforts should be made to bring them back to the mainstream.

P. ALARMELMANGAI,
Palani, Tamil Nadu

■ It is unfortunate that even after being admonished

publicly and warned of surgical strikes for any form of outrageous aggression, the forces backing terror have not mended their ways. The incident has also brought to light the vulnerabilities in India's counter-terrorism defences against fidayeen attacks. Lawmakers must address the lack of an institutional arrangement for the management of India's counter-terrorism response. The country can ill-afford a loss of precious lives at the hands of a few extremist forces.

SHREYANS JAIN,
New Delhi

■ One is at a loss for words and one's heart goes to the families of all those who have lost their lives. Defence officials must now ensure a calibrated response so that

anti-India elements do not dare to touch Indian soil.

DEBASISH BARUAH,
Kohora, Kaziranga, Assam

■ One fears that people in the Valley will suffer for a terrible crime perpetrated by a few. Of course passions are high and cries of "blood for blood" are heard. Yet we still hope that even now there will be officials at the senior levels who will have their heads on their shoulders and proceed with patience and caution. Before furious retaliation is unleashed, there must be a dispassionate inquiry.

INDERJIT SINGH JAJEE,
Chandigarh

Safe blood

It is unfortunate that there are some people donating their own blood for

pecuniary considerations, perhaps to make both ends meet. This practice, on the face of it, is morally and ethically incongruous, defeating the noble cause of blood donation (Editorial page, "Every drop matters", February 15). The panacea is to involve the community at large. If blood collection booths are accessible across the country, people may voluntarily opt for donation. There needs to be greater awareness of "blood donation day".

DEEPAK SINGHAL,
Noida

■ How can one forget the incident in Tamil Nadu, of a youngster who donated blood that transmitted infection to a mother. Blood banks and transfusion units need to be better monitored

and staff need to be enthused about their responsibility.

SACHIN V.K. JADHAV,
Lakhala, Washim, Maharashtra

Subtle message?

The well-caricatured depiction of Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav prodding his son and SP leader, Akhilesh with a "nose push", in presence of the architects of the Opposition's mahagathbandan and the Prime Minister and BJP president, speaks a thousand words. One waits to see the political fallout after the unexpected "gesture of goodwill" in Parliament (OpEd page, February 15).

B. GURUMURTHY,
Madurai

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On the Silk Route trail

The Silk Route was an unhindered stream of trade that built bridges between cultures, until it was broken up by the rise of national borders. A Russian plumber and a German nurse capture its romance by retracing the route. **Peerzada Ashiq** reports

Moored to the banks of the Dal lake in Srinagar, ‘New Shahen-shah’ is not a fancy houseboat. An immersion rod hisses in a makeshift washroom set up on a wooden plank outside the houseboat. Tourists Roman, 47, a Russian plumber, and Anne, 31, a German nurse, are looking forward to their mid-day bath, and understandably so. Following heavy snow and landslides, they had been stranded for two weeks on the Zoji La, a pass which connects Kargil in Ladakh with Srinagar, their final stop.

When Roman and Anne met for the first time three summers ago in Tibet, they decided to do a special trip in 2018: retracing the famous Silk Route. They would explore the overland route that once connected Central Asia, Asia and Europe via the high mountain passes of the Pamir, Tian Shan, Hindu Kush, Karakoram and Kunlun mountain ranges.

Says Roman, “It was our dream to travel along the Silk Route, which was once an unhindered flow of different streams of cultures. Today it’s a series of water-tight chambers due to national borders.”

On a military truck

It was in the late 18th and early 19th century that British archaeologist Sir Aurel Stein organised the first major expeditions to explore what German geographer Baron Ferdinand von Richthoven had in 1877 named the ‘Silk Road’. Stein undertook eight expeditions along the ancient trade route that links China and the Mediterranean. On at least one expedition, Kashmir was Stein’s starting point for a journey to explore a second century Buddhist site in China’s Xinjiang province. The excavations made by Stein between 1900 and 1915 helped throw some historical light on this part of Xinjiang, which was once a part of the mysterious Kroraina kingdom.

But in the post-colonial era, the consolidation of borders and hostility between neighbouring countries snapped the last remnant linkages of the Silk Route in the Kashmir region. The incorporation of Xinjiang into China in 1949 sealed it. But Roman and Anne managed to break through the ‘sealed route’ after 71 years, as they navigated through some of the world’s toughest border posts.

In July 2018, Anne hired a military truck fitted with a modular kitchen and a two-bed arrangement in the back. It was a vehicle that could withstand temperatures as low as minus 50° Celsius. It was what helped Roman and Anne survive when they were stranded in Ladakh for 15 days. Recalls Roman, “Even the vehicle’s fuel got frozen many times at the Zoji La Pass. If you stepped out, there was a good chance you’d freeze to death.”

It was his idea to hire a military truck, preferably a World War II-era vehicle. He says, “Anne managed to find one with a 5,200 cc engine in Germany. We wanted a vehicle that could negotiate mountains of this height and magnitude and withstand its vagaries. Thankfully, it did.”

Anne drove the vehicle all the way from Germany to Romania across many states of Europe, and finally to Ukraine. “It was a memorable journey. One could see the stark contrast between two kinds of lifestyles. On the one hand were people pinned down by the modern idea of life, and on the other, a whole set of communities untouched by modernity, living a comparatively primitive life on the mountainside,” says Anne.

Roman had once travelled overland from India to Russia via Tibet. Now he was all set to drive down from Russia to Kashmir along the Silk Route. Commencing the Silk Route leg of their journey from St Petersburg, they took the traditional land route through Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan, halting at the Silk Route’s famous stopovers of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Badakhshan. From Kyrgyzstan, the vehicle made its entry into China.

Getting into Xinjiang

He adds, “This time, travelling to China was not easy. Our entry into Xinjiang took around 28 hours at the customs, where all the data from our phones and laptops was downloaded.” Anne was unlucky. The Chinese customs officials spotted her pet cat – foreign animals are not allowed into China – and refused her entry.

However, this did not deter Roman from continuing his journey along the Silk Route in China. He drove the truck alone through the famous marketplaces of Urumqi and Kashgar of Xinjiang, before taking the arduous mountain stretches towards Karakoram in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). His road journey took him close to the famous Pangong Lake that straddles India and China in Ladakh.

Entering the Karakoram mountains through the Khunjerab Pass at an elevation of 16,010 ft, Roman steered his vehicle into Gilgit-Baltistan’s Hunza valley in present-day PoK. Explains Roman,



Self-drive: “We wanted a vehicle that could negotiate mountains of this height and magnitude and withstand its vagaries. Thankfully, it did.” Roman (left) and Anne in Srinagar after completing their journey along the Silk Route. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



“At the Balti Fort, I saw an 18th century Russian samovar (copper tea pot). Variants of it are used in Afghanistan and Kashmir.” He decided to pick up a 100-year old antique Afghan ‘samovar’ (a word of Russian origin) from Pakistan’s Peshawar. “‘Sam’ means ‘self’ in Russian and ‘Var’ means ‘cook,’” he explains.

Samovar is a copper teapot with a chimney at the centre for charcoal. While the Russian samovar has a knob at the bottom, the Kashmiri one has a teapot-like nose at the top. Roman adds, “This is a living example of how much we still have in common despite the borders that have come up.”

Roman and Anne met up in Pakistan for the onward journey to India through the Wagah border at Amritsar, and from there to Ladakh via Manali in Himachal Pradesh. The Silk Route journey would have remained incomplete unless they covered Ladakh’s Leh and Kargil towns, which were once bustling stopovers for silk-carrying merchants from China. Despite inclement weather in November (snow had already covered the passes connecting China with Gilgit-Baltistan and Himachal Pradesh with Ladakh, while the day temperature hovered below freezing point), Roman was determined to carry the antique samovar for the Central Asian Museum in Leh.

Says Roman, “I feel elated to have brought a samovar for the Leh museum. It would highlight the broken link. In Leh, I realised that the Russian word ‘aksakal’, which means ‘white-beard’ and ‘wise man’, had become the designation for the customs officer who used to check the caravans on the Silk Route in the past. The words and the utensils used here make one feel as if it was only yesterday that the region was open for trade.”

A spark in the cold desert

The timing of Roman’s offering of an antique samovar to the museum in Leh could not have been more opportune. Ladakh is sparsely populated. Its twin districts of Leh and Kargil have a combined population of just 2.74 lakh people (as in Census 2011) spread across a vast cold desert. Yet the region is astir with people’s movements demanding a revival of the old trade routes. The setting up of the Central Asian Museum in Leh, in 2016, on the premises of a 17th

century mosque, stands testimony to the people’s attempt to reclaim the past, with an eye on the future.

Back in 2004, in Kargil town, around 200 km from Leh, two brothers, Gulzar Hussain Munshi, 48, and Ajaz Hussain Munshi, 42, decided to sort out the artefacts hidden in their grandfather’s inn. The inn had been set up in 1920 and was then known as the Aziz Bhat Sarai. The three-storey building also doubled as a depot for goods, with the ground floor accommodating a stable for traders’ horses. The Munshi brothers converted the only surviving inn of the Silk Route in Ladakh into a museum. Gulzar became its director, while Ajaz is its curator.

Named the Munshi Aziz Bhat Museum of Central Asia and Kargil Trade Artefacts, the house of the Munshis has become a major attraction for tourists interested in learning more about the Silk Route. It houses over 30,000 artefacts from the 19th and the early 20th centuries. These include turquoise-studded silver necklaces and engravings from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Khotan and Kashgar, and 17th century carpets from the weavers of Yarkand and Kashgar in Xinjiang. There is also a 17th century gold-plated saddle strap from Yarkand. Early 20th century artefacts include western toiletries such as soap, toothbrushes, and shaving brushes dating back to 1903, 1905, 1926, and 1939 – all imported from England, Germany and the U.S.

Says Ajaz, “After reaching the Mumbai coast, these toiletries travelled all the way to Central Asia through Yarkand, the cold desert of Khotan, and

Kashgar. From the other side, silk and carpets would reach Indian and Western markets.” His grandfather, Munshi Aziz Bhat (1880-1950), was a prominent owner of a Silk Route enterprise, Munshi Aziz Bhat And Sons. He adds, “It traded in a number of goods, including silk, rubies, gold, and spices, with its business extending ‘in all the four directions.’”

Says Ajaz, “I do not see my private museum as a mausoleum of the Silk Route. I see it as heralding a fresh start. The time has come for Kargil to open itself up to Baltistan and Xinjiang again. If travellers like Roman and Anne can make the travel happen again, why can’t we, who were to the Silk Route what blood is to a body?”

Hajira Begum, the 104-year-old grandmother of the Munshi brothers, still has letters from 1933 containing details about the stocks of gold, rubies, and silk carried by the horses arriving from different directions. Says Begum, “One horse would carry 40 kg of gold dust. It used to cost ₹12 per kg. I can still smell the spices that criss-crossed these mountains.”

The Munshis have already been approached by the Chinese Embassy in India for help in establishing a museum dedicated to the Silk Route. Says Ajaz, “China seems equally interested in reviving the links. They are in touch with us for the museum.”

Hunderman village, the nearest Silk Route point to Kargil town, still bears a great deal of resemblance to Kashgar bazaar in China’s Xinjiang. It connects Kargil to Baltistan’s Skardu area in PoK, which is less than 5 km from Kargil’s main market. For the families here, retelling old tales and legends about trade and travel is a popular pastime on dark winter evenings. These stories, frequently told and retold, have also played a role in sparking the current political movement seeking a renewal of the Silk Route’s old linkages.

Sheikh Nazir Mehdi Mohammadi, president of the Anjuman Jamiyat Ulla-

The time has come for Kargil to open itself up to Baltistan and Xinjiang again. If travellers like Roman and Anne can make the travel happen again, why can’t we, who were to the Silk Route what blood is to a body?”

AJAZ HUSSAIN MUNSHI, Kargil

ma Kargil, a local socio-religious group, is spearheading a campaign to reopen the Kargil-Skardu and Turtuk-Khapolu routes. He says the people of Kargil are being denied their due. Says Mohammad, “People would be compelled to march towards the Line of Control (LoC) if the Kargil-Skardu and the Turtuk-Khapolu roads are not reopened.”

With each passing day, the movement is gaining momentum and support. Feroz Ahmad Khan, chairman of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC)-Kargil, a body set up to administer the region locally, says the time has come to take the battle to the doors of power in New Delhi.

WhatsApp at the border

The advent of Internet and social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp have further strengthened the yearning of the local population to connect with their roots. For instance, Balti, a Tibetan language, is on the wane on the Indian side of the LoC, with only about 9,000 speakers in five villages of the Nubra Valley. But Sherine Fatima Balti, 23, a resident of Leh’s Bogdag, has emerged as a singing sensation for the 2.9 lakh Balti-speaking population of Baltistan on the other side of the LoC.

Says Sherine’s father and a contractor, Ahmad Shah, 52, “My daughter is followed by 57,000 people on Facebook. Over 90% of her followers are from Baltistan.” A comment from Manzoor Hussain Balghari and Ehsan Ali Danish, two well-known lyricists from Baltistan, on Sherene’s Facebook page started an unusual musical jugalbandi (union) online. Says Shah, “Balghari and Danish now share their lyrics online with Sherine. She sings them and uploads the videos, which then go viral in Baltistan. Her songs are even aired on the local radio stations there.” In January this year, Sherine was conferred the Jammu and Kashmir State Award for Performing Arts.

Adds Shah, “Other Baltistan-based lyricists have also started sharing their lyrics for Sherine to sing.” One popular song written by Balghari and sung by Sherine is about the yearning to meet a dear one. “At the end of the day, the sky meets the earth; why can’t we too,” go the lyrics.

Sherine’s songs, ‘Grifshat Sula Beik’ and ‘Tsertragi Jusay Jusay’, are runaway hits in PoK. Sherine says, “I am the first

Balti woman to take up singing, as it is strongly discouraged by our conservative culture. One day I would like to meet my fans across the LoC.”

Sherine’s family, like the 12,000 other families that got divided into Jammu and Kashmir and PoK after Independence, saw the boundary redrawn after the 1971 war. And families again got divided. Says Shah, “Baltistan is just 4 km from Bogdag village. In 1971, we were part of Pakistan for six months during the war before India won us back. It took many divided families 47 years to cover this 4 km distance. Our past is painful. Opening the Turtuk-Khapula road will go a long way in healing the wounds of war here.”

Today, WhatsApp helps the divided families exchange videos and see each other by cell phone. It also heightens the longing for a real reunion. For instance, the family of Ghulam Hussain, 42, a social activist, belongs to Thyakshi village in the Nubra Valley. They became residents of India only in 1971, when the Indian Army annexed 804 sq km of territory from Gilgit-Baltistan. Ghulam Qadir, Hussain’s uncle, got separated from his family in 1971 and stayed back in Ghanche district on the other side of the LoC, while his wife remained stranded here. Says Hussain, “It took over 12 years to secure a meeting between husband and wife. Now we rely on on-line video conferencing to see my uncle and aunt, which is not enough.” For people in nearby Bogdag village, Hussain’s Thyakshi village remained a “mini-Pakistan” for many years.

Locals want tourism to pick up at Turtuk too, like it has at the Wagah border. Says Hussain, “Opening the roads will liberate us. During the winter, it is easier to ferry vegetables from Baltistan than from Leh town.”

Ironically, the twin routes of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawalakote that were opened in 2005 for the divided families of Jammu and Kashmir were of no use for those in Ladakh. Pakistan treats PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan as two separate entities. Says Hussain, “The bus service was limited to the divided families of PoK. So we could not avail it to reach Gilgit-Baltistan.”

Kargil saw another shutdown on February 8. Since the announcement of the decision last November to open the Kartarpur Corridor between India and Pakistan, there have been three major rallies in Kargil town, with the protesters pressing for similar arrangements in this region.

Meanwhile, Anne and Roman, having successfully concluded their Silk Route adventure, have already shipped their military truck back to Germany from a Mumbai port. Says Roman reflectively, “Traditions live longer than regimes. Culturally, it will mean a great deal if people are allowed to move freely. I’m sure it will happen sooner or later.”

Agriculture can alleviate employment woes



DEVINDER SHARMA
FOOD & AGRICULTURE SPECIALIST

If only agriculture can be turned economically viable and ecologically sustainable, it can easily take away much of the pressure the country faces in creating additional employment. All it requires is a paradigm shift in economic thinking, which begins by first treating agriculture as an economic activity. Making farm livelihoods sustainable should be the first step towards achieving the objective of ensuring gainful employment for the marginalised communities.

IN March 2018, an estimated 2.5 crore people, more than the population of Australia, applied for about 90,000 positions in the Indian Railways. In 2015, over 23 lakh candidates, including 22 lakh engineers and 255 PhD holders, had applied for 368 posts of peon in the Uttar Pradesh state secretariat. As many as 7,000 people, most of them college graduates, applied for 13 vacancies for waiters in Maharashtra's secretariat. Undoubtedly, the job scenario across the country is appalling.

This is borne by the fact that India's unemployment rate rose to a 45-year high during 2017-18, as a newspaper reported, quoting the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) study conducted between July 2017 and June 2018. At a time when India's economy has been on a growth trajectory in the past four years - growing at an average exceeding 7 per cent per annum — the failure to provide jobs to millions of people is a clear-cut pointer that relying on a higher GDP is not the answer to creating more jobs. Whether we like it or not, it is now becoming apparent that a higher GDP does not translate into more employment opportunities.

Although Finance Minister Arun Jaitley dismisses the study, saying "if the economy is growing at 12 per cent nominal growth in the past five years, it would be an economic absurdity to say that such a large growth, the highest in the world, doesn't lead to the creation of jobs," but the question that needs to be asked is: where are the jobs? While all-out efforts are being made to show that job creation is on track, a report by the Centre for Monitoring of Indian Economy (CMIE) deflates the claims when it shows that in the past year, almost 1.1 crore people lost their jobs. "An estimated 91 lakh jobs were lost in rural India, while the loss in urban India was 18



RAY OF HOPE: Agriculture, which employs over 50 per cent of the population, has the ability to reboot Indian economy.

lakh jobs. Rural India accounts for two-thirds of India's population, but it accounted for 84 per cent of the job losses," the report said.

Growth without jobs is meaningless. The indication that a higher GDP does not automatically lead to more jobs was clearly visible in the UPA era when despite a high growth exceeding 8.3 per cent on an average, only 1.5 crore jobs were created in 10 years (2004 to 2014). This was against the annual intake of about 1.2 crore fresh entrants in the job market every year, which meant that against the need to provide 12 crore people with employment, the UPA government could provide only 1.5 crore jobs. Ten years is not a small period, and it is here that policy-makers failed to realise the inability of eco-

nomic growth to create more jobs.

Still worse, a Planning Commission report had worked out that between 2004-05 and 2011-12, about 14 crore jobs were lost in agriculture. Many economists term the migration from agriculture to be a welcome sign. Going by the World Bank prescription, which was doled out back in 1996, India was directed to go for a population shift, translocating 40 crore people from rural to urban areas in the next 20 years, by 2015. While most government economists have blindly followed the World Bank prescription, I have always termed these 40 crore people being forced to migrate from the villages as 'agricultural refugees'. In the absence of alternative employment opportunities, these millions are swarming into

reality is that during the period, agriculture saw an unprecedented rate of migration; manufacturing, too, slumped, causing a loss of 5.3 crore jobs. More recently, another 1.06 crore jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector during the four-year period (2011-12 to 2015-16).

Since agriculture is the biggest employer, employing 52 per cent of the population as per the 2011 Census, the resolution of the monumental employment crisis that India faces actually lies in the crop fields. If only agriculture can be turned economically viable and ecologically sustainable, it can easily take away much of the pressure the country faces in creating additional employment. All it requires is a paradigm shift in economic thinking, which begins by first treating agriculture as an economic activity, which has multi-faceted roles cut out. Making farm livelihoods economically sustainable should be the first step towards achieving the objective of ensuring gainful employment for marginalised communities. Once agriculture becomes economically viable, providing more income to 60 crore people, it will reignite the rural-based industry, and in the process trigger a reverse migration.

Whether we like it or not, only agriculture has the ability to reboot the economy. The increased demand a refurbished agriculture will create will be phenomenal, leading to a spurt in industrial production. This may not be there in the economic textbooks, which still emphasise on reducing the population in farming, but it is time to look beyond. If the Constitution can be amended umpteen times, I see no reason why dominant economic thinking cannot undergo a transformation for the better, in tune with the changing times. It's time to accept that agriculture is truly the mainstay of Indian economy.

30 years after 'settlement', Bhopal victims await closure



BEANT SINGH BEDI
FORMER DISTRICT & SESSIONS JUDGE

Many survivors of the Bhopal gas tragedy have not been paid so far, while scores of others received only a pittance. The liability of the Union Carbide Corporation, Union Carbide India Limited and Dow Chemicals has not yet been determined. Many people are still wondering how and why the controversial settlement came about on February 15, 1989.

ALMOST 35 years after the Bhopal gas tragedy, the world's worst industrial disaster, its aftershocks are still being experienced. It was on the intervening night of December 2 and 3, 1984, that the poisonous methyl isocyanate gas leaked from the industrial plant of Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), engulfing slums and other areas of the town. The disaster led to a contentious and long-drawn-out litigation, the offshoots of which are still pending in the Supreme Court.

The Indian government, under the provisions of the Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster (Processing of Claims) Act, 1985, filed a suit for compensation in the district court, Bhopal. In December 1987, the district judge passed an order for Rs 350-crore interim compensation. On revision, the High Court reduced this figure to Rs 250 crore. The matter finally reached the apex court. The latter pressed the parties for a settlement. In its order dated February 14, 1989, the Constitution Bench directed that there be an overall settlement of all claims in the suits for \$470 million (around Rs 750 crore, as per that year's rates). Consultations between the parties continued throughout the night. The next day, they filed a written settlement signed by the parties, which was approved by the court. Thus, the Bhopal settlement came into existence. The detailed reasons for this



LITIGATION: The government's curative petition, praying for a re-examination of the 1989 judgment, is pending before the Supreme Court.

order were set out in a subsequent order of the Constitution Bench dated May 4, 1989. The court observed that it would be its endeavour to undo any injustice (if any, arriving from this settlement). The court added, "Those who trust this court will not have cause for despair."

In the meantime, another Constitution Bench (December 22, 1989) upheld the constitutionality of the 1985 Act. The order dated May 4, 1989 (Sahu

case), led to a series of review petitions, the main challenge being that the quantum of compensation settled was grossly low. The Constitution Bench negated this challenge by its judgment dated October 3, 1991. However, it restored the criminal case against Warren Anderson, then Chairman of the UCC, and other officials. The court held that if some claimants were left unpaid even after the exhaustion of the settlement amount, the Union of India should not be found wanting in making good the deficiency.

In 1989, the UCC was allowed to go scot-free for all liabilities, including criminal charges, on the payment of the paltry (under the circumstances) sum of \$470 million. The Indian government's original claim was for \$3.3 billion. It is pointed out that the number of deaths was five times more than what the government stated while accepting the settlement. This meant that when the compensation was disbursed, the claimants were paid proportionately less. The government has also been criticised for its decision to release Anderson. He flew out of India and never came back to stand trial. The government also exposed itself to criticism when the criminal charge under Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the IPC was diluted to one under Section 304-A (causing death by negligence).

In 2010, the Chief Judicial Magistrate sentenced a few UCC officials to imprisonment for two years after holding them "guilty of killing 25,000 innocent people in 1984". The nation rose in support of the Bhopal victims. Amid the uproar, the government filed a curative petition in the Supreme Court in December 2010, praying for a re-examination of the February 14, 1989, judgment. This curative petition is still pending. Recently, an application was filed for an early hearing, on

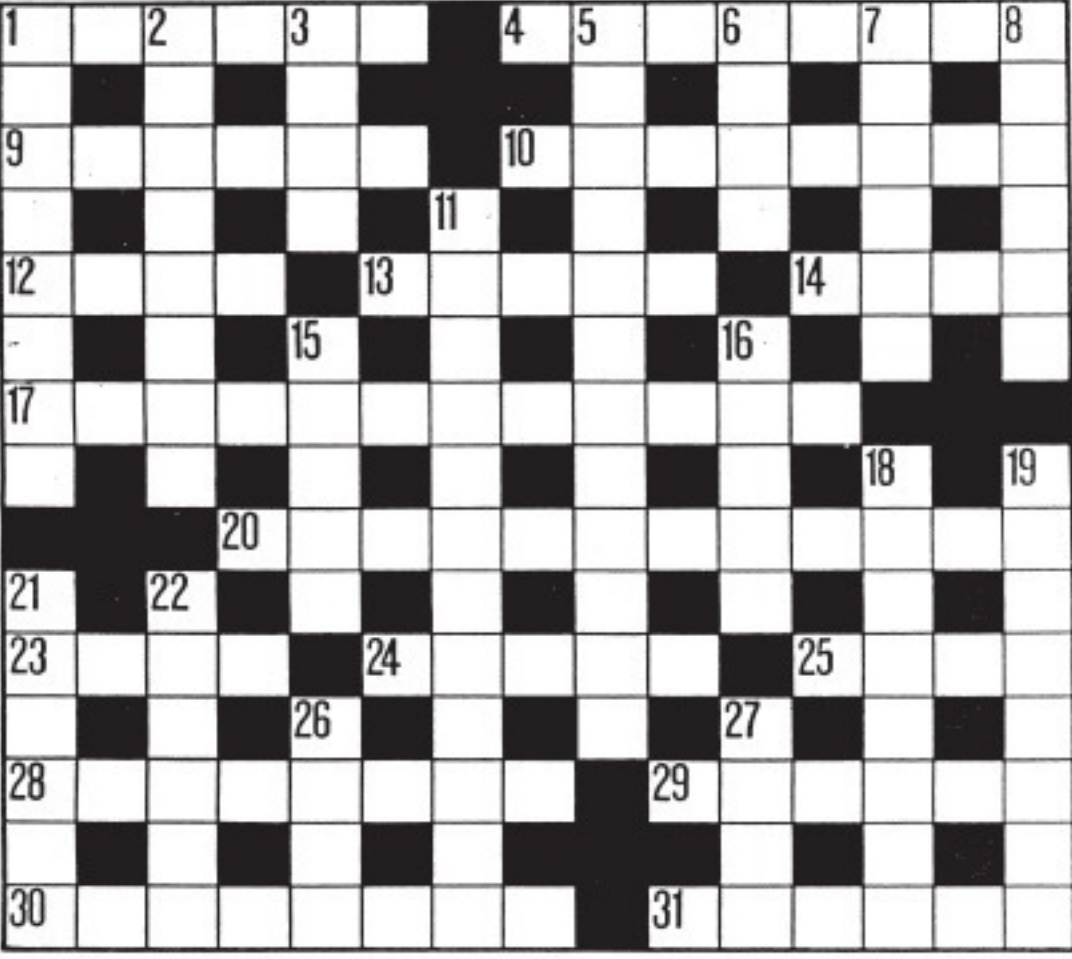
which the Chief Justice of India directed that it shall be heard in April.

The UCC is now owned by Dow Chemicals, which has merged into DuPont to create Dow DuPont. By April 1, Dow DuPont plans to break up into three companies, a plan that will see the end of UCC. These developments have added another dimension to the pending curative petition.

In August 2014, a US court ruled that Dow and UCC were not liable. The Indian government has demanded an additional Rs 7,844 crore as compensation for the victims, besides Rs 315 crore to repair the damage to the environment and subsoil water.

Be that as it may, nothing has been resolved so far. The exact nature of the toxic gas has not yet been determined; the antidote is also not known. Hundreds of tonnes of toxic waste is lying at the site. India neither has the expertise to deal with this waste nor how to de-contaminate underground water. Many survivors have not been paid so far, and many received only a pittance. The liability of the UCC, Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) and Dow has not yet been determined. Many wonder how and why the settlement of 1989 was entered into. Now that the statutory period of 30 years has passed, survivors hope that archival retrieval will help to deal with the contentious issues, left unresolved so far.

QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Able to move quickly (6)
4 Shrink (8)
9 Zest-giving quality (6)
10 Doctrine (8)
12 Frustrate (4)
13 Bracing (5)
14 Farm building (4)
17 Resources (4,3,5)
20 Enrolment (12)
23 Father's sister (4)
24 Grown-up (5)
25 Scottish lake (4)
28 Precipitately (8)
29 A fungal growth (6)
30 Medieval musician (8)
31 Show signs of (6)

DOWN

1 To lower in price (4,4)
2 Centre of target (5,3)
3 Luxuriant (4)
5 A superstition (3,5,4)
6 An implement (4)
7 Positive declaration (6)
8 Causing strain (6)
11 Welcome deliverance (4,8)
15 Large black bird (5)
16 To massage (5)
18 Confusion (8)
19 Causing obstruction (2,3,3)
21 Get to the bottom of (6)
22 To no avail (2,4)
26 Surfeit (4)
27 Quote as an authority (4)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Right, 4 Dashing, 8 Mob, 9 Stayed put, 10 Augment, 11 Daily, 13 Evince, 15 Prefer, 18 Pagan, 19 Archaic, 21 Come round, 23 Owe, 24 Nettles, 25 Elegy.

Down: 1 Rummage, 2 Go begging, 3 Taste, 4 Dearth, 5 Slender, 6 Imp, 7 Gutsy, 12 Left alone, 14 Central, 16 Rickety, 17 Maquis, 18 Pecan, 20 Cadre, 22 Mat.

SU DO KU

3							2
		4		9	1		5
			5		1	6	
			1	8	9		6
	1						8
6			3	7	4		
	7	2			3		
	9		6	2		3	
4							1

EASY

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 15, 2019 FRIDAY

- Vikrami Samvat 2075
- Shaka Samvat 1940
- Magh Shaka 26
- Phalgun Paryushite 3
- Hijari 1440
- Shukla Paksh Tithi 10, up to 1:19 pm
- Vishku Yoga up to 3:23 am
- Mrighshikha Nakshatra up to 8:53 pm
- Moon enters Gemini sign 9.32 am.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

1	9	8	4	5	6	3	2	7
6	4	5	3	7	2	8	1	9
7	3	2	9	1	8	6	5	4
4	1	7	6	2	9	5	3	8
5	6	9	8	3	7	2	4	1
2	8	3	5	4	1	7	9	6
3	5	1	7	6	4	9	8	2
9	7	4	2	8	5	1	6	3
8	2	6	1	9	3	4	7	5

FORECAST

SUNSET: **FRIDAY** **SATURDAY** **SUNRISE:**

18:10 HRS **07:03 HRS**

Sunny **Partly Cloudy** **Cloudy** **Rainy** **Foggy**

CITY **MAX** **MIN**

Chandigarh 18 11
New Delhi 20 13

PUNJAB

Amritsar 18 09
Bathinda 19 10
Jalandhar 18 08
Ludhiana 18 09

HARYANA

Bhiwani 22 11
Hisar 22 11
Sirsa 19 10

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Dharamsala 14 05
Manali 08 01
Shimla 12 04

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Jammu 15 10
Leh 04 -05
Srinagar 06 01

UTTARAKHAND

Dehradun 20 11
Mussoorie 16 04

TEMPERATURE IN °C

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 1

समुचित प्रक्रिया जरूरी

लड़ाकू विमान या हेलीकॉप्टर जैसे जटिल युद्धक हथियार खरीदने का काम आसान नहीं है। नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक ने वायु सेना के लिए की गई मझोले लड़ाकू विमानों की खरीद के ऑर्डर पर 660 तथा रडार सिस्टम पर 42 विशेष टिप्पणियां की हैं। यह प्रक्रिया इतनी सीधी सपाट भी नहीं कि बिना सोच विचार पूरी कर ली जाए। क्योंकि तब अधिकांश बोली लगाने वाले एकबारगी ही अयोग्य घोषित हो सकते हैं। व्यक्तिगत स्तर पर ऐसी विशेषताएं या उत्पाद की विशिष्टताओं को महत्व दिया जा

सकता है जो यह तय करने में मदद करें कि क्या बेहतर हो सकता है और क्या नहीं? यह अक्सर निर्णय से जुड़ा मामला होता है। वास्तविक तौर पर देखें तो उपयोगकर्ता की प्राथमिकता की भी एक अहमियत होती है। वायु सेना के साथ भी यही मामला है। शुरुआती चरण में उसने बार-बार इस बात पर जोर देना जारी रखा कि उसे मिराज की आवश्यकता इसलिए है क्योंकि करगिल युद्ध में इस विमान का प्रदर्शन उल्लेखनीय रहा था। क्या 2012 में मिराज के उत्तराधिकारी के रूप में राफेल के

चयन के लिए भी वायु सेना का ऐसा ही दबाव था, हालांकि उस वक़्त उसे कामयाबी नहीं मिल सकी।

यह दो ऐसी चीजों के बीच चयन हो सकता है जिनमें बहुत कम अंतर हो। यकीनी तौर पर यूरोफाइटर भी राफेल के समान ही बेहतर रहा होगा क्योंकि इसका भी चयन किया गया था, और स्वीडन की बोफोर्स गन का फ्रेंच विकल्प भी उतना ही दमदार रहा होगा। परंतु क्या यूरोफाइटर का चयन करने से उसे भारत के लिए खास जरूरतों के मुताबिक उन्नत नहीं बनाना पड़ता? और राफेल को इस रूप में ढालने में लगी 140 करोड़ डॉलर या कुछ अधिक की राशि खर्च नहीं करनी पड़ती? सबसे बढ़कर कूटनयिक निहितार्थ भी चयन को प्रभावित कर सकते हैं और करते हैं। आखिर इस बात की और क्या वजह हो सकती है कि भारवाहक हेलीकॉप्टरों की मानक दर बदली गई, वह भी बोलियां खोले जाने के बाद? ऐसे

में एक ओर जहां अंकेक्षण की बातों को गंभीरता से लिया जाना चाहिए, वहीं व्यावहारिक बातों का भी ध्यान रखा जाना चाहिए।

ऑडिट रिपोर्ट भी हथियार खरीद की जटिल रिपोर्ट से आसान नहीं होतीं। ऐसे में यह समझ होनी आवश्यक है कि आखिर क्यों सीएजी रक्षा मंत्रालय के इस बात पर जोर देने पर चुपचाप मान गया कि राफेल अनुबंध में वित्तीय गोपनीयता का प्रावधान है।

जबकि अन्य तमाम हथियार खरीद सौदों से जुड़े वित्तीय आंकड़े सीएजी की उसी रिपोर्ट में साफ देखे जा सकते हैं। यह भी जाहिर है कि सीएजी ने राफेल की वित्तीय गारंटी न दिए जाने के कारण हुई बचत की राशि का उल्लेख न कर भी सरकार को राहत दी है। अंकेक्षकों के लिए काफी कुछ है।

क्या हथियार खरीद की यह विस्तृत प्रक्रिया इसलिए कम गुणवत्ता की है क्योंकि यह इतनी

विस्तृत है? इस समीकरण में समय को कारक मानकर देखिए। कई मामलों में चयन प्रक्रिया में ही 8 से 10 वर्ष का समय लगता है और इस दौरान रक्षा सेवाओं को प्रतीक्षा करनी होती है। कई बार तो इसके बाद भी खरीद को अंजाम नहीं दिया जाता। कई बार अंतरिम तौर पर

तकनीक बदल चुकी होती है। क्या प्रतिस्पर्धी बोलियों के बीच चयन की संक्षिप्त प्रक्रिया संभव है? क्योंकि

हाल के दिनों में तो अधिकांश खरीद बिना ऐसी बोली के हुई है। जहां तक लेनदेन की बात है, शायद ही कोई होगा जो सोचेगा कि इतने बड़े पैमाने पर होने वाले सौदों में पैसे का लेनदेन नहीं होता होगा। ध्यान रहे कि ये निर्णय कई स्तरों पर, कई वर्ष में लिए जाते हैं और चयन करना इतना जटिल होता है कि इनमें हेराफेरी की काफी गुंजाइश रहती है।

इस बीच बड़े सवालों का कोई उचित जवाब

ही नहीं है। उदाहरण के लिए इस बात का कोई स्पष्टीकरण नहीं है कि जब वायु सेना को 126 लड़ाकू विमानों की आवश्यकता थी तो 36 विमान क्यों खरीदे गए जबकि वैसे ही विमानों के लिए नए सिरे से बोली लगने तथा उनके हासिल होने में कई वर्ष का समय लग सकता है। रक्षा मंत्रालय ने इस मसले पर प्रतिक्रिया दी है कि हल्के लड़ाकू विमानों के ऑर्डर दिए जा रहे हैं। यानी उसके विमान से मझोले और हल्के विमानों में कोई फर्क ही नहीं है। तेजस के मामले में भी धीमी प्रगति हो रही है। अब वायु सेना अतिरिक्त सुखोई-30 हासिल करने में लगा है जो भारी विमान है। इस बीच वायु सेना घरेलू विमान निर्माण उद्योग तैयार करने से निरंतर दूरी बनाए हुए है। नौसेना जहाज निर्माण के क्षेत्र में बहुत पहले स्वदेशी अपना चुकी है। यानी इतने भारी ह्साब बजट के बावजूद हमारा देश आयात पर निर्भर हो चुका है। कहीं न कहीं कुछ गड़बड़ अवश्य है।



विनय शिन्हा

पाकिस्तान ने खुद पर ही चला दी बंदूक

पुलवामा का आतंकी हमला पाकिस्तान के लिए काफी बड़ा दांव बन गया

है। लेकिन उसने यह दांव भारत में `गलत` सरकार के दौरान खेला है।

दक्षिण एशियाई मामलों के अमेरिकी विद्वान स्टीफन पी कोहन की पाकिस्तान की सामरिक सोच को लेकर एक अनूठी व्याख्या है। कोहन के मुताबिक, पाकिस्तान अपनी कनपटी पर बंदूक रखकर दुनिया के साथ बातचीत करता है, मानो कहता हो कि ‘जो मुझे चाहिए वह दे दो नहीं तो मैं अपना भेजा उड़ा लूंगा’। फिर आपको उसकी फैलाई गड़बड़ी से जुझना पड़ता है। क्या पाकिस्तान ने पुलवामा में उस बंदूक का ट्रिगर दबा दिया है?

