



The big fight

For the AIADMK, the Assembly bypolls are more important than the Lok Sabha election

In Tamil Nadu, political alliances for the Lok Sabha election are falling into place as in a jigsaw. The real fight, as it has been over the last four decades, is between the two major regional parties, the AIADMK and the DMK; but the BJP and the Congress have ensured that they have skin in the game, giving the contest a national flavour. While the BJP virtually forced its way into the AIADMK camp, the Congress drove a hard bargain for seats in the DMK-led alliance. Through four elections from 1996 to 2004, the AIADMK had switched between the Congress and the BJP, before contesting 2009 and 2014 without either of them for company. In 2014, the go-it-alone strategy yielded rich dividends: the party won 37 of the 39 seats. For the party to now give away five seats to the BJP and another seven to the Pattali Makkal Katchi is therefore a climbdown. But the AIADMK is more interested in retaining power in the State. The party is running the government on a wafer-thin majority after a revolt by the faction led by T.T.V. Dhinakaran. Alongside the Lok Sabha election, by-elections to 21 Assembly constituencies are likely to be held. For Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, winning these seats is more important than a few more Lok Sabha constituencies in Tamil Nadu. With the BJP on board, the AIADMK can hope to have a stake in a government at the Centre, but even more important for the party is the tie-up with the PMK. With its concentrated support base in the northern districts of the State, the PMK could be of immense help in at least eight seats where by-elections are due.

The alliance with the BJP and the PMK also helped the AIADMK win the battle of perceptions with Mr. Dhinakaran's Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam. In the public eye, the AIADMK, as a sought-after ally, is now the bigger of the two parties. For the DMK, the tie-up with the Congress is part of its visualisation of a larger national canvas. In India's coalition era, the DMK has had an important role to play: the party was part of governments led by different combinations of parties. If indeed the AIADMK government lasts its full term until 2021, the DMK would very much like to have some levers of power at the Centre. The party was in power either at the Centre or in the State for most of the 15 years from 1996 till 2011, and it would like to avoid a second consecutive loss in the Lok Sabha election after two successive defeats in the Assembly elections. Moreover DMK president M.K. Stalin knows this is his first big test after the passing of his father and party patriarch M. Karunanidhi. For him, the stakes are just as high in the Lok Sabha election.

With reservations

It's not clear if the 103rd Amendment will protect the new quota for Gujjars in Rajasthan

With leaders of the Gujjar agitation for reservations calling off their stir, the Rajasthan government has averted what could have been a prolonged crisis. There is a sense of *déjà vu* amid all this. Gujjar leaders have held various rounds of protests over the last decade and a half, demanding reservations in educational institutions and employment in a separate backward category that is apart from the existing 21% set aside for Other Backward Classes in the State. Despite governments bringing in legislation towards this end, they have been struck down on the grounds that the additional quota would take the quantum of reservation above the 50% limit set by the Supreme Court in the *Indra Sawhney* judgment. On Wednesday, the Rajasthan State Assembly passed legislation providing 5% reservation to Gujjars and four other nomadic communities, classifying them as "extremely backward classes". But this time, the circumstances have arguably changed with the passing of the 103rd Amendment to the Constitution that allows for a 10% quota for the economically backward among communities that do not enjoy any form of reservation. The State government has also added a line to the Bill explicitly referring to the amendment, which effectively breaches the 50% limit set for reservations by the Supreme Court. It remains to be seen how the judiciary will tackle this question in light of the 103rd amendment, the constitutionality of which is under challenge.

The demand by Gujjars has a specific context. In Rajasthan, the community is currently eligible for reservations as an OBC community. They had in the mid- and late-2000s agitated for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe category, in keeping with the way they are classified in Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. This demand was denied because tribal status, as defined in the Constitution's Fifth Schedule, involves identifiable characteristics such as lifestyle, culture, inaccessibility and backwardness, and not just economic underdevelopment. Since then, the largely pastoral community has pressed for reservations under a separate backward class category, arguing that inclusion of Jats in the OBC list has crowded Gujjars out of the benefits of reservations. Clearly, the decision to accommodate a demand from one politically dominant community (Jats) has come to haunt administrators in the State as this has fanned Gujjar agitations on and off. Multiple commissions appointed by State governments have recommended the implementation of the 5% quota on the basis of the community's "extreme" or "most" backward nature. But the lack of adequate data in the absence of a proper socio-economic caste census to prove this has led to the policy's undoing in judicial orders. More important, the repeated agitations are an indication of the shortfall in adequate, gainful and secure job opportunities in States such as Rajasthan.

The employment test

The labour force may have actually shrunk while the Modi government has been in office



PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

Attuned as we have become to political grandstanding on the purpose of democracy, we may not have imagined that something so prosaic as statistics can alter our perception of how it is actually working for us. The emergence over the past few months of data on employment, speaking precisely the lack of it, cannot but have an influence on our assessment. They paint a picture of an economy that is widely out of line with the government's pronouncements on its performance. These have generally avoided any reference to employment, except to say that there is a lack of reliable data on it, for the rectification of which the government itself has done very little.

Arun Jaitley, Finance Minister for the greater part of this government's tenure, has claimed that it has coincided with a degree of macroeconomic stability that has not been surpassed. Perhaps he had in mind the combination of falling inflation and declining Budget deficits since 2014. However, while this has indeed transpired, it is important to note that these trends had commenced even before. Moreover, after repeatedly expressing a commitment to fiscal consolidation, the government did not hesitate to swerve from the path of rectitude to finance an income support programme for farmers in an election year.

Silence on jobs

But of greater significance is the fact that neither he nor the Prime

Minister has had anything to say about employment. In this the BJP is not unique. Employment does not usually figure in the public discourse orchestrated by political parties, either at the Centre or in the States. This must change, for steady employment is the citizen's aspiration, to realise which she elects representatives. Governments in India must therefore be routinely subjected to an employment test which gauges their success in generating and sustaining high employment. In his election campaign in 2014 Narendra Modi had announced that he would generate jobs.

Employment data from government sources (Labour Bureau) for about half a decade up to 2015 and from the independent agency Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) for the period since give us a reasonably good idea of the progress made with respect to employment. When supplemented with other information, these sources also suggest to us the proximate factors responsible for that history. The evidence they provide tell two stories. First, the Modi government has had next to no success in generating employment, notwithstanding its promises at election time. A development that may require some effort to understand fully, but which nevertheless it is important for the citizen to do, is that the labour force may actually have shrunk while it has been in office. The labour force is the sum of the employed and those unemployed who are seeking employment. A shrinking of the labour force is most unusual in an economy with a growing population, and thus a growing working age cohort.

The demonetisation effect

While this decline had already emerged in 2015, it became pro-



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nounced after demonetisation in 2016. We owe to CMIE, a private Indian body, both this finding and the articulation of the precise mechanism at work. A section of those hitherto willing to work may have simply dropped out of an already challenged labour market. This possibility is recognised in macroeconomics as the 'discouraged-worker effect' and has been observed in Western economies. The loss of skill that can accompany being unemployed even temporarily, and the consequent loss of long-run output for the economy, is the basis of the argument that public policy must respond with alacrity to growing unemployment. No such sensibility has infused the government, which appears not to have noticed the decline in the labour force itself, a development that occurred very early in its tenure. It has instead congratulated itself on having delivered macroeconomic stability. We are now able to see that whatever may have been the acclaimed beneficial impact of demonetisation in terms of raising direct tax compliance, it has caused demoralisation among a section of the already unemployed who may have given up all hope of finding employment.

The second of the two histories referred to, seen in the reports of one of the government's agencies, is that of a rising unemployment rate from 2011 onwards. This point

has political significance as we stay poised for the general election. This is that while the Modi government may have run amok with the demonetisation, India's unemployment challenge predates this episode and evidently runs deeper. Labour Bureau data show that the unemployment rate almost doubled between 2011 and 2015. It is surprising that the government's own reports did not flag this. The economic, as opposed to the political, message is that the recent history of unemployment has been impervious to the political formation governing India.

If we are to more than just wring our hands at the existent unemployment, an understanding of what underlies it is necessary. Actually, no more than standard macroeconomic analysis is needed in this regard. Both output growth and employment are under normal circumstances associated with capital formation. Capital formation as a share of output has been declining since 2011-12. Unlike consumption expenditure, capital expenditure is unique in expanding both the supply and demand sides of the economy. Despite the declining capital formation, neither United Progressive Alliance (UPA) II nor National Democratic Alliance II considered it necessary to respond to it by stepping up public investment, the obvious thing to do in the prevailing circumstances.

The clue to this inertia may be found in the political economy. For UPA II the success of its first term in office must have looked like the perfect opportunity to expand its political base by legislating rights and reciting the mantra "inclusive growth". Then came Narendra Modi, who somewhat incongruously for an avowedly nationalist politician, embraced the dogma of the Washington Consen-

sus. Popular in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it extolled small government and asserted the capacity of the market mechanism to deliver an optimal outcome. There was in this scheme of things no place for any involuntary unemployment. So, whatever may have been the calculation of the two political formations, employment generation just took a back seat in their respective programmes.

Cost of failure?

We have adopted representative democracy as our form of government because we cannot in isolation achieve the outcomes we desire even when they are exclusive to us. Employment is one example of this. Though it manifests itself as jobs for individuals, it is determined by macroeconomic factors which individuals cannot influence on their own. The Great Depression in the 20th century and the Great Recession in the 21st, both which have originated in the U.S. but quickly spread across the world, testify to this helplessness of individuals in the face of market forces. In a democracy, it is left to elected representatives whether to pursue macroeconomic policies conducive to the generation of employment. India's political parties have for close to a decade now failed to do so, either willfully or out of neglect. However, when elected to govern, they are given a chance to create the conditions that enable Indians to lead flourishing lives, which includes being meaningfully employed during their working age. India's political parties must pass 'the employment test'. When they fail they must vacate the stage.

Pulapre Balakrishnan is Professor, Ashoka University, Sonapat and Senior Fellow, IIM Kozhikode

More symbolic than punitive

India's trade-related action will encourage informal trade and propel Pakistan to look for markets beyond South Asia



SEEMA BATHLA & ABHISHEK JHA

India's decision to withdraw the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan means that India will not treat Pakistan on an equal footing in trade as is expected of fellow members of the World Trade Organisation. The move comes after the attack on a Central Reserve Police Force convoy in Pulwama, Jammu and Kashmir.

Just a dent

It does not strictly fall under the 'beggar-thy-policy', often used in international trade through which one country tries to resolve its economic problems by means that worsen the economic problems of its neighbours or trade partners. The moot point therefore is the sensitivity of the impact of the MFN status on Pakistan in terms of its trade with India. It can only be a pressure tactic and do little unless stringent actions are taken to stop informal trade that has been going on between the two countries for long.

Besides China, India and Pakistan are the two largest economies in the South Asian region. Being

dominant constituents of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, both countries have immense potential for intra-regional trade. Trade now takes place using three channels: the official route; the illegal (informal) route, through smuggling along porous India-Pakistan land borders and also Afghanistan, which may not be accounted for in the national income; and lastly, through mainly Dubai and Singapore, which have free ports and accommodate legal agents of traders from India and Pakistan.

Informal trade generally takes place due to restrictions on import of specific items on grounds of health and religious beliefs; 'high tariff barriers or transportation costs, making it cost effective to smuggle goods in the country; imposition of non-tariff measures (NTMs); weaknesses in the 'rules of origin' resulting in 'trade routed through a third country; leakages in transit trade; and distortions in domestic policies such as the absence of or relatively low indirect taxes, creating an incentive to transport items illegally to neighbouring countries. Traders carry out informal trade between Pakistan and India through the exchange of goods at the border as well as through the personal baggage scheme' through "green channel" facilities at international airports or railway stations. 'Infor-



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mal trade has also taken place through Afghanistan where goods are exported officially from India and later smuggled into Pakistan. Indian-made goods smuggled into Pakistan include cosmetics, liquor, stainless steel utensils, ayurvedic medicines, videotapes/CDs, confectionery/cashew nuts, tea, coffee, live animals and spices'.

Trade data

From 2011-12 to 2017-18, India's formal trade with Pakistan increased from \$1.94 billion to \$2.41 billion. Of this, the share of exports stands at almost 80% and has been fairly stable over the years (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India). In 2012-13, informal trade between India and Pakistan - estimated in a study (ICRIER, N. Taneja and S. Bimal, 2016) - was \$4.71 billion, which was double when compared to formal trade. India's informal export share to Pakistan was again much higher at \$4 billion while its import share was low at \$0.71 billion.

After the Pulwama attack, the

follow-up measure to raise tariff duty on imports to 200% can again be trivial. So would be the NTMs, if increased, as India's imports from Pakistan are reasonably low at \$0.488 billion. Besides, imports from Pakistan grew at a lower rate (1.04%) compared to exports (1.32%) per annum from 2011-12 to 2017-18. Major exports from India that would hard hit would be cotton (not carded or combed) valued at \$0.273 billion, p-Xylene (\$0.082 billion), polypropylene (\$0.063 billion) and single yarn (\$0.088 billion). Pakistan's loss from major exports to India would be much less - from dates (\$0.113 billion), portland cement (\$0.078 billion), other petroleum oil (\$0.055 billion) and light oils and preparations (\$0.028 billion).

Thus Pakistan is an important export destination for India but not vice-versa. This is despite the fact that Pakistan imposes a large number of NTMs (143) on Indian exports, the major ones being export related measures (25.2%); technical barriers to trade (24.5%); and sanitary and phytosanitary measures (22.4%). These are 'concentrated on agriculture, plants, and food-related products and operate as bans that shut competitors out of its market. Pakistan's NTMs are blunt instruments; it is difficult to use them to provide targeted protection to the strategic industries. In contrast, India's NTMs are

soft barriers which operate as delays or bureaucratic hurdles rather than bans. Pakistan's NTMs focus on general categories of goods whereas India's NTMs are on particular industries and trading partners. The widely used NTMs India uses include defence procurement procedure, preference to domestically manufactured electronic goods in government procurement' and a ban on goods largely manufactured within the country.

The sense is that Pakistan may not face an exacerbating situation with India withdrawing the MFN status and raising the import duty. Informal trade may proliferate, which might not be in India's interest and an appropriate strategy is required to bring it to a halt. Also, under the South Asia Free Trade Area Agreement (SAFTA) 2004, Pakistan's share in external trade is less than 10%, while India's share is more than 70%. Such steps may propel Pakistan to look for new markets beyond SAFTA, corroborated by the recent meeting held with Saudi Arabia and growing prospects of trade through a third country, mainly via Dubai.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Electoral alliances

There cannot be a more opportunistic alliance than the one formed between the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the PMK (Page 1, "AIADMK signs pact with BJP, PMK, February 20). It was only recently that some in the PMK complained about the AIADMK's alleged corruption. One wonders what happened now. The PMK is too naive to take people for granted. One hopes that people recognise and reject the opportunistic politics behind such alliances.

T. ANAND RAJ,
Chennai

■ The PMK allying with the AIADMK is an unanticipated move given that that party has been critical of the AIADMK administration ever since Jayalithaa was in power in Tamil Nadu. The BJP joining hands with the

AIADMK is another game of opportunism.
N. VISVESWARAN,
Chennai

■ Politics makes strange bedfellows and the seat-sharing accord reached between the AIADMK, the BJP and the PMK is proof that parties with disparate ideologies that have been spewing venom at each other can come together to fight elections by swallowing the insults. What is really puzzling though is the PMK hitching its wagon to the AIADMK star. There are numerous instances of the top leadership in the PMK highlighting the "misdeeds" of the Dravidian party and even accusing it of being indifferent towards the people ("Trolls have a field day on social media", February 20).
C.V. ARAVIND,
Bengaluru

Pakistan's response

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan may have broken his silence after the Pulwama attack, and he has only shocked us (Page 1, "Pakistan will hit back if India strikes, says Imran", February 20). He has just repeated the usual statement one gets out of Pakistan, which is nothing but an evasive tactic. What more proof does he require? It is amusing that the Pakistan government, which is unable to control terror activities on its soil, is now talking about retaliation.
D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

■ The Pakistan Prime Minister should realise that he sounds silly and ridiculous. The world knows he is a puppet in the hands of his military masters. He has the audacity to say this when Pakistan is the 'poster boy' of terrorism. Mr. Khan is

not only a neophyte in politics but also equally untrustworthy.
DEEPAK SINGHAL,
Noida

■ Mr. Khan's response is hardly surprising. With Pakistan already bleeding financially, India's pressure could weaken it further. India appears to be adopting a clever strategy of not letting anyone know what its next move could be. Wearing down the enemy silently is a tactic with potential.
R. SIVAKUMAR,
Chennai

No to torture

A civilised nation can ill-afford to continue the inhuman 'third degree treatment' that convicts are often subject to in custody (Editorial page, "The importance of being humane", February 20). Custodial torture is brutal and debasing. It is time

this abhorrent practice is wiped out through suitable enactment of anti-torture laws.
B. GURUMURTHY,
Madurai

■ Punishments are meant to infuse fear in the person who commits a crime with the expectation that it will act as a deterrent. But one needs to draw the line as far as having severe custodial punishment is concerned. The reasons

and the circumstances under which a person may commit a crime have to be well-studied, and in this science and psychology play a key role. Individuals identified as a risk must be helped and their rehabilitation must be thought of. Deficiencies in the justice system must also be overcome.
VINOD SANTHANAM,
Tysons, Virginia, U.S.

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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the Life page report on Hyperloop (Feb. 20, 2019, early editions), the second deck heading erroneously said the proposed system would cut travel time by one fifth to 30 minutes. Actually the travel time is going to be cut to 30 minutes - that is one-fifth the current duration of travel. The error was corrected in the later editions.

The picture caption in the story titled "Ever ready to deliver fitting response to the enemy: IAF chief" (Feb. 17, 2019) said it was a *Mirage 2000* firing missiles during a fire power demonstration in Rajasthan. Actually, the picture showed a *MiG-27* aircraft.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturba Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

A modern story of Ekalavya

The education system continues to exclude many people's histories, world views and cultures



SUNDAR SARUKKAI

It is difficult being a teacher these days. The dismantling of institutions, which seems to be the prime concern of this government, began with education. The attack on premier public universities through motivated hiring, questioning reservation, and creating a climate of fear and intimidation has continued. This is a time when many teachers are forced to rethink the meaning of teaching.

The place of the teacher

This has also led to a climate of suspicion about teachers in general, in schools, colleges and universities. Teachers are constantly under attack by systems which want to protect students (especially because students are nowadays seen as paying 'consumers'), by parents who decide what and how a teacher should teach, by a government which humiliates and uses teachers, and by private managements which see teachers as a necessary 'evil' to put up with. Our colleges and schools even today are places of feudal authority and oppressive labour conditions. In such a climate, for the first time in my life, I am beginning to ask whether it is worth teaching at all.

It was not easy being a teacher earlier too. The pay was quite abysmal and the work that it entailed, particularly the grading of hundreds of exam papers, was not necessarily enjoyable. But there was something different; there was a sense of service and commitment to the act of teaching, somewhat similar to the medical profession then. There was an underlying notion of respect for teachers, even from students.

In India, there are many stories of teachers who sacrificed much in order to teach. Teaching meant inspiring students, making them better human beings, and enabling them to go up in life. A good mathematics teacher always taught more than mathematics. What students learnt with every good teacher was not just subject matter but ways of being in the world.

The first disintegration of this



"Our society is filled with committed teachers, but they are all silenced by the powers that run education as a handmaiden for their personal and political ambitions." A classroom in Mandawa, Rajasthan. *GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK PHOTO

world of teaching came when teaching became equivalent to 'giving tuition'. And then came other major problems that have contributed to this suspicion of teaching. In a digital world, the role of a teacher is more and more unclear. There is a lack of clarity on what exactly a teacher is supposed to teach: the content, or diverse ways of thinking, or learning together with others?

Related to this issue is the continued lack of equal access to education. We have spent more money and effort keeping people out of the education system than trying to bring them in — much of this is done through dubious concepts called intelligence and merit, operationalised by examinations. It is not a surprise then that our gross enrolment ratios for all levels of education are quite low, because the aim of the system right from the beginning was to find ways to control who would enter the portals of education. This is a continuation of the Ekalavya complex, and it is possible because we have created a system in which the excluded find little representation of their lives, their world views and their articulations in what is taught.

A story of caste and learning

In the midst of this existential crisis, I watched a new Tamil movie called *Sarvam Thaala Mayam*. It is a movie which has been criticised for its avoidance of caste issues even though it is primarily about Carnatic music's

relation with caste. While that may be true, here I am more interested in what it says about the nature of teaching and learning. It is a modern Ekalavya story in a Tamil mainstream idiom and, like Ekalavya's story, which is about caste and privilege, at its core it is about the processes of teaching and learning.

The story of Ekalavya is well known and has been used as a powerful metaphor to highlight problems of exclusion in education — about how the privileged monopolise learning even though others may be far better. This movie makes us ask: What would Ekalavya do today if Drona refuses to teach him?

The modern Ekalavya, Peter Johnson, is the son of a mridangam maker. He is very talented. When he accidentally listens to a mridangam vidwan, Vembu Iyer, he is mesmerised. But this Chennai Ekalavya cannot easily become a student of this vidwan and much of the obstacle is related to their caste differences. These differences are most tellingly articulated by the boy's father who creates these instruments but also seems resigned to the fact that he will not be allowed to play them.

However, the modern Ekalavya does not give up when Vembu Iyer refuses to take him as his student. He persists and is finally taken as Iyer's student because Iyer sees Peter's passion and genuine commitment. Peter is like Ekalavya in his complete devotion to his guru, but due to a misun-

derstanding, the teacher banishes Peter for no fault of his. Their reconciliation is really the heart of the story, for it is not just a negotiation between people of different caste hierarchies but also between the hierarchy of teacher and student.

If Arjuna was the counterpart to Ekalavya in the original story, there is an equally powerful counterpart in this modern version. This is in the form of a fair-skinned, Tamil Brahmin NRI, who has been admitted to a PhD programme at Harvard University. He comes with more privilege than Arjuna! But Peter is unfazed. He takes on the traditionalists in their own game. In the climax of the movie, his strength is shown to lie in his own historical and cultural consciousness. Peter changes due to his encounter with his guru but he also changes the instrument and the classical music tradition which uses it.

Vembu Iyer epitomises all the struggles of a teacher, one who belongs to an exclusive tradition but with an ideal of learning that transcends that exclusion. A teacher is one who is able to go beyond his or her tradition and comfort zone for the sake of a true seeker. The film reminds us that a teacher is incomplete without good students, but good is not intellectual competence alone; it is something more. The last scene of the film, when the teacher accepts the student as someone who can not only carry on the tradition but also bring his own modifications to it, captures one of the central ethical principles of teaching.

Need for an inclusive system

What this movie reminds us is that the present-day education system is based on the qualities, attributes and desires of a dominant community. It is not inclusive, since it does not have space for truth, knowledge and the qualities of learning based on the diverse strengths of different cultures and histories like those of Peter. But Peter's struggle should remind teachers that teaching is a service, not a transaction. Our society is filled with countless such committed teachers, but they are all silenced by the powers that run education as a handmaiden for their personal and political ambitions.

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Splurging in the time of debt

Andhra Pradesh's government continues to launch populist schemes despite its poor financial situation



K. VENKATESHWARLU

It is puzzling that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is busy announcing a spree of sops, given the State's poor financial situation. A recently released White Paper on State finances and economic growth details how the unscientific and unjust bifurcation of undivided Andhra Pradesh, as well as the unwillingness of the Central government to implement several provisions of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, left Andhra Pradesh with a revenue deficit of ₹16,078 crore in 2014-15.

Several problems

The paper argues that 46% of the estimated revenue was granted to Andhra Pradesh against a population of 58%; assets were allocated on location basis (most locations were in Hyderabad and hence left behind), while debts and liabilities were divided on the basis of population; the pension liability of the combined State was divided on the basis of population; power allocation was done on the basis of consumption; and refund of taxes, a liability, was allocated on the basis of population, whereas deferred tax collections, an asset, were given on the basis of location, causing a loss of ₹3,820 crore.

Further, the State lost Hyderabad, that in 2014 was estimated to generate about ₹60,000 crore of revenue, besides the manufacturing and service sector hubs. It inherited drought and cyclone-prone areas. Though the Central government had acknowledged that the fiscal, economic and social conditions of Andhra Pradesh would be adversely affected by bifurcation, the support lent to the State in the last four and half years has been abysmal, the State claims.

Andhra Pradesh's economy continues to be predominantly agrarian. This is evident from the fact that the contribution of the agriculture sector, which was 23% in undivided Andhra Pradesh, shot up to 30.2% at the time of bifurcation in 2014, and to 34.4% in 2017-18. Consequently, the per capita income was ₹82,870 in 2014, compared to Telangana's per capita income of ₹1,12,162. Telangana is powered by the industry and services sector. The per capita income of Andhra Pradesh is the lowest among the five southern States.

The Socio Economic Survey of 2017-18 says the State's public debt has gone up to ₹2,25,234 crore. Market loans are a lion's

share in the debt, accounting for 60%. The outstanding debt includes the un-apportioned amount of ₹23,483 crore between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The debt accounts for 28.79% of the State GDP and the government says it is forced to raise loans as no special funds are flowing from the Centre beyond the Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

Dealing with the financial crisis

Yet the government insists that it has "converted the crisis into an opportunity". Despite structural challenges, the Budget boasts that the State is counted among the best economic performers with an average growth of 10.66% compared to the all-India growth rate of 7.3% (June 2014-December 2018).

How is the State overcoming the problems of a low tax base, deficit rainfall, an "un-cooperative" Central government, and the hurdles mounted by bifurcation and a predominantly agriculture economy? Government officials say the State is not only controlling revenue expenditure by cutting administrative costs, plugging revenue leakages, minimising transaction costs and rationalising the tax structure, but also using more technology across the board.

Presenting the vote-on-budget in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly, Finance Minister Y. Ramakrishnudu said the government had successfully launched the Comprehensive Financial Management System, which is in operation now. This, he said, not only improved "effectiveness of budget, expenditure and cash management", but also brought about a sea change in government transactions. The government, he said, saved ₹2,585 crore through Aadhaar seeding in the Public Distribution System by using technology to plug leakages. And it has managed to increase tax revenue from ₹38,038 crore in 2014-15 to ₹75,438 crore in 2018-19.

Although it claims to have done well in managing the available resources, the government seems unable to resist the temptation to launch more populist schemes in total disregard for the State's fragile financial condition. After spending over ₹22,000 crore on crop loan waivers, it announced ₹5,000 crore in the Interim Budget for Annadatha Sukhimbhava, an economic support scheme for farmers; doubled social security pensions; and increased the unemployment allowance. It also increased the pay scales of employees, the wages of Anganwadi workers and village revenue assistants, and the allocation for various welfare schemes.

How can a government indulge in financial profligacy while alleging a virtual funds freeze by the Centre?

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SINGLE FILE

The private sector in public health

It can provide services and capital

RUHA SHADAB



The healthcare panel at the recent India Conference hosted by students of the Harvard Kennedy School and the Harvard Business School discussed the role of the private sector in augmenting public healthcare services. Goal 3 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is to "ensure healthy

lives and promote well-being for all at all ages". India has a mammoth role in helping the world attain SDG-3 as global health indicators cannot improve without India making giant strides. In providing healthcare, the Indian government has led the way, as it should, given that India is a welfare state.

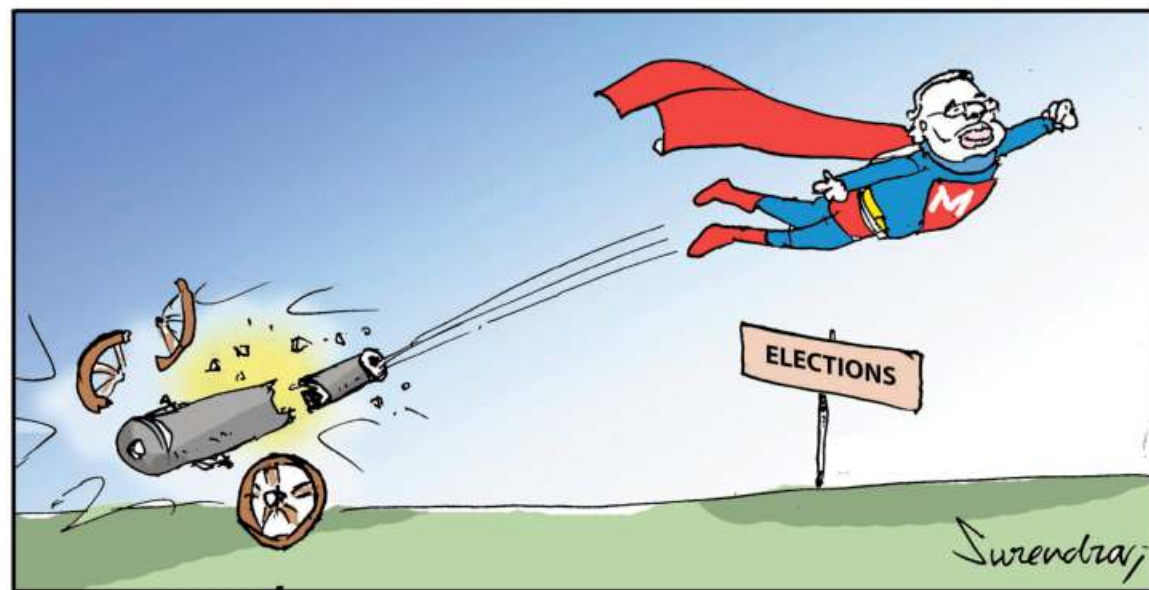
Over the past decade, courtesy changing demographics and lifestyles, India has been witnessing shifting disease prevalence in terms of the largest causes of morbidity and mortality. This requires that we give our health delivery system a re-look. The Harvard panel dove in to how the private sector can be leveraged for this purpose. The precondition is to create an ecosystem where partnerships between the private and the public sector can thrive. This must start with trust and stated common objectives. Once the ecosystem is more conducive, complementarities need to be identified.

While one may not foresee a great presence of the private sector in providing primary healthcare services, areas such as ambulance services and value-based care delivery can be promoted through this sector. Ayushman Bharat seeks to improve the network of the government's first-point-of-contact health centres. For higher levels of services, the private sector can be incorporated by creating linkages between public health infrastructure and private providers through a hub-and-spokes model.

Besides services, the private sector is also a source of capital. A legally mandated way to provide this is through Corporate Social Responsibility. Companies above a certain annual turnover (₹1,000 crore), net worth (₹500 crores) or annual net profits (₹5 crore) have to earmark 2% of their net profits of the past three years to CSR projects, which may include healthcare projects. CSR has not yet reached its full potential. However, it is encouraging to see the merging of initiatives. This is seen in the government directing companies, albeit public sector ones, to the focus districts of the Aspirational Districts programme, which was started in 2018 to improve governance and service delivery across six sectors including health and nutrition.

At the end of the day the lesson was clear: as India strives to ensure availability, affordability and accessibility to quality healthcare for its people, both private and public stakeholders need to come together.

The writer is a doctor pursuing a Master's degree in Public Policy at Harvard University



FAQ

Inflation pressure eases

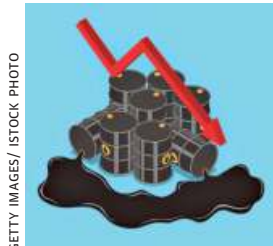
The Indian economy benefits from the fall in global oil prices

T.C.A. SHARAD RAGHAVAN

Why has inflation been falling?

Inflation at both the retail and wholesale levels has been falling for the last 4-5 consecutive months. Inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which captures retail inflation, and the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) has been falling in general for the last year or so. The CPI, for example, was as high as 5.21% in December 2017, following which it fell quite steadily (except for a mid-year blip in 2018) till it reached 2.05% in January 2019, the lowest it has been in 19 months. The WPI has similarly seen an overall decline, but has been more volatile than the CPI.

The main reason why inflation has been falling is the drop in global oil prices. After rising in the middle of 2018 to average \$80 a barrel in October, the Indian basket of crude oil prices fell to \$57 a barrel in December 2018. It was \$59



in January 2019. Prices in February have been slightly higher than that, but the increase is not much.

What does this mean for the economy?

The nature of the Indian economy is such that a change in oil prices has knock-on effects on almost every sector such as food, manufacturing, transport and infrastructure. Any sector that uses fuel or energy as an input is affected by global oil prices because India is still overwhelmingly dependent on imported oil to meet its needs.

When global oil prices fall, inflation falls across the board, most notably in energy-intensive sectors.

And within this, falling prices in each of these sectors have an impact on the other sectors dependent on them. For example, falling inflation in the transport sector means that every sector that needs to transport goods will also benefit.

Another aspect of falling inflation is that the Reserve Bank of India has more leeway to go easy on interest rates, one of its key inflation targeting tools. In its last Monetary Policy Review, the central bank cut the benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points. Some experts feel there is scope for even more cuts. Politically, low and falling inflation is always to the benefit of the government. This is especially noteworthy in the run-up to the general election. In contrast, the CPI inflation averaged about 7.6% in the three months leading up to the 2014 elections.

Why do WPI and CPI inflation diverge?

Economists have pointed out the divergence for quite some time now. The main reason behind it is that the two indices measure different products and assign each of the categories different weights in the calculation of the overall index. This divergence has intensified since the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax because the new tax system affects retail inflation far more than it does wholesale inflation, since it is included in the final price of the product.

What is the outlook ahead?

The outlook on oil prices is a stable one. The consensus is that crude oil prices will remain in the range of \$55-65 a barrel for the next three to four quarters. Given how important this is for inflation in India, experts feel retail inflation will remain subdued at 2-3% and wholesale inflation at 3-4% in the near future.

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 21, 1969

Mujibur Rahman let out on parole

The prospects of political talks between President Ayub Khan and the Opposition brightened today [February 20, New Delhi] with the release on parole of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, principal accused in the Dacca Conspiracy Case. There were rumours that the Government might be willing to drop the conspiracy case, but there was no official statement on the circumstances under which Mr. Rahman, who had earlier refused to meet Mr. Ayub Khan except as a free man, was persuaded to accept parole. As word of Mr. Rahman's release reached Rawalpindi, the eight-party Central Democratic Action Committee resumed discussions on Mr. Ayub Khan's invitation for talks to resolve the political crisis. The D.A.C. convener, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, told newsmen in Rawalpindi that Mr. Rahman would reach there from Dacca to participate in the D.A.C. discussions.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 21, 1919

Affray in a Train.