पहली बात, इस ख्याल को अपने दिमाग से निकाल दीजिए कि यह हमला घरेलू आतंक की उपज है। यह फिदायीन आतंकी एक मतांध भारतीय कश्मीरी था। इन वजहों से यह हमला पूरी तरह से भारतीयों द्वारा सोचा-समझा और अंजाम दिया हुआ नहीं हो सकता है:

हमले की जिम्मेदारी जैश-ए-मोहम्मद ने ली है जो पूरी तरह पाकिस्तान में स्थित और आईएसआई के निर्देशों से संचालित होने वाला संगठन है। भले ही कट्टरपंथ का असर और इसकी प्रेरणा स्थानीय हो सकती है लेकिन ऐसा कोई सबूत नहीं है कि इतने बड़े पैमाने पर विस्फोटक अनाड़ी स्थानीय समूहों के पास उपलब्ध रहा हो। उनके लिए विस्फोट ट्रिगर और टाइमर की कार्यप्रणाली को भी समझ पाना मुश्किल है। हमला अंजाम देने के पहले रिकार्ड वीडियो को देखिए। हमलावर की भाषा कश्मीरी अवाग की शिकायतों या बदले वाली न होकर बाकी हिस्सों के मुसलमानों को उकसाने वाली है। बाबरी मस्जिद और गुजरात का जिक्र किया गया है और ‘गोमूर पीने वालों’ के खिलाफ बगावत करने की अपील ‘अपने सभी मुस्लिमों’ से की गई है। यह लश्कर-ए-तैयबा की सोच से कहीं अधिक जैश की राय है, स्थानीय कश्मीरियों की तो कतई नहीं।

यह हमला जैश के पिछले कारनामों की शैली से पूरी तरह मेल खाता है। वर्ष 2001 में श्रीनगर में विधानसभा पर आत्मघाती हमला, उसी साल संसद भवन पर आतंकी



राष्ट्र की बात
शेखर गुप्ता

हमला, पठानकोट और गुरदासपुर में हमला, सभी का मकसद आतंक को किसी तरह कश्मीर के बाहर ले जाना था। लश्कर ने भी नवंबर 2008 के मुंबई हमले में भी यही किया था लेकिन उसकी ज्यादा ताकत कश्मीर में लड़ाई जारी रखने में ही लग रही है।

वैश्विक दबाव में लश्कर के सैन्य हुक्मरान उसे पाकिस्तानी राजनीति में लाना चाह रहे हैं। वहीं जैश आकार में छोटा होने के बावजूद अधिक खतरनाक, साधन-संपन्न और पाकिस्तानी खुफिया एजेंसी आईएसआई का चहेता भी है। जैश ‘असददार’ हमलों के चयन में भी अधिक सजग रहा है। हम आईसी-814 विमान कांड से ही जैश की साधन-संपन्नता को जानते हैं। उसने काठमांडू से उड़ान भरने वाले इस भारतीय विमान को अगवा किया और सुरक्षित पनाहगाह कंधार तक ले गया। उसने यात्रियों की सुरक्षित रिहाई के एवज में भारतीय जेलों में बंद बड़े आतंकी सरगनाओं की रिहाई की मांग रखी। कई अनुसंधानों में यह बात पुख्ता हो चुकी है कि अपहरणकर्ताओं को काठमांडू तक पहुंचाने, कंधार में तालिबान के जरिये अजहर की सुरक्षित रिहाई तक की समूची प्रक्रिया की निगरानी आईएसआई ने ही की थी। पाकिस्तानी सत्ता प्रतिष्ठान और आईएसआई के लिए मसूद अजहर एवं जैश की अहमियत लश्कर और हाफिज सईद से कहीं अधिक है। जैश उसकी ताकत बढ़ाने वाला मुख्य संगठन है। चीन भी इस बात को मानता है इसीलिए वह शर्मनाक ढंग से उसका बचाव भी कर रहा है।

पुलवामा हमले के आत्मघाती युवक का स्थानीय होना कोई अचरज वाली बात नहीं है। अब तक के अपने सभी हमलों में जैश ने भारतीय कश्मीरियों की अहम भागीदारी रखी है। संसद हमले में शामिल रहा अफजल

जवाबी कार्रवाई के बौर ही निकल गए हैं, हालांकि कुछ गोपनीय सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक जरूर हुई। वाजपेयी और मनमोहन सिंह के दौरान भारत बाध्यकारी कूटनीति, पाकिस्तान पर वैश्विक दबाव बढ़ाने और मूलतः शांतिवादी रवैया रखने वाली सामरिक मनोदशा के चलते अपने गुस्से भरे दौर से निकलने में सफल रहा था। भारत की सोच यही थी कि किसी भी उकसावे की कार्रवाई का हद से ज्यादा जवाब नहीं देना है। लेकिन मोदी सरकार में ऐसा धीरज नहीं है। यह सरकार मनमोहन और वाजपेयी समेत पिछली तमाम सरकारों को उनकी ‘कायरता’ के लिए जिम्मेदार मानती रही है। उड़ी में सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के बाद मचे शोर और उससे हासिल राजनीतिक पूंजी को देखें तो इसकी कोई उम्मीद नहीं है कि वह खुद पर लंबे समय तक काबू रख पाने में सफल होगी। पाकिस्तान को जवाब मिलने जा रहा है। यह कोई नहीं जानता है कि ऐसा कम, कहां और कैसे होगा लेकिन इसमें लंबा वक़्त भी नहीं लगेगा।

जवाबी कार्रवाई जल्द ही हो सकती है। यह सबकी नज़रों में आने वाला, गहरे शोर वाला और विजयी बदले के दावों में लिपटा होगा। भारत में चुनाव अभियान शुरू होने में अभी कुछ दिन बाकी हैं। ऐसे में मोदी नहीं चाहेंगे कि दोबारा सरकार बनाने के लिए जनता के बीच जाने के पहले उन पर पुलवामा का दाग लगा रहे।

कानाफूसी

क्रिया-प्रतिक्रिया

पिछले दिनों समाजवादी पार्टी के संस्थापक मुलायम सिंह यादव ने संसद में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की तारीफ करके और उनके दोबारा प्रधानमंत्री बनने की कामना करके राजनीतिक जगत में हलचल मचा दी थी। इसके बाद लखनऊ में ऐसे पोस्टर लगे देखे गए जिन पर लिखा था कि देश के 125 करोड़ लोगों की भावनाओं को लोकसभा में रखने के लिए मुलायम सिंह यादव का धन्यवाद। उसी दिन बिहार की पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री और मुलायम सिंह यादव की रिश्तेदार राबड़ी देवी ने उनके बयान पर निराशा प्रकट की। उन्होंने कहा कि यादव ने जो कुछ भी कहा उसकी आज की राजनीति में कोई प्रासंगिकता नहीं है। उन्होंने तो यहां तक कह डाला कि अब मुलायम की स्मृति उनका साथ छोड़ रही है।

किशोर का विस्तार

प्रशांत किशोर की इंडियन पॉलिटिकल ऐक्शन कमेटी (आई-पैक) राजनीतिक सलाह मशविरे के क्षेत्र में बहुत तेज गति से अपना कार्य क्षेत्र बढ़ा रही है और दिलचस्प है कि इसका किसी राजनीतिक विचारधारा से न जुड़ाव है और न ही दूरी। जानकारी के मुताबिक महाराष्ट्र में आई-पैक को शिवसेना के साथ काम करने का प्रस्ताव मिल चुका है जबकि कई अन्य राज्यों में होने वाले विधानसभा चुनावों में उसे भारतीय जनता पार्टी के साथ काम करना है। जानकारी के मुताबिक आई-पैक केप्टन अमरिंदर सिंह के नेतृत्व वाली पंजाब सरकार को नीतिगत सुझाव देने का काम भी करेगी।

आपका पक्ष

बेरोजगारी का स्थायी समाधान जरूरी

बेरोजगारी भारत की सबसे बड़ी समस्या बनकर उभर रही है जिसे हल नहीं किया गया तो इसके नतीजे भयानक हो सकते हैं। इस समस्या का समाधान करना सरकार के लिए बड़ी चुनौती बन गया है। इसके लिए सबसे बड़ी बाधा हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था है जिसमें बदलाव लाने होंगे। कॉलेज में सिद्धांत आधारित पढ़ाई होती है लेकिन उद्योगों के हिसाब से केवल सिद्धांत की पढ़ाई कारगर नहीं हो सकती। नौकरी और पढ़ाई के बीच यह खाई काफी गहरी होती जा रही है। असंगठित क्षेत्र में ठेकेदारी भी एक बड़ी समस्या है। इसके जरिये कामगारों का शोषण होता है और कम कर्मियों के सहारे अधिक काम कराया जाता है। कर्मियों और ठेकेदारों से जुड़ी प्रत्येक जानकारी एक ऑनलाइन पोर्टल पर दर्ज होनी चाहिए। ग्रामीण



क्षेत्रों में कई एकड़ सरकारी जमीन वंजर पड़ी हुई है। सरकार इसे पर्यटक स्थल या दूसरे कामों में उपयोग में ला सकती है और स्थानीय बेरोजगारों को काम दिया जा सकता है। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में कई दूसरी समस्याएं भी हैं जिसके चलते गांवों से शहर में लगातार पलायन

बेरोजगारी दूर करने के लिए असंगठित और ग्रामीण क्षेत्र की समस्याओं का निदान जरूरी है

होता रहता है। सरकार भले ही प्रत्येक गांव तक बिजली पहुंचाने का वादा करती रहे लेकिन उसके

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड लिमिटेड, 4, बहादुर शाह जफर मार्ग, नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bmail.in
उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।



मीडिया मंत्र

वनिता कोहली-खांडेकर

बड़ी कंपनियों (स्टार, जी, सोनी और वायकॉम) के भीतर ही रहेगा। आज कोई भी इलेक्ट्रॉनिक मीडिया कंपनी 20 फीसदी बाजार हिस्सेदारी के स्तर तक नहीं पहुंच सकती है।' फिर तो हमें 6,500 करोड़ रुपये वाले सोनी और 3,105 करोड़ रुपये वाले सन गुप की तरफ से थोड़ी धक्केबाजी पर नजर रखनी होगी। इन दोनों कंपनियों के विलय की चर्चा काफी पहले उठी थी लेकिन कुछ ठोस सामने नहीं आया। चर्चा यह है कि सोनी अपना विस्तार करने के लिए बाजार पर नज़रें टिकाए हुए है। उसे जी में एक संभावित निवेशक भी बताया जा रहा है।

दूसरा, इस घटनाक्रम से ऑनलाइन वीडियो परिसंपत्ति खड़ी करने की जंग तेज होगी। याद रखें कि अमेरिका में नेटफ्लिक्स, एमेज़ॉन प्राइम वीडियो और अन्य खिलाड़ियों के विकास ने दुनिया के सबसे बड़े मीडिया उद्योग को भी झकझोर दिया है। अकेले नेटफ्लिक्स ने कंटेंट निर्माण पर पिछले साल 8 अरब डॉलर खर्च किए। ऐसे में परंपरागत मीडिया फर्मों को प्रसारण सामग्री खरीदने के लिए कॉमकास्ट, नेटफ्लिक्स, एमेज़ॉन या ऐपल के बरक्स कड़ी मशक्कत करनी पड़ेगी। यह उन बड़े कारणों में शामिल रहा है जिसके चलते रपट मंडोंक ने 30 अरब डॉलर वाली अपनी कंपनी ट्वेंटी फर्स्ट सेंचुरी फॉक्स का मोटा हिस्सा पिछले साल डिज्नी को बेचने का फैसला किया था।

हालांकि भारत इस तरह के हालात पेदा होने से काफी दूर है। वर्ष 2018 में भारतीय बाजार में टीवी दर्शकों की संख्या 13 फीसदी बढ़ी। बार्क के आंकड़ों की मानें तो टेलीविजन दर्शकों की संख्या 83.6 करोड़ हो गई जबकि वर्ष 2016 में यह 79 करोड़ थी। ब्रॉडबैंड कनेक्शन वाले 44.7 करोड़ भारतीयों ने ऑनलाइन

समय को लेकर कोई भी गारंटी नहीं ले सकता। 10-12 घंटे तक लगातार बिजली गुल और एक बार खराबी आने पर 2-4 दिन तक बिजली का ना आना ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में आम बात है। सरकार को इसका तत्काल समाधान करना चाहिए जिससे ग्रामीण, खासकर किसानों की स्थिति में सुधार होगा। सरकार के इन प्रयासों से नवयुवक रोजगार के लिए अपने पैरों पर खड़े होंगे।

रविन्द्र कुमारवत, खरगोन

भवन निर्माण प्रक्रिया बने दुरुस्त

मकान बनाने के लिए उपयोग में लाई जाने वाली सामग्री की बढ़ती कीमतों के चलते केंद्र सरकार की

2022 तक सभी को मकान उपलब्ध करने की योजना के सामने एक बड़ी चुनौती दिखाई दे रही है। सरकार इस लक्ष्य की प्राप्ति के लिए कई प्रोत्साहन दे रही है और इसके चलते कई निर्माता घटिया सामग्री का उपयोग कर रहे हैं। घटिया सामग्री के उपयोग के चलते कई निर्माण के गिरने की खबरें आती रहती हैं। इस तरह के निर्माताओं पर नकेल कसने के लिए सरकार को प्रभावी उपयै उठाने चाहिए। सरकार इसके लिए एक विशेष विभाग का गठन कर सकती है जो सामग्री की जांच और मजबूती का प्रमाणपत्र दे सके। निर्माताओं से एक राशि लेकर उसका कोष बनाया जाना चाहिए जिससे किसी हादसे की स्थिति में घायलों को मुआवजा दिया जा सके। दोषी निर्माताओं के लिए कठोर दंड का प्रावधान किया जाए और उनका लाइसेंस फौरन निरस्त किया जाए।

गुरदयाल सिंह, जम्मू

चीन का दोहरापन

पुलवामा में गुरुवार को हुए अब तक के सबसे बड़े आतंकी हमले में भारत को तो हिलाया ही है, दुनिया के कई देश भी इस हमले से सकते में हैं। अब यह किसी से छिपा नहीं रह गया है कि इस हमले के पीछे पाकिस्तान है, भले पाकिस्तान सरकार इसका खंडन कर रही हो। पुलवामा के इस हमले की जिम्मेदारी जैश-ए-मोहम्मद ने ली है और जैश का सरगना मौलाना मसूद अजहर पाकिस्तान में ही रहता है। इस आतंकी संगठन का संचालन परदे के पीछे से पाकिस्तान सरकार और आइएसआइ ही करती है। दुनिया के ज्यादातर देश पाकिस्तान को आतंकवादी देश घोषित कर चुके हैं। यह सब जानते-बूझते भी चीन पाकिस्तान के साथ खड़ा है और उसकी आतंकवादी नीतियों और गतिविधियों को खुल कर समर्थन दे रहा है। संकट की इस घड़ी में भारत को एक बड़ा झटका यह लगा है कि चीन ने एक बार फिर मसूद अजहर को संयुक्त राष्ट्र द्वारा अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवादी घोषित कराने से साफ इंकार कर दिया है। हैरान करने वाली बात यह है कि एक तरफ तो चीन भारत के साथ दोस्ती का दम भरता है और दूसरी ओर भारत के कट्टर दुश्मन मसूद अजहर को वह आतंकवादी मानने को तैयार नहीं है। हालांकि पुलवामा हमले की चीन ने निंदा की है, लेकिन यह उसका ढोंग भर है।

भले चीन वैश्विक मंचों से कहता रहे कि वह आतंकवाद के खिलाफ और भारत के साथ है, लेकिन हकीकत कुछ और ही है। मसूद अजहर के बचाव में चीन का उतरना कोई नई बात नहीं है। जब-जब सुरक्षा परिषद में मसूद अजहर का मामला गया, परिषद के सदस्य देश भारत के साथ खड़े नजर आए और इस पक्ष में रहे कि मसूद अजहर को अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवादी घोषित किया जाना चाहिए। लेकिन ऐन वक्त पर चीन ने ऐसे अड़ंगे लगाए कि भारत के प्रयास विफल होते गए। सबसे पहले अप्रैल, 2016 में चीन ने सुरक्षा परिषद की प्रतिबंधित आतंकियों की सूची में मसूद अजहर का नाम डालने की भारत की कोशिश को तकनीकी आधार पर रुकवा दिया था। फिर उसी साल अक्टूबर में मसूद को अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवादी घोषित करने की भारत की अपील पर बाधा पैदा की। तीसरी बार फरवरी, 2017 में मसूद अजहर पर पाबंदी के अमेरिका के प्रयास को वीटो कर दिया। जाहिर है, उसके ये सारे प्रयास भारत विरोधी हैं।

भारत लंबे समय से इस कोशिश में लगा है कि मसूद अजहर को अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवादी घोषित किया जाए ताकि इसके जरिए उस पर शिकंजा कसा जा सके और उसके भारत प्रत्यर्पण के लिए पाकिस्तान पर दबाव बनाया जा सके। मसूद अजहर ने 2001 में भारत की संसद पर हमले को अंजाम दिया था, उसके बाद पठानकोट और उड़ी हमले को साजिश भी उसी ने रची और उसके संगठन जैश ने ही इन हमलों को अंजाम दिया। वह पाक अधिकृत कश्मीर की राजधानी मुजफ्फराबाद सहित पाकिस्तान के शहरों में भारत के खिलाफ रैलियां निकालता रहा है और जहर उगलता रहा है। यह वही अजहर मसूद है, जिसे 1994 में श्रीनगर में गिरफ्तार किया गया था और 1999 में कंधार अपहरण कांड के बाद विमान यात्रियों की सुरक्षित रिहाई के बदले उसे भारत सरकार ने छोड़ा था। यह सब जानते हुए भी चीन अगर मसूद अजहर के साथ खड़ा है और उसे बचा रहा है तो ऐसे में भारत के साथ उसकी दोस्ती संदेह के घेरे में आ जाती है।

अवरुद्ध सूचनाएं

सूचना का अधिकार कानून बना था तो उम्मीद जगी थी कि इससे भ्रष्टाचार पर रोक लगेगी, सरकारी कर्मचारियों की जवाबदेही सुनिश्चित होगी, वे अपने कर्तव्यों के प्रति सावधान होंगे। शुरू में कुछ सालों तक ऐसा देखा भी गया। मगर अब उस कानून का असर खत्म-सा हो गया लगता है। इसकी एक वजह यह भी है कि केंद्र और राज्यों में सूचना आयुक्तों के पद समय से भरे नहीं जाते। कई जगह इन पदों को भरने में जानबूझ कर लापरवाही बरती जाती है। इसी के मद्देनजर एक याचिका पर सुनवाई करते हुए सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने केंद्र सरकार से पूछा है कि सूचना आयुक्तों की नियुक्ति में इतनी देर क्यों होती है? क्यों इस पद पर सिर्फ नौकरशाहों की नियुक्ति की जाती है, इसके लिए दूसरे क्षेत्रों के लोगों को क्यों नहीं चुना जाता! अदालत ने सुझाव दिया है कि सूचना आयुक्तों की नियुक्ति निर्वाचन आयुक्त की तरह होनी चाहिए। किसी सूचना आयुक्त के अवकाश ग्रहण करने से दो महीने पहले ही उसकी जगह दूसरे व्यक्ति को तैनात करने की प्रक्रिया पूरी हो जानी चाहिए। इसके लिए खोज समिति को तत्पर रहना चाहिए।

हालत यह है कि केंद्र में मुख्य सूचना आयुक्त सहित ग्यारह सूचना आयुक्त होने चाहिए, पर कई सालों से यह संख्या पूरी नहीं हो पाती। यही स्थिति राज्यों में है। अवकाश प्राप्त सूचना आयुक्त की जगह नई नियुक्ति की प्रक्रिया लंबे समय तक रुकी रहती है। इसका नतीजा यह हुआ है कि करीब साढ़े तेईस हजार शिकायतें निपटारे का इंतजार कर रही हैं। सूचना आयुक्त का काम सूचनाधिकार संबंधी शिकायतों का निपटारा करना होता है। यों इस कानून के तहत देश का कोई भी नागरिक किसी भी कामकाज से जुड़ी कोई जानकारी मांग सकता है और उसे उपलब्ध कराना संबंधित विभाग की जिम्मेदारी है। अगर वह मांगी गई सूचना उपलब्ध कराने में किसी प्रकार की टाल-मटोल करता है, तो उसके खिलाफ दंड के प्रावधान हैं। जब यह कानून बना था तो शुरुआती दिनों में इसके चलते अनेक बड़े खुलासे हुए। इससे सरकारी कर्मचारियों में अपने कामकाज के प्रति कुछ मुस्तेदी भी देखी गई, पर उनमें हमेशा इस कानून का भय बना रहता था, इसलिए जल्दी ही सूचनाएं उपलब्ध कराने को लेकर वे कोई न कोई गली निकालने लगे। सरकारों भी इस कानून के चलते असहज देखी गई। जो लोग भ्रष्ट तरीकों से अपना काम कराते थे, उनके हाथ बंध गए। यही वजह है कि कई राज्यों में सूचनाधिकार कार्यकर्ताओं पर जानलेवा हमले भी हुए।

इस तरह सूचना आयुक्तों की नियुक्ति में जानबूझ कर की जाने वाली देरी की कुछ वजहें समझना मुश्किल नहीं है। यह अकारण नहीं है कि पिछले साढ़े चार-पांच सालों में सूचनाधिकार के तहत मांगी और प्राप्त की जाने वाली सूचनाओं की दर काफी कम हो गई है। अब तो कई बार स्थिति यह भी देखी जाती है कि इस कानून के तहत मांगी गई जानकारी को संबंधित विभाग यह कह कर टुकरा देते हैं कि गोपनीयता के चलते वह जानकारी सार्वजनिक नहीं की जा सकती। या वे लंबे समय तक उस आवेदन को रोक कर रखते हैं, जबकि नियम के मुताबित निर्धारित समय सीमा के भीतर मांगी गई सूचना उपलब्ध कराना उनकी जिम्मेदारी है। कहना न होगा, इस तरह सूचना के अधिकार कानून को एक तरह से अप्रभावी बनाने का प्रयास होता रहा है। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय की सख्ती से उम्मीद जगी है कि यह कानून एक बार फिर से अपने प्रभावी रूप में दिखेगा।

कल्पमेधा

दिल से निकलेगी न मर कर भी वतन की उत्फत,
मेरी मिट्टी से भी खुशबू-ए-वतन आएगी।

-लाल चंद फलक

जनसत्ता

अभिषेक कुमार सिंह

दिल्ली, मुंबई जैसे महानगरों में पिछले

एक-दो साल में जितने बड़े अगिनकांड

हुए हैं उनसे यही साबित हुआ है कि चंद

लापरवाहियों के चलते हम आग के आगे

बेहद लाचार बन गए हैं। मर्ज आग की

ताकत बढ़ जाना नहीं, बल्कि यह है कि

आग से सुरक्षा के जितने उपाय जरूरी हैं,

शहरीकरण की आंधी और अनियोजित

विकास-नियोजन की नीतियों ने उन

उपायों को हाशिये पर धकेल दिया है।

असल में, कथित विकास के नाम पर वास्तविक जंगलों से शहरों के कंक्रीट के जंगलों में पहुंची मानव सभ्यता के लिए आज आग उसकी ताकत के उलट कमजोरी साबित हो रही है। दिल्ली, मुंबई जैसे महानगरों में पिछले एक-दो साल में जितने बड़े अगिनकांड हुए हैं उनसे यही साबित हुआ है कि चंद लापरवाहियों के चलते हम आग के आगे बेहद लाचार बन गए हैं। मर्ज आग की ताकत बढ़ जाना नहीं, बल्कि यह है कि आग से सुरक्षा के जितने उपाय जरूरी हैं, शहरीकरण की आंधी और अनियोजित विकास-नियोजन की नीतियों ने उन उपायों को हाशिये पर धकेल दिया है। विर्डबना यह है कि शहरीकरण के सारे कायदों को धता बताते हुए विकास जरूरी हैं, शहरीकरण की आंधी और अनियोजित विकास-नियोजन की नीतियों ने उन उपायों को हाशिये पर धकेल दिया है।

शहरों में आग की घटनाएं गंभीर समस्या बन गई हैं। तमाम लापरवाहियों और कायदे-कानून की अनदेखी ने आग को हमारे विनाश के हथियार में तब्दील कर डाला है। हाल में देश की राजधानी दिल्ली के एक होटल में आग ने सत्रह जिंदगियां लील लीं। यह बड़े अचरज की बात है कि कंक्रीट के जंगलों में तब्दील हो चुके दुनिया के तमाम आधुनिक शहर आग को न्योता दे रहे हैं। एक के बाद एक होने वाले शहरी अग्निकांडों पर कोई लगाम नहीं लग पा रही है। दिल्ली के होटल का दर्दनाक हादसा मालूम नहीं कि कितने दिनों तक हमारे जेहन में जिंदा रहेगा, क्योंकि हो सकता है कि तब तक उससे भी भीषण कोई नया अग्निकांड हमारी स्मृतियों पर हावी हो जाए। नए हों या पुराने, दुनिया भर के तमाम शहरों में आग से महफूज बनाने वाले उपायों पर तभी कुछ नजर जाती है, जब वहां की इमारतों में कोई बड़ा हादसा हो चुका होता है।

असल में, आधुनिक वक्त के निर्माण का जो सबसे चिंताजनक पहलू इधर कुछ वर्षों में सामने आया है, वह यह है कि इमारतें बाहर से तो लकदक दिखाई देती हैं, लेकिन उनके अंदर मामूली चिंगारियों को हवा देकर भीषण अग्निकांडों में बदल देने वाली इतनी चीजें मौजूद रहती हैं कि ऐसी मामूली वजहों की असरदार रोकथाम अब तक नहीं हो सकी। जैसे, सन 1666 में लंदन की आग ‘ग्रेट फायर ऑफ लंदन’ के बारे में कहा जाता है कि वह लंदन की पुडिंग लेन स्थित एक छोटी बेकरी शांप में शुरू हुई थी। इसी तरह अमेरिका के कैलिफोर्निया स्थित ऑकलैंड वेयरहाउस में एक आयोजन के दौरान लगी आग एक रेफ्रिजरेटर की देन बताई जाती है। आज की आधुनिक रसोइयों में रखे फ्रिज-

मन हुनरमंद है

भागमभाग के बीच मन की हर धड़कन को बोझिल होने से बचाए रखना है। हो सकता है कि संसार में बुनियादी जरूरत सबकी अलग-अलग हों, लेकिन मन को नियंत्रित रखना तो फिर भी संभव है ना।

यहां पर आत्मानुशासन बहुत सहायक सिद्ध होता है। इस अनुशासन में मन को इतना समझदार होना चाहिए कि यह असली सौंदर्य बोध है क्या? महान साहित्यकार जार्ज बर्नार्ड शा साहित्य के साथ सौंदर्य-प्रेमी भी थे। उनका अधिकांश समय इन दोनों के अध्ययन में ही गुजरता था। एक बार उनका एक प्रबंधक उनसे मिलने आया। उस समय बर्नार्ड शा सौंदर्य का ही चिंतन कर रहे थे। प्रशंसक ने उनसे सवाल किया- हद है, आप सुंदरता के उपासक हैं, मगर आपके सामने रखी मेज पर गुलाब का फूल तक नहीं रखते? यह सुन कर बर्नार्ड शा ने कहा- मुझे आपका सर बहुत पसंद आया, बहुत खूबसूरत है, अब क्या इसके काट कर मेज पर सजा लूं?