The murderous affray in a compartment of the Quetta Mail train which left Karachi on Tuesday morning [Feb. 18] has resulted in the death of two persons. A Punjabi Mohamadan named Haji Almadin belonging to Lahore, who for the last five years has been a sweetmeat seller in Karachi, entered a third class compartment of the train at Junnshahi. Fourteen passengers were already in the compartment. He asked one seated near the window to surrender his seat, but the man refused whereupon the Punjabi drew a large knife and stabbed him in several places finally throwing him out of the window. Another man interfered and was also attacked, but took refuge in a lavatory where he smashed the window and jumped from the train... The Punjabi continued his attacks on other passengers and altogether one man was killed on the spot and eight severely injured.

CONCEPTUAL Acid test ratio

FINANCE

This refers to a financial metric that is used to measure the ability of a firm to meet its various short-term obligations. It is calculated by dividing the sum of a firm's most liquid assets like cash and short-term receivables by its short-term liabilities. Other short-term assets like inventory, which are not readily convertible into cash, are usually not included in the calculation of this ratio. The acid-test ratio is used by analysts as an important measure of a firm's liquidity position. There is considerable leeway involved in the calculation of the ratio since analysts may differ in their opinion about the actual liquidity of a firm's various assets.

MORE ON THE WEB

Video: Aero India Show kicks off

<http://bit.ly/AeroShowVideo>

Opinion

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2019



SAUDI-INDIA COOPERATION

Narendra Modi, prime minister of India

Last week's barbaric Pulwama attack was a symbol of the shadow of the inhuman danger hovering over the world. To deal with the scourge, we have agreed that there was a need to ramp up pressure on countries extending any sort of support to terrorism

Pledged shares and real estate loans are worrying

Falling value of pledged promoter shares and the ability of real estate firms to repay NBFCs is the next big worry

THE SOMEWHAT RECKLESS lending by NBFCs to promoters against shares of their companies is bound to take a toll on their balance sheets. Indeed, what is shocking is the nonchalance with which mutual funds—which are supposed to be investing the savings of small investors—have also lent to promoters against pledged shares. As share prices fall, and lenders sell the pledged shares in the market, they are becoming more vulnerable to losses. Some NBFCs are monetising other businesses to ensure their cash flows are not choked. Indeed, it is not clear whether mutual funds understand the risk associated with lending against equity shares. The fact is, smaller companies today are short of cash—since business isn't exactly booming—and promoters are resorting to leveraging themselves. While the funds are being invested in their businesses, the practice is nonetheless worrying. Axis Capital has pointed out that the aggregate pledging activity by promoters within the BSE 200 hit an eight-year high in the October-December quarter.

The next big worry for the financial markets is how real estate players are going to service their loans; the mix of developer loans in total NBFC/HFC credit has inched up from 6.2% in 2014-15 to 10.7% in 2017-18. By all accounts, that share would have moved up further by now. Developers are in a tough situation due to sluggish sales, high unsold inventories, lengthening project lifecycles and slower price correction that has left affordability low. Some of these problems were hidden by the easy refinancing, but the severe shortage of liquidity over the past six months changes the situation completely. The liquidity deficit in the banking system shot up to nearly ₹87,000 crore in the week to February 15, the highest in seven weeks. While this may ease over time, the high level of borrowings by the Centre, states and PSUs is threatening to crowd out the private sector. The total value of developer loans is estimated at ₹6 lakh crore; of this, the vulnerable portion, which is the core developer book, is estimated at ₹3.4 lakh crore, or 60% of the total according to Credit Suisse. While this portfolio grew at just 4% for banks between 2014-15 and 2017-18, it grew at a whopping 46% for NBFCs/HFCs. As such, even a little bit of stress could have a big impact in the money markets.

To some extent, the forbearance extended by RBI on real estate loans, around seven years ago, is to blame. Since banks were allowed to restructure loans to builders, the developers were not forced to offload inventories at market-clearing prices. Even otherwise, the real estate business was on a sticky wicket since much of it was investment-driven and based on the premise that prices would trend higher. For their part, the developers used the collections from pre-selling apartments to buy more land instead of completing projects. The result is around 4 lakh units of inventory in India's micro-markets and large dues to banks. By a conservative estimate, this amounts to around ₹2 lakh crore of liquidity. Today, buyers are unwilling to purchase homes in the expectation prices will fall and, so, inventories are getting cleared at a very slow pace. The chickens are coming home to roost.

A little more angelic now

Over a year to fix the issue, but no relief for existing cases

WHILE THE GOVERNMENT has done well to finally address the issue of taxing angel funding, the long delay—and the series of twists and turns in between—speaks volumes for how a reluctant tax department managed to put off a solution for well over a year. And this is despite the fact that start-ups are a personal passion of prime minister Narendra Modi who even got the government to set up a fund to help catalyse investments into these start-ups. Indeed, with the areas the start-ups are working in like fintech/health-tech/agri-tech/etc., and the possibility of providing radical solutions, these start-ups have already created a lot of value for investors. According to Inc42—a media platform dedicated to the start-up ecosystem—between them, India's 39,000 start-ups have got a total funding of \$38.5 billion since January 2014 and are, today, valued at around \$130 billion.

So, when matters came to a head and surfaced in the media, and the government said there would be no harassment till a committee came up with a solution, the taxman continued to issue notices and, in one case, the start-up said the taxman had even attached its bank account and withdrawn money from it. And when those protesting against the tax on angel funding ratcheted up the protest, the taxman issued clarifications that were niggardly and didn't really address the issue. So, for instance, when no tax was to be levied if the start-up had a capital of under ₹10 crore, this low cap limited the scope of angel funding. And since the exemption applied to angels who had an income of over ₹50 lakh and a net worth of over ₹2 crore, this effectively ruled out investments from friends and family that probably represent a fifth of all angel investment. By saying investment up to ₹25 crore in start-ups will now be exempt, the friends-and-family issue has been sorted out; start-ups can now have a capital base of up to ₹100 crore in place of the earlier ₹25 crore and any listed firm—with a turnover of at least ₹250 crore and a net worth of ₹100 crore—can also act as an angel investor without the money being taxed; funding by big local firms can be a big source of investment as it is in other countries.

To ensure the solution works, the government must now monitor tax demands to ensure the taxman doesn't still try to catch angel investments under the ambit of Section 68 of the I-T Act; so, as long as the start-up furnishes the PAN numbers of investors and all payments are made by cheque, that has to be good enough. The taxman is under pressure to ensure that shell companies don't masquerade as start-ups, so the temptation to have stricter norms in practice needs to be guarded against. Also, the stipulation that the start-up can't invest in shares will ensure no start-ups can merge or take over another firm; this is unduly restrictive. If the taxman is worried about the use of shell companies to siphon off funds, he needs to catch them, not make life difficult for start-ups. Also, there is little point coming up with new rules if the 2,000-2,500 tax orders already passed are not scrapped based on the new rules.

SurveillanceState

The release of surveillance data from China demonstrates the restricted freedom the country's citizens and minorities enjoy

A DISCOVERY BY Victor Gevers, a Dutch cybersecurity researcher who revealed the said data on Twitter last week, has given a rare glimpse into China's extensive surveillance of Xinjiang, a remote region in the west of the country, home to an ethnic minority population that is largely Muslim. The database was a compilation of real-time data on more than 2.5 million people in western China, updated constantly with GPS coordinates of their precise whereabouts. Alongside their names, dates of birth, places of employment, sex, home address, official identification card number, etc., there were notes on the places that they had most recently visited. The database Gevers found appeared to have been recording people's movements, tracked by facial recognition technology.

And now, questions of privacy and freedom abound, but this kind of extensive surveillance is not new for China, which is known to have strict internet surveillance and censorship rules, or the US, for that matter, ever since Edward Snowden, in 2014, leaked details of extensive phone and internet surveillance by American intelligence agencies to the media. In the Chinese case, the *New York Times* reports that the ruling government has established a robust and nation-wide facial recognition and artificially intelligent surveillance system with more than 200 million surveillance cameras, with the aim of tracking the exact movements of citizens. And what these cameras and video feeds are used for in the politically tense atmosphere of Xinjiang, no matter the rest of the country, does not bode well for the minority communities there. The province has been subject to severe security measures by the Chinese government over the past few years in the name of quashing and cleansing the society of extremist movements, like internment camps that the government says are vocational training centres designed to rid the region of latent extremism. Despite a UN committee reporting last year that these centres could be used against those peacefully exercising their rights, thus facilitating the "criminal profiling" of ethnic and religious minorities, and more such international condemnations from human rights groups and national governments, greater concerted international action continues to be absent, placing the lives of the ethnic minorities in further jeopardy.

ANGEL TAX

BY ALLOWING LISTED FIRMS TO DO ANGEL INVESTMENT, A BIG WINDOW FOR POTENTIAL FUNDS HAS BEEN OPENED UP, AND THAT WILL BENEFIT BOTH THE BIG FIRMS AND START-UPS

Indian firms can finally act like angels

NOT SINCE THE launch of 'Start-up India' in 2016 has a single notification from the government garnered so much praise from Indian entrepreneurs. The recent notification from DPIIT (formerly DIPP) signalled the death knell for the dreaded 'Angel Tax'—section 56(2)(viib) of the Income Tax Act, 1961. The section taxed capital receipts from Indian investors as income in the hands of private companies based on "high" share premium, a taxation approach unique only to India. It also applied only to investments from Indians and not foreigners—an act of discrimination which has seen domestic funding shrink 48% from 2015 and had led many to dub this the 'Indian Tax'.

The notification, borne out of roundtables organised by Ramesh Abhishek of DPIIT on February 4, was a refreshing change of pace as it crowdsourced a solution from Indian entrepreneurs as opposed to deciding what was best for them. Some of the measures include: -

- A ₹25 crore blanket exemption for money raised from any Indian source

- Extending the tenure and revenue threshold to 10 years and ₹100 crore in order to qualify as a start-up

- Allowing investments from listed companies to be exempt from the section

But it is the last point around listed companies that is the single biggest game-changer for Indian start-ups.

Every start-up ecosystem in the world thrives when its large listed companies invest heavily into the ecosystem. Silicon Valley owes a lot to listed companies like Google, Facebook, Salesforce, Microsoft, etc., who have



SIDDARTH PAI
Founding partner, 3one4 Capital

invested billions of dollars into start-ups and are amongst the largest acquirers of start-ups there. China's Alibaba, Tencent and Baidu are renowned for creating start-up clusters as well. The best example of this comes from the Didu-Uber wars in 2016.

When Uber raised \$2 billion to specifically invest in China, Jean Liu, the president of Didi Chuxing, the largest cab-hailing service in China, went straight to Tencent and Baba to get the capital required to take them on. In the words of Yanbo Wang, Chinese academician who studies start-ups, "for Uber, burning through \$2 billion in China was a huge amount. But for Didi, and for TenCent and Alibaba, spending \$2 billion to win at home? It was nothing". Which Indian entrepreneur can boast the same of an Indian company giving him or her the capital to take on a global behemoth?

The top 10 listed companies in India are sitting on cash and cash equivalents of over ₹2.7 lakh crore, which is around \$38 billion. Contrast that with the \$38.5 billion raised by all Indian start-ups from 2014 to 2018, of which not even 10% comes from Indian sources, and you can see how



our listed companies have failed the start-up ecosystem. Companies like TCS, Infosys, Indian Oil, are buying back crores of stock—an indication that the company believes that the money is better returned to investors

as opposed to being invested by the company—belies the sheer potential that remains untapped.

But no longer. This 'Angel Tax' prevented listed companies from investing in start-ups as their investments would have been liable to being taxed in the hands of the start-up. Due to stringent norms regarding the reporting of the fair value of all investments, this tax amount impaired the value of the start-up and directly hit the bottom-line of the listed company. But after this exemption given to them, their reluctance to immerse themselves into the Indian start-up system should subside.

Make no mistake, India will not become a digital colony unless we have more active participation from domestic pools of capital. Our listed companies are sitting on piles of cash and, yet, their acquisitions of and investments into Indian start-ups are paltry. While the rest of the world is

When Uber raised \$2 billion to invest in China, Didi went to Tencent & Alibaba for funds. Burning \$2 billion in China was a lot for Uber, but it mattered less for Tencent/Alibaba to help win at home

What choices does India have?

Is India ready for a long war? It is easy to unite while the blood is boiling but a long hard war with no end in sight is another matter. It is unknown in India

MEGHNAD DESAI

A prominent economist and labour peer



INDIA IS UNITED—by Pakistan. That is the paradox of nationalism. Every nation has a favourite or most-hated enemy. For France, it was Germany for over a hundred years. England had France as its enemy for nearly a thousand years. India has, since the 1947 partition, Pakistan as an enemy.

It has fought four wars with Pakistan. It began within months of independence in Kashmir. In 1965, Shastri surprised everyone by asking the Army to cross the border at Punjab and reverse the balance of the conflict which Pakistan thought would be in Kashmir. India was able to assist the Mukti Bahini to dismember Pakistan and help create Bangladesh. In Kargil, despite the surprise, India won. There is little doubt India could win again in a limited war, but the risk now is that both countries have nuclear weapons.

There are people who want peace. They emphasise the syncretic culture between the two nations. There have been people who wish the reunion of the two countries, if not that of all three which were once united. But after Pulwama, this is a distant dream. The urgent task is now to think about retaliation.

Time is short. Though the decision is with the armed forces, the imminence of elections makes it urgent that the war be got out of the way before voting starts. The war has to be of limited duration and one in which India sets itself a precise goal and can unilaterally end the war. Not that anyone is likely to be told what the Army will do. Nor do they need amateur advice.

Even so, what can India do? The most direct and legitimate action

would be to cross the Line of Control and occupy Azad Kashmir. This makes it clear that it is being used to transport terrorists and India wants to shut this gap. Azad Kashmir is of an indeterminate status as it was seized by Pakistan as part of an unsettled war of 1948, but still legally is a part of India as per the Treaty of Accession that the maharaja of Kashmir signed with India.

As some loss of life, the Indian Army could occupy Azad Kashmir. Retaining it would be difficult. It could be made into an international dispute, going possibly to the UN. If so, India could hold it forever given how long it takes UN to solve any such dispute. This would be ending the 1948 war.

This is not likely to end there. Pakistan, along with China, is bound to open another front in the northern border regions of India with China. This is tricky territory and India will face two enemies simultaneously. If the conflict lasted, it could escalate, bringing the US on to India's side. Trump has declared his dislike for Pakistan as a haven of terrorism. He has no time for China either. India has maintained an implicit understanding with the US ever since Manmohan Singh's nuclear decision which George Bush helped with.

Is India ready for a long war? It has no experience of prolonged war. It experienced defeat and humiliation

in 1962 but that is now forgotten. It is easy to unite while the blood is boiling but a long hard war with no end in sight is another matter. It is unknown in India.

It would make more sense to inflict damage by a strictly limited action which would be like a hit and run. As in 1965, it could be away from Kashmir. This would involve action across the Punjab or Rajasthan border. Like the surgical strike, India could hit the enemy camps and then withdraw. Pakistan may retaliate by opening another front and then the war could extend across the border.

Then there is the naval option. India and Pakistan have only fought land wars. Given the recent upgrading of the Indian Navy, it would be possible to deploy the Navy to attack Karachi, a sort of reversal of 26/11. This could be a limited engagement, striking a symbolic blow and demonstrating India's naval superiority.

These are just arm-chair speculations. What the Army will do is quite properly a secret and no amount of outside advice is going to matter. It will, however, alter the dynamics of the election. All the other issues will be off the table during the period when the Army is engaged.

The government cannot take for granted that it will benefit. That will depend on the success of the strike and any repercussions which may follow if Pakistan escalates the quarrel into a full-fledged war.

What the Army will do is quite properly a secret and no amount of outside advice is going to matter. It will, however, alter the dynamics of the election and has to, thus, be of limited duration

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lowering of rates

RBI recently cut the repo rate by 25 bps, but there is no indication yet on the ground to show that credit flow has been broad-based with banks still remaining reluctant to lower their lending rates. With Consumer Price Inflation having touched a nine-month low of 2.05%, banks should be nudged to lower the lending rate before RBI embarks upon further monetary easing measures. Agreed, low inflation, low interest rates, a stable rupee and global crude prices augur well for the ruling BJP government at the Centre as it gears up to face the Lok Sabha polls, but when low or negative food inflation is synonymous with rural distress, and with both the Centre and states running fiscal slippages, it casts a big shadow over their commitment towards macroeconomic stability. Staying course on macroeconomic stability by the elected governments without resorting to populist measures during election season would bring more tangible benefits to our economy. Fiscal prudence should not be sacrificed at the altar of populist schemes — M Jeyaram, Madurai

A shocking tragedy

The tragedy in the skies over Bengaluru that claimed the life of one pilot and left two others injured has left aviation buffs stupefied. The accident occurred after two Hawk aircraft of the Surya Kiran Aerobatics team collided in mid-air with one aircraft cannoning into the other's cockpit during a dress rehearsal for the Aero India 2019. The flying manoeuvres and aerial stunts are no doubt breathtaking but can go awry as this mishap proved — Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

THE FINANCE BILL, 2019, has introduced a far-reaching tax reform. Clause 8 of the Bill has enhanced the rebate under Section 87A from ₹2,500 to ₹12,500. As a result, about 40% of individual taxpayers on the records of the department—those with returned total income of ₹5 lakh or less—are absolved of any obligation of paying income tax.

In practical terms, after availing standard deduction as well as other deductions for long-term savings etc, salary earners can easily earn up to ₹60,000 per month without having to worry about income tax. The impact of this reform on the economy is likely to be multi-layered and complex, but mostly beneficial.

The finance minister had, in his Interim Budget speech, estimated the cost of this reform at ₹18,500 crore—the revenue loss emanating from this measure. The government appears to have computed this by aggregating the revenue gathered from slabs below ₹5 lakh. This calculation is fallacious because, historically, whenever tax rates have been reduced, collections have shot up.

Thus, when in FY75, personal income tax rates were reduced from 97.75% to 77%, and then later in FY77 further reduced to 66%, the net revenues of the government of India from this source—after deducting the states' share—spurred from ₹213 crore in FY74 to ₹362 crore in FY75 and further to ₹542 crore in FY77. Sometimes, however, the spurt comes with a lag of a few years. For instance, over FY86 and FY88, the number of tax slabs were reduced to four, and the maximum tax rate was further brought down to 50%. Revenues, correspondingly, increased from ₹697 crore in FY85 to ₹1,492 crore in FY89.

These instances can be multiplied, but the fiscal history of modern India quite clearly establishes that rate cuts tend to increase and not decrease tax revenues. In practical terms, therefore, the recent rate cut may not only have no cost, but may actually result in revenue gains.

What explains this phenomenon?

Arthur Laffer, the noted American economist, points out that starting from a tax rate of nil, every increase in the rate of tax will, in the first instance, lead to an increase in revenue. After an optimum point, however, a further increase in rates will lead to a decrease in total revenue. It follows then after such a point a decrease in rate will lead to an increase in total revenue. Unlike many other countries—especially in developed world—in India the Laffer curve appears to be not an idle theoretical construct, but a reality.

Quite apart from public revenues, the new rationalised structure of rates is likely to affect the economy in a number of other ways as well. Firstly, among the

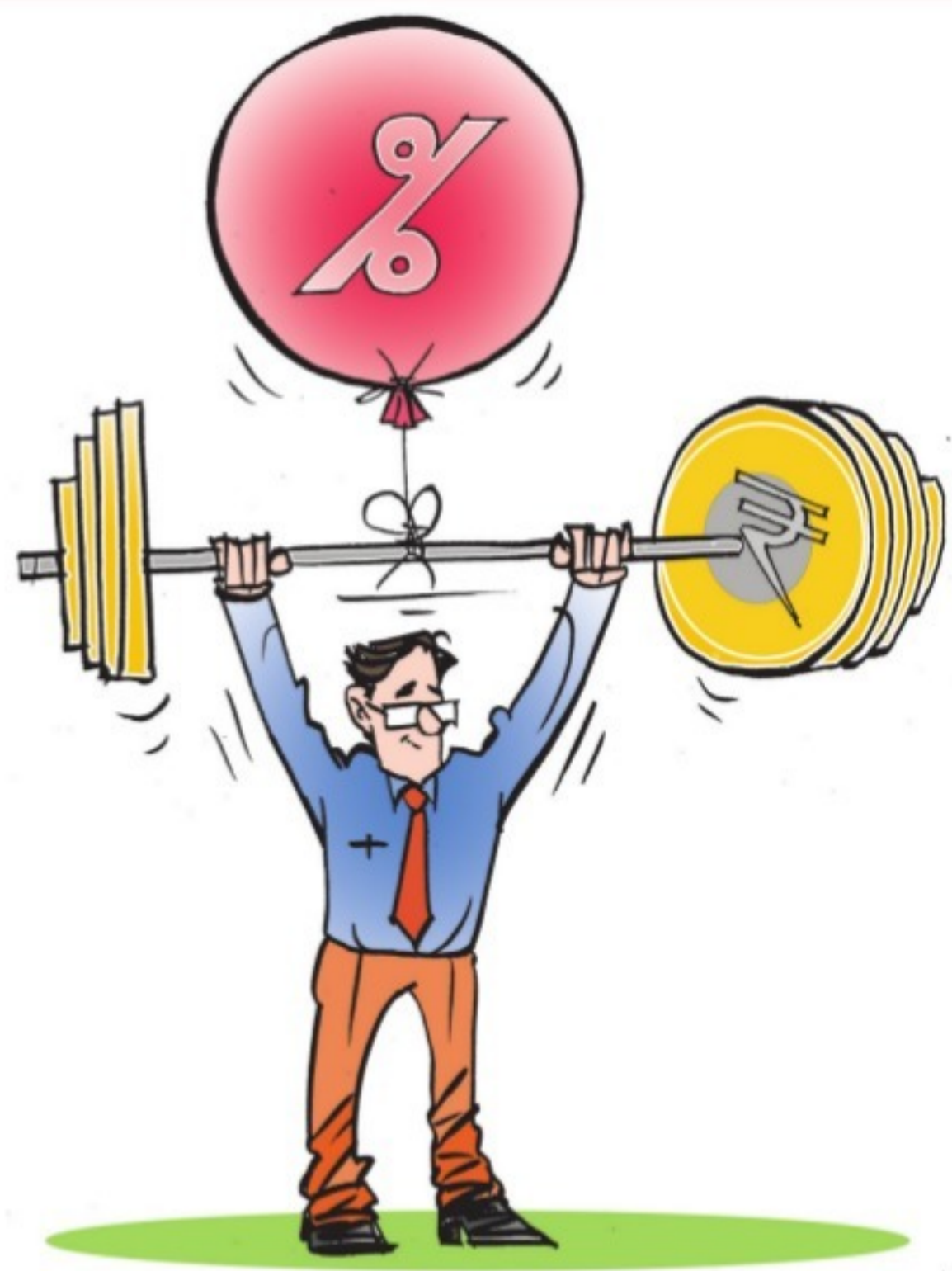


ILLUSTRATION: ROHINIT PHORE

HARDAYAL SINGH

The author is former Chief Commissioner of Income Tax



● **INCOME TAX**

Towards the 'right' rate structure

The economic impact of the recent rebate in income tax announced in Interim Budget is likely to be multi-layered and complex, but mostly beneficial—historically, whenever tax rates have been reduced, collections have shot up

affected middle classes, it may drive people to work harder, because whatever additional income they earn will now remain with them. Unlike the rich, these taxpayers value additional income much more than additional leisure.

Secondly, many of them may now declare to the tax authorities some income they were earlier trying to evade or avoid. This is because they may now find that the cost of compliance is low, but that of evasion and avoidance is high.

Finally, the additional income now available to the taxpayer will either be saved or spent. At the macro level, if it is saved, it will help enhance household savings (recovering from a five-year low of 16.3% of GDP in FY17) and translate into much-needed investment. On the other hand, if it is spent, it will augment sagging consumer demand, which may help firms utilise excess capacity, and ultimately spur them into making fresh investments in capital goods. In either case, the overall economy will benefit.

The main criticism against this measure is that the ruling government

The new government can consider adopting rate of 10% for incomes up to ₹10 lakh, 20% between ₹10-25 lakh, and 30% above ₹25 lakh, as was suggested by draft DTC 2009

should not have waited till its last Budget to announce the same. The current government was elected on the plank of "minimum government and maximum governance". This tax reform is very much in line with that promise. With the maximum marginal tax rate of 30% (about 36% with various cesses and surcharges), applicable to incomes above ₹10 lakh, India's rate structure is internationally competitive. The 30% band, however, kicks in at a comparatively lower level than in many other countries. In addition, the bands themselves need to be elongated. This is because they were set many years ago. Because of inflation, many taxpayers find themselves being taxed at higher rates, without their real income having increased.

The draft Direct Taxes Code presented for discussion by the UPA government in 2009 suggested a rate of 10% for incomes up to ₹10 lakh, 20% between ₹10 lakh and ₹25 lakh, and 30% above ₹25 lakh. In the Indian context, this is a pre-eminently sensible rate structure that a newly elected government should seriously consider adopting when it presents the full Budget later this year. This would carry through the current reform to its logical conclusion.

Not just straws in the wind

JAMAL MECKLAI

The author is CEO, Mecklai Financial



Change is definitively in the air and there is little doubt that tax rates on the wealthy in the US are going to rise

AN EDITORIAL I READ in the *Financial Times* reported that sales of vinyl (records) have been exploding—25% year-on-year in the US and 17% in the UK—as have sales of hardback books (31% y-o-y). "The millennial generation (those born after 1996) is an important contributor to this phenomenon, seeing the vinyl record (as) an example of the "authenticity" they crave in everything from food to politics."

The current issue of *The Economist* has a cover story titled 'Millennial Socialism'—unsurprisingly, they believe it is not the answer to capitalism's problems.

AOC—Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the youngest member of US House of Representatives, and, at 29, a little older than the millennials—has been making waves as a member of the Democratic Socialists of America and advocating a progressive platform that includes Medicare for All, jobs guarantee, guaranteed family leave, establishing a Green New Deal, abolishing US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, free public college and trade school, infrastructure projects for renewable energy, and a 70% marginal tax rate for incomes above \$10 million.

Elizabeth Warren, a senior Senator who is running for President, has called Trump a "symptom of a larger problem (that has resulted in) a rigged system that props up the rich and powerful and kicks dirt on everyone else." She is calling for a high tax on assets in excess of \$50 million, which approach, in my view, is superior to that of AOC, since (a) it undercuts the likely (bullshit) criticism that it would reduce the incentive for highly productive people to work harder, and (b) redistribution of assets rather than income can generate far more value for the economy, since most of these assets—second homes, high value luxuries—are underutilised in terms of generating income.

Clearly, socialism is coming to America even though an extraordinary number of people in the US (and, to be sure, other countries) are extremely touchy about the word. It's almost as if the benefits of successful socialist economies—Germany and most of Northern Europe, for instance—carry some sort of moral disgrace. It may have to slip in under another name—"a kinder, gentler capitalism", perhaps.

Indeed, it is significant that as far back as the late 1980s, President George HW Bush—never anybody's image of a socialist—spoke of the need for a "kinder, gentler America" highlighting the fact that things were not going the right way in America. And, indeed, the fact remains that in the 40 years since, inequality has soared to levels where talk of socialism is no longer limited to sophomore classes and Che Guevara stories.

Change is definitively in the air and there is little doubt that tax rates on the wealthy are going to rise. I would hope—and it seems a reasonable bet—that tax avoidance (ha ha) and tax arbitrage will come into focus. What seems like a thousand years ago, I used to work as a legal proofreader at law firms in New York and first came across the term "tax avoidance"—to anyone with half a brain, it was clear that this was just a legal way to "cheat" on your taxes. People like Warren Buffett have highlighted this time and again.

The scale of loss to the economy is impossible to assess, but I would bet that easily 2-3% of US GDP is tax avoidance away in various tax havens like the Cayman Islands and others. One idea would be for the US government to pay each citizen of each of these havens, say, \$40,000 a year (75-80% of US GDP per capita) in return for closing down these facilities. A Google search showed the population of Caymans at 60,000 (in 2016); so the payout to them would be about \$2.5 billion; if the total for all tax havens came to 50 times that, the cost would be far less than even 1% of US GDP—the gain would doubtless be many, many times that.

There are much brighter minds than mine that could come up with better solutions—the good news is that many of them will now be working for the people and not just the 1%. Movements like Occupy Wall Street will likely come back to life, perhaps as part of the upcoming Presidential campaign.

Asset prices will fall globally, as the US is still the biggest daddy in the game. This will be no bad thing—most cities have become prohibitively expensive to live in. Indeed, there is already a softening at the top end of real estate; and certain "luxury" purchases remind me of the old adage of buyers having more money than brains, reflecting my earlier point that these assets are certainly monumentally inefficient in terms of generating economic value. Even as interest rates fall faster than currently anticipated, equity markets will remain subdued. There will, of course, be enormous pushback—indeed, there already is. Volatility will rise—buy the Vix.

But the reality is that there are far too many straws in the wind for this to be just another evening breeze.

Making India a defence manufacturing hub

BABA KALYANI

The author is president, SIDM, and chairman, CII National Committee on Defence

INDIA IS EXPECTED to be a \$10-trillion economy in the next 12-13 years and its defence spend will reflect this expansion, creating huge demand for indigenously built modern weapon systems. The draft Defence Production Policy (DPP) 2018 highlights major categories of systems—fighter aircraft, helicopters, warships, land & combat vehicles, etc. Such critical platforms clubbed with bringing in high-technology in the country offer huge opportunities for both global and Indian OEMs. Policy goals include achieving a turnover of \$26 billion and additional investments of \$10 billion by 2025. In line with its stated objectives, over the last four years, the ministry of defence initiated many policy and procedure reforms.

DPP 2016 has many enabling features to promote the role of Indian industry: ■ Higher preference for Make-in-India categories; ■ Simplified 'Make' procedure with higher level of funding (90% against 80% earlier); and ■ Strategic partnership model to facilitate participation of Indian private industry, through technology collaboration with foreign OEMs, in select segments—fighter aircraft, helicopters, submarines and armoured fighting vehicles.

Besides rationalising items requiring direct industrial licences (DIL), the government enhanced FDI limit in defence (from 26% to 49% through automatic route, and up to 100% on case-by-case basis through government route where access to modern technology may be involved). Revised offset guidelines have been introduced to simplify processes.

Ahead of the Aero India 2019, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved significant changes in DPP, in what is called the third phase of reforms. These are focused on making procurement procedures industry-friendly and simplifying certain aspects, to make it smoother and faster, to meet the opera-

tional requirements of the armed forces. The ministry of defence has launched projects for development of two defence industrial corridors (in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh) dedicated to defence manufacturing. State governments are offering incentives for starting defence & aerospace industries to attract investments and create job opportunities.

Many Indian companies are suppliers to major OEMs directly and through their tier-1 suppliers. Positive policies and Make-in-India have created enthusiasm among Indian industry, which is on the threshold to assume greater responsibility in making the nation self-reliant in defence production. Private industry has added demonstrable capability for manufacturing warships to gun systems, missile systems, small arms, etc.

The resurgence of India's manufacturing is remarkable. Revenues are soaring and the sector is making its presence felt abroad as many Indian firms are becoming transnational. India is developing into a manufacturing hub for global corporations wanting to leverage

the sector's proven capability in product design, reconfiguration and customisation, assured quality, and value addition.

Civil aviation is also soaring. Passenger traffic is likely to touch 350 million in 2020 to make India the third-largest aviation market in the world. India's fleet of 430 civil aircraft will likely double over 5-7 years. The maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) sector is projected to increase from \$700 million to \$1.5 billion by 2020. Rapid growth now calls for on modernisation of airports, communications, navigation and surveillance systems for air traffic management, and facilities for MRO to manage pressure on the existing civil aviation infrastructure.

We, at Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers and CII, believe that global aerospace industries would take a note of these positive developments, and Aero India is a platform to explore scope and opportunities for JVs and partnerships, and would provide a fillip to the defence industry in India, promote investments and build partnership to make India a defence manufacturing hub.

INNOVATION

INDIA'S 7% GROWTH RATE, on an average, for the last three decades, is quite an achievement. But the Indian economy needs to grow at double digits for the next three decades, like China did, to eliminate poverty, provide decent jobs to masses and improve overall standard of living. A way to do so is improving productivity of factor endowments, particularly of the large labour force. Improving productivity and competitiveness across the board depends upon 'innovation' where India's lags behind in a big way from not only developed countries but also from its peers like China.

India's rank on the Global Innovation Index is 57 out of 126 countries, compared to China's 17th. If we look at R&D expenditure, India spends only 0.69% of its GDP vis-a-vis 4% and 2.14% by South Korea and China, respectively. Given the size of China's GDP, the R&D expenditure of China is around 12 times that of India. No wonder, China has surpassed giants in innovation, like the US, Germany and France, and has become number one in both the number of patent applications as well as in the number of patents granted.

India aspires to be the next manufacturing hub, but is fast losing out to China in many sectors. A sector where India still enjoys comparative advantage is pharmaceuticals. In fact, India is one of the largest producers of the generic versions of high-

Are we fast losing out to China?

India needs to focus on policies that promote innovation-led growth to stay competitive in the global market

PRAVAKAR SAHOO & RASHI SONAL

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quality medicines with lower prices mostly due to competitive advantage in cost of production and R&D. India has been the leading producer in some of the sub-sectors like vaccines and antiretroviral drugs used to combat AIDS. However, India's share in bio-pharmaceuticals is far behind countries like South Korea and China. India's share is less than 3% in the world bio-pharma industry and its mission is to reach 5% in bio-pharma by 2022.

China is the second-largest producer of pharma ingredients. Encouraged by supportive government policies like preferential pricing for innovative drugs, China has been the leader in active pharmaceu-

tical ingredient (API) manufacturing and the second-largest investor in R&D. Some of the advantages to the pharma sector in China are low prices due to bulk production, increasing participation of EU and US companies with Chinese corporations, increase in government expenditure on health sector, new pharma regulatory review and application process, etc.

In recent years, China has focused on innovation. Earlier, the Chinese pharma sector was inward-looking and investors were worried because of unfavourable regulatory issues such as delays in drug approvals, IPR violations and lack of transparency. For example, foreign companies



had to initiate clinical trials despite approval from other countries. However, China has responded to these challenges by taking appropriate measures such as a strong regulatory framework towards transparency, introducing the patent linkage system to minimise patent infringement and patent issues, massive increase in staff at the China Food and Drug Administration (CFDA) to reduce applications from five years to six months, opening doors to foreign contract manufacturing organisations, and also proposing to accept overseas clinical trials.

China has also taken steps to encourage innovation in medicines and medical

devices. The initiatives are meant to accelerate a transparent and quick application and approval process, and to protect the patents and investors in innovation industry. China has developed TRIPS-compliant IP laws and regulations, and put in efforts to improve administrative capacity of IP offices. In 2017, CFDA became a member of the International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH). This allows China to catch up with high-speed drug development in the EU and the US. Overseas companies can now use optimised review process and international multi-centre clinical trials. Increasingly, China is taking measures to repatriate scientists of Chinese origin and also attracting scientists of foreign origin, which helps in technology transfers. Moreover, Chinese still continue with SEZs and R&D parks with fiscal incentives, discounted utilities, R&D funds and access to funds. Given the ageing population, rising health expenditure including big expenditure on R&D, the pharma sector in China is booming.

India lacks a comprehensive policy for innovation in pharma. Strengthening IPRs and regulatory procedure that facilitate partnership in research, technology and innovation are needed. Stronger sector-specific skill development programme, access to finance through more venture capital investment and seed funding, bet-

ter infrastructure and more PPP are necessary for innovation across sectors, including pharma. India can follow some of the steps China has taken, such as training a large number of PhDs and repatriation of trained scientists, establishment of common environment treatment infrastructure, and regulations for assuring quality and safety of products.

Given the importance of the pharma sector in its contribution to the health sector, employment and exports, India introduced Pharma Vision 2020 and framed policies to reduce time for new facilities, etc, but the focus needs to be on policies to maintain and promote the competitive advantage that this sector enjoys.

What India lacks is the culture of innovation. There are thousands of in-house R&D and industrial centres by both public and private sectors, but these are spread out and lack synergy. It's time to encourage partnership and collaboration for efficiency and better outcomes. More spending on R&D along with better linkages between industries, academics and R&D centres is required. Participation of industry with academic and public institutions, starting from curriculum development to joint research, publications, patents, etc, would create a better innovation environment. India needs to focus on policies that promote innovation-led growth to stay competitive in the global market.

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

DISGRACE

How offensive does Governor Tathagata Roy need to be to incur the displeasure of the President? The wait continues

MEGHALAYA GOVERNOR TATHAGATA Roy has endorsed a call for a boycott of Kashmir and Kashmiris in the wake of the Pulwama tragedy. Roy's tweet of an appeal from a "retired colonel" to boycott Kashmir and "everything Kashmiri" with the comment that "I am inclined to agree" comes when Kashmiri students, professionals, traders etc. are increasingly being targeted by Hindutva groups in many parts of India. While most of the political establishment — barring exceptions like West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the Left and, of course, leaders of the political parties in Jammu and Kashmir — has been ambivalent in its response to this campaign, Roy has walked the extra mile to condone it.

Maybe he needs reminding but Roy holds a Constitutional office. The Governor is the representative of the President and is expected to act as the custodian of the Constitution. In fact, he is meant to advise and caution the government if and when it transgresses Constitutional morality. What happens if he is accused of doing this? Well, nothing so far. It is tempting, of course, to dismiss this former president of BJP's West Bengal unit as a headline-hunting loudmouth. Social media thrives on his type, left, right and centre. Hasn't he said similar things in the past? He has, indeed. A couple of years ago, as Tripura Governor, he approvingly quoted Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee in a tweet to suggest that "Hindu-Muslim problem" could be resolved only through a "civil war". Later, he clarified that he wasn't advocating one but only quoting Mookerjee. To be fair to Roy, he has been consistent in his bigotry and it is possible that he believes it fetched him office. A year before being appointed as Tripura governor, he emphasised that "overwhelming Hindu majority is essential to maintain a multi-religious society and secular state" with the caveat that "West Bengal is slipping" on this count. Soon after taking oath as governor, Roy tweeted that Hindus in Bangladesh and West Bengal were attacked by Muslims and wondered "what awaits us Bengali Hindus?"

Roy, whose Twitter profile describes him as "right-wing Hindu socio-political thinker, writer, ideologue," is surely entitled to his views. It's all too good that authorities, who are quick to book university students for social media posts and charge them with sedition, firmly stand by Roy's right to free speech. It is worth a thought, however, how much further Governor Roy needs to stoop for the government and the Rashtrapati to wake up. Meanwhile, with each hateful tweet, he undermines his Constitutional position. Not that it bothers him one bit.

INTERIM SOLUTION

A framework agreement on capital, surplus transfers from RBI to government will smoothen ties between the two

FOR THE SECOND year running, the RBI has agreed to transfer an interim dividend or surplus profits to the government, with the pay out — at Rs 28,000 crore this time, more than double the Rs 10,000 it transferred to the exchequer last year. The early payout by the central bank and the mounting pressure on the RBI to transfer a much higher surplus is a reflection on fiscal management and government finances in an election year, with extra spending commitments and fiscal slippages. As the owner or controlling shareholder, it is natural, and justifiably so, for any government to seek a reasonable or fair return on the capital deployed by the sovereign, especially in the commercial enterprises promoted by it. But a distinction needs to be made when it comes to the central bank, even if the government is the sole owner, considering that the state of the bank's balance sheet is intrinsic to delivering on its objectives of monetary and financial stability and also to boost credibility, not just in the financial markets but also among credit rating agencies.

As the experience of the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent events show, there has been a dramatic change in the risk environment under which central banks operate. There is a recognition that these banks should be equipped to provide huge liquidity commitments and also build strong capital buffers as a cushion against unforeseen risks and potential losses. Notably, this has led to the Bank of England and the UK Treasury (the equivalent of the finance ministry in India) signing an MoU last year on the financial relationship between the two, which clearly lays down the capital principles and purpose and the ceiling above which net profits will be paid to the treasury as dividend. It helps that the Bank of England Act provides for 50 per cent of the bank's profits or such other sum to be paid to the treasury twice a year, including one as interim payment.

A committee headed by former governor Bimal Jalan is now reviewing the RBI's economic capital framework. As the monetary policy committee agreement has shown, a similar legislative framework agreement on capital and rules on surplus transfer can help narrow differences and smoothen ties between two critical arms of the government. But even that will be defeated if there is an escape clause for governments which are not fiscally prudent.

WELCOME, ROBOCOP

Kerala police has inducted an android into its ranks. Perhaps machines have lessons for more traditional law enforcement

ROBOCOP, PEOPLE TEND to forget, was not a robot. The eponymous character in the 1987 cyberpunk classic was a cyborg, and it's the hybrid's humanity that really moves the movie along. *The Terminator* (1984), on the other hand, terminated. KP-Bot, India's first robo-cop, has little similarity with her fictional counterpart from three decades ago — like the terminator, she's all robot. Modelled after women police personnel, the Kerala police's newest asset is an android developed by the Kochi-based start-up, Asimov Robotics, and Cyberdome, a technology development centre of the Kerala police. To begin with, KP-Bot will welcome visitors, pass out information and guide them through the services available at the police headquarters. So far, so innocuous. But, in the future, she will detect explosives and issue identity cards to visitors.

For the paranoid, those waiting for the inevitable robocalypse, Kerala's robocop is just another step towards the end of people as we know them. Between AI and machines with an understanding of armaments, does humanity stand a chance? Likely, this paranoia belongs where it began, in the realm of science fiction. And given that the company that helped create KP-Bot is named after Isaac Asimov, it is likely that any iterations on the android will keep in mind the Three Laws of Robotics: A robot may not harm a human being; it must follow orders; and it must protect itself, so long as such protection does not conflict with the first two laws.

The logical loop of the Three Laws, of course, is airtight. In fact, they are just about ethical enough to form guidelines for human police persons in India and beyond. Essentially, they boil down to being decent (no "third-degree"), disciplined (chain of command) and without pointless bravado. Sadly, even fictional robots and robocops have not been able to follow the Three Laws. And organic law enforcement is, for now, merely human.



RAMACHANDRA GUHA

Shaming ourselves

Our political response to the barbarous Pulwama attack has played into the hands of Lashkar, Jaish, and the ISI.

I WAS BORN and raised in Dehradun, a town which has been on the front pages of this newspaper in recent days, for reasons that do its history and reputation no credit at all. A series of chilling reports have appeared on the harassment of Kashmiri students studying in that town. They were forced to flee back to their home state, while the administrators of their colleges have been made to pledge that they will admit no Kashmiris in future. In at least one case, a senior faculty member of Kashmiri origin has been dismissed from his post.

Those persecuting innocent Kashmiris in Dehradun were led by activists of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad. Radical students of both the left and right are not prone to reason at the best of times, and in this case the ABVP has, at it were, a visible external stimulus for their anger — the horrific attack by terrorists on a CRPF convoy in Pulwama. The attack was coordinated by a jihadi group based in Pakistan, a group aided by the Pakistani Army and the Pakistani State. But why attack young citizens of the Republic for a crime committed by someone else, and orchestrated from across the border? And particularly the Kashmiris, who have come to seek a decent education outside their own state, hoping thereby to equip themselves for a job in the modern economy? How will attacking these students help in the war against terror and in the shaming of Pakistan?

The leaders of the ABVP are not known for careful or logical thinking. It may be hard for them to comprehend that the Kashmiris who come outside their home state to study are, in effect, India's best hope for stemming the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism in the Valley. If these Kashmiris can go to college safely and with self-respect in Dehradun, and then go on to work safely and with self-respect in places like the town I now call home, Bengaluru, then other Kashmiris will come to recognise what the jihadis seek to obscure — namely, that for a better future for themselves and their families, a country like India offers far better

prospects than a country like Pakistan.

The ABVP is unwilling or unable to understand that knowledge-seeking Kashmiri students can be an indispensable aid in India's battle against jihad. But surely the president of the BJP can. He is an exceptionally intelligent and well-informed man. However, he has an election to fight, and surveys suggest that his party will be hard put to achieve anything close to a majority in the Lok Sabha. So he chooses to go down the path of communal bigotry. Thus, in a recent speech in Guwahati, Amit Shah said that if the BJP returned to power in New Delhi, it "won't allow Assam to become another Kashmir". It is very clear what he means by this; that the BJP will not allow Muslims to settle in that state. The President of the BJP is willing to stigmatise citizens of Kashmir on the basis of their religion, in order to win more seats in Assam (where the majority religion is more compatible with the ideology of his party).

What the ABVP did to Kashmiris in Dehradun and what the BJP president said about Kashmir in Assam was awful enough. Even worse, from the point of view of constitutional propriety, were the tweets of the Governor of Meghalaya, endorsing the boycott of Kashmiris and of their products by the rest of India. These tweets were brought to the attention of the President's Office soon after they were issued. But they have not been retracted; indeed, no doubt in the knowledge that he is protected by those he reports to, the governor has defended his despicable statements in an interview to this newspaper.

The prime minister has been silent on the subject — as is his wont, when it comes to matters disturbing or controversial. One word by him would have stopped the goons of the ABVP in their tracks. Expectedly, it has not come. Notably, though, the president of the Congress party has said nothing either about the demonisation of ordinary Kashmiris in the streets of Northern India, on social media, and by powerful people in office. He, too, has an election to fight; and so

cowardice has prevailed over courage, political expediency over plain human decency. While the BJP seeks to demonise Kashmiris to win seats elsewhere in India, the Congress will act as if Kashmiris do not exist at all.

Kashmir, says the political class in one voice, is an integral part of India. Kashmiris are another matter altogether. So, instead of identifying, isolating, and weakening those elements in the Valley who promote Islamic fundamentalism, the ruling party now wants us to think of all residents of the Valley as traitorous. And the leading Opposition party is happy to go along with this. This is not just morally wrong, but politically suicidal — that is, if one's conception of politics goes beyond winning a particular election to assuring a secure and prosperous future for our Republic.

The threats and intimidation issued by the ABVP, the dog-whistles issued by Amit Shah and by the Meghalaya governor, the silence of the prime minister and of the Congress president — not one of these will make our jawans any safer. On the other hand, they will please and comfort our enemies, and embolden them further. If young Kashmiris are told that colleges in the mainland have no place for them, who does that help but the jihadis? If the governor of one state asks us to boycott citizens of another state, who does that help but the jihadis? If the president of India's ruling party insinuates that all Muslims are untrustworthy, who does that help but the jihadis? And if all these statements go uncontested by the prime minister and by the Congress president, who does that help but the jihadis?

The political response within India to the barbarous attack in Pulwama has played absolutely into the hands of the Lashkar, the Jaish, and the ISI. When we should have been proactive in shaming and stigmatising the Government of Pakistan for its sponsorship of terror, we have instead been proactive in shaming and stigmatising ourselves.

The writer is a Bengaluru-based historian



APOORVANAND

THE AGE OF CRITICISM

For over 50 years, Namvar Singh defined the contours of Hindi literary culture

THE MOST BRILLIANT mind of our literary world is no more. The death of Hindi literary critic Namvar Singh truly marks the end of an era. What was this era? It was defined by the excitement of creation and an eagerness to sincerely engage with it. It can, therefore, be called a true age of criticism. Namvar Singh was shaped by the Gandhi-Nehru era, which has been the only period of criticism in modern India. For, criticism exists only with creation. But the task of criticism is not to validate creation or be its propagandist. Criticism is not secondary to creation. Since creation is, in itself, a response, a critical one to the existing reality, it must submit itself to criticism, which examines it by the standards it has set autonomously.

Namvar Singh epitomised this spirit of criticism. Hindi has seen great critics like Ram Chandra Shukla and Hazari Prasad Dwivedi or Ram Vilas Sharma, but Namvar Singh strode like a colossus. It is seldom that a critic remains at the centre of literary discussion for more than half a century. Namvar Singh, trained in the classical literary traditions, was equally conversant with modern literary canons. He called himself a humble disciple of Dwivedi, who in turn was influenced by the cosmic and cosmopolitan vision of Rabindranath Tagore.

Nothing is beyond criticism, was the motto of the guru and the shishya. No tradition, no canon was sacred or holy enough to not be tested by the fire of criticism. Namvar Singh had tradition in his bones and could, therefore, question its lofty claims — he knew

when tradition was a source of nourishment and when it turned into a deadening disease. He was the last authoritative voice on the Aapabhramsha literature in Hindi and knew his Sanskrit so well that the Sanskrit scholars never tried to dispute his judgement. Namvar Singh held that tradition can never be seen as singular, it had to be plural. His book, which is also a tribute to his guru, is titled *Doosri Parampara Ki Khoj*. There was no one single high tradition to which all "little" traditions must submit. He loved new voices. Young writers remember with gratitude and fondness the phone calls and postcards from Namvar Singh. He preferred to err on the side of New. Only Ashok Vajpeyi comes close to him in this respect.

The range of Namvar Singh's scholarship was mind-boggling. He was inarguably the first and the only Hindi scholar and intellectual who commanded the respectful attention of luminaries from the world of social sciences and politics. He remained a voracious reader till the last and, like Bipan Chandra, fought his weakening eyesight to keep reading. It can be said that reading ate into his writing time. He remained a reluctant writer. People often treated this as laziness, but those who knew him well understood that it was his humility, the result of his companionship with the greats of the world of letters, that made him a reluctant writer.

Namvar Singh is described as a Marxist critic. But the adjective is redundant when applied to his work. Criticism is not a colony

of social sciences. In fact, its autonomy from ideological labels makes it a worthwhile activity. He also did not fall into the trap of theory, which became a fashion in the West and marginalised the discipline of criticism for a long time. For Namvar Singh, practical criticism was essential to keep the act of criticism relevant, not only to literature but to life itself. He was the first Marxist to challenge the official Marxist aesthetic canons and introduce revisionists or unofficial Marxists such as Walter Benjamin, Theodore Adorno and Antonio Gramsci to the Hindi reading public.

Namvar Singh developed a unique writing style. He wore his scholarship lightly and his writing was accessible even to those uninitiated into literary discourses. He was also popular as an orator, who commanded large followings in big and small towns. People from all walks of life thronged to listen to him. Not surprisingly, some called this frugal writer a representative of *vachik* tradition.

Namvar Singh never sacrificed his teaching for the sake of his other vocation, writing. He was faithful to his students, and prepared meticulously for his classes. He enjoyed polemics. There has not been a better master of this art than him. But he yearned for dialogue and understanding. Criticism can remain democratic only by inviting conversation.

In the passing away of Namvar Singh, the art of the word has lost a true lover.

The writer teaches Hindi at Delhi University



FEBRUARY 21, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

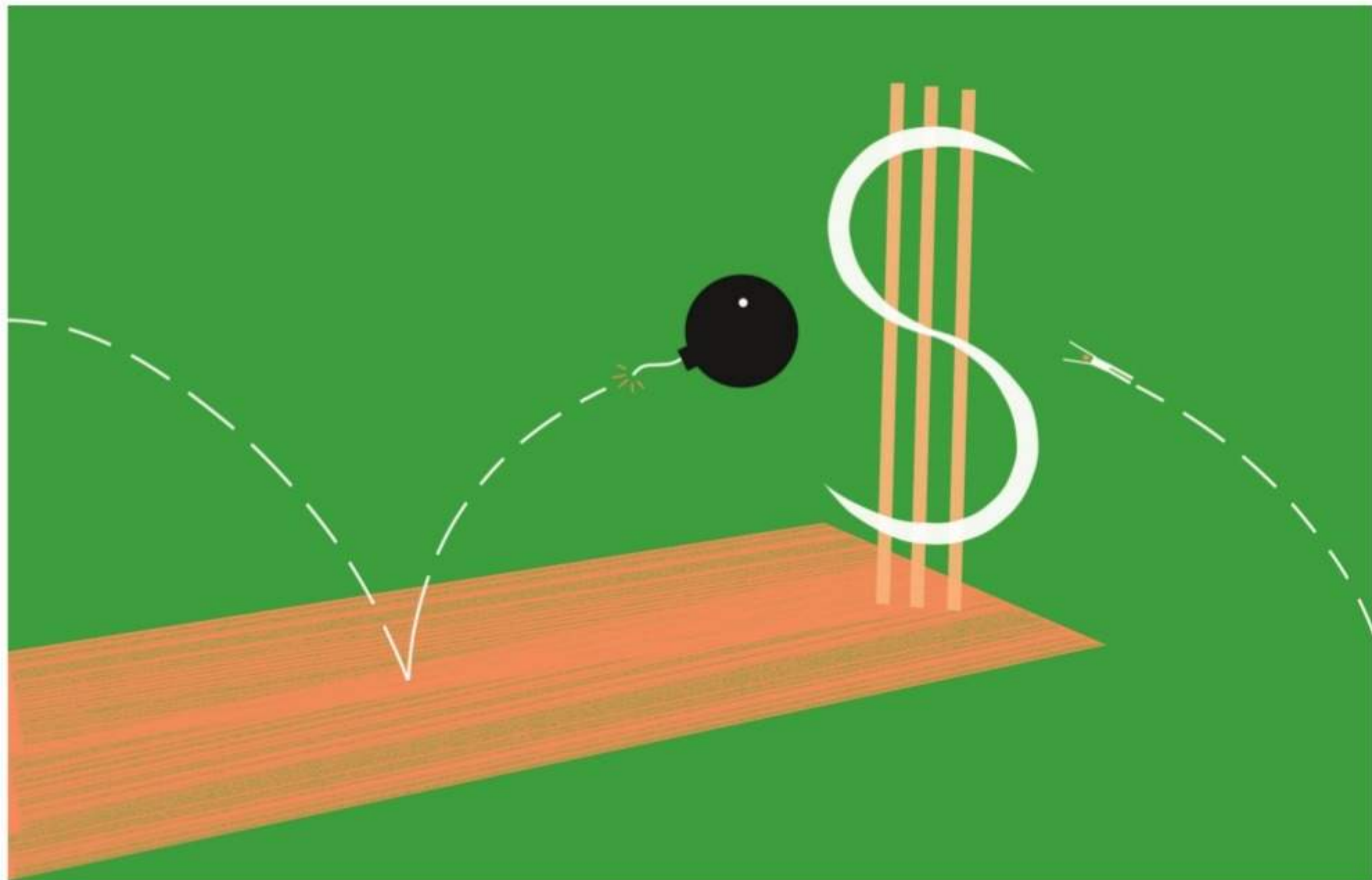
RAIL BUDGET
GOODS MOVEMENT AND suburban travel for commuters will cost more as a result of increases announced by Railway Minister Madhu Dandavate. Presenting the railway budget for 1979-80, Dandavate announced additional levies of Rs 178 crore to enable the railways to end the year with a surplus of Rs 88.49 crore. No increase has been proposed in fares for long distance passenger, mail, express or superfast trains. A supplementary charge of 5 per cent has been imposed on rail goods transported up to 500 kilometres, and 10 per cent for distances beyond 500 kilometres. Exemptions from supplementary charges to certain commodities have been withdrawn.

CHINA IN VIETNAM
AFTER A DAY of conflicting reports about what is happening on the Sino-Vietnamese border, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that its troops were still inside Vietnam, and were not withdrawing to the border. In the first announcement about the situation after almost 48 hours, the Chinese government officially denied earlier reports that the vice foreign minister, Ho Ying, had told the Lebanese ambassador in London that the operation in Vietnam was over, BBC reports. However, the foreign ministry statement did not go into any detail on the state of the fighting or indicate when China is likely to pull out. Later, the official Hsinhua news

agency reported that fighting was still going on in the Kwangsi and Yunnan border areas.

CONSENSUS WANTED
THE UTTAR PRADESH Janata Legislature Party will meet on February 27 to elect a new leader. Madhu Dandavate will conduct the meeting at Lucknow as central observer. The party's central parliamentary board at its meeting reviewed the developments in UP in the wake of the chief minister, Ram Naresh Yadav, losing the confidence of the party on February 15. There was general agreement among the board members belonging to different Janata constituents that the successor to Yadav should be selected by consensus.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE



CR Sasikumar

The cost of Pulwama

Any alleged terror attack traceable to Pakistan severely undercuts its economic stability, IMF deal



RANI D MULLEN AND DUVVURI SUBBARAO

IS IT POSSIBLE that Pakistan has scored a self-goal by allegedly sponsoring last week's terrorist attack on Indian security forces in Pulwama, Jammu & Kashmir which took over 40 lives? Since the Pakistan-based terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) has claimed responsibility for the attack, India has vowed to work on isolating Pakistan economically and diplomatically as a state sponsor of terrorism. This comes at a time when Pakistan is facing an external payments crisis, with only \$7 billion in reserves, less than two months of import cover, and is in desperate need of a bailout by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Yet, if India succeeds in convincing major shareholders of the IMF — the US, European countries, Japan and China — and international organisations like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) of the Pakistan state's involvement in these attacks, an IMF bailout of Pakistan, which looked like a distinct possibility just last week after the meeting between Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan and IMF managing director Christine Lagarde, could be in jeopardy. And Pakistan risks going over the precipice as a result.

Outwardly, Pakistan is putting up a brave face and appears to have got a reprieve with the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman promising investments up to \$20 billion during his recent visit there in what has widely been interpreted as help for the country's crumbling economy. However, these are just pledges of potential future investment,

and even if they materialise, funds will flow slowly as projects get grounded. Despite the fanfare of Prime Minister Khan and the crown prince cheerily driving through the streets of Islamabad in a horse-drawn carriage, the promised Saudi assistance will do little to rescue Pakistan from its rapidly deepening balance of payments crisis.

The need to access IMF assistance is a sharp brush with reality for Prime Minister Khan who, as is typical across South Asia, won office on the promise of huge handouts. Early in his tenure, Khan exuded confidence that friendly countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and China would come to his aid, thereby helping him avoid going to the IMF and escape the harsh conditionalities that will accompany an IMF package, including stringent expenditure cuts. Evidently, those hopes have not materialised to the extent expected, leaving the prime minister — who once said he would rather commit suicide than approach the IMF — with little choice but to negotiate with the IMF for Pakistan's 12th bailout package since the 1980s.

Even before the Pulwama attacks, there were difficult issues that Pakistan needed to settle with the Fund. One of the main issues is providing the IMF with concrete assurance that its assistance will not be used to repay Chinese loans. The IMF is likely also demanding a meaningful float of the exchange rate, which Pakistan will find difficult to yield on, in part out of fear of financial instability. Pakistan has already raised gas and electricity prices, but the Fund will likely go beyond just utility prices and seek a comprehensive fiscal responsibility package from the government to ensure that its assistance will pave the way for restoring credibility to public finances.

In Pakistan, as across emerging and developing economies, the IMF is seen as a necessary evil — to be approached as a last resort when all other avenues of resurrecting a sinking economy fail. Despite the fear of do-

The US is currently focused on a peace deal with the Taliban in order to leave Afghanistan, and Pakistan's support is crucial for concluding the deal. In return for that support, the US, as the dominant shareholder in the IMF, would have put its formidable weight behind a Fund bailout package for Pakistan. In the wake of the Pulwama attack, Pakistan may have forfeited that support.

domestic political backlash to IMF loan conditionalities, Pakistan's recent experience demonstrates the critical importance of an arrangement with the IMF for an economy in crisis. It is only an IMF package that sends the signals that can restore investor and market confidence in a failing economy and enable a sustainable adjustment. But the reverse is also true: If institutions such as FATF continue to keep Pakistan on the grey list or even blacklist it, and the IMF imposes more stringent conditionalities or even significantly delays its loan agreement, global investor confidence in Pakistan could nosedive, deepening the economic crisis.

On the political side, before the Pulwama attack, Pakistan's negotiating strength vis-à-vis the IMF seemed to have been improving. The US is currently focused on securing a peace deal with the Taliban in order to leave Afghanistan, and Pakistan's support is crucial for concluding the deal. In return for that support, the US, as the dominant shareholder in the IMF, would have put its formidable weight behind a Fund bailout package for Pakistan. In the wake of the Pulwama attack, Pakistan may have forfeited that support. The US has endorsed India's right to self-defence and, in a clear signal that it is not willing to look the other way from Pakistan-based and possibly-supported terrorist group attacks, it has asserted that Pakistan must crack down on terrorists operating from its territory, as per its obligations under UN resolutions.

Has Pakistan overplayed its hand? Will its worsening economic crisis help it realise that the price to pay for sponsoring terrorism can be exceedingly high? How Pakistan responds to these questions will determine the chances for peace in the Subcontinent.

Mullen is Visiting Senior Research Fellow and Subbarao is Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore



CLEMENT CHAUVET

Enterprise empowerment

Small businesses can lead to financial self-sufficiency, empower rural women

IN DHANI SHANKAR village, Bhiwani, Renu makes colourful bangles and cosmetic creams using natural ingredients. Renu was lucky to have received the support of her husband in starting her own enterprise. She was motivated to do this after attending a three-day Start-And-Improve-Your-Business training in Jui village, and, she started her shop with Rs 10,000. Now, Renu tells me, she makes a profit of Rs 8,000 in a month. Renu also motivates other women in her village as a Biz Sakhi and, with her help, 14 women have started their own businesses.

When Renu came to participate in the discussion on promoting entrepreneurship, she told me that rural women often face problems in entering the workforce due to their domestic duties. In fact, on an average, Indian women spend 297 minutes daily on unpaid care work.

The need to improve women's participation in the economy has been a long-standing priority and is also crucial towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, too. In recent years, entrepreneurship has emerged as an ideal way for rural women to contribute, by taking a few hours out of their day they can engage in small businesses and bring home additional income. There are

multiple programmes which offer support to such women such as the Start and Improve Your Business Program (SIYB) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the government's Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD). Our ongoing partnership with Hero MotoCorp Ltd and the Government of Haryana too seeks to positively impact the lives of 14,000 underprivileged women like Renu through training and entrepreneurial skill development.

However, recent data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation shows that women constitute only 14 per cent of the total entrepreneurs in the country. So, what is stopping more rural women from getting involved in entrepreneurship?

Through its pilot programmes with rural women under the Disha Programme, UNDP India has come to realise that one of the reasons for this lack of uptake is the absence of mentorship for women entrepreneurs. Women in rural areas face multiple barriers to pursuing income-generating activities, with patriarchal family and societal norms being the primary hurdle. Renu was of course lucky to have a very supportive husband.

Other issues include lack of awareness about opportunities, difficulty in accessing formal financing and poor customer management skills. It is clear that providing opportunities isn't enough — these women need to be made aware and guided through the process to ensure they are successful.

Trained by Disha Project — a partnership between UNDP India, IKEA Foundation and India Development Foundation, the Biz Sakhis are women from rural communities who guide budding female entrepreneurs through multiple processes and provide both practical and psychological support to them. As a first step, they encourage rural women to start their own businesses by making them aware of entrepreneurship as a realistic opportunity, and, by informing them of the benefits of starting their own small businesses.

However, even after the women are trained, access to finance remains a big hurdle for rural women who often dip into their savings or take loans from their family. Biz Sakhis are instrumental at this point in helping them access formal banking channels for loans, by providing them information about schemes such as the Mudra Yojana Scheme of the government.

Again, even with financing, small female-

run businesses often fail due to poor understanding of the market. Biz Sakhis provide inputs to help women access market linkages and introduce them to a variety of business models and ideas to help them scale up. They also work with small business owners to develop their communication skills, and to be able to persuade and negotiate with stakeholders within the ecosystem of their businesses.

However, the most important role that Biz Sakhis play in the lives of rural entrepreneurs, is to be the source of emotional and psychological support. It helps these women to become more confident in their abilities and have the determination to continue with their businesses.

Often, family pressures and societal norms discourage women from engaging in such activities or cause them to abandon their business in the wake of community backlash. Being from the community themselves, Biz Sakhis such as Renu can effectively engage with women and the community at large to counter such barriers and empower rural women to sustain their businesses.

The writer is the chief of skills and business development at UNDP India

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"India must see the writing on the wall and acknowledge that — just as the US has realised in Afghanistan — there is no military solution to Kashmir." — DAWN

Love of labour

The interim budget has kept in mind the interests of workers. This is the first time in recent history a government has done that



SAJI NARAYANAN C K

FOR THE FIRST time in a long while, a Union budget has tried to care for workers. In recent times, we have witnessed mere sermons on the social sector in the previous budgets. The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) had termed last year's budget as totally disappointing. Expectations similar to the one created by this budget were engendered in the budget presented by Yashwant Sinha during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, even though Sinha later shifted to the capitalist camp. In the current interim budget, the finance minister has affirmed that 50 per cent of the GDP comes from the sweat and toil of 42 crore workers in the unorganised sector. This is a recognition of the role labour plays in the country's economic progress. Let us hope that the pro-worker vision initiated this year will form a part of the future roadmap of India's development.

Historically, Babasaheb Ambedkar's tenure as India's first labour minister in the Viceroy's Council can be termed as the golden period for Indian labour. Ambedkar was also the architect of India's labour law reforms. The Minimum Wages Act, Dearness Allowance (DA), Leave Benefit, Revision of Scale of Pay, right to strike and many other laws and policies for women and workers came about thanks to him. Ambedkar also contributed to the shaping of the Employees State Insurance Act, Employees Provident Fund Act, Industrial Disputes Act and Factories Act. No government can justify straying from the path forged by a great reformer like Ambedkar.

Since the advent of globalisation, labour reforms as a part of economic reforms have become contentious. The present government also had to face objections on this count, even from the BMS. It has become an article of faith for policy makers in successive governments that an industrial empire can be built only on the graveyard of workers' rights. But the initial problems of the Narendra Modi government in the labour sector, fortunately, have been corrected to a considerable extent in recent days, mostly due to the non-compromising interference by BMS. The highly-contentious anti-labour reform process was stalled when PM Modi gave an assurance during the Indian Labour Conference that changes in labour laws will be brought about only after consulting with trade unions and other stakeholders. Since then, labour has benefited greatly from the change in direction.

The central government has doubled bonus benefits, maternity benefits, gratuity, Employee Provident Fund (EPF) cover

age and more. Minimum wages have been revised from Rs 246 to Rs 333/350 per day. This was done at a time when the CPM-ruled Tripura state fixed the country's lowest minimum wages at Rs 75 per day. Employee's State Insurance (ESI) eligibility ceiling, new ESI benefits, EPF minimum pension, honorarium for scheme workers were raised besides enhancing many insurance benefits. The long-pending demand of the neglected Gramin Dak Sevaks in the postal service to implement the Kamlesh Chandra Report was met by the central government. Besides, child labour was prohibited upto 14 years and wage payment through banks was made compulsory.

One demand of the trade unions, jointly, was that the labour departments, both at the Centre and in the states, must cease the delay in registering trade unions. The central government has, through a notification, decided that registration shall be deemed to have taken place after 45 days of application.

The trade unions and policy makers in the country were concerned by the fact that, at present, only about 7 per cent of the total 50 crore working population receives the benefits of the Minimum Wages Act. The new Labour Code on Wages presented in Parliament is historic and revolutionary. This law, if properly implemented, will not only change the face of Indian labour, but will also bring a sizeable proportion of the population above the poverty line. Similarly, the Labour Code on Social Security, which ensures about 14 benefits to the last worker, will also create history. There are certain provisions in it which need pruning. This golden chance of creating another milestone was delayed because it needs a better equipped policy and legislative machinery that can move faster.

Such a basket of pro-labour reforms is unique in recent history of labour, probably after Ambedkar's efforts in the direction. The BMS considers that that this was achieved due to the success of its approach of "sangharsh and samvad" towards the government.

At the same time, the CPM-led Kerala government has legislated the anti-worker Head-load Worker amendment Act, brought in the Shop Act Amendment through the ordinance route without the mandatory consultation with trade unions, which increased the working hours of women and continues to implement Fixed Term Employment without any beneficial protection. The communist trade unions are helplessly supporting such moves.

There are great expectations from the present Modi government since it has outdone its predecessors in showering benefits to the world of work. But this is not the end of history, and many things are yet to be achieved.

The writer is president, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE LAW'S RIGHT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Ruse of gender justice' (IE, February 20). As opposed to what the writer has assumed, triple talaq is not an ordinary form of divorce. It exists on the foundation of gender inequality where only a man has the right to invoke this form of separation. Even after the SC judgment declaring triple talaq unconstitutional, men continued the practice. The government decided to bring a law in these circumstances for the benefit of the women. The writer also overlooks the law on child marriage, dowry prohibition, cruelty against women and so on.

Vishalkha Singh Deshwai, Delhi

EMPTY PROMISES

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A promissory note' (IE, February 20). As the general elections approach, it's high time now for voters to understand the hollow promises made by each party. These promises can only be seen as a tool to appease the masses. Hopefully, voters will cast their votes bearing in mind long-term solutions to their problems this time.

Neha Khanna, New Delhi

A TIME FOR FRIENDS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'BJP and friends' (IE, February 20). The BJP-Shiv Sena alliance surprised all of us because of the way the Sena has been criticising Prime Minister Modi in recent times. It is also surprising to see the BJP conceding seats to Sena while it has won more seats and had a better strike rate in the 2014 general election. However, it is better for the BJP to have eaten humble pie and agreed on seat-sharing, rather than refusing an alliance. Since this is going to be an intensely fought election, the BJP would do well to be more ac-

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

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commodating of its allies. The BJP should learn from the SP and BSP, who have forgotten their differences to come together.