बर्नार्ड शा की बात सटीक थी। प्रशंसक शर्म से पानी-पानी हो गया। मशहूर रूसी-अमेरिकी उपन्यासकार, दर्शन शास्त्री और सिने पटकथा लेखक आयन रैंड का एक प्रसिद्ध कथन है कि ‘पावन आत्मा पर कभी शासन नहीं किया जा सकता।’ क्या हम इससे यह आशय ले कि सरल और पवित्र व्यक्तित्व अपनी गुणवत्ता के चलते दुनिया में सदैव पूजे जाते रहे हैं? लेकिन इससे भी बड़ी और गहरी बात गेटे ने कही है कि जो अपने मन की सरगम नहीं सुन सकता, वो बाहर क्या तो सुनेगा और समझेगा। किसी लेखक ने कहा है कि हमारा मन कोई आम का पेड़ तो नहीं है जिस पर हर साल रसीले फल लगते हैं और हम उसी क्षण उन्हें तृप्ति भर खा भी सकते हैं। कभी-कभी उलटा भी हो जाता है।

हम यश की कामना से मुक्त हों और असफल होने की तैयारी मन में हो तो ही काम में प्रवृत्त होना चाहिए और मगन होकर रहना चाहिए। संतुष्ट और सुकून भरा मन हर हाल में मगन रहने वाला होता है। दरअसल, मन के पास अलौकिक ताकत, अपार शक्ति भी संचित है। बस, इसे पहचानना पड़ता है। मन के लिए सब संभव है और इसका विस्तार सितारों तक है

एक बार की बात है एक निराश और परेशान नवयुवक मनोवैज्ञानिक सलाहकार के पास आया। सलाहकार से बोला कि वह सभी की नजर में बिल्कुल निकम्मा और बेकार हो गया है, किसी का ध्यान नहीं आता। सलाहकार ने मुस्कुरा कर कहा कि ‘आप सोच रहे हैं कि मैं आपकी मदद कर सकता हूँ?’ युवक ने उत्तर दिया कि ‘हां, मैं आपकी मदद कर सकता हूँ।’ सलाहकार ने कहा कि ‘आप सोच रहे हैं कि मैं आपकी मदद कर सकता हूँ?’ युवक ने उत्तर दिया कि ‘हां, मैं आपकी मदद कर सकता हूँ।’ सलाहकार ने कहा कि ‘आप सोच रहे हैं कि मैं आपकी मदद कर सकता हूँ?’ युवक ने उत्तर दिया कि ‘हां, मैं आपकी मदद कर सकता हूँ।’

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-8, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश आप चाहें तो अपनी बात ईमेल के जरिए भी हम तक पहुंचा सकते हैं। आइडी है : chaupal.jansatta@expressindia.com

कांटे से कांटा

पुलवामा के आतंकी हमले की विश्व भर में घोर निंदा हुई है। सभी देशों ने भारत के साथ सहानुभूति और एकजुटता जताई है। अब समय आ गया है जब सरकार कोई निर्णायक कदम उठा कर आतंक के इस नासुर को जड़ से साफ कर दे। कहने की आवश्यकता नहीं कि श्रीलंका ने बहुत सहा मगर आखिर आजज आकर उसने एलटीटीई जैसे दुर्दांत आतंकी संगठन को अपनी सैन्य शक्ति से नेस्तनाबूद कर दिया। क्या हमारा देश कश्मीर के अलगाववादीयों को पाकिस्तान समर्थित आतंकवादी संगठनों को ऐसा ही पाठ नहीं पढ़ा सकता? ध्यान रहे कांटा कांटे से ही निकलता है! विर्डबना है कि देश-विरोधी गतिविधियों को बढ़ावा देने वाले अलगाववादी नेताओं को मुश्काल के

माइक्रोवेव से लेकर एसी, कंप्यूटर जैसे उपकरण और फाल्स सीलिंग के भीतर की जाने वाली वायरिंग महज एक शॉर्ट सर्किट के बाद काबू नहीं किए जा सकने वाले आग के शोले पैदा कर रही है।

दिव्कत यह है कि आधुनिक शहरीकरण की जो मुहिम पूरी दुनिया में चल रही है, उसमें सावधानियों और आग से बचाव के उपायों पर ज्यादा काम नहीं किया गया है। आज इमारतें ऐसी निर्माण सामग्री से बन रही है जिसमें आग को न्योता देने वाली तमाम चीजों का इस्तेमाल होता है। आंतरिक साज-सज्जा के नाम पर फर्श और दीवारों पर लगाई जाने वाली सुखी लकड़ी, आग के प्रति बेहद संवेदनशील रसायनों से युक्त पेंट, रेफ्रिजरेटर, इनवर्टर, माइक्रोवेव, गैस का चूल्हा, चिमनी, एयर कंडीशनर, टीवी और सबसे प्रमुख पूरी इमारत की दीवारों के भीतर बिजली के तारों का संजाल है जो शॉर्ट सर्किट की सूरत में छोटी-सी

दूसरा बड़ा संकट तंग रास्तों के किनारे पर ऊंची इमारतें बनाने के चलन ने पैदा किया है। ऐसी ज्यादातर इमारतों में शायद ही इसकी गंभीरता से जांच होती हो कि यदि कभी अचानक आग लग जाई तो क्या बचाव के साधन आसपास मौजूद हैं। कोई आपात स्थिति पैदा हो तो वहां निकासी का रास्ता क्या है, क्या वहां मौजूद लोगों को समय पर चेतावनी देने की प्रणाली काम कर रही है। दिल्ली के होटल में आग की घटना के पीछे ये सारे कारण गिनाए जा

आग को बड़े हादसे में बदल डालते हैं। इन सभी चीजों को आग से बचाने के इंतजाम भी प्रायः या तो किसी इलेक्ट्रॉनिक डिवाइस, जैसे एमसीबी आदि के हवाले होते हैं या फिर फायर अलार्म के सहारे जो अक्सर ऐसी सूरत में काम करते नहीं मिलते हैं क्योंकि उनकी समय-समय पर जांच नहीं होती।

कहने को तो देश के किसी भी हिस्से में कोई संस्था, फैक्टरी इत्यादि अग्निशमन विभाग की तरफ से मिले अनापत्ति प्रमाणपत्र (एनओसी) के बिना नहीं चल सकती। यह एनओसी भी उन्हें सीधे नहीं मिलता। दिल्ली में अग्निशमन विभाग को जब एमसीडी, एनडीएमसी या अन्य संबंधित एजेंसियों से इसका आवेदन मिलता है, तो वे उन फैक्ट्रियों या संस्थानों की इमारतों में जाते हैं और जांच करने के बाद संतुष्ट होने पर एनओसी जारी करते हैं। लेकिन सभी जानते हैं कि इस प्रावधान की अनदेखी होती है। बताया तो यह भी जाता है कि इन विभागों के कर्मचारियों को पता भी रहता है कि किस संस्था या फैक्टरी में

कौन-सा काम हो रहा है, लेकिन मिलीभगत कर सारी धांधलेबाजी की ओर से आंखें मूंद ली जाती हैं। यह भी नहीं भूलना होगा कि फैक्ट्रियों, होटलों, अस्पताओं आदि को समय-समय पर अग्निशमन विभाग की ओर से फायर सेफ्टी नोटिस तो जारी किए जाते रहे हैं, लेकिन राजनीतिक दखलंदाजी और कर्मचारियों-अधिकारियों की साजगोट से मामला अक्सर ही टंडे बरस्ते में डाल दिया जाता है। वक्त आ गया है कि देश तय करे कि वह विकास की चमचमाती मीनारें खड़ी करने से पहले यह सुनिश्चित करेगा कि भविष्य में कोई शहरी इलाका या इमारत लापरवाही और नियमों की अनदेखी की वजह से पैदा होने वाली मानवनिर्मित आपदा यानी आग में नहीं धिरेगी और इस कारण बेकसूर लोगों की जान नहीं जाएगी।

रहे हैं। कुछ और अहम बातें भी हैं जो शहरों में आग को विनाशकारी ताकत दे रही हैं। जैसे, तकरीबन हर बड़े शहर में बिना यह जाने ऊंची इमारतों के निर्माण की इजाजत दे दी गई है कि क्या उन शहरों के दमकल विभाग के पास जरूरत पड़ने पर उन इमारतों की छत तक पहुंचने वाली सीढ़ियां (स्काईलिफ्ट) मौजूद हैं या नहीं। दिल्ली में दमकल विभाग के पास अधिकतम चालीस मीटर ऊंची स्काईलिफ्ट हैं, पर यहां इमारतों की ऊंचाई सो मीटर तक पहुंच चुकी है। यही हाल, इसके एनसीआर इलाके का है। नोएडा में भी अधिकतम बयालीस मीटर ऊंची स्काईलिफ्ट उपलब्ध है, पर यहां जो करीब दो हजार गगनचुंबी इमारतें हैं या जिनका निर्माण चल रहा है, उनमें से कुछ की ऊंचाई तीन सौ मीटर तक है (निर्माणाधीन टावर-सुपरनोवा 300 मीटर ऊंचा होगा)। लगभग यही हाल देश के दूसरे बड़े शहरों में है।

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काम का नहीं रहा। सलाहकार ने मुस्कुरा कर कहा कि ‘अरे... नहीं। इतनी जल्दी अपने बारे में फैसला मत लो। ऐसा करो, कल सुबह मेरे पास फिर से आओ, तब तक कोई तीन बेकार, बेकाम की चीजों का पता लगा कर मुझे बताओ। उसके बाद आपकी समस्या का समाधान खोजता हूं।’ नवयुवक को सलाहकार की बातों पर हंसी आ गई। यह तो बहुत आसान काम था। नवयुवक को रास्ते मे गोबर का ढेर मिला, कुत्ता मिला, झाड़ी मिली। उसकी खोज पूरी हो गई। नवयुवक की नजर में ये सब बेकार चीजें थीं। वह अगले दिन आया और सलाहकार को बताया कि गोबर, कुत्ता और झाड़ी किसी काम के नहीं। तब सलाहकार ने मंद-मंद मुस्कुराते हुए कहा- ‘मेरे दोस्त, गोबर से उपले बनते हैं, खाद बनती है, गोबर गैस बनती है। कुत्ता मानव का सबसे वफादार दोस्त है, घर की चौकीदारी करता है और झाड़ी फसल के लिए बाड़ बनाने के काम आती है, सूख साईं तो ईंधन भी है।’

नवयुवक यह सुन कर भौंचक्का रह गया। अब उसने हिम्मत बटोर कर बताया- मैं भी किसी का दोस्त बन सकता हूं। बाड़ की तरह सुरक्षा दे सकता हूं। उसका आत्मविश्वास जाग गया। वह समझ गया कि मन की ऊर्जा से वह भी कुछ सार्थक कर सकता है।

आखिर कब पुलवामा में सीआरपीएफ के काफिले पर जिस तरह आतंकी हमला हुआ उससे कई सवाल खड़े हो रहे हैं। इनमें अहम है कि आखिर इस काफिलेके गुजरने की सूचना किसके पास थी? पुलिस के पास? सीआरपीएफ के पास? या फिर सीआरपीएफ के जवान ही तैनात रहते हैं। फिर भी इनमें से किसी ने पुलवामा की जघन्य आतंकी घटना की निंदा नहीं की। ये देश विरोधी बातें भी करते रहे हैं और सरकार से सुरक्षा भी पा रहे हैं! शायद ही किसी देश में ऐसा होता हो!

- शिवन कृष्ण ठेगा, अरावली विहार, अलवर***

आखिर कब

पुलवामा में सीआरपीएफ के काफिले पर जिस तरह आतंकी हमला हुआ उससे कई सवाल खड़े हो रहे हैं। इनमें अहम है कि आखिर इस काफिलेके गुजरने की सूचना किसके पास थी? पुलिस के पास? सीआरपीएफ के पास? या फिर सीआरपीएफ के जवान ही तैनात रहते हैं। फिर भी इनमें से किसी ने पुलवामा की जघन्य आतंकी घटना की निंदा नहीं की। ये देश विरोधी बातें भी करते रहे हैं और सरकार से सुरक्षा भी पा रहे हैं! शायद ही किसी देश में ऐसा होता हो!

- शिवन कृष्ण ठेगा, अरावली विहार, अलवर***

आतंकी संगठन तक कैसे पहुंची? खुफिया विभाग ने जम्मू कश्मीर राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग पर आतंकी हमले का एलर्ट जारी किया था, फिर भी इतना बड़ा हमला हो जाना बहुत दुखद है। हमले के बाद जिस तरह से आतंकी संगठन ने जिम्मेदारी ली है उसे सरकार को चुनौती के रूप में लेना चाहिए। शहीदों के खून के एक-एक कतरे का हिसाब लिया जाना चाहिए। जवानों की शहादत केवल निंदा या आश्वासन के शब्दों में उलझ कर न रह जाए। सरकार एक के बदले दस सर लाने के वादे को आखिर कब पूरा करेगी? ● ***मोहम्मद आसिफ, जांमिया नगर, दिल्ली***

वाजिब अवसर

पुलवामा के जघन्य हत्याकांड ने देश के अलावा समूचे विश्व को झकझोर कर रख दिया है। आतंकवाद

● ***शिवानी पटेल, कानपुर***

भारतीय सेना को इतना मजबूत बनाएं कि दुश्मनों में दहशत हो

पुलवामा में हुए कायराना फिदायीन हमले में देश के 40 से अधिक जवान शहीद हो गये . इस घटना ने देश को स्तब्ध कर दिया है . दुखी और आक्रोशित कर दिया है . जरूरी हो गया है कि अब सुरक्षा नीतियों की समीक्षा की जाये, सैन्य बलों को मजबूत किया जाये और आतंकियों को उनकी भाषा में जवाब मिले . इसके अलावा, इस बात पर भी गौर किया जाये कि बदले की कार्रवाई व युद्धोन्माद के बीच शांति बहाली की राजनीतिक प्रक्रिया के रास्ते भी कैसे निकाले जा सकते हैं . इन्हीं बातों के मद्देनजर आज की विशेष प्रस्तुति ...



सेना को जरूरी सैन्य-संसाधन दिये जाएं

जब भी इस तरह का कोई बड़ा हमला होता है, तो इसमें कहीं न कहीं चूक जरूर होती है. यह चूक अब एक इन्कवायरी (जांच) का मुद्दा है. मोटे तौर पर देखें, तो जब भी सेना के जवानों का इस तरह कोई कॉन्वॉय (काफिला) होता है, तो जहां से चलना है और जहां जाना है, वहां तक चाकचौबंद सड़क व्यवस्था के साथ संदिग्ध गतिविधियों पर सेना की नजर रहती है, ताकि कोई चूक न होने पाये. यह एक लंबी प्रक्रिया है. जाहिर है, इस प्रक्रिया को पूरा नहीं किया गया होगा, तभी चूक की स्थिति बनी होगी. यह सब एक बड़ी जांच का विषय है, क्योंकि आम तौर पर इतनी बड़ी कॉन्वॉय को नहीं चलाया जाता.



अजय साहनी
आंतरिक सुरक्षा विशेषज्ञ

क्या सरकार ने भारतीय सेना को इतना मजबूत बनाया है कि जवान पाकिस्तान में घुस कर लड़ाई लड़ सकें? नहीं! सरकार ने सेना को कमजोर बनाया है. इस देश में तमाम सरकारें झूठ के आधार पर नीतियां बनाती रही हैं. बीते तीस साल से यही हो रहा है.

देशभर में चारों तरफ से प्रतिक्रिया आ रही है कि अब भारत सरकार कुछ करे. मुझे समझ में यह नहीं आता कि सरकार को अभी कुछ क्यों करना चाहिए? सरकार बीते पांच साल से क्या कर रही थी? या पिछले दस या पंद्रह साल से क्या कर रही थी? सरकार यह कम समझेगी कि आंतरिक सुरक्षा में बहुत साधन-संसाधन लगाने की जरूरत है? दरअसल, इंटरनल एजेंसीज में, एक्सटर्नल एजेंसीज में, कोवर्ट ऑपरेशंस (गुप्त ऑपरेशनों) में पैसा लगाने की जरूरत है और यह काम सरकार को दशकों पहले से ही करना चाहिए था. बीते कई सालों से सरकार हमेशा रक्षा के क्षेत्र में कम पैसा खर्च कर रही है, इसका खामियाजा यह है कि हमारी सेना के पास सैन्य-संसाधनों की कमी है. हर साल सरकार रक्षा बजट में मात्र पांच-छह प्रतिशत बजट बढ़ाती है, जबकि आज इतना प्रतिशत तो मुद्रास्फूर्ति है. इसका मतलब साफ है कि सैन्य-खर्चों में बढ़ावोती करने की बजाय लगातार कटौती हो रही है. और सरकार यह कहती है कि वह

बहुत तैयारी कर रही है. आखिर किस चीज की तैयारी कर रही है यह सरकार?

पिछले साल पार्लियामेंट की स्टैंडिंग कमेटी ऑन डिफेंस के चेयरमैन थे आरसी खंडूरी, जिन्होंने रिपोर्ट दी थी कि भारतीय सेना के 68 प्रतिशत सैन्य-उपकरण इस्तेमाल के काबिल नहीं हैं. खंडूरी ने रिपोर्ट में लिखा था कि भारत के पास इतना सैन्य-संसाधन नहीं है कि वह दस दिन तक कोई लड़ाई लड़ सके. इस रिपोर्ट पर ध्यान देने की बजाय सरकार ने खंडूरी को ही चेयरमैन पद से हटा दिया. क्या यही है सेना को मजबूत करने की तैयारी? सरकार इस रवैये से सेना को कैसे मजबूत करेगी, हादसों को कैसे रोक पायेगी?

कोई भी रणनीति सेना की क्षमता पर निर्धारित होती है. सेना के पास ताकत होगी, उसी आधार पर वह ठोस रणनीति बना पायेगी. महंगे रफायल खरीदकर निजी कंपनियों को फायदा पहुंचाने की बेईमानी से फुरसत जब किसी को मिले, तब तो वह किसी सैन्य-क्षमता या रणनीति पर काम करेगा! जब रणनीति नहीं होती है, तो सरकारों के पास नौटंकी होती है और बड़े-बड़े बयान होते हैं कि हम ये कर देंगे, वो कर देंगे. रोज सीमा पर हमारे जवान शहीद हो रहे हैं, और देश के भीतर नेता वाहियात बयान देते फिर रहे हैं. इन बयानों से सेना का मनोबल कभी नहीं बढ़ सकता. उसके लिए चाहिए कि सेना को जरूरी सैन्य-संसाधन मुहैया कराये जायें, ताकि जवानों का कोई वार खाली न जाये.

इस सरकार ने पिछले पांच साल में ऐसा कोई तंत्र या रणनीति नहीं बनायी, जो ऐसे हादसे के बाद 24 घंटे के अंदर-अंदर जैश-ए-मुहम्मद के सरगना को धर दबोचे. जैश सरगना मसूद अजहर हो या हाफिज सईद, ये सब पाकिस्तान में खुलेआम घूम रहे हैं. क्या सरकार ने भारतीय सेना को इतना मजबूत बनाया है कि जवान पाकिस्तान में घुस कर लड़ाई लड़ सकें? नहीं! सरकार ने सेना को कमजोर बनाया है. इस देश में तमाम सरकारें झूठ के आधार पर नीतियां बनाती रही हैं. बीते तीस साल से यही हो रहा है. हर हमले के बाद झूठे नेता बयानवीर बन जाते हैं और कहते हैं कि अब ऐसा आगे कभी नहीं होगा. हमले पर हमले होते जा रहे हैं, लेकिन ये सरकारें सेना के नाम पर वोट बैंक की राजनीति कर रही हैं. इस तरह से राष्ट्रनिर्माण संभव नहीं है और न ही इस तरह देश सशक्त बन पायेगा.

(बातचीत : वसीम अकरम)

इस मॉड्यूल का पर्दाफाश जरूरी

कुछ तो जो चूक थी, वह स्वाभाविक थी. चूंकि, एक एमपीवी हाईवे से काफिला जा रहा था, जो हद से ज्यादा बड़ा था और बहुत धीमी गति से चल रहा था. नियमानुसार, जब ऐसा काफिला जा रहा होता है, तो किसी भी अन्य वाहन को बीच में आने नहीं दिया जाता. लेकिन, लंबे समय से ऐसे खतरे का कोई अंदाजा नहीं था, और हालात सामान्य चल रहे थे. ऐसी स्थिति में अक्सर ऐसा देखा गया है कि निजी वाहन धीमी गति से चल रहे काफिले से आगे निकल जाते हैं और कोई उन्हें नहीं रोकता. इस दृष्टि से देखा जाये, तो चूक तो हुई है. नब्बे के दशक में जब फौज और पैरामिलिट्री जवानों के काफिले चलते थे, तो उनके बीच में आने की किसी को इजाजत नहीं मिलती थी और सबको सख्ती से रोक लिया जाता था. इस सख्ती को दोबारा लागू करना पड़ेगा, अगर ऐसे हालात जारी रहे.



सुशांत सरीन
रक्षा विशेषज्ञ

नब्बे के दशक में जब फौज और पैरामिलिट्री जवानों के काफिले चलते थे, तो उनके बीच में आने की किसी को इजाजत नहीं मिलती थी और सबको सख्ती से रोक लिया जाता था . इस सख्ती को दोबारा लागू करना पड़ेगा, अगर ऐसे हालात जारी रहे .

के दिमाग में आ गया कि मैं फिदायीन हमलावर बन जाऊंगा, ऐसा संभव नहीं है. यह संभव इसलिए नहीं होता, क्योंकि बाकी चीजें इकट्ठा किये बिना इस तरह का बड़ा आतंकी हमला हो ही नहीं सकता है. चूंकि, इस तरह के हमलों में कई सारे लोग शामिल होते हैं, तो जानकारी लीक करने के और किसी को इस गतिविधि की भनक लगने का चांस बहुत बढ़ जाता है. इसीलिए, कई बार हम देखते हैं कि सुरक्षाबल किसी को हिरासत में लेते हैं और उसके ऊपर यह इल्जाम लगता है कि किसी न किसी दहशतगर्दी की कार्रवाई में वह शामिल था. ऐसा इसीलिए होता है, क्योंकि पहले से भनक लग जाती है. लेकिन इस मामले में, आपको कार्नाकान खबर नहीं हुई. शायद, इस प्रकार की कोई जानकारी मिली थी कि कोई हमला हो सकता है. लेकिन, इसे पता नहीं लगाया जा सका कि कौन इसमें शामिल हो सकता है. कई बार आपके पास इंफॉर्मेशन आ भी रही होती है, लेकिन कहीं कुछ छूट जाता है और जबकुछ पता नहीं चल पाता, फिर किसी को आप पहले पकड़ भी नहीं पाते. हादसा जब हो जाता है, तब आप वापस जाकर देखते हैं कि क्या-क्या इंफॉर्मेशन मिली थी और आप उसके आधार पर कार्रवाई करना शुरू करते हैं. लेकिन, सैन्य संबंधी गतिविधियों में इस तरह की घटनाएं होती हैं. ये उम्मीद पाल लेना कि आपको फौज सौ फीसदी सफल हो होगी, बेमानी है. लेकिन, कोशिश की जानी चाहिए कि ऐसे हादसे न हों. इस लिहाज से चूक तो हुई है.

अब कार्रवाई शुरू होगी. फिलहाल, हमें यह भी नहीं पता कि विस्फोटक सामग्री क्या थी. क्या वह आरडीएक्स था, टीएनटी जैसा मवाद था, या फिर रोजमर्रा के घरेलू सामानों, जैसे डिटजेंट पाउडर आदि चीजों से बना बम था, हमें अभी तक यह जानकारी नहीं मिली है. जब यह जानकारी मिल जायेगी, तब भी यह अंदाजा मिल जायेगा कि असल में चूक कहाँ हुई है. उम्मीद तो है कि इस तरह की गतिविधियों के मॉड्यूल का पर्दाफाश किया जायेगा, लेकिन समय लगेगा.

(बातचीत : देवेश)

सुरक्षा प्रोटोकॉल को सख्ती से लागू कराएं

कश्मीर के पिछले पंद्रह-बीस सालों के इतिहास पर नजर डालें, तो छिटपुट आतंकी हमले होते रहे थे. लेकिन, धीरे-धीरे ऐसे हमले घटते गये थे. बड़े हमले भी हुए, लेकिन कुछ वर्षों का अंतराल बना रहा. साल 2007-08 के बाद सेना पर बड़े हमले कम होते गये, खासकर साल 2009 से लेकर 2013 तक कैजुअल्टीज कम हुईं. साल 2014 के बाद से एक बार फिर से ये आंकड़े बढ़ना शुरू हुए. सेना पर छोटे हमले बढ़े, आम नागरिकों की मौतें ज्यादा होने लगीं. इन बातों को ध्यान से देखने की जरूरत है. पुलवामा में जो हुआ है, वह भयानक है. इतनी बड़ी मात्रा में विस्फोटक सामग्री गाड़ी के साथ काफिले के बीच में पहुंच गयी और किसी को भनक नहीं लगी. खबर है कि इसे स्थानीय स्तर पर बनाया गया था. पुलवामा के इलाके फौज और पुलिस की बहुत सारी टुकड़ियां हमेशा रहती हैं और सक्रिय रहती हैं. फिर क्यों नहीं इसका पता चल सका पहले, यह सवाल है.



राधा कुमार
लेखिका एवं विश्लेषक

राज्यपाल ने खुद स्वीकार किया है कि हमसे गलती हुई है. पुलिस ने एक हफ्ते पहले ही आतंकी हमले की चेतावनी दी थी. इस चेतावनी को सीआरपीएफ और राज्यपाल ने क्यों संज्ञान में नहीं लिया? इस समय सिक्योरिटी हेड खुद राज्यपाल ही हैं. फिर इतनी बड़ी गलती कैसे हो गयी? नागरिक वाहनों को क्यों इजाजत दी गयी काफिले के गुजरने के दौरान? आंकड़े बताते हैं कि जब शांति प्रक्रिया जारी थी और बातचीत चल रही थी, सेना पर हमले भी घटते गये और लोग भी कम हताहत हुए थे. लेकिन, बातचीत खत्म कर दी गयी और अब फिर से वही खूनी मंजर जारी है. सबसे बड़ी त्रासदी यही है कि सरकार बातचीत ही नहीं करना चाहती, जिसका परिणाम हिंसक और वीभत्स रूप में हमारे सामने है, हमारे इतने सुरक्षाबलों की जानें जा रही है, आम नागरिक मारे जा रहे हैं. इंसानी जान की इतनी सस्ती कीमत कभी नहीं होनी चाहिए. सरकार को अपनी राजनीति के लिए सेना के जवानों को तबाह नहीं करना चाहिए. देश की जनता को खड़े होकर कहना चाहिए, आपको एक भी जान के साथ खिलवाड़ करने का हक नहीं है. देश में कोई ऐसा विपक्ष भी मौजूद नहीं है, जो शांति कायम करने के लिए प्रयास करे और बातचीत शुरू करे. बदले की बात करने से किसी का फायदा नहीं होने वाला. खैर, सरकार से इतनी उम्मीद तो कर ही सकते हैं कि सुरक्षाबलों को मजबूत वाहन दें, उन्नत श्रेणी के सुरक्षा कवच प्रदान करें और सुरक्षा प्रोटोकॉल को सख्ती से लागू करायें.

सरकार से इतनी उम्मीद तो कर ही सकते हैं कि सुरक्षाबलों को मजबूत वाहन दें व उन्नत श्रेणी के सुरक्षा कवच प्रदान करें .

इंटेलिजेंस की नाकामी का परिणाम यह हादसा

यह आतंकी घटना सुरक्षा एजेंसियों की चूक का परिणाम है और निसंदेह इस गतिविधि में पाकिस्तान का हाथ भी शामिल है. बहुत सीबी-समझी साजिश के तहत इस शांति ढंग से इस घटना को अंजाम दिया गया है. यह देश की सुरक्षा पर सवाल खड़े करने वाली घटना है. इंटेलिजेंस के लोगों ने कैसे उस वाहन को काफिले के बीच में आने दिया, यह बड़ा सवाल है. ऐसे कैसे कोई कार 100 किलो विस्फोटक सामग्री लेकर चली गयी और उसे कोई चेक करनेवाला भी नहीं था. गवर्नर साहब ने खुद स्वीकार किया है कि आतंकी घटना खुफिया एजेंसियों की नाकामी का परिणाम है. मुझे आश्चर्य इस बात की भी है कि जिस तरह अमेरिका में 9/11 की घटना हुई थी जिस पर बात होती रहती है, कहीं अमेरिका ने दूसरा 9/11 तो नहीं होने दिया था. यहाँ हमें सावधान होने की जरूरत है. हर बार जब भी हम इन एजेंसियों या सरकार में बैठे लोगों से बात करते हैं, तो वे कहते हैं कि हमने बहुत सी घटनायें होने से रोकी हैं, यह एक चूक हुई है बस. ऐसा हो सकता है कि वे सही ही हों, लेकिन उनकी इस बात से कोई प्रभावित नहीं होता है.



प्रो एसडी मुनि
सदस्य, कार्यकारी काउंसिल, आईडीएसए

यह आतंकी घटना देश के लिए झटका है. अगर सरकार को कुछ करना है, तो उन्हें तुरंत करना चाहिए. अगर दो दिन और निकल गये तो उस गतिविधि का महत्व नहीं रह जायेगा. कश्मीर घाटी में जैश-ए-मोहम्मद की सक्रियता का पता सबको है और सबको यह भी पता है कि पाकिस्तान उसका पूरा सहयोग कर रहा है. जैश-ए-मोहम्मद का कश्मीर में नेटवर्क बहुत तगड़ा है, सब जानते हैं. यह सब कोई नयी बात नहीं है. कश्मीर में राज्यपाल शासन लागू करने का मतलब ही था कि सरकार यह मानकर चल रही थी कि सब ठीक कर देंगे, लेकिन फिर भी यह घटना हुई. जबसे हमने यह ज्यादा कहना शुरू किया है कि पाकिस्तानियों को हम ठीक कर देंगे, कश्मीरियों को ठीक कर देंगे, तबसे ज्यादा समस्या शुरू हुई है. सुरक्षा मसले पर केवल सैन्य कार्रवाई से कुछ सुधार नहीं रहा है. हम अपनी नीतियों से केवल यह दिखा रहे हैं कि हम दोनों जगहों पर सबको बराबर कर देंगे और हम किसी की परवाह नहीं करते हैं. लेकिन, इसका कोई असर नहीं हो रहा है. चाहे फौज के जनरल कश्मीर जाकर बोलें या हमारे राजनेता, स्थिति सुधरी नहीं है और खराब ज्यादा हो गयी है. अब चुनाव नजदीक है, तो चुनाव तक कोई शांति प्रक्रिया भी देखने को नहीं मिलेगी. चारों तरफ प्रचार होगा कि हमने थपड़ का जवाब मुक्के से दिया है.

सख्ती से दिया जाए जवाब

पाकिस्तान की नीतियों में कोई परिवर्तन नहीं आ रहा है और आतंकवादी संगठनों को वह खुला समर्थन अभी-भी दे रहा है. इसी का वीभत्स रूप पुलवामा में देखने को मिला है. कश्मीर और पाकिस्तान को लेकर हमें अपनी नीतियों की समीक्षा करनी होगी कि आखिर कमी कहाँ रह गयी. कहीं तो कमजोरी रह गयी है, जिसका फायदा उन्होंने उठाया है. लोग शांति की बात करते हैं और इतने जवान मारे जा रहे हैं. अब अगर इसका सख्ती से जवाब नहीं दिया गया, तो देश में संदेश जायेगा कि यह कमजोर सरकार है. चूंकि चुनाव भी नजदीक हैं, इसलिए सरकार जरूर सख्त कदम उठायेगी. अब पाकिस्तान को उसकी ही भाषा में जवाब देना पड़ेगा.



प्रकाश सिंह
पूर्व डीजीपी, बीएसएफ

साजिश है, जो आनेवाले चुनाव में प्रभाव डालेगा . ऐसा कहकर ही पाकिस्तान सरकार अपनी जिम्मेदारी से पीछे हट रहा है .

जम्मू-कश्मीर, राजाव और राजस्थान में सुरक्षा और भी बढ़ानी होगी, ताकि आगे ऐसे हमले न होने पायें . सुरक्षा बलों और खुफिया संगठनों के बीच बढ़िया सामंजस्य की आवश्यकता है . ऐसे संकेत में एक-दूसरे पर दोषारोपण की बजाय हमें अपनी कमियों को दूढ़ना चाहिए और उन्हें ठीक करना चाहिए . आनेवाले दिनों में, भारत सरकार को ऐसे आतंकवादी संगठनों द्वारा हवाला फेंक के हस्तंतरण की जांच करनी है . इसलिए, भारत को सारे अंतरराष्ट्रीय आर्थिक संगठन और खुफिया संगठनों के साथ मिलकर काम करना होगा . ऐसे संकेत इन आतंकी संगठनों को आर्थिक हताशा मिलती रहेगी, ऐसे हमलों को रोक पाना मुश्किल होगा . हमें सतर्कता बढ़ा देनी चाहिए .



डॉ ध्रुवज्योति भट्टाचार्य
रिसर्च फेलो, इंडियन काउंसिल ऑफ वरल्ड अफेयर्स, दिल्ली

पाकिस्तान को कड़ा संदेश देना अब जरूरी हो गया है

जम्मू-कश्मीर के पुलवामा जिले में हुए फिदायीन हमले से एक बार फिर यह बात साबित हो गयी है कि पाकिस्तान एक ऐसा देश है, जो आतंकवाद और आतंकवादी समूहों का समर्थन करता है . पाकिस्तान स्थिति संगठन जैश-ए-मुहम्मद के आतंकी आदिल अहमद डार ने इस आत्मघाती हमले को अंजाम दिया . इससे यह बात साफ हो जाती है कि पाकिस्तान में खुलेआम घूम रहे आतंकी भारत के खिलाफ साजिश रच रहे हैं . यह हमला भारत के खुफिया विभाग के लिए भी एक बड़ी विफलता है, क्योंकि वह इतने बड़े हमले के बारे में पहले से कुछ भी खबर नहीं दे पाया .

अब यह देखना जरूरी है कि इस बार भारत सरकार किस तरह इस हमले को अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर पेश करती है . भारत के पास यही मौका है कि वह पाकिस्तान को एक जबरदस्त संदेश दे, ताकि पाकिस्तान सरकार को यह मानना पड़े कि ऐसे मानव-

विरोधी संगठनों का उसे समर्थन नहीं करना चाहिए .

मेरा मानना है कि सिर्फ पाकिस्तान को 'भोस्ट फेवर्ड नेशन' की सूची से हटा देना ही पर्याप्त नहीं है . इस मुद्दे को सारे सबूतों के साथ, संयुक्त राष्ट्र परिषद् और अंतरराष्ट्रीय संस्थाओं में भी ले जाना जरूरी है . हाफिज सईद के साथ-साथ सारे आतंकी संगठनों के खिलाफ कड़ी से कड़ी सजा की मांग करके भारत सरकार पाकिस्तान को कड़ा सबक सिखा सकती है . जब तक पाकिस्तान निरंतर भारत के खिलाफ ऐसे आतंकियों को समर्थन करता रहेगा, तब तक भारत के नौजवान शहीद होते रहेंगे . इसलिए हमें इसे हर हाल में रोकना ही होगा . यह तत्काल आवश्यकता है कि आतंकवाद के मुद्दे पर दुनिया के सभी देश मिलकर पाकिस्तान को पृथक करें . पाकिस्तानी मीडिया इस हमले को एक छोटी घटना मान रहा है . वहां यह दर्शाया जा रहा है कि यह हमला भारत की ही

Kashmir's troubled future



TICKER
MIHIR SHARMA

In the aftermath of the bloodiest attack in the Valley's history, there are several points that could be made about what it implies for the future. None of them are anything other than deeply disturbing.

The first is that there has been a steady increase in violence in the Valley since 2014. This has multiple reasons, but the fact that New Delhi has squandered the gains from the 10 years of relative quiet prior to 2014 is perhaps the biggest. Rather than trying to integrate more Kashmiris into the mainstream in the years since then, the central government has turned Kashmir into a political issue that it wishes to use to win votes in the Hindi heartland.

The Valley was no paradise prior to 2014, but the escalation in violence since then is starkly visible in the data. The number of terrorist incidents, according to the Union home ministry's numbers that were presented to Parliament, has risen steadily — from 222 in 2014 to 614 in 2018. The number of security force personnel killed has similarly shot up, from 47 in 2014 to 80 in 2017 and 91 in 2018.

When the current government came into power, it abandoned the long-standing ceasefire protocol on the Line of Control. This was meant to combat infiltration. Not only has it clearly not reduced the number of incidents, it avoided the real problem. And that is that, once again, we are seeing local young people "taking up the gun", in the phrase that became so tragically common in the 1990s. Rather than worrying about foreign militants, we should have been worrying about the radicalisation of locals like the 20-year old who drove the Pulwama car bomb. The return of home-grown militancy is the second point. While the low-level brutality of an intrusive police state through the 2000s and 2010s — which used detention and checkpoints as a matter of course — may not compare in numbers with the out-and-out anti-insurgency tactics of earlier, it did suffice to ensure that an entire generation of Kashmiris has been lost to the Indian state. We will now have to deal with the consequences of this.

The third worry is the changing nature of the Islamists' tactics. Tactics can easily be copied from insurgents and terrorists across the world. Intelligence about this attack came in as a "Syria-style car bomb". Kashmir has seen few suicide attacks — in fact the Jaish-e-Mohammed pioneered them in an attack on Srinagar's Badami Bagh cantonment in 2000 — and no car bomb of this size. The bomber, in the video released after his death — again, something familiar from the bloodstained recent history of the Middle East — specifies the "defeat" of the United States by the Taliban as his inspiration. A Valley full of IEDs and car bombs and suicide bombers is a very different proposition from what security forces have had to face before.

Fourth, the strategy of the militants has also changed. The jihadists have sought to target military or police targets specifically. Partly as a consequence, more civilians are sympathetic than in the 1990s. Combined with increasing religious radicalisation — the replacement of local religious traditions with harder, more nihilistic imports from the Middle East — this means that the army and the paramilitaries have a far harder job. They have already complained about civilian crowds forming to protect areas where militants have reportedly holed up. Fighting terrorists is one thing. Fighting insurgents is worse. Fighting a population is worst of all.

Fifth, the impact of neighbourhood developments can clearly be felt. The United States' promise of a precipitate withdrawal from Afghanistan is dangerously stupid; not only will it inspire jihadists everywhere the same way that the USSR's defeat by the mujahedid did, the confidence of the Pakistani military establishment given this expected departure and the solid support of Beijing has soared. The last time Pakistan-backed jihadists were at a loose end after a superpower withdrawal, three decades ago, the Valley exploded. We should deeply fear the consequences of an easing of pressure on Pakistan's western border.