Bal Govind, Noida

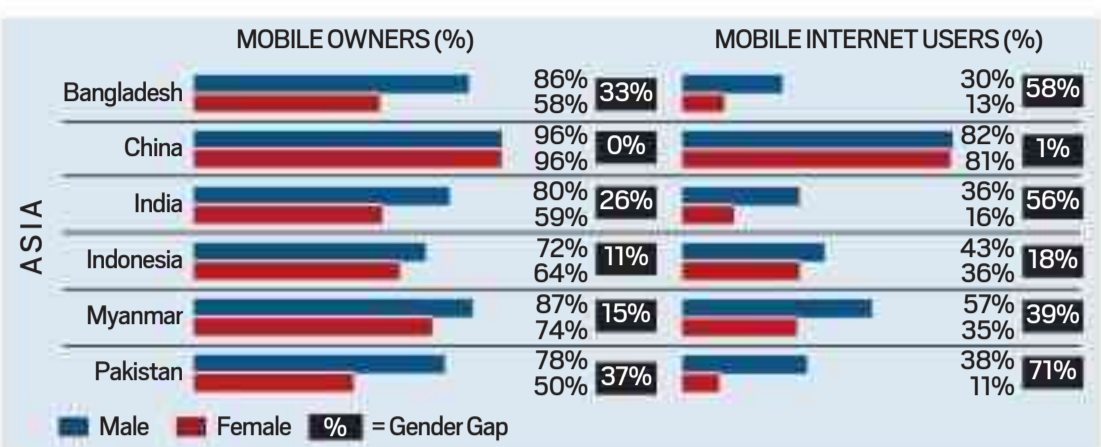
BJP'S QUEST

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'BJP seals Lok Sabha deal with AIADMK' (IE, February 20). The BJP is wary of falling short of its 2014 tally. Many of its erstwhile allies are no longer with it. The SP and BSP alliance in Uttar Pradesh is giving sleepless nights to the party's bosses. Although the BJP has successfully stitched an alliance with its oldest partner, the Shiv Sena, it is an open secret that the Sena has been critical of the Modi government.

Veena Shenoy, Thane

TELLING NUMBERS

Report flags gap in India mobile usage: 80% men, 59% women



INDIAN WOMEN are 26% less likely than Indian men to own a mobile phone, and 56% less likely to use mobile Internet, according to the findings of a new report by Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA), a London-based global trade body representing 750 operators with over 350 companies.



Unequal access to mobile technology threatens to exacerbate the inequalities women already experience. The statement said the GSMA found that closing the gender gaps in mobile ownership and usage represents a substantial commercial opportunity for the mobile industry.

TIP FOR READING LIST

THE RIPPER'S VICTIMS: UNTOLD STORY

BRITISH HISTORIAN Hallie Rubenhold has written some of the most fascinating stories about women in early modern Europe: the history of an 18th-century annual 'guide book' of the names and 'specialties' of London's prostitutes, including 'some of (its) funniest, rudest and most surreal entries'; the story of the Worsleys, the most sensational saga of sex, scandal, and divorce in 18th-century England; and the adventures of Henrietta Lightfoot, 'a young Englishwoman fleeing from a dishonourable past in London'.

between August and November 1888, turned out to be largely untrue? The focus of The Five, Rubenhold says, 'is entirely on the women and not on their murderer'. The first 'full-length biography to explore and contextualise the lives of the five victims of Jack the Ripper' promises to 'completely change', according to the book's publicity material, 'the narrative of the Ripper murders'.



All accounts of perhaps the best known serial killer of all time describe him as a man who murdered 'prostitutes'. But what if, asks Rubenhold, virtually everything that we have ever known about Polly Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Kate Eddowes and Mary Jane Kelly, the so-called canonical five who were killed by the mysterious 'Whitechapel Murderer'

follows the grimly similar lives of the five women who were 'born into hardship, moved from the briefest of childhoods into a cycle of childbearing, alcohol dependence, poverty, emotional despair and homelessness', living and dying in hell — mostly because they were born female, and 'their worth was compromised before they had even attempted to prove it'.

SIMPLY PUT

Moving forces in J&K: the challenge

Following the terror attack in Pulwama, Centre has said civilian traffic on the key highway would be temporarily halted during movement of security convoys. What are its implications?

BASHAARAT MASOOD SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 20

THE DAY after a suicide car bomber rammed his explosives-laden car into a paramilitary bus in Pulwama of Jammu & Kashmir, killing 40 CRPF personnel, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh said that civilian traffic would be restricted during the movement of convoys of security forces.

"Civilian traffic movement will be restricted for some time during movement of Army and security forces convoys. This may cause inconvenience and I apologise for this but this is necessary for safety of jawans," Singh said after chairing a high-level security review meet.

A look at the importance of the highway as the only road link between Jammu and Kashmir, and the implications of such a move to restrict civilian traffic — for five hours — during movement of security forces' convoys.

How the highway runs The Jammu-Srinagar-Uri national highway runs 370 km. The length includes 175 km in the Valley, from Qazigund in South Kashmir to Uri North Kashmir, and it is this stretch that is considered to be facing a security threat.

Civilian traffic & convoys Every day, at least four security convoys



move on the highway, two from Jammu to Kashmir and two the other way. Movement of convoys increases during summer, when the road to Ladakh and border areas of the Valley like Gurez and Tangdhar is thrown open. The convoys move only by day because of security concerns around night movement.

use the same 30-foot-wide road," said a senior traffic official. He described the challenge: "If we stop traffic at Baramulla or Narbal for only one hour, it means that over 5,000 vehicles would pile up from each side. It would take us several hours to clear the jam. Also, it would also be very difficult to stop vehicles coming out of different residential areas along the highway."

North Kashmir. Another alternative route is the railway. Currently the service is an eight-coach train that connects Banihal in Jammu to Baramulla in Kashmir. A train route would not only reduce travel time from over five hours to two-and-a-half hours, but also be safer according to experts.

What factors are at play in Lok Sabha, Assembly polls in Haryana?

BJP vs divided Cong vs new Chautala

Ruling BJP faces rebellion and new tie-ups, Congress battles familiar infighting. Split casts question mark on INLD prospects, focus shifts to Dushyant.

raise the issues of Rafale deal and farm distress. Congress leader and former Chief Parliamentary Secretary Ran Singh Mann alleged the BJP government has failed to provide the jobs it promised, while BJP leader Sanjay Ahuja claimed the state government has ensured transparency in government recruitment. The INLD has been demanding completion of the SYL canal. In the end, many expect caste politics to upstage national issues.

Do these parties have problems within? As the separate rallies suggest, infighting continues in the Congress. MLAs in one camp are said to be lobbying for the removal of Tanwar as HPCC chief; at one stage, they even sought removal of Choudhry as CLP chief. In the battle to head the state Congress, the party has failed to form district units. The lack of a coordinated effort is seen as one of the reasons for Surjewala's defeat in the recent Assembly bypoll in Jind.

BSP snapped ties after the result. Om Prakash Chautala is in jail and, even when he was out on furlough, his illness forced the party to cancel some of his programmes aimed at motivating INLD workers. Dushyant Chautala's new party, JJP, finished second in Jind and is said to be exploring an alliance with AAP.



SUKHBIR SIWACH CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 20

HARYANA VOTES in both Lok Sabha and Assembly elections this year. It is not yet clear, however, whether these will be simultaneous or whether the Assembly elections will follow the Lok Sabha polls as in 2014.

How did Haryana vote in the last Lok Sabha and Assembly polls?

In the May 2014 results for the Lok Sabha elections, the BJP won 7 of the state's 10 seats, with a 35% vote share and leads in 52 of 90 Assembly segments. In the Assembly polls of October 2014, the BJP won 47 seats as its vote share dropped to 33%. This has been the broad trend in the last two decades, with the party performing well in Lok Sabha polls going on to win the Haryana Assembly.

What issues are at play now? The BJP is set to contest in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as project Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar's governance record. The Congress is expected to

have held separate rallies.

Is the INLD still a major player? Haryana's main Opposition party, the INLD has split between factions led by patriarch Om Prakash Chautala's son Abhay Chautala and Abhay's nephew Dushyant Chautala. Its candidate lost his security deposit in the Jind bypoll and its alliance partner

no means within sight of finality."

No clear path yet More than 75 years later, the predicament endures. A 2013 study led by the American ecologist J Jed Brown noted that "state-of-the-art fish passage facilities have been unsuccessful. Some migratory species, such as sturgeons, do not pass through at all. But even the species that do make it through do so in numbers far less than stated targets".

The new fish pass on the Ganga will cover only 8 metres, a tiny fraction of the Ganga's width at Farakka. A small number of the hilsa might well sneak through, but it is doubtful if the new fishway will allow large shoals of the fish to return to their former spawning grounds further upstream.

Why new plan to 'unlock' Farakka for hilsa recalls old debate on fish passes

KAUSHIK DAS GUPTA NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 20

AMONG THE longstanding gastronomy debates in the subcontinent is the one on the relative merits of the hilsa that comes from the Padma river in Bangladesh versus the variety that is found in the Ganga in India. The advocates of both varieties underline the distinctive sweet-salty flavour of the silver-scaled fish. While those in the east vouch for its fleshy texture, aficionados in the west rest their claims on what the fish does to the taste buds — that sweet-salty flavour is apparently more pronounced in the Ganga hilsa.

tain to the annual journey of the fish.

The hilsa's journey In scientific parlance, the hilsa is an anadromous fish. It lives most of its life in the ocean, but during the rainy season, when it is time to spawn, the hilsa moves towards the estuary, where the rivers of India and Bangladesh meet the Bay of Bengal. A large part of the shoal travels upstream in the Padma and the Ganga — some are known to move towards the Godavari, and there are records of hilsa migration to the Cauvery. Culinary lore has it that the fish that travel the farthest upstream have the best combination of the flavours of the sea and the river.



ming upstream beyond Farakka. In Buxar on the border of Bihar and UP, the last recorded catch of the hilsa was made 32 years ago.

Fishway experiments Earlier this month, the government unveiled a project to facilitate the movement of the hilsa to its spawning grounds of yore. The navigation lock at Farakka will be redesigned at a cost of Rs 360 crore to create

a fish pass for the hilsa. Fish passes — also known as fish ladders or fishways — aim to assist fish in crossing obstacles presented by dams and barrages. They usually consist of small steps that allow the fish to climb over the obstacles and enable them to reach the open waters on the other side. It requires controlling the water running over these ladders — they must be adequate to catch the attention of the fish, but not too strong to deter them from swimming against it.

perimented with fish ladders to enable unhindered movement of the hilsa across anicuts in the Cauvery's northern distributary, the Kollidam. The experiment was tried for about 40 years before being given up. Fish passes also proved ineffective in North India. By the middle of the 20th century, the utility and effectiveness of fishways was being seriously debated in the US. A paper in the May 1940 issue of The Stanford Ichthyological Bulletin put the question in perspective: "The devising of a fish pass is fraught with uncertainty, because it is almost impossible to prophesy the behaviour of fish and quite impossible to anticipate the vagaries of water. The subject involves a working knowledge of hydraulics, and while hydraulic engineers conversant with the habits and requirements of fish are rarely to be found, the rules and assumptions of hydraulics themselves are apt to be disconcertingly upset when applied to the functioning of a fish pass. The subject is by

Twitter and elections

With the Lok Sabha polls round the corner, this might be a good time to look at the top Twitter influencers among our politicians



NOT FOR PROFIT

NIVEDITA MOOKERJI

Founded some 13 years ago, the San Francisco-based social media platform Twitter will play more than an important role in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in India, if the current political narrative is to be believed. That the Parliamentary Standing Committee summoned the Twitter global chief to explain his stand on safeguarding citizens' rights on social media platforms shows the seriousness being attached

to Twitter in these fraught times.

Let's check out 10 possible influencers in the Twitter gallery as the countdown to 2019 elections has begun. The three ladies—Bahujan Samaj Party Chief Mayawati, newly-inducted Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee — are at the bottom of this list with 99,400, 215,000 and 315,000 Twitter followers, respectively. Going by the numbers, they have to go aggressive to improve their social media standing.

Mayawati joined Twitter only in October 2018 and has sent out only 44 messages. While she has already got 99,400 followers, she's not following anybody other than Twitter Support. Priyanka is the latest kid on the block. She joined Twitter earlier this month, coinciding with her entry into politics, and she hasn't sent out any tweets so far. She's managed a follower base of 7,215 but is following only seven — brother Rahul Gandhi and some oth-

ers from the party. As for Mamata, she's been around for almost five years on the platform and has tweeted 5,134 times. While her followers are at 3.15 million, she's not much of a follower herself. She's kept it short at 31, choosing to have actors and singers besides the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and politicians including Rahul Gandhi, Piyush Goyal, Arun Jaitley and Arvind Kejriwal on the list. She's also following the Kolkata Police.

Nitin Gadkari is in the seventh place as per the number of followers. The road transport and highways minister has been a slow adopter of social media. Not too long ago, he was following only three; now the number has risen to 132. But he's yet to embrace anything global on Twitter. He's following most things BJP apart from the PMO and ministers. Having joined in December 2009, he's sent out 3,070 tweets — most of them in the last few months. He's being followed by 4.41 million.

Piyush Goyal is at number six with

5.1 million followers. Mostly tweeting achievements of the government, the minister for railways and coal has sent out 20,000 tweets since he joined in April 2013. He himself is following 497 including Amitabh Bachchan, Preity Zinta and Ajay Devgn; business chambers and a couple of industrialists, apart from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and other party leaders.

Rahul Gandhi is on number five with 8.6 million followers. A regular voice on social media, he joined in April 2015 and has sent out 4,140 tweets. The Congress president follows only 206 including Priyanka, Akhilesh Yadav, Kanimozhi, Mamata Banerjee and Sharad Yadav. The list also has a mix of business people (Ratan Tata, Anand Mahindra, Bhavish Aggarwal), celebrities (Sachin Tendulkar, Lata Mangeshkar) and top tech names (Satya Nadella, Sundar Pichai, Tim Cook)... There's no prominent BJP name here.

Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav is a notch higher with 9.07 million followers at number four. The number of people he follows, at just 16, doesn't compare with his popularity. And they are mostly actors/celebrities (like Vidya Balan, Amitabh Bachchan, A R Rahman). There's no

political party or politician he's following right now. On Twitter since July 2009, he has sent out just 2,051 tweets in close to 10 years.

Amit Shah is third with 12.6 million followers. The BJP president, who joined Twitter in May 2013, is following just 282, most of them leaders from his party and related organisations apart from an actor or two.

Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal has an impressive 14.5 million follower base. Since November 2011, when he got into Twitter, he has sent out 27,300 messages. He's following 209, including leaders cutting across parties. PM Modi, Nitin Gadkari, Chandrababu Naidu, Omar Abdullah, Nitish Kumar, Sitaram Yechuri, Mamata Banerjee are among the names. The list does not ignore the lieutenant governor of Delhi despite the faceoffs.

Topping the list is, of course, the PM, with 45.7 million followers. A Twitterite since January 2009, he's sent 22,400 messages, less than Kejriwal's count. Of this list, Modi is following the maximum number of people and organisations at 2,124, including celebrities, industrialists, startups and both Indian and international media.

Will this effort translate into votes? There's time still to work on the numbers.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Picture imperfect



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

Not surprisingly, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath is a critic of the predecessor government, led by Shivraj Singh Chouhan of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). On Tuesday when he met prospective investors and businessmen in Bhopal, he criticised the previous government's single-window clearance system, calling it a failure. But in what is seen as a major embarrassment for his government, just before the meeting started, booklets relating to different industries and policies were distributed among the guests. Pictures of Chouhan and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, a Jana Sangh leader of yesteryear, adorned the booklets, which were printed during the previous regime.

No time to waste



Congress President Rahul Gandhi (pictured) has been meeting people with gusto these days. On Tuesday, he met a small group of businessmen in New Delhi under

the *apni baat Rahul ke saath* umbrella. During the meeting, a small-time trader from Indore suggested his party consider paying special attention to the handloom industry in Madhya Pradesh. Being the second-largest industrial sector in the state, it has the potential to generate employment in large numbers. After listening to him patiently, Gandhi whisked out his mobile phone and called Chief Minister Kamal Nath. He organised their meeting without delay.

Gadkari, the film

It isn't just the poster of a movie on the life and times of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that has caught the imagination of social media. For the last week or so, the trailer of a biopic on Union minister Nitin Gadkari is one of the more watched clips on YouTube. The trailer of *Gadkari* (the film) has garnered 144,000 views after it was posted on social media on February 12. "Unfolding the real life story of union minister Nitin Jairam Gadkari's courage, wisdom and untold truth. A journey of a man from RSS swayamsevaka to a politician," the preface to the movie trailer states. It also claims that the film is Nagpur's first crowd-funded feature-length film. Nagpur is not just the headquarters of the RSS, it is also Gadkari's hometown.

Sebi gives mutual funds a reality check

Guidelines on returns, classification and labelling will scale back 'outperformance' claims and improve transparency

JASH KRIPLANI

The mutual fund industry has had a good run for quite some time. Fund collections, especially through systematic investment plans, have been to the tune of ₹8,064 crore a month — an all-time high.

Amid this euphoria, however, the industry has also had to ride through the crisis that hit mid- and small-cap funds, defaults by Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services and other companies, and of course, implement several guidelines of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

Sebi's changes, which were proposed in October 2017 and notified last year, will have a long-term impact on equity funds' performance. The new norms have introduced more transparency and will also scale back claims of outperformance by many schemes. This is on account of the introduction of the total return index (TRI) last February. TRI captures both the dividend gains and capital appreciation delivered by the benchmark index. The price return index used earlier only captured the capital appreciation, thereby making fund managers look exceptionally good even when companies paid hefty dividends.

"The TRI methodology is more in-line with global norms. In the earlier method, scheme outperformance could get overstated as dividend gains were not included in the benchmarks. Now, investors can take a more informed investment decision," said Vetri

Subramaniam, group president and head (equity), at UTI MF.

Another big move by the regulator has been the re-classification of schemes. Under these guidelines, large-cap funds can allocate 80 per cent of their stocks in large-cap companies or the top 100 companies. Mid-cap funds can have 65 per cent in mid-cap stocks, and small-cap funds can have 65 per cent in small-cap stocks. The result of this classification could be that fund managers could find it harder to outperform benchmarks because they won't be able to dabble too much in riskier stocks.

The new regulations require large-cap schemes to invest at least 80 per cent of their funds in the top-100 companies. We have recently seen only a few stocks within this universe outperforming," Anand Vardarajan, head of business and product strategy at Tata MF said. Last year, 67 of the Nifty-100 stocks underperformed the index returns.

Most agree, however, that this is a good move from a hygiene perspective. "Though re-classification puts constraints for most categories, it is positive from the investors' standpoint because, earlier, there were some instances of multiple market-cap oriented strategies being run in the same scheme," Subramaniam added.

"Scheme re-classification has been quite an important step because it helps investors make fair comparisons between the various schemes," said Radhika Gupta, chief executive officer of Edelweiss MF.

Added Vardarajan: "Earlier product



THE ROAD TO TRANSPARENCY

EARLIER	NOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheme returns were compared against just price gains of a benchmark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheme returns need to be compared against price and dividend gains under Total Return Index method
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schemes, whether a large- mid- or small- cap mandate, had leeway to follow multiple investment strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reclassification requires schemes to be in line with their mandate, precluding riskier investments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balanced schemes with, say, 70 or 50% equity were bunched together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balanced schemes have three categories to make them 'true-to-label'

comparison was difficult as there was a possibility of schemes with different characteristics getting bracketed in the same category. Now, they can easily segregate various schemes when weighing their options."

The regulatory move to make schemes "true-to-label" is meant to make it easier for an investor to narrow his preferences. Consequently, this exercise has been carried out across all kinds of funds. That is, balanced schemes have been classified into three

categories — the conservative hybrid (10-25 per cent in equities), balanced hybrid (40-60 per cent in equities and aggressive hybrid (65-80 per cent in equities). Earlier, schemes with 70 per cent equity as well as 50 per cent equity were all bunched together, making it almost impossible for investors to differentiate between them.

Such changes were extended across categories on the debt side as well. To ensure investors are not misled, schemes are required to make a certain minimum

allocation to stocks that align with the scheme's mandate.

Some players within the MF industry see this as an opportunity for low-cost products such as exchange-traded funds (ETFs) and index funds. These funds reflect the returns of an underlying index of companies and are available at lower fees for investors.

The fees charged by ETFs can be as low as 0.1 per cent against fees of 1.5-2.25 per cent charged by large-cap schemes, say analysts tracking the MF industry. "While alpha [outperformance] will persist for mid- and small-cap categories, index funds and ETFs will have a larger role to play in the large-cap space," Edelweiss MF's Gupta says.

Retail investors haven't started boarding the ETF bandwagon aggressively, as only seven per cent of ETF assets are owned by individual investors. But some MFs are already exploring opportunities around ETFs and the index funds. In December, Tata MF launched its Nifty ETF. Edelweiss is in the process of launching a debt ETF, which would comprise of government-owned companies. Even though debt markets have faced several challenges recently, an ETF comprising of government-backed debt papers might give some comfort to retail investors.

Anticipating this churn from large-cap to ETFs, Sebi recently laid down norms prescribing a minimum number of constituents in the underlying index and weight limits on the constituent stocks. Whether ETF penetration remains at these levels or deepens, such changes by the market watchdog are likely to make MFs safer in the long run.

INSIGHT

Risk management in capital markets

Risks involve market manipulation, money laundering and fraudulent reporting



VIKRAM LIMAYE

In the Indian financial services landscape, risk management has always been seen as a focus area for banking and capital markets players. Our regulators have set appropriate guidelines and policies that achieve the dual objectives of market development together with prudent risk management and consumer protection. While risk management and its importance in lending is well understood and discussed in public circles (this may be attributed to the current high levels of NPAs), risk management in capital markets is a less discussed topic.

Capital markets, globally and in India, are at risk of many violations including market manipulation, money laundering and fraudulent reporting among others. Recent changes in global capital markets have forced participants across the ecosystem — buy-side and sell-side participants, custodians, market infrastructure and financial technology providers — to reassess their strategies, business models and risk frameworks. This results in movement in revenue pools where risk resides and

players are best positioned to succeed. All participants are being forced to adapt their business models as a result.

The changes in the capital markets ecosystem also affect the risk across the value chain for market participants and consequently the development of appropriate processes to mitigate these new risks will become critical. As a result, increased scrutiny will be placed on risk management frameworks as well as recovery and resolution plans.

Best practice elements of a capital markets risk management architecture can be broken broadly into two buckets: a) risk governance, policies and procedures; and b) risk modelling, measurement, and reporting.

Risk governance refers to mechanisms that firms use to assess and implement decisions related to market, liquidity, credit and operational risks inherent in capital markets. Capital market firms typically organise and govern their risk management practices using a three-lines-of-defence model. This usually includes risk taking, risk oversight and risk assurance activities.

Broadly, the first line is composed of risk takers — business line heads who must own and track the risks they generate. The second line is typically an independent body, usually the capital markets risk function, that sets limits for taking risks and ensures that all risks are being appropriately managed across the organisation. The third line, usually the internal audit function, verifies the efforts of the first two to ensure that nothing is out of line from the defined

policies, controls and processes.

The effectiveness of the three-lines-of-defence model depends on the clarity of roles, responsibilities and accountability of all stakeholders, a clear segregation of duties to ensure independence in risk management, and review and challenge built into the governance framework across all levels.

The capital markets risk function must outline its approach to risk management and set limits to quantify the amount of risk the firm is willing to take, through a risk appetite statement. Capital markets risk management procedures and processes translate policies into specific and tangible steps, according to which day to day activities can be performed. The procedures also need to ensure that the firm has an effective system of controls, reasonably designed to identify and mitigate risks.

Translating risk policies and procedures into action requires capital market firms to effectively model all risk types (credit, market, liquidity, operational etc.), regular monitoring of risks and reporting to ensure efficient decision making across the organisation.

The foundational elements of risk modelling comprise key elements including decomposing risk into discrete parts, balancing effectiveness and efficiency of the risk models and aligning methodology with regulatory requirements and firm strategy. A robust market risk modelling function would typically entail execution of the following processes:

- Development of modelling methodology for calculating the Value-at-Risk (VaR) and Stressed Value-at-Risk (SVaR)
- Development of pricing models and sensitivities for all asset classes

within the capital markets risk function's purview

- Development of scenarios for stress testing
- Model calibration and measurement of model performance
- Periodic validation of the model in alignment with firm's model validation policies

The aggregation of risk metrics into reports and KRIs is vital for management's ability to effectively monitor and mitigate all material risk types. The frequency of risk management report generation and distribution is set to enable periodic measurement and to keep pace with the speed at which risks can change. The risk measurement reports play a crucial role in contributing to sound risk management and effective management decision making.

Risk reporting is a key capability within organisations that comprises processes including signing off on results (such as daily VaR results) to maintain accuracy of risk management and confirm that results are accurate for reporting and disclosure purposes; producing results that accurately convey all risk data at an aggregate level (the reports should ideally include a fine balance between risk data, analysis of risk, and qualitative explanations); producing reports for regulatory purposes — usually entails multiple checks and reviews by senior risk managers to ensure that all data is accurate and exhaustive to meet regulatory requirements.

The next generation of risk management will include near real-time calculations, aggregation and reporting of risks across the entire capital markets value chain, and more granular categorisations of risks. For future capital markets risk functions to be successful, they would require sophisticated tools to synthesise complex information and generate insightful alerts and reports in real-time situations.

The author is MD & CEO, NSE

LETTERS

Problem of plenty

In Maharashtra, the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) have decided to contest together for the Lok Sabha polls of 2019. Before they could finalise the exact distribution of the 48 seats in the state, smaller like-minded parties have shown interest in joining the "secular" bandwagon. They are the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghata, the Shiv Sangram Sena, the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena and the Bharipa Bahujan Mahasangh party. The last one has asked for 12 seats. If the demands of all these parties are to be met, how many seats will be left for the two main contenders to fight from?

Arun Malankar Mumbai

Don't rule out talks

It is unfortunate, yet understandable, that Prime Minister Narendra Modi (*picture*) has come to the conclusion that "time for talks has passed". The Pulwama attack might have led to this conclusion. However, it is when things get worse, talks need to be held to redeem the situation. The decision of not to resume talks will only prolong the hostilities and tension. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's readiness for "talks on terror" and guaranteed action on actionable evidence is hard to believe.

There is no escape for India and Pakistan from relying on "talks" as the only way to edge towards an amicable



settlement of the Kashmir dispute. It is uncomfortable, but inescapable that what most Kashmiris call "repression for the continued occupation and subjugation" incubates militancy in the Valley. Nobody can legitimise or condone senseless violence in the name of jihad or religious war. At the same time, the struggle for the right to self-determination and more autonomy cannot be put down by military might. Patriotism should not stop us from speaking against the disquieting ways used by the security forces to eliminate militants from the Valley. We should not let our moral compass be constricted by nationalism and religion.

G David Milton Maruthanode

Letters can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to: The Editor, Business Standard Nehru House, 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg New Delhi 110 002 Fax: (011) 23720201 E-mail: letters@bsmail.in All letters must have a postal address and telephone number

HAMBONE



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Interim relief

RBI's payout will help the govt

In its latest board meeting on Monday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to transfer an interim dividend of ₹28,000 crore to the government in the current fiscal year. Together with the ₹40,000-crore final surplus share for 2017-18 (India's central bank follows the July-June cycle), which the Centre received in the first half, the dividend transferred by the RBI to the government in 2018-19 has gone up to ₹68,000 crore. This is substantially higher than the ₹50,000 crore it got from the RBI in 2017-18. The higher amount would surely come as a big relief for the government for achieving its fiscal deficit target of 3.4 per cent in the current fiscal year at a time when there are concerns over lower than expected revenue collection especially via the goods and services tax (GST) route as well as the increased demands for public sector bank recapitalisation.

It's clear the government is depending on the RBI's largesse. For instance, in the interim Budget, presented at the start of the month, the finance minister revised the dividend from the RBI, nationalised banks, and financial institutions from ₹54,817 crore to ₹74,140 crore for FY19. For the next fiscal year, the government is seeking ₹69,000 crore as dividend from the central bank, which is about 83 per cent of the combined dividends of ₹82,911 crore the Centre has budgeted from the RBI, state-owned banks and financial institutions. The RBI, too, seems to be playing along, as is evident from the generous payout this year. The practice of interim dividend, in fact, started under former RBI governor Ujit Patel when the central bank paid ₹10,000 crore on this account last year.

The welcome sign is that the interim dividend decision by the new governor is based on a limited audit review and after applying the extant capital framework. It shows the government has stayed away from pushing the RBI to touch its reserves — an issue that had snowballed into a major crisis between the government and the central bank. The RBI's argument that time was that the bulk of the excess reserves it accumulated each year as a result of interest income as well as seigniorage, or the profits earned by issuing the currency, should be left with it as contingency funds to ensure financial stability in the economy. But the government reckoned that the central bank did not need to have about 27 per cent of its assets as capital and reserves. This led to a friction between the two.

That question should hopefully end after the expert committee, headed by former governor Bimal Jalan, gives its report next month. The committee, which will review the extant economic capital framework, will suggest how the central bank should handle its reserves and whether it can transfer its surplus to the government. It is also expected to look into the adequate level of risk provisioning the RBI needs to maintain. That apart, any other related matter, including treatment of surplus reserves created out of realised gains, will also come within the ambit of this committee. The government should take action on the recommendations quickly to signal an end to the long debate.

India on its own

Foreign assistance on climate change isn't forthcoming

Even while claiming major advances on meeting climate commitments with largely domestic endeavour and funding, India's second biennial update report presented to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) seeks adequate financial and technological support to meet the new challenges on this front. This plea, no doubt, is bound to fall flat due to the rich nations' growing reluctance to contribute funds for this purpose. The important part of the report, therefore, is the declaration that, unlike most other countries, India is on track to fulfilling two of its three main commitments made as part of the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to combat climate change. These involve reducing the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions intensity of its gross domestic product (GDP) by 20-25 per cent by 2020 over 2005 levels, and raising the share of non-fossil fuels-based power in electricity production to 40 per cent. The third commitment — creating 2.5-3 billion tonnes of carbon sink through forestry — is set to be missed. Nevertheless, despite unabated increase in the GHG emissions, the carbon intensity of the Indian economy has dipped to 21 per cent, which is well within the targeted range. Similarly, the proportion of non-fossil electricity in power output has surged to 35.5 per cent, bringing the 40 per cent goal within striking distance.

However, more resources would need to be mobilised to sustain and step up these efforts. Funding worth about \$206 billion (at 2014-15 prices) is estimated to be needed till 2030 for climate adaptation in areas such as agriculture, water resources and ecosystems. An additional \$834 billion is required for global warming mitigation measures. Against this, all that India has received till 2018 is an indicative allocation of \$87.87 million. Of this, the actual approvals amount to merely \$59 million. Worse still, the indicative allocation for the 2018-22 period has shrunk to just \$40 million — a pittance compared to the massive requirement. How much of it materialises is uncertain as the developed countries often renege on their pledges.

Therefore, the choice before India is clear. It will have to stand on its own in staving off the perils of global warming. The agriculture sector needs greater resilience against erratic weather to safeguard the livelihood of the bulk of the country's population. According to the farm ministry, the output of major crops may not show any significant dip in the shorter run but it might decline sharply by as much as 10-40 per cent over a longer period. The country's capacity to cope with weather-induced natural disasters, too, would need to be shored up. No cost would be too high for this purpose, given the huge and recurring damage the country is suffering due to events attributable to climate change. Official estimates put these losses at around \$10 billion a year. Health costs and consequential productivity losses are apart from this. A World Bank report released in June 2018 said the rising temperature and changing monsoon rainfall patterns could shave off 2.8 per cent of India's GDP, affecting the living standards of nearly half of its population by 2050. Under these circumstances, it may be advisable for India to lay greater emphasis on adaptation vis-à-vis other aspects of the battle against climate change.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA



The World Bank and its defunct energy policy

Nomination of David Malpass by the Trump administration to head the World Bank represents a chance for the lender to go back to its original charter

The shock resignation of World Bank President Dr Jim Yong Kim, announced in early January, more than three years before his term would have ended, and the nomination of David Malpass, one of the institution's sharpest critics in the current US administration, has been seen as yet another disruptive change to the global order under President Trump's watch.

While disruptive change has become a regular affair under this most impetuous of US presidents, the changing of the guard at the World Bank is potentially of great consequence to the world's poor. That is, assuming the Malpass nomination is not seriously challenged by the EU which jealously guards its say in the appointment of IMF Managing Director as part of the *quid pro quo* over the twin Bretton Woods institutions that served the post-World War order.

Malpass has been a strong advocate for accountability at the World Bank and comes with a "back to the basics" focus on pro-growth projects for countries which include people in extreme poverty. He has also been a known critic of the World Bank's loans to China and India, arguing that these countries have become rich enough to tap global capital markets on reasonable terms.

The post-1945 Bretton Wood's arrangement, of course, is very much associated with Maynard

Keynes, a key founding economist-architect of that order. Lord Keynes' much-quoted prognostication, that practical men find themselves under the influence of some "defunct economist", couldn't be better illustrated than in the World Bank's intellectual evolution.

It did not take long for Dr Kim, an appointee of President Obama in 2012, to impose a ban on the financing of coal-fired power stations (in 2013), followed subsequently by a ban on investments in all new upstream oil and gas resource development projects. For this onslaught on fossil fuels, Dr Kim seems to have been under the thrall of Keynes' defunct economists and political philosophers who cast votes for the Bank to favour mitigating long run climate change over economic growth to serve the immediate needs of the world's poor.

There is no shortage of commentary on the World Bank's defunct economics. Prof Deepak Lal, a former Oxford don and Research Administrator of the Bank remarked that Dr Kim incredulously "over-ruled the cost-benefit estimates of coal-based power over solar and wind-based power generation produced by his own economic staff, justifying this by reference to a wish to cut global emissions of greenhouse gases."

Mikko Paunio, a public health expert who has



TILAK K DOSHI

The telecom crisis: Noises off

The prospect of possible jail time for Anil Ambani for defaulting on payment to a creditor understandably dominated the business headlines most of Wednesday. Less noticed is another telecom crisis that has thrust itself upon, not the private sector nor the courts but the taxpaying public. Over the past week, MTNL and BSNL have each sent their owner, the Government of India, an SOS seeking a bailout — the second request in six years.