Sixth, Kashmir is oddly distant from the conversation in Pakistan itself. That country is currently obsessed with its cricket league and with the forthcoming visit of Saudi Arabia's strongman (for which, apparently, 3,500 pigeons are being procured). Kashmir is far less of a headline in Pakistan now than it was a couple of decades ago. Yet little has been done to take advantage of this decline in the domestic political use of the Kashmir issue there.

Seventh, Kashmir is a live political issue in India in a way that it never has been before. The India of the 1990s had to deal with an insurgency and managed without worrying about national machismo. This is no longer the case. Kashmir is used as a metaphor, a threat, and a rhetorical battleground by such politicians as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath. This is a vast and worrying change.

We do not face an insurgency of the sort that erupted in the 1990s. Thanks to shocking mismanagement, radicalisation and politicisation, the danger is a great deal worse today.

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Friendship above everything else

For all that he blazed like a meteor across the revolutionary sky, George Fernandes was an innocent among the cut-throats and pickpockets who infest the political jungle



WHERE MONEY TALKS
SUNANDA K-DATTA RAY

Returning from China in 2003, George Fernandes broke journey in Singapore and visited my flat in the Nanyang Technological University campus where I was teaching in the journalism school. He seemed somehow subdued, his voice almost a whisper, but what he said was arresting. "I've got a new slogan for them when I get back — 'Chase China!'"

The words didn't sound as if they would galvanise an Indian mob but George was so profoundly impressed by every aspect of the progress China had made that he wanted India

to emulate it. "Chase China," he murmured, pleased with the sound. He spent the rest of the evening not exactly denying he had ever called China India's "Enemy Number One" but explaining it was a Hindi filmi phrase ("like Hero Number One") that he didn't understand. George's enthusiasms were as ardent as his explanations were long-winded.

Given his lifelong teetotalism, it was paradoxical that our first encounter was in a London pub in early 1970. I don't know what George was doing in England but I was finishing my stint as *The Statesman's* first Indian representative there. The lease of my flat in Hampstead having ended, I had moved in with a friend, M R Sivaramakrishnan, a diplomat I had known since his posting in Hong Kong. Siva had to meet George and chose the pub across the road from India House because it was after office hours. I was keen on seeing one of the legends of the 1967 election and remember a tousled (as he always was I later learnt) man in a shabby brown tweed jacket with a woollen scarf wrapped round his neck in the style of English university students of that era. In fact, with his glasses, pleasant smile and bright inquiring look, George might

have been a student himself.

We didn't actually meet until about 15 years later when he telephoned me from Delhi about a conference on Tibet in his house. David Ennals, whom I had known when he was a minister in Britain's Labour government, was a speaker. He also roped in Zail Singh, who came (I suspected) not to support Tibet but to defy Rajiv Gandhi with whom he was publicly at war. Tibet wasn't a sudden infatuation like China for George. It was a long-standing affair like Myanmar. Why he asked me I don't know; perhaps he had heard of my interest in another lost cause, Sikkim. But George didn't regard Tibet as a lost cause. Nor did he see any problem in reconciling loyalty to Tibet with admiration for China. He also admired Vietnam, especially for its pragmatism in coming to terms with the superpower that ravaged the country for nearly two decades and killed three million Vietnamese.

Socialism was not a doctrinaire creed for him but an expression of caring. He was horrified when asking for water in a dusty Muzaffarpur village, he was told that only Coca-Cola was potable. "Do you need an American bowl for potty?" he asked in outrage because Rajiv's liberalisation had meant for-

eign household goods. "Aren't Indian suitcases good enough?" No wonder he had sent Coke and IBM packing. The technical justification covered a deep philosophical objection.

I asked why an agnostic secularist and former Christian seminarian should support Hindu revivalists. In reply, he spoke at length about hosts of eminent people who had pleaded with him, leaving me with the conclusion that like E M Forster, he placed friendship above other considerations. I could understand his hurt when a prominent journalist whom I shan't name attacked him. "I sent him abroad for the first time you know!" George exclaimed. Another incident illustrated the conundrums in which he found himself. Dropping in unexpectedly at his Krishna Menon Marg (New Delhi) bungalow, I found George sunk in gloom. Hearing that the Congress party managers were giving substantial inducements to election candidates, he had sent one of his own aides to pose as a turncoat intending to expose Congress corruption after the man returned with the bribe. He didn't. He pocketed the money and vanished. Among other inconsistencies, I remember him performing the *mukhagni* rite as solemnly as any loyal Hindu son when Mrs K K Chettur, mother of his long-time partner, Jaya Jaitly, died.

For all that he blazed like a meteor across the revolutionary sky, George Fernandes was an innocent among the cut-throats and pickpockets who infest the political jungle. He was too good a man to achieve spectacular success in the game of thrones. RIP

LUNCH WITH BS ▸ ANITA DUBE | ARTIST & CURATOR, KOCHI ART BIENNALE

Better late than never

Dube gives Anjali Bhargava a peek into her journey as an artist — that began later than usual but is far from over

You may call her a late bloomer but it took Anita Dube 30 years to discover her first love. The year was 1989. Dube had created a name for herself as an art writer and historian but she found herself at the crossroads in terms of her professional development — she was dealing with the trauma of a recent divorce, the disbandment of the Indian Radical Painters' and Sculptors' Association (IRPSA), was far from home (Lucknow) in Delhi and financial security.

Like many artists, in her pain, Dube found out what she loved doing best — creating art rather than writing about it. Thirty years on, Dube is the first female curator of the Kochi art biennale 2018 edition selected by an artistic advisory committee set up for each edition.

Dube and I are meeting for lunch at China Kitchen in Delhi's Hyatt Regency as she simply could not find the time for it in Kochi, where we first met during the inaugural week of the biennale in December. I pursued her for the five days I was there but she was too harried with all the goings on to make time for a long, life-journey kind of a chat. We order a sweet and sour pork for her, a soup and a stir-fried vegetable for me and decide to share an egg fried rice. She orders a glass of Prosecco while I stick with water.

Born to highly educated and equally unconventional parents — both doctors by profession — Dube had an idyllic childhood on the banks of the river Gomti in Lucknow — a wild and free upbringing, cycling, climbing trees and dissecting frogs. The two factors — her childhood and non-conformist parents — combined to imbue the radical spirit evident in her work even today.

A high performer — she is a product of Loreto, Lucknow — Dube managed to leave a provincial Lucknow to join Lady Shri Ram College in Delhi to study history. History as a subject itself didn't excite her. In her second year she began attending art shows in the

capital, began to appreciate theater and poetry, coming across artists and collectors like Jatin Das and Aman Nath in her poetry reading circle. "My love for art and culture was spawned during this time," she explains.

It was this brief affair with the arts that led her to apply for a master's in art history at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. She was fortunate to cross paths with none other than Padma Bhushan awardee Ghulam Mohammed Sheikh in the school. It was thanks to his offering her admission and under his guidance and tutelage that she ventured deeper in the dive she had already taken. Her parents, who wanted her to take the civil services examination or to do medicine, were a trifle disappointed by her choices but allowed her to follow her heart.

After graduating, Dube taught at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) for a while and her first big break came when she wrote the catalogue for Ebrahim Alkazi's Art Heritage. Around that time, excited by what he saw, Vivan Sundaram organised a workshop for upcoming sculptors in Kasauli, which she attended. This was followed by a major exhibition held in Delhi, "Seven Young Sculptors", for which Dube wrote the text. By then she had begun to be known in the art world for her writing.

I interrupt to ask how she supported herself: There's a lack of concern about the more mundane aspects of life in many artists — something I find intriguing. She explains that there was simply nothing to lure one back then. Unlike today's material world and the preoccupation she sees with comfort and luxury, the 1980s and 1990s was a period when you could get by on very little. Bohemian was the way to be.

By 1985-86, Dube married a fellow artist and got pulled into the IRPSA, an intellectually charged and radically inclined association of artists from Kerala. The IRPSA spawned a new genre of politically and socially con-

scious artists, who took art beyond the ordinary. Art became more of a statement and expression of views than it ever was. It spurred commoditisation of art, conveying a larger message through the artworks, something that influenced Dube's work as a sculptor later. At that time, Dube was still writing texts and catalogues for shows. A manifesto-type text she wrote during this phase, "Questions and Dialogue", for a contemporary show held in Baroda was well received. But by 1988, IRPSA had been disbanded (following the death of its founder), Dube herself had got divorced and she found herself at the crossroads. Dube returned home to Lucknow to recover from, what she recalls, was one of the lowest points of her life.

Our food arrives and we decide to concentrate on eating for a while.

It's when she returned from Lucknow that Dube's life took a new turn. At home she had started carving and dabbling with clay in a serious way — almost as therapy — and on returning to Delhi, she had a small exhibition at her home in Tara Apartments in 1992. Nothing was sold, though the show was well received. That's when she realised she had an artist within her, one that was waiting to be unleashed.

She plunged headlong into her newly found passion in her 30s. Her first big break and what defined her work in some ways was a metal and wood carving show in Namibia in 1996 — her first international trip at 40 years which, she says, sounds practically funny today since people seem to have wheels on their feet. Post Africa, she began to work with new materials including fabric and her work took a new turn. Fiery and feisty, it began to reflect her opinions.

She started doing more ambitious work. A 1999 piece, Silence (Blood Wedding), was considered her seminal work and widely acclaimed. There was no looking



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

We are coming to the end of our meal so I shift focus to Kochi. She's been housed there for almost the entire period and is only here in Delhi briefly — for a family wedding and the India Art Fair. Otherwise, since August 2017, Dube has been living, breathing, eating, thinking and dreaming the biennale. There has been no room for anything else. After she worked out a theme in her mind, she started travelling to invite artists whose work she liked and which fit in with her larger message, visiting close to 20 countries in a whirlwind fashion over two years.

Dube's theme for the biennale — "Possibilities for a non-alienated world" — is reflective of the communication breakdown one sees in an increasingly virtual world. "We have been on the phone and on WhatsApp but isn't this meeting the real thing," she asks to illustrate the larger message of her show.

"Everyone is looking at their screens and we think we are connected. We are not," she argues.

She wants people to connect and remain connected, face to face. She met all the artists she loved and whose work she chose to display. The show asks people to be more accepting of differences — be it religion or sexual preferences. "I have been able to convey my ideas on such a large scale thanks to the biennale; it's a major opportunity," she adds.

So what next, I ask. Her own life has been on hold. What does Anita Dube look forward to?

The last few years have been one of consolidation and preparation for the years ahead. She is looking to get out of the "mess of Delhi" and pen the next chapter of her life — a quieter one she expects — at her new home in Noida and her new studio in Kaladham, an artists' colony set up by former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati. Dube invites me to visit her studio — designed by renowned architect Madhav Raman who is currently giving it finishing touches — and see her work over a glass of wine. She may be a late starter but her spirit remains intact.

The 'call' of the fields



PEOPLE LIKE THEM
GEETANJALI KRISHNA

This week, whilst in the boondocks of Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh, I had this strange feeling that something was off. Soon I realised what it was. While everywhere there were large billboards emblazoned with slogans of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and newly constructed outdoor toilets were visible in many houses — I saw a disproportionate number of people emerging from the woods carrying that telltale empty plastic bottle. Women chattered gaily in large groups that periodically disappeared discreetly behind the trees and into the mustard fields. Young boys were playing cricket with the bottles they had just emptied. In the meantime, the toilets constructed

by the government stood there, unused. Don't they work? I asked Lalit Kumar, my local host. The famous Awadhi hospitality immediately kicked in. "You want to go," he asked. "Please use it, it's very clean." And clean it was. Why didn't they use their lovely new loos, I asked? Kumar laughed good-naturedly. He took me to the local tea shop where dozens of people offered dozens of reasons why they preferred to answer nature's call in natural surroundings instead of in toilets.

"Over 75 per cent of our village likes to go to the fields," Ram Pal Rawat, a farmer said. "That's what they're used to and that's what they like." In fact, their neighbouring village had even more toilets than they did. "There too, most prefer not to use them," he said. What about the women? I asked. The government had built pink toilets for them everywhere and called them *samman ghar* or honour houses. "Our daily gossip sessions in the field would come to an end if we started using bathrooms," an old lady exclaimed. "Besides, outdoors is much cleaner than indoors."

As we drank steaming cups of tea, someone came up with the strangest reason for using his loo only sparingly. "When the weather is good, I insist that my family defecates in the open so that

we can make our septic tank last longer before it overflows," said Tej Narain, another farmer. It turned out that many others also used their loos only when the weather was bad or if they were sick. Soon, the people who liked to do their "jobs" outdoors anyway, said that preserving their septic tanks was the reason why they didn't use their toilets.

I hastened to point out that the new toilets had been built on the twin pit composting technology. They could use their loos all the time and they'd never fill up. Narain said that he'd heard about this but didn't quite believe it. "Long ago, a septic tank overflowed in the village," he said. "No labourers were available, so we had to clean it ourselves and I'll never forget the stink."

His friends and neighbours concurred. "Who knows how long these composting pits will work anyway?" one said. "Even if they work, who'll use that compost anyway?" asked another.

Just then lightning lit up the clouds overhead and it started raining. The tea party broke up as we all hastened for cover. As we left, I saw the light in an outdoor toilet come on. "See! We do use toilets when we have to," said my host. "The rest of the time, we go to the fields behind the toilet and praise Swachh Bharat Abhiyan."

An evening to remember



PEOPLE LIKE US
KISHORE SINGH

Why did the waiter fall into the swimming pool? Witnesses heard a shout and a splash, and then the cry "Man overboard!" Okay, I made up the last bit, but an "Oh! Oh! Oh!" surrurred through the party. Something had happened, and as Indians, everyone gawped as the poor young lad, shocked into silence and speechless with the cold, tried to find a footing on the pool's floor. His platter of kebabs floated surreally to the bottom of the pool, there to rest like corpses. Another waiter pulled him out, slipping and sliding. As he stood dripping on the pool deck, a towel was handed to him. Guests stood around sipping their cocktails, marvelling that he hadn't turned blue.

"He needs a change of clothes," my wife said, stepping forward to take charge. None of us had clothes to spare at the cottage — we still carried clothes to and from the farm, not keeping any in storage yet — but quick thinking led her to head for the caretaker's hut. Having seen her take charge, everyone went back to drinking and dancing, and I went back indoors to check on the food arrangements. A few moments later, my wife stormed into the living room to ask why I couldn't have taken the waiter to get changed. It turns out, the caretaker wasn't in, so my wife had to forage through his clothes in absentia to find some that would fit. "I had to find him underwear," she remonstrated with me later, but how was I responsible for that?

But why did the waiter fall in the swimming pool in the first place? He hadn't been drinking, or so we were told. And since his scope of work was the grill counter and not the bar, he couldn't have been tipling surreptitiously. We hadn't factored in anyone falling into the pool but my son had had the forethought to have it filled. "Just in case," he'd said then, which I had imagined to imply someone wanting to go skinny-dipping under the moon. Now he was gloating. "Told you," he said. Without the water,

we would have had someone with broken bones. Now, at worst, we had no more than a case of sniffles and some embarrassment.

Witnesses disclosed the waiter's crime was one of impropriety. His eyes were temporarily distracted by a young lady's passage, causing his humiliating fall from grace to disgrace. "Serves him right," said the young lady in question, when she heard. Perhaps she spoke too soon though. By the time the evening was over, we had a list of casualties that was as long as it was varied. One friend had walked into a glass door. (The door survived.) She sat with a packet of ice clutched to her forehead for the rest of the evening. Another fell on the dance floor, earning himself a slash across his nose.

A further inventory is required to list the demeanours of the evening. Five youngsters threw up, all of them inside the cottage. The smell is still lingering some days later. An equal number passed out — on sofas, beds, on the lawn. Some had to be carried to their cars (fortunately, none of them was driving). The Party Smart tablets they had consumed were clearly not working. The leftovers filled the fridge to overflowing because no one ate (they only drank). We ran out of Disprins.

WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

Fix the process

It can be no one's case that buying complex weaponry like fighter aircraft or helicopters is easy business. The Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG's) report on air force purchases mentions 660 specifications in the medium fighter order, and 42 for a radar system. Nor can it be a cut-and-dried process — for that might lead to all bidders in most contracts being disqualified at the outset. Besides, the relative importance given to individual specifications or product features can significantly affect judgements on what the best offer is — and (let's face it) these are often matters of judgement. In the real world, there would also be user preferences — as with the air force, which kept insisting in the early stages that it wanted the Mirage because of its performance in the Kargil war. Did similar air force pressure explain the choice of the Rafale (Mirage's successor) in 2012, though the aircraft did not qualify?

The choice can be between tweedledum and tweedledee. The Eurofighter must have been as good as the Rafale, since it too was shortlisted; and, earlier, the French alternative as good as Sweden's Bofors gun. But would choosing the Eurofighter have obviated the "India-specific enhancements" and its bill of \$1.4 billion or more, incurred basically to make the Rafale meet the required specifications? On top of that, diplomatic considerations can and have influenced choices. What else can explain why the benchmark price for heavy-lift helicopters was changed after the financial bids had been opened? In the end, therefore, while audit strictures must be taken seriously, real-world perspectives do intrude into the frame.

Audit reports themselves don't do much better than the more complex business of buying weapons. It passes understanding, for instance, as to why the CAG acquiesced to the defence ministry's insistence on financial secrecy with regard to the Rafale contract, when all the financial numbers are laid out for all the other weapons acquisitions reviewed in the same CAG report! Also, it is obvious that the CAG has given the government a free pass by not putting a number to the amount that the Rafale was allowed to save by avoiding financial guarantees. So much for auditors.

Are the elaborate processes and procedures for buying weapons sub-optimal precisely because they are so elaborate? Put into the equation the time factor, for it takes eight to 10 years in many cases for a selection process to be carried through while the defence services wait. Indeed, in the end there may be no acquisition at all (as with the AgustaWestland), or technology has changed in the interim. Is a simpler, shorter process possible for choosing between competitive bids? After all, most acquisitions in recent years have been done with no competitive bidding at all. As for the perennial issue of pay-offs, only the naive would think there are none when the purchases are so large that they can make or break vendors, when decisions are taken at multiple levels over years, and the choices are so complex as to be capable of endless fiddling (an air chief faces charges for allegedly having fiddled one number).

Meanwhile, there are no real answers to the larger questions. There is, for instance, no satisfactory explanation why only 36 fighter aircraft were ordered when the air force needed 126 — necessitating now a second round of bidding for the same kind of aircraft and possible delay of several years in getting the balance aircraft. The defence ministry's response on the issue (says the CAG) is that light combat aircraft were also being ordered. That treats medium and light aircraft as interchangeable. But with the Tejas also making slow progress, the air force is now trying to get hold of extra Sukhoi-30s, which are heavy aircraft! On top of this haphazard building of the fleet, we have the air force's seemingly ingrained distaste for putting in the effort to support a domestic aircraft manufacturing industry (such as the navy has done for shipbuilding). So the country gets locked into permanent import dependence of the kind that no other country with a large defence budget (other than Saudi Arabia) is exposed to. Something sure is rotten in the state of Denmark.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA



Pakistan has pulled the trigger on itself

Pakistan has taken too much of a chance with Pulwama — with the wrong government in India, and at the wrong time

Stephen P Cohen, the noted American scholar on South Asia, has a genius description for Pakistani strategic thought. Pakistan, he says, negotiates with the world by holding the gun to its own head: Give me what I want, or I will blow my brains out. You then handle the mess. Has Pakistan pulled that trigger in Pulwama?

First, get any notion that this was a purely indigenous act of terror out of the way. The suicide terrorist was a radicalised Indian Kashmiri. But count the reasons why his couldn't be an entirely Indian planned and executed operation:

■ The Jaish-e-Mohammed has claimed responsibility. It is purely a Pakistan-based and ISI-controlled organisation.

■ While radicalisation and motivation can be local, there is zero evidence that this volume of high explosive (most likely RDX or RDX-mixed) is available with usually amateurish local groups, along with skills to rig the trigger-timer mechanism.

■ See that last video the bomber recorded. He is reading from a pre-written text from a board placed in front of cards held by someone. The language isn't so much about Kashmiri grievances or revenge as to instigate Muslims in the rest of India. Babri Masjid and Gujarat are invoked, and "all our Muslims" exhorted to rise in revolt against "cow-urine drinkers". This is precisely how the Jaish, even more than the Lashkar-e-Taiba, thinks. Not local Kashmiris.

This action fits perfectly the pattern set by the Jaish in the past. The suicide bombing of the Assembly in Srinagar in 2001, the attack on Parliament later in the same year, raids on Pathankot and Gurdaspur have all had the same objective: To somehow take the terror fallout beyond Kashmir. The Lashkar did so in Mumbai (26/11), too, but much of its energy and manpower is still used in fighting in Kashmir. Under global pressure, it is also being mainstreamed by its GHQ patrons into Pakistani politics. The Jaish, much smaller but enormously more vicious, resourceful and an ISI

favourite, is more selective with "impact" attacks.

How resourceful the Jaish is we know from the IC-814 hijack. It could get an Indian plane hijacked from Kathmandu and taken to safe harbour in Kandahar to trade hostages for their key leaders jailed in India. It's been established repeatedly in subsequent research that every step in that hijack — from facilitation in Kathmandu to negotiations in Kandahar using the Taliban, and then safe "recovery" of released Jaish chief Masood Azhar and others — was overseen by the ISI.

To the Pakistani establishment and ISI, Azhar and the Jaish are much bigger assets than even the Lashkar and Hafiz Saeed. The Jaish is their main force-multiplier. The Chinese also acknowledge it, which is the reason they are shamelessly complicit in protecting him.

That this terrorist was a local Kashmiri is no surprise. In each of its actions so far, including IC-814, Parliament and other attacks, the Jaish has had key participation of Indian Kashmiris.



NATIONAL INTEREST
SHEKHAR GUPTA

Afzal Guru, remember, was Indian. Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, one of the other two jailed terrorists traded for IC-814 passengers, was Kashmiri. We have enough evidence, therefore, to stop wasting time in local, root-cause theories and giving Pakistan any deniability, however implausible.

Why do we raise that question? Has Pakistan finally pulled that trigger into its own head? Because, all the earlier Jaish and Lashkar attacks passed without a publicised retaliation, although we know about some secret "surgical strikes" in the past. Between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, India was able to ride out the moments of anger with coercive diplomacy, global pressure on Pakistan, and a strategic mindset that was fundamentally pacifist, and believed in responding no more than proportionately to any provocation.

The Modi government has no such pretence. It holds both Dr Singh and Vajpayee and other governments of the past in contempt for what it sees as their

The technological superiority of Europeans enabled them to brutally subjugate populations that outnumbered them by orders of magnitude.

Xenophobia is less rational in the 21st century because easy global information flows make it hard to create and maintain the technological asymmetry required to keep populations in subjugation. But getting a plurality of the world's voters to recognise that xenophobia is irrational, may admittedly, be difficult.

Oddly, xenophobia might become entirely rational again if homo sapiens do become space faring animals. Suppose that we encounter an alien civilisation vastly superior to us, technologically. Those aliens may enslave us, or exterminate us, for much the same reasons that humans have enslaved, or exterminated other humans. The aliens may even eliminate humans purely because we represent a potential threat. And if we encounter an alien race technologically inferior to us, we may decide to exterminate them before they do it to us! That's the "Dark Forest" theory, which sees the Universe as a dark forest, where predators lurk everywhere. It is a horrible thought.

Twitter: @devangshudatta



VIEWPOINT
DEVANGSHU DATTA

There is a common thread running through the rise of the right wing across the world and that thread is xenophobia. The fear of the outsider, laced with a cocktail of racism and religious bigotry, have been skillfully used by right-wingers in various places to manipulate varying political systems in order to take and consolidate power.

This has happened through democratic means in many places. Consider Donald Trump with his "wall" and his broad categorisation of Latin Americans, Muslims and all non-whites as criminals. Mr Trump still has roughly 40 per cent approval, despite children being forcibly separated from their parents, and dying

in government custody.

Consider Brexit, with its "Leaver" campaign founded on fears of Britain being overrun by foreigners. It is only now that the average Briton is realising the enormity of the cost of leaving the European Union. Similarly in Hungary, where Viktor Orban won an election by orchestrating a campaign against the "invasion" of asylum seekers. Or France, where Marine Le Pen took over her father's mantle as the dark angel of the far right. Or India, where the BJP's re-election campaign mixes majoritarian rhetoric, with bigotry and dog-whistling.

It's all about the fear of the outsider. It is easy to rationally dismiss xenophobic rhetoric. Immigrants tend to work harder than the locals. They take the dirty, low-paid jobs. They tend to generate more in taxes than they cost in terms of social welfare.

In the US, an immigrant is far less likely to commit a random mass-shooting than a citizen born and bred. In Britain, the National Health Service will likely collapse if Brexit results in all the foreigners leaving. France would never have won either of its World Cups without the footballing skills of immigrants from its former colonies.

But the fear of the foreigner is atavistic

and widespread. The campaigns referred to above were all based on large dollops of fake news and fake premises, and each was manipulative in the extreme. But each of these campaigns was successful because it tapped into an extant wellspring of bigotry and xenophobia that affected a substantial chunk of the local electorate.

In every case, there were historical causes for the fears. Those fears may no longer be rational but there was a time when they were. Modern India is a country created by waves of large-scale migrations and invasions, and it endured two hundred years of colonialism. That makes it easy to trigger majoritarian sentiments and xenophobia.

Britain was a relatively small country that suffered the threat of catastrophic invasions by Napoleon and Hitler. The White Anglo Saxon Protestant (WASP) settlers who are the single-largest American demographic achieved their pre-eminent position via the genocide of the original settlers, alongside the import of slaves. Some WASPs are terrified of possible pay-back if they cease to be a majority.

Xenophobia was actually rational back in the colonial era. The Native Americans and the Africans of the Slave Coast were absolutely right to fear the Europeans.

Voters' dilemma: BJP? No. Modi? Yes.



LINE AND LENGTH
T C A SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

Two weeks ago, a very senior member of the Congress publicly said the BJP would lose 135 seats in the 2019 general election. I thought this was a very precise number, based possibly on some internal estimates of the party. He did not, however, say how many the Congress would win.

Should this happen — and that huge a fall seems unlikely — the BJP will come down to 147 seats from the 282 it won in 2014, and 133 from its current position of 268 in the Lok Sabha.

This is very close to the 138 seats it had won in 2004.

Meanwhile, the Congress itself does not believe that it will get more than 125 seats, which is around three times what it won in 2014. Less hopeful and more realistic estimates place its tally at around 100. That will be enough for it to cry victory and hail Rahul Gandhi as a champion.

If we take the most optimistic estimates of the Congress — BJP 133, Congress 125 — who will the president invite to form the next government? This question has only one answer.

Then, whoever the prime minister is, we will have to see if he gets 1996'd. Remember how Atal Bihari Vajpayee was unseated after just 13 days in office? That too could happen if the BJP loses more than 100 seats.

Also if, as seems more likely, the BJP and the Congress between them manage to win only around 280 seats, the rest of the parties will account for the

remaining 264 seats. In 2014 BJP+Congress was 326 seats, which left the rest with 218.

So regardless of who leads the next government, we are going to have a weak or a very weak government after five years of a very strong one. For this not to happen, the party that leads the next government will have to win at least 210 seats because it is only then that its foundational weakness diminishes sufficiently.

We have the experiences of 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2004 as witness. Each of these governments was hostage to regional parties. True, the Congress won 206 seats in 2009 and was less of a hostage than in 2004, where it had won 145. But it squandered the opportunity.

Caste, community, inflation So, what are we in for?

Politics in India is about two things only — 90 per cent of it is about social policies and only 10 per cent is about economic policies. And, most regrettably, 90

per cent of the 90 per cent is about caste and community while 90 per cent of the remaining 10 per cent is about inflation.

It is also true that for their own reasons both the BJP and the Congress have avoided using caste as their main driver. The BJP has tried to unite the Hindus and the Congress has tried to unite the minorities.

This is perhaps the only good thing they have in common. On bad things they are peas of a pod. Take out the family from the Congress and the RSS from the BJP and the two could unite.

Thus, after 2004, the Congress focused on community — recall the 2015 Antony report, which said it had bent too far in favour of Muslims — and neglected inflation and caste. The BJP, on the other hand, has always focused on inflation and community while neglecting caste.

The result has been a walkover for the caste-based parties. These could well account for

Stepping into their shoes

EYE CULTURE

ADRIJA SHUKLA

What is it like to be a woman in a male-dominated profession like a police officer? Netflix has recently released a film, *Soni*, to take the viewers closest to the possible answer. The film is a brutally honest representation of the scenario, which neither takes us too deep into the miseries of the women nor gives false hopes.

The best thing about the actors of the film is that one can relate to them. We have seen the glimpse of these women everywhere around us. These are not larger than life characters that do extraordinary things. They are just regular women, who come up with their own way of dealing with things despite pressure from society and their own families.

The film, directed by Ivan Ayr, is a story of a sub-inspector Soni (Geetika Vidya Ohlyan), a hot-headed woman, who has anger issues. After a point, Soni wants to teach every man a lesson who misbehaves with her. She obviously has to face consequences for her actions. Soni works under an IPS officer, Kalpana Ummat (Saloni Batra), who has to face a lot of flak because of Soni's actions. But, Kalpana does not leave Soni's side. In fact, the comradery between the two women gains strength because of their dedication towards their work.

Kalpana is a level-headed woman. At home, her mother-in-law is worried that she has crossed her 30s, time is running out, when will she become a mother? At the office, her husband tells her that her juniors are getting her into trouble because she is too soft in dealing with them. But Kalpana knows what she wants. During the film, this character feels suffocated because of the behaviour of the people but she doesn't shy away from performing her personal and professional duties.

With changing times, women have become more vocal about exercising their rights. But a lot of stereotypes still come handy when women step into the roles that are conventionally performed by men. Taking the example of the Army, recently, General Bipin Rawat said that the Army is not yet ready for women in combat roles. "We are not yet ready for that... Women are needed to be prepared for that kind of hardships. It is not easy. Let us not compare ourselves with the western nations. They are more open," he said. "There are orders that we have to cocoon her separately. She will say that somebody is peeping, so we will have to give a sheet around her." I think in that case a better statement would have been that men, along with women, will also be needed to be prepared for that kind of situation.

General Rawat even said since the majority of Indian soldiers still come from villages, they will have a problem taking

orders from a woman commander. Apparently, when it comes to the show of power, it is pretty good to make a woman lead an all-men Army services contingent on the Republic Day.

Contrary to man, no matter how high-ranking officer a woman becomes, her gender never leaves her. This reminded me of the time, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while his visit to Bangladesh, praised his counterpart by saying that Sheikh Hasina was tough on terrorism, "despite being a woman."

A few weeks ago, Congress president Rahul Gandhi sparked a controversy with his remark, "The watchman with a 56-inch chest ran away and told a *mahila*, defend me," he said. The use of the word *mahila* for Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in a demeaning manner angered many women activists. If you have seen the video in Rajasthan, where Gandhi was giving his speech, the mic also captured the obvious loud cheering from audiences after his remark.

In one of the scenes, during duty on a check-post at night, the police officers stop the car of a drunk Navy officer. Being a senior on the duty, Soni tells the officer to come out of the car. Her anger shoots up when the officer holds her hand. She throws him out and beats him up. She had to face repercussions for her decisions and being her boss, Kalpana, too. When Soni is attacked at home, her estranged husband tells her had he been living at home, no one would have dared to do this to her.

Throughout the film, Kalpana's junior officers call her 'sir' which seemed to be a practice in the police department. She scolds here juniors for not following the protocol of giving women officer to an abandoned girl, found by a constable. In one of the scenes, Kalpana's husband, who is also a high-rank police officer, asks her why did she even choose to become an IPS officer, when she can't behave like one? Despite being dismissed as someone soft and weak, she does not stop dealing with people with empathy. Sometimes I feel that in the fight of feminism and equality, women have been so busy proving themselves to be tough that no one now gives importance to this quality empathy anymore.

Soni comes home after the spat with the Navy officer. Her neighbour gives her ultimate solution to her problems. "Start wearing *sindoor* (vermilion). People will stop misbehaving with you." On the other hand, Kalpana teaches her 13-year-old niece to confront the students who made fun of her periods at school. Maybe women helping women will make this world a little better.

Every week, Eye Culture features writers with an entertaining critical take on art, music, dance, film and sport

Weak demand, keen competition hit earnings

IT firms are a saving grace, else, the December 2018 quarter would have been a washout for India Inc

AS THE HEADLINE numbers show, it has been a disastrous earnings season, leaving India Inc in deep distress. Profits for a universe of 1,995 companies fell 30% y-o-y in the December 2018 quarter although revenues were up a decent 19% y-o-y. The simple fact is raw material costs and other expenses remain elevated but not too many companies are able to pass these on to consumers or end users because demand is so muted and the competition intense. The shortage of liquidity since September appears to have pushed up the cost of finance hurting the demand for consumer durables, while subdued investments in projects by the private sector and sluggish construction have left the demand for materials such as cement weak.

The telecom sector, in particular, has been badly bruised by the heightened competition after Reliance Jio entered the market in September 2016. But even rivals Bajaj Auto and Hero MotoCorp have been compelled to get into a price war to protect market share. The abundance of capacity in the cement sector, at a time when there is little activity in real estate, has left realisations of players like Ultratech weak. In the absence of adequate pricing power, profit margins are getting squeezed. For instance, gross margins at Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) fell 160 basis points y-o-y due to raw material cost pressures even as inventories remained high. At Ultratech, standalone revenues were a good 16% y-o-y higher but net profits were up just 7% y-o-y, due to higher-than-expected costs.

In some sectors of the economy, recent policy changes have impacted demand adversely. For example, the changes in the axle load norms have hurt the demand for trucks of a certain size; Ashok Leyland reported a 12% y-o-y drop in revenues in Q3 FY19, with volumes falling and the company not able to command pricing power. Again, the more expensive insurance policies have stymied demand for both cars and two-wheelers. In fact, the automobile sector is yet to recover from what was a very dull festive season; dealers confirm demand for cars, UVs and two-wheelers is still lacklustre and that inventories are at levels that are much higher than those typically seen at this time. Auto major M&M reported a very weak set of numbers for the December 2018 quarter with operating profit margins falling 150 basis points y-o-y.

To be sure, there were some bright spots; Larsen & Toubro delivered a splendid set of numbers, posting a 24% increase in revenues and a 27% increase in ebitda on the back of some strong project execution. While the fall in order inflows was a slight disappointment, the backlog is healthy. But core sector players, such as power generator Tata Power, are grappling with several problems and the company reported a 68% drop in consolidated profits hurt by the weak performance of its coal and infrastructure companies even as losses at its Mundra UMPF remained high. Amongst the consumer pack, Asian Paints was able to cash in on the festive season as was TVS Motors. However, management commentary has been very circumspect given how difficult it is to pass on costs to consumers. Even heavyweights such as Hindustan Unilever are not able to price products as they would like to. Had it not been for the IT firms, which are doing well in challenging conditions, the season would have been a complete washout.