The demands, which festered through most of 2018, are remarkable because they reflect gross mismanagement at taxpayer's expense — and they now require taxpayer money to bail them out. MTNL's management has told the Department of Telecom (DoT) that it has borrowed ₹20,000 crore to clear statutory dues and pay staff salaries, and it wants the government to underwrite this money with a sovereign guarantee and take responsibility for the principal and interest. With losses expanding to ₹832.26 crore in Q3 of FY19, its net worth has been fully eroded. Had any equivalent private sector company faced the same predicament it would have been up for sale.

To be fair, the government has also asked BSNL, with accumulated losses of ₹31,287 crore, to explore the option of closure. As with Reliance Communication, Reliance Industries' Jio has delivered the *coup de grace*, despite the mandated head-

start BSNL was given in the 3G business. But closure is a dramatic step by public sector standards. In 2009, plans for a small dilution in shareholding was scuttled by BSNL's unions over fears of post-IPO retrenchment (this fear was not unfounded; over 2007-08 central government-owned companies shed some 44,000 jobs). Yet, pay and pension alone have done these former blue chips in. In both, employee costs account for over 90 per cent of income — at a time when technology is the sole competitive edge in the business. So, just as union power has prevented the closure of Air India, which should have folded half a decade ago, BSNL can be expected to enter the list of large white elephants on the GOI's roster.

Both telecom giants have revival plans that centre on voluntary retirement schemes and sale of assets (3G spectrum for MTNL, land banks for both). These are not novel; they have been considered intermittently since at least 2008 without much success. And a bailout is improbable, too, given the government's fiscal constraints.

Even assuming the government does agree, there will be howls of protest from beleaguered private competitors. In 2013, with reverberations from the 2G spectrum scandal still being felt, the telecom operators' lobby wrote a protesting letter to the United Progressive Alliance government against a ₹20,000-crore bailout proposal that DoT



SWOT
KANIKA DATTA

worked at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the European Commission and the World Bank, found that the Bank (along with WHO and the Lancet) conveniently forget the "energy ladder" which allowed the now-developed countries to graduate to their current 24/7 access to reliable and cheap fossil-fuelled electricity (mainly coal, and more recently, natural gas) while denying the very same process of development to the now developing countries. Rupert Darwall, a former special adviser to the United Kingdom's Chancellor of the Exchequer, charges that during Dr Kim's tenure, the "World Bank lost its way and sacrificed the interests of the poor to green ideology".

The resignation of Dr Kim, for some, could not have come at a more opportune time. The World Bank and its counterparts such as the Asian Development Bank have taken a lead role in denying poorer countries the development strategy that the now-rich countries had taken so successfully since the Industrial Revolution. By the 1980s, Europe, North America and Japan had already cleaned up their cities of urban smog while ensuring clean, reliable and affordable energy which included high-efficiency, low-emission coal and natural gas-fuelled power plants, and cleaner transport and cooking fuels.

The Bank's enthusiastic adoption of the "sustainable development" meme — that much-enslaved slogan of special interest groups proclaiming "civil society" interests — has had an insidious effect in development economics. There has not been a single instance of a country successfully developing to middle income status without the use of fossil fuels as the workhorse of industrialisation and modern economic growth. Yet elastic concepts of "sustainability" and the like remain the lead talking points among many pundits of economic development.

The previous chief economic advisor to the Indian government Arvind Subramanian recently warned that India, like other developing countries, cannot allow the narrative of "carbon imperialism" to come in the way of realistic planning. This would include adopting the best technology using cheap coal for power generation, increasing the use of cleaner fossil fuels such as natural gas, and recognising the hidden costs of subsidising newer technologies such as wind and solar power.

The Trump administration's Treasury Guidance for the US position on multilateral banks regarding energy projects and policies includes the objectives to "help countries access and use fossil fuels cleanly and efficiently" and "support development of robust, efficient, competitive, and integrated global markets for energy". These are good first steps.

But the nomination of David Malpass could not have come sooner, and the sooner World Bank managers shake off their enslavement to defunct economists, the better. The hopes of the world's one billion poor — yet to achieve access to reliable, affordable and clean energy taken for granted in the developed countries — depend upon it.

The writer is a Singapore-based consultant in the energy sector, and is the author of "Singapore in a Post-Kyoto World: Energy, Environment and the Economy" published by the Institute of South-east Asian Studies (Singapore, 2015). He was a 1984 Robert S McNamara Research Fellow of the World Bank.

had submitted to Cabinet for the two entities. "Consideration of any such proposal is not permissible as it will be in contravention of all tenets of policy, fair competition and level playing field," the letter pointed out, and the government duly backed out (whether fiscal considerations played a role too is unclear).

At risk are over 200,000 jobs between both these loss-making entities. With unofficial election campaigning already in full swing, and the government battling its own statistics institutions over record high unemployment numbers, the last thing Narendra Modi needs at this time are TV images of telecom employees on *dharna* for losing their jobs. So it's a fair bet that the two sick giants will live to battle at least another few months for a decision from the next government.

A band-aid solution is at hand from Air India, which found no buyers when it was put on the auction block last year. This year, there are reports that the government proposes to issue sovereign guaranteed non-convertible debentures worth ₹29,000 crore to repay working capital loans. This is essentially borrowing more by any other name.

And who will buy this debt? In 2012, a ₹7,200-crore NCD issue was subscribed by the Life Insurance Corporation and the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation. The first institution has been the government's bailout vehicle of choice since the 1980s, and the second has recently mobilised the second to finance the chronically inefficient Food Corporation of India operations. There is nothing to stop both of them stepping up to the plate for two beleaguered telecom giants as well.

From Burma to Myanmar



BOOK REVIEW

SHYAM SARAN

In Abhijit Dutta's book, *Myanmar in the World: Journeys Through a Changing Burma*, I was expecting a travelogue. The author tells his tale through journeys he has undertaken both into the Myanmar heartland and to its ethnic peripheries, but this book is a dense tapestry that draws upon the country's history, its complex geography and its changing present. It offers a nuanced, if somewhat impressionistic, perspective on the country and its people. Having lived in Myanmar, I found familiar echoes in descriptions of major cities, monuments and the un-

ried pulse of daily life. The 300-odd pages are packed with empathetic observation and deep insights, which only underscore how little one knows about one of India's closest neighbours that once was part of the British colonial Indian empire.

The book has a Prologue and an Epilogue with five chapters set in between. For those interested in the history of India-Myanmar links Chapter 1, *India's Farthest Province*, is a good read. It traces the trajectory of how Indian migrants built the city of Rangoon (now Yangon) and ran the nuts and bolts of colonial administration. This kindled growing local resentment and even racial prejudice, which eventually led to their large-scale exodus back into India. That familiar fear of economic domination by an alien people has now been transferred to the Chinese, whose extraction of the country's rich resources and pervasive presence is making them the new target of visceral hostility.

The same racially tinged hostility is apparent in the more recent Rohingya crisis, with Muslim Bengali-speaking communities in the Rakhine state being driven out in their tens of thousands in a barely disguised bout of violent ethnic cleansing. Mr Dutta has analysed this in detail in Chapter 3, *In Rakhine State*, providing a much-needed historical perspective and a revealing survey of popular sentiments among the majority Buddhist population in the state. As he points out, the latest exodus is only the most recent in a series of such involuntary migrations. Racial and religious animosities run very deep, and there are no easy answers to the humanitarian dilemma that they throw up.

Chapter 4, *Burma By Any Other Name*, provides an informative narrative on Myanmar's continuing challenge of accommodating its various ethnic groups into the national mainstream. During the Myanmar Army's direct rule over the

country, ceasefire agreements had been concluded with several of the major armed groups. They had been allowed to keep their armed forces and were granted considerable autonomy, particularly in economic matters. Some were and continue to be involved in the drug trade and those ranged along the border with China also enjoy tacit support and protection from Chinese authorities. With the advent of constitutional government, flawed as it may be, there have been efforts to bring these groups and the territories controlled by them into the union. But it has been difficult to take back the considerable local autonomy to which they have become accustomed over the past nearly three decades. There has been a relapse into military confrontation between the Myanmar Army and some of the armed groups. The Chinese continue to use some of these groups to maintain a constant pressure on the Myanmar government. It appears unlikely that there would be an early solution to this problem.

The final chapter on "The Green Borderlands" describes the dominating

role that China has come to play in the country through its various infrastructure projects and by promoting large-scale trade through several border trade points. In the Rakhine state, which has also been a focus for Indian economic cooperation projects, the Chinese have already put in place an oil and gas pipeline from the deep-water port of Kyaukpyu to Kunming in the southern Chinese state of Yunnan. This carries not only gas produced along the Rakhine coast but also oil and gas that may be shipped from the Gulf, bypassing the narrow Malacca Straits, which may be easily interdicted. Kyaukpyu is also being developed as a Special Economic Zone, where Chinese companies will be investing. India's own efforts to rebuild the Sittoung Port further south and link it with Mizoram, though river transport and a highway are still not complete, pale in comparison to what the Chinese are putting in place in Kyaukpyu.

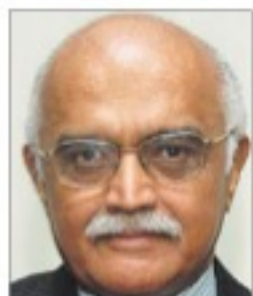
The Epilogue offers a critique of Aung San Suu Kyi's (ASSK) leadership of the Myanmar government as State Councillor, constrained as she is by the

Myanmar Army continuing to hold the key levers of power. In the author's view, she has done remarkably well in playing a complex political game, making compromises but seeking to uphold principle. She has obviously disappointed those who made her into an iconic and idealistic figure, but she herself has not seen herself in that role. Mr Dutta sees Myanmar's future at this time of transition as being intimately linked with the personal and political fate of ASSK. Political regression remains round the corner. The longer she wields power, limited as it may be, the better the chances for the country and its people to finally take their rightful place in the world.

The reviewer is a former foreign secretary and is currently Senior Fellow, CPR

MYANMAR IN THE WORLD: Journeys Through a Changing Burma
Abhijit Dutta
Aleph
372 pages, ₹799

Intel inputs rarely specific, but action a must



VAPPALA BALACHANDRAN
EX-SPECIAL SECY, CABINET SECRETARIAT

INTELLIGENCE professionals are always puzzled when charges of intelligence failure are hurled at them even when they had already reported broad trends of subversive activities to the executive branches. A day after the Pulwama attack, Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik said there was no intelligence “about any of them (the youth) being trained as a suicide bomber”. The Governor’s adviser, K Vijay Kumar, also told the media that “there was no specific intelligence input” (about the suicide car bomb attack).

Exact and timely alerts are rare. The 9/11 Commission found that the CIA had sent 40 highly sensitive President’s Daily Briefs (PDB) between January 20 and September 10, 2001, to then US President George W Bush on Osama bin Laden’s terror preparations. The June 12, 2001, alert even mentioned Khalid Sheikh Mohammed recruiting people to travel to the US to meet colleagues. It was only known later that he was the chief 9/11 conspirator. Similarly, there were about 16 alerts from 2006 onwards on the possibility of a major attack on Mumbai, some of these mentioning sea-borne route and targets. Yet these attacks could not be prevented due to different reasons, including what the 9/11 Commission had called ‘failure of imagination’ on the part of the executive departments which did not convert ‘trends’ into local preventive measures. While airline security was neglected in the US, coastal protection measures were ignored in India.

Things are more difficult in prolonged insurgency situations such as in Kashmir that are sustained with foreign help; the battle of attrition comes in waves, interspersed with periods of



LAPSE: The Pulwama suicide bomber was reportedly detained six times between September 2016 and March 2018, but never charged with any offence.

calm. One of the reasons for the impression of intelligence failure is the inability of the ground action groups to convert national or tactical intelligence inputs into local action. This is aggravated by the practice of segmenting terrorists or groups by ground action units or even by analysis branches, pigeonholing them on the basis of features of past terrorist acts.

Intelligence analysts and supervisory officers should not have pre-determined assessments based only on past experience. For example, a retired DGP (J&K) was quoted as saying that Kashmiris were not known to prefer suicide bombing, like what Adil Ahmad Dar had done, due to their reli-

gious orientation. He should have known that the emergence of Islamic State (IS) altered the game all over the world. He should also have known that the IS or its ideology was eyeing the Kashmir Valley as a ripe place to enter. Another report said that the authorities were surprised that Dar used a car-borne improvised explosive device (IED), which was discontinued by Hizbul Mujahideen after 2005 due to civilian casualties.

All these impressions were unwarranted had the local authorities studied global terrorist trends. This writer had concluded his article on the Islamic State (*The Tribune*, January 7, 2019) by mentioning an incident that

took place on December 28, 2018, when some Kashmiri youths had hoisted the IS flag on the pulpit of the 14th-century Jama Masjid, indicating their intent to jump on the IS bandwagon. I had also mentioned how IS had influenced three Indonesian families to sacrifice their children in a church suicide bombing in Surabaya on May 13, 2018. In Indonesia, too, this was shocking as local terror outfit Jemaah Islamiyah had permitted only men to carry out suicide bombing.

A report from Mumbai, quoting the Intelligence Bureau, said Dar was detained six times between September 2016 and March 2018, but was not charged. This indicates that we are entering a phase experienced by Western agencies. Sixteen terrorists responsible for seven vehicle-mowing incidents — from Nice (France) on July 14, 2016, to New York on November 1, 2017, killing 140 — had been on the radar of local law enforcement agencies. The perpetrators of the January 2015 Charlie Hebdo killings and the November 2015 Paris killings were on the police radar. In the UK, information on Khalid Masood (Westminster Bridge incident), Salman Abedi (Manchester Arena), Khuram Butt & Youssef Zaghba (London Bridge) was available with the police. Yet these incidents could not be prevented.

How then do we meet the challenge? Human intelligence has always been an issue in J&K. We try to resolve it with technical methods. In my lecture to the Singapore Police officers on November 7, 2017, I had quoted the European experience that ‘bulk’ interception was not producing results as analysis was not catching up with the huge volume of information due to a shortage of analysts. Speculation

that Artificial Intelligence (AI) would solve the problem of the technical information glut has not yet been proved correct. It is still at a nascent stage. On the other hand, experts such as John Chirhart, federal technical director of US security firm Tenable, quoted by *The Guardian*, had warned that the human touch should never be underestimated when assessing intelligence: “Humans are still a vital part of the process because they provide something computers can’t.”

Tragically, this is ruled out in J&K due to the alienation of the youth after the NDA assumed power in 2014, treating protesters throwing stones as Pakistani terrorists. Former NDA minister Yashwant Sinha, who led the Concerned Citizens Group (CCG) to the Valley a number of times, has been talking about the ‘dismay and despondency’ growing among the public. “Even people who used to talk reasonably earlier were using the language of the militants and separatists... The proximate reasons for this not only seemed to be lack of dialogue with Kashmiris, but also because tourism had plummeted, the hotel business was in dire straits, there was flight of capital and an overall economic downturn leading to greater unemployment,” he said. In the process, Kashmir became a classic case of home-grown insurgency when the public started obstructing security forces during their operations, facilitating easier access to foreign-based jihadi groups.

One recalls how in 1947 our army was greatly helped by the local people, including National Conference cadres, who lent their manpower and vehicles to chase away the Pakistani invaders.

The writer was a member of the 26/11 terror attack inquiry committee

One of the reasons for the impression of intelligence failure is the inability of ground action groups to convert national or tactical intelligence inputs into local action. This is aggravated by the practice of pigeonholing terrorists or groups on the basis of previous terror acts. Intelligence analysts and supervisory officers should not have pre-determined assessments based only on past experience.

Onus on Church to confront sexual abuse



FLAVIA AGNES
WOMEN'S RIGHTS LAWYER

ROMAN Catholics across the world are waiting in great anticipation for the outcome of the historic meeting of representatives of Bishops’ Conferences, who will assemble in the Vatican from February 21 to 24 to deliberate upon the sexual abuse crisis that has plagued the Catholic Church for decades. Cardinal Oswald Gracias, head of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), is one of the nine advisers to Pope Francis and a member of the organising team for this meeting.

In recent years, skeletons have tumbled out, exposing the carefully guarded secrets of sexual abuse of children by the priestly class in countries such as the US, Ireland and Australia. The Church had to spend millions of dollars, and even sell off its property, to pay huge amounts of compensation ordered by courts in Boston and other places in the US. Even Bishops have been complicit in the crime, providing the cover-up to the acts of abuse of innocent children by priests. In response to the crisis, the Vatican had issued directions a few years ago that a Child Protection Policy must be introduced in every country to ensure the safety of minors within Church institutions.

There have been personal narratives of abuse of religious women (nuns) from across the world. The sexual scandals that unfold every day in different parts of the world have brought out poignant ‘first-person accounts’ by victims who have confirmed that cover-ups and systematic silence by



ADMISSION: Pope Francis recently underlined the pressing need to acknowledge sexual abuse of religious women by the priestly class.

their superiors destroyed the lives of so many children and adults from every continent.

Studies on the abuse of religious women were published years ago, but there was no noticeable change in the Church hierarchy’s attitude. While the incidents of abuse continue, religious women reporting these crimes are made to feel abandoned — sometimes excluded from their own communities.

Voices of Faith (VoF), an organisation which strives to enhance women’s role and participation within the Church hierarchy, had organised an event in November 2018 in the

Vatican, where it had invited survivors of abuse from various continents to share their experiences. They narrated poignant accounts not only of the abuse by priests, but also of how their superiors refused to act on their complaints.

Though Christians are a minority in India, several incidents of abuse of women and children by the clergy have hit the headlines in recent years. The alleged sexual abuse of a nun in Kerala by the Bishop of the Jalandhar diocese and the so-called ‘neutral’ position adopted by the Church officials, who refused to issue a statement in favour of the survivor, is still fresh in people’s

minds. Finally, following sustained protests by the nuns of the congregation and their supporters, the Bishop was arrested, but later released on bail. Subsequently, he was given a hero’s welcome by the Catholic community in Jalandhar. The chargesheet in this case is yet to be filed.

Close on the heels of this episode comes the news report of the conviction by a POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) court in Kannur (Kerala) on February 15 of a Catholic priest, Fr Robin, for raping and impregnating a 16-year-old student of one of the schools under his authority.

It has taken two years to secure the conviction. There was a huge cover-up in this case too. Due to the pressure by the accused, the girl’s father came forward to take the blame upon himself, so that the priest could be let off. Finally, during interrogation, he broke down and confessed. The victim and her mother turned hostile during the trial. But the DNA test of the infant matched with that of the priest, which helped to nail him. He has been awarded 20 years’ imprisonment.

The announcement from the Vatican in August 2018 that the issue of sexual abuse would be discussed at the highest level raised the hopes of millions that at last some concrete steps would be taken to curb this menace. However, Pope Francis recently stated that not much should be expected from the meeting as it was called only to apprise the Bishops of the sexual abuse of

minors and to pray and reflect upon the matter. However, in another statement, the Pope admitted that the problem of sexual abuse against religious women existed and must be acknowledged.

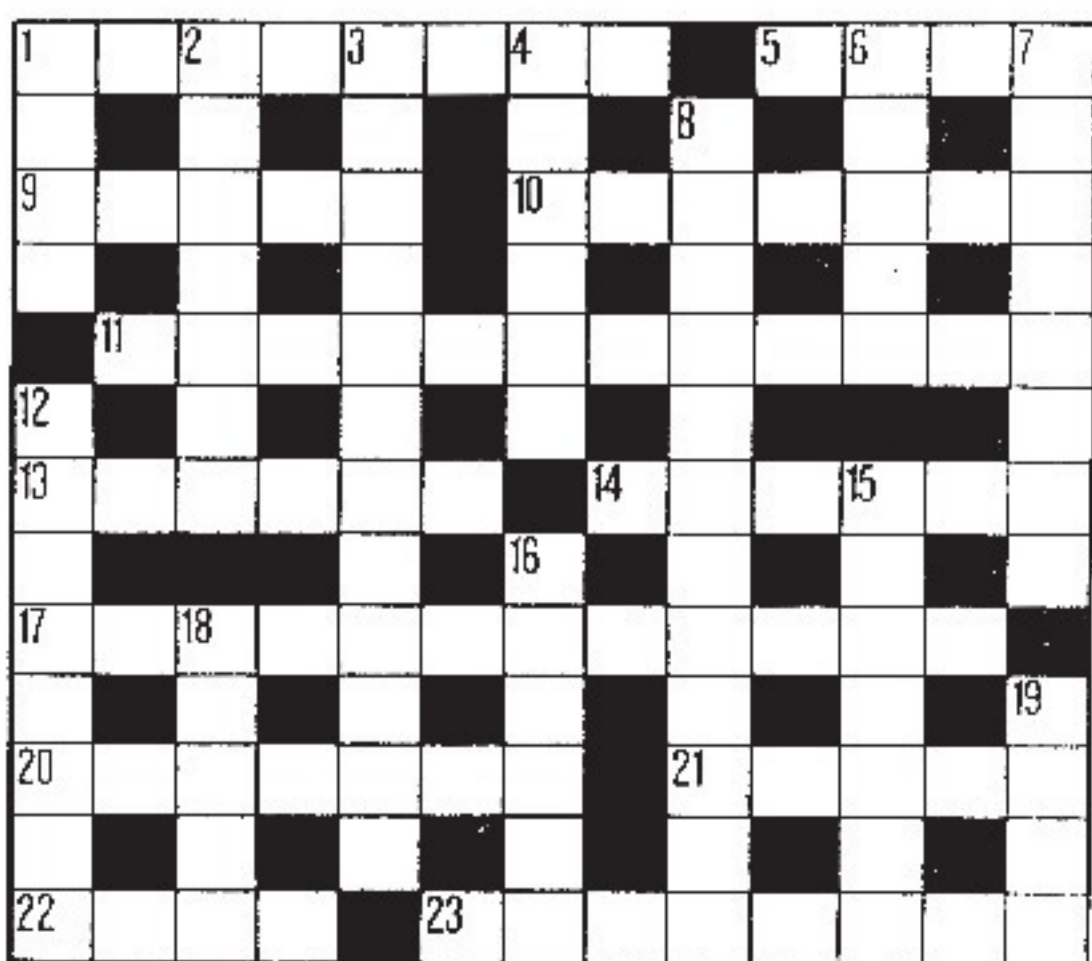
There is as yet no clarity whether the survivors of abuse have been invited to speak at this gathering. There appears to be no transparency about the procedure which will be followed at this historic meeting. The VoF has put out a statement that there has been no response to its questions regarding transparency and the expected outcomes of the meeting.

Representatives of a global organisation of survivors and advocates against clergy abuse, Ending Clergy Abuse (ECA), will be present in Rome to respond to what comes out of the conference. Virginia Saldanha, a delegate from India, has been working on the issue of clergy abuse for decades and has helped many survivors to follow up the cases within the Church hierarchy in the country.

Regarding the expected outcomes, Doris Wagner, a former religious sister from Germany who reported abuse by clergy in her own congregation, comments: “What the Church as an institution could give to the survivors is the message: You are the Church and you are here at home, tell us what you need and we will give it to you. I believe there is a future for the Church only if the Church at all its levels, in teaching, legally, institutionally, structurally is committed to this logic.”

In recent years, skeletons have tumbled out, exposing the carefully guarded secrets of sexual abuse of children by the priestly class. The Church had to spend millions of dollars, and even sell off its property, to pay huge amounts of compensation ordered by courts. A four-day meeting in the Vatican, beginning tomorrow, seeks to address the burning issue.

QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Adverse (8)
- 5 Greet (4)
- 9 Momentary flash (5)
- 10 Tightly grouped (7)
- 11 Totally unexpectedly (3,2,3,4)
- 13 Variable (6)
- 14 Writing implement (6)
- 17 Leave in haste (4,1,7)
- 20 Course of treatment (7)
- 21 Strengthen (5)
- 22 To weary (4)
- 23 Curative (8)

DOWN

- 1 Strong impulse (4)
- 2 Token of admiration (7)
- 3 Welcomingly (4,4,4)
- 4 Enumerate (6)
- 6 To benefit (5)
- 7 In recent times (8)
- 8 Impervious (12)
- 12 Explosion of feeling (8)
- 15 Indian unleavened bread (7)
- 16 Spiritualists’ meeting (6)
- 18 Bode (5)
- 19 Bargain (4)

YESTERDAY’S SOLUTION
Across: 1 Obnoxious, 8 Order, 9 Halting, 10 Tedium, 11 Repent, 12 Iron hand, 15 Manifest, 18 Homily, 20 Rascal, 21 Grounds, 22 Learn, 23 Think tank.
Down: 2 Blame, 3 Outset, 4 In no time, 5 Solemn, 6 Admiral, 7 Dromedary, 11 Rigmorale, 13 On the run, 14 Unusual, 16 Flaunt, 17 Amount, 19 Laden.

SU DO KU

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

MEDIUM

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 20, 2019 WEDNESDAY

- Vikrami Samvat 2075
- Shaka Samvat 1940
- Phalgun Shaka 1
- Phalgun Parvishite 8
- Hijari 1440
- Krishan Paksh Tithi 1, up to 5:37 pm
- Ati Yoga up to 7:28 am
- Suka Yoga up to 3:12 am
- Magha Nakshatra up to 8:03 am
- Purvaphalguni Nakshatra up to 4:04 am
- Moon in Leo sign
- Gandmool up to 8:00 am

YESTERDAY’S SOLUTION

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

FORECAST

SUNSET: WEDNESDAY 18:14 HRS
 SUNRISE: THURSDAY 06:58 HRS

Sunny Partly Cloudy Cloudy Rainy Foggy

CITY
 Chandigarh 19 13
 New Delhi 24 14

PUNJAB
 Amritsar 20 10
 Bathinda 22 11
 Jalandhar 19 10
 Ludhiana 18 11

HARYANA
 Bhiwani 22 13
 Hisar 22 12
 Sirsa 21 13

HIMACHAL PRADESH
 Dharamsala 14 04
 Manali 08 -03
 Shimla 07 -01

JAMMU & KASHMIR
 Jammu 17 10
 Leh 04 -06
 Srinagar 05 01

UTTARAKHAND
 Dehradun 19 11
 Mussoorie 10 02

TEMPERATURE IN °C

The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

ISI stamp on Pulwama

Indian Army guns for Pak spy agency

THE Indian Army's assertion that spy agency ISI was involved in the Pulwama attack has queered Pakistan's diplomatic pitch. The General Officer Commanding of the 15 Corps, Lt Gen KJS Dhillon, didn't mince words while calling the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) the brainchild of the Pakistan army and saying that the latter, along with the ISI, were controlling the terror outfit. The brazen swiftness with which the Masood Azhar-led JeM claimed responsibility for the attack has left no room for doubt about its powerful backing. Pakistan PM Imran Khan ought to find out why JeM, which his government supports, has admitted its role rather than seeking actionable evidence from India.

While claiming that it had no role in the Pulwama carnage, Pakistan has sought UN intervention to reduce bilateral tension. However, JeM's admission will make it increasingly difficult for the neighbouring country to play the 'victim' card. In a pre-emptive communication to the UN, Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has red-flagged the 'threat of use of force by India'. Nevertheless, the international body is likely to take Pakistan's frantic pleadings of innocence with more than a pinch of salt.

The ISI-handled JeM, formed by Azhar after he was released in exchange for passengers of the hijacked IC-814 flight of Indian Airlines in 1999, has also been accused earlier of carrying out major terror strikes on Indian soil, including the ones on Parliament House, Pathankot airbase and the army camps in Jammu and Uri. It's an open secret that Azhar enjoys military and political patronage in Pakistan. In the wake of the Pulwama attack, the Indian Army has quickly managed to eliminate the Jaish leadership in Kashmir. A far bigger challenge is to keep the local youth away from the sinister influence of the spy agency. Top officers have appealed to the parents of gun-toting youngsters to persuade them to surrender before it's too late. The two-pronged strategy of exposing Pakistan's nefarious designs and reaching out to the Valley residents can go a long way in curbing the epidemic of radicalisation.

Numbers too big to ignore

Recognise and address the addiction problem

INDIA has a problem. A recent study has found an inordinately large number of Indians addicted to various substances. While other drugs get more Press, it has been found that alcohol is the most widely used addictive substance. The widespread availability and increasing acceptability of social drinking could account for a large number of users, but it is worrying that 20 per cent of them are addicts. Besides alcohol, the other addictive substances used are cannabis, opioids, sedatives and inhalants.

Outrage, call to action, a police crackdown on some sellers, harsher laws — all these are knee-jerk reactions that follow any time there is information about addiction or of an instance of people dying due to bad, adulterated, substandard substances. It is debatable if any of these measures is a long-term solution, which lies in less quantifiable but more effective social intervention, support to the family and the addict, and so on. It all should start with a more humane treatment of the addict and an honest attempt at reformation. The horrible condition of so-called drug de-addiction centres and the inhuman treatment of patients admitted to such centres are often exposed in the media, and show what is wrong with our approach to this serious and debilitating problem.

Punjab has the dubious distinction of being among the top five states for substance abuse across drug categories. The extent of the problem is known to everyone except, perhaps, the political class that maintains a blinkered vision on this matter. Indeed, allegations abound about the drug dealers' network of sympathisers, nay, even collaborators, among those tasked to catch them. Such people need to be brought to book, and prosecuted to the full extent of the law. They corrode the moral fabric of the people and deserve no sympathy. Alcohol, the most widely used substance, is legally available in most parts of the country. Combating this addiction calls for a slew of calibrated responses that help the addict without the fear of ostracisation. Recognising the problem and acknowledging it is the first step; the rest will follow.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

If we can't first connect with our students' hearts, then we don't have a chance of connecting with their minds. — Justin Tarte

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1919

India and the Peace Conference.

IN reply to a question by Mr. K.K. Chanda enquiring whether the attention of Government had been drawn to resolutions of public bodies in India strongly urging the delegation of non-official India representatives to the Peace Conference to be nominated from a panel prepared by the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League and whether the Government proposed to consider the desirability of recommending to His Majesty's Government the acceptance of the suggestion, the Hon'ble Sir William Vincent said:—"The Government of India do not propose to recommend to His Majesty's Government acceptance of the suggestions contained in them." Having regard to the strength and volume of opinion behind the proposals of the public bodies, it would clearly have been better if the Government had given a fuller reply than they chose to give or at any rate had stated some of the reasons why in their opinion the recommendation could not be accepted.

English Nation's Duty.

THE *Statist* in the course of its 50th article on the problems arising after the war draws attention to the question of the better political education of the British nation as to its duties regarding the Dominions and India. The writer points out that neither the British voters nor the members of Parliament know precisely what duties they owe to the people in India and the Colonies. Although the great Dominions can assert their claims, yet they "may be very seriously compromised by what we decide in these little Islands." The writer thinks that the British system of government is inefficient for the purpose of controlling the affairs of a great Empire and therefore the system should be altered.

...and now, Kashmiri students

There is a need to reclaim universities as sites for engaged learning



AVIJIT PATHAK

PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY, JNU

THEY are Kashmiri students — young, dreamy and driven by educational quest and vocational pursuits. But then, it is because of our collective decadence that we stereotype them. And, with the mob mentality and mass psychology of revenge after the Pulwama tragedy, our 'nationalist' gaze classifies them as 'conspirators' or 'potential terrorists'. As they are targeted and attacked, and the story repeats itself from Dehradun to Delhi, I realise the importance of being a teacher. I must raise my dissenting voice, a voice emanating from the therapeutic power of a dialogic relationship with the young.

If you look at JNU, AMU and now the Kashmiri students, you see a pattern; and it exists because of the emotionally charged narrative of the nation — a nation in danger because of the 'enemy' out there — constructed by the ruling regime and sanctified by the noisy television channels.

Yes, I have no hesitation in saying that there is immense violence in the monolithic discourse of nationalism, and its urge to transform young minds into 'resources' for the nation, or 'loyal' citizens with what Michel Foucault would have regarded as 'docile' bodies/minds adhering to the rules of 'discipline' the state sanctifies. Hence, with the practice of 'hierarchical observation', the ruling regime identifies those who are not 'normal': those interrogating the dominant discourse of nationalism, or its politics of knowledge. No wonder, for the Establishment, even the chorus of *azadi* — a reflection on patriarchy, casteism, crony capitalism and militaristic nationalism, and a quest for egalitarianism and cultural pluralism — looks



CRUCIAL: A dignified communion with the youth must be enabled.

A monolithic discourse backed by the coercive machinery of the state annihilates the possibility of any conversation with the young.

problematic. The likes of 'JNU radicals', the vocal students of Aligarh Muslim University (a gaze activated by the proponents of the *Hindu rashtra* has already stigmatised the 'identity' of the majority of the inhabitants of this place), or for that matter, a young professor in Assam reminding us of the intensity of fear and alienation ordinary Kashmiris experience in the Valley are, therefore, seen as 'anti-national'. A monolithic discourse backed by the coercive machinery of the state annihilates the possibility of any conversation with the young. What exists is only the instantaneity of filing sedition charges against them, or, isolating, assaulting and stigmatising the Kashmiri students.

Second, something has gone terribly wrong with the way the ruling regime (and this time because of its affinity with neoliberalism) perceives higher education. Become a 'nationalist', celebrate the militarisation of the consciousness and hate the 'enemy' nation. Or, learn the 'skills', adjust yourself to the demands of the market, and join the workforce. In this agenda, there is no scope for self-reflection, philosophic wonder or critical/passion-

ate thinking. Yes, many of our private universities or institutes of technology and management have no 'politics'; in these super-hygienic campuses, a teacher as a professional 'skill provider' engages with the student as a 'client'. No, the regime does not have any problem with these shops.

However, what it cannot bear is the presence of some public universities where some tradition of critical thinking, political churning or engaged learning is still alive. JNU is 'bad' because its students and teachers speak of Marx and Ambedkar, and Gandhi and Tagore; HCU is problematic because here the voice of the subaltern interrogates the status quo; and AMU is not 'nationalist' enough, particularly when the lieutenants of Yogi Adityanath are observing it. In a way, this is the time for destroying public universities; this is the time for robbing education of critical pedagogy.

And third, the propaganda machinery — say, a news channel burdened with the conscience of the 'republic' — is working for destroying the reputation of public universities. These 'troubled' campuses are seen as 'war zones' and it would appear that terror-

ists, anti-national conspirators and Maoists are staying in hostels, and nothing else takes place here. I feel its pain and absurdity every day. My students (and some of them are from Kashmir), I know, are bright, sensitive, civilised and politically articulate. Yet, when I see cops at the university gate, I feel that the system is transforming everything into its opposite: critical thinking into deviance, scholarship into waste of time (or that of the taxpayer's money), and positive youth energy into anti-national conspiracy.

It would be a tragedy if we fail to understand and converse with the youth, if we destroy the possibility of a dignified communion with the Kashmiri youth. We need enabling Vice Chancellors to illumine the universities. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find VCs who are true educators and capable of engaging with the youth — the spectrum of worldviews or dissenting voices they represent. If a VC feels annoyed, or calls the police when he hears a slogan like 'Smash Patriarchy' or 'Down with Fascism', or fines the students if he sees a torch-light demonstration by them expressing solidarity with farmers, or students of Kashmir who have been harassed by the militant 'nationalists' or the cops, you can imagine the intensity of the damage caused by him.

Yet, concerned citizens and critical pedagogues have to come together, and put pressure on society. A society that suspects the youth, encourages mob mentality and abhors critical voice can fall into the trap of a potentially fascist regime. At this crucial juncture, sensitive minds have to fight a battle for reclaiming universities as sites for engaged learning, critical thinking and non-violent debate. We ought to nurture a cosmopolitan mind — not limited to a caste, an exclusionary class, a territory, or a religious dogma. Regionalism, parochialism, saffronisation, religious nationalism and lumpenism have already destroyed many of our universities. Its victims are those who — like Tagore — remind us of the discontent of militant nationalism.

It is time we stopped this madness.

Neither a borrower nor a lender be

RITU KAMRA KUMAR

NEITHER a borrower, nor a lender be. For loan off loses both itself and friend. And borrower dulls the edge of husbandry." This portion from William Shakespeare's 'Polonius' advises Laertes is relevant even today. It is a piece of advice to people who often borrow money and forget to pay. I was reminded of these wise words as I passed by my neighbour's house. The other day, she had come to me, humbly pleading me to lend her one thousand rupees as her husband had not yet got his salary. Empathising with her plight, I gave the money, but after that she never showed her face to me.

There are many such people who

give excuses to borrow money. There are some who casually tell you to give *shagun* on their behalf on the occasion of a celebration you are going to attend. You gift the envelope on their behalf, but they never repay the *shagun* amount. Thereafter, whenever you meet them, the matter bothers you, but you don't dare mention it, lest it should ruin your relationship with them. It's so true: 'who ventures to lend loses money and friend'.

Why do people postpone repaying debts? Is it amnesia or intentional forgetfulness or are they habitual offenders? Well, the reasons and excuses can vary. Some people are adept at living off others' money and habits die hard. I have a friend who is quite well off, yet her purse is always empty and even for small amounts,

she resorts to borrowing, and often forgets to repay. Though she keeps telling us, "Please remind me if I have to pay you some money. You all know, how it is. I am very forgetful." We have now accepted her habit, all in the package of friendship, but sometimes it does pinch badly.

A little bit of borrowing is permissible. During my hostel days, this give-and-take activity was common among friends as pocket money was always insufficient. But borrowing as a habit is antagonistic and annoying.

Stephen Leacock illustrates this well in his story 'My Lost Dollar', where the author lends a dollar to his friend Todd in the name of friendship and in kindness. But Todd forgets to return the money. Stephen drops many hints to remind Todd of the

dollar that he owes him, but in vain. Finally, he gives up on Todd. As Stephen adds him to the list of people who owe him money, it occurs to him that just like Todd, he too might have forgotten to repay some borrowed money. He ends the story by wishing to start an 'Honesty Movement' for paying those small amounts that he might have borrowed. In humour, the author leaves a final comment: that he didn't want Todd to stumble upon his story and read it.

I, too, wish the same because I may be looking for a standard from others that I myself might have failed to meet. The lender is pained if the borrower forgets to return the amount to him. However, the anecdote does teach a message: 'Neither a borrower, nor a lender be.'

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Control the drug menace

Punjab, which was known for its vigorous youth and sturdy folk and for its players, prospering agriculture and rich culture, is now notorious for being a state of drug addicts. The news report '16 cr Indians on alcohol, Punjab high on drugs' shows that the use of alcohol and drugs like cannabis is alarmingly rampant in the state. During the past few elections, drug abuse has been the prime issue, but strong enough measures have not been taken to tackle this problem. The report throws light on how indigenous drugs are expanding their tentacles in the state. They are cheap and easily available. Strong steps should be taken to control this menace.

ANMOL BALI, VIA EMAIL

Drug use alarming

The increased use of alcohol in India is alarming. A survey conducted by AIIMS, New Delhi, has revealed that 16 crore Indians use alcohol and most of them are addicts, requiring urgent treatment. The use of cannabis, opioids and sedatives is common among the youth in Punjab. Most of the drugs are locally available. To control the consumption of these harmful substances, proven and cost-effective actions are increasing taxes on alcoholic drinks, ban or restrictions on

alcohol advertising and restricting the physical availability of alcohol.

SALONI MOHAN, ZIRAKPUR

Targeting J&K students

The government has done well to issue an advisory asking all states to provide security to the Kashmiris and stop anyone from targeting J&K students. On the other hand, the Valley people will also be well advised to refrain from making anti-national comments in the social media as that may be fuelling public anger against them. To prevent any communal flare-up, the administration and political leaders must ensure that calm is maintained even when there are some provocations from either side. Kashmir is an integral part of our country.

LAL SINGH, VIA EMAIL

'Battle casualty' status?

Would the Modi *sarkar* recognise the sacrifice of the 41 CRPF personnel who died in the Pulwama attack as 'battle casualty', just like defence personnel who are martyred while fighting for the nation or while on duty? Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh has asserted that the same is under consideration. It is hoped that the recent suicide bomb attack on the CRPF convoy would spur the govern-

ment to act in this regard.

HEMANT KUMAR, AMBALA CITY

Win over Valley

Apropos the editorial 'The Pulwama massacre' (February 19), the incident has shown that Pakistan will not give up its confrontational attitude over Kashmir. A hasty military option, especially at a time when the US is seeking Pakistan's help in firming up a deal with the Afghan Taliban and Beijing is evading questions on its blocking of action at the UN, against JeM leader Masood Azhar might backfire. The need of the hour is to build political consensus on the way forward to address alienation and win the hearts of our people in the Valley, besides taking a multi-pronged initiative.

SS PAUL, CHAKDAHA, NADIA

Higher education ignored

Though Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal has enhanced the education share by 9.75 per cent in the Budget, higher education has been neglected. More than 80 per cent of regular posts are lying vacant in government colleges. The Punjab Government has not shown any sign of filling the posts of assistant professor. Since 1996, no regular teacher has been appointed in the government colleges. College edu-

cation is virtually at the stake of part-time and guest faculty teachers. Some colleges are even without regular principals and teachers. In the 24 years since 1996, how many NET/UGC cleared/PhD qualified candidates have become over-aged without getting even a single chance for the job and how many have crossed the matrimonial age while waiting for a permanent job? The state must ponder on these important questions.

SARDOOL SINGH, GURDASPUR

Save Patiala heritage

In the middle 'Reclaiming old grandeur', the writer has brought out the importance of the limited tribe of art conservationists. Patiala has many historical buildings, artefacts, archival material and memorabilia which need protection, conservation and restoration. The government should make efforts to get these buildings declared heritage sites. It is imperative that heritage walks are conducted and the historical buildings opened to the public. Historians should be diligently involved in reconstructing the storyline to make the buildings come alive again. Proper marketing can generate tourist interest for these sites and help in resuscitating the heritage.

JASHANDEEP SANDHU, PATIALA

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 5

खत्म हो बहस

रिजर्व बैंक ने सोमवार को अपनी अब तक की सबसे लंबी बोर्ड बैठक में यह तय किया कि वह चालू वित्त वर्ष में 28,000 करोड़ रुपये का अंतरिम लाभांश सरकार को हस्तांतरित करेगा। वर्ष 2017-18 के 40,000 करोड़ रुपये के अंतिम अधिशेष (केंद्रीय बैंक जुलाई-जून चक्र का अनुसरण करता है), जो पहली छमाही में केंद्र को मिला, उसे

शामिल किया जाए तो आरबीआई द्वारा वर्ष 2018-19 में केंद्र को हस्तांतरित राशि 68,000 करोड़ रुपये हो गई। यह वर्ष 2017-18 में आरबीआई द्वारा केंद्र को दी गई 50,000 करोड़ रुपये की राशि से अधिक है। आरबीआई की ओर से सरकार को लाभांश सौंपे जाने का मामला पिछले काफी समय से विवाद और चर्चा का विषय बना हुआ है।

सरकार आक्रामक ढंग से ज्यादा से ज्यादा राशि की मांग करती रही है। इसके लिए अनुमान से कम राजस्व संग्रह (खासतौर पर जीएसटी आने के कारण) तथा सरकारी बैंकों के पुनर्पूजीकरण की जरूरत जैसी तमाम वजहों को जिम्मेदार बताया जाता रहा है। इस संदर्भ में अंतरिम लाभांश निश्चित तौर पर सरकार के लिए एक बड़ी राहत लेकर आया क्योंकि इसकी मदद से उसे चालू वित्त वर्ष में 3.4 फीसदी राजस्व घाटे का अपना तय लक्ष्य हासिल करने में मदद मिलेगी। यह बात स्पष्ट है कि सरकार आरबीआई की उदारता और दानशीलता पर निर्भर रही है। उदाहरण के लिए इस माह के आरंभ में पेश किए गए अंतरिम बजट में वित्त मंत्री ने आरबीआई की ओर से राष्ट्रीयकृत बैंकों और वित्तीय संस्थानों

को जारी किए जाने वाले लाभांश में संशोधन किया और वित्त वर्ष 2019 के लिए उसे 54,817 करोड़ रुपये से बढ़ाकर 74,140 करोड़ रुपये कर दिया गया। अगले वित्त वर्ष के लिए सरकार 69,000 करोड़ रुपये का राजस्व केंद्रीय बैंक से चाहती है। यह केंद्र द्वारा आरबीआई, सरकारी बैंकों और वित्तीय संस्थानों से निर्धारित 82,911 करोड़ रुपये के राजस्व का 83 फीसदी है। आरबीआई की ओर से इस वर्ष उदारतापूर्वक दी गई राशि को देखें तो ऐसा लगता नहीं कि उसे इसमें कोई समस्या है। हालांकि अंतरिम लाभांश सरकार को देने की प्रक्रिया आरबीआई के पिछले गवर्नर ऊर्जित पटेल के कार्यकाल में शुरू हुई जिन्होंने गत वर्ष 10,000 करोड़ रुपये इस मद में दिए थे।

परंतु यह मुद्दा केंद्र सरकार और आरबीआई के बीच बड़े विवाद का विषय भी बन गया। आरबीआई ने उस वक्त यह दलील दी थी कि हर वर्ष अधिशेष राजस्व का बड़ा हिस्सा ब्याज से होने वाली आय और मुद्रा जारी करने से होने वाले लाभ के कारण जमा होता है और उसे आपातकालीन फंड के रूप में रहने देना चाहिए ताकि अर्थव्यवस्था में वित्तीय स्थिरता बरकरार रखने के लिए जरूरत पड़ने पर उसका इस्तेमाल किया जा सके। परंतु सरकार की चिंताएं कहीं अधिक तात्कालिक रही हैं। यही वजह थी कि दोनों के बीच विवाद उत्पन्न हो गया। आरबीआई ने अंतरिम भुगतान को लेकर जो हालिया उदारता दिखाई है, उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि उस पर उठे सवाल विशेष

सामिति की अगले माह आने वाली रिपोर्ट के बाद खत्म हो जाएंगे। समिति की अध्यक्षता पूर्व गवर्नर विमल जालान को सौंपी गई है। समिति आर्थिक पूंजीगत ढांचे की समीक्षा करेगी और यह सुझाव देगी कि केंद्रीय बैंक को पूंजी भंडार का प्रबंधन कैसे करना चाहिए और वह अपना अधिशेष सरकार को हस्तांतरित कर सकती है या नहीं। उम्मीद की जाती है कि समिति आरबीआई द्वारा जोखिम की प्रोविजनिंग के स्तर के मामले में भी अपनी राय देगी। अधिशेष भंडार से जुड़े तमाम मसले समिति के दायरे में रहेंगे। सरकार को समिति की अनुशंसाओं पर शीघ्र कदम उठाना होगा ताकि इस बहस पर विराम लग सके कि आरबीआई को कितना लाभांश सरकार के सौंपा करना चाहिए।



अजय मोहंती

युवा बेरोजगारी का दंश और जनांकिकी लाभांश

युवाओं के रोजगार को देखें तो हमें पता चलता है कि बहुत बड़ी संख्या में लोग स्वरोजगार को अपनाए हुए हैं। इस संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी दे रही हैं राधिका कपूर

देश इस समय रोजगार के गंभीर संकट से दो चार है। इस समाचार पत्र द्वारा हाल ही में पीरियॉडिक लेबर फोर्स सर्वे यानी पीएलएफएस (2017-18) के हवाले से एक रिपोर्ट प्रकाशित हुई जिसमें बताया गया कि देश में रोजगार का संकट कितना विकराल हो चुका है। प्रचलित बेरोजगारी हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था की विशेषता रही है। करीब 6 फीसदी की बेरोजगारी दर काफी कुछ कहती है। चेतावनी की बात यह है कि उच्च बेरोजगारी काफी हद तक युवाओं यानी 15 से 29 की उम्र के युवाओं की बेरोजगारी से जुड़ी हुई है।

युवाओं में बेरोजगारी की दर ग्रामीण पुरुषों और महिलाओं में क्रमशः 17.4 फीसदी और 13.6 फीसदी रही। शहरी युवाओं में पुरुषों और महिलाओं के लिए यह क्रमशः 18.7 फीसदी और 27.2 फीसदी थी। मोदी सरकार जब सत्ता में आई थी तो इसमें युवाओं को रोजगार देने के वादे और इस पर उन्हें मिले समर्थन का अहम भूमिका रही। ऐसे में सरकार के लिए हालिया आंकड़ों को स्वीकार करना असहज करने वाली बात है। परंतु यह केवल एक चुनावी मुद्दा नहीं है। इसका संबंध देश के गंवाए जाते जनांकिकी लाभ

से भी है जबकि ऐसा अवसर किसी देश के समक्ष यदाकदा ही आता है।

किसी भी देश में जब कामगार आबादी की वृद्धि कुल आबादी से तेज होती है तो कहा जाता है कि उसके पास जनांकिकी लाभ का अवसर है। माना जाता है कि इससे आय बढ़ेगी, बचत बढ़ेगी, प्रति कामगार अधिक पूंजी आएगी और एक किस्म का जनांकिकी लाभ अर्जित होगा। फिलहाल भारत दुनिया में सबसे अधिक युवा आबादी वाला देश है। आबादी का 65 फीसदी से अधिक हिस्सा 15 से 59 की उम्र का है।

वर्ष 2035-40 तक इस संख्या में इजाफा होने की उम्मीद है। यानी भारत के पास जनांकिकी लाभ लेने का अवसर अन्य किसी देश से अधिक है। अगर हमें इस अवसर का लाभ उठाना है तो हमें अतिरिक्त श्रम शक्ति को उपयोगी रोजगार देने होंगे। परंतु युवा बेरोजगारी की बढ़ती दर इसे निराशाजनक बना रही है।

श्रम ब्यूरो ने 2015-16 में आखिरी बार रोजगार और बेरोजगारी का जो पारिवारिक सर्वे किया था उसके द्वारा जारी आखिरी आंकड़े हमें कहीं अधिक बेहतर विश्लेषण करने की इजाजत देते हैं और इस बात की पुष्टि करते हैं कि युवाओं के बीच बेरोजगारी पिछले काफी समय से

बढ़ रही है। मैं 2017-18 के पीएलएफएस और श्रम ब्यूरो के 2015-16 के आंकड़ों की तुलना नहीं करूंगी क्योंकि उनमें घरों के चयन के मानक अलग-अलग थे। परंतु फिर भी श्रम ब्यूरो के सर्वेक्षण से यह संकेत मिलता है कि युवा बेरोजगारी के सामने कठिन चुनौतियां हैं।

वर्ष 2015-16 के सर्वेक्षण में बेरोजगारी की दर 3.7 फीसदी थी जबकि 15 से 29 वर्ष की उम्र के युवाओं के लिए यह दर 10.3 फीसदी थी। श्रम ब्यूरो के सर्वेक्षण के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि 30 से 59 की उम्र के लोगों के लिए रोजगार की दर बमुश्किल 1 फीसदी रह गई।

श्रम ब्यूरो के 2015-16 के सर्वेक्षण में शैक्षणिक स्तर के आधार पर बेरोजगारी का विश्लेषण और अधिक परेशान करने वाले नतीजे पेश करता है। श्रम ब्यूरो के सर्वेक्षण के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि शैक्षणिक स्तर के साथ बेरोजगारी दर में इजाफा होता है। स्नातक और स्नातकोत्तर डिग्री वालों में बेरोजगारी की दर तकरीबन 30 फीसदी थी। इससे पता चलता है कि पढ़े लिखे लोगों के लिए अपने कौशल और योग्यता के अनुसार रोजगार हासिल करना कितना मुश्किल काम है।

दूसरी ओर अशिक्षित लोगों के लिए

बेरोजगारी दर केवल 2.7 फीसदी रही। यह कमतर आंकड़ा बहुत आश्चर्य नहीं करता। यह केवल इस वजह से है कि अशिक्षित युवा अक्सर लंबे समय तक बेरोजगार रहने की स्थिति में नहीं रह सकते।

युवाओं के बीच रोजगार की प्रकृति की बात करें तो स्वरोजगार प्राप्त युवाओं की हिस्सेदारी में भी भारी विसंगति नजर आती है। एकबार फिर 2015-16 के आंकड़े दिखाते हैं कि ये पारिवारिक श्रमिक हैं जिनको किसी प्रकार का भुगतान नहीं किया जाता है। रोजगारशुदा लोगों की अगली बड़ी श्रेणी यदाकदा काम करने वालों की है जो 36.64 फीसदी है। नियमित वेतनभोगी कर्मचारियों की हिस्सेदारी 17.13 फीसदी के साथ अपेक्षाकृत कम है जो बताती है कि युवाओं के लिए अच्छे उत्पादक काम कितने कम हैं। इसके अलावा वर्ष 2015-16 में 40 प्रतिशत से अधिक युवा कृषि कार्यों में लगे हुए थे जबकि मात्र 13 फीसदी युवा ही विनिर्माण क्षेत्र में संलग्न थे। शैक्षणिक स्तर में सुधार के बावजूद बड़ी तादाद में युवाओं का कृषि कार्यों में लगे रहना यह बताता है कि गैर कृषि क्षेत्र उनके लिए जरूरत के मुताबिक रोजगार के उपयुक्त अवसर तैयार करने में नाकामी हासिल हुई है।

करियर के उठान पर युवाओं को उनके योग्य रोजगार न मिल पाने से न केवल उनमें हताशा उत्पन्न होती है, बल्कि इसका उनके करियर पर काफी गहरा असर होता है। इतना ही नहीं यह बात भविष्य में उनके बेरोजगार रहने की आशंका को भी काफी मजबूत कर देती है।

युवाओं की बेरोजगारी की समस्या से निपटने का कोई जादुई उपाय नहीं है। कई लोग कहते हैं शिक्षा और कौशल विकास क्षेत्र में सुधार करने से बात बन सकती है। इसके अलावा उद्यमिता पर जोर देने और श्रम शक्ति में महिलाओं की भागीदारी बढ़ाने की बात भी कुछ ऐसी ही है। परंतु इन कामों में से कोई भी तभी सफल साबित हो सकती है कि उसका क्रियान्वयन समग्र आर्थिक नीति में किया जाए ताकि रोजगार की तादाद अधिकतम की जा सके न कि केवल जीडीपी में इजाफा हो।

यकीनी तौर पर यह अपने आप में एक पहलू है कि हमारा देश 7 फीसदी की दर से वृद्धि हासिल कर रहा है लेकिन इसके बावजूद हमारे यहाँ शिक्षित युवाओं के लिए रोजगार के पर्याप्त अवसर तैयार नहीं हो पा रहे हैं। आने वाले महीनों में राजनीतिक बदलाव संभव है लेकिन यह बात आवश्यक है कि देश में युवाओं की बेरोजगारी के मसले से भलीभांति निपटा जाए। ऐसा नहीं है कि इसकी केवल आर्थिक लागत ही मायने रखती है।

युवाओं की बेरोजगारी के सामाजिक प्रभाव बहुत गहरे हो सकते हैं। वर्ष 2011 का अरब उभार हमें यह याद दिलाता है कि मोहभंग की स्थिति वाले बेरोजगार युवाओं की हताशा हमें किस स्थिति में पहुंचा सकती है।

(लेखिका इंडियन काउंसिल फॉर रिसर्च ऑन इंटरनैशनल इकॉनॉमिक रिलेशंस की वरिष्ठ फेलो हैं। लेख में प्रस्तुत विचार निजी हैं।)

भाजपा को भारी नुकसान से कमजोर सरकार की आशंका



सम सामरिक

टीसीए श्रीनिवास-राघवण

कांग्रेस के एक वरिष्ठ नेता ने

दो सप्ताह पहले सार्वजनिक तौर पर कहा था कि भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) इस साल होने वाले आम चुनावों में 135 सीटें गंवा सकती है। मुझे कांग्रेस नेता का सीटों के बारे में यह आकलन बेहद सटीक लगा जो संभवतः कांग्रेस के आंतरिक अनुमानों पर आधारित था। हालांकि उन्होंने यह नहीं बताया था कि कांग्रेस इस चुनाव में कितनी सीटें जीतने जा रही है?

अगर कांग्रेस नेता का यह आकलन सही होता है तो भाजपा वर्ष 2014 में जीती गई 282 सीटों से घटकर इस बार 147 पर आ जाएगी। अगर भाजपा की मौजूदा सीट संख्या 268 से तुलना करें तो फिर वह 2019 में 133 पर ही रह सकती है। यह वर्ष 2004 में भाजपा को मिली 138 सीटों के काफी करीब होगा।

इस बीच कांग्रेस को खुद भी यह भरोसा नहीं है कि वह आगामी चुनावों में 125 से अधिक सीटें जीत पाएगी। हालांकि वह आंकड़ा भी वर्ष 2014 में उसे हासिल सीटों का तिगुना होगा। वैसे कांग्रेस के कुछ कम आशावादी एवं अधिक वास्तविक अनुमान यही हैं कि वह 100 सीटों के करीब रहेगी। इतनी सीटें भी कांग्रेस को जीत का ऐलान करने और राहुल गांधी को चैंपियन बताने के लिए काफी होंगी।

अगर हम कांग्रेस के सर्वाधिक आशावादी अनुमान-भाजपा 133 और कांग्रेस 125, को भी लें तो अगली सरकार बनाने के लिए राष्ट्रपति का निमंत्रण किसे मिलेगा? इस सवाल का तो केवल एक ही जवाब है।

वैसी स्थिति में जो भी प्रधानमंत्री बनेगा, हमें देखना होगा कि कहीं उसकी हालत 1996 में अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी की तरह न हो जाए? वाजपेयी को केवल 13 दिन सत्ता में रहने के बाद ही हटना पड़ा था। अगर भाजपा इस बार 100 से अधिक सीटें गंवाती है तो 1996 का वाकया भी दोहराया जा सकता है।

इस बात की संभावना अधिक लग रही है कि भाजपा और कांग्रेस दोनों की सम्मिलित सीटों की संख्या 280 ही रहती है तो बाकी दलों के पास 264 सीटें चली जाएंगी। पिछले

लोकासभा चुनाव में भाजपा और कांग्रेस को मिलाकर 326 सीटें थीं और अन्य दलों के खाते में 218 सीटें ही बच गई थीं।

ऐसी स्थिति में अगली सरकार की अनुआई जो भी करे, पिछले पांच साल तक बेहद मजबूत सरकार रहने के बाद हमें एक अशक्त या बेहद कमजोर सरकार मिलने जा रही है। ऐसी स्थिति से बचने के लिए जरूरी होगा कि केंद्र में सरकार बनाने वाली किसी भी पार्टी को कम-से-कम 210 सीटें मिलें। ऐसा होने पर ही नई सरकार की बुनियादी कमजोरी काफी हद तक दूर हो जाएगी।

हम 1996, 1998, 1999 और 2004 के उदाहरण देख चुके हैं। इनमें से हरेक सरकार को क्षेत्रीय दलों का बंधक बनाया था। कांग्रेस ने 2009 के चुनाव में अपने दम पर 206 सीटें जीतकर क्षेत्रीय दलों के चंगुल से भाजपा को बंधक बनाया था। लेकिन उसने शासन के स्तर पर वह मौका गंवा दिया था।

सवाल है कि हम क्या चाहते हैं? भारत में राजनीति केवल दो बातों से ही संबंधित है: 90 फीसदी मसले सामाजिक नीतियों के बारे में होते हैं और केवल 10 फीसदी ही आर्थिक नीतियों से ताल्लुक रखते हैं। इस 90 फीसदी में से भी 90 फीसदी मुद्दे जाति एवं समुदाय से संबंधित होते हैं और बाकी 10 फीसदी मुद्दों में 90 फीसदी मसले मुद्रास्फीति से संबद्ध होते हैं।

यह भी सच है कि भाजपा एवं कांग्रेस दोनों ही अपनी अलग वजहों से जाति को अपना मुख्य वाहक बनाने से परहेज करते रहे हैं। भाजपा ने हिंदू मतदाताओं को एकजुट करने की कोशिश की है और कांग्रेस ने अल्पसंख्यकों को एक सूत्र में बांधने की कोशिश की है। इन दोनों दलों के बीच की यह

इकलौती साझा बात है। बुरी बातों के मामले में दोनों एक जैसे ही हैं। अगर कांग्रेस से उसने शीर्ष परिवार को अलग कर दें और भाजपा से राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ (आरएसएस) को हटा दें तो दोनों साथ आ सकते हैं।

इस तरह कांग्रेस ने समुदायों पर ध्यान देना शुरू कर दिया। वर्ष 2015 में आई एंटनी समिति की रिपोर्ट याद कीजिए जिसमें कांग्रेस को नजरअंदाज किया गया अधिक झुक जाने को लेकर आगाह किया गया था। लेकिन कांग्रेस ने महंगाई और जाति के मसले को नजरअंदाज किया है। दूसरी तरफ, भाजपा ने हमेशा ही महंगाई और समुदाय को तबज्जो दी है और जाति को नजरअंदाज किया है।

इसका नतीजा यह हुआ है कि जाति-आधारित दलों के लिए खुला मैदान मिल गया है। अगली लोकसभा में इन दलों को करीब आधी सीटें मिल सकती हैं। ऐसा होना 2019 चुनावों के बारे में वाकई बहुत खराब खबर होगी।

वर्ष 1989 से अब तक का अनुभव यही रहा है कि जब भी केंद्र सरकार की जातिगत राजनीति करने वाले दलों पर अतिशय निर्भरता रही है तो देश में शासन डांवाडोल हो जाता है क्योंकि घरेलू एजेंडा बहुत संकीर्ण मुद्दों से तय होने लगता है। इस बार के चुनाव में अगर भाजपा की सीटों में 80-100 की भी गिरावट आती है तो मुझे डर है कि ऐसी ही हालत पैदा होने वाली है।

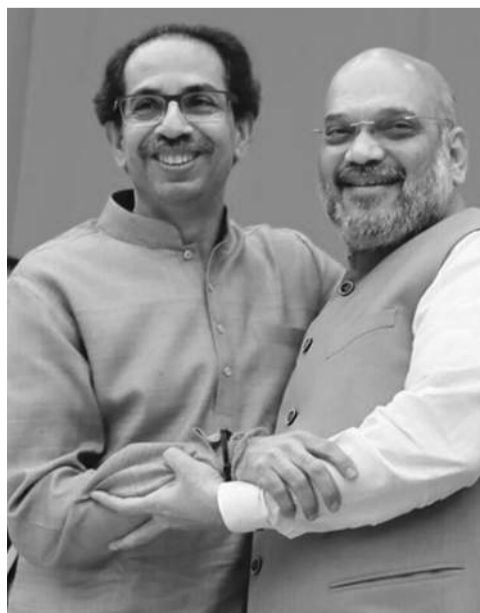
लेकिन अगर आप भाजपा के पदाधिकारियों से बात करें तो वे इस नुकसान के 50 सीटें तक ही सीमित करने वाले दलों को रहे हैं। इसके पीछे उनकी दलील है कि पहले अच्छा प्रदर्शन नहीं रहने वाले राज्यों में भाजपा प्रदर्शन सुधारकर्ता नुकसान की भरपाई करने की रणनीति पर चल रही है। लेकिन वह महज एक उम्मीद ही बनकर रह सकती है।

अखिर कि, मोदी फैक्टर भले ही कम हुआ है लेकिन खत्म नहीं हुआ है। उस लिहाज से देखें तो 2019 का आम चुनाव मोदी के कामकाज पर एक जनमत संग्रह बन सकता है। अगर ऐसा हो जाता है तो फिर भाजपा अपने सभी आलोचकों को गलत साबित कर सकती है।

कानाफूसी

तुरुप का इक्का

सूत्रों का कहना है कि भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) ने शिवसेना को आगामी लोकसभा चुनाव के दौरान महाराष्ट्र में गठबंधन के लिए राजी करने के लिए असेम तुरुप के इक्के का इस्तेमाल किया। इसकी मदद से ही दोनों दलों के बीच बिगड़ती बात बन सकी। आखिर क्या था वह तुरुप का इक्का? दरअसल सोमवार को जब भाजपा के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष अमित शाह और शिवसेना प्रमुख उद्धव ठाकरे के बीच मुलाकात हुई तो भाजपा नेतृत्व ने शिवसेना को साफ यह इशारा कर दिया कि उसके लिए शरद पवार के नेतृत्व वाली राष्ट्रवादी कांग्रेस पार्टी (राकांपा) और राज ठाकरे के नेतृत्व वाली महाराष्ट्र नवनिर्माण सेना (मनसे) राजनीतिक रूप से कतई अस्पृश्य नहीं हैं। बस यह बात सुनते ही शिवसेना के कसबल ढीले पड़ गए और पार्टी गठबंधन के लिए चुपचाप तैयार हो गई। भाजपा के एक वरिष्ठ नेता के मुताबिक परदे के पीछे राकांपा और मनसे के समझौते की आशंका ने शिवसेना को झुकाने में अहम भूमिका निभाई। हालांकि इसके अलावा शिवसेना को यह वादा भी किया गया है कि अगर केंद्र में भाजपा की सरकार दोबारा बनती है तो उसे और अधिक मंत्रालय दिए जाएंगे।



आपका पक्ष

महानगरों में बढ़ता ध्वनि प्रदूषण

महानगरों में वायु प्रदूषण के साथ ध्वनि प्रदूषण बढ़ता जा रहा है। इससे लोगों के स्वास्थ्य पर बुरा असर पड़ रहा है। सड़कों पर वाहनों से उत्पन्न होने वाला शोर मस्तिष्क पर बुरा प्रभाव डालता है। लगातार लाउडस्पीकर बजने से भी परेशानी उत्पन्न होती है। हालांकि लाउडस्पीकर बजाने से संबंधित नियम बनाए गए हैं लेकिन कुछ अवसरों पर कानून की अनदेखी भी की जाती रही है। सड़क किनारे रहने वाले लोगों को अधिक ध्वनि प्रदूषण से जूझना पड़ता है। सड़क पर लगातार चलने वाले वाहनों से उत्पन्न शोर तथा हॉर्न की आवाज दिनभर सुनाई देती रहती है। इससे अधिक परेशानी चौराहों के पास बने घरों में रहने वाले लोगों को होती है। चौक-चौराहों में वाहन चालक हॉर्न का अधिक इस्तेमाल करते हैं जिससे अधिक शोर उत्पन्न होता है। कई साइलेंट जेन पर भी वाहन चालक हॉर्न का इस्तेमाल कर देते हैं जिससे दूसरे व्यक्ति को



नुकसान होता है। स्कूल तथा अस्पताल के आसपास क्षेत्र को साइलेंट जेन में रखा गया है तथा वहां सड़कों पर हॉर्न पर प्रतिबंध का संकेत चिह्न भी लगाया जाता है। ध्वनि प्रदूषण दिमाग पर असर डालता है जिससे व्यक्ति चिड़चिड़ापन का शिकार हो जाता है। ध्वनि प्रदूषण का एक और मुख्य कारण निर्माण है। निर्माण के दौरान

ध्वनि प्रदूषण पर रोक लगाने के लिए कानून बनाने तथा कड़ाई से पालन करने की जरूरत है। मशीनों तथा मजदूरों द्वारा काम किए जाने से शोर उत्पन्न होता है। इससे आसपास रहने वाले लोगों पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव पड़ता है। काम करने वाले मजदूरों पर भी इसका

प्रभाव पड़ता है। अदालत ने पटाखों से होने वाले वायु प्रदूषण के कारण इस पर प्रतिबंध लगाया था जो सराहनीय पहल थी। पटाखे से जहरीले धुएँ के अलावा शोर भी उत्पन्न होता है। सरकार को वायु प्रदूषण पर नियंत्रण लाने के लिए जगह-जगह पर वाहनों की जांच करनी चाहिए कि वाहनों में प्रतिबंधित हॉर्न तो नहीं लगाए गए हैं। जैसे वाहनों में वायु प्रदूषण प्रमाणपत्र दिया जाता है, वैसे ही ध्वनि प्रदूषण का प्रमाणपत्र भी जरूरी करना चाहिए। हाल में राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण (एनजीटी) ने ध्वनि प्रदूषण संबंधित एक मामले में एनजीटी ने कहा कि कानून का उल्लंघन करने वालों के खिलाफ कार्रवाई करने की जरूरत है। अतः नियमों का कठोरता से पालन ही प्रदूषण कम कर सकता है।

किशोर कुमार, नोएडा

देश में हवाई मार्ग का विस्तार जरूरी

देश में रेल मार्ग, सड़क मार्ग से यात्रा करने में काफी समय लगता है। इसलिए हवाई मार्ग विकसित करना जरूरी हो गया है। हालांकि सरकार की उड़ान योजना देश दिशा में काम कर रही है लेकिन अभी तक इसके सकारात्मक परिणाम नहीं मिले हैं। सरकार की उड़ान प्रमाणपत्र दिया जाता है, वैसे ही जिससे कई जगहों में अब तक हवाई संपर्क स्थापित नहीं हो पाया है। महानगरों के अलावा छोटे शहरों में भी हवाई यातायात की सुविधा उपलब्ध करानी चाहिए जिससे लोग कम समय में यात्रा पूरी कर सकें। यह सुनिश्चित करने के लिए सरकार को उचित कदम उठाने की भी जरूरत है कि छोटे शहरों के लोग भी हवाई यात्रा कर सकें। अमेरिका, फ्रांस, ब्रिटेन आदि देशों में हवाई अड्डों की संख्या काफी अधिक है। अतः सरकार को हर जिले तथा छोटे शहरों को हवाई संपर्क से जोड़ने की जरूरत है।