Where are the edu reforms?

Many hyped announcements, no real action

FROM THE CENTRAL Advisory Board of Education (in 2005) to industry (the 2003 Ambani-Birla report on education) and the NITI Aayog (in 2017), many have argued for granting greater autonomy to higher education institutes and universities, especially the top-rung ones. So, a HRD ministry committee arguing for greater autonomy for IITs may seem like another iteration of the same logic. But, given how the government has been pussyfooting on higher education autonomy so far, every such recommendation should serve as a reminder of how urgently this reform is needed. The IIM example should serve as a strong example of the government's reluctance to give up control. Though the government passed the IIM Act in 2017 to give the premier management education institutions unprecedented autonomy, it never freed them of the shackle of reservations. And, as reported by *Mint* last year, the government is not truly ready to relinquish control of the IIMs. After seemingly having removed the premier management education institutions unprecedented autonomy, the government last year reportedly wanted to amend the 2017 Act to force the IIMs to implement virtual fee caps—ironically, “without flouting the autonomous spirit of the IIM Act”. And, this was despite the IIM Act itself having provisions placing reasonable restrictions on the IIMs' use of surplus revenue. The government also wanted the IIMs to increase their intake, which, surely would have come at the cost of student-quality that is maintained through the rigorous admission procedure. This shows the government, despite all the right noises it has made on autonomy, is only too willing to burden higher education institutions—when it should be funding the creation of more IIM-like institutions, it would rather have the existing institutions dilute their standards.

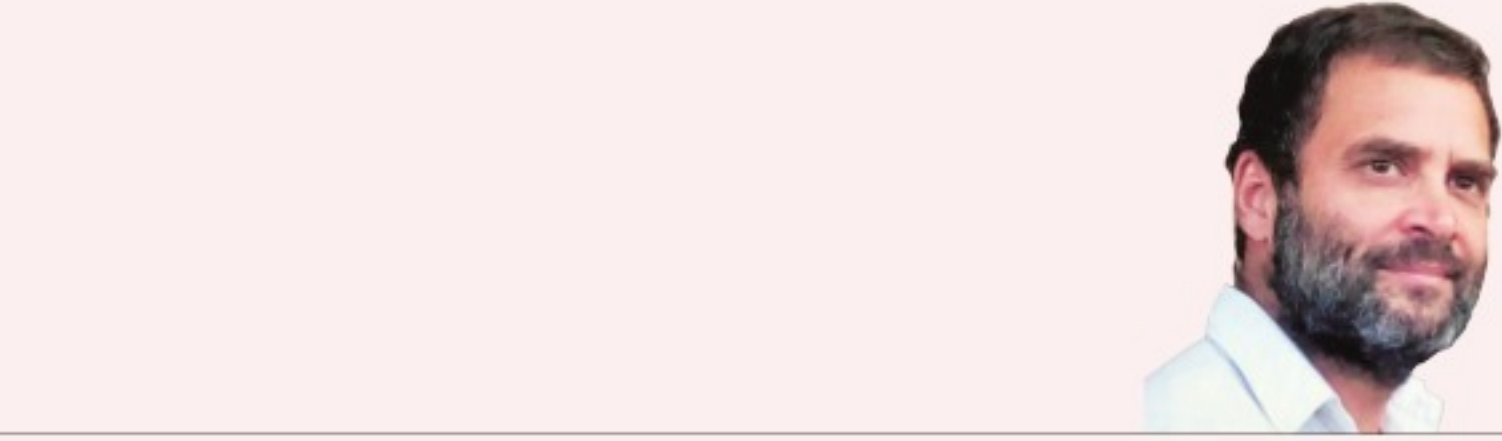
It is not just autonomy for higher-ed institutions that is the problem. In fact, very few of the big education reforms the Centre has announced have materialised. The New Education Policy—that is expected to outline the overall reforms vision for the education sector—is now stale business. Two committees have submitted reports, and yet none have seen the light of day. A truncated version of the first was released by the government before it was junked altogether. The second one was submitted in October last year, and yet the draft remains to be tabled. Similarly, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), that was supposed to replace the inefficient UGC regime, is nowhere on the horizon. The government had announced the Diksha initiative to facilitate the training of untrained school teachers; but, as an analysis of Budget numbers over the Modi years, published in *IndiaSpend*, pointed out recently, the allocation for teachers' training is a fraction of what it was a few years ago. The Higher Education Funding Agency, that was supposed to finance infrastructure development—from an overall corpus of ₹1 lakh crore—at “all educational institutions under higher education, school education and institutions under ministry of health which is referred by the concerned ministry” under RISE 2022 had managed to approve projects worth only ₹10,000 crore by November last year, and that too only exclusively to top-billed institutions. It is futile to expect this inertia to change this late into the term of the present government. The next government will need to hit the ground running on education reforms; else, it will only mean squandered potential and productivity.

Flagging Misuse

The campaign to hoist BJP flags on the houses of govt-scheme beneficiaries is unethical and, indeed, unacceptable

THE BJP'S HIMACHAL Pradesh unit, as per a report in *The Indian Express*, wants beneficiaries of Central and state government welfare schemes in the state to fly flags of the party atop their houses. As per the report, party workers will be expected to approach each of the 8.5 lakh such households in the state and try and convince them to support the BJP—and proclaim the same from rooftops—in the run up to the general elections this year. This is envisaged to be part of the the party's nation-wide campaign *Mera Pariwar, Bhajapa Pariwar* (my family, a BJP family). As part of this campaign, five crore BJP workers in the country will also fly party-flags atop their houses. But, the problem is, while the party can ask its workers to fly its flag, coaxing government-scheme beneficiaries to do this is unethical, and downright unacceptable. Coaxing beneficiaries to consider their entitlement as a party's largesse is political sleaze of the worst kind. Government funds belong to the people, and government programmes are mere channels through which these funds are deployed for the people's benefit.

Public funds are not to be leveraged to consolidate votes. It is an elected government's solemn responsibility to benefit citizens, irrespective of their political allegiance, while not shoring up its vote-bank among the electorate. The usage of public funds to further the political goals of a party is gross misuse of them, and the Election Commission should make sure that this doesn't happen. Politicising government schemes in the manner that the Himachal BJP has reportedly proposed sets a precedent for parties and future governments to colour entitlements of the people as party largesse, and that is a rabbit-hole no party would want to go down.



RESILIENCE AND PERSISTENCE
Rahul Gandhi, president of the Congress

The aim of terrorism is to divide this country and we are not going to be divided for even one second, no matter how hard people try

● RATE TRANSMISSION

LOWER RATES DO NOT LEAD TO HIGHER INVESTMENT. THIS IS DEPENDENT ON THE STATE OF THE BANKING SYSTEM AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Analysing the impact of lowering of the repo rate

WITH RBI SIGNALLING a change in stance to the lowering of rates and some banks decreasing their lending rates, there is a positive sentiment in the market. Interest rates were hiked twice during 2018 which had put industry on the back foot as procuring funds became expensive. Banks as well as borrowers have always been talking of interest rates to be lowered and hence should be satisfied that there can be more rate cuts to come in the coming months if inflation remains range-bound. How exactly does this translate into higher investment growth?

Theoretically, lower interest costs provide an incentive to companies to invest which in turn helps to foster growth. It also brings down the interest cost for companies which helps in stabilising profits. This will vary across industries as the interest-to-turnover ratio averages around 2-3% for non-financial companies and could stretch to around 10% for capital intensive industries. This looks logical.

The attached graphic juxtaposes the movement in weighted average lending rates of banks (WALR) on new loans given for the last five years along with growth in credit to various sectors to ascertain if there are any connections. Interest rates have actually come down by 210 bps since 2013-14, with the fall being 220 bps by 2017-18 before the repo rate was increased by RBI. Therefore, there has been a tendency for banks to lower rates continuously over this time period. As of March 2014, the repo rate was 8% after which it has come down without any upward revision to 6% by March 2018. In a way, it can be concluded that the transmission has been quite efficient as lending rates on new loans have come down in a commensurate manner. This is significant because, often, it has been argued that banks have not been proactive in terms of lowering their lending rates when RBI takes such an action.

Now, the pattern of growth in bank credit is quite interesting. The rate of growth has actually been declining or unchanged in 3 of the 4 years leading to 2017-18. Secondly, the rate of



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Views are personal

growth in credit-to-industry, which is what one can relate directly with investment, has been coming down and turned negative in 2016-17, before recovering with an anaemic 0.7% growth in 2017-18. This sector constitutes around a third of total credit and is hence quite dominant. Typically, the lowering of cost of capital should have led to higher credit flow to this sector.

Thirdly, growth in credit-to-agriculture has been buoyant in 4 of the five years which, again, is driven more by statute as it comes under priority sector lending. Fourthly, retail loans have been growing at the highest rates, which is positive for the household sector and has supported both the housing and auto sectors. Also, in the last couple of years, there has been a tendency for even PSBs to concentrate more on retail loans and hence build up a better portfolio given that NPAs tend to be lower in this segment.

Fifthly, the service sector has witnessed a mixed growth pattern and declined to 5.7% in 2014-15 before recovering in the next two years and then slowing down, again, in 2017-18. Here, NBFCs and trade are the two leading sectors which account for around half of credit to the services segment. Lastly, in 2018-19, growth in credit has picked up across all the



sectors which is contrary to what conventional wisdom would support as this was a period when interest rates increased.

What this data indicates is that merely lowering rates does not lead to higher growth in credit across the sectors. It is most effective for the home segment which is also preferred by banks. In case of industry, a lot would depend on the state of capacity utilisation and investment opportunities that are there. Lowering interest rates works in case there is appetite for investment. In FY19, for example, RBI data shows that capacity utilisation rates have been improving and was at 74.8% in September from 73.8% in June. Therefore, some industries were in a position to scale up by borrowing more even though interest rates had increased. In the preceding years, this rate has hovered between 70-72%, which in turn proved to be a deterrent even though the cost of borrowing had come down.

The services sector needs further probing. NBFCs are re-lenders as they borrow money from banks and use the same for onward lending. Here they would tend to switch across different sources like corporate debt and CPs. Lower interest rates, for example, tend to feed into the market-driven instruments at a faster pace thus making

such switches attractive. Interestingly, the weighted average 10-years GSec yield had come down from 8.54% in 2013-14 to 6.89% in 2017-18, which is a drop of 165 bps. Corporate bond yields for AAA-rated paper came down from 8.92% to 7.57%, which is a drop of 145 bps while that of AA paper was around 75-80 bps.

Another issue which becomes important is the willingness of banks to lend. Here, the reference is to the NPA issue where the overhang has made banks cautious on the lending side. This has tended to be concentrated in sectors like power, steel, telecom, etc., where the demand for fresh funds has also been subdued as companies try and sort out the resolution issues.

The fallout of the declining interest rates scenario has also meant that it has had an impact on growth in term deposits. The chart below shows how the growth rate has been coming down quite sharply over the years, from a range of 17% to a low single-digit rate in the last 3 years. Now this is a concern for two reasons. Firstly, from the point of view of banks, this is something which can pressurise liquidity, which, in turn, will call for affirmative action from the central bank in the form of support from OMO and term repos. Secondly, at the broader level, this has an impact on financial savings. The overall savings as per CSO is down from 33.1% in FY13 to 30.1% in FY18 which is a concern. Further, within financial savings, migration to the capital market through the mutual funds route or direct equity has also increased the risk taken by households which can be volatile depending on market conditions.

The issue of low interest rates is often looked at from the point of view of borrowers. While lower rates do cause cost of funds to come down, it is not necessary that it will lead to higher investment. This depends on the state of the banking system as well as opportunities for growth. Continuous reduction in rates also flags the possibility of banks finding it harder to garner deposits, which is also the case today where RBI intervention has been almost relentless. Therefore, there are trade-offs to be chosen as savers, too, would have their preferences.

The GST math conundrum

Even if there is no further rate rationalisation or relaxation in compliance requirements during FY20, the budgeted growth target of almost 20% for GST collections can be described as ambitious

BASED ON THE Interim Budget, the aggregate GST collection (Centre and states) for FY20 would be ₹13.71 lakh crore, which is almost a 20% growth over revised estimates for FY19. The budgeted aggregate GST collections for FY19 was ₹13.47 lakh crore which has been revised to ₹11.47 lakh crore (based on figures from the receipt budget of the Interim Budget). The average monthly collection in the first year of GST was ₹90,000 crore and for the second year, FY19 till January, it is ₹97,000 crore, which is below the estimated monthly average requirement of ₹1 lakh crore. The monthly GST target for FY20, translates to ₹1.25 lakh crore. The Interim Budget has set a very steep target for GST.

The Interim Budget did not provide a clear roadmap on how this boost in GST collections would happen. The assumption could be that, with the introduction of other fiscal measures, economic activity will pick up and will lead to higher GST collections. GST collections show an upward swing of 8% in FY19, a year in which there were two rounds of rate rationalisation and the recent announcements of raising exemption and composition scheme limits. The impact of the latter on GST collection will only be known from February 2019 onwards. The government has consistently maintained they would look at further rate rationalisations and hence this is also a real possibility. A group of ministers is currently reviewing the taxation of the real estate sec-

tor. Even if there is no further rate rationalisation or relaxation in compliance requirements during FY20, the growth target of almost 20% can be described as ambitious.

Anti-evasion measures like e-way bills and tax deducted at source/tax collected at source have been introduced in FY19. These measures have, to some extent, contributed to the upswing in GST collections. E-ways bills are still unable to curb evasion and technology intervention, such as the mandatory RFID tag introduced by UP, may assist in better tracking of movement of goods.

There are two other anti-evasion measures which have not been implemented and can assist in improving GST collections. The first is the reverse charge mechanism (RCM) for purchases from unregistered dealers and the other, the back bone of the GST law, is the input tax credit (ITC) matching mechanism which is, for now, not functional on GSTN. The RCM is significant, considering the doubling of the exemption limits in most states. The lack of a functional ITC matching mechanism has, as per media reports, led to a number of cases of fraudulent ITC credit claims, some of which have been detected over the past couple of months. The new compliance process, which is to be implemented from April 2019, may address the ITC matching requirement. All these anti-evasion measures, along with a pickup in economic activity, may help in realising

the goal of 20% growth in GST collections.

An improvement in GST collections is required not only to meet the budget estimates but also to enable a more uniform GST implementation across all goods and services. Though GST has brought in the concept of 'one nation, one tax', for most goods and services, there is a large portion of the economy that is still outside of the purview of GST. Crude oil, natural gas, petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel are still outside the ambit of GST. This exclusion continues to create distortions in the tax value chain as taxes on these products are not creditable under the GST law. The key reason for keeping the 5 petro products outside of GST are revenue concerns and hence an upswing in GST collections will enable these 5 petro products to be included within the GST law.

Another concern, and one which we have seen playing out in the past, is that very high revenue estimates can give rise to an aggressive tax regime in order to meet the collection targets. Such actions may lead to temporary gains but, in the long-term, do have an adverse impact on compliance and collections. Another major fallout of lower collections is the delay in processing and payment of refunds which is a key concern today and can get aggravated in the future. Hence, the need for a roadmap and timely interventions, to achieve the budget estimate, is even more imperative and urgent.

BELA SHETH MAO

Partner, Deloitte India

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Fidayeen attack

The attack on a CRPF convoy by a Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) 'fidayeen' bomber near Awantipora on the Srinagar-Jammu Highway that left 44 jawans martyred and scores of others seriously injured are reminiscent of the dark days of the militancy in the valley. The blast which blew the bus to smithereens is the first of its kind in Kashmir and the worst-ever in terms of casualties. While our hearts go out to the gallant soldiers who lost their lives and limbs, it is obvious that our intelligence and security personnel need to pull up their socks and be more vigilant — Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

Courting controversy

Considering and quantifying in money terms, the huge dilutions of securities made in finalising the murky Rafale deal and the major unprecedented concessions made to the French, like the waiver of a government guarantee and accepting of a letter of comfort which has no legal binding on the French supplier and the French government, the 2.86% gain in price boasted by the CAG is minuscule. The CAG should have played in its report what the actual cost of the Jets would have been if such dilutions and concessions were not conceded. That the government preferred to table the CAG report only on the last day of the Parliament session certainly courts further controversy — Tharcus S Fernando, Chennai

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The setting up of income-earning criteria of ₹8 lakh per year as the eligibility for the proposed reservation is a serious issue. This high limit will bring almost the entire general category households under the reservation ambit and would also cost more to the system and households for generating/getting EWS cards

The floating of the reservation card

THE ACT OF providing 10% reservation to the economically weaker sections in the general category is historic, in the sense it was passed in both houses of Parliament without any opposition. The entire Opposition acquiesced either for the fear of being dubbed anti-poor in the forthcoming general elections, or they believe the economic parameter matters for addressing backwardness through reservation. The legal experts, on the other side, refer it a 'cynical fraud on the Constitution'. This is because the genesis of reservation in India addresses the caste- and occupational-based historical discrimination/injustice faced by some communities or groups rather than economic backwardness.

Social exclusion has been the central rationale for reservations in India until now. On this basis, the reservation was first given to the scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST); it was then extended to other backward classes (OBC) in the 1990s (after 1989) under Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution. In several judgments, notably *Indra Sawhney 1992*, the Supreme Court reaffirmed the principle that "no classification could be made for reservations by relying exclusively on economic criteria" and reservation cannot exceed more than 50%. The recent Constitutional (124th Amendment) Bill 2019 deals with the new classification called 'economically weaker sections' of citizens. On the above two grounds, it may get struck in the court or the court might take a holistic view via referring Article 46 under the Directive Principles of State Policy, which speaks about promoting, with special care, the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people. How it would be conceived, one has to see in the times to come.

But in the current dynamic world, it is true that the economy is progressing in such ways that is generating glaring economic inequalities. The Oxfam inequality report 2019 highlights that the wealth of the nine richest Indian individuals is equivalent to the bottom 50% of the country. The inequalities are not only deep-rooted, but are also growing at faster rates over the period across castes. The mobility of economically backward

people to a better-off state is largely dormant. The caste of the poor generally does not help them get out of poverty or from accessing basic amenities. The economically weaker sections of citizens have largely remained excluded from attending (or retention in) the higher educational institutions and employment on account of their financial incapacity to compete with the persons who are economically more privileged.

Our estimates from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) 2012 show unequal opportunity in employment and education across castes and classes—unequal opportunities due to both social and economic reasons. Brahmins/forward castes, no doubt, have more than twice salaried

employment and higher educational attainment than the group currently having reservation on social background. But when we classify all social categories by their levels of income, we observe a similar pattern in employment and educational attainment at different levels of income across social categories. A low-income-household person has 4-5 percentage points less salaried employment and higher educational attainment than the one from high-income households across all forward and backward castes. Reservation can be an effective affirmative action to address unequal opportunities across different classes in the society only if the real needy poor are targeted for its benefit.

SHAILENDER KUMAR HOODA

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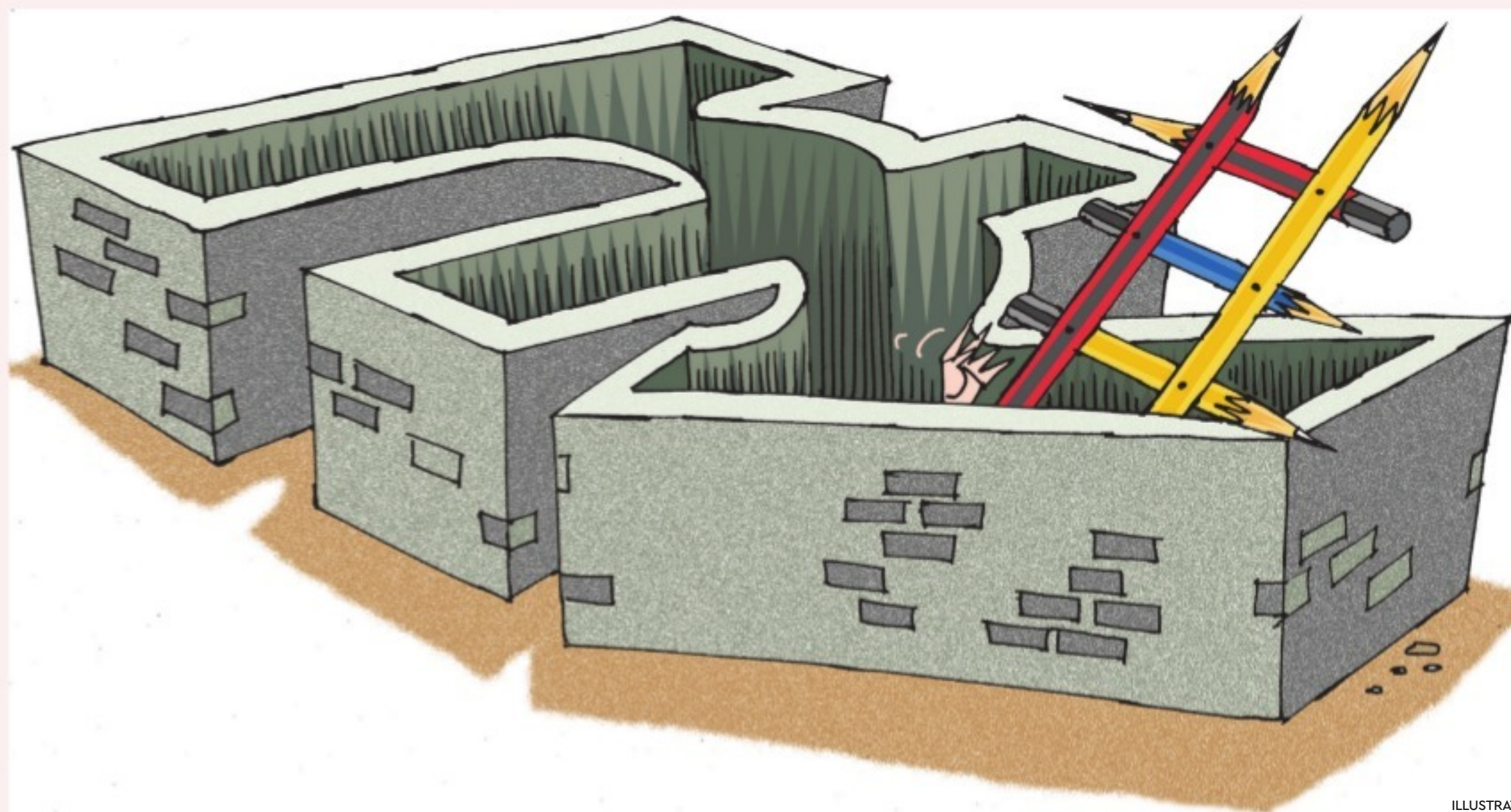
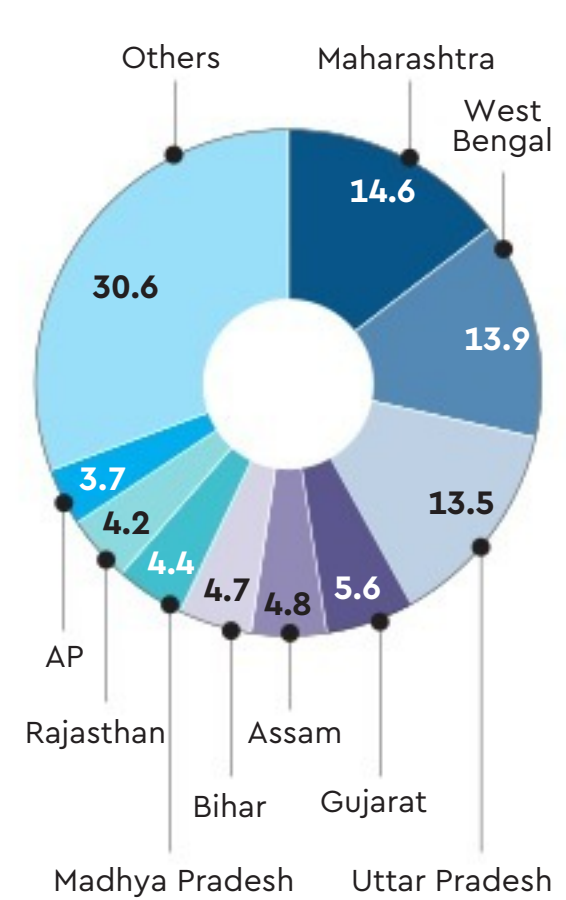


ILLUSTRATION: ROHIT PHORE

Distribution of persons age 16-40 (potential beneficiaries of 10% quota) across states



No exclusion at all

Given such evidences, the setting up of income-earning criteria of ₹8 lakh per year as the eligibility for the proposed reservation is a serious issue. Such a cut-off has been used for creamy layer among the OBCs—the income cut-off was initially kept at ₹1 lakh per year in 1993, which was raised to ₹2.5 lakh in 2004, ₹4.5 lakh in 2008, ₹6 lakh in 2013, and ₹8 lakh in 2017. It's important to note that this cut-off is used for extremely well-off households, while it will decide the level of poverty in the current Act—which is a contradiction. This high limit will bring almost the entire general category households under the reservation ambit and would also cost more to the system and households for generating/getting EWS (economically weaker section) cards. As per estimates from IHDS 2012, the entire forward castes come under 10% quota, except for only 2.28% forward castes that have more than ₹8 lakh income. This consists of 6.9 crore households (1.2 crore brahmins, 5.37 crore other forward castes, and 0.37

crore from others) and 32.3 crore persons (5.9 crore brahmins, 24.9 crore other forward castes, and 1.5 crore from others). The general category population constitutes around 27.3% share in India's total estimated (121 crore) population in 2012. The size of population/households would be a little more if one extrapolates it with the current population level.

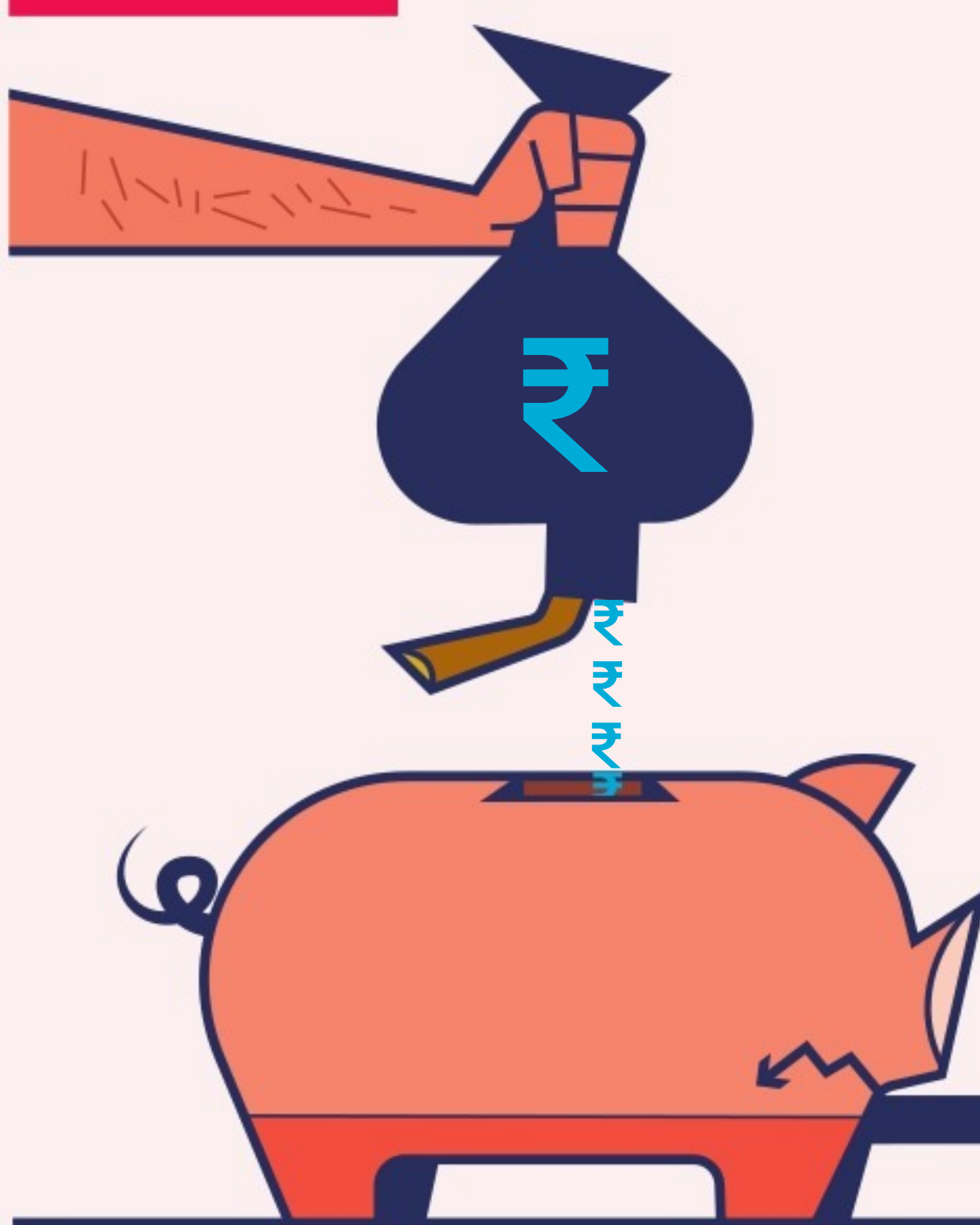
The major worry here is that the high limit will lead to unequal opportunity between households having low income (say, ₹1 lakh or less) and those earning ₹8 lakh. The experience from earlier affirmative actions reveals that high-income households received highest benefits in both education/employment as compared to low-income ones. The deserving poor receive the minimal benefit. The income criteria, thus, needs to be rationalised and fixed carefully, otherwise the proposed 10% quota will fail to address the problem of unequal opportunities.

The intended beneficiaries at aggregate level as well as those aged 16-40 (who are potential job- and admission-seekers in higher educational institution through reservation) are expected to be

high from West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra (around 40%), as per estimates from IHDS data—if population growth rate remains the same across states. The intended households benefiting from this quota would be almost 13% from metropolitans, 29% from urban, 25% from developed villages and 33% from less developed villages.

Of the total intended beneficiaries, almost 70% are aged 18 years or more—the potential voters. But whether all of them will consider it a progressive move is difficult to say, as a majority of job opportunities in the emerging market economy are in the private sector, rather than in public. Another important aspect is that, until now, 50% seats in jobs in open category were open to everyone including STs, SCs and OBCs. Since the new Act will now reduce the 10% job/education opportunities for these groups, how their voting pattern behaves is difficult to predict. The floating of the reservation card may not be a win-win situation in the forthcoming general elections, but it would generate enough debate around the existing affirmative action in India.

DATA DRIVE



Declining savings hit investment

DOMESTIC SAVINGS, as a proportion of the gross domestic product at current prices, declined to 30.5% in FY18 from 34.6% in FY12, stymieing investment significantly. Household savings, the largest contributor to savings in the economy, plunged to 17.2% of GDP in FY18 from 23.6% in FY12. While private corporate sector savings stagnated, public sector savings rose marginally, according to data from Central Statistics Office.

The declining trend of household savings from a high 25.6% of GDP in FY10 to 18% in FY16, 17.1% in FY17 and 17.2% in FY18 has affected overall investment, which has dropped from 34.3% of GDP in FY12 to 28.7% in FY16, 28.2% in FY17 and 28.6% in FY18.

Net financial savings of households

have come down from 7.4% of GDP in FY12 to 6.6% in FY18 because of a rise in households' financial liabilities. Gross financial savings, which touched an all-time high of 12.2% of GDP in FY10, dropped to 9.4% in FY17 and inched up to 10.9% in FY18.

Investment by households has fallen from 15.7% of GDP in FY12 to 10.3% in FY18 and the share of households in capital formation has slipped from 45.9% of GDP in FY12 to 35.8% in FY18. As household savings are a major source of funding investment in the economy, the declining trends seen after the twin policy shock of demonetisation and implementation of goods and services tax coupled with rising liabilities will pose a serious challenge to investment and employment generation.

Negligible rise in gross financial savings of households (% of GDP)



Net financial savings drop because of rising liabilities (% of GDP)



Falling domestic savings hit investment (Gross fixed capital formation (GFCF), % of GDP)



Investment by households drops the most (% of GDP)



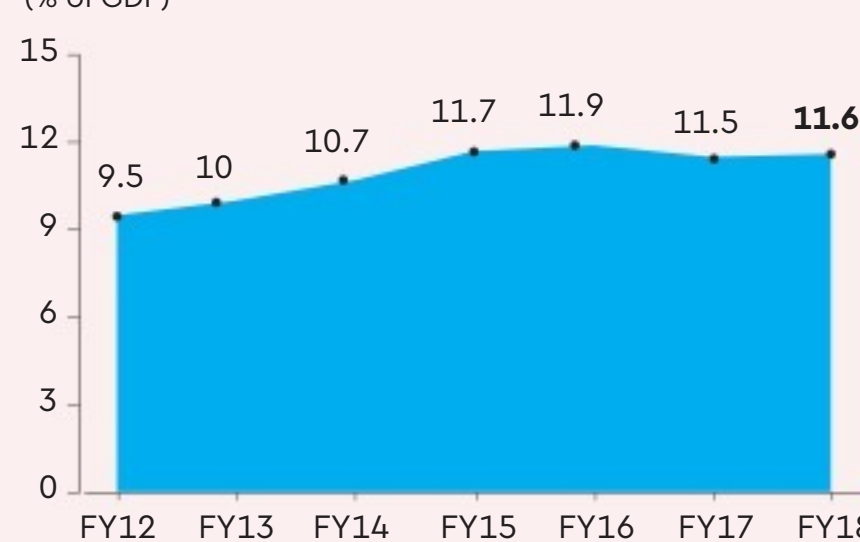
Domestic savings decline (Gross domestic savings, % of GDP)



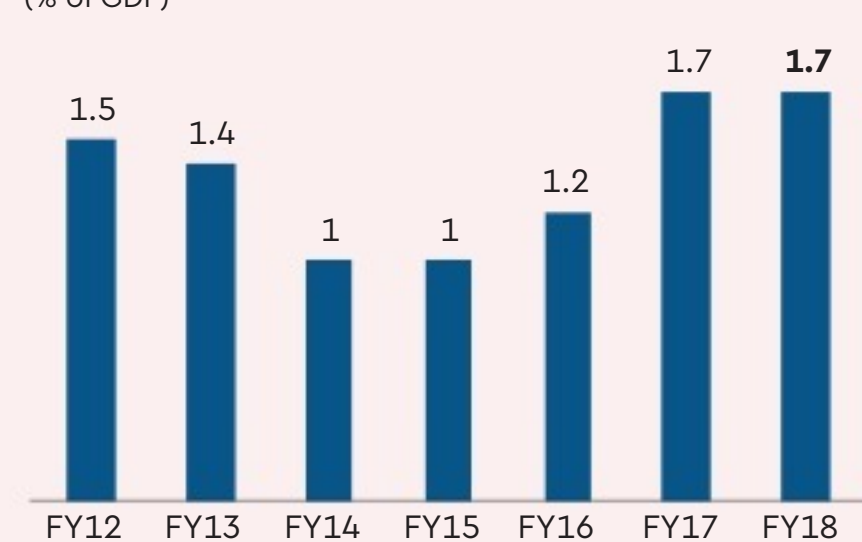
Household savings take a hit (% of GDP)



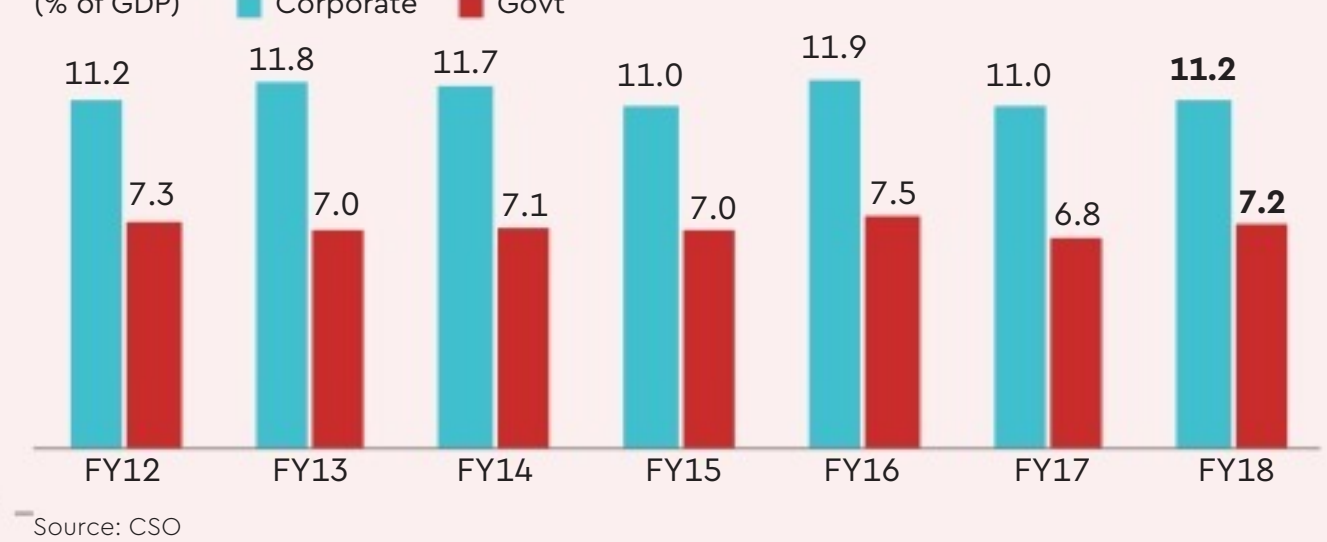
Private corporate savings stagnate (% of GDP)



Public sector savings rise marginally (% of GDP)



Corporate, government investment remain stagnant (% of GDP)



Source: CSO

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

DON'T BE TERRORISED. DON'T LET FEAR RULE YOUR LIFE. EVEN IF YOU ARE SCARED.

— SALMAN RUSHDIE



FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Politics, but no politics

Deteriorating situation in Valley can't be delinked from abdication of political responsibility by governments in Delhi



SHYAM SARAN

THE LATEST TERRORIST outrage in Kashmir underscores the nature of the war against terror. The terrorist has to succeed only occasionally to negate, in public perception, the scores of successes security forces may have achieved in preventing or forestalling similar previous attempts. It is to the credit of the security forces, including the Indian Army, the BSF and the CRPF, that they have undertaken many successful operations in the recent past to neutralise terrorist elements before these could perpetrate lethal damage.

The number of terrorists who have been eliminated in recent operations has increased significantly. While we must identify any lapses in Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) or intelligence failures which may have enabled a major attack to be mounted against the CRPF convoy, one must acknowledge that there will always remain a possibility that someone, somewhere, sometime will manage to breach even the most forbidding of defences.

There is a limitation of resources, making it difficult to put in place the most advanced and relatively robust anti-terror measures. There is a constant compulsion to minimise inconvenience and the potential harassment of ordinary citizens. There is always a trade-off between enhanced security and the public's freedom of mobility and access to public spaces. One may lessen risks but their total elimination is not possible. Before rushing to judgement on what may have gone wrong and fixing accountability, it is important that we do not lose sight of the complex political and security environment, particularly in Kashmir, that our forces have to operate in.

In the present case of a suicide bomber jamming his explosive-laden SUV into a CRPF troop carrier which was part of a long convoy, several points are noteworthy. The attack occurred on the Jammu-Srinagar highway, which is the only major artery leading into the Valley. This is used by civilians as well as the security forces. To close off the highway whenever it is being used by security forces is simply not feasible. It would have an adverse impact on the state's economy. This compulsion created the opportunity for the explosive-laden SUV to drive alongside and jam into one of the CRPF vehicles. Could the troops have been moved by air instead? Yes, but this would have been a major expense and if included in the SOPs for the future, will necessitate a huge increase in the security budget.

There is talk of intelligence failure. Those familiar with intelligence work know that the agencies are inundated daily with a large volume of information picked up from human and electronic sources, including communication intercepts. Intelligence alerts may be issued on this basis but alerts are not the same as precise intelligence indicating the place, time and nature of a planned attack and who may be intending to carry it out. In the present case, too, there were vague 'alerts', but to allege intelligence failure because these alerts did not lead to apprehension of the attacker before he carried out his murderous attack, may be misleading.

The use of a suicide bomber for the operation, and that too, a local youth, is ominous. It represents a deliberate escalation and points to growing radicalisation of Kashmiri youth.

There is talk of intelligence failure. Those familiar with intelligence work know that the agencies are inundated daily with a large volume of information picked up from human and electronic sources, including communication intercepts. Intelligence alerts may be issued on this basis but alerts are not the same as precise intelligence indicating the place, time and nature of a planned attack and who may be intending to carry it out. In the present case, too, there were vague 'alerts', but to allege intelligence failure because these alerts did not lead to apprehension of the attacker before he carried out his murderous attack, may be misleading.

Being aware of the very real limitations, technical and political, under which security forces operate, one must be prepared to deal with a likely breach. Our reaction when that happens should be balanced and nuanced. Morale should not be undermined by the failure to prevent one such incident when many more successes have been achieved. Additional measures should be put in place but only after careful evaluation rather than as a knee-jerk reaction. Nor should additional measures put even more onerous restrictions on normal daily civilian life.

The deteriorating security situation in the Kashmir Valley cannot be delinked from the abdication of political responsibility by successive governments in Delhi. The security forces have repeatedly restored relative peace and stability enabling political processes to be activated and more enduring political solutions to be found. But each time, relative peace has only bred complacency in the political leadership creating the setting for renewed bouts of violence and local disaffection. In a highly polarised pre-election environment, political parties must not engage in a high-decibel blame game. They must come together to deal with what is a festering wound which could spread its toxin in the entire body politic.

What is happening in Kashmir and in other disturbed parts of India is only the more acute manifestation of a national malaise whose symptoms are rising communal, parochial and sectarian confrontations which

often erupt into brutal violence. While the state has to deal with such violence and restore safety and security, the only sustainable answer is addressing, through constitutionally-mandated political processes, underlying political, economic and social grievances that are drivers of these multiple mutinies. To treat each such manifestation as a law and order challenge is to enmesh the state in an action-reaction process where violence born out of disaffection and state suppression follow in mutually escalating and destructive steps.

Kashmir cannot be isolated from the rest of India and its alienated population brought to heel through imposition of ever stricter security measures. To accept this logic is to open the door to citizens in other parts of the country being subjected to the same oppression in the name of safeguarding the state if they express dissatisfaction and dissent.

The Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) based in Pakistan has claimed responsibility for the latest attack. There are already demands that Pakistan be punished for aiding and abetting the terrorist group in undertaking cross-border attacks against India. This could take the form of another round of "surgical strikes" and/or heavy artillery fire directed against Pakistani targets much like what we witnessed after the Uri terrorist attack.

There will be renewed attempts to mobilise international opinion against Pakistan on the terrorism issue, including by persuading China to withdraw its objection to declaring JeM leader Masood Azhar a global terrorist at the UN. We should bear in mind their failure so far to change the strategic calculus in Islamabad. Will more of the same work, and if significant military escalation is proposed, can the inevitable risks be contained and managed?

We must also acknowledge that external forces will continue to exploit the disturbed situation in Kashmir to undermine India's security. What we need is a strategy which takes into account both the domestic and external dimensions of the Kashmir issue. Unless a security perspective is accompanied by a willingness to use democratic political processes to chart a path towards normalcy in the state, the precious lives sacrificed by the security forces will continue to be in vain.

The writer is a former Foreign Secretary and currently Senior Fellow, CPR

RE-IMAGINING DELHI

Centre and Delhi government face-off must be addressed through a new idea of statehood

THE BATTLE OVER the legislative and executive control of the National Capital Territory of Delhi remains unresolved. The split verdict by a two-judge bench comprising Justices A K Sikri and Ashok Bhushan has, in essence, affirmed the power of the Union government (through the office of the lieutenant governor) over the elected state government on crucial matters: The Centre remains the cadre-controlling authority in Delhi and the Delhi Anti Corruption Branch cannot investigate central government officers. The two judges, however, differed on whether the state government can manage cadre below the rank of joint secretary and the matter will now be referred to a larger bench. Not surprisingly, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal expressed his displeasure at the verdict while the BJP celebrated it.

Part of the blame for the conflict and theatrics over governance in the capital lies with the current cast of political actors. The AAP has certainly been more shrill than its predecessors, choosing spectacle and agitation over quiet and patient negotiation. Equally, the Centre, through successive LGs and the home ministry, has tried to hobble a government with an impressive mandate using Delhi's constitutional peculiarity — it's legally a Union Territory with an elected government whose powers are circumscribed. But it is only through a mature politics that the root cause of the over-politicisation of governance, playing at least since 2015, must be addressed. The courts are limited by the letter of the law, by the contours of the distribution of powers laid down in the Constitution and previous judgments. What Delhi needs is a bold re-imagination of the skewed federal contract that currently determines its executive and legislative boundaries.

Since Independence, the National Capital Region has gone from being just the seat of power to a vibrant, growing city, its diversity enriched by waves of migration, its economy by industry and services. The tussle between the Centre and state, between the people and the law, can only be addressed through a new idea of statehood, one which recognises that sovereignty ultimately derives from the people. Delhi's exceptionalism, the power imbalance in favour of the Centre, emerges from the needs of a national capital — the seat of government and power, the nerve centre of administration. A mature discussion between stakeholders that looks beyond short-term political gains holds the potential to resolve the embedded contradiction. Both the current Union and Delhi governments enjoy impressive mandates. Unfortunately, instead of using their opportunity to bring in a much-needed redefinition of the division of powers, they have passed the buck to the courts.

WELCOME, REX

The first cricketer from Manipur to earn India U-19 stripes is an exciting addition to cricket firmament, paves way for others

THREE MONTHS AFTER he snaffled all 10 wickets in an innings against Arunachal Pradesh, 18-year-old left-seamer Rex Singh became the first cricketer from Manipur to earn the India U-19 stripes. A player from the Northeast taking baby steps in competitive cricket is an inspiring sight. It's a vindication of cricket's untapped potential in the region, hitherto a hub for combat-sports and football. The only cricket ground in Imphal is a ramshackle maidan. Rex, like most poster-boys from cricketing backwaters, emerged despite the system, not because of it.

Though the cricket board had initiated several grass-root programmes for the development of the sport in the region since the turn of this decade, Rex traced an uncharted route, shrugging off an unsuccessful taekwondo stint and embracing tennis-ball cricket before getting noticed by a neighbourhood cricket coach. Amidst strife and curfews, endemic to many Northeastern states, he was fascinated by the magical swerves and patterns of the hard, red leather ball. The rest of his game he developed watching YouTube videos. He was fortunate that his emergence coincided with the inclusion of his state in the Ranji Trophy, consequent to the board adopting Justice Lodha's recommendations.

Rex has busted the popular prejudice that the inclusion of newbies from a non-cricket playing region would dilute the competitiveness of the league. These players might not match or challenge the traditional cricketing powerhouses, in infrastructure, talent or the quality of the game, but exposure would only encourage talent. They must be allowed time to blossom. Now they have a poster boy to adore and emulate. The path from the Northeast to the Indian cricket team is no longer too long.



KHALED AHMED

ADIL AHMAD DAR, the 20-year-old school dropout who led the suicide attack at Pulwama in south Kashmir on February 14, was a Jaish-e-Muhammad "fedayee" warrior, trained for the job in the Valley. He was inspired by Burhan Muzaffar Wani, commander of a Kashmiri militant group Hizbul Mujahideen, earlier killed by the Indian army; and he was also inspired by the "defeat" of America at the hands of the Taliban.

One feared the inevitable: India will associate Pakistan with Dar and Jaish-e-Muhammad, the terrorist organisation that Pakistan stupidly allows to survive in Bahawalpur, south Punjab. A lot of anti-Pakistan rage will be manufactured in India after assuming that Dar actually crossed over into Pakistan, took instructions and money from the ISI. Indian commentator Rahul Bedi's comment came as a relief, reminding India and Pakistan to take joint action instead of getting into another war of words: "Most militants in Kashmir are now homegrown."

Jaish-e-Muhammad is banned in Pakistan but its leader, Masood Azhar, is allowed to live in peace in his hometown, in his madrasa Usman-o-Ali, Bahawalpur. His terrorist group was earlier called Harkatul Mujahideen, associated closely with Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda. It became Jaish after an internal division. "Maulana" Masood Azhar had the ability

A LOOMING CRISIS

Pakistanis are sick of so-called mujahideen and want India, Pakistan to cooperate

to raise funds all over the world. In 1993, al Qaeda was involved in the killing of 24 Pakistani soldiers in Somalia while performing duties under the UN auspices, about which Osama bin Laden was to boast later. While in disguise in India — and up to no good in Kashmir — Azhar was captured in 1994.

In 1999, an Indian civilian aircraft was hijacked after take-off from Nepal by a group of terrorists led by Azhar's brother, Ibrahim. The plane was taken to Afghanistan where the Taliban government, recognised by Pakistan, arranged for a swap of Indian passengers with the two al Qaeda terrorists, Umar Sheikh and Masood Azhar. After their release, both came to Pakistan and began operating freely. Sheikh, now in a jail in Hyderabad Sindh, came to Lahore, and Azhar went to the most powerful seminary in Pakistan, Jamia Binoria in Karachi, from where he issued threatening statements against President Pervez Musharraf.

Azhar damaged Musharraf more effectively after 9/11 when he attacked the Indian Parliament and caused a military stand-off between Pakistan and India that lasted almost a year. He was put under house arrest in his hometown, from where he had a way of vanishing from time to time. In 2009, according to a report published in London's *The Telegraph*, Jaish-e-Muhammad had acquired

a 4.5-acre compound outside Bahawalpur in addition to the madrasa Usman-o-Ali inside the city. While local authorities acknowledged that Jaish had spread out of the city, they denied that the new acquisition was anything more than a cattle farm.

In February 2014, Pakistan decided to break the unspoken embargo Azhar's movement and got him out of his ISI-protected madrasa to speak to a public gathering of thousands in Muzaffarabad. His job was to castigate India for unfairly killing Afzal Guru, a "freedom-fighter" hanged in India for allegedly helping Jaish mount an attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001.

Most Pakistanis are tired of the so-called mujahideen and want India and Pakistan to cooperate instead of notching up bilateral terrorism, India feeling righteous about the Jaish threat and Pakistan preening on having captured RAW agent Kulbhushan Jadhav "red-handed". Even if it wants to, India will not listen to good sense before the polls and Pakistan will be the hobby horse to beat up on. And Pakistan, economically belly-up and subliminally dying to "normalise" through the Kartarpur corridor, will go on mysteriously tolerating terrorists on its soil who kill its children.

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan



FEBRUARY 16, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIA-CHINA TALKS
THE CHINESE FOREIGN minister, Huang Hua, will visit New Delhi this year to continue discussions on the border and other issues. Indian pilgrims may be allowed to visit Mansarovar and Kailash because the Chinese have agreed to consider an Indian proposal on these lines. Chinese leaders have confirmed a hands-off policy as far as the problems of the Nagas and the Mizos is concerned. Throughout the three rounds of talks with India's foreign minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in Peking totalling nearly eight hours, Huang did not make any negative reference to India's relations with the Soviet Union.

AFGHAN CRISIS
THE US STATE Department said that Soviet advisers present at the Kabul Hotel where the US Ambassador to Afghanistan was killed "failed to heed repeated requests" by US officials that force should not be used against the kidnappers. The acting Secretary of State Warren Christopher summoned the Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin to the department to "express in the strongest terms the shock of the US government" over the alleged Soviet role in the death of Ambassador Adolph Dubs. Dubs was killed by his four kidnappers when the police charged into the hotel room, reportedly after officers fired automatic weapons.

UP CM QUILTS
UP CHIEF MINISTER Ram Naresh Yadav resigned after losing the confidence of the Janata legislature party. He resigned after receiving instructions from Deputy Prime Minister Charan Singh. Yadav said there could be no compromise or cooperation with such communal organisations as the RSS.

JANATA PREZ ON UP
JANATA PRESIDENT CHANDRA Shekhar said every effort would be made to have a person acceptable to all sections as leader of the UP Janata legislature party. The election of Ram Naresh Yadav's successor should not be on the basis of group alliances, he added.



15 THE IDEAS PAGE

J&K and the AfPak hyphen

US-Taliban engagement in Afghanistan has emboldened groups like Jaish and Lashkar-e-Taiba. The jihadist project has also been helped by the political vacuum in the Valley



NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

IN 2008, CANDIDATE Barack Obama angered India by suggesting that the road to peace in Afghanistan ran through Kashmir. He made the case in several interviews before his election as US President that if India and Pakistan would only resolve their differences, the Pakistan army would be more inclined to heed the American call to go after its assets in Afghanistan. Some months later, when President Obama appointed Richard Holbrooke as the Special Envoy for India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, India lobbied with determination to keep itself from being hyphenated with Af-Pak, and succeeded in keeping itself out of Holbrooke's mandate.

Almost exactly a decade later, as security experts piece together Thursday's devastating suicide attack on a CRPF convoy at Awantipora on the Jammu-Srinagar highway, it appears as if that hyphenation may have returned to haunt India, albeit in a different way.

In a pre-recorded video released by Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), the group that claimed responsibility for the attack, the Kashmiri youth at the wheel of the car bomb seemed to suggest that he had been inspired by the "success" of the Taliban over US forces in Afghanistan. Reports in this paper have shown that even before the US began pushing a peace deal with the Taliban, three years ago, youth in South Kashmir spoke of how the Taliban's "victory" over US forces had showed them that they too could "defeat India". As the US-Taliban engagement gathers pace, and Pakistan claims bragging rights for bringing them together, the emboldening of the jihadist project in Kashmir, and of Pakistan-based fellow travellers of the Afghan Taliban such as JeM and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), is something India has to be ready for.

The links between the JeM and the Taliban are well-known. On October 2001, when the JeM was listed under UNSC 1267, the reasons given were that it was "participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing or perpetrating of acts or activities by, with, under the name of, on behalf or in support of, supplying, selling or transferring arms and related materiel to or otherwise supporting acts or activities of al-Qaida, Usama bin Laden and the Taliban". According to the UNSC, al Qaeda, Taliban and other extremist organisations provided finances to Maulana Masood Azhar to set up the JeM. As a member of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Azhar had also fought in the first Afghan war, and the JeM is believed to have participated in Taliban operations against US forces.

After it came into existence in 2000, it was active in the Kashmir Valley for a couple of years, and in 2001 carried out a massive suicide attack with a car bomb, similar to Thursday's strike, at the Jammu & Kashmir assembly. But the JeM lost favour with the Pakistan army, which was under US pressure after 9/11, and the group then turned against its patrons, twice even attempting to assassinate then military ruler General Pervez Musharraf.

Its comeback to the Valley in 2015 coincided with the taking shape of a new, indige-



C R Sasikumar

nous militancy in J&K, which had its origins in the 2008 Amarnath land row, followed by the 2010 anti-Machil protests, and the 2012 hanging of Afzal Guru. Its operations since then have included the terrorist strike at Pathankot Air Force base and the attack on the Uri Brigade headquarters. The unrest in the Valley since the 2016 killing of Hizbul Mujahideen militant, Burhan Wani, gave the JeM the foothold it had been looking for since 2001. Some of the confidence and triumph of the Taliban, which is hoping to make a comeback in Kabul by the middle of this year, is sure to rub off on its friend JeM as well as the LeT.

At this moment, it is all too easy for politicians to demand and promise revenge against Pakistan, but any military adventurism could have unforeseen, unintended consequences. The post-Uri surgical strike exposed the military limitations of that particular instrument. It brought no positive changes. Instead, the LoC remained hot, and Indian civilians and soldiers continued to die. Any military operation would have to go beyond the surgical strike, even for political optics, and it may still not achieve any strategic objectives. Worse, it may spin out of control. What worked in the government's favour in September 2016 was that Pakistan chose not to respond militarily. In fact, it even denied there had been any military operation of the kind that the Indian Army announced it had undertaken across the Line of Control. It may not be the same again.

What India still has is the moral ground against a state that is addicted to the use of terrorist groups as proxies against its neighbours. A day before the attack in Awantipora, there was an almost identical attack in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province, which borders Afghanistan and Pakistan's Balochistan province. A suicide bomber drove a car loaded with explosives into a bus carrying troops of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) near the provincial capital Zahedan, close to the Pakistan border. The attack killed 27 troops and injured a dozen other troops of the elite IRGC, close to

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the Iran-Pakistan border. The Jaish al-Adl, a successor to the anti-Iran Jundullah, claimed responsibility for the attack.

There is no overt link between the two attacks except their striking similarity. But both the JuA and JeM are Sunni extremist groups. Both are based in Pakistan. Both have flourished in the same enabling ecosystem provided by the Pakistan army. The Indian security establishment even believes that the JuA is a front of the LeT. While Iran blamed the US and its allies for the attack, it also asked Pakistan to stop sheltering the JuA. In a thinly veiled statement after the attack, the Iranian foreign ministry said the group "receives military, financial and intellectual support from certain regional states", hinting both at Saudi and Pakistan backing for the group, while the IRGC commander was more open in his call to Pakistan to shut down the group.

Whether or not the government succeeds in getting China to shed its opposition to listing Masood Azhar under UNSC 1267, and achieves its stated goal of "isolating" Pakistan internationally, what India needs to do more urgently is to acknowledge that it has failed in Kashmir, that the situation in Kashmir is much worse than it was in 2014-15. Not just because of terrorists, with or without help from Pakistan. It is so because despite being in the ruling coalition in Jammu & Kashmir, the BJP and the Modi government refused to engage with Kashmir, creating a political vacuum in the Valley. Leading lights of the BJP as well as some security experts bragged that the situation in the 1990s was so much worse that bringing the present crisis under control was going to be a walk in the park. "A three-and-a-half district militancy", they called it. It is painfully obvious now that this is not the case. Clearly, something else is required if Kashmir is not to get hyphenated with Afpak. And it is not the security forces who can provide that something to pull the Valley back from the abyss.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"More than most countries, Pakistan knows full well the wages of extremism."

—DAWN

Rash U-turns, half-baked plans

Social policy is in danger of getting lost in electoral histrionics



JEAN DRÈZE

AS THE COUNTRY inches towards parliamentary elections, a deep confusion pervades the realm of social policy. When the Narendra Modi government came to power five years ago, there were high expectations of a rollback in welfare schemes. The previous government, so went the story, had gone overboard with social spending, and Modi would set this right. In fact, the UPA government had only initiated a much-needed revamping of India's underdeveloped social sector, with some important results (as we learnt later from the fourth National Family Health Survey and other sources). But corporate-sponsored think tanks, generally hostile to social spending, preferred to argue that it was time to rein in the welfare state.

Until recently, the Modi government seemed to abide by that script. It showed little interest in social policy during the last five years. The 2015-16 Union Budget gave dramatic expression to this indifference, with deep cuts in allocations for many social programmes. True, these could be partly justified on the grounds that the states were receiving a higher share of the indivisible pool of taxes. But the cuts went further, and the axe fell particularly heavily on children, with initial cuts of around 36 per cent and 50 per cent for midday meals and the Integrated Child Development Services respectively. When I asked a very senior finance ministry official, one year later, how this happened, he first said that he was not aware of it and then explained that the cuts had been made at the last minute, without paying much attention to the details. This speaks volumes.

There are many other examples of the indifference if not hostility of the central government to social policy in the last five years. Maternity entitlements, a legal right of all Indian women (except those already covered in the formal sector) under the National Food Security Act 2013, were ignored for years and are brazenly violated to this day. The rights of workers employed under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act have also been undermined by budget crunches, erratic wage payments and the vagaries of technocracy. The central government's contribution to social security pensions for the elderly has been frozen at a measly Rs 200 per month, despite repeated appeals for more from 60 eminent economists, among others. With the partial exception of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, there have been no major initiatives in the social sector in the last five years. Most of the government's efforts have gone into promoting Aadhaar and saving money rather than protecting people's entitlements.

However, the NDA government seems to be changing gear if not making a U-turn. Suddenly, it has rediscovered that millions of poor people in India desperately need public support for their survival and wellbeing. As a starter, the government announced a grand health insurance scheme, Pradhan

Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, which claims to cover up to Rs 5 lakh of health expenditure every year for 10 crore families. It is another matter that this is actually a hospitalisation insurance scheme, with a tiny budget. In the same vein, the finance minister recently announced a mega scheme for contributory pensions in the informal sector. Here again, the claims and promises are out of gear with actual budget commitments (just Rs 500 crore for now), but they could serve the real purpose — winning votes. Meanwhile, the budget for non-contributory pensions for widows and the elderly was quietly reduced by more than Rs 600 crore.

The finance minister did allocate big money (Rs 75,000 crore) for the new scheme of direct cash transfers to farmers. This is the most tangible sign of the NDA government's U-turn on social policy. Perhaps the scheme is better than nothing — the poor in India do need income support and this is one way of going about it. But is this the best way? Quite likely, many well-off farmers (or business owners who also happen to have a little land) will take advantage of the scheme while many vulnerable groups, starting with landless labourers, are left out.

The net result of this pre-electoral frenzy is an ill-thought assortment of second-rate social programmes. The Opposition parties, alas, are adding to the confusion. The Congress, in particular, seems to be committing itself to a very strange "minimum income guarantee" scheme. The idea, according to statements from Rahul Gandhi and P Chidambaram, is that if you earn less than the minimum income, the government will pay the difference. This makes no sense. For one thing, it is wholly impractical — how is the government supposed to estimate this income gap, household-wise? For another, it would mean that anyone who earns less than the minimum income might as well give up working, since the government is supposed to fill the gap anyway.

According to some media reports, this odd idea has the support of top development economists such as Angus Deaton, Thomas Piketty and Abhijit Banerjee. This is just hot air. On further enquiry, it turns out that none of them are backing a specific proposal, sympathetic as they certainly are to various forms of income and wealth redistribution in India.

Meanwhile, no major political party has proposed bold initiatives in the fields of health and education. These are just as important as income support. In fact, India desperately needs a big national initiative for universal quality education. This is essential not only to help people out of poverty but also to deal with the country's oppressive web of economic and social inequalities. A leap towards universal healthcare, going well beyond the histrionics of Ayushman Bharat, is long overdue.

It is good both the government and the Opposition are sparing a thought for the poor. But the current scramble to win their votes is in danger of breeding half-baked plans and expensive stunts. What India needs is a well-thought out effort to consolidate the foundations of a lasting social security system.

The writer is visiting professor at the Department of Economics, Ranchi University

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SHOCK CIRCUIT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The nation mourns' (IE, February 15). The Pulwama terror attack proves beyond any doubt that the surgical strikes across the LOC to avenge the Uri Army Base attack has not deterred terrorists. It had little impact on the ground in the Valley, particularly in south Kashmir. In fact, by announcing the surgical strikes to the whole world, we got no appreciation from the global community — it only equated India with Pakistan for violations across the border instead. The Modi government should have carried on conducting surgical strikes and also denying them at the same time — which is precisely what the ISI is doing. **P L Singh, Amritsar**

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The nation mourns' (IE, February 15). At this crucial juncture, we should exercise patience and restraint. The Pulwama terror attack is a heinous crime and the perpetrators must be punished after prudent preparation. All national and regional parties should cooperate to chart further course of action. **Subhash Vaid, Noida**

BLURRED LINES

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Crossing the Laxman Rekha' (IE, February 15). At a time when standards of public discourse hit a new low every alternate day, this article endeavours to draw a line between acceptable and unaccept-

LETTER OF THE WEEK

POPE'S WAY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'When the road darkens' (IE, February 9). Pope Francis's acknowledgment of the sexual offence charges against the Church is a positive sign for Christianity. Whenever any wrong happens, the best way to deal with it is to accept mistakes and take corrective actions. Cover-ups do injustice to victims and the religion. **Nishant Parashar, Chandigarh**

able talk in public life. Over the last decade, political debate in India has been reduced to rhetoric, mudslinging and personal insinuations. Reading this article reminded me of a debate in Parliament in the mid-90s. It was a verbal duel between the then PM Narasimha Rao, and leader of Opposition and BJP patriarch, Atal Bihari Vajpayee. They also represented two different ideologies. However, the political debate between the two was witty and loaded with information. Above all, one gave space and respect to the other's viewpoint. Compare this with the language used by political leaders now.

Rishi Kaushik, Jamshedpur

Reconciliation with honour

What Ayodhya needs now is healing, not compromise



RAJMOHAN GANDHI

WHILE APPRECIATING FRIEND Apoorvanand's strictures ('A rotten compromise', IE, February 6) following my suggestion ('A new temple, a new mosque', IE, February 6) for a possible settlement in Ayodhya, and welcoming his comment as a valuable contribution to a necessary debate, I must also respond frankly to him.

Let me reproduce, word for word, the core suggestion which I had advanced in the context of the Supreme Court readying itself to hear Ayodhya's land-title dispute: "The bare bones of a settlement are not hard to identify. One, the Hindu side admits the error in demolishing the mosque. Two, the Indian state admits its failure to prevent the demolition. Three, the Muslim side acknowledges the Hindu community's wish to see a Ram temple rise on the site as also the Hindu community's belief that a temple had once stood where the Babri Masjid was built. Four, not far from the site, and yet not too close to it, space for a new mosque is made available by the Hindu side and the Indian state. If necessary, the four steps can be simultaneous. In this dream-like scenario, acknowledgment of wrongdoing and restitution leads to justice as well as reconciliation... Will Ayodhya's disputing sides voluntarily come together as I have imag-

ined? Very unlikely. But the Supreme Court can direct them to do so."

To the question that has been asked — which (or what) is the Hindu side or the Muslim side that I speak of — the answer is at two levels. For the Supreme Court, the Hindu and Muslim disputants before it would represent the two sides. In the nation generally, those Hindus who want a temple constructed at the site where the mosque had stood until 1992 represent "the Hindu side" in the dispute, and those Muslims who want a mosque rebuilt on the site represent "the Muslim side".

I recognise that a great many Hindus and Muslims in the land would agree to any settlement irrespective of where a temple or mosque is built or rebuilt, but it is the divide between the Hindu and Muslim "sides" as defined above that needs to be bridged.

An impossible goal? Perhaps. But not more impossible than the other aims that are routinely discussed — for example ending pollution, corruption, hunger and disease.

It should be noted that the word "compromise" was not used in my proposal, neither in the lines reproduced above nor elsewhere. The word "settlement" was employed, as also the phrase "acknowledg-

ment of wrongdoing and restitution". Equally importantly in my proposal is that the state would be a key party to a settlement and to the acknowledgment of wrongdoing and restitution.

Once the state, which would include the central government and the UP government, makes the proposed acknowledgment and restitution, it would simultaneously reaffirm its commitment to prevent a reenactment anywhere (in Mathura, Kashi or anywhere else) of what happened in Ayodhya in December 1992.

By making the proposed acknowledgment, the state would underline and reiterate India's Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act 1991 which "prohibits conversion of any place of worship" and "provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947". It is well known that only the disputed Ayodhya site was left out of the purview of the 1991 Act.

Acknowledgment of wrongdoing is never easy. Nor is it necessarily fruitless. A Hindu litigant admitting to the Supreme Court, "What was done in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 was wrong", would be a significant statement and could contribute to a better climate in the land.

The state acknowledging that it failed to prevent the tragedy in 1992 would also not be easy. Yet that could send a critically important message to future rulers. And the state and the Hindu side joining hands in finding adequate space for a new mosque could, God willing, turn out to be healing steps of restitution.

For the Muslim side to let go of the disputed (and despoiled) site would be very hard. Apoorvanand is perfectly right in stating that an honourable compromise is one where the stronger side yields to the weaker. But the need of the hour may not be compromise so much as healing.

I am not so naive as to think that my proposal will be accepted by Ayodhya's disputants, or by the two "sides" in the nation as I have tried to define them, or to imagine that the Supreme Court will give my suggestion serious attention.

But some individuals may perhaps ask themselves whether, as I put it in my article, it is impossible for a nation to come together to address the past's mistakes.

The writer, a grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, is research professor at the Centre for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



Terrible Thursday

As investigations into the Pulwama attack begin, Pakistan must act against the Jaish

As India mourns the death of 40 CRPF personnel in Thursday’s terrorist strike in Jammu and Kashmir’s Pulwama district, it is clear that the attack was meant to provoke. The Jaish-e-Mohammed, the Pakistan-based terrorist organisation which has orchestrated numerous strikes in the Kashmir Valley, has taken responsibility for what is now the highest toll of security forces in any attack in the State. Investigations should yield a better picture, but it is a matter of extreme concern that a suicide bomber could time his attack to hit a security convoy. There is no question that Pakistan bears the onus to explain why Masood Azhar, the leader of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, enjoys such freedoms on its territory, if not outright support from the establishment. Certainly, diplomatic backing by Pakistan and China has been crucial in defeating efforts at the United Nations to put Azhar on the list of banned terrorists. Early details indicate that a sports utility vehicle laden with a huge quantity of explosives targeted the convoy of 78 buses carrying about 2,500 soldiers from Jammu to Kashmir. The video of the presumed suicide bomber too hints at an altered standard operating procedure meant to provoke and escalate tensions. Forensics teams have already begun work and answers to the disturbing questions the attack has raised on intelligence gathering, dissemination and coordination in the Valley must be pieced together.

However, if the terrorists have acted from an updated playbook, New Delhi’s response must not play into their plans with reflexive and precipitate official action. India has withdrawn the Most Favoured Nation status to Pakistan in a signal that it will not wait for preliminaries in the effort to isolate Pakistan. Coercive diplomacy is likely to continue, but to be effective the effort needs a wider net, especially at a time when the U.S. is seeking Pakistan’s help in firming up a deal with the Afghan Taliban. Beijing too must not, and cannot, evade questions about its previous blocking of action at the UN, specifically against Azhar. Post-Uri, after terrorist attacks the air is always thick with calls for retributive cross-border strikes. The past history of limited, if any, returns from such precipitate action must serve as a cautionary check. Instead, the effort must be to isolate Pakistan for its support to the Jaish and seek substantive action, to effectively upgrade intelligence and plug security gaps, and to win the confidence of the local population in the Valley. Thursday’s attack was meant to provoke and polarise the country. New Delhi’s response must, instead, be to isolate the perpetrators and keep the peace on Indian territory.

Forever president

Sisi stands to extend his reign if Egypt’s draft constitutional changes go through

Egypt’s proposed constitutional changes to extend presidential terms are a huge setback to the country’s democratic progress. Re-elected last year, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the military leader who seized power in 2013, would be allowed to begin afresh a six-year term in 2022 under the new amendments. Another provision envisages a political role for the military as a guardian of the Constitution. Thursday’s parliamentary vote initiating these changes will have to be ratified in a popular referendum, but few doubt the establishment’s capacity to secure it. The 2018 general elections were held without a serious challenger to Mr. Sisi, whose rival was in effect handpicked by the regime after other contenders were forced to quit the race. The economy has returned to a growth trajectory following an International Monetary Fund loan in 2016, in exchange for cuts in public subsidies. But soaring prices and double-digit unemployment have dimmed the government’s overall appeal. In the past five years, the popular upsurge that began with the overthrow of the three-decade-long autocratic rule of Hosni Mubarak in 2011 has subsided. The military crackdown has vengefully targeted Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood government of former President Mohamed Morsi, who has since been convicted. The media and political activists anxious to consolidate the gains from the 2011 Tahrir Square mass protests have not been spared the authorities’ wrath either.

Egypt had begun nominal attempts at ushering in a multi-party system in 2005, when Mr. Mubarak got himself elected for a fifth term. But within a few months, he declared himself President for life. Attempts to switch to popular representative government in the latter part of his tenure were merely cosmetic. Within years, in 2011, followed the mass protests that demanded the overthrow of the Mubarak regime and formed the epicentre of the ‘Arab Spring’. Today, events have turned a full circle under Mr. Sisi’s firm grip on the levers of power. The military has been never so powerful since the rule of Gamal Abdel Nasser. As with several autocrats today, the Egyptian leader has leveraged the American and the Russian governments effectively, while they seem indifferent to the military’s excesses. Egypt similarly benefits from the strategic partnership it signed with China, bringing trade flows and investment. But above all, China’s politically hands-off approach is a win-win for both regimes. While such diversification may be smart diplomacy, it begs the question about Cairo’s long-standing position as the leader of the Arab world. There is a simmering anger among sections of the youth contending with unemployment and the absence of avenues for dissent. The Arab Spring is nearly a decade behind, but the conditions that brought the multitudes to Tahrir Square still prevail.

Hindutva 2.0 is in crisis

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s winning formula of 2014 is under severe stress; can he refresh it?



VARGHESE K. GEORGE

A month ago, on January 18, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) general secretary Bhaiyyaji Joshi said in Nagpur: “When the temple will get constructed on Ram Janmabhoomi in 2025, this progress (of India) will gather further momentum... Once the Ayodhya temple is built, the country will gain the capital required for the next 150 years.”

The idea that the construction of a controversial temple at the site of a demolished mosque can lead to the formation of capital in the country could be intriguing for the uninitiated. For the proponents of Hindutva, however, this notion is integral to their idea of development and progress. The proposition is that an aggressive assertion of the collective Hindu identity is an essential precondition for India’s development. This is a point that pro-market supporters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi self-deceptively overlooked ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, though he himself had made his position clear. Asked whether he was “pro-business” or a “Hindu nationalist,” he said in 2013: “There’s no contradiction between the two. It’s one and the same image.”

Three contradictions

While this has been a core component of Hindutva thought for decades, it was Mr. Modi’s reign in Gujarat that made it acceptable, and popular. If enough people still thought Mr. Modi’s 2014 campaign was jettisoning Hindutva for deve-

lopment, it was convenient for him.

Hindutva politics over the years had suffered from three inherent contradictions that stunted its growth: friction between pro-market segments and Hindu traditionalists in the Indian right wing; contradictory requirements of the centralised, disciplinarian, ideologically rigid core of the RSS and building a mass mobilisation through a political wing; and consolidating a Hindu vote bank among a people hierarchically and oppressively divided by the caste system.

Mr. Modi’s innovation to Hindutva politics since 2002 has been in reconciling these three contradictions in a sufficient measure, initially in Gujarat and then in other parts of the country to win a Lok Sabha majority in 2014. That is Hindutva 2.0 – where material progress is married to a religious social agenda; disciplined organisation and mass mobilisation are balanced; and the lower rungs in the caste hierarchy are enlisted as part of an omnibus Hindu identity in which they are offered social acceptance and political representation. All these factors that worked in Mr. Modi’s favour are now unravelling, and Hindutva 2.0 is in crisis.

The circle that admirably described Mr. Modi as pro-market has shrunk very fast, and most of those who still call him so do it derisively, often accusing him of having promoted crony capitalism, and failing to deliver on job creation. Those who spoke of his managerial skills, many as a cover to mask their own bigotry, are now disappointed over the government’s handling of the economy, especially demonetisation and poor implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). They may



not be cheering for anyone else, but they are no longer saying Mr. Modi is the saviour.

On the other hand, the religious right is happy. They have pushed the temple agenda to the back-burner with a new deadline of 2025, giving Mr. Modi breathing space, and have begun to rally forces behind his 2019 campaign. Yet, the marriage of material prosperity and religious nationalism is not exactly made in heaven, and is teetering.

Caste break-up

Enrolment of a critical mass of Dalits and backward caste populations into the Hindutva politics that is widely perceived as a project for the nourishment of upper caste dominance was Hindutva 2.0’s second success. Mr. Modi presented himself as a lower caste leader and sought to appropriate Dalit and backward caste figures ranging from B.R. Ambedkar, Sree Narayana Guru to Ayyankali and even Mata Amritanandamayi into his politics. The idea of Hindutva is based on the premise that there is a collective interest for the community common to all caste groups. Given the social, economic, linguistic, cultural diversities within Hindus, a common thread that could unite them all is the image of a common enemy. Cow protection has been the convenient

Heralding a new dawn

India and Saudi Arabia are poised to dramatically deepen the bilateral relationship



SAUD AL-SATI

In April 2016, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gave itself a goal and a promise in the form of Vision 2030. The Saudi citizen has become the focal point for sustainable development with massive projects directed towards building a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation. The entire foundation of our Kingdom’s economy is being transformed towards a post-oil age with the aim of attracting \$427 billion in private investments over the next decade to diversify the economy and create 1.6 million new jobs through the National Industrial Development and Logistics Programme.

Powered by reforms

According to World Bank’s ‘Doing Business 2018’ report, Saudi Arabia has instituted the largest number of business reforms among countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as of July 2017. With its platform Meras, starting a business in the Kingdom now requires only one step and one day! The single-window platform Fasah has also been

launched for customs clearance and import and export procedures. The ‘Doing Business 2019’ report has ranked Saudi Arabia as the fourth-largest reformer within the G20. In 2018, Saudi Arabia saw foreign direct investment rise by 127% year-on-year. Global confidence in Saudi Arabia’s ascent has further solidified with the International Monetary Fund forecasting increased growth for Saudi Arabia in July 2018.

The Kingdom’s construction market is set to touch \$96.52 billion in 2025, up from \$45.33 billion in 2016. There are three mega-projects underway – smart city project Neom, Qiddiya entertainment city and the Red Sea Tourism Project. In 2018, we also launched FekraTech, a national initiative for digital ideas, aimed at making Saudi Arabia a global innovation hub. The Saudi Intellectual Property Authority is also working towards transforming Saudi Arabia into an advanced knowledge-based economy built on innovation and entrepreneurship.

A \$100 billion planned investment in transport projects will also occur over the next decade as we expand the railway system and introduce new light rail mass transit projects in Riyadh, Jeddah, Makkah and Madinah. The grand expansions of the Holy Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet’s Mosque in Madinah have increased their capacity for accommodating millions of worshippers. One of the most important goals of the Vision 2030 is to increase our capacity to welcome 30 million Umrah per-



formers every year by 2030, improve their experience and enrich it further.

Since a majority of the Kingdom’s population is below the age of 30, education is a key component of Vision 2030. Over the decades, Saudi Arabia’s education system has gone through an astonishing transformation. Due to generous scholarships from the Kingdom, a large number of Saudi students study overseas. By 2030, the Kingdom intends to have at least five Saudi universities among the top 200 in international rankings. Education reforms have also led to an increase in women’s literacy and participation in the workforce.

With the Kingdom at the heart of the Arab and Islamic world, the changes taking place on the Saudi soil are creating positive influences for the entire Arab region. Saudi Arabia remains committed to the social, economic and political stability of the region and will continue playing a leading role in countering terrorism and establishing peace as demonstrated by the Kingdom’s contribution towards

tool here. In the 2015 Bihar elections, Mr. Modi urged Yadavs to not vote for Lalu Prasad, who he said was insulting the cow-worshipping community by supporting beef eating. In his home State of Gujarat it was ‘white revolution,’ and cow protection, while in Bihar it was pink revolution, or a proliferation of slaughter houses, he said.

But the same cow protection that helped Hindu unity soon enough fractured it as Dalits became targets of vigilantes. “If you want to attack, attack me, not the Dalits. If you want to shoot, shoot me, not the Dalits,” Mr. Modi said in August 2016, as instances of cow vigilante attacks on Dalits increased. Moreover, the gravest impact of the collapse of livestock economy is in States where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) did well in 2014, and within them, on backward castes and Dalits.

While Hindutva 2.0 offered a lot of rousing rhetoric for Dalits and backwards as quoted above, it also demonstrated an unprecedented hostility towards autonomous lower caste mobilisations. Brazenly partisan police action and the continuing police oppression of Dalit groups which organised protests, such as at Bhima Koregaon in January 2018, are signs of this intolerance of lower caste mobilisation against the Hindu right. The BJP governments in power also emboldened sections of the upper castes to seek to recapture the space lost to lower caste politics in earlier years.

The policy impact of the Modi government, ranging from the overall underperformance of welfare schemes for the Dalits, and the recently announced reservation for economically backward upper castes, is yet another source of friction. Pursuit of unity without

questioning caste hierarchy is vintage RSS, but is not very attractive to the majority among the Hindus. These contradictions are showing in regions where the BJP did well in 2014.

The iron grip of the RSS on the BJP, and the former’s search for ideological purity have not only contributed to constant friction between the two, but historically also limited the electoral successes of Hindutva. For instance, while the RSS did not entirely trust Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was often accused of being a closet Nehruvian, the more ideologically pure BJP leaders did not have any significant mass appeal. With Mr. Modi at the helm, Hindutva 2.0 overcame this dilemma, combining mass appeal and uncompromising Hindutva credentials in his persona. The synergy between the RSS and the BJP has never been stronger than its is today. But this disciplined march towards the goal of a Hindu Rashtra under the command of a ‘strong leader’ has created a new friction within. BJP legislators, Ministers and leaders who feel suffocated and powerless, despite being technically part of the ruling dispensation, now have a limited stake in Mr. Modi’s continuation in power. A large number of sitting members of the Lok Sabha are likely to be denied tickets in 2019, if Mr. Modi continues on the ‘Gujarat model’ for beating anti-incumbency.

None of this is hidden from Mr. Modi and his tactician, BJP president Amit Shah, and they are bound to seek measures to reverse these trends. The extent of their success remains an open question. What is, however, clear is that the three critical components of Hindutva 2.0 are under severe stress.

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the historic peace accord signed between Ethiopia and Eritrea in Riyadh in 2018. We continue to stand by our Yemeni brothers and support the Palestinian cause. Our dream is of a peaceful, progressive and a prosperous world.

In our common pursuit for development and stability, Saudi Arabia sees India as an important partner. Our ties trace their roots to the third millennium BC. Trade, science, arts, literature, languages – the exchanges between our civilisations have indeed been profound. India holds a special place for us. Nearly 3 million Indians form the largest expatriate community in the Kingdom. India has also seen its Haj quota of 1,36,020 increase consecutively during the last two years to a record 1,75,025.

India and Saudi Arabia have more opportunities today to tap into than ever before. The bilateral trade for 2017-18, in excess of \$27 billion, will accelerate as Saudi Arabia and India engage in a host of new areas such as information and communications technology (ICT), health care, defence, biotechnology, education and infrastructure among others. India is one of the top countries on the Kingdom’s preferred list with great potential for investment in organic and food processing industries.

Expanding cooperation

The energy partnership between the two countries is also finding new grounds. As of October 2018, Saudi Aramco has nearly \$2 billion in material-service sourcing with Indian companies, and investing

in India’s value chain from oil supply, marketing and refining to petrochemicals and lubricants is a key part of its global downstream strategy. The \$44 billion integrated refinery and petrochemicals complex at Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, being jointly developed by Saudi Aramco, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and a consortium of Indian public sector units (PSUs) consisting of Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), is yet another milestone.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2018 on the sidelines of the G20 summit and both sides agreed to set up a high-level mechanism to boost concrete actions in terms of investment, technology and manufacturing across various sectors.

As formidable economies of MENA and Asia, Saudi Arabia and India have a historic opportunity to collaborate in shaping the future of our regions, for a better tomorrow full of prosperity and promise. Combining our respective strengths will pave the way for endless possibilities and accomplishments for the benefit of our two peoples and the region. The forthcoming state visit of the Crown Prince to India presents another historic opportunity to expand collaboration between our two friendly nations.

Saud Al-Sati is Saudi Arabia’s Ambassador to India

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.

Carnage in Kashmir

It is saddening that paramilitary personnel were caught unawares despite surveillance and close monitoring (Page 1, “37 CRPF men killed in J&K suicide attack”, February 15). Neither Governor’s rule nor President’s rule appear to have resulted in any significant change in the State of Jammu and Kashmir as far as curbing terrorism is concerned. The people in the State seem to have no hope of peace. Eliminating terrorists is going to be difficult as terror elements appear to be working in isolation.

N. VISVESWARAN,
Chennai

■ Evidence points to security and intelligence lapses. Where were the explosives

sourced from? It is time the international community came together and pledged to root out terror or act against terror centres.

SACHIN V.K. JADHAV,
Lakhala, Washim, Maharashtra

■ If there is incontrovertible proof of terror outfits being involved, India should step up its efforts to have in place a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. This must be at the level of the United Nations. Reports of Kashmiri youth now being a part of terror are deeply disturbing. Sincere efforts should be made to bring them back to the mainstream.

P. ALARMELMANGAI,
Palani, Tamil Nadu

■ It is unfortunate that even after being admonished

publicly and warned of surgical strikes for any form of outrageous aggression, the forces backing terror have not mended their ways. The incident has also brought to light the vulnerabilities in India’s counter-terrorism defences against fidayeen attacks. Lawmakers must address the lack of an institutional arrangement for the management of India’s counter-terrorism response. The country can ill-afford a loss of precious lives at the hands of a few extremist forces.

SHREYANS JAIN,
New Delhi

■ One is at a loss for words and one’s heart goes to the families of all those who have lost their lives. Defence officials must now ensure a calibrated response so that

anti-India elements do not dare to touch Indian soil.

DEBASISH BARUAH,
Kohora, Kaziranga, Assam

■ One fears that people in the Valley will suffer for a terrible crime perpetrated by a few. Of course passions are high and cries of “blood for blood” are heard. Yet we still hope that even now there will be officials at the senior levels who will have their heads on their shoulders and proceed with patience and caution. Before furious retaliation is unleashed, there must be a dispassionate inquiry.

INDERJIT SINGH JAJEE,
Chandigarh

Safe blood

It is unfortunate that there are some people donating their own blood for

pecuniary considerations, perhaps to make both ends meet. This practice, on the face of it, is morally and ethically incongruous, defeating the noble cause of blood donation (Editorial page, “Every drop matters”, February 15). The panacea is to involve the community at large. If blood collection booths are accessible across the country, people may voluntarily opt for donation. There needs to be greater awareness of “blood donation day”.

DEEPAK SINGHAL,
Noida

■ How can one forget the incident in Tamil Nadu, of a youngster who donated blood that transmitted infection to a mother. Blood banks and transfusion units need to be better monitored

and staff need to be enthused about their responsibility.

SACHIN V.K. JADHAV,
Lakhala, Washim, Maharashtra

Subtle message?

The well-caricatured depiction of Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav prodding his son and SP leader, Akhilesh with a “nose push”, in presence of the architects of the Opposition’s mahagathbandan and the Prime Minister and BJP president, speaks a thousand words. One waits to see the political fallout after the unexpected “gesture of goodwill” in Parliament (OpEd page, February 15).

B. GURUMURTHY,
Madurai

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www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/

On the Silk Route trail

The Silk Route was an unhindered stream of trade that built bridges between cultures, until it was broken up by the rise of national borders. A Russian plumber and a German nurse capture its romance by retracing the route. **Peerzada Ashiq** reports

Moored to the banks of the Dal lake in Srinagar, ‘New Shahen-shah’ is not a fancy houseboat. An immersion rod hisses in a makeshift washroom set up on a wooden plank outside the houseboat. Tourists Roman, 47, a Russian plumber, and Anne, 31, a German nurse, are looking forward to their mid-day bath, and understandably so. Following heavy snow and landslides, they had been stranded for two weeks on the Zoji La, a pass which connects Kargil in Ladakh with Srinagar, their final stop.

When Roman and Anne met for the first time three summers ago in Tibet, they decided to do a special trip in 2018: retracing the famous Silk Route. They would explore the overland route that once connected Central Asia, Asia and Europe via the high mountain passes of the Pamir, Tian Shan, Hindu Kush, Karakoram and Kunlun mountain ranges.

Says Roman, “It was our dream to travel along the Silk Route, which was once an unhindered flow of different streams of cultures. Today it’s a series of water-tight chambers due to national borders.”

On a military truck

It was in the late 18th and early 19th century that British archaeologist Sir Aurel Stein organised the first major expeditions to explore what German geographer Baron Ferdinand von Richthoven had in 1877 named the ‘Silk Road’. Stein undertook eight expeditions along the ancient trade route that links China and the Mediterranean. On at least one expedition, Kashmir was Stein’s starting point for a journey to explore a second century Buddhist site in China’s Xinjiang province. The excavations made by Stein between 1900 and 1915 helped throw some historical light on this part of Xinjiang, which was once a part of the mysterious Kroraina kingdom.

But in the post-colonial era, the consolidation of borders and hostility between neighbouring countries snapped the last remnant linkages of the Silk Route in the Kashmir region. The incorporation of Xinjiang into China in 1949 sealed it. But Roman and Anne managed to break through the ‘sealed route’ after 71 years, as they navigated through some of the world’s toughest border posts.

In July 2018, Anne hired a military truck fitted with a modular kitchen and a two-bed arrangement in the back. It was a vehicle that could withstand temperatures as low as minus 50° Celsius. It was what helped Roman and Anne survive when they were stranded in Ladakh for 15 days. Recalls Roman, “Even the vehicle’s fuel got frozen many times at the Zoji La Pass. If you stepped out, there was a good chance you’d freeze to death.”

It was his idea to hire a military truck, preferably a World War II-era vehicle. He says, “Anne managed to find one with a 5,200 cc engine in Germany. We wanted a vehicle that could negotiate mountains of this height and magnitude and withstand its vagaries. Thankfully, it did.”

Anne drove the vehicle all the way from Germany to Romania across many states of Europe, and finally to Ukraine. “It was a memorable journey. One could see the stark contrast between two kinds of lifestyles. On the one hand were people pinned down by the modern idea of life, and on the other, a whole set of communities untouched by modernity, living a comparatively primitive life on the mountainside,” says Anne.

Roman had once travelled overland from India to Russia via Tibet. Now he was all set to drive down from Russia to Kashmir along the Silk Route. Commencing the Silk Route leg of their journey from St Petersburg, they took the traditional land route through Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan, halting at the Silk Route’s famous stopovers of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Badakhshan. From Kyrgyzstan, the vehicle made its entry into China.

Getting into Xinjiang

He adds, “This time, travelling to China was not easy. Our entry into Xinjiang took around 28 hours at the customs, where all the data from our phones and laptops was downloaded.” Anne was unlucky. The Chinese customs officials spotted her pet cat – foreign animals are not allowed into China – and refused her entry.

However, this did not deter Roman from continuing his journey along the Silk Route in China. He drove the truck alone through the famous marketplaces of Urumqi and Kashgar of Xinjiang, before taking the arduous mountain stretches towards Karakoram in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). His road journey took him close to the famous Pangong Lake that straddles India and China in Ladakh.

Entering the Karakoram mountains through the Khunjerab Pass at an elevation of 16,010 ft, Roman steered his vehicle into Gilgit-Baltistan’s Hunza valley in present-day PoK. Explains Roman,



Self-drive: “We wanted a vehicle that could negotiate mountains of this height and magnitude and withstand its vagaries. Thankfully, it did.” Roman (left) and Anne in Srinagar after completing their journey along the Silk Route. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



“At the Balti Fort, I saw an 18th century Russian samovar (copper tea pot). Variants of it are used in Afghanistan and Kashmir.” He decided to pick up a 100-year old antique Afghani ‘samovar’ (a word of Russian origin) from Pakistan’s Peshawar. “‘Sam’ means ‘self’ in Russian and ‘Var’ means ‘cook,’” he explains.

Samovar is a copper teapot with a chimney at the centre for charcoal. While the Russian samovar has a knob at the bottom, the Kashmiri one has a teapot-like nose at the top. Roman adds, “This is a living example of how much we still have in common despite the borders that have come up.”

Roman and Anne met up in Pakistan for the onward journey to India through the Wagah border at Amritsar, and from there to Ladakh via Manali in Himachal Pradesh. The Silk Route journey would have remained incomplete unless they covered Ladakh’s Leh and Kargil towns, which were once bustling stopovers for silk-carrying merchants from China. Despite inclement weather in November (snow had already covered the passes connecting China with Gilgit-Baltistan and Himachal Pradesh with Ladakh, while the day temperature hovered below freezing point), Roman was determined to carry the antique samovar for the Central Asian Museum in Leh.

Says Roman, “I feel elated to have brought a samovar for the Leh museum. It would highlight the broken link. In Leh, I realised that the Russian word ‘aksakal’, which means ‘white-beard’ and ‘wise man’, had become the designation for the customs officer who used to check the caravans on the Silk Route in the past. The words and the utensils used here make one feel as if it was only yesterday that the region was open for trade.”

A spark in the cold desert

The timing of Roman’s offering of an antique samovar to the museum in Leh could not have been more opportune. Ladakh is sparsely populated. Its twin districts of Leh and Kargil have a combined population of just 2.74 lakh people (as in Census 2011) spread across a vast cold desert. Yet the region is astir with people’s movements demanding a revival of the old trade routes. The setting up of the Central Asian Museum in Leh, in 2016, on the premises of a 17th

century mosque, stands testimony to the people’s attempt to reclaim the past, with an eye on the future.

Back in 2004, in Kargil town, around 200 km from Leh, two brothers, Gulzar Hussain Munshi, 48, and Ajaz Hussain Munshi, 42, decided to sort out the artefacts hidden in their grandfather’s inn. The inn had been set up in 1920 and was then known as the Aziz Bhat Sarai. The three-storey building also doubled as a depot for goods, with the ground floor accommodating a stable for traders’ horses. The Munshi brothers converted the only surviving inn of the Silk Route in Ladakh into a museum. Gulzar became its director, while Ajaz is its curator.

Named the Munshi Aziz Bhat Museum of Central Asia and Kargil Trade Artefacts, the house of the Munshis has become a major attraction for tourists interested in learning more about the Silk Route. It houses over 30,000 artefacts from the 19th and the early 20th centuries. These include turquoise-studded silver necklaces and engravings from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Khotan and Kashgar, and 17th century carpets from the weavers of Yarkand and Kashgar in Xinjiang. There is also a 17th century gold-plated saddle strap from Yarkand. Early 20th century artefacts include western toiletries such as soap, toothbrushes, and shaving brushes dating back to 1903, 1905, 1926, and 1939 – all imported from England, Germany and the U.S.

Says Ajaz, “After reaching the Mumbai coast, these toiletries travelled all the way to Central Asia through Yarkand, the cold desert of Khotan, and

Kashgar. From the other side, silk and carpets would reach Indian and Western markets.” His grandfather, Munshi Aziz Bhat (1880-1950), was a prominent owner of a Silk Route enterprise, Munshi Aziz Bhat And Sons. He adds, “It traded in a number of goods, including silk, rubies, gold, and spices, with its business extending ‘in all the four directions.’”

Says Ajaz, “I do not see my private museum as a mausoleum of the Silk Route. I see it as heralding a fresh start. The time has come for Kargil to open itself up to Baltistan and Xinjiang again. If travellers like Roman and Anne can make the travel happen again, why can’t we, who were to the Silk Route what blood is to a body?”

Hajira Begum, the 104-year-old grandmother of the Munshi brothers, still has letters from 1933 containing details about the stocks of gold, rubies, and silk carried by the horses arriving from different directions. Says Begum, “One horse would carry 40 kg of gold dust. It used to cost ₹12 per kg. I can still smell the spices that criss-crossed these mountains.”

The Munshis have already been approached by the Chinese Embassy in India for help in establishing a museum dedicated to the Silk Route. Says Ajaz, “China seems equally interested in re-viving the links. They are in touch with us for the museum.”

Hunderman village, the nearest Silk Route point to Kargil town, still bears a great deal of resemblance to Kashgar bazaar in China’s Xinjiang. It connects Kargil to Baltistan’s Skardu area in PoK, which is less than 5 km from Kargil’s main market. For the families here, re-telling old tales and legends about trade and travel is a popular pastime on dark winter evenings. These stories, frequently told and retold, have also played a role in sparking the current political movement seeking a renewal of the Silk Route’s old linkages.

Sheikh Nazir Mehdi Mohammadi, president of the Anjuman Jamiyat Ulla-

The time has come for Kargil to open itself up to Baltistan and Xinjiang again. If travellers like Roman and Anne can make the travel happen again, why can’t we, who were to the Silk Route what blood is to a body?”

AJAZ HUSSAIN MUNSHI, Kargil

ma Kargil, a local socio-religious group, is spearheading a campaign to reopen the Kargil-Skardu and Turtuk-Khapolu routes. He says the people of Kargil are being denied their due. Says Mohammad, “People would be compelled to march towards the Line of Control (LoC) if the Kargil-Skardu and the Turtuk-Khapolu roads are not reopened.”

With each passing day, the movement is gaining momentum and support. Feroz Ahmad Khan, chairman of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC)-Kargil, a body set up to administer the region locally, says the time has come to take the battle to the doors of power in New Delhi.

WhatsApp at the border

The advent of Internet and social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp have further strengthened the yearning of the local population to connect with their roots. For instance, Balti, a Tibetan language, is on the wane on the Indian side of the LoC, with only about 9,000 speakers in five villages of the Nubra Valley. But Sherine Fatima Balti, 23, a resident of Leh’s Bogdag, has emerged as a singing sensation for the 2.9 lakh Balti-speaking population of Baltistan on the other side of the LoC.

Says Sherine’s father and a contractor, Ahmad Shah, 52, “My daughter is followed by 57,000 people on Facebook. Over 90% of her followers are from Baltistan.” A comment from Manzoor Hussain Balghari and Ehsan Ali Danish, two well-known lyricists from Baltistan, on Sherene’s Facebook page started an unusual musical jugalbandi (union) online. Says Shah, “Balghari and Danish now share their lyrics online with Sherine. She sings them and uploads the videos, which then go viral in Baltistan. Her songs are even aired on the local radio stations there.” In January this year, Sherine was conferred the Jammu and Kashmir State Award for Performing Arts.

Adds Shah, “Other Baltistan-based lyricists have also started sharing their lyrics for Sherine to sing.” One popular song written by Balghari and sung by Sherine is about the yearning to meet a dear one. “At the end of the day, the sky meets the earth; why can’t we too,” go the lyrics.

Sherine’s songs, ‘Grifshat Sula Beik’ and ‘Tsertragi Jusay Jusay’, are runaway hits in PoK. Sherine says, “I am the first

Balti woman to take up singing, as it is strongly discouraged by our conservative culture. One day I would like to meet my fans across the LoC.”

Sherine’s family, like the 12,000 other families that got divided into Jammu and Kashmir and PoK after Independence, saw the boundary redrawn after the 1971 war. And families again got divided. Says Shah, “Baltistan is just 4 km from Bogdag village. In 1971, we were part of Pakistan for six months during the war before India won us back. It took many divided families 47 years to cover this 4 km distance. Our past is painful. Opening the Turtuk-Khapula road will go a long way in healing the wounds of war here.”

Today, WhatsApp helps the divided families exchange videos and see each other by cell phone. It also heightens the longing for a real reunion. For instance, the family of Ghulam Hussain, 42, a social activist, belongs to Thyakshi village in the Nubra Valley. They became residents of India only in 1971, when the Indian Army annexed 804 sq km of territory from Gilgit-Baltistan. Ghulam Qadir, Hussain’s uncle, got separated from his family in 1971 and stayed back in Ghanche district on the other side of the LoC, while his wife remained stranded here. Says Hussain, “It took over 12 years to secure a meeting between husband and wife. Now we rely on on-line video conferencing to see my uncle and aunt, which is not enough.” For people in nearby Bogdag village, Hussain’s Thyakshi village remained a “mini-Pakistan” for many years.

Locals want tourism to pick up at Turtuk too, like it has at the Wagah border. Says Hussain, “Opening the roads will liberate us. During the winter, it is easier to ferry vegetables from Baltistan than from Leh town.”

Ironically, the twin routes of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawalakote that were opened in 2005 for the divided families of Jammu and Kashmir were of no use for those in Ladakh. Pakistan treats PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan as two separate entities. Says Hussain, “The bus service was limited to the divided families of PoK. So we could not avail it to reach Gilgit-Baltistan.”

Kargil saw another shutdown on February 8. Since the announcement of the decision last November to open the Kartarpur Corridor between India and Pakistan, there have been three major rallies in Kargil town, with the protesters pressing for similar arrangements in this region.

Meanwhile, Anne and Roman, having successfully concluded their Silk Route adventure, have already shipped their military truck back to Germany from a Mumbai port. Says Roman reflectively, “Traditions live longer than regimes. Culturally, it will mean a great deal if people are allowed to move freely. I’m sure it will happen sooner or later.”

Agriculture can alleviate employment woes



DEVINDER SHARMA
FOOD & AGRICULTURE SPECIALIST

If only agriculture can be turned economically viable and ecologically sustainable, it can easily take away much of the pressure the country faces in creating additional employment. All it requires is a paradigm shift in economic thinking, which begins by first treating agriculture as an economic activity. Making farm livelihoods sustainable should be the first step towards achieving the objective of ensuring gainful employment for the marginalised communities.

IN March 2018, an estimated 2.5 crore people, more than the population of Australia, applied for about 90,000 positions in the Indian Railways. In 2015, over 23 lakh candidates, including 22 lakh engineers and 255 PhD holders, had applied for 368 posts of peon in the Uttar Pradesh state secretariat. As many as 7,000 people, most of them college graduates, applied for 13 vacancies for waiters in Maharashtra's secretariat. Undoubtedly, the job scenario across the country is appalling.

This is borne by the fact that India's unemployment rate rose to a 45-year high during 2017-18, as a newspaper reported, quoting the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) study conducted between July 2017 and June 2018. At a time when India's economy has been on a growth trajectory in the past four years - growing at an average exceeding 7 per cent per annum — the failure to provide jobs to millions of people is a clear-cut pointer that relying on a higher GDP is not the answer to creating more jobs. Whether we like it or not, it is now becoming apparent that a higher GDP does not translate into more employment opportunities.

Although Finance Minister Arun Jaitley dismisses the study, saying "if the economy is growing at 12 per cent nominal growth in the past five years, it would be an economic absurdity to say that such a large growth, the highest in the world, doesn't lead to the creation of jobs," but the question that needs to be asked is: where are the jobs? While all-out efforts are being made to show that job creation is on track, a report by the Centre for Monitoring of Indian Economy (CMIE) deflates the claims when it shows that in the past year, almost 1.1 crore people lost their jobs. "An estimated 91 lakh jobs were lost in rural India, while the loss in urban India was 18



RAY OF HOPE: Agriculture, which employs over 50 per cent of the population, has the ability to reboot Indian economy.

lakh jobs. Rural India accounts for two-thirds of India's population, but it accounted for 84 per cent of the job losses," the report said.

Growth without jobs is meaningless. The indication that a higher GDP does not automatically lead to more jobs was clearly visible in the UPA era when despite a high growth exceeding 8.3 per cent on an average, only 1.5 crore jobs were created in 10 years (2004 to 2014). This was against the annual intake of about 1.2 crore fresh entrants in the job market every year, which meant that against the need to provide 12 crore people with employment, the UPA government could provide only 1.5 crore jobs. Ten years is not a small period, and it is here that policy-makers failed to realise the inability of eco-

nomic growth to create more jobs.

Still worse, a Planning Commission report had worked out that between 2004-05 and 2011-12, about 14 crore jobs were lost in agriculture. Many economists term the migration from agriculture to be a welcome sign. Going by the World Bank prescription, which was doled out back in 1996, India was directed to go for a population shift, translocating 40 crore people from rural to urban areas in the next 20 years, by 2015. While most government economists have blindly followed the World Bank prescription, I have always termed these 40 crore people being forced to migrate from the villages as 'agricultural refugees'. In the absence of alternative employment opportunities, these millions are swarming into

reality is that during the period, agriculture saw an unprecedented rate of migration; manufacturing, too, slumped, causing a loss of 5.3 crore jobs. More recently, another 1.06 crore jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector during the four-year period (2011-12 to 2015-16).

Since agriculture is the biggest employer, employing 52 per cent of the population as per the 2011 Census, the resolution of the monumental employment crisis that India faces actually lies in the crop fields. If only agriculture can be turned economically viable and ecologically sustainable, it can easily take away much of the pressure the country faces in creating additional employment. All it requires is a paradigm shift in economic thinking, which begins by first treating agriculture as an economic activity, which has multi-faceted roles cut out. Making farm livelihoods economically sustainable should be the first step towards achieving the objective of ensuring gainful employment for marginalised communities. Once agriculture becomes economically viable, providing more income to 60 crore people, it will reignite the rural-based industry, and in the process trigger a reverse migration.

Whether we like it or not, only agriculture has the ability to reboot the economy. The increased demand a refurbished agriculture will create will be phenomenal, leading to a spurt in industrial production. This may not be there in the economic textbooks, which still emphasise on reducing the population in farming, but it is time to look beyond. If the Constitution can be amended umpteen times, I see no reason why dominant economic thinking cannot undergo a transformation for the better, in tune with the changing times. It's time to accept that agriculture is truly the mainstay of Indian economy.

30 years after 'settlement', Bhopal victims await closure



BEANT SINGH BEDI
FORMER DISTRICT & SESSIONS JUDGE

Many survivors of the Bhopal gas tragedy have not been paid so far, while scores of others received only a pittance. The liability of the Union Carbide Corporation, Union Carbide India Limited and Dow Chemicals has not yet been determined. Many people are still wondering how and why the controversial settlement came about on February 15, 1989.

ALMOST 35 years after the Bhopal gas tragedy, the world's worst industrial disaster, its aftershocks are still being experienced. It was on the intervening night of December 2 and 3, 1984, that the poisonous methyl isocyanate gas leaked from the industrial plant of Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), engulfing slums and other areas of the town. The disaster led to a contentious and long-drawn-out litigation, the offshoots of which are still pending in the Supreme Court.

The Indian government, under the provisions of the Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster (Processing of Claims) Act, 1985, filed a suit for compensation in the district court, Bhopal. In December 1987, the district judge passed an order for Rs 350-crore interim compensation. On revision, the High Court reduced this figure to Rs 250 crore. The matter finally reached the apex court. The latter pressed the parties for a settlement. In its order dated February 14, 1989, the Constitution Bench directed that there be an overall settlement of all claims in the suits for \$470 million (around Rs 750 crore, as per that year's rates). Consultations between the parties continued throughout the night. The next day, they filed a written settlement signed by the parties, which was approved by the court. Thus, the Bhopal settlement came into existence. The detailed reasons for this



LITIGATION: The government's curative petition, praying for a re-examination of the 1989 judgment, is pending before the Supreme Court.

order were set out in a subsequent order of the Constitution Bench dated May 4, 1989. The court observed that it would be its endeavour to undo any injustice (if any, arriving from this settlement). The court added, "Those who trust this court will not have cause for despair."

In the meantime, another Constitution Bench (December 22, 1989) upheld the constitutionality of the 1985 Act. The order dated May 4, 1989 (Sahu

case), led to a series of review petitions, the main challenge being that the quantum of compensation settled was grossly low. The Constitution Bench negated this challenge by its judgment dated October 3, 1991. However, it restored the criminal case against Warren Anderson, then Chairman of the UCC, and other officials. The court held that if some claimants were left unpaid even after the exhaustion of the settlement amount, the Union of India should not be found wanting in making good the deficiency.

In 1989, the UCC was allowed to go scot-free for all liabilities, including criminal charges, on the payment of the paltry (under the circumstances) sum of \$470 million. The Indian government's original claim was for \$3.3 billion. It is pointed out that the number of deaths was five times more than what the government stated while accepting the settlement. This meant that when the compensation was disbursed, the claimants were paid proportionately less. The government has also been criticised for its decision to release Anderson. He flew out of India and never came back to stand trial. The government also exposed itself to criticism when the criminal charge under Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the IPC was diluted to one under Section 304-A (causing death by negligence).

In 2010, the Chief Judicial Magistrate sentenced a few UCC officials to imprisonment for two years after holding them "guilty of killing 25,000 innocent people in 1984". The nation rose in support of the Bhopal victims. Amid the uproar, the government filed a curative petition in the Supreme Court in December 2010, praying for a re-examination of the February 14, 1989, judgment. This curative petition is still pending. Recently, an application was filed for an early hearing, on

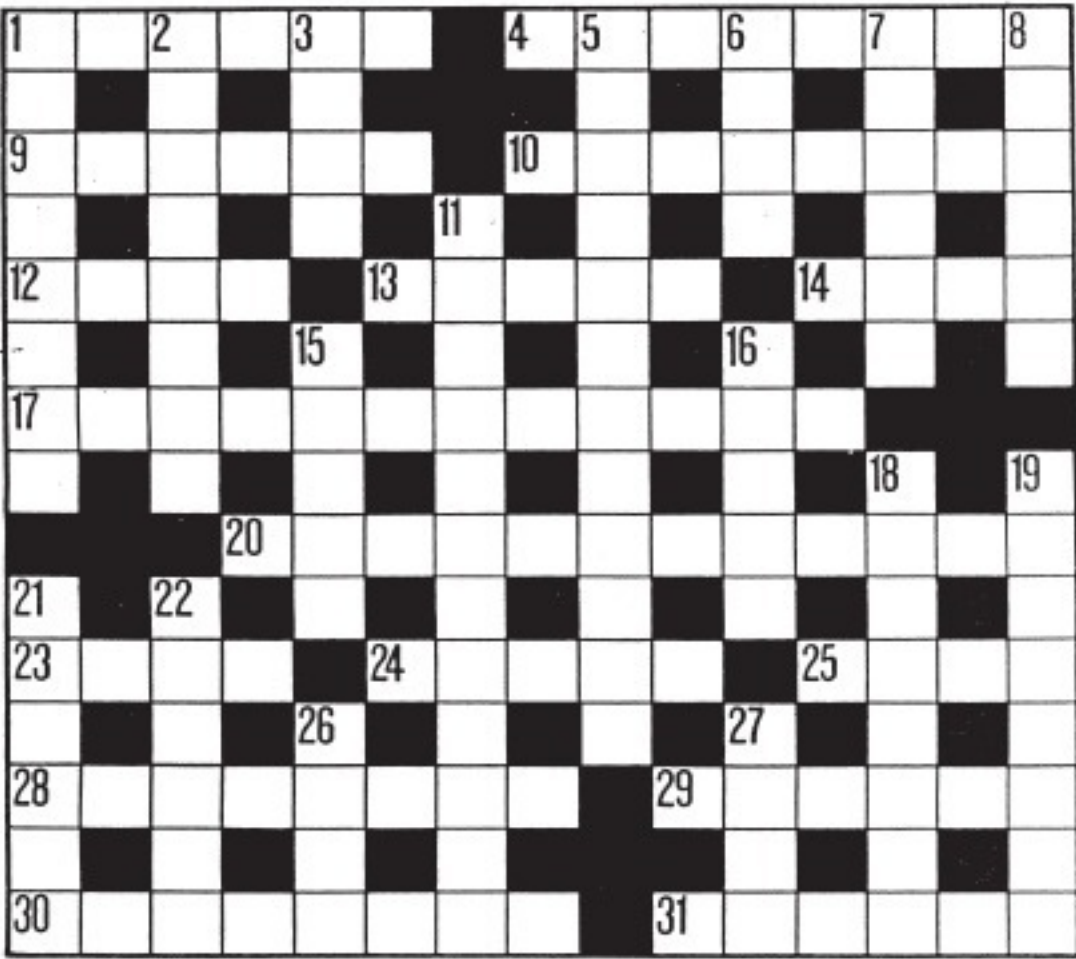
which the Chief Justice of India directed that it shall be heard in April.

The UCC is now owned by Dow Chemicals, which has merged into DuPont to create Dow DuPont. By April 1, Dow DuPont plans to break up into three companies, a plan that will see the end of UCC. These developments have added another dimension to the pending curative petition.

In August 2014, a US court ruled that Dow and UCC were not liable. The Indian government has demanded an additional Rs 7,844 crore as compensation for the victims, besides Rs 315 crore to repair the damage to the environment and subsoil water.

Be that as it may, nothing has been resolved so far. The exact nature of the toxic gas has not yet been determined; the antidote is also not known. Hundreds of tonnes of toxic waste is lying at the site. India neither has the expertise to deal with this waste nor how to de-contaminate underground water. Many survivors have not been paid so far, and many received only a pittance. The liability of the UCC, Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) and Dow has not yet been determined. Many wonder how and why the settlement of 1989 was entered into. Now that the statutory period of 30 years has passed, survivors hope that archival retrieval will help to deal with the contentious issues, left unresolved so far.

QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Able to move quickly (6)
4 Shrink (8)
9 Zest-giving quality (6)
10 Doctrine (8)
12 Frustrate (4)
13 Bracing (5)
14 Farm building (4)
17 Resources (4,3,5)
20 Enrolment (12)
23 Father's sister (4)
24 Grown-up (5)
25 Scottish lake (4)
28 Precipitately (8)
29 A fungal growth (6)
30 Medieval musician (8)
31 Show signs of (6)

DOWN

1 To lower in price (4,4)
2 Centre of target (5,3)
3 Luxuriant (4)
5 A superstition (3,5,4)
6 An implement (4)
7 Positive declaration (6)
8 Causing strain (6)
11 Welcome deliverance (4,8)
15 Large black bird (5)
16 To massage (5)
18 Confusion (8)
19 Causing obstruction (2,3,3)
21 Get to the bottom of (6)
22 To no avail (2,4)
26 Surfeit (4)
27 Quote as an authority (4)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Right, 4 Dashing, 8 Mob, 9 Stayed put, 10 Augment, 11 Daily, 13 Evince, 15 Prefer, 18 Pagan, 19 Archaic, 21 Come round, 23 Owe, 24 Nettles, 25 Elegy.

Down: 1 Rummage, 2 Go begging, 3 Taste, 4 Dearth, 5 Slender, 6 Imp, 7 Gutsy, 12 Left alone, 14 Central, 16 Rickety, 17 Maquis, 18 Pecan, 20 Cadre, 22 Mat.

SU DO KU

3							2
		4		9	1		5
			5		1	6	
			1	8	9		6
	1						8
6			3	7	4		
	7	2			3		
	9		6	2		3	
4							1

EASY

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 15, 2019 FRIDAY

- Vikrami Samvat 2075
- Shaka Samvat 1940
- Magh Shaka 26
- Phalgun Paryushite 3
- Hijari 1440
- Shukla Paksh Tithi 10, up to 1:19 pm
- Vishku Yoga up to 3:23 am
- Mrighshikha Nakshatra up to 8:53 pm
- Moon enters Gemini sign 9.32 am.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

1	9	8	4	5	6	3	2	7
6	4	5	3	7	2	8	1	9
7	3	2	9	1	8	6	5	4
4	1	7	6	2	9	5	3	8
5	6	9	8	3	7	2	4	1
2	8	3	5	4	1	7	9	6
3	5	1	7	6	4	9	8	2
9	7	4	2	8	5	1	6	3
8	2	6	1	9	3	4	7	5

FORECAST

SUNSET: **FRIDAY** **SATURDAY** **18:10 HRS**
SUNRISE: **SATURDAY** **07:03 HRS**

Sunny Partly Cloudy Cloudy Rainy Foggy

CITY **MAX** **MIN**

Chandigarh 18 11
New Delhi 20 13

PUNJAB

Amritsar 18 09
Bathinda 19 10
Jalandhar 18 08
Ludhiana 18 09

HARYANA

Bhiwani 22 11
Hisar 22 11
Sirsa 19 10

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Dharamsala 14 05
Manali 08 01
Shimla 12 04

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Jammu 15 10
Leh 04 -05
Srinagar 06 01

UTTARAKHAND

Dehradun 20 11
Mussoorie 16 04

TEMPERATURE IN °C

आतंकवाद शांति और सुरक्षा, समृद्धि और लोगों के लिए एक महत्वपूर्ण खतरा है...

...बान की मून, संयुक्त राष्ट्र के पूर्व महासचिव



दर्द ने मुझे शांति के मूल्यों से वाकिफ कराया



अपनी कहानी

>> **फान थी किम फुक**

लोगों की नजर में बारूदों के अवशेषों ने मुझे जहरीला बना दिया था। लेकिन अब मैं न सिर्फ जी रही हूँ, बल्कि अपने अनुभव से मैंने सीख ली है। अपमान, दर्द और तकलीफ से निकलने का रास्ता पाया है। मेरा जीवन अब उम्मीद, प्यार और क्षमा से भरा है।



मैं नौ साल की थी। तन पर एक धागा तक नहीं था। मैं सड़क पर चीखते हुए दौड़ रही थी और मेरे पीछे थे बंदूकधारी सैनिक। युद्ध के खौफ में मैं बस रोए जा रही थी। बारूद के गुबारों में दर्द के सिवा और कुछ नहीं था। इन्हीं व्योरां वाली मेरी तस्वीर लोगों ने हजारों मर्ता देखी है। वीभत्स वियतनाम युद्ध की उस तस्वीर ने मेरी जिंदगी निर्धारित कर दी। मेरा जन्म वियतनाम की राजधानी से बमुश्किल तीस मिनट की दूरी पर स्थित एक गांव में हुआ था।

आसमान से मौत बरस रही थी

वियतनाम-अमेरिका युद्ध के दौरान मुख्य रणनीतिक रास्ता मेरे गांव को छूता था। आठ जून, 1972 को अमेरिकी हमले में मेरा गांव तबाह हो गया था। मेरे दो चचेरे भाई-बहन मारे गए और मैं बुरी तरह जख्मी हो गई थी। मेरी चर्चित फोटो मेरी तस्वीर के दौरान की है। युद्ध रिपोर्टर निक उट ने ही अस्पताल ले जाकर मेरी जान बचाई थी। हालांकि तब मैं जीना नहीं चाहती थी। उस भयानक त्रासदी के दस साल बाद दुनिया को मेरे बारे में पता चला, तो मुझ पर सवालों के हमले होने लगे। मजबूरन मुझे अपनी पढ़ाई छोड़नी पड़ी। हालांकि चार साल बाद मुझे क्यूबा जाकर पढ़ाई करने का मौका मिला। 1992 में शादी करने के कुछ वक्त बाद मैं कनाडा में रहने लगी।

गर्म हवाएं और मेरी जली त्वचा

बचपन में मैं वियतनाम के काओ दाई धर्म से जुड़ी थी। मेरे दादा-दादी हमारे समुदाय के सम्मानित धार्मिक नेता थे। हर कोई उनकी कद्र करता था। मां-बाप ने भी उन्हीं का अनुसरण करते हुए मेरी पीढ़ी को सभी धार्मिक शिक्षाएं दी थीं। शांति के लिए लंबे वक्त तक मैंने ऊपर वाले से प्रार्थनाएं कीं। लेकिन मेरी प्रार्थनाओं का कोई जवाब मुझे मिला नहीं। मुझे यकीन हो चला कि ऊपर वाले को हमारी दुर्दशा परवाह नहीं है। इन सबके इतर युद्ध की वजह से मेरे शरीर पर पड़े निशान और गहरे होते जा रहे थे। वियतनाम की गर्म और रूखी हवाएं मेरी जली त्वचा को और ज्यादा तकलीफ दे रही थी।

बरसों अकेलापन झेला है

एक इंसान जितना अकेला हो सकता है, मैंने उतना ही अकेलापन झेला है। लंबे वक्त तक मेरा कोई दोस्त नहीं था। लोगों की नजर में बारूदों के अवशेषों ने मुझे जहरीला बना दिया था। इतने कटु अनुभवों के बावजूद मैंने हमेशा अपने दुश्मनों के लिए प्रार्थना की है। मैं तो ईश्वर की आभारी हूं कि उसने मुझे दुख सहना सिखाया है। मैं इसलिए भी खुश हूं कि दर्द ने मुझे शांति के असल मूल्यों से वाकिफ कराया। यही वजह है कि 1997 में मुझे यूनेस्को ने शांति के लिए अपना सद्भावना दूत नियुक्त किया था।

बस और युद्ध नहीं

मैं नई पीढ़ी को सलाह देना चाहती हूं कि प्रेम और क्षमा जैसे गुणों के साथ जीने में ही असली मजा है। मैं मानती हूं कि दुनिया का भला करने के लिए आपकी एक छोटी-सी दुआ का भी महत्व है। लोगों को मेरे उदाहरण से समझना चाहिए कि यदि एक बच्ची ऐसा कर सकती है, तो और कोई क्यों नहीं! बस और युद्ध न हो, कहीं भी न हो, किसी भी वजह से न हो, मेरे लिए इससे बढ़कर और कोई खुशी नहीं।

-हाल ही में ड्रेसडेन शांति पुरस्कार से नवाजी गई नायाम गर्ल के नाम से मशहूर किम के साक्षात्कार पर आधारित।



सूत्र

>> **एस्टी लॉंडर**

रसोई घर से भी हो सकती है बड़ी शुरुआत

मेरा जन्म हंगेरियन यहूदी प्रवासियों के परिवार में कोरोना, क्वींस, न्यूयॉर्क में 1908 में हुआ था। मेरे पिता की क्वींस में एक हाईवेयर की दुकान थी। मेरी मां बहुत ही खूबसूरत थीं और बचपन से ही मैं उनके जैसा दिखना चाहती थी। मेरे व्यक्तित्व पर मेरे पिता का काफी प्रभाव पड़ा। बचपन से ही उनके साथ दुकान पर काम करते हुए मैंने चीजों को बेचने की कला सीखी।

वर्ष 1914 में मैंने अपने चाचा के साथ काफी समय बिताया और चाचा के सान्निध्य ने मेसे जिंजीगी बदल दी। मेरे चाचा एक रसायनज्ञ थे, जिन्होंने त्वचा की क्रीम के लिए चार गुप्त फार्मूला तैयार किया। मैं उनके द्वारा तैयार क्रीम को अपने दोस्तों के बीच बेच दी थी। चूंकि मैं देखने में अच्छी थी और मेरे त्वचा साफ व गुलाबमय थी, जिससे मुझे क्रीम का विज्ञापन करने में मदद मिली। और इस तरह से एक अप्रवासी लड़की से मैं एक व्यवसायी महिला बन गई। मेरा मानना है कि हम सबके पास असंमित क्षमता होती है और सफलता इस बात पर निर्भर करती है कि आप अपने सपनों के लिए किस तरह से काम करते हैं। 1930 में मैंने एक एकाउंटेंट से शादी की और हमारी पहली संतान का जन्म 1933 में हुआ। क्रीम बेचकर मैंने जो पैसे अर्जित किए थे, उससे मैंने एक कंपनी की शुरुआत की। मेरे उत्पादों की गुणवत्ता बहुत अच्छी थी, लेकिन कोई नहीं जानता था कि मैं रात को अपने छोटे-से रसोई घर में उन्हें बनाती थी। शुरू से मेरे लक्ष्य स्पष्ट और सरल थे-एक महिला के पास अपने सौंदर्य के लिए बहुत कम समय होता है, उसी दौरान उसकी त्वचा जवान और दीप्तिमान होनी चाहिए। इसलिए 'त्व्रित और प्रभावी' की मेरी अवधारणा शानदार थी। अपने व्यवसाय पर पूरी तरह ध्यान देने के कारण मेरा परिवार टूट गया और मैं अपने बेटे के साथ मियामी बीच चली गई, जहां मैंने एक कार्यालय खोला। अपने करिअर में आगे बढ़ते हुए मैंने विशिष्ट लोगों के पैसे और प्रभाव का इस्तेमाल किया। 1942 में जब मेरा बेटा गंभीर रूप से बीमार पड़ गया, तो फिर मैं अपने पूर्व पति से मिली और हमने फिर से शादी कर ली। फिर हमने साथ मिलकर काम करना शुरू कर दिया और एस्टी लॉंडर कॉस्मेटिक का साम्राज्य खड़ा किया। मुफ्त सैंपल बांटने का मेरा आइडिया भी काम कर गया, क्योंकि जो महिला मुफ्त सैंपल के लिए आती थी, वह और भी उत्पादों की खरीदारी करती थी।

सफलता इस बात पर निर्भर करती है कि आप अपने सपनों के लिए किस तरह से काम करते हैं।

विर्भीक पत्रकारिता का आठवां दशक

स्थापना वर्ष : 1948

घाटी में सुरक्षा बलों को निशाना बनाकर किए भीषणतम हमले के बाद सरकार का पाकिस्तान के खिलाफ सख्त रुख स्वाभाविक है, अलबत्ता इसके साथ-साथ सुरक्षा के मोर्चे पर सतर्कता बरतने की भी आवश्यकता है।

सख्ती और सतर्कता

कश्मीर घाटी में सुरक्षा बलों को निशाना बनाकर किए गए भीषणतम हमले के बाद सरकार ने पाकिस्तान के प्रति जैसी सख्ती और गंभीरता का परिचय दिया है, वह स्वभाविक ही है। सुरक्षा मामलों की कैबिनेट कमेटी की बैठक में उसने पाकिस्तान से सबसे वरीयता प्राप्त देश का दर्जा वापस ले लिया है, जो उसने उसे 1996 में दिया था। उसने पाकिस्तानी उच्चायुक्त को बुलाकर पुलवामा हमले पर कड़ा विरोध दर्ज करते हुए पाकिस्तान स्थित भारतीय उच्चायुक्त को दिल्ली बुला लिया है तथा करतारपुर कॉरिडोर पर बातचीत बंद करने का भी संकेत दिया है। सरकार ने इस हमले के बाद पहली बार सर्वदलीय बैठक भी बुलाई है। पुलवामा हमले को अंजाम देने वाले जैश के सरगना मसूद अजहर को अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवादी घोषित करने के भारत के प्रयास पर चीन ने हालांकि फिर अड़ंगा लगाया है, इसके

बावजूद सरकार ने पाकिस्तान की कूटनीतिक घेरेबंदी की कोशिशें भी तेज कर दी हैं। इसके साथ-साथ सुरक्षा के मोर्चे पर हमें ज्यादा सतर्क रहने की भी जरूरत है। घाटी में जैश के आत्मघाती हमले की पूर्व सूचना को अगर गंभीरता से लिया गया होता, तो संभवतः इस त्रासदी को टाला जा सकता था। सुरक्षा बलों के काफिले के साथ नागरिक वाहनों को चलने देने की छूट कुछ साल पहले ही शुरू की गई थी, लेकिन सैकड़ों किलो विस्फोटकों से लदी कार अचानक हाइवे पर सुरक्षा बलों के वाहनों से जिस तरह टकरा गई, वह सुरक्षा के साथ-साथ खुफिया मोर्चे पर भी बड़ी चूक है। कश्मीर में सीआरपीएफ की ओर से लंबे समय से बुलेटप्रूफ वाहनों की मांग की जा रही है। वहां सैनिकों और अर्धसैनिक बल के जवानों को सड़कों के रास्ते लंबे समय तक लाने-ले जाने के बजाय विमानों से लाने-ले जाने के सुझाव भी दिए जा चुके हैं। इन सभी पर गंभीरता से विचार करने की जरूरत है। जम्मू-कश्मीर के



हालात सरकार से बेहद संवेदनशील तरीका अख्तियार करने की भी मांग करते हैं, ताकि ग्रेनेड फेंकने वाले और पत्थर फेंकने वाले हाथ में फर्क किया जा सके। तभी घाटी के युवाओं को आतंक के रास्ते में जाने से रोक जा सकेगा। पुलवामा हमले के विरोध में जम्मू में फैली हिंसा भी उतनी ही चिंताजनक है। पाकिस्तान को सबक सिखाते हुए सुरक्षा के मोर्चे पर सख्ती बरतने तथा देश में शांति और स्थिरता का माहौल बनाए रखना भी उतना ही आवश्यक है।

जल्दबाजी की जरूरत नहीं

पुलवामा में हुए आतंकी हमले के खिलाफ सरकार से कठोर कार्रवाई की अपेक्षा स्वाभाविक है। लेकिन एक परिपक्व सरकार सभी विकल्पों को तौलने के बाद अपने चुने हुए समय और स्थान पर पूरी तैयारी के साथ कार्रवाई करती है, जब सफलता सुनिश्चित होती है।

वेलेंटाइन डे को पुलवामा जिले में सीआरपीएफ जवानों को ले जा रही बस पर फिदायीन हमला हाल के समय का सबसे बड़ा आतंकवादी आक्रमण है। बेशक यह बेहद दुखद घटना है, लेकिन यह कई पहलुओं को खोलती है, जो विश्लेषण की मांग करते हैं।

पहला तो यही कि इतना बड़ा काफिला कभी भी अलक्षित नहीं हो सकता। जाहिर है, इसकी खबर फैल गई होगी। इसने आतंकी समूहों को आत्मघाती वाहन और हमलावर के चयन का मौका दे दिया होगा, जिसका वीडियो हमले के तुरंत बाद जारी किया गया। जाहिर है, यह हमला सुनियोजित था। आखिरकार विस्फोटकों से लदे एक वाहन को कम समय

में तैयार नहीं किया जा सकता।

इसलिए सीआरपीएफ की आसन गतिविधि की जानकारी लीक होने की पूरी आशंका है, जिसकी पड़ताल की जानी चाहिए। इतनी बड़ी मात्रा में विस्फोटक प्राप्त करने की आतंकियों की क्षमता की भी जांच होनी चाहिए। यह या तो नियंत्रण रेखा के माध्यम से सीमा पार से खरीदा गया होगा या उन संगठनों से हासिल किया गया होगा, जो इसका काम करते हैं। किसी भी मामले में इसकी जांच करने और खामियों को दूर करने की जरूरत है। दूसरी बात यह है कि तमाम सुरक्षा इंतजामों के बावजूद ऐसा हुआ। ऐसे काफिले केवल एक बार सड़क खुलने के दौरान और अपनी सुरक्षा में आगे बढ़ते हैं। सड़क पर आने वाले वाहनों की जांच की जाती है, फिर भी विस्फोटक लदा वह वाहन अंदर घुसने में कैसे कामयाब रहा? इस पर चिंतन-मनन और विश्लेषण करने की

आवश्यकता होगी। इससे संकेत मिलता है कि आतंकियों ने इलाके का सर्वे किया और व्यवस्था की खामियों का उन्हें पता था, जिसका उन्होंने फायदा उठाया। हमले के साथ-साथ वाहनों पर गोलीबारी से पता चलता है कि आतंकवादियों ने सही समय पर अपने खुफिया तंत्र का संचालन किया था, जो सुरक्षा बलों की गतिविधियों से संबंधित जानकारीयों के लीक होने की पुष्टि करता है। तीसरा मुद्दा यह है कि अपने आपमें यह



फैक्ट फाइल

मोस्ट फेवर्ड नेशन



>> भारत-पाक सीमा

मोस्ट फेवर्ड नेशन दर्ज की शुरुआत 11वीं सदी के आसपास से मानी जाती है।

जम्मू-कश्मीर के अवंतीपुरा में भीषण आतंकी हमले के बाद भारत ने पाकिस्तान को दिया मोस्ट फेवर्ड नेशन (एमएनएफ) का दर्जा वापस ले लिया है। भारत ने 1996 में पाकिस्तान को यह दर्जा दिया था। विश्व व्यापार संगठन (डब्ल्यूटीओ) के सदस्य देश संगठन के किसी अन्य देश को द्विपक्षीय संबंधों के आधार पर यह दर्जा देते हैं। इससे व्यापार में उस देश को अधिक प्राथमिकता दी जाती है और दर्जा प्राप्त देश कम आयात शुल्क पर कारोबार करता है। यह गैर भेदभाव वाली व्यापार नीति है। मोस्ट फेवर्ड नेशन दर्ज की शुरुआत 11वीं सदी के आसपास से मानी जाती है, जब समुद्री रास्ते से कारोबार में किसी देश को तरजीह दी जाती थी। 1667 में मैड्रिड की संधि के जरिये स्पेन ने ब्रिटेन को मोस्ट फेवर्ड नेशन का दर्जा दिया था। विश्व व्यापार संगठन (डब्ल्यूटीओ) ने ब्रिटेन को यह दर्जा दिया। दूसरे विश्व युद्ध के बाद 1948 में विभिन्न देशों के बीच व्यापार संबंधी वार्ता के लिए जनरल एग्रीमेंट ऑन टैरिफ एंड ट्रेड (गैट) अस्तित्व में आया। गैट विभिन्न देशों के बीच एक व्यापार संबंधी कानूनी समझौता था। गैट के पहले अनुच्छेद में यह स्पष्ट था कि यदि कोई देश किसी देश को एमएफएन का दर्जा देता है, तो वह उस देश को व्यापार समझौते में रियायतें और विशेष सुविधाएं देगा। जनवरी, 1995 में गैट को भंग कर उसकी जगह विश्व व्यापार संगठन की स्थापना की गई। इसकी स्थापना 124 देशों की सहमति से की गई थी।



आत्मघाती हमला ही है। सुरक्षा बलों के शिविरों पर अब तक जो आत्मघाती हमले हुए हैं, उनमें हमलावर ज्यादातर पाक नागरिक रहे हैं। शायद ही कभी कोई कश्मीरी उसमें शामिल रहा हो। यह हमला घाटी में आतंकवाद के पैटर्न में बदलाव का संकेत दे सकता है, इसलिए सुरक्षा बलों को अपनी मौजूदा रणनीति में बदलाव की आवश्यकता हो सकती है। ऐसी खबरें हैं कि आतंकवादियों को अफगानिस्तान में प्रशिक्षण दिया गया, जो एक चिंताजनक पहलू है।

चौथा मुद्दा हमले के समय से जुड़ा है। चूंकि लोकसभा का चुनाव करीब है, यह हमला भाजपा की छवि को धूमिल कर सकता है, जो कुछ समय पहले तक पाकिस्तान पर अपनी सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक की सफलता और आतंकी घटनाओं पर रोक का दावा कर रही थी। अगर राजनीतिक दलों में पर्याप्त परिपक्वता होगी, तो इस घटना को चुनाव में मुद्दा नहीं बनना चाहिए। हालांकि, भारतीय राजनीतिक प्रणाली को जानने के बाद कोई भी विरोधी दल सरकार को तुरंत चुनौती नहीं देगा, क्योंकि यह भारतीय भावना की अनदेखी करने जैसा होगा। लेकिन कुछ समय बाद वे सरकार की कश्मीर और पाकिस्तान नीति पर सवाल उठा सकते हैं।

पाकिस्तान स्थित जैश-ए मोहम्मद ने इस हमले की जिम्मेदारी ली है। उसने अपनी सेना के निर्देश पर ऐसा किया होगा, जिसका उद्देश्य गुप्त होगा। मुख्य रूप से उसने मौजूदा राजनीतिक माहौल को प्रभावित करने

मिस्र में 2034 तक अल सिसी

मिस्र की संसद ने संविधान संशोधन को मंजूरी दी, जिसके तहत अल सिसी 2034 तक सत्ता में बने रहेंगे।

न्यूयॉर्क टाइम्स के लिए डेलैव वाश

मिस्र की संसद ने बृहस्पतिवार को संविधान संशोधन को मंजूरी दी, जिसके तहत राष्ट्रपति अब्देल फतेह अल सिसी की सत्ता 2034 तक बढ़ा दी गई है। यह जहां उनके तानाशाही शासन को मजबूत करता है, वहीं देश में सैन्य शासन को वर्चस्व प्रदान करने वाला भी है। यह बदलाव औपचारिक तौर पर उन घटनाक्रमों को सही ठहराता है, मिस्र के अनेक लोग 2011 से ही जिसके गवाह थे। तब मिस्र में विरोध प्रदर्शनों ने राष्ट्रपति होस्नी मुबारक को सत्ता से बाहर कर दिया गया, और उसकी जगह उससे भी मजबूत एक व्यक्ति को सत्ता मिली, जो दशकों तक, और शायद जीवन भर सत्ता में बने रहना चाहता है।

दरअसल अमेरिका ने बिना सवाल किए अल सिसी का जिस तरह समर्थन किया-राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने उन्हें 'शानदार आदमी' कहा-उसने भी मिस्र के इस नेता को निडर होकर आगे बढ़ने का साहस दिया है। निर्वासित विपक्षी राजनेता मोहम्मद अलबरदेई ने पिछले सप्ताह ट्वीट किया, 'अरब वसंत उल्टी दिशा में।' गौरतलब है कि अलबरदेई ने 2013 में तब उप-राष्ट्रपति पद से इस्तीफा दे दिया था, जब अल सिसी



के सुरक्षा जवानों ने 800 से अधिक विरोधियों की हत्या की थी। दुकानदार डेनियल कहते हैं, सिसी किसी भी तरह सत्ता से चिपके रहना चाहते हैं।

संविधान में इन प्रस्तावित बदलावों का अर्थ यह होगा कि सिसी, जिनका 2022 में सत्ता से बाहर होना तय था, छह-छह साल के दो और कार्यकाल पूरे करेंगे तथा उन सांविधानिक मानकों को ध्वस्त कर देंगे, जिन्हें सत्ता में आने के एक साल बाद 2014 में उन्होंने लागू किया था। अल सिसी के पास जजों तथा

महा अभियोजक को नियुक्त करने का अधिकार होगा, जबकि शीर्ष न्यायापालिका से कानूनी मसौदों को मंजूरी देने का अधिकार छीन लिया जाएगा। मिस्र के 10 मानवाधिकार समूहों ने चेतावनी दी है कि ये प्रस्तावित सांविधानिक बदलाव अल सिसी को आजीवन सत्ता में रहने का हक तथा अभूतपूर्व एकतरफा अधिकार देंगे। ज्यादा समय नहीं हुए, जब अल सिसी ने वायदा किया था कि वह अपना कार्यकाल बढ़ाने की कोशिश नहीं करेंगे। नवंबर, 2017 में उन्होंने *सीएनबीसी* से कहा था कि हम बेवजह हस्तक्षेप नहीं करेंगे। तब उन्होंने संविधान का हवाला देते हुए चार-चार साल के दो कार्यकाल पर अमल करने की बात कही थी। लेकिन उसके कुछ ही महीने बाद विवादस्पद राष्ट्रपति चुनाव में 97 फीसदी वोट पाने के बाद सिसी के समर्थकों ने संविधान संशोधन की बातें शुरू कर दी थीं।

मानवाधिकार हनन की घटनाओं के बावजूद पश्चिम तथा अरब के नेता सिसी को इस्लामी आतंकवाद के खिलाफ मजबूत शख्सीयत मानते हैं। अमेरिकी विदेश मंत्री माइक पोम्पेओ ने पिछले महीने अपनी काहिय यात्रा में सिसी की तारीफों के पुल बांध दिए थे। हाल के महीनों में मिस्र की तीन बड़ी सुरक्षा सेवाओं में से एक जनरल इंटेलीजेंस सर्विस की राज बैठक होती थी, जिसमें अल सिसी का कार्यकाल बढ़ाने पर विचार होता था। उन बैठकों की अध्यक्षता सिसी के बेटे महमूद अल सिसी करते थे, जो जनरल इंटेलीजेंस सर्विस में वरिष्ठ अधिकारी हैं।

युवा देश-युवा वोट

4.5 करोड़

के आसपास नए मतदाता होंगे
आगामी लोकसभा चुनाव में वोट देने के काबिल, चुनाव आयोग के 2018 के आंकड़ों के मुताबिक।



अंकिती बोस

सताइस साल की अंकिती बोस की कंपनी ई-कॉमर्स प्लेटफॉर्म जिलिंगो को 'यूनिकॉर्न' स्टेटस मिलने वाला है।



ब्लॉकचेन

(BLOCKCHAIN)

को एक सर्व में 2018 का सबसे ओवररेटेड शब्द पाया गया है। इस शब्द ने सर्वेक्षण में 'एआई' और 'प्रोग्रामैटिक' जैसे शब्दों को पीछे छोड़ा।