राकेश जैन, सतना

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिज़नेस 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।

निवेश की राह

सरकार ने स्टार्टअप योजना को गति देने की मंशा से इसमें निवेश करने वाली कंपनियों को कर में बड़ी राहत का एलान किया है। अब स्टार्टअप कंपनियों में पच्चीस करोड़ रुपए तक निवेश करने पर कोई कर भुगतान नहीं करना पड़ेगा। अभी तक यह सीमा दस करोड़ रुपए थी। इसके अलावा स्टार्टअप की परिभाषा में भी बदलाव किया गया है, जिसके तहत अब अपने पंजीकरण से दस साल तक परिचालन करने वाली कंपनियां भी निवेश कर सकेंगी। पहले यह सीमा सात साल थी। अब सौ करोड़ नेटवर्थ या ढाई सौ करोड़ रुपए का सालाना कारोबार करने वाली कंपनियां भी निवेश कर सकेंगी। इसी तरह स्टार्टअप में निवेश संबंधी कुछ और नियमों को लचीला बनाया गया है। इस तरह निवेशकों का दायरा बढ़ने और स्टार्टअप कंपनियों को कुछ गति मिलने की उम्मीद बनेगी। आंतरिक व्यापार संवर्द्धन विभाग इसे लेकर उत्साहित है।

दरअसल, स्टार्टअप केंद्र सरकार की महत्वाकांक्षी योजना है। इसे इस मकसद से शुरू किया गया था कि देश के तकनीकी रूप से दक्ष युवा नौकरियों के पीछे भागने के बजाय अपना काम शुरू कर सकेंगे। नए रोजगार भी सृजित होंगे। अभी तक बहुत सारे युवा इसलिए अपना कारोबार शुरू नहीं कर पा रहे थे कि उन्हें पूंजी जुटाने में मुश्किलें आती थीं। मगर मौजूदा सरकार ने इसके लिए अलग से प्रावधान किए और नए रोजगार शुरू करने के लिए खूब प्रोत्साहित किया। बैंकों से कर्ज की सुविधा बढ़ाई गई। ऋण संबंधी शर्तों को लचीला बनाया गया। मगर जैसी उम्मीद की गई थी, यह योजना वैसी गति नहीं पकड़ पाई। माना जा रहा था कि कंपनियां स्टार्टअप योजना में निवेश के लिए आगे आएंगी, नए उद्यमों को प्रोत्साहन देंगी और अपने कारोबार में बढ़ोतरी करेंगी। मगर उत्साहजनक नतीजे नहीं निकल पाए। इसलिए नए संशोधन के तहत निवेश करने वाली कंपनियों के लिए आयकर में छूट की सीमा बढ़ाई गई है। माना जा रहा है कि स्टार्टअप योजना के गति पकड़ने से न सिर्फ रोजगार संबंधी समस्या का समाधान निकलेगा, बल्कि विकास दर को भी लक्ष्य तक पहुंचाने में आसानी होगी। इसलिए स्टार्टअप को गति देने की सरकार की चिंता स्वाभाविक है।

अच्छी बात है कि सरकार ने नए उद्यमों को प्रोत्साहन देने के साथ-साथ छोटे और मझोले उद्यमों की स्थिति सुधारने पर भी ध्यान केंद्रित किया है। पिछले दिनों छोटे और मझोले उद्यमों को एक करोड़ रुपए तक के कर्ज बिना शर्त दिए गए। कोई भी बैंक ऐसे उद्यमों को कर्ज देने से मना नहीं कर सकता। इसी क्रम में स्टार्टअप को आगे बढ़ाने का प्रयास हो रहा है। इस तरह इन इकाइयों की दशा सुधरने से रोजगार के अवसर बढ़ेंगे। पर हकीकत यह है कि कोई भी कारोबार सिर्फ उत्पादन पर ज्यादा समय तक नहीं टिकता। उसके लिए बाजार की जरूरत पड़ती है। स्टार्टअप के तहत उत्पादन पर जोर तो है, पर बाजार में खपत उस अनुपात में बढ़ने की गुंजाइश बहुत कम रह गई है। विदेशी बाजारों में भी भारत के लिए बहुत कम जगह है। निर्यात की दर संतोषजनक नहीं है। फिर उन बड़ी कंपनियों के उत्पादों और सेवाओं से प्रतिस्पर्द्धा है, जिन्हें सस्ती दर पर वे उपलब्ध करा रही हैं। इसी सबके मद्देनजर निवेशक उत्साहित नजर नहीं आते। कोई भी निवेशक अपनी पूंजी उसी उद्यम में लगाना चाहता है, जिसमें मुनाफे की गुंजाइश है। इसलिए स्टार्टअप में निवेश की राह आसान बनाने के साथ-साथ बाजार के विस्तार पर भी विचार होना चाहिए।

हादसे की उड़ान

बंगलुरु में वायुसेना के दो विमानों की टक्कर यों अभ्यास के दौरान हुआ हादसा है और इसमें जानमाल का बड़ा नुकसान नहीं हुआ, लेकिन इस हादसे से एक बार फिर सवाल उठा है कि ये विमान कितने सुरक्षित हैं और क्या ऐसा वक्त पर भी इनसे कोशल की कसौटी पर कोई चूक हो सकती है! मंगलवार को बंगलुरु में येलहांका हवाई अड्डे पर एयर शो के लिए किए जा रहे अभ्यास के दौरान सूर्यकिरण के दो हॉक विमान आपस में टकरा गए। खबर के मुताबिक इस हादसे में एक विंग कमांडर की मौत हो गई, जबकि एक विंग कमांडर और एक स्क्वॉड्रन लीडर सहित एक नागरिक घायल हो गए। गौरतलब है कि हादसे के शिकार सूर्यकिरण के ये हॉक विमान वायुसेना की एयरोबेटिक्स टीम का हिस्सा थे और इनका इस्तेमाल सेना में प्रशिक्षण के लिए किया जाता है। आमतौर पर प्रशिक्षण में चूंकि अपेक्षया नए लोग शामिल होते हैं, लिहाजा इसके लिए इस्तेमाल होने वाले विमानों और उनके उड़ान के सुरक्षित होने पर अतिरिक्त ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए। पूरी तरह प्रशिक्षित व्यक्ति बचाव के तौर-तरीकों से परिचित होता है और किसी आपात स्थिति में वह ज्यादा कोशल का प्रदर्शन कर पाता है। लेकिन सूर्यकिरण के जो विमान हादसे के शिकार हो गए, उनकी उड़ान के लिए पायलटों के चयन के मापदंड बहुत ऊंचे हैं और सिर्फ लड़ाकू जेट के कुशल और अनुभवी पायलट इसके लिए चुने जाते हैं।

हालांकि सूर्यकिरण ने श्रीलंका से सिंगापुर तक करीब साढ़े चार सौ शौ किए हैं और इस लिहाज से ताजा दुर्घटनाओं को आम या अक्सर होने वाले हादसे के रूप में नहीं देखा जाना चाहिए। लेकिन यह भी तथ्य है कि इनका इस्तेमाल करीब आठ साल पहले ही बंद कर दिया गया था, लेकिन 2015 में इन्हें दोबारा वायुसेना में शामिल कर लिया गया। साफ है कि किसी ठोस वजह से ही इन विमानों का इस्तेमाल बंद किया गया होगा। अगर दोबारा इन्हें अभ्यास और बाकायदा एयरोबेटिक्स टीम में शामिल किया गया तो क्या इनका पूरी तरह सुरक्षित होना सुनिश्चित कर लिया गया था? बंगलुरु के एयर शो में विमान टकराने की यह कोई पहली घटना नहीं है। हवा में हैरतअंगेज करतब दिखाने के क्रम में अक्सर हादसे हो जाते हैं। इससे पहले मार्च 2006 और जनवरी 2009 में अभ्यास और प्रदर्शन के दौरान सूर्यकिरण के विमान हादसे के शिकार हो चुके हैं। इसी महीने की शुरुआत में बंगलुरु में ही वायु सेना का एक लड़ाकू विमान मिराज दुर्घटनाग्रस्त हो गया था, जिसमें सवार दो पायलटों की मौत हो गई।

यह ध्यान रखने की जरूरत है कि किसी भी हादसे में केवल विमान और उस पर हुए खर्च का नुकसान नहीं होता है, बल्कि उसमें सवार लोगों की जान भी जाती है। बंगलुरु में विमानों की टक्कर में भी एक नागरिक सहित एक विंग कमांडर की मौत हो गई और संयोग से एक विमान के पायलट की जान बच गई। लेकिन सच यह है कि एक विंग कमांडर की जान भी नाहक चली गई, जो जिंदा होते तो वायुसेना की सेवा में रहते हुए देश और फिर समाज के लिए बेहद उपयोगी साबित हो सकते थे। किसी नागरिक की जिंदगी भी अहम होती है। किसी एक घटना का सचक यह होता है कि भविष्य में अभ्यास या फिर निर्धारित ड्यूटी के दौरान विमानों की उड़ान और उससे पहले की तैयारी में पूरी चौकसी बरती जाए और उसमें चूक की कोई गुंजाइश न हो।

कल्पमेधा

विवादों को खोजने, उन्हें गलत ढंग से पहचानने और उनका गलत ढंग से इलाज करने की कला ही राजनीति है।

–अर्नस्ट बेन

जनसत्ता

सुधीर कुमार

उच्च शिक्षा और रोजगारोन्मुखता के बीच बढ़ती खाई की वजह से हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था केवल ‘ग्रेजुएट’ पैदा कर पा रही है। उसमें इतनी ताकत नहीं है कि सबके लिए रोजगार सुनिश्चित कर सके। उच्च शिक्षा प्राप्त करने वाले युवा भी अपने भविष्य को लेकर असुरक्षित महसूस कर रहे हैं। दरअसल, बढ़ती जनसंख्या और तदनुसार आवश्यक रोजगार सृजन नहीं हो पाने से देश में बेरोजगारी का ग्राफ दिनोंदिन बढ़ता ही जा रहा है।

हाल में इस साल के लिए दुनिया के कई विश्वविद्यालयों की रैंकिंग की रिपोर्ट जारी हुई है। दुनियाभर के एक हजार दो सौ पचास विश्वविद्यालयों में शिक्षण, शोध, ज्ञान हस्तांतरण और अंतरराष्ट्रीय संभावना जैसे कुल तेरह संकेतकों के अध्ययन के बाद तैयार की गई इस ‘ग्लोबल रैंकिंग’ में भारत के उनचास विश्वविद्यालय अपनी जगह बनाने में कामयाब रहे हैं। हालांकि विश्व के शीर्ष ढाई सौ सर्वश्रेष्ठ विश्वविद्यालयों की सूची में इस बार भी भारत के किसी विश्वविद्यालय को जगह नहीं मिली है। इस सूची में लगातार तीसरे वर्ष ब्रिटेन की ऑक्सफोर्ड यूनिवर्सिटी शीर्ष पर रही, जबकि ब्रिटेन की ही केंब्रिज यूनिवर्सिटी और अमेरिका की स्टैनफोर्ड यूनिवर्सिटी क्रमशः दूसरे और तीसरे पायदान पर रही।

उच्च शिक्षा व्यवस्था में चीन और अमेरिका के बाद तीसरे स्थान पर भारत आता है। बावजूद इसके, दुनिया के शीर्ष ढाई सौ श्रेष्ठ संस्थानों की सूची में भारत के विद्यार्थियों के जीवन के अहम पड़ाव होते हैं। दरअसल, उच्च शिक्षा की गुणवत्ता ही किसी राष्ट्र के भविष्य का स्वरूप तय करती है। देश की प्रगति के लिए एक बेहतर खाका तैयार करने में उच्च शिक्षा की महती भूमिका रही है। उच्च शिक्षा के प्रति सरकारी उदासीनता का ही दुष्परिणाम है कि आज उच्च शिक्षा प्राप्त लाखों युवा बेरोजगार हो रहे हैं। एक तरफ, ऊंची कटऑफ, महंगी फीस और सुलभता के अभाव में उच्च शिक्षा की प्राप्ति कठिन होती जा रही है, तो दूसरी तरफ उच्च शिक्षा ग्रहण करने के बाद भी कुछ खास हासिल नहीं हो पाता है। एक समय था जब समाज में एमए, बीएड, एमफिल और पीएचडी जैसी डिग्रियों और उन्हें अर्जित करने वाले लोगों को सम्मान की दृष्टि से देखा जाता था। लेकिन आज आलम यह है कि ऐसी डिग्रियां केवल तसल्ली का भाव जगाने पर की रह गई हैं। दूसरी तरफ ऐसी डिग्रियां खुलेआम बेची भी जा रही हैं और यकीन मानिए उनके काफी ग्राहक भी हैं! आज के समय में डिग्री हासिल करना सरल हो गया है, लेकिन रोजगार की मांग के अनुसार कुशलता और योग्यता को जुटा पाना मुश्किल होता जा रहा है। वहीं, उम्र और समय खपा कर जिन आधा दर्जन डिग्रियों को एक युवा हासिल करता है, वे अंत में जब महत्त्वहीन मालूम पड़ती हैं तो अवसाद की गिरफ्त में जाना स्वाभाविक ही है। निराशा और हताशा का यही भाव शिक्षित युवाओं को खुदकुशी करने की ओर धकेलता है। यह प्रवृत्ति घातक है और इस पर रोक लगाने के लिए समाज और सरकार को आत्ममथन करने की जरूरत है।

अनीता यादव

अपने कॉलेज जाते हुए मुझे रोज ही मेट्रो स्टेशन की सीढ़ियों पर एक बुजुर्ग दिखते हैं। बदन पर कुर्ता, फटी-सी धोती, पैरों में उधड़े मोजे से झांकीली पैर की बूड़ी उंगलियां, हाथ में पकड़ा कटोरा, जिसे वे हर आने-जाने वाले के सामने कुछ पाने की उम्मीद से फैलाते हैं। कुछ संवेदनशील लोग सिक्के उछालते हुए कटोरे के हवाले करते हैं तो कुछ मुंह बिचका कर निकल जाते हैं। मैं उस कटोरे में लगभग रोज ही कुछ सिक्के डाल देती हूं, यह जानते हुए भी कि भीख लेना और देना ठीक नहीं है। मन को मना लेती हूं कि जब हमारे समाज में रिश्तत का लेन-देन घड़ल्ले से चलता है तो भीख कैसे ‘अपराध’ है?

वे बुजुर्ग भी मेट्रो यात्रियों को देखते ही दीन भाव से करुणा-मिश्रित मुस्कान बिखरने की भरसक कोशिश करते हैं। मैंने एक दिन पूछ लिया कि बाबा इस उम्र में भीख का सहारा किस मजबूरीश लेना पड़ा, तो अपनी क्षेत्रीय बोली और बुढ़ापाजनित कंपन के साथ उन्होंने जो कहा, उससे मैं इतना ही समझ पाई कि परिवार ने उन्हें निकाल दिया है। उम्र के इस आठवें दशक में पेट के लिए भीख के अलावा चारा ही क्या था! दो रोटी के लिए

नापाक करनी

पुलवामा हमले के बाद भारत के प्रयासों के कारण वैश्विक स्तर पर पाकिस्तान खुद के अलग-थलग पड़ जाने से घबरा चुका है। इसीलिए वह फिर अपना गया गुजरा पुराना रग अलाप रहा है कि हमले का सबूत दिया जाए तो वह कार्रवाई करेगा। उसके यहाँ पल रहे आतंकी संगठन जैश-ए-मोहम्मद ने खुले तौर पर पुलवामा हमले की जिम्मेदारी ली थी। फिर किस चीज का सबूत दिया जाए? 26/11 के स्पष्ट सबूत देने के बाद भी कोई ठोस कार्रवाई नहीं की गई। पटानकोट हमले में पाकिस्तानी जांच एजेंसी को भारत आने का मौका मिलने के बावजूद पाकिस्तान ने कुछ नहीं किया। जैश-ए-मोहम्मद का सरगना खुले तौर पर वहां घूम रहा है। ‘नया पाकिस्तान’ की रट लगाने वाले पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री इमरान को क्या मालूम नहीं है कि हाफिज जसद जैसे आतंकवादी उनके कैबिनेट मंत्रियों के साथ सार्वजनिक सभा में भाग लेते हैं?

चौतरफा विरोध के कारण ऊपरी तौर पर पाकिस्तान दिखाने का प्रयास कर रहा है कि उस पर कोई असर नहीं हुआ है लेकिन अंदरूनी हालात बता रहे हैं कि भारत द्वारा सर्वाधिक तरजीही मुल्क का दर्जा वापस लेने के साथ सीमा शुल्क में 200 फीसद की बढ़ोतरी होने के कारण उसके आने वाले दिन और खस्ताहाली के होने वाले हैं। संयुक्त राष्ट्र को उसने पत्र लिख कर गुहार लगाई है कि दक्षिण एशिया के हालात तेजी से खराब हो रहे हैं। लेकिन इन खराब हालात के लिए जिम्मेदार तो खुद पाकिस्तान ही है। मगर वह यह सच्चाई मानने के लिए कतई तैयार नहीं है। चीन के कर्ज के जाल में पूरी तरह से फंस चुके पाक को अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष (आईएमएफ) ने भी राहत देने से इंकार कर दिया है। उधर फ्रांस संयुक्त राष्ट्र में जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के सरगना मसूद अजहर को वैश्विक आतंकी घोषित

उच्च शिक्षा और बेरोजगारी

किसी विश्वविद्यालय का स्थान न बना पाना चिंता का विषय है। दिलचस्प यह है कि इस सूची में कई ऐसे राष्ट्र शीर्ष जगह बनाने में सफल रहे हैं जो आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर हैं। भारत में उच्च शिक्षा के नाम पर हर वर्ष अरबों रुपए खर्च किए जा रहे हैं। फिर भी भारतीय शिक्षा पद्धति अंतरराष्ट्रीय मानक से पीछे ही चल रही है! सवाल यह है कि भारी-भरकम बजट, स्मार्ट कक्षाओं की व्यवस्था और बेहतरीन संरचना के बावजूद मौजूदा समय में विश्वविद्यालय अपनी अंतरराष्ट्रीय चमक बिखेर पाने में असफल साबित क्यों हो रहे हैं? यह वास्तव में व्यापक विमर्श का विषय है कि प्राचीन काल में विक्रमशिला, नालंदा और तक्षशिला जैसे विश्वविद्यालयों द्वारा स्थापित अंतरराष्ट्रीय प्रतिष्ठा को वापस लाए बिना क्या भारत को पुनः ‘विश्व गुरु’ के रूप में स्थापित करने का लक्ष्य पाना आसान होगा?

कॉलेज व विश्वविद्यालय उच्च शिक्षा की दृष्टि से विद्यार्थियों के जीवन के अहम पड़ाव होते हैं। दरअसल, उच्च शिक्षा की गुणवत्ता ही किसी राष्ट्र के भविष्य का स्वरूप तय करती है। देश की प्रगति के लिए एक बेहतर खाका तैयार करने में उच्च शिक्षा की महती भूमिका रही है। उच्च शिक्षा के प्रति सरकारी उदासीनता का ही दुष्परिणाम है कि आज उच्च शिक्षा प्राप्त लाखों युवा बेरोजगार हो रहे हैं। एक तरफ, ऊंची कटऑफ, महंगी फीस और सुलभता के अभाव में उच्च शिक्षा की प्राप्ति कठिन होती जा रही है, तो दूसरी तरफ उच्च शिक्षा ग्रहण करने के बाद भी कुछ खास हासिल नहीं हो पाता है। एक समय था जब समाज में एमए, बीएड, एमफिल और पीएचडी जैसी डिग्रियों और उन्हें अर्जित करने वाले लोगों को सम्मान की दृष्टि से देखा जाता था। लेकिन आज आलम यह है कि ऐसी डिग्रियां केवल तसल्ली का भाव जगाने पर की रह गई हैं। दूसरी तरफ ऐसी डिग्रियां खुलेआम बेची भी जा रही हैं और यकीन मानिए उनके काफी ग्राहक भी हैं! आज के समय में डिग्री हासिल करना सरल हो गया है, लेकिन रोजगार की मांग के अनुसार कुशलता और योग्यता को जुटा पाना मुश्किल होता जा रहा है। वहीं, उम्र और समय खपा कर जिन आधा दर्जन डिग्रियों को एक युवा हासिल करता है, वे अंत में जब महत्त्वहीन मालूम पड़ती हैं तो अवसाद की गिरफ्त में जाना स्वाभाविक ही है। निराशा और हताशा का यही भाव शिक्षित युवाओं को खुदकुशी करने की ओर धकेलता है। यह प्रवृत्ति घातक है और इस पर रोक लगाने के लिए समाज और सरकार को आत्ममथन करने की जरूरत है।

बुजुर्गों का दुख

जदोजहद करते वे बुजुर्ग हमारे समाज में कोई अकेला उदाहरण नहीं हैं। शनिवार को सुबह एक महिला ‘जय शनिदेव’ के जय-घोष से घर की कुंडी खुड़काती हैं, जिन्हें लोग ‘शनीचरी’ के नाम से पुकारते हैं। कोई नहीं जानता कि उनका असली नाम क्या है। ‘शनीचरी’ शब्द को ओढ़ कर उन्होंने अपने अस्तित्व को उसी में लपेट लिया है। वे भी परित्यक्ता हैं। पेट पालने के लिए हर शनिवार को ‘शनि-देव’ के नाम पर घर-घर जाकर पैसे

या तेल मांगती हैं। अगर हृदय को रुकना और प्रेम से भर कर समाज को देखें तो ऐसे अनेक उदाहरण हमारे आसपास ही मिल जाएंगे। यह सभी जानते हैं कि भीख मांगने का संगठित रूप से गिरोह चलाने वाले किस तरह काम करते हैं। बड़े माफिया इसके लिए बच्चों को अपहृत कर, उन्हें शारीरिक रूप से अक्षम बना कर भीख के कारोबार में उतार देते हैं। फिल्मी पर्दा भी समय-समय पर समाज को इस सड़ांध को बेपरदा करता रहता है। दूसरी ओर, वे बुजुर्ग भी इसमें संलिप्त हैं जो शारीरिक श्रम कर पाने में असमर्थ हैं। उम्र की इस दहलीज पर पेट पालने के लिए उन्हें भीख का सहारा लेना पड़ता है। क्या समाज और सरकार मिल कर इन बुजुर्गों के लिए कुछ कर सकते हैं जो परिवार द्वारा परित्यक्त हैं और मजबूरन भीख मांगते हैं?

करने का प्रस्ताव ला रहा है। इस प्रस्ताव का समर्थन अमेरिका और ब्रिटेन भी कर रहे हैं। फ्रांस पाकिस्तान को वित्तीय कार्रवाई बल की काली सूची में बरकरार करने की भी बात कह रहा है। इजराइल ने जहां बिना शर्त भारत को मदद का प्रस्ताव दिया है तो भारत द्वारा सुरक्षा बलों को पूरी छूट देने का समर्थन अमेरिका भी कर रही है। रूस भी भारत के साथ खड़ा है। दरअसल, आज चीन को छोड़कर विश्व की लगभग सभी बड़ी शक्तियां भारत के समर्थन में हैं जिसका असर पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री के वीडियो में 35 से अधिक कट लगने से साफ नजर आता है। भारत को वैश्विक स्तर पर

दोहरी मानसिकता के हैं! अभी कुछ माह पूर्व जब गुजरात में एक बिहारी द्वारा एक बच्ची के साथ गलत हरकत के कारण बिहारियों को गुजरात छोड़ने पर मजबूर किया जा रहा था तब हमारा तर्क था कि सभी बिहारी अपराधी नहीं होते। और आज हम अपने उसी तर्क को धता बताते हुए सभी कश्मीरियों को आतंकी मान उन पर हमले कर रहे हैं! ऐसी मानसिकता राष्ट्रीय एकता के लिए खतरा है। जब कश्मीर हमारा है तो कश्मीरी भी हमारे हैं!

भले ही अभी हमारा दिल जवानों की शहादत से खम्ही है पर यह अवसर भी है कि कश्मीरियों को और अधिक प्रेम और सद्भाव के साथ गले लगाएं ताकि भारत को लेकर उनके मन में जो आशंका है वह स्वतः समाप्त हो जाए। दशकों से जल रहे कश्मीर की आग को अब केवल सरकार व सेना द्वारा नहीं

नफरत के खिलाफ

पुलिस ने देश के विभिन्न भागों से सोशल मीडिया पर देश विरोधी और आपत्तिजनक टिप्पणियां करने वाले लोगों को गिरफ्तार किया है। इन टिप्पणियों का उद्देश्य देश में वैमनस्य व हिंसा फैलाना है। एक लोकतांत्रिक देश में नफरत का कोई स्थान नहीं है। इस प्रकार की टिप्पणियां करने वाले भी आतंकवादियों से कम खतरनाक नहीं हैं। इनके लिए भी हमारे कानून के अंतर्गत सख्त सजा

बेशक शोध, अनुसंधान और अन्वेषण के मामले में हम राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर अच्छा तो कर रहे हैं, लेकिन अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर यह नाकाफी मालूम पड़ता है। विश्वविद्यालयों में शिक्षा के स्तर और शोध की गुणवत्ता पर ध्यान दिए जाने की जरूरत है, ताकि अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भारतीय मेधा की तुती अधिकाधिक बोले। और यह तभी संभव है जब उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों में शिक्षा व शोध के स्तर पर निरंतर अच्छा काम होगा। आजकल हमारे विश्वविद्यालयों में शोध के नाम पर जो कुछ चल रहा है, वह किसी से छिपा नहीं है। अधिकांश विश्वविद्यालयों में शोध के नाम पर केवल खानापूति होती है। जो छत्र वास्तव में शोध करना चाहता है, वह ‘पैरवी’ और ‘पहुंच’ न होने की वजह से इससे वंचित हो जाता है, जबकि जिसकी ‘पकड़’ है, वह पीएचडी में नामांकित होकर, शोध कार्यों में ध्यान लगाने की बजाय प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं की तैयारी में अपना समय लगाना चाहता है! यह भी यथार्थ है

कि मौजूदा समय में पीएचडी ज्ञान का पैमाना न होकर महज एक डिग्री बन कर रह गई है। पीएचडीधारी लोगों का चपरासी पद के लिए आवेदन करना आज के समय में सामान्य बात हो गई है। उच्च शिक्षा और रोजगारोन्मुखता के बीच बढ़ती खाई की वजह से हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था केवल ‘ग्रेजुएट’ पैदा कर पा रही है। उसमें इतनी ताकत नहीं है कि सबके लिए रोजगार सुनिश्चित कर सके! उच्च शिक्षा प्राप्त करने वाले युवा भी अपने भविष्य को लेकर असुरक्षित महसूस कर रहे हैं। दरअसल, बढ़ती जनसंख्या और तदनुसार आवश्यक रोजगार सृजन नहीं हो पाने से देश में बेरोजगारी का ग्राफ दिनोंदिन बढ़ता ही जा रहा है। देश में बेरोजगारी सामाजिक कोढ़ बन चुकी है। आज भारत की गिनती

कि स्वकीय व्यवस्था के खिलाफ हिंसक या अहिंसक तौर पर आक्रोश व्यक्त करेंगे। शिक्षा नागरिकों की मूलभूत आवश्यकता और बुनियादी अधिकार है। सामाजिक बंधनों, बुराइयों और कुदुरतियों के खात्मे की दिशा में शिक्षा एक बड़ा हथियार साबित हुआ है। शिक्षा वैयक्तिक व सामाजिक दोनों तरह के शोषण व अन्याय के खिलाफ लड़ने व संघर्ष की ताकत प्रदान करती है। हालांकि शिक्षा का उद्देश्य केवल राष्ट्र के नागरिकों को साक्षर बना देना नहीं है, बल्कि लोगों में योग्यता का विकास कर उन्हें रोजगार की चौखट तक पहुंचाना ही अंतिम लक्ष्य है। लेकिन इस दृष्टि से भारतीय शिक्षा अब तक अपने मकसद में पूरी तरह कामयाब नहीं हो पाई है।

राजनैतिक उथल-पुथल पर तो हम हर चाय के ठीये पर अपनी बौद्धिक जुगाली करते नहीं थकते, लेकिन घर-समाज में कैसे हालात हैं, उससे हमारा कोई सरोकार नहीं। प्रेम, करुणा, संवेदना जैसे भावों का स्थान स्वार्थ, ईर्ष्या, द्वेष, अहंकार, क्रोध, दर्प जैसे भाव कब के ले चुके। ऐसे नकारात्मक भावों से भरे हम जिस समाज में रह रहे हैं, वह मानवीय संबंधों से विच्छिन्न होता समाज है। जिस संबंध से हमें कोई फायदा नहीं, वह हमारे लिए बेमानी है। नतीजतन, घर से

बुजुर्गों का स्थान खिसक रहा है। वे या तो सड़कों पर भीख मांगते या वृद्धाश्रमों में अकेलेपन से जूझ रहे हैं। उनकी सूनी आंखें ‘अपनों’ को ढूढ़ने के लिए दूर तक जाकर वापस लौट आती हैं। पिछले कुछ दशकों में वृद्धाश्रम न केवल महानगरों में, बल्कि छोटे नगरों और कस्बों में भी कुकुरमुत्तों की मानिंद उग आए हैं। हाल ही में आई एक खबर को याद कर ध्यान ठहर जाता है, जिसमें एक छोटी बच्ची स्कूल की ओर से ‘वृद्धाश्रम घूमने के कार्यक्रम’ के दौरान वहीं अपनी दादी देखती है। उसी दादी के बारे में पूछने पर माता-पिता यह कह कर टाल देते थे कि वे किसी रिश्तेदार के घर गई हुई हैं। वृद्धाश्रम में दादी को देख कर उस बच्ची के

फायदा नहीं, वह हमारे लिए बेमानी है। नतीजतन, घर से बुजुर्गों का स्थान खिसक रहा है। वे या तो सड़कों पर भीख मांगते या वृद्धाश्रमों में अकेलेपन से जूझ रहे हैं। उनकी सूनी आंखें ‘अपनों’ को ढूढ़ने के लिए दूर तक जाकर वापस लौट आती हैं।

पिछले कुछ दशकों में वृद्धाश्रम न केवल महानगरों में, बल्कि छोटे नगरों और कस्बों में भी कुकुरमुत्तों की मानिंद उग आए हैं। हाल ही में आई एक खबर को याद कर ध्यान ठहर जाता है, जिसमें एक छोटी बच्ची स्कूल की ओर से ‘वृद्धाश्रम घूमने के कार्यक्रम’ के दौरान वहीं अपनी दादी देखती है। उसी दादी के बारे में पूछने पर माता-पिता यह कह कर टाल देते थे कि वे किसी रिश्तेदार के घर गई हुई हैं। वृद्धाश्रम में दादी को देख कर उस बच्ची के

का प्रावधान होना चाहिए। दुश्मनों के साथ-साथ देश में छिपे हुए ऐसे देश विरोधी लोगों को भी कड़ा सबक सिखाना बहुत जरूरी हो गया है।

- हेमा हरि उपाध्याय, जावरा रोड, खाचरोद**

सद्भाव के साथ

पुलवामा हमले के बाद देश भर में गुस्से का माहौल है लेकिन दुखद है कि इस गुस्से का शिकार निर्दोष कश्मीरियों को होना पड़ रहा है। बिहार की राजधानी में कश्मीरी व्यापारियों की दुकानों में आक्रोशित जनता ने तोड़फोड़ की। अफसोस होता है कि हम कितनी

दोहरी मानसिकता के हैं! अभी कुछ माह पूर्व जब गुजरात में एक बिहारी द्वारा एक बच्ची के साथ गलत हरकत के कारण बिहारियों को गुजरात छोड़ने पर मजबूर किया जा रहा था तब हमारा तर्क था कि सभी बिहारी अपराधी नहीं होते। और आज हम अपने उसी तर्क को धता बताते हुए सभी कश्मीरियों को आतंकी मान उन पर हमले कर रहे हैं! ऐसी मानसिकता राष्ट्रीय एकता के लिए खतरा है। जब कश्मीर हमारा है तो कश्मीरी भी हमारे हैं! भले ही अभी हमारा दिल जवानों की शहादत से खम्ही है पर यह अवसर भी है कि कश्मीरियों को और अधिक प्रेम और सद्भाव के साथ गले लगाएं ताकि भारत को लेकर उनके मन में जो आशंका है वह स्वतः समाप्त हो जाए। दशकों से जल रहे कश्मीर की आग को अब केवल सरकार व सेना द्वारा नहीं

दुनिया के सर्वाधिक बेरोजगार आबादी वाले देशों में की जाती है। विडंबना यह है कि देश में एक तरफ रोजगार के अवसरों के लाले पड़े हैं, तो दूसरी तरफ उपलब्ध अवसरों में भी लगातार कटौतियां की जा रही हैं। 2016-17 के आर्थिक सर्वेक्षण पर गौर करें तो पाता चलता है कि पिछले कुछ वर्षों से देश में हर साल हजारों नौकरियां खत्म हो रही हैं। बीते दिनों आई सेंटर फॉर मॉनिटरिंग इंडियन इकोनॉमी (सीएमआइई) की रिपोर्ट भी चिंतित करने वाली है। इसमें बताया गया है कि केवल 2018 में एक करोड़ दस लाख भारतीयों को अपनी नौकरी से हाथ धोना पड़ा। जाहिर है, ये एक करोड़ लोग भी बेरोजगारों की जमात में शामिल हो जाएंगे।

आमतौर पर प्रचलित मजदूरी दर पर योग्यता के अनुसार काम न मिलने की दशा को बेरोजगारी कहा जाता है। प्रच्छन्न, खुली, चक्र्रीय, मौसमी और शिक्षित आदि बेरोजगारी के ही प्रकार हैं। इनमें शिक्षित बेरोजगारी राष्ट्र की प्रगति में सबसे ज्यादा बाधक होती है। क्षमताओं से परिपूर्ण युवा जब नौकरी के लिए बहाली की बाट जोहता है या फिर अपनी योग्यता से नीचे की नौकरी करने को लाचार होता है तो इस तरह वह क्षुब्ध मन से काम करना प्रारंभ कर देता है। विश्व के सबसे बड़े युवा राष्ट्र में शिक्षित और डिग्रीधारी बेरोजगार युवाओं की फौज भविष्य के लिए शुभ संकेत नहीं है। यह चिंतन करने का समय है कि कहीं हमारी मौजूदा शिक्षा व्यवस्था में खोट तो नहीं! ऐसी शिक्षा ग्रहण करने से क्या फायदा जो कल युवाओं को जीविकोपार्जन के लिए दर-दर भटकने को मजबूर करे। जब ऐसी विकट स्थिति पड़े-लिखे युवाओं के जीवन में आएगी तो या तो वे अपनी रुचि और समझ के

साथ स्वरोजगार अपनाएंगे या नकारात्मक रुख अपना कर सक्ारी व्यवस्था के खिलाफ हिंसक या अहिंसक तौर पर आक्रोश व्यक्त करेंगे।

शिक्षा नागरिकों की मूलभूत आवश्यकता और बुनियादी अधिकार है। सामाजिक बंधनों, बुराइयों और कुदुरतियों के खात्मे की दिशा में शिक्षा एक बड़ा हथियार साबित हुआ है। शिक्षा वैयक्तिक व सामाजिक दोनों तरह के शोषण व अन्याय के खिलाफ लड़ने व संघर्ष की ताकत प्रदान करती है। हालांकि शिक्षा का उद्देश्य केवल राष्ट्र के नागरिकों को साक्षर बना देना नहीं है, बल्कि लोगों में योग्यता का विकास कर उन्हें रोजगार की चौखट तक पहुंचाना ही अंतिम लक्ष्य है। लेकिन इस दृष्टि से भारतीय शिक्षा अब तक अपने मकसद में पूरी तरह कामयाब नहीं हो पाई है।

अपरिपक्व मन पर क्या प्रभाव पड़ा होगा? अंदाजा लगाना कतई मुश्किल नहीं है। जिन माता-पिता को बच्चों का रोल मॉडल होना चाहिए, वे किस भूमिका में उतर रहे हैं? बड़ी-बड़ी डिग्रियां और उनके आधार पर विदेश में लाखों रुपए महीने की आमदनी की नौकरी के सपने पूरे करने में सहयोग देने वाले मां-बाप क्या मात्र हमारे लिए एक सीढ़ी हैं, जिसे इस्तेमाल किया जाए और फिर घर के किसी एक कोने में, सड़क या फिर वृद्धाश्रम में ले जाकर छोड़ दिया जाए? मानवीय संबंधों से छीजती ऊष्मा और संवेदना के अभाव से बेहतर समाज की कल्पना असंभव है।

वर्तमान की सच्चाई अगर ‘गुल’ है तो जीवनतः ‘अनुभवों की पोतली’ वे बुजुर्ग हैं। इनके अनुभवों को जीवन-रूपी ताले की कुंजी रूप में संभालना और अगली पीढ़ी को अग्रसारित करना हमारा नैतिक दायित्व ही नहीं, बल्कि प्राथमिकता सहित जिम्मेदारी भी होनी चाहिए। इनसे ‘मुक्ति’ पाकर तकनीकी और भौतिक उन्नति चाहे जितनी कर लें, लेकिन एक श्रेष्ठ समाज की रचना संभव नहीं। भविष्य को संवराने के लिए इस ‘अतीत’ को संभजने की निहायत जरूरत है। ‘घर’ समाज की सबसे छोटी इकाई है। अगर इस इकाई में हमारे साथ हमारे बुजुर्ग नहीं हैं, तो बेहतर समाज की संकल्पना हथेली पर सरसों उगाने सरीखी ही होगी।

बुझाया जा सकता बल्कि इसमें जनभागीदारी अपरिहार्य हो चली है। हम शहीद जवानों की जिंदगी तो नहीं लौटा सकते पर उनके बलिदान को सार्थक तो कर ही सकते हैं। इसके लिए जरूरी है कि हमने आसपास के कश्मीरियों को सुरक्षित महसूस कराएं। हमें याद रखना चाहिए कि प्रेम की लौ हमेशा नफरत की जंजीरों को पिघला देती है।

- राहुल राज, नवादा, बिहार**

मौद्रिक कवायद

किसी भी देश को अर्थव्यवस्था को रफ्तार देने के लिए ऋण का वितरण सही दिशा में हो इसके लिए वहां की मौद्रिक नीति बेहद महत्त्वपूर्ण होती है। हमारे देश में भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआइ) हर दो महीने पर मौद्रिक नीति की समीक्षा करता है। चालू वित्तीय वर्ष की आखिरी मौद्रिक नीति समीक्षा में काफ़ी दिनों बाद नीतिगत ब्याज दर यानी रेपो रेट में कटौती की गई है। इससे लोगों को सस्ता कर्ज मिलने की उम्मीद बढ़ी है। इस बार अगस्त 2017 के बाद पहली बार आरबीआइ ने रेपो रेट में 0.5 फीसद की कटौती की है। मौद्रिक नीति की खास बात पर गौर करें तो वित्त वर्ष 2019-20 में जीडीपी वृद्धि 7.4 प्रतिशत रहने का अनुमान है। जब बैंकों को कम दर पर ऋण उपलब्ध होगा तो वे भी ग्राहकों को आकर्षित करने के लिए अपनी ब्याज दरें कम करेंगे।

रिजर्व बैंक ऑफ इंडिया का काम देश के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों सेक्टर संकटां का उत्थान भी है, उनकी वृद्धि कैसे हो चाहे वह ऑटो मोबाइल क्षेत्र हो या रियल स्टेट या अंशु। मौद्रिक नीति का मुख्य मकसद महंगाई पर अंकुर, कीमतों में स्थिरता और टिकाऊ आर्थिक विकास दर का लक्ष्य हासिल करना शामिल है। रोजगार के अवसर तैयार करने सहित इस दिशा में आरबीआइ को और सक्रियता दिखानी चाहिए।

- रितेश कुमार उपाध्याय, संत कबीर नगर**



रांची, गुरुवार, 21.02.2019

चीन का दोहरापन

पुलवामा के भयावह हमले के बाद भी पाकिस्तान के आतंकी सरगना मसूद अजहर को चीन बचाने की कोशिश में लगा हुआ है। चीन अजहर को सुरक्षा परिषद की पाबंदी से दो बार बचा चुका है। अपने रवैये पर कायम रहते हुए उसने भारत से अजहर के खिलाफ सबूतों की मांग की है, जो उसकी हेठौ और दोहरे मानदंड का परिचायक है। चीन अपने देश के भीतर झिनजियांग प्रांत में चरमपंथी अलगाववादी गुटों की हिंसात्मक गतिविधियों के विरुद्ध कई सालों से अभियान चला रहा है। स्वायत्त क्षेत्र होने के बावजूद वहां सरकार ने नागरिक अधिकारों की परवाह किये बिना बड़ी संख्या में लोगों को जेलनुमा शिविरों में रखा है, जहां उन्हें कठोरता से मानसिक तौर पर सरकारी विचारधारा और नीतियों के लिए तैयार किया जाता है। आतंकीयों को मौत की सजा देने और कैद में रखने की कवायद भी जारी है। सरकारी की कोशिश है कि चरमपंथ को संगठित आतंकवाद में बदलने से पहले ही खत्म कर दिया जाये। चीन 1990 के दशक के उत्तरार्द्ध से ही अफगानिस्तान और पाकिस्तान के आतंकी गिरोहों से संघर्ष कर उभरू आतंकीयों के प्रशिक्षण शिबिर बंद कराने और बाहरी मदद को रोकने की कोशिश करता रहा है। वर्ष 2000 में पाकिस्तान में चीन के राजदूत ने तालिबान के मुखिया मुल्ला उमर से मुलाकात कर यह गारंटी हासिल की थी कि उभरू आतंकी झिनजियांग में हमले नहीं करेंगे। इसके बदले उन्हें तालिबानियों की तरफ से लड़ने की छूट देने पर चीन मान गया था। आतंकवाद पर दोहरापन का एक बड़ा कारण यह भी है कि पाकिस्तान में चीन को अपने 60 बिलियन डॉलर की परियोजनाओं तथा उनमें कार्यरत चीनी नागरिकों की सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करनी है। इसके लिए उसने अल-कायदा और तालिबान से जुड़े संगठनों के साथ बलौच उग्रवादियों और मसूद अजहर जैसे आतंकीयों को साधने की नीति अपनायी है। तालिबान से शांति-वार्ता करने और अफगानि सता में उसकी हिस्सेदारी पर चीन का जोर इसी वजह से है। अन्य इलाकों के अलावा न सिर्फ पाकिस्तानी पंजाब और पाक-अधिकृत कश्मीर में चीनी आर्थिक गतिबारे का विस्तार हो रहा है, बल्कि इसके तहत मसूद अजहर के ठिकाने बहावलपुर में एक बड़ा सौर ऊर्जा संयंत्र भी बन रहा है। इस प्रकार दक्षिण एशिया में चीनी वर्चस्व स्थापित करने की नीति और आतंक को इस्तेमाल करने की पाकिस्तानी राजनीति के बीच एक गठजोड़ बन चुका है। यह गठजोड़ भारत, ईरान और अफगानिस्तान की सुरक्षा और स्थिरता के लिए बड़ा खतरा है। ये आतंकी पाकिस्तान के भीतर भी निर्दोष नागरिकों और अल्पसंख्यकों को निशाना बनाते रहे हैं। चीन की गोट में खेल रहे आतंकवादी किसी दिन उसी के लिए भस्मासुर बन सकते हैं। आज जरूरत इस बात की है कि चीन अपनी नीति पर पुनर्विचार करने के साथ पाकिस्तान के रवैये में बदलाव के लिए भी पुरजोर कोशिश करे।

दक्षिण एशिया में चीनी वर्चस्व स्थापित करने की नीति और आतंक को इस्तेमाल करने की पाकिस्तानी राजनीति के बीच एक गठजोड़ बन चुका है।

कार्यरत चीनी नागरिकों की सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करनी है। इसके लिए उसने अल-कायदा और तालिबान से जुड़े संगठनों के साथ बलौच उग्रवादियों और मसूद अजहर जैसे आतंकीयों को साधने की नीति अपनायी है। तालिबान से शांति-वार्ता करने और अफगानि सता में उसकी हिस्सेदारी पर चीन का जोर इसी वजह से है। अन्य इलाकों के अलावा न सिर्फ पाकिस्तानी पंजाब और पाक-अधिकृत कश्मीर में चीनी आर्थिक गतिबारे का विस्तार हो रहा है, बल्कि इसके तहत मसूद अजहर के ठिकाने बहावलपुर में एक बड़ा सौर ऊर्जा संयंत्र भी बन रहा है। इस प्रकार दक्षिण एशिया में चीनी वर्चस्व स्थापित करने की नीति और आतंक को इस्तेमाल करने की पाकिस्तानी राजनीति के बीच एक गठजोड़ बन चुका है। यह गठजोड़ भारत, ईरान और अफगानिस्तान की सुरक्षा और स्थिरता के लिए बड़ा खतरा है। ये आतंकी पाकिस्तान के भीतर भी निर्दोष नागरिकों और अल्पसंख्यकों को निशाना बनाते रहे हैं। चीन की गोट में खेल रहे आतंकवादी किसी दिन उसी के लिए भस्मासुर बन सकते हैं। आज जरूरत इस बात की है कि चीन अपनी नीति पर पुनर्विचार करने के साथ पाकिस्तान के रवैये में बदलाव के लिए भी पुरजोर कोशिश करे।



अपनी बुद्धिमत्ता

आजकल आप हर चीज को मशीन बना रहे हैं। सिर्फ आपके लिए 'उपयोगी' हो सके, एक मनुष्य के जीवन में इसके अलावा और भी आयाम होते हैं। यह जरूरी नहीं है कि एक मनुष्य किसी के लिए उपयोगी हो। बात सिर्फ यह है कि गाड़ी में बंधे बैल जंगल में छलांगे मारते हिरनों को देखकर सोचते हैं, 'वे अपना जीवन बखबाद कर रहे हैं, किसी के लिए कोई काम के नहीं हैं, बेकार हैं'। लेकिन हिरन मौज में हैं, आनंद कर रहे हैं। आप बंधे हुए हैं और आप में कोई आनंद नहीं है। उपयोगी होने के प्रयत्न में अगर आप एक आनंद-रहित मनुष्य हो जाते हैं, तो जीवन के सभी उद्देश्य हार जाते हैं। आप क्या कर रहे हैं, इसका कोई अर्थ नहीं रह जाता। समाज की नजर में चाहे आपको वैसा चेहरा लेकर घूमने के लिए, और आप ने दुनिया के लिये जो कुछ भी किया है, उसके लिये शायद कुछ इनाम मिल जाये लेकिन जीवन के लिए इसका कोई मतलब नहीं है। अपने जीवन को किसी और की बुद्धिमत्ता से देखना नहीं चाहिए। अपने जीवन को थोड़ी ज्यादा बुद्धिमत्ता से देखना सीखिये। हर-एक के पास अपने जीवन को संवेदनशीलता के साथ देखने की बुद्धिमत्ता होती है। समस्या यह है कि आप भूतकाल के और वर्तमान के भी आदर्श, सफल व्यक्तियों से बहुत प्रभावित होते हैं। हर सामान्य बच्चा एक पूर्ण जीव की तरह होता है। आप एक बच्चे को सिर्फ उसकी पूर्ण क्षमता प्राप्त करने के लिए पोषित कर सकते हैं। आप उनको कुछ और नहीं बना सकते। अगर आपके ख्याल में नारियल का वृक्ष ही एक आदर्श वृक्ष हो और आप के बगीचे में एक आम का पौधा उग आता है, तो आप क्या करेंगे? चूँकि यह नारियल के वृक्ष की तरह नहीं दिखता, तो क्या आप उसकी सिर्फ एक सीधी डाल छोड़ कर बाकी सब काट डालेंगे? यह तो बहुत गलत बात होगी। ऐसे ही, आप सिर्फ एक काम कर सकते हैं कि बच्चे को उसकी पूर्ण बुद्धिमत्ता, शारीरिक खुशहाली तथा भावनात्मक खुशहाली प्राप्त करने के लिए पोषित करें। यह तभी होगा, जब आप उसको सिर्फ पोषण दें, उससे छेड़छाड़ न करें।

कुछ अलग

रिश्ते भी स्मार्ट होने चाहिए !

आजकल स्मार्ट होने का जमाना है। वह चाहे फोन हो या टीवी या फ्रिज सब स्मार्ट होने चाहिए। वैसे स्मार्ट होने में कोई बुराई भी नहीं है। नया स्मार्टफोन लेने के बाद क्या आपको पुराने फोन की कमी खलती है? आप कहेंगे हाँ, कभी-कभी जब नया फोन हैंग होता है या कोई वायरस आ जाता है, वह बहुत सिपल था, उसमें फीचर्स कम थे, यह नया फोन वैसे तो बहुत बढ़िया है, पर इसमें फीचर्स इतने ज्यादा हैं कि आधे की तो कभी जरूरत ही नहीं पड़ती है। खैर जब इतनी चीजें स्मार्ट हो रही हैं, तो हमारे रिश्ते क्यों न स्मार्ट हों? अब आप कहेंगे कि रिश्ते और स्मार्ट, यह भला कैसी बात हुई?

जब दुनिया बदल रही है, तो हमारे रिश्ते क्यों नहीं? बस यही मामला थोड़ा उल्टा हो जाता है। कुछ चीजें अपने मूल रूप में ही अच्छी लगती हैं और हमारे रिश्ते उनमें से एक हैं। जरा सोचिये, हमारा पुराना फोन बाल करने और मैसेज भेजने के काम तो कर ही रहा था और हममें से ज्यादातर लोग अपने स्मार्टफोन से भी वही काम करते हैं, जो अपने पुराने फोन से करते थे। फोन पर चैटिंग और मिमट-मिमट पर फेसबुक का इस्तेमाल बस थोड़े दिन ही करते हैं फिर जिंदगी की आपाधापी में ये चीजें बस फोन का फीचर भर बनकर रह जाती हैं, पर इस थोड़े से मजे के लिए हम अपने फोन को कितना कॉम्प्लिकेटेड बना लेते हैं, कहीं गिर न जाये, महंगा फोन कहीं खो न जाये, इसलिए हमेशा अपने से चिपकाये फिरेते हैं। हम यह नहीं कह रहे हैं कि आपने फोन बदल कर गलत

सऊदी युवराज मुहम्मद बिन सलमान की भारत यात्रा को लेकर सरकारी हलकों में बहुत उस्साह देखने को मिला। विदेश मंत्रालय का यह दावा था कि भारत की आपत्ति को ध्यान में रखकर ही यह शाही मेहमान पाकिस्तान से भारत नहीं आये, बल्कि वापस रियाद लौटने के बाद ही उन्होंने दक्षिण एशिया के दौर का दूसरा कदम उठाया। पर इस बात को कैसे नजरंदाज करें कि इस क्षेत्र के दौर का आरंभ पुराने मित्र और सऊदी सहाया समर्थन पर आश्रित पाकिस्तान से हुआ और भारत के बाद सोधे वह चीन गया?

सऊदी विदेश मंत्री का बयान भी उल्लेखनीय है। उनका कहना था कि युवराज का प्रयास भारत-पाकिस्तान के बीच तनाव घटाने का रहेगा। यह समझ पाना कठिन है कि पाकिस्तान के प्रति पारंपरिक पक्षधरता दर्शानेवाला तथा वहां कट्टरपंथी वहाबी इस्लाम के प्रसार में निर्णायक भूमिका निभानेवाला देश यह कैसे कर सकता है?

यह बात रेखांकित की जा रही है कि शाही दौर के दौरान पांच बड़े महत्वपूर्ण समझौतों पर हस्ताक्षर किये गये, जिनसे यह प्रमाणित होता है कि सऊदी अरब के विश्व दर्शन में बदलाव आ रहा है और वह भारत के साथ दूरदर्शी सामरिक समझौते के लिए तैयार है। हिंद महासागर में नौसैनिक गश्त लगानेवाला समझौता सबसे अहम है। तेल शोध के क्षेत्र में काम करनेवाली सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की इंधन कंपनी ने सऊदी प्रतिनिधि मंडल के सदस्यों के साथ उच्च स्तरीय वार्ताएं कीं और यह अपेक्षा की जा रही है कि ईरान पर लगाये अमेरिकी प्रतिबंधों का असर कम करने के लिए सऊदी हमारा साथ होगा। याद दिलाना जरूरी नहीं कि सऊदी अरब से भारत सबसे बड़ी मात्रा में तेल का आयात करता है। निश्चय ही उससे बेरुखी हमारे हित में नहीं है।

मगर यहां तत्काल यह जोड़ने की जरूरत है कि तेल की राजनीति ही इस देश के साथ हमारे संबंधों को संवेदनशील नहीं बनाती। मुसलमानों के पवित्र तीर्थ स्थल

मक्का और मदीना भी सऊदी अरब में ही स्थित हैं और इनके रखवाले के रूप में वही हज यात्रा का प्रबंधन करता है। भारत में मुसलमानों की आबादी दुनिया के किसी भी बड़े इस्लामी देश की तुलना में कम नहीं है। जनतांत्रिक चुनावी राजनीति के दबाव में किसी भी राजनीतिक दल के लिए सऊदी अरब के साथ दोस्ताना रिश्ते उपयोगी महसूस होते हैं।

कुछ और बातों का जिक्र बेहद जरूरी है। जिस समय युवराज मुहम्मद बिन सलमान का अभिषेक हुआ था, यह आशा की जा रही थी कि दक्षिणयूसी से प्रसन्न सऊदी अरब में आधुनिकता तथा उदारवाद की नयी लहर उठ रही है। युवराज ने शुरू में भ्रष्टाचार को समाप्त करने के लिए जो कड़े कदम उठाये, उन्होंने इस धारणा को पुष्ट किया। राजपरिवार से जुड़े अब तक ताकतवर दरबारियों को (शाही) जेल भेजने में उन्होंने देर नहीं लगायी और महिलाओं को ड्राइविंग का अधिकार दे दिया। अपनी को इंटरनेट का सुख (सीमित ही सही) भोगने का अवसर निकट भविष्य में देने की पेशकश भी उन्होंने की। सऊदी शाह के साथ उन्होंने रूस का दौरा किया और यह संकेत दिया कि वह अमेरिका को छोड़ा से बाहर निकलने का प्रयास कर रहे हैं।

सऊदी आचरण में बदलाव का विश्लेषण करनेवाले विशेषज्ञों का मानना है कि इस हदय परिवर्तन का



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भारत के लिए यह समझना परमावश्यक है कि सऊदी अरब तथा अमेरिका के सामरिक और आर्थिक रिश्ते आधी सदी से भी अधिक पुराने हैं, इन्हें युवराज सलमान चाहें भी तो पलक झपकते नहीं बदल सकते।

मुख्य कारण तेल की कीमतों में गिरावट तथा कार्बन प्रसरण को लेकर जीवाश्म ईंधन में कटौती तथा तेल की निरंतर कम होती खपत से जुड़ी आशंकाएं हैं। कभी बेशुमार अमीर समझा जानेवाला यह देश आज अपने भोग-विलासी खर्च में झिझकता दिख रहा है। बड़ी संख्या में प्रवासी मजदूरों, पेशेवरों को नये करों के बोझ से वहां रहना दूभर हो रहा है। कई छंटीनी के शिकार हो हर लौटने को मजबूर हुए हैं। भारत के लाखों नागरिक सऊदी अरब में बरसों से काम करते आये हैं, इन सबका भविष्य संकटग्रस्त लग रहा है।

सऊदी अरब के सांस्कृतिक तथा सामरिक महत्व को चुनौती देनेवाला नया आक्रामक रूप से कट्टरपंथी संगठन आईएसआईएस यानी बगदादी की नयी खिलाफत भी सीरिया तथा शम्स में सऊदी अरब के लिए सरदर पैदा करता रहा है। इन सब बातों का लुब्धो-लुभाव यह है कि शिखर पर सत्ता परिवर्तन की सुगबुगाहट के साथ-साथ अंतरराष्ट्रीय परिवेश भी सऊदियों के लिए पहले जैसा अनुकूल नहीं रहा। ईरान, लेबानन और रूस के संयुक्त

मोर्चे ने निश्चय ही उनके वर्चस्व को चुनौती दी है। दक्षिण एशिया और चीन की तरफ दृष्टिपात की प्रेरणा यही है। अंत में इस बात को पुलाना असंभव है कि सऊदी मूल के अमेरिकी पत्रकार खशोगी की तुर्की में सऊदी

इस वित्त वर्ष में जीडीपी ग्रोथ

एक तरफ भारत सरकार को उम्मीद है कि वित्त वर्ष 2019-20 में जीडीपी ग्रोथ 7.5 प्रतिशत रहेगा, वहीं नोमुरा ने कहा है कि सरकार की वित्तीय नीतियां ऐसी नहीं हैं, जो जीडीपी ग्रोथ को बढ़ा सकें। नोमुरा के हिसाब से भारत की जीडीपी ग्रोथ 6.5 प्रतिशत से भी कम रहेगा। बहरहाल, कितना ग्रोथ होगा, यह तो आनेवाले वक्त में ही पता चल पायेगा। और आनेवाले दिनों में इस संबंध में कई बातें भी सामने आयेंगी।

नोमुरा ने जो जीडीपी का आकलन किया है, उसके पीछे कुछ ठोस कारण हैं। इन कारणों को अच्छी तरह समझने की जरूरत है। अर्थव्यवस्था का मूल यही है कि सरकार की आय कितनी है और उसका खर्च कितना है। बेहतरीन अर्थव्यवस्थाएं वो होती हैं, जिनकी आय ज्यादा और खर्च कम होते हैं। हमारे घरों में भी यही तथ्य काम करता है और हम अपनी आय ज्यादा चाहते हैं, जबकि हर हाल में खर्च को कम रखने की कोशिश करते हैं। लेकिन, इस समय भारत सरकार का खर्च ज्यादा है और आय कम, इसलिए अर्थव्यवस्था की कुछ चुनौतियां तो हैं ही। दरअसल, हम बड़े निर्यातक देश नहीं हैं, बल्कि उपभोग करनेवाले देश हैं और सेवा देनेवाले देश हैं। इसलिए हमारे पास आमदनी की समस्या तो बनी ही रहेगी। सरकार के पास आय का स्रोत सिर्फ टैक्स है, जिसे बढ़ाये जाने की जरूरत है। यदि आय नहीं बढ़ेगी, तो वित्तीय घाटा बढ़ेगा। किसी भी सरकार के लिए वित्तीय घाटे को कम करने के लक्ष्य होने ही चाहिए। दरअसल, हमारी सरकारों को अपनी सभी जन-योजनाओं को चलाने के लिए बहुत पैसा चाहिए होता है। इस संदर्भ में यह खबर अच्छी है कि पिछले दिनों आरबीआई ने सरकार की मदद की है। आरबीआई ने सरकार को 28 हजार करोड़ रुपये दिया है, ताकि सरकार का काम सुचारू रूप से चल सके। बीते साल सितंबर में भी आरबीआई ने सरकार की मदद की थी।

हम बड़ी और तेज गति से बढ़नेवाली अर्थव्यवस्था के साथ ही कुछ जरूरी चुनौतियों से भी होकर गुजर रहे हैं, इससे इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता है। इस महीने की शुरुआत में भारत सरकार ने बजट में कृषि क्षेत्र के लिए प्रावधान किया, उससे सरकार पर कुछ बोझ बढ़ा है। यह बोझ एक लाख करोड़ रुपये तक है और चूँकि यह खर्च है, इसलिए जरूरी यह है कि सरकार को आय भी आये, तभी संभव है कि वह वित्तीय घाटे को कम कर पायेगी। अगर आमदनी कम होगी और खर्च ज्यादा होगा, तो यह अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए ठीक नहीं है। इसलिए कुछ चुनौतियां हैं सरकार के सामने, लेकिन वह इसे संभालने की कोशिश में फिलहाल सफल होती नहीं दिख रही है।

भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था में 67 प्रतिशत उपभोग का हिस्सा है। पिछले डेढ़-दो दशक में कई नयी ऐसी चीजें बदली हैं, जिसकी वजह से हमें आंकड़े निकालने की प्रक्रिया तो बदलनी ही पड़ेगी। इसलिए सरकार कह रही है कि डेटा को वह नये फॉर्मेट के आधार पर तय कर रही है। यह बात ठीक भी है, क्योंकि यह वक्त की जरूरत भी है कि हम अपने आंकड़ों-आकलनों को नयी प्रक्रिया के तहत शुद्धता के मानक पर ले आएं, लेकिन, यह ठीक नहीं कि सरकार अपने मुख्य सांख्यिकीविद् से कोई बात न कर खुद ही सब कुछ तय करे। सरकार और मुख्य सांख्यिकीविद् के बीच में संवादहीनता से सवाल तो उठेंगे ही, शायद यही सब देखते हुए ही नोमुरा ने अपना आंकड़ा दिया है। भारत सरकार को उम्मीद हो या फिर नोमुरा का अर्थव्यवस्था की अर्थव्यवस्था पर ही पड़ेगा। इसलिए जीडीपी ग्रोथ के आंकड़े का संशोधन आज एक बड़ा मुद्दा बना हुआ है। चूँकि भारत दुनिया में सबसे तेजी से बढ़नेवाला देश बन गया है, इसलिए सरकार सोच रही है कि आंकड़े निकालने का आधार और प्रक्रिया आदि नये हों।

यहां एक महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि भारत सरकार जीडीपी के डेटा को खुद ही संशोधित कर रही है। यहां तक कि पिछले साल के जीडीपी ग्रोथ के आंकड़ों को भी सरकार संशोधित कर रही है, ताकि वह दिखाया जा सके कि हम साढ़े साढ़े साढ़े प्रतिशत से ऊपर चल रहे हैं। इस मामले पर कई सवाल उठ रहे हैं। दरअसल, केंद्रीय सांख्यिकी कार्यालय (सीएसओ) के डेटा संग्रहण के आधार पर ही जीडीपी ग्रोथ, मुद्रास्फीति और कई अन्य आंकड़े निकलते हैं। भारत सरकार के सांख्यिकी मंत्रालय के मुख्य सांख्यिकीविद् ने कुछ दिन पहले ही यह कहते हुए इस्तीफा दे दिया कि सरकार जीडीपी ग्रोथ के संशोधन खुद कर रही है। सांख्यिकीविद् ने कहा कि सरकार जब खुद यह डेटा बना रही है, तो फिर उसकी सत्यता संदिग्ध हो सकती है। हालांकि, इसमें दूसरी बात यह भी है कि पहले जो जीडीपी का डेटा था, वह बहुत पुराने फॉर्मेट में बना हुआ था। चूँकि अब भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था में कई नये आयाम जुड़ गये हैं और लगातार बढ़ते हुए हम एक उपभोग वाली अर्थव्यवस्था की तरफ जा रहे हैं, इसलिए नये तरह से जीडीपी का डेटा निकालने की जरूरत भी महसूस की जा रही है। यह जरूरी भी है, लेकिन इसका तरीका सही होना चाहिए।

देश दुनिया से

कोरियाई प्रायद्वीप में रूस की भूमिका

कोरियाई प्रायद्वीप को लेकर रूस की नीति और अमेरिका-उत्तर कोरिया शिखर सम्मेलन पर उसका रुख क्या होगा, यह इस पर निर्भर करता है कि मॉस्को अपनी कूटनीति और कूटनीतिक प्राथमिकताओं को किस रूप में देखता है। कोरियाई प्रायद्वीप रूस के नीति-निर्माण के लिए बहुत ज्यादा महत्व नहीं रखता है। अधिकांश रूसी अभिजात वर्ग का मानना है कि मॉस्को के पास उत्तर कोरियाई मामलों में निर्णायक भूमिका निभाने के लिए आवश्यक राजनीतिक और आर्थिक लाभ का अभाव है और इसलिए प्रायद्वीप की गतिविधियों में वह सीमित भागीदारी चाहता है। हालांकि इस समय रूस, प्रायद्वीप के मामलों से अलग नहीं रहना चाहता है, रूसी अभिजात वर्ग का मानना है कि इस मुद्दे से रूस के अलग होने का मतलब है, पूर्वोत्तर एशिया के सुरक्षा व्यवस्था के निर्माण में मुख्य भूमिका निभाने से चूक जाना। रूस को उम्मीद है कि वह उत्तर कोरिया के परमाणु संकट में रणनीतिक सुरक्षा और स्थिरता प्रदान करने में अपनी भूमिका निभा सकता है। वर्तमान में रूस केवल द्विपक्षीय कूटनीति के माध्यम से प्रायद्वीप मामलों में शामिल है, लेकिन रूसी विचारक भविष्य में सिक्स-पाटी वार्ता को फिर से शुरू करने का समर्थन करते हैं।

ली जून

कार्टून कोना



साभार : बीबीसी

पोस्ट करें : प्रभात खबर, 15 पी, इंडस्ट्रियल एरिया, कोकर, रांची 834001, **फैक्स करें :** 0651-2544006, **मेल करें :** eletter@prabhatkhabar.in पर ई-मेल संक्षिप्त व हिंदी में हो। लिपि रोमन भी हो सकती है।



आपके पत्र

नामवर जी को श्रद्धांजलि

अहले सुबह रेडियो पर सुना कि महान आलोचक, लेखक, कवि, शिक्षक, पत्रकार एवं साहित्यकार डॉ नामवर सिंह का देहांत हो गया. मन व्यथित हो गया. अभी पिछले महीने ही कृष्णा सोबती जी के निधन की मनुहूस खबर मिली थी. पिछले डेढ़ वर्ष के भीतर ही, साहित्य जगत के कई दिग्गज हस्ताक्षरों का सितारा अस्त हो गया. डॉ नामवर जी साहित्य की तमाम विधाओं में पारंगत तो थे ही, मगर वे सबसे पहले एक आलोचक थे. उनका युवावक सायबवाद के ओर था, यह किसी से छुपा नहीं है. काशी हिंदू विश्वविद्यालय में अध्यापन के समय ही लोकसभा का चुनाव भी लड़े और हार गये. फिर जोधपुर विश्वविद्यालय गये. जे.एन.यू. के हिंदी विभाग की नींव तो डॉ नामवर सिंह ने डाली थी. डॉ नामवर सिंह को अशुभपूण श्रद्धांजलि !

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पाक पीएम का बेतुका राग

पुलवामा आतंकी हमले के पांच दिन बाद पाकिस्तान ने मुँह खोला है और वही सबूतों का पुराना राग अलापा है. भारतीय सेना ने स्पष्ट किया है कि इन हमलों के पीछे पाकिस्तान और आइएसआई का हाथ है, लेकिन पाक प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने इस हमले में पाकिस्तान का हाथ होने से साफ इंकार कर दिया है. साथ ही उन्होंने कहा है कि पहले भारत सबूत दे, उसके बाद पाकिस्तान कार्रवाई करेगा. इमरान के अनुसार भारत हर बार पाकिस्तान की बलि का बकरा बनाता है. पहले भी कई बार सबूत दिया जा चुका है. लेकिन वह आतंकवादी हाकिम सईद पर कार्रवाई करने को तैयार ही नहीं है. मुंबई हमले व उरी हमले के बाद भी पक्के सबूत दिये गये थे, लेकिन तब भी पाकिस्तान ने इन सबूतों को ही मानने से इनकार कर दिया था. इमरान ने भारत के साथ बातचीत की उम्मीद जताई लेकिन पाक पीएम को यह नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि सीमा पर गोलीबारी और बातचीत एक साथ नहीं चल सकती.

अमन सिंह, बरेली, उत्तर प्रदेश

सरकारी आंकड़े और बयानबाजी

सीमा पर मरते जवानों के आंकड़े और सरकार की बयानबाजी में कोई तालमेल नहीं दिखती है. सरकार कहती है कि बारमुला की आतंकीयों से पूरी तरह मुक्त करा लिया गया है, परंतु सीमा पर या कश्मीर में आतंकवादियों के हाथों मरते जवानों की बढ़ती संख्या के आंकड़े सरकारी दावों की कलाई खोलकर रख देते हैं. इसी फरवरी में गृह राज्य मंत्री द्वारा जो आंकड़े भारत की लोकसभा के पटल पर रखे गये, उसमें यह बताया गया है कि कश्मीर में 2014 से 2018 के बीच जवानों के शहीद होने की संख्या 94 प्रतिशत तक दुःखदरूप से बढ़ गयी है. यह कठोर और कटु सच्चाई है कि किसी भी सेना या सुरक्षाबल की सफलता की दर उसके खुफिया तंत्र की सटीक जानकारी से बहुत कुछ बढ़ जाती है, परंतु कश्मीर के मामले में भारत का खुफिया एजेंसियां बिल्कुल नाकाम रही हैं, जिसका खासियामा जवानों को शहीद होकर देनी पड़ रही है.

निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद

