



अनंत सृष्टि की तरह कला भी आनंद का ही प्रकाश है

कला का मूल उत्स आनंद है। आनंद प्रयोजनातीत है। सुंदर फूल देखने से हमें आनंद प्राप्त होता है। पर उससे हमारा कोई स्वार्थ या प्रयोजन सिद्ध नहीं होता। प्रभा की उज्वलता और संध्या की सिन्धुता देखकर चित्त को एक अपूर्व शांति प्राप्त होती है। पर उससे हमें कोई शिक्षा नहीं मिलती। न कोई सांसारिक लाभ ही होता है। कारण आनंद का भाव समस्त लौकिक शिक्षा तथा व्यवहार से अतीत है। उसमें कोई बहस नहीं चल सकती। हमें आनंद क्यों मिलता है? इसके कोई कारण नहीं बताया जा सकता। वह केवल अनुभव ही किया जा सकता है। 'ज्यों गुंगे मीठे फल को रस अंतर्गत ही भावै।' आनंद का भाव वाणी और मन की पहुंच के बिल्कुल अतीत है। 'यतो वाचो निवर्तते अप्राप्य मनसा सह।' पर नीति का संबंध मन के साथ है। मन बिना आलोचना के, आनंद के सहज भाव को ग्रहण नहीं करना चाहता। वह पोथी पढ़-पढ़कर 'पंडिताई' में मस्त रहता है। सहज प्रेम के 'झाई अक्षर' से उसकी तृप्ति नहीं होती। वह कविता पढ़कर इस बात की खोज में लग जाता है कि इसमें अर्थनीति, राजनीति, राष्ट्रतत्व, भूतत्व, जीवतत्व अथवा और कोई तत्व है या नहीं। वह यह नहीं समझना चाहता कि इस कविता में आनंद का जो अमिश्रित रस है, उसके किसी भी तत्व का कोई मूल्य नहीं। पर जो लोग इस दुष्ट समालोचक मन को दमन करने में समर्थ होते हैं, वे कला के 'आनंदरूपमृतम्' का अनुभव कर लेते हैं।

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-दिव्यत हिंदी उपन्यासकार

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हरियाली और रास्ता

विक्रम, ड्राइवर और कचरा

एक टैक्सी ड्राइवर की कहानी, जिसने सवारी को जीवन के बारे में व्यावहारिक व अनमोल सीख दी।



विक्रम को एक दिन दफ्तर से घर जाने में काफ़ी देर हो गई। आम तौर पर वह बस से जाता था। पर उस दिन देर होने के कारण उसने सोचा, क्यों न टैक्सी से चला जाए। रास्ता लंबा था, तो विक्रम ने ड्राइवर से बातचीत शुरू कर दी। ड्राइवर गुरप्रीत अपने अथवा विक्रम के साथ बात रहा था कि तभी दुर्घटना होते-होते बची। गुरप्रीत सड़क के बीच में गाड़ी चला रहा था। बाईं तरफ कुछ गाड़ियां खड़ी थीं। सड़क पर कोई डिवाइडर नहीं था और सामने की तरफ से एक बड़ा-सा ट्रक आ रहा था। गुरप्रीत की स्पीड चालीस किलोमीटर प्रति घंटे की रही होगी। तभी बाईं तरफ की गाड़ी सड़क के बीचोबीच आ गई। गुरप्रीत के पास तो ही विकल्प थे, या तो वह जोर से ब्रेक लगाए, या फिर सड़क की दाईं तरफ चला जाए। गुरप्रीत ने पहला विकल्प लिया और जोर से ब्रेक लगा दिया। टैक्सी आवाज करती हुई सामने वाली गाड़ी से थोड़ी दूरी पर जाकर रुकी। सामने वाली गाड़ी से एक शख्स उतरकर आया और बोला, क्या दिखाई नहीं देता? गुरप्रीत मुस्कराते हुए बोला, माफ कीजिएगा, आप ठीक तो हैं न। उस शख्स ने धूरकर गुरप्रीत को देखा और वापस चला गया। विक्रम बोला, उसकी वजह से आज हमारी जान जाते-जाते बची और तुमने उसी से माफी मांगी। गुरप्रीत बोला, आपने कभी कचरा गाड़ी देखा है? विक्रम बोला, मतलब? गुरप्रीत बोला, कचरा गाड़ी में हर तरीके का कचरा भरा रहता है। वह जहां-जहां जाती है, अपना कचरा गिराती जाती है। कुछ लोग कचरा गाड़ी की तरह होते हैं। जिनके अंदर गुस्सा, तनाव, चिढ़, जलन आदि का कचरा भरा होता है। वे जहां-जहां जाते हैं, अपना कचरा दूसरों पर गिराते जाते हैं। हमें उनका कचरा उन्हीं के पास रहने देना चाहिए और प्रार्थना करनी चाहिए कि वे उस कचरे से मुक्ति पा सकें।

जिंदगी बहुत छोटी है, हम चाहें, तो कचरा इकट्ठा कर लें या फिर खुशियां।

जिस दिन पाकिस्तान ने भारतीय वायुसीमा में घुसने की कोशिश की, उसी दिन पाक प्रधानमंत्री ने भारत के सामने वार्ता की पेशकश भी की! इसके साथ-साथ उसके झूठ को भी जोड़ लें, तो साफ है कि अलग-थलग पड़ने के बावजूद उसकी फितरत नहीं बदल रही।

पाकिस्तान की फितरत

बालाकोट

मैं जैश के आतंकी ठिकाने को ध्वस्त करने की प्रतिक्रिया में अगली सुबह पाकिस्तान ने भारतीय वायुसीमा में घुसने की जो दुस्साहसी कोशिश की, उसकी आशंका तो थी ही, भारतीय वायुसेना ने उसका जैसा मुहताज जवाब दिया, वह भी उम्मीदों के अनुरूप ही था। विदेश मंत्रालय द्वारा की गई प्रेस कॉन्फ्रेंस में-जिसमें पाकिस्तान को संदेश देने के लिए वायुसेना के एयर वाइस मार्शल की भी बेहद अर्थपूर्ण उपस्थिति थी-प्रवक्ता ने बताया कि पाक वायुसेना ने भारतीय सैन्य ठिकानों को निशाना बनाने की कोशिश की थी, जिसे नाकाम करते हुए एक एफ-16 विमान को मार गिराया गया। हालांकि यह दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है कि पाक युद्धक विमानों को खदेड़ने की प्रक्रिया में

हमने एक मिग-21 खोया, जिसके पायलट को पाकिस्तान अपने कब्जे में बना रहा है। उस पायलट को सकुशल वापस लाने की कोशिश में हमें पूरा जोर लगा देना चाहिए। इस सिलसिले में सरकार ने नई दिल्ली स्थित पाक उप-उच्चायुक्त को तलब भी किया। यह भी उम्मीद करनी चाहिए कि घोषित युद्ध न होने के बावजूद पाकिस्तान जिनेवा समझौते का पालन करते हुए हमारे पायलट के साथ बर्ताव में मानवीयता का परिचय देगा। पाक प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने भारतीय वायुसीमा में घुसने की कथित कोशिश को जवाबी कार्रवाई बताते हुए जिस तरह अपने देशवासियों को संबोधित किया, और भारत के सामने वार्ता की पेशकश की, वह आंखों में धूल झांकने की पाकिस्तान की एक और कोशिश ही ज्यादा लगती है। इमरान खान की इस 'पेशकश'

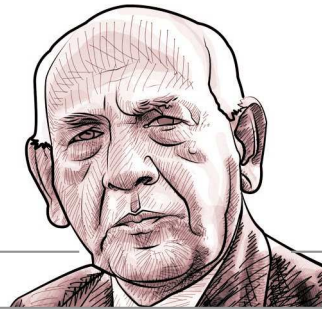
की वजह कब्जे में किए गए भारतीय पायलट के बहाने भारत को ब्लैकमेल करने की मंशा भी हो सकती है या फिर यह वैश्विक दबाव के आगे उसके झुकने का सुबूत भी हो सकता है, क्योंकि भारत की कार्रवाई के बावजूद चीन समेत किसी देश ने पाकिस्तान का समर्थन नहीं किया है, बल्कि चीन में तीन देशों के विदेश मंत्रियों ने संयुक्त बयान जारी कर आतंकवाद की निंदा की है। वहां चीन और रूस के विदेश मंत्रियों की मौजूदगी में सुषमा स्वराज ने भारतीय कार्रवाई का औचित्य उलटते हुए कहा कि भारत ने पाक के आतंकी ठिकाने को निशाना बनाया। लिहाजा वैश्विक स्तर पर अलग-थलग पड़ चुके पाकिस्तान को अब आतंकवाद को प्रश्रय देना बंद करने के बारे में गंभीरता से सोचना चाहिए, अन्यथा भारत हर मोर्चे पर उसे माकूल जवाब देने के लिए सक्षम और तैयार है।

शांति और युद्ध के बीच



भारत को पाकिस्तान पर इतना दबाव बनाकर रखना चाहिए कि उसे याद रहे कि अगर उसने आतंकवाद को प्रश्रय देना जारी रखा, तो उसकी आर्थिक स्थिति और भी खराब हो सकती है।

प्रशांत दीक्षित, सेवानिवृत्त एयर कोमोडोर



के जरिये जैश-ए मोहम्मद के कैंप को तबाह कर दिया गया है। संभवतः भारत सरकार सिर्फ पाकिस्तान को ही नहीं, पूरे विश्व को यह संदेश देना चाह रही थी कि भारत का उद्देश्य आतंकवादी संगठनों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई करना था, जिससे भारत पर समय-समय पर होने वाले आतंकी हमलों पर सफलतापूर्वक अंकुश लगाया जा सके। अब यह देखना महत्वपूर्ण है कि पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान और

पाकिस्तानी सेना इसको कैसे देखती है। यहाँ एक बात को ध्यान में रखना आवश्यक है कि हमने जो आतंकी शिविर पर हवाई हमले किए वह पाकिस्तान की धरती पर था और खैबर पख्तूनख्वा प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान का इलाका है। इसका एक असर यह हो सकता है कि इसे उनके लिए एक व्यक्तिगत हमला समझा जाए, और पाकिस्तानी जनता और पाकिस्तान की सेना उन्हें उकसाने में सफलता पा ले। हालांकि अभी तक पाकिस्तान ने

यह स्वीकार नहीं किया है कि भारतीय वायु सेना की कार्रवाई उनके लिए कोई खासियत रखती है। उनके दृष्टिकोण से उस कार्रवाई में न तो कोई हताहत हुआ है और न ही कोई नुकसान पहुंचा है। इन सब बातों के ड्रं में इस पूरे प्रकरण को दिशा किस तरफ जाएगी, यह महत्वपूर्ण है। मेरा मानना है कि भारी तनाव की यह स्थिति अभी थोड़े दिनों तक ही चलेगी। हवाई अड्डों को बंद करने का जो फैसला लिया गया था, वह भी सिर्फ एहतियात के तौर पर सुरक्षा के दृष्टिकोण से लिया गया निर्णय था। यह निश्चित है कि शीघ्र ही अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यवस्था अपना असर दिखाएगी और दोनों देशों पर दबाव डाला जाएगा कि सैनिकों से जुड़े किसी अभियान को ज्यादा तूल न दिया जाए, और दोनों देशों की वायु सेनाएं अपने-अपने बेस में चली जाएं। इन सबके बीच हालांकि, पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने फिर से यह कहा है कि हम दोनों देश एक दूसरे से बातचीत का रास्ता निकालें, क्योंकि इसी में हम सबकी भलाई है। इमरान के इस बयान से भारत को सहमत होने में कोई अड़चन नहीं होनी चाहिए। जैश-ए मोहम्मद के ठिकानों पर हमला करके और जैसे कि कहा जाता है, उसे तबाह करके भारत ने अपना उद्देश्य पूरा कर लिया है। साथ ही यह भी आशा है कि न सिर्फ पाकिस्तान को, बल्कि पूरी दुनिया को यह संदेश चला गया है कि आतंकवाद के मामले में भारतीय विचारधारा में और संसार के और देशों की विचारधारा में कोई विरोधाभास नहीं है। इसलिए इमरान खान के इशारों को ठीक से समझ के हमें सकारात्मक दिशा में कदम उठाने चाहिए।

रही बात अपने लापता पायलट को वापस लाने की, तो अगर वास्तव में वह पाकिस्तान के कब्जे में है, तो इस मामले में हमें पाकिस्तान को कूटनीतिक संदेश भेजने की आवश्यकता है कि वह उस पायलट को जितनी जल्दी हो सके, छोड़

दे, ताकि वह सुरक्षित वतन लौट सके। इसके अलावा भारत को अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर पाकिस्तान पर इतना दबाव बनाकर रखना चाहिए कि उसे याद रहे कि अगर उसने आतंकवाद को प्रश्रय देना जारी रखा, तो उसकी आर्थिक स्थिति और भी खराब हो सकती है। अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर उसे अलग-थलग रखना बेहद जरूरी है।

भारत को पाकिस्तान के साथ रिश्ते को एक नए दृष्टिकोण से देखना पड़ेगा। वर्तमान सरकार की इस नीति में पाकिस्तान से वार्तालाप नहीं हो सकता, जब तक कि उनकी तरफ से आतंकवाद पर अंकुश न लगाया जाए। मुझे लगता है कि हमें इस नीति पर पुनर्विचार करना पड़ेगा। साथ ही साथ कुछ पुराने मुद्दों को ठीक से समझने के तरीके निकालने पड़ेंगे। उदाहरण के लिए, कई वर्षों पहले पाकिस्तान के तत्कालीन राष्ट्रपति मुशरफ ने सुझाव दिया था कि नियंत्रण रेखा को ही दोनों देशों के बीच की सीमा मान ली जाए और आम जनता के बीच एक-दूसरे से मिलने की वील दी जाए। अतल जी के जमाने में दोनों देशों के बीच शांति व सुलह के जो कदम उठाए गए थे, हमें उन्हीं नीतियों को अपनाने की कोशिश करनी चाहिए।

इन सब प्रयत्नों के साथ हमें याद रखना पड़ेगा कि पाकिस्तान के भीतर अब भी ऐसी ताकतें हैं, जो भारत से गहरा रिश्ता बनाने में खलल पैदा करें। इस संदर्भ में हमें याद करना होगा कि जब भी दोनों देशों ने एक-दूसरे की ओर हाथ बढ़ाया है, तब ये ताकतें उभर के आईं और रास्ते में रुकावटें पैदा कीं, यह सिलसिला एक झटके में समाप्त हो जाए, यह शाब्द संभव नहीं है। इसलिए हमें संयम बरतना पड़ेगा और पाकिस्तान जो अपने देश में मुश्किलें डाल रहा है, उसमें उसकी मदद करनी पड़ेगी। सतर वर्ष का इतिहास एक दिन में बदला नहीं जा सकता, इसे दुर्हस्त करने के लिए कदम उठाने होंगे।

विज्ञान को मनुष्यता से जोड़ें

विज्ञान विकास का ही नहीं, आज विकास का भी रास्ता तैयार कर रहा है। इसलिए विज्ञान को मनुष्यता के साथ जोड़कर देखना चाहिए। अपने हित में हम जिस गति से विज्ञान का दुरुपयोग कर रहे हैं, वह एक दिन हमारे लिए विघटनकारी साबित होगा।



अनिल प्रकाश जोशी

आधारित हैं, पर इससे एक विवर्णता भी पनपी है। नई खोजें पुरानी चीजों को खत्म कर देती हैं। ट्रैक्टर के प्रचलन ने बैल की परंपरा समाप्त की है, खेतों की गूल (छोटी नहर) भूमिगत पंपों में बदल चुकी है और जंक फूड ने भोजन की आदत बदल दी है। विज्ञान को जो सबसे विक्षिप्त खोज मनुष्य ने रची है, वे हथियार हैं। आत्मसुरक्षा के राष्ट्रीय-अंतरराष्ट्रीय बहाने के नाम पर हम धुंधली को बर्बाद करने से मात्र एक बटन दूर हैं, जिसके दबते ही निनाश हो जाएगा। राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा की आड़ में बड़े व्यापार भी खड़े हो गए और इस ताकत ने वैसे देशों को महत्वपूर्ण बना दिया, वैचारिक विकास में जिनकी कोई बड़ी भूमिका नहीं है। यह सब इसलिए

राष्ट्रीय विज्ञान दिवस के अवसर पर हम यह भूल नहीं सकते कि नई सभ्यता और विकास की नींव विज्ञान ने ही रखी है। हमारे चारों तरफ की तमाम सुविधाएं, बेहतर जीवन सब में विज्ञान ने अहम भूमिका निभाई है। बेंजामिन फ्रेंकलिन का लाइटनिंग का अध्ययन हो या बैटरी की खोज या प्लास्टिक का आविष्कार, सब विज्ञान का ही परिणाम रहा। वर्ष 1700 में एडवर्ड जेनर ने वैक्सीन का प्रयोग तय किया और 1800 तक वैज्ञानिकों ने यह स्वीकार कर लिया कि बीमारियों के पीछे बड़ा कारण बैक्टीरिया और वायरस हैं, और 1900 तक आते-आते कई तरह की एंटीबायोटिक तैयार हो गईं, जिन्होंने हैजा और चेचक पर अंकुश लगाया। पिछले कई दशकों से सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी का लाभ भी हम देख ही रहे हैं। इसने सूचना के आदान-प्रदान को जहां त्वरित किया, वहीं कागज के अत्यधिक उपयोग पर भी अंकुश लगा दिया।

लेकिन विज्ञान अब मात्र विकास का ही नहीं, बल्कि विकास का भी रास्ता तैयार कर रहा है। हम विज्ञान और विचार को जोड़ नहीं पाए, इसलिए कई तरह के वैज्ञानिक विकार हमारे बीच में हैं। इसे ऐसे भी समझा जा सकता है कि विज्ञान के जरिये हमने भोगवादी सभ्यता को ज्यादा बढ़ावा दिया। जैसे, सड़कों पर अंधाधुंध दौड़ती गाड़ियों का आवश्यकता नहीं कहा जा सकता, क्योंकि ये विलासिता का हिस्सा बन चुकी हैं। कार के नए से नए मॉडल इस सिद्धांत को मिटा नहीं सकते कि देश-दुनिया के कई हिस्सों में आज भी आवाजाही संभव नहीं है। खाद्य सुरक्षा अपनाए जाने वाले तमाम रास्ते विज्ञान

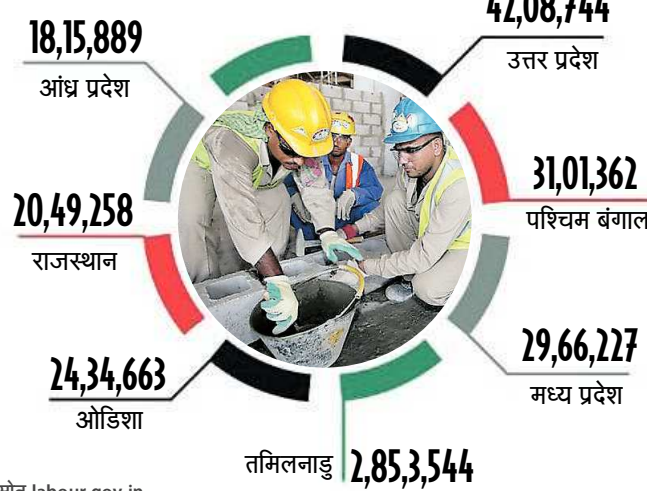
खुली खिड़की

निर्माण से जुड़े श्रमिक

देश के विकास में विभिन्न तरह के हो रहे निर्माण कार्यों की भूमिका अहम है। एक आंकड़े के मुताबिक, देश में इस वक्त करीब सवा तीन करोड़ श्रमिक निर्माण कार्यों से जुड़े हैं, जिनमें 42 लाख श्रमिकों के साथ उत्तर प्रदेश पहले स्थान पर है।

निर्माण कार्यों से जुड़े श्रमिकों की संख्या

आंकड़े- 31 दिसंबर, 2018 तक के



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जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के खैबर फख्तूनख्वा स्थित कैंप में भारतीय वायुसेना के दो विमान गिराए हैं, लेकिन हमारी सरकार ने इससे इनकार करते हुए कहा है कि हमने पाकिस्तान के हवाई हमले की कोशिश को नाकाम किया है और पाकिस्तान के एक लड़ाकू विमान को गिरा दिया है। इस प्रक्रिया में हमने एक विमान खोया है और हमारा एक पायलट लापता है, जिसके बारे में पाकिस्तान दावा कर रहा है कि वह उसके कब्जे में है। विदेश मंत्रालय के प्रवक्ता ने कहा कि हम पाकिस्तानी दावे की तस्दीक करेंगे। स्पष्ट है कि पाकिस्तान का बढ़-चढ़कर दावा करना उसके दुष्प्रचार की रणनीति का हिस्सा है। इन सबके बावजूद तथ्य यह है कि दोनों तरफ सैन्य गतिविधियां बढ़ गई हैं और कुछ समय के लिए आठ हवाई अड्डों पर यात्री विमानों के संचालन को भी रोकने का आदेश दिया गया था, जिसे बाद में वापस ले लिया गया।

भारतीय विदेश मंत्री सुषमा स्वराज ने विदेश यात्रा के दौरान रूस और चीन के साथ मिलकर एक संयुक्त वक्तव्य जारी किया है, जिसमें आतंकवाद की पूरी निंदा की गई है। मेरा मानना है कि यह पाकिस्तान के लिए एक सख्त संदेश है। जाहिर है, इस तनाव की माहौल में दोनों देशों के बीच एक परिपक्व व्यवहार की आवश्यकता है। बालाकोट में आतंकी शिविर पर हवाई हमले के बाद विदेश सचिव ने जो बयान दिया था, उसमें यह खुलासा कर दिया गया था कि यह एक गैर-सैनिक अभियान है और इस आतंकवाद विरोधी अभियान

मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> हरसुख भाई डोबरिया

घर को बना दिया परिंदों की पनाहगाह

मैं गुजरात के जूनागढ़ में रहता हूँ। करीब उन्नीस साल पहले की घटना है। एक दुर्घटना की वजह से मेरी टांग में फ्रैक्चर आ गया था। नतीजा यह निकला कि मुझे लंबे वक्त तक घर में आराम करना पड़ा। इसी दौरान मेरा एक दोस्त मेरे लिए अपने खेतों से बाजरे की कुछ बालियां लेकर आया। मैंने इरादतन बाजरे के दाने अपनी बालकनी में बिखेर दिए। दाने देखकर वहां एक तोता आ गया। मैं रोज यही काम करने लगा। और हर दिन दाना चुगने वाले पक्षियों की संख्या बढ़ती गई। एक महीने के भीतर मेरे घर की बालकनी सैकड़ों पक्षियों का अड्डा बन गई। बालकनी की जगह सीमित थी। वहां अब और ज्यादा पक्षी नहीं बैठ सकते थे। लेकिन मुझे तो इन पंख वाले मेहमानों की संख्या बढ़ानी थी। मैंने कुछ पाइपों की मदद से उनके लिए कई स्टैंड बनाए, और हर पाइप पर उनके खाने का पूरा इंतजाम किया। उन्नीस साल बीतने वाले हैं, मैं वह काम आज भी और ज्यादा अच्छे तरह से अंजाम दे रहा हूँ। इस काम में मेरे साथ मेरे परिवार वालों का भी पूरा योगदान है। हर रोज हजारों पक्षियों की दावत का इंतजाम करने में उनका पूरा साथ रहता है।

मेरा पुराना वाला घर शहर के बीच में था। वहां जगह भी कम थी, सो पक्षियों की सेवा करना मेरे लिए वहां पर थोड़ा मुश्किल हो रहा था। मेरे पड़ोसियों को भी परिंदों की दावत से परेशानी होती थी। हालांकि उन्होंने कभी इस बात की शिकायत नहीं की, मगर मुझे उनकी समस्या का अंदाजा था। यही सब सोचकर मैंने वहां से निकलकर किसी खुली जगह पर अपना ठिकाना बनाने का फैसला किया। सात साल पहले मैंने शहर से काफी दूर अपने पुरतैनी मकान में रहना शुरू कर दिया। यहाँ मैंने पक्षियों के लिए कई एकड़ जमीन खाली छोड़ रखी है। उनका पेट भरने के लिए यहां

हर किस्म का इंतजाम है। यही नहीं, इस पनाहगाह में हर साल हजारों नए पक्षी जन्म लेते हैं। नन्हे परिंदों को यहां किसी प्रकार का खतरा नहीं होता है। वे यहां से तभी बाहर जाते हैं, जब उनके पंख उड़ने लायक हो जाते हैं। पक्षियों को मौसम की मार से बचाने के लिए मैंने बसेरों का भी निर्माण कराया है। कुदरती तरीकों से बनाए गए घोंसलों को यहां रहने वाले परिंदों की विलासिता कहा जा सकता है। पक्षियों के संरक्षण के लिए काम करने वाले दूसरे लोगों को भी घोंसले बनाना सिखाता हूँ। मैं इच्छुक किसानों को बाजरे की इन खास बालियों के बीज भी बांटा हूँ, ताकि वे भी मेरी तरह तोते और गौरैया जैसे पक्षियों के लिए काम कर सकें। वैसे भी मैं इस काम के सिवा नए-नए तरीकों से खेती करना पसंद करता हूँ। पक्षियों के प्रति प्रेम और उनके संरक्षण के लिए मुझे राष्ट्रपति सृष्टि सम्मान से सम्मानित किया जा चुका है। जबकि खेती के अनेक प्रयोगों के लिए भी मुझे गुजरात सरकार द्वारा कृषि रत्न से नवाजा जा चुका है। मैं सिर्फ पांचवीं कक्षा पास हूँ। मैं शुरू से ही अपने पारिवारिक व्यवसाय से जुड़ा हूँ। मैं मानता हूँ कि इन बेजुबान परिंदों के अनुग्रह का ही परिणाम है कि मैं अपनी जिंदगी में कुछ कर पाया। मैंने पक्षियों की सेवा की, जो कि मेरा फर्ज था। अब यह फर्ज मेरे परिवार की अगली पीढ़ी मेरे साथ निभा रही है।

-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 11

नया संचालन ढांचा

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) ने मंगलवार को तीन अन्य वाणिज्यिक बैंकों को प्रॉम्प्ट करेक्टिव ऐक्शन (पीसीए) ढांचे से बाहर कर दिया। यानी इन बैंकों को ऋण देने और अन्य बैंकिंग सेवाएं बहाल करने का अवसर मिल गया। इन तीन बैंकों में से इलाहाबाद बैंक और कॉर्पोरेशन बैंक सरकारी जबकि धनलक्ष्मी बैंक एक छोटा

निजी बैंक है। आरबीआई ने अपने वक्तव्य में कहा है कि वित्तीय निगरानी बोर्ड (बीएफएस) ने 26 फरवरी को पीसीए के अधीन आने वाले बैंकों के प्रदर्शन के आकलन संबंधी समीक्षा बैठक के बाद यह निर्णय लिया। बीएफएस ने पाया कि सरकार ने 21 फरवरी को पीसीए के ढांचे में आने वाले बैंकों समेत कई बैंकों में नई पूंजी

डाली। निश्चित तौर पर दो सरकारी बैंक, जिन्हें पीसीए के ढांचे से बाहर किया गया, वे सरकार द्वारा पुनःपूँजीकरण के सबसे बड़े लाभार्थी बनकर उभरे। इलाहाबाद बैंक और कॉर्पोरेशन बैंक को क्रमशः 6,896 करोड़ रुपये और 9,086 करोड़ रुपये की नई पूंजी प्रदान गई। इससे इन बैंकों के पूंजीगत फंड में इजाफा हुआ है और उनके ऋण नुकसान को प्राविर्जनिंग में सुधार हुआ और पीसीए मानकों का अनुपालन सुनिश्चित हुआ।

उम्मीद के मुताबिक ही नैशनल स्टॉक एक्सचेंज (एनएसई) में तीन बैंकों के शेयर सुबह के शुरुआती कारोबार में 10 फीसदी तक उछले। इस महीने के आरंभ में आरबीआई ने तीन अन्य सरकारी बैंकों बैंक ऑफ इंडिया, बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र और

ओरियंटल बैंक ऑफ कॉमर्स को पीसीए ढांचे से बाहर कर दिया था और केवल पांच बैंक ही इसमें शेष रह गए थे। यह एक स्वागतयोग्य बात है और उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि शेष बैंक भी जल्दी ही अपने मूलभूत काम को अंजाम देने की स्थिति में आ जाएंगे। मूलभूत काम यानी कारोबारियों को ऋण देना और इस तरह देश में आर्थिक गतिविधियों को बढ़ावा देना। वित्त मंत्रालय को उम्मीद है कि अगले छह से आठ महीनों में तीन से चार और बैंक आरबीआई की कमजोर बैंकों की सूची से बाहर हो जाएंगे। यह उम्मीद इसलिए की जा रही है क्योंकि उनकी वित्तीय स्थिति में सुधार हो रहा है, पूंजी का स्तर सुधर रहा है और फंसा हुआ कर्ज कम हो रहा है।

सच तो यह है कि ये कमजोर बैंक प्राथमिक तौर पर पीसीए मानकों से पार पाने में इसलिए कामयाब रहे हैं क्योंकि सरकार ने इनमें बड़े पैमाने पर पूंजी डालने का निर्णय लिया। गत सप्ताह वित्त मंत्रालय ने घोषणा की कि इस वित्त वर्ष में 12 सरकारी बैंकों में 48,239 करोड़ रुपये की नई पूंजी डाली जाएगी ताकि ये नियामकीय पूंजी आवश्यकताओं का ध्यान रख सकें और अपनी वृद्धि योजनाओं को धन मुहैया करा सकें। इस फंडिंग के साथ 1.06 लाख करोड़ रुपये की कुल डाली जाने वाली पूंजी में से 1,00,958 करोड़ रुपये की राशि बैंकों में आ गई। सवाल यह है कि क्या बैंकों को पीसीए से बाहर लाने भर से उनको बेहतर वृद्धि सुनिश्चित हो जाएगी। ऐसा इसलिए

क्योंकि नई पूंजी का एक बड़ा हिस्सा फंसे हुए कर्ज के निपटान में जाएगा और वृद्धि के लिए इस्तेमाल होने वाली पूंजी कम ही रह जाएगी। बैंकों को नए सिरे से ऋण देने की शुरुआत करने के पहले बाजार से धनराशि जुटानी होगी या फिर उनको इस उम्मीद में बजट की प्रतीक्षा करनी होगी कि सरकार शायद और अधिक पूंजी डाले। सरकारी बैंकों के संचालन ढांचे में भी आमूलचूल बदलाव की आवश्यकता है। अगर सरकार इस पर ध्यान केंद्रित करती है तो बेहतर होगा। मजबूत जोखिम प्रबंधन ढांचे के अलावा जरूरत यह भी है कि एक ऐसी व्यवस्था लागू की जाए जहां उच्च पदों पर नियुक्तियां समय पर हों और बैंकों के बोर्ड पेशेवर और जवाबदेह हों।



विजय सिन्हा

रोजगार सृजन से होगी शांति कायम

कश्मीर घाटी में शांति बहाली में रोजगार सृजन की अहम भूमिका है, हालांकि पुलवामा आतंकी घटना के बाद से इस विषय पर शायद ही कोई बात कर रहा है। विस्तार से जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं नौशाद फोर्ब्स

इस बात से तो सभी सहमत होंगे कि हमारी प्रमुख राष्ट्रीय प्राथमिकता रोजगार सृजन है। इस समाचार पत्र के विभिन्न पन्नों पर भी पिछले कुछ दिनों के दौरान राष्ट्रीय सांख्यिकी आयोग के भूतपूर्व और वर्तमान सदस्य रोजगार संबंधी अपनी ही रिपोर्ट की सत्यता को लेकर बहस मुबाहिसा करते नजर आए हैं। ऐसी खबरें सुर्खियों में रही हैं जहां सरकार में शामिल लोग रोजगार सृजन की बात करते नजर आए जबकि विपक्षी दल रोजगार समाप्त होने या कम होने की दुहाई देते दिखे। यह सिलसिला उस समय थम गया जब पुलवामा में केंद्रीय रिजर्व पुलिस बल (सीआरपीएफ) के जवानों पर आतंकी हमला हुआ। तब से लेकर अब तक अखबार और टेलीविजन दोनों जगह इस आतंकी हमले से जुड़ी घटनाओं का ही बोलबाला है। पुलवामा में हुए आतंकी हमले के ऐन पहले तक यह आलेख पूरी तरह रोजगार के बारे में होना था लेकिन अब यह कश्मीर से संबंधित है। ऐसा लग रहा है मानो रोजगार तो फिर भी प्रतीक्षा कर सकते हैं और वह मुद्दा बाद में उठाया जा सकता है। यह आलेख पुलवामा में हुए आतंकी

हमले में मारे गए सीआरपीएफ के 40 जवानों के बारे में नहीं है। इन नौजवानों को असमय काल के गाल में समाना पड़ा, उनके परिवारों पर विपदा टूट पड़ी। यह आलेख संभावित बदले के बारे में भी नहीं है, जिसके परिणाम और अधिक त्रासद हो सकते हैं। एक और बात, यह आलेख प्रतिस्पर्धी राष्ट्रवाद का जाप करने वाली राजनीति से भी कतई संबंधित नहीं है। यह आलेख उस त्रासदी के बारे में है जिसका नाम ही कश्मीर है। कश्मीर घाटी किसी भी मानक पर दुनिया की सबसे खूबसूरत जगहों में से एक है। श्रीनगर, मुलामगं या पहलगाम का भौगोलिक सौंदर्य तथा लकड़ी का काम, कारपेट एवं कढ़ाई का काम आदि जम्मू कश्मीर को पर्यटन की दृष्टि से स्वर्ग बनाते हैं। जब हम बच्चे थे तो छुट्टियां मनाने की दृष्टि से कश्मीर हमारे परिवार की पसंदीदा जगह हुआ करती थी। सन 1989 तक हम निरंतर कश्मीर जाया करते थे। उसके बाद सन 2011 तक यह सिलसिला बाधित रहा। सन 2011 के बाद हमने कश्मीर की तीन यात्राएं कीं। कुछ वर्ष पहले तक ऐसा लग रहा था कि कश्मीर में हालात सामान्य हो रहे हैं। हजारों की संख्या में पर्यटक

कश्मीर घाटी का रुख कर रहे थे। इस बात का फायदा कश्मीर की अर्थव्यवस्था को भी मिल रहा था। दो दशक में पहली बार कश्मीर घाटी में रोजगार के अवसर तैयार हो रहे थे और युवाओं में भविष्य को लेकर उम्मीद जाग रही थी। सन 2011 और 2011 में 12 में कन्फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडियन इंडस्ट्री (सीआईआई) ने उड़ान नामक एक श्रानदार पहल की। इसके तहत कश्मीर के हजारों एमबीए और इंजीनियरिंग छात्रों को मुंबई और पुणे के उद्योगों की यात्रा कराई गई। हमारे जैसे जिन लोगों ने अपनी मुलामगं या पहलगाम का भौगोलिक सौंदर्य तब यही लगा होगा कि छात्र हमारी प्रौद्योगिकी देखकर प्रसन्न हुए और हमने अपने प्रबंधन की योग्यता से उन सभी को प्रभावित किया। परंतु उन्होंने हमें बताया कि उन्हें अपने जीवन में पहली बार शॉपिंग मॉल और मल्टीप्लेक्स आदि देखकर सबसे अधिक आनंद आया है। अधिकांश इंसानी आबादी सबसे पहले अच्छी ज़िंदगी जीना चाहती है। वे अच्छी आजीविका, संतोषजनक रोजगार और ऐसा भविष्य चाहते हैं जो उनके बच्चों को उनसे बेहतर

जीवन दे सके। सन 2012 में सीआईआई के छात्र संबंधी कार्यक्रम के बाद हमारी पहली श्रीनगर यात्रा में मेरे भाई ने और मैंने पुणे में हमारे साथ काम करने के लिए करीब छह कश्मीरी एमबीए छात्रों का साक्षात्कार लिया। हमारी बातचीत ऐसे मोड़ पर आ गई जहां हमने उनसे पूछा कि वे भारत, पाकिस्तान और कश्मीर को कैसे देखते हैं। उनका जवाब एकदम स्पष्ट था: सभी बच्चों को अपना भविष्य भारत के साथ नजर आ रहा था। इसके लिए कोई नैतिक वजह या सन 1947 के पहले की कोई वैधानिक स्थिति जिम्मेदार नहीं थी। इसकी एकमात्र वजह भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था थी। उस वक्त भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था फलफूल रही थी। उन्हें हमारे साथ ऐसा भविष्य नजर आ रहा था जिसका वे हिस्सा बनना चाहते थे। पाकिस्तान पर वे विचार ही नहीं कर रहे थे। अब हमारे भीतर का राष्ट्रवाद इस बात को लेकर क्रुद्ध हो सकता है कि वे आर्थिक अवसरों की वजह से हमारी ओर आकृष्य थे। परंतु ध्यान रहे कि उनका आकर्षण कहीं अधिक वास्तविक और मजबूत था।

यह वही भावना है जिसके चलते भारत में जन्मे लेकिन अब अमेरिका में रहने वाले लोगों की संख्या सन 1980 के 10 लाख से बढ़कर आज 30 लाख तक पहुंच गई है। इनमें से अधिकांश तो अब अमेरिका की नागरिकता भी ग्रहण कर चुके हैं। उनकी आर्थिक सफलता की बदौलत ही आज देश के कुछ बड़े राष्ट्रवादी संगठनों की फंडिंग होती है। राष्ट्रवाद को आर्थिक संभावनाओं और अवसरों से जोड़ने वाली यह भावना अत्यंत ताकतवर है। हमने एमबीए के जिन छात्रों का साक्षात्कार किया वे कोई सामान्य रूढ़िवादी बच्चे नहीं थे। उनकी शिक्षा और सीआईआई की पहल की बदौलत वे घाटी के 5 फीसदी भाग्यशाली बच्चों में शामिल थे जबकि उनके 95 फीसदी अन्य भाई-बंधुओं की तकदीर उनके जैसी नहीं थी। परंतु कश्मीर सनके का दीर्घकालिक हल इसी में निहित है। कश्मीर में अच्छे स्कूल और कॉलेज खोले जाने की आवश्यकता है ताकि बेहतर मानव संसाधन तैयार हो और उनको बेहतर मूल्यों की शिक्षा दी जा सके। राजनीतिक तौर तरीकों में बदलाव के जरिये कश्मीर घाटी में शांति बहाली का प्रयास किया जाना चाहिए ताकि हजारों की संख्या में पर्यटक आएँ और वहां के लोगों को रोजगार मिल सके। कश्मीरी छात्रों के लिए देश भर के स्कूल और कॉलेज खोल दिए जाने चाहिए। उद्योग जगत को बड़ी तादाद में कश्मीरी स्नातकों को अपने यहां जगह देनी चाहिए। एक ऐसे चुनाव प्रचार अभियान की आवश्यकता है जो कश्मीरियों समेत देश के 95 फीसदी लोगों के लिए अवसर तैयार करने की बात कहता हो। रोजगार के अवसर लंबे समय तक प्रतीक्षा नहीं कर सकते।

(लेखक फोर्ब्स मार्शल के को-चेयरमैन, सीआईआई के पूर्व प्रेसिडेंट और सीटीआईआईआर के चेयरमैन हैं। लेख में प्रस्तुत विचार निजी हैं।)

राजकोषीय मोर्चे पर बेहतर योगी सरकार का प्रदर्शन

उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री योगी आदित्यनाथ अपने हिंदुत्ववादी राजनीति के चलते प्रायः खबरों में रहते हैं। लेकिन उनकी सरकार के राजकोषीय प्रदर्शन पर बहुत कम ध्यान ही दिया गया है। यहां तक कि उनकी सरकार के नवीनतम बजट के बारे में भी अखबारों में सुर्खियां यही बनी कि योगी सरकार ने गायों के आश्रयस्थल बनाने के लिए 400 करोड़ रुपये का आवंटन किया है। योगी सरकार के इस तीसरे बजट में राज्य की वित्तीय स्थिति के बारे में कम ही चर्चा हुई है। इसकी वजह यह नहीं है कि राज्य के बजट के बारे में ब्योरा आसान फॉर्मेट में तत्काल मुद्देबा नहीं हो पाता है। राज्यों में बजट पेश होने के कई महीने बाद भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) राज्यों के बजट के बारे में अपना वार्षिक प्रकाशन लाता है। उसके बाद ही राज्य के बजट के बारे में कोई समुचित विश्लेषण किया जा सकता है जिसमें राजस्व और व्यय के मोर्चे पर पिछले साल की तुलना में अध्ययन किया जा सके। पीआरएस लेजिस्लेटिव रिसर्च की एक रिपोर्ट इस खाई को भरने की कोशिश करती है। इसमें वित्त वर्ष 2019-20 के लिए अब तक आठ राज्यों में पेश बजटों का ब्योरा दिया गया है।



दिल्ली डायरी ए के भट्टाचार्य

यह रिपोर्ट योगी सरकार के बारे में लोकप्रिय धारणा के उलट नजरिया पैदा करती है। इस बजट के तीनों बजट बताते हैं कि राज्य ने राजकोषीय मजबूती की दिशा में उल्लेखनीय उपलब्धि हासिल की है। पूर्ववर्ती अखिलेश यादव सरकार के अंतिम वित्त वर्ष 2016-17 में उत्तर प्रदेश का राजकोषीय घाटा सकल राज्य घरेलू उत्पाद (जीएसडीपी) का 4.5 फीसदी रहा था। लेकिन योगी सरकार ने अपने कार्यकाल के पहले ही वित्त वर्ष 2017-18 में इसे 2.02 फीसदी पर ला दिया। ये दोनों ही अंकड़े वास्तविक हैं और ऑडिट जांच से गुजर चुके हैं। योगी सरकार के दूसरे बजट 2018-19 में संशोधित अनुमानों के मुताबिक राजकोषीय घाटा थोड़ा बढ़कर 2.97 फीसदी हो गया था। वर्ष 2019-20 के बजट में वित्त मंत्री राजेश अग्रवाल ने राजकोषीय घाटे के जीएसडीपी का 2.97 फीसदी ही रहने का अनुमान बताया है। वित्त आयोग ने राज्यों में राजकोषीय घाटे को जीएसडीपी के तीन फीसदी के

दायरे में तय किया हुआ है और उत्तर प्रदेश भी अब गुजरात, पश्चिम बंगाल और कर्नाटक के बाद इस सीमा के भीतर रहने वाला राज्य बन चुका है। राज्य के राजस्व व्यय और राजस्व प्राप्तियों के बीच के फासले यानी राजस्व संतुलन के बारे में क्या स्थिति है? इस मामले में भी उत्तर प्रदेश अधिशेष स्थिति हासिल कर चुके गिने-चुने राज्यों में शामिल हो चुका है। राजस्व अधिशेष 2017-18 में जीएसडीपी के 0.91 फीसदी पर खिसक आया था लेकिन 2018-19 में यह बढ़कर 3.2 फीसदी पर जा पहुंचा था। हालांकि अगले वित्त वर्ष में अधिशेष के 1.76 फीसदी ही रहने का अनुमान बताया गया है।

ऐसा हो पाने की संभवतः बड़ी वजह यह है कि राज्य के अपने कर राजस्व में तीव्र वृद्धि हुई है। योगी सरकार के पहले साल में उत्तर प्रदेश का अपना कर राजस्व वर्ष 2017-18 में 8 फीसदी बढ़कर 97,393 करोड़ रुपये पर पहुंच गया। लेकिन 2018-19 में 38 फीसदी की नाटकीय उछाल होने से राज्य सरकार का कर राजस्व 1.34 लाख करोड़ रुपये पर जा पहुंचा। जिस तरह 2018-19 में हुई जबरदस्त उछाल चौंकाने वाली है, कुछ उसी तरह 2019-20 में कर राजस्व में महज 4 फीसदी वृद्धि होने का अनुमान भी अंधाधुंध करता है।

क्या यह उछाल उत्तर प्रदेश के अपने कर राजस्व पर वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) के पहले पूर्ण वर्ष का नतीजा थी? और अब जीएसटी दरों को तर्कसंगत बनाए जाने और उनमें कटौती के बाद कई क्षेत्रों को नई रियायतें दी जा चुकी हैं जिससे कर राजस्व में वृद्धि धीमी ही रहने के आसार हैं। वर्ष 2018-18 में उत्तर प्रदेश के लिए जीएसटी राजस्व 1.06 लाख करोड़ रुपये रहने का अनुमान था और 2019-20 में इसमें तीन फीसदी बढ़ोतरी

का ही अनुमान है। अगर आने वाले वर्षों में जीएसटी संग्रह में सुस्ती आने से उसके कर राजस्व में वृद्धि स्थिर होती है तो राज्य सरकार के लिए यह निश्चित रूप से एक चुनौती होगी।

योगी सरकार के कार्यकाल में ध्यान देने लायक एक और बात उसके पूंजीगत व्यय से जुड़ी हुई है। यह 2018-19 में 110 फीसदी की जबरदस्त उछाल के साथ 1.17 लाख करोड़ रुपये का पहुंचा जबकि 2017-18 में यह 55,599 करोड़ रुपये था। वर्ष 2019-20 में पूंजीगत व्यय के मामली गिरावट के साथ 1.16 लाख करोड़ रुपये रहने के अनुमान जताए गए हैं। सरकार के कुल व्यय में पूंजीगत व्यय की हिस्सेदारी 2017-18 के 17 फीसदी से बढ़कर 2018-19 में 26 फीसदी पर जा पहुंची और अगले वित्त वर्ष में इसके 24 फीसदी पर रहने का अनुमान है। राज्य के कुल व्यय में पूंजीगत व्यय की हिस्सेदारी को चौथाई स्तर तक पहुंचाना एक ऐसी उपलब्धि है जो बहुत कम राज्य ही हासिल कर पाए हैं। पीआरएस लेजिस्लेटिव रिसर्च ने उत्तर प्रदेश के लिए पूंजी परिव्यय का भी गणना की है और इसे पूंजीगत व्यय के एक ऐसे अवयव के तौर पर परिभाषित किया है जिसका प्रत्यक्ष इस्तेमाल परिसंपत्ति निर्माण में होता है। इस तरह का पूंजी परिव्यय भी 2018-19 में दोगुना होकर 88,528 करोड़ रुपये रहा है और 2019-20 में 100 फीसदी से अधिक गिरावट के साथ 77,641 करोड़ रुपये रहने की संभावना है। दूसरे शब्दों में, योगी सरकार ने अपने बजटों में पूंजी व्यय से होने वाले परिसंपत्ति निर्माण को नजरअंदाज नहीं किया है। देश के सबसे अधिक आबादी वाले राज्य उत्तर प्रदेश का जीएसडीपी आकार 14.76 लाख करोड़ रुपये है और इस वजह से यह पांच शीर्ष राज्यों में शामिल है। इसी के साथ उत्तर प्रदेश देश के सबसे पिछड़े राज्यों में से भी एक है। लेकिन अगर राज्य राजकोषीय समझदारी दिखाता है और परिसंपत्ति निर्माण पर अधिक खर्च करता है तो वह राजकोषीय मोर्चे पर कुछ सही कदम तो उठा ही रहा है। क्या अब समय नहीं आ गया है कि आर्थिक विश्लेषण उत्तर प्रदेश के राजकोषीय प्रदर्शन पर गौर करें? इससे राज्य में आर्थिक वृद्धि की संभावना के बारे में बेहतर समझ पैदा करने में मदद मिलेगी।

कानाफूसी

जोश का कारोबार

जब भावनाएं उबाल पर होती हैं तो ब्रांड भी बाजार में ऐसे अवसरों का लाभ उठाने से नहीं चूकते। फास्ट फूड रेस्टोरेंट बर्गर सिंह जिसने 2016 में उड़ी में हुए आतंकी हमले के बाद अंजाम दी गई सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के वक्त छूट की पेशकश की थी, उसने मंगलवार को बालाकोट में भारत की हवाई कार्रवाई के बाद दोबारा छूट की बात कही। पाकिस्तान स्थित आतंकी ठिकानों पर हवाई हमले की खबर आने पर रेस्टोरेंट ने अपने ग्राहकों को 'एफपाकअनन' कूपन के माध्यम से 20 फीसदी की छूट देनी शुरू कर दी। उसने 2016 में 30 फीसदी तक की छूट प्रदान की थी। दोनों ही मौकों पर उसे सीशल मीडिया पर असंवेदनशील होने का उलाहना सहना पड़ा। पुणे में निजी बीमा कंपनी बजाज आलियांज लाइफ ने अपने कार्यालय के बाहर इलेक्ट्रॉनिक स्कॉल बोर्ड पर लिखा- 'हाऊ इज द जोश?' उसने यह संवाद उड़ी : द सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक फिल्म से लिया।

बाबर के वारिस

मंगलवार को रंगीन शेरबानी और उससे मेल खाती हुई पगड़ी पहने हुए एक व्यक्ति ने सर्वोच्च न्यायालय का रुख किया। उसका दावा है कि वह मुगल बादशाह बहादुर शाह जफर की छठी पीढ़ी का वंशज है। प्रिंस याकूब हबीबुद्दीन तकी ने देश को सबसे बड़ी अदालत का रुख करते हुए कहा कि राम मंदिर-बाबरी मस्जिद विवाद में उसका पक्ष भी सुना जाए। उसने दावा किया कि जिस जमीन पर विवादित बाबरी मस्जिद बनी है, उसका मालिकाना हक उनका है। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने उसकी याचिका सुनने से इनकार कर दिया लेकिन उन्हें सुनवाई के बाद अपने वकीलों से अत्यंत उत्सुकतापूर्वक बात करते देखा गया। वह अधिवक्ताओं के साथ सेल्फी लेते हुए भी देखे गए।



विजय सिन्हा

आपका पक्ष

आतंकवाद खत्म करने का आगाज

भारतीय वायु सेना ने जम्मू कश्मीर के पुलवामा में आतंकी हमले में शहीद हुए 40 जवानों का बदला पाकिस्तान में आतंकवादी संगठन जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के प्रशिक्षण शिविरों को तबाह कर ले लिया। महज 20 मिनट में आतंकी ठिकानों को ध्वस्त कर भारतीय सेना ने दिखा दिया कि देश की तरफ बुरी नजर रखने वाले दुश्मनों को अब बदार्श नहीं किया जाएगा। भारतीय सेना ने यह भी दिखा दिया कि अगर सेना को कुछ छूट दे दी जाए तो वह जैश-ए-मोहम्मद, अलकायदा जैसे हर एक आतंकवादी संगठन का खात्मा कर सकती है। पुलवामा में आतंकी हमले के बाद देश की जनता में आक्रोश का माहौल है। इसे देखते हुए केंद्र सरकार को इस कार्रवाई के खिलाफ फैसला लेने में काफ़ी आसानी हुई। वहीं केंद्र सरकार ने सेना को इस कार्रवाई के लिए मंजूरी देकर शहीद हुए जवानों का मान रखा और यह संदेश दिया कि



जवानों का बलिदान व्यर्थ नहीं जाएगा। पुलवामा में आतंकी हमले के बाद भारत द्वारा पाकिस्तान पर कई तरह के प्रतिबंध लगा दिए गए थे। वहीं पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने भारत से शांति वार्ता के लिए एक और मौका देने का आग्रह किया था, लेकिन भारत ने वायुसेना की कार्रवाई से पाकिस्तान को जवाब दे दिया है।

भारत-पाकिस्तान के बीच तनाव के मद्देनजर जम्मू-कश्मीर हवाई अड्डा हाई अलर्ट पर रहा

यह भी संदेश दिया गया है कि आतंकवाद के पनाहगारों के साथ भारत किसी तरह का कोई वार्ता नहीं करेगी।

शुभम शर्मा, नोएडा

युद्ध नहीं आतंकवाद का हो खात्मा

पुलवामा में आतंकी हमले की जवाबी कार्रवाई में भारतीय सेना ने नियंत्रण रेखा के पार आतंकवादी संगठनों के ठिकानों पर बम बरसाए। भारत के इस कदम से पाकिस्तान भी कार्रवाई करने की चेतावनी दे चुका है। हालांकि भारत का वार आतंकवाद पर है लेकिन अगर पाकिस्तान अपनी सेना का इस्तेमाल करता है तो युद्ध जैसे हालात उत्पन्न हो सकते हैं। आतंकवाद को खत्म करने के लिए युद्ध कोई उपाय नहीं है। दोनों देशों को युद्ध से बचना चाहिए तथा आतंकवाद को खत्म करने की दिशा में कारगर पहल करनी चाहिए। इससे युद्ध से होने वाले नुकसान से बचा जा सकता है।

मोहित कुमार, नई दिल्ली

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

नकली शराब कारोबार बंद हो

उत्तर प्रदेश के गोरखपुर तथा कुशीनगर जिले में जहरीली शराब के सेवन से कुछ लोगों की मौत हो गई थी। इसके बाद असम में भी जहरीली शराब पीने से करीब 85 लोगों की मौत हो गई। घटना के बाद मृतकों की संख्या में इजाफा संभव है क्योंकि घटना के बाद करीब 300 पीड़ित लोगों को अस्पताल में भर्ती कराया गया है। सरकार ने इस मामले में सक्रियता दिखाई है और पीड़ित लोगों को न्यायिक सेवाएं उपलब्ध कराई जा रही है। सवाल यह है कि लोगों के बीच जहरीली शराब कहां से पहुंच रही है। ऐसी घटना के पीछे कौन लोग हैं तथा घटना के जिम्मेदार कौन हैं। सरकार को घटना के दोषियों का पता लगाकर कड़ों कार्रवाई करनी चाहिए। इसके अलावा नकली शराब के कारोबार को खत्म करने के लिए अलग व्यवस्था बनानी चाहिए।

तुंगेश शर्मा, गोरखपुर

Opinion

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2019

Need to do more if FDI flows are to increase

In April-December 2018, inflows contracted by 7%; as a share of GDP, FDI fell from 3.4% in FY09 to 2.3% in FY19

GIVEN THE INDIAN economy's relative attractiveness vis a vis China in the last few years—lower wage costs and a strong technology sector—it should attract large FDI flows. The combined fresh inflows in FY16 and FY17 were a hefty \$83.5 billion; in FY18 this was \$44.9 billion—if reinvested earnings of FDI projects are added, the FY16-17 number rises to \$115.8 billion and FY18 to \$61 billion. However, the trend seems to have reversed because, at \$33.5 billion in the nine months to December 2018, there has been a contraction of 7% year-on-year in terms of fresh equity flows.

Although the government has eased the investment limits, sectors such as defence haven't seen meaningful inflows. Foreign firms, it would appear, are satisfied with a 49% stake in a venture or a bigger one for bringing in state-of-the-art technology. By and large, it is the services space that continues to pull in the bulk of the investments and not manufacturing, although these nearly doubled to \$17 billion in the five years to 2016-17. In fact, there has been an absence of momentum in the Make-in-India programme and, for that matter, in manufacturing in general. Bigger FDI inflows in defence would depend upon the pace of defence orders under the Make-in-India programme, but defence orders haven't gained pace under the NDA either.

A more lenient FDI regime is needed both for manufacturing and in areas such as multi-brand retail to spur job creation. But simply freeing up investment limits isn't enough, it must be easy to do business. When the UPA threw open multi-brand retail to global retailers, the response was less than lukewarm because of the several riders attached to the policy. Even otherwise, the rigid labour laws, poor infrastructure and the unstable regulatory environment seem to have hampered flows into industry; a good chunk of FDI has come into companies that are well-established and where regulation is relatively less important such as FMCG multinationals. The government needs to fix the problems on the ground and shrug off its conservative approach that limits investments. It is a pity global pharma majors aren't investing more in India's pharma sector given the large pool of scientists and science graduates. The sector pulled in less than \$1 billion each in FY16 and FY17, lower than the \$1.5 billion in FY15. The auto sector, too, saw just \$1.6 billion in FY17 compared with \$2.6 billion in FY16, although India has relatively cheap labour and also a big home market. The biggest amounts of FDI have come into the e-commerce space—\$8 billion plus in 2018—leading to the creation of thousands of jobs. The inflows of this fiscal have been dominated by those in services, computer hardware and software, telecommunications and chemicals.

To be sure, fresh FDI inflows to India have nearly doubled over the past decade to \$44.9 billion in FY18—\$61 billion including reinvestments, that adds up to around 2.4% of GDP. But, given how local capital is limited, it is critical India attracts much more so as to reduce the dependence on fickle portfolio flows. Of the total net capital flows of \$240 billion, estimated in the three years to FY18, close to 5% was FDI, the rest portfolio flows were into debt and equity. In the ten years prior to that, FDI accounted for less than 30% of the inflows. India's current account deficit widened to 2.9% of GDP from 2.4% in Q1FY19 and, worryingly, the relatively stable net FDI saw trailing twelve month flows dip to \$28 billion. This cannot be good news.

Ban 'regulatory assets'

SEB turnaround aided by not paying gencos ₹1.4 lakh cr

THE LATEST SETS of data from the power ministry suggest that the sector has witnessed a smart turnaround, mostly because of the UDAY scheme introduced a few years ago. According to the ministry, the UDAY states have managed to cut their financial losses by a whopping 70%, from ₹51,480 crore in FY16 to ₹15,049 crore in FY18. Indeed, the ministry says, states like Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Daman & Diu have shown profits in FY18; Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura and Manipur showed losses, but these were 50% lower than those in FY16. It is, then, odd that generating companies are unable to service their bank loans on time, and since they are on the verge of default—if not defaulted already—the government is trying to get the central bank to relax its classification norms for NPAs.

The reason for the coexistence of a turnaround with stressed gencos is that, with the state governments unwilling to hike electricity tariffs—and the so-called independent electricity regulators don't think they can order a tariff hike on their own—to take into account actual costs, the turnaround is a false one; indeed, much of the fall in losses is due to the UDAY scheme's insistence that banks cut their loan rates dramatically, from 12-14% to around 8% by substituting state-government bonds for SEB loans. Around 20,000 MW of the 52,000 MW of stressed projects are due to the fact that, with the SEBs not able to pass on costs, they have just refused to sign power purchase agreements with the gencos. Another tactic is to simply not supply enough power since, with a gap between costs and tariffs, each unit of supply means additional losses; that is why, power minister RK Singh has been pushing for making 24x7 electricity supply mandatory. Loss levels, ATC in jargon, remain very high and, as compared to the target of cutting this to 15% by March 2019, this was around 21% at the end of December 2018; each one percentage point reduction in ATC lowers financial losses by around ₹4,000 crore, so when ATC losses don't fall, the only way to keep SEBs solvent is to raise tariffs.

With ATC losses not falling fast enough—this involves going after power thieves and special police and courts—and the regulators not able to ensure regular tariff hikes, SEBs have opted for the easier option of not paying their dues. According to the power ministry data, SEB dues were around ₹14,600 crore for private sector gencos till the end of November 2018 and ₹21,600 crore for public sector generators like NTPC and DVC till the end of January 2019. It gets worse since there is this fiction called 'regulatory assets'. When an independent regulator knows it needs to raise tariffs so as to net, say, ₹100, but doesn't want to raise them—due to the state government indicating it will not allow it—it tells the genco to classify ₹100 as a regulatory asset; the genco will be given interest costs of, say, ₹8 per year, on this asset till the time tariffs can be raised to cover the ₹100. While it is obvious regulatory assets, like any IOU, have to be fully paid for within a few years, almost ₹60,000 crore of fresh regulatory assets were created in FY14-18, taking the total IOUs till date to as much as ₹1,35,000 crore. Instead of trying to persuade RBI to relax its NPA norms, the government needs to fix the power sector mess.

Education High

The Delhi govt puts its money where its mouth is on govt education; other states and the Centre should take a cue

THE DELHI GOVERNMENT'S budget, as has been the case so far with the current dispensation, has a welcome focus on education. For the coming fiscal year, the government earmarked a whopping 26% of its total expenditure estimate for the sector—at ₹15,601 crore, it is up by nearly 40% from ₹11,300 crore last year. A major thrust in this education budget is rewarding children who have performed well. Students who have managed to procure more than 80% in their examinations will be given a scholarship of ₹2,500. Continuing the government's drive towards digital modes of learning, students who manage to score more than 80% in their CBSE class X board exams will also be given tablets of their own.

The Delhi government had initiated two programmes to boost learning levels, Mission Chhauta and Mission Buniyaad. The aim was to remedy the lack of basic reading and arithmetic skills in students up to the ninth grade by dividing students into two groups and holding their classes separately. The children in one group were given extra attention and monitored to ensure that their abilities improved. This policy of tracking—grouping students according to their perceived ability—permits pedagogy to be geared towards the differential learning levels of students and makes the process of imparting education that much more easier and, thus, effective. Schemes like these have propelled the attainment of students at government schools, leading to them improving their results in last year's class XII CBSE board exams from an 88.36% pass rate in 2017 to 90.64% in 2018 as also rapidly improving their reading- and math-based abilities as evidenced by the increase in learning outcomes that came about as a result of Mission Buniyaad last year.



LAUNCH OF SHREYAS

Prakash Javadekar, Union HRD minister

The education with skills is the need of the hour and the [new programme] will be a major effort in this direction to make our degree students more skilled, capable, employable and aligned to the needs of our economy

SERVITISATION

THE NEW PARADIGM CALLS FOR AN INCREASED FOCUS ON DEVELOPING 'MASS SERVICES' AS THE DRIVER OF GROWTH AND JOBS

Rethinking the job paradigm

ARINDAM BHATTACHARYA

Senior partner and director of the BCG Henderson Institute. Views are personal



JOBS HAS BECOME the 'hottest' political battle as the Lok Sabha elections approaches, as media reports on jobs data from the NSSO survey, and earlier in 2017 from the labour ministry survey of establishments, point towards job-less growth. While the government has raised questions on the accuracy of data, the opposition has questioned government policies. To me, this is shooting down the messenger for the message. I believe that this data raises a different question of whether it is time to rethink the paradigm for job creation? To answer this question, we have to first de-average the India growth data to draw any conclusions, and, secondly, understand the structural shifts in global supply chains which impact every country.

Let us start with an important global trend. Since the industrial revolution in the mid 19th century, countries have followed the twin strategies of manufacturing growth and merchandise exports to create millions of new jobs. China is the latest example of the success of this strategy. However, this strategy is being disrupted by the emergence of the 'Industry 4.0' technologies in an era of growing economic nationalism as global supply chains morph into more of local/regional ones. Falling costs of robots erode the advantage of low labour cost-based global plants, making it more economic for global companies to set up smaller, automated plants closer to markets. At the same time, growth in consumption in emerging markets means that many of them can support full supply chains rather than depend on imports. This reduces merchandise trade flows, especially of intermediate goods and calls into question the future efficacy of manufacturing export-led economic (and jobs) growth strategies followed by developing countries.

Let us now turn to India. When we decompose the growth and employment data for India from the 1970s into its three components—total labour hours, capital stock and total factor productivity (TFP)—we find that, while most of the growth between 1970 and 1990 came from growth in labour hours, from the early 1990s (using the same data series) the capital usage started increasing sharply, compared to the increase in net labour hours. This resulted in a phenomenon called 'capital deepening' and India's economy became significantly more capital-intensive. This conclusion is sup-

ported by the slower growth of labour intensive sectors like textile/apparel, food and leather compared to capital-intensive sectors like chemicals/rubber, metals, metal products and machinery. Even in services, the less labour-intensive financial services sector has added more value than more labour intensive sectors like tourism, health, and education. Employment elasticity of manufacturing growth had started dropping, not in the last few years, but much before that.

This analysis leads to two critical conclusions. The first is the one which many experts have been pointing to for many years: reforming our labour laws which seems to incentivise the use of capital over labour. This becomes more critical as falling costs of automation and its increasing benefits makes this trade-off in manufacturing (and even services sectors) even more attractive. The second conclusion is perhaps more controversial—we need a new paradigm to think about jobs which is more aligned to the new realities of the 21st century with its structural shifts in global supply chains and the increasing economic attraction of automation.

In this first of a two-part article, I want to focus on the second conclusion and present some specific ideas for a new paradigm on growth and jobs (and develop these ideas further in the second article). Let me first summarise the three important elements of the old paradigm, especially for developing countries. The first was the primary role of manufacturing and merchandise exports as the basis of growth and job creation. The second concerned the type of jobs—formal jobs, both blue and white collar, were highly desirable and formed the basis of a growing middle class. The third was on the type of companies: large companies were seen as more competitive and productive due to their greater scale and

thus were seen as the big drivers of formal jobs growth.

Today, each one of these elements is getting radically disrupted. If we look at global trends, merchandise trade has been slowing down while services trade, and especially digital services trade, is growing several times faster as digitisation and cross-border data flows explode. If we look at growth patterns of industrial companies, we find that, while the growth of their physical products like plants and machines is slowing down, the 'servitisation' of their business has been accelerating. Finally, if we look at the type of start-ups, the fastest globalising companies today, or companies with the highest market caps, we find that they are all digital or digitally-enabled services companies. So the first element for the new paradigm is an increased focus on developing 'mass services' as the driver of growth and jobs in the 21st century, similar to the role played by mass manufacturing in the 20th century.

Secondly, we see dramatic shifts in the type of jobs which are emerging, with the growth of freelancers or the gig economy, as opposed to formal jobs. These type of jobs were virtually unknown when mass manufacturing took off as everyone wanted formal employment and are more difficult to measure (and perhaps partially explains the data challenges we face in India). Today, in the US, it is estimated that one in three workers are freelancers and many of them are supplementing their formal jobs. Estimates vary but some experts believe that this job category will cover more than 25% of all jobs in the next few years. There are many reasons for this growth, ranging from changing attitudes to full-time work to emergence of digital platforms that has helped build the e-marketplace for freelancers. Unfortunately, many policymakers and

politicians sarcastically call this trend as undesirable 'uberisation' and point out its dangers compared to the safety of formal jobs. But should we not leverage this important global trend and make it much easier for such jobs to emerge if they are the natural development of the social and digital revolution taking place? Of course we will have to think how to make it win-win for all by re-thinking labour classifications, protecting freelancers from exploitation in an unequal power equation without destroying the economics, and setting standards for new cost-effective social security programmes for them.

The third pillar of the new paradigm is the significant shift from big to small companies that will drive growth and jobs in the future. In the era of mass manufacturing, we have grown up with the economic logic that size and scale drives competitiveness. Hence, most of the 'mind-space' of policymakers was taken up by large organised sector players. Digital technologies (digital platforms, e-markets, falling bandwidth costs, cloud storage, etc) have brought about fundamental changes in this economic equation favouring size/scale as they dramatically bring down transaction costs, increase access to global markets and customers, allow 'asset-light' business models to flourish and increase the importance of IP and talent for future value creation over physical assets. A small player offering a popular digital game downloaded from the internet can build a billion dollar global business in months rather than decades as Niantic, a small company on the west coast of US, did with its game PokemonGo. The present government has rightly emphasised the importance of start-ups and small/medium enterprises and launched a series of policy initiatives but there remain many challenges these firms face from access to funds to excessive regulatory burden.

Let me end this first part of the two-part article on jobs by emphasising that the three pillars of the old paradigm—manufacturing and merchandise trade, large scale formal jobs and large companies—are not suddenly redundant. They will continue to be important but, as we enter the fourth industrial revolution, we have to necessarily 'reboot' our mental models if we have to deliver jobs with growth. Otherwise, we will continue to shoot down the messenger for the message!

Unleashing \$8 trillion of climate defence

In the past three years, sovereign wealth funds have invested a total of just \$11 billion in renewable energy companies, green energy projects and climate-oriented debt, comprising less than 0.2% of their total assets

MARK GILBERT

Bloomberg

ON MONDAY, THE British Met Office recorded the UK's warmest winter day on record. In Chile, January temperatures in the capital city of Santiago beat the previous record by a full degree Celsius. Globally, the last five years were collectively the world's warmest ever.

The world is losing the race to curb carbon dioxide emissions. In 2017, output of the gases that contribute to global warming climbed to a record—as did the cost of insuring against natural catastrophes, which reached \$350 billion. But a new report from the World Economic Forum, the group that hosts the annual Davos shindig, suggests that there's an underutilised pool of capital available to help tackle climate change—sovereign wealth funds (SWFs).

According to the Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, more than 70 national funds control about \$8 trillion of assets, with the bulk of their money generated by oil and gas income. Iceland is the latest nation seeking to establish a rainy day fund; it is planning to set aside \$2.5 billion.

But figures compiled by the United Nations Environment Programme in December estimate that in the past three years, SWFs have invested a total of just \$11 billion in renewable energy companies, green energy projects and climate-oriented debt, comprising less than 0.2% of their total assets. That is pathetic.

Globally, clean energy investment has topped \$300 billion annually for the past five years, according to figures compiled by Bloomberg New Energy Finance. In Europe, investment in technologies from wind power to solar projects increased by 27% last year to more than \$74 billion.

As the world moves away from fossil fuels, many of the nations that have tapped their natural resources to set up sovereign wealth pools risk being left with reserves of oil and gas for which demand is dwindling. The WEF argues that there is a "structural risk of not acting—namely that a global energy revolution leaves nations stranded and without the resource revenues needed to diversify down the road".

The UN study suggests that sovereign funds have been inhibited from developing greener portfolios because of a reluctance to forgo returns from the oil and gas industries. Norway's \$1 trillion sovereign wealth fund, the world's biggest, has met with resistance since it proposed dumping all of its oil and gas stocks in 2017, saying that the nation was already vulnerable to oil-price volatility as western Europe's biggest exporter of crude. A report published in January recommended the Norwegian fund should allocate at least 5% of its cash to renewable energy infrastructure projects, arguing that such investments offer long-term growth potential, low correlation to

other asset classes, and the prospect of enhanced risk-adjusted returns.

In a similar vein, the WEF study argues that sovereign funds are better placed than other potential investors to finance green energy projects. SWFs are "better equipped to take advantage of environmental, social and governance investment strategies than private counterparts, as they can better afford to wait to see the social as well as financial benefits of such an approach". They can also take advantage of longer time horizons than private investors, the WEF says.

But they risk being late to the party. In November, Carlyle Group Chairman David Rubenstein told a conference in Amsterdam that, as more investments are made to address global warming, the returns available will be boosted correspondingly. Around the world, the amount allocated by venture capital and private equity firms to clean energy projects jumped by 127% in 2018 to reach \$9.2 billion, BNEF calculates.

While it may be politically difficult for some countries to wean themselves off their economic reliance on fossil fuels, enlightened self-interest suggests SWFs should do more to support renewable energy. Here is hoping that they do—for all of our sakes.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mix caution with aggression

Recent political and socioeconomic moves on multiple fronts to tighten security, suppress internal conflicts in sensitive areas, discourage trade relations and disengage ties in various capacities are welcome tactful measures to seek attention of/support by international bodies, including the UNSC. Increased responsibility and preventive measures are the next steps. Authorities, in addition to perceiving sensitive matters cockeyedly, ought to enhance security on the border and be cognisant of additional surveillance needs. Superfluous attempts have failed to improve the long-term bilateral relations hitherto, as one-sided cordial gestures in the past have not been duly reciprocated. Continuation of robust governance coupled with a strategic approach to mix caution with aggression is the need of the hour to mitigate risks — Girish Lalwani, Delhi

Indian documentary

The Oscar for the Indian documentary which showcased the fight of Indian women against entrenched patriarchal systems to secure their right to dignity and menstrual hygiene is indeed heartening for it would help make conversation about menstruation become more louder and public. Eliminating menstrual taboos which are restrictive and discriminatory through sustained awareness campaigns needs no delay — M Jeyaram, Madurai

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

LAST MONTH SAW a series of discussions around a employment numbers reported in the leaked Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). I wanted to understand the underlying reasons and the validity of the numbers quoted in the media. I did not have access to the findings of the leaked report, so I looked at the survey methodology available in public domain and compared it to the methodology of the last Employment-Unemployment Survey (EUS) of 2011-12—both of which have been conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) of the Ministry of statistics and programme implementation. I further compared the methodologies across these surveys to ground realities in India, to identify the possible reasons for the low numbers that have been reported.

I found there to be a stark difference in the methods used to choose survey households. The PLFS is based on education level of households and the EUS is based on expenditure (urban) or livelihood (rural) of households. Any direct comparison of the survey results of the PLFS with the earlier EUS would lead to erroneous inference about the employment scenario. Further, the sample chosen in the PLFS was not quite representative of the underlying Indian population in terms of the achievement of secondary education leading to lower estimates for the population, labour force participation and employment. And here I will show you how that is the case.

The EUS

The EUS, which was last conducted during the 68th round of the NSSO for the duration July 2011 to June 2012, is a comprehensive survey providing a complete picture of the labour force, across sectors like agriculture, industry, services, etc, in both rural and urban areas.

In any survey, a sample of locations are chosen judiciously to represent the entire country. For the EUS 2011-12, the selection of locations for First Stage Units (FSU) in the sample, urban and rural classification was made based on the data from Census 2001 and each town with a population of more than 10 lakh was represented as a separate group in sample locations. For the Second Stage Strata (SSS), the criteria for choosing households in both the rural and urban areas was household affluence, as shown in the accompanying table.

In rural areas, 50% of chosen households are those with principal earnings from non-agriculture-based activities. There was good representation of households with at least one member engaged in non-agricultural activities; for example, employed in formal/informal sector.

For urban areas, the Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) available from the previous rounds of the NSSO household surveys forms the basis for selecting households. The MPCE considers the realities of that particular area based on the previous round survey (by the NSSO) leading to the criteria for selecting households. Household expenditure is a good proxy to ascertain earnings for households through employment (formal or informal). The sample also has good representation of the middle class engaged in gainful employment-related activities.

The PLFS

The PLFS, also conducted by the NSSO between July 2017 and June 2018, is the first to focus on a detailed overview of the labour market in India. It provides continuous update on the employment situation in rural (quarters for urban and yearly for rural areas). This survey has, for the first time, used the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) method to capture data—a great step towards technology adoption. The sample size of various NSSO surveys are comparable and may be assumed to be in line with the last EUS survey of 2011-12.

For the PLFS, the selection of locations in the FSU for urban and rural areas was done as per Census 2011 classification. Each census town with a population over



ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

AVIK SARKAR

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The real reason behind low employment numbers

It would be proper to wait for the next round of the PLFS (2018-19) that is under progress and compare its findings with the results of the PLFS (2017-18) to make a more correct assessment of the employment rate in the country

Household selection criteria in EUS 2011-12

Rural	%	Urban	%
Relatively affluent households	25%	Households having MPCE of top 10% of urban population	25%
Of the remaining, households dignifying principal earning from non-agricultural activity	50%	Households having MPCE of middle 60% of urban population	50%
Other households	25%	Households having MPCE of bottom 30% of urban population	25%

Household selection criteria in PLFS 2017-18

Rural	%	Urban	%
2 or more members above 10th Std	25%	3 or more members above 10th Std.	25%
1 member above 10th Std.	50%	2 members above 10th Std.	25%
0 member above 10th Std.	25%	1 member above 10th Std.	25%
		0 member above 10th Std.	25%

People and households based on education level

	% of people in India (Census 2011)		% of households with family members above secondary level (NSSO 68 Round in 2011-12)			
	Literate	Above Secondary	0	1	2	2+
Total	63.07	21.51	66.42	17.43	10.27	5.88
Rural	57.91	15.30	75.61	14.64	6.61	3.14
Urban	74.47	35.24	46.20	23.56	18.32	11.91

15 lakh was formed into a strata (group) for further sampling. The remaining towns were classified into three strata based on population: less than 50,000, 50,000 to 3 lakh, and 3 lakh to 15 lakh. The representative samples were then selected from each of these groups. Keeping in mind the population growth and constraint of similar sample size, it was a good decision to move the town population threshold from 10 lakh to 15 lakh.

But there is a major change in the criteria for the selection of households in the SSS for both rural and urban areas, based on the number of general education up to secondary level (10th standard).

At first glance, the household selection criteria for the PLFS seems aspirational in nature, as the choice of households is dependent upon the education level of the household instead of the earlier criteria of affluence/expenditure. It is true that mostly formal or better-paying employment is linked to the education level of the household members and this move by the PLFS is really aspirational in nature. However, it made me wonder if this selection of sample based on the level of education is really representative of the underlying population of India.

I started by looking at the data on Census 2011 and found that the percentage of people above secondary level as of 2011 is quite low, at 21.51%, which goes further down to 15.3% for the rural population but has a healthy number of 35.24% for the urban population. Not all informal or daily wage employment requires more than secondary level education. A healthy literate level of 63.07% implies that a large portion of the population has basic literacy, which is what is required for daily wage employment.

Household-level secondary education was not readily available from Census

Any direct comparison of the results of the Periodic Labour Force Survey with the earlier Employment-Unemployment Survey would lead to erroneous inference about the employment scenario

2011 or other data sources to my knowledge. For this, unit level survey data of the EUS of the NSSO 68 Round in 2011-12 was used to derive the estimates of the number of households with zero, one, two or more than two members having general education level above secondary level (see table).

Thus, it can be seen that there are 66.42% of households with (75.61% rural and 46.20% urban) with no family members with general education above secondary level. Whereas only 25% of households have been sampled based on these criteria, leading to a huge mismatch between the reality and the samples drawn. People from these households are mostly daily wagers or engaged in informal employment, which would also show lower employment estimates.

These numbers provided a good view on the education level of the people in India and showed that the stratification criteria used in the PLFS is not quite aligned to the secondary and above secondary levels of education in the country.

This under sampling, leading to under-representation of such households, is leading to lower estimates of the people for this group in labour force participation and employment rate. This is what is falsely coming through—lower employment numbers due to under-representation of the population.

The percentages of households for the urban area, though far from the sample sizes are closer to the reality in urban areas compared to rural areas. It would be proper to wait for the next round of the PLFS (2018-19) that is under progress and compare its findings with the results of the PLFS (2017-18) to make a more correct assessment of the employment rate in the country.

The tyranny of metrics

SEEMA BANSAL & SHOIKAT ROY

Bansal is director, Social Impact Practice, BCG; Shoikat Roy is an expert consultant in Impact Practice, BCG

Why we learn nothing from the learning outcome data

THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY of school education in a central Indian state faces a conundrum—related to being placed in the top quartile in India in MHRD's annual National Achievement Survey (NAS), he has been replaced with a sense of despondency at being rock bottom in the recent ASER 2018 results. The secretary has the state's own learning data collected randomly across 1 lakh students in government schools—which is different from NAS and ASER. There is also a school on learning outcome data from Aspirational Districts collected by the NITI Aayog that is as yet unread on his desk—his fear that it will paint a fourth picture is not unfounded.

It is difficult for the secretary to decide which set of learning data is worth spending time on. NAS scores will determine funding under SSA, the Prime Minister will personally review Aspirational Districts improvement, while for the media and general public ASER is the flavour of the month. Not only this, the secretary also gets other rankings: NITI Aayog's SEQI, MHRD's PGI and Aspirational Districts Delta rankings, among others. Each has similar but different takes on what is important in education and throws up a different set of ranks and priorities for his state.

How did we get here? A decade ago, the education sector witnessed a shift towards measuring learning outcomes in a standardised manner. At the time, the push to collect learning data was essential to understand and confront the depth of the learning crisis in India. But the need to assess and measure learning outcomes has been taken to an extreme today that renders the entire exercise futile. While the efforts are well-intentioned, they're creating more confusion than clarity. In the NAS data, for example, states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Delhi have been ranked bottom, while Jharkhand and Rajasthan are closer to the top. ASER rankings show the polar opposite in many cases. NAS posits that an average grade 5 student scored 60-70% on a graded paper in Maths and Language, whereas ASER claims that in many parts of India a majority of students in grade 5 are not even familiar with basic Grade 2 competencies like subtraction.

One north Indian state, for example, claims that 70% of its government school students are at grade level according to its internal data, while ASER indicates that half its students are at least 2 to 3 grade levels behind in every subject. The ASER data itself throws up inexplicable results that limit decision-making on the basis of it. Several states have shown extreme swings in successive years in the same grades that seems nearly impossible. Thus, in the absence of disaggregated and transparent data to explore the potential causes, it is difficult to arrive at a nuanced action agenda.

Experts will argue NAS and ASER cannot be compared because of a significant difference in methodologies and sampling. It is possible NAS is skewed towards brighter students attending school, but it is unacceptable that multiple surveys are leading to two antithetical views of overall educational outcomes in a state. As a consequence of conflicting measurements and lack of quality data, the objective of index-based measurement systems—to prioritize and identify weaknesses for improvement—is largely a lost cause. Today, if any bandwidth is spent in states, it is on wondering "what really is the truth." Data-based learning assessments and rankings that should have been a clarion call to action for states have degraded into a source of frustration and cynicism, as well as the target of ridicule.

This is magnified by the significant transaction costs imposed on the system by such exercises. Internal studies estimate teachers spend 10-20 days of critical teaching time on conducting and uploading various types of assessments data; not to mention the costs borne by the administration in collating, analysing and reconciling. It is unacceptable this burden is not ameliorated by meaningful data-based insights and a clear action agenda to improve outcomes.

So what is the answer? It is critical that Centre, states and external organisations adopt a collaborative approach to measurements. All bodies must reconcile the definitions of learning outcome metrics and corresponding measurement tools and processes. While external approaches must be encouraged, the ecosystem needs to come to a common answer on what learning outcomes are to be measured, for what purposes (incentivisation, teacher training, accountability initiatives), and develop common approaches and best practices for accurate data collection and validation. Unless this is done immediately, the purpose of measuring learning outcomes will be completely lost.

IN THE ECONOMIC SURVEY 2016-17, Arvind Subramanian, the former Chief Economic Adviser, for the first time initiated a debate on Universal Basic Income (UBI) in India. In western countries, UBI is prevalent as existing social security measures are often inadequate to sustain the minimum standard of living by the poor people. In the West, UBI is not a permanent feature of public policy, as young people get jobs, at least in the upswing of the business cycle, while old and disabled manage their affairs with the available social security measures.

While presenting the Interim Budget, the Union finance minister introduced the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)—direct benefit transfer (DBT) of ₹6,000 annually to all farmers having land up to 5 acres. The scheme will cost ₹75,000 crore per annum and will benefit 12 crore small and marginal farmers. Although the amount is small, a good beginning has been made in the direction of UBI in India. Poor people certainly deserve support to live a dignified life. One has to introspect as to whether this has been introduced as most other schemes have failed to achieve their objectives.

UBI is distortionary even in the developed countries. While choosing between work and leisure, normal behaviour of the workforce is vitiated due to UBI. Persistence of UBI is a moral hazard problem that encourages substitution of leisure in place of work. Therefore, UBI is used sparingly, particularly when inequality is glaring, and poor people fail to maintain a

Towards a sustainable UBI

Can PM-KISAN surmount implementation hurdles?

BARENDRA KUMAR BHOI

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minimum standard of living.

Barring very old and disabled persons, poor people prefer to earn and live with dignity rather than seek dole-outs. In this context, it is the responsibility of the government to create enough employment opportunities so that UBI is not required.

Indian conditions are much more complex than those in developed countries. Reliable data on employment are not available, leave alone data on disguised unemployment. Recently, there have been some moves towards social security measures in India. These are Ayushman Bharat, Fasal Bima Yojana, national old age pension scheme, etc. These initiatives are awfully inadequate and the coverage is abysmally low. Unemployment allowance is virtually not available to jobless persons.

Government health insurance for the poor is limited to hospitalisation with a financial limit at ₹5 lakh per family. Private medical insurance is expensive and beset with corrupt practices.

Ideally, one should think of a robust social security system rather than spending large amounts every year imprudently on subsidies. The total amount of money spent on subsidies in the post-Independence period could have been sufficient to introduce a fairly good social security system. Despite the recent introduction of some social security measures, there is no commensurate decline in initiatives.

MGNREGA has been a good initiative to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed employment to the poor people in rural areas against the creation of assets. This



could have solved the seasonal unemployment in rural areas.

Since the rural infrastructure is awfully poor, there is no dearth of projects that can be taken up under MGNREGA. Earlier, leakages from MGNREGA were large. This has been plugged due to DBT to beneficiaries by the government. It appears as if after the introduction of DBT, organisers of MGNREGA have lost all incentives to vigorously pursue the programme. The scheme is, at best, dysfunctional, leading to persistence of abject poverty and inequality in rural areas despite reasonably high GDP growth.

Farm distress in India is a complex phenomenon. The irony is that it has accelerated at the peak of the agricultural production. Farmers are up in arms as prices

of farm products have fallen significantly during the last two years. Moreover, they hardly get around 25% of the price paid by urban consumers. This barely covers their cost of production. The root cause of the recent farm distress is, therefore, market failure, unlike crop failure earlier.

During the recent years, the government has taken several structural reforms to improve the efficiency of value chain in agriculture, such as Fasal Bima Yojana, electronic National Agriculture Market (eNAM), setting up of producers' companies with tax breaks, etc. It is better to review as to why these structural reforms are not working rather than introducing multiple schemes without a rigorous implementation strategy.

In India, the profit margin in farming

has come down drastically due to low productivity and rise in input costs. On top of this, terms of trade have become adverse against farm products, which crippled the financial condition of farmers. Agriculture needs long-term solutions like investment in irrigation, building up of rural infrastructure, extensive use of post-harvest technology, efficient value chains in marketing of agricultural products, etc.

As a short-term solution to the enduring problem, many states have been offering farm loan waivers, which benefit big farmers more than marginal farmers. Landless labourers and share-croppers are left high and dry. This not only disrupts credit flows to agriculture, but also impairs the credit culture, forcing farmers to depend on the informal sector to meet their immediate financial requirements.

Can PM-KISAN surmount implementation hurdles? Given poor land records in the country, how quickly state administrations can prepare the list of beneficiaries and transfer the amount? How to ensure UBI to landless labourers, share-croppers? Is it a substitute for inefficient implementation of other reforms? Given the budget constraints, how long can the government transfer such funds to farmers without asset creation? In the absence of robust social security measures, is this also a suboptimal solution like farm loan waivers? Can interlinking of rivers—the flagship project—be undertaken urgently by using funds allocated for rural development, which would provide employment to a larger section of rural people?



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Courage under fire

With pre-emptive strike across LoC, IAF has demonstrated ability to perform complex missions



S KRISHNASWAMY

THE DAY AFTER

Pakistan must promptly return the IAF pilot; next steps need caution and counsel, not silly TRP bluster

FEBRUARY 26, 2019, will go down as a historic day for the Indian air force (IAF). On this day, it was called upon to conduct a pre-emptive strike against a Pakistani terrorist camp at Balakot. This operation was conducted on a dark night by 12 Mirage-2000 aircraft in a surprise attack, operating from Gwalior. The mission was supported by SU-30MKI, Netra AWACS aircraft and an unspecified number of tanker aircraft. All the aircraft reportedly reached home safely after conducting the mission. The government has called it a "non-military pre-emptive strike", but the aim of the mission was retribution for the attack by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists on the CRPF convoy at Pulwama in which 40 CRPF soldiers were killed.

For the first time since Independence, the IAF has been recognised as being capable of operating independently when the element of surprise, speed and assured results were warranted. It is a proud moment indeed for the whole nation to see the IAF rise to the occasion and reportedly execute such a critical mission to perfection.

The mission launched was a complex one. It required excellent coordination between a variety of aircraft as well as diverse skills, which were amply demonstrated. The attack was reportedly spearheaded by 12 Mirage-2000 aircraft. The spearhead was supported by Netra, the indigenous Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) comprising detection radar and systems with the ability to monitor an adversary's air activity and transmissions and accordingly control the strike elements. Conceived by the IAF and designed by the DRDO to support and accompany strike missions, the Netra is small, reasonably fast and more manoeuvrable compared to its larger counterpart, the IL 76 AWACS of the IAF. This is the first time that the Netra has been used to support an offensive mission. The DRDO deserves a pat on its back.

Additionally, it is reported that SU-30 aircraft were used to mount patrol. Their purpose was to engage enemy interceptors launched against the strike elements. Their job was to protect the strike elements and en-

sure that the mission goes through. Precision-guided weapons and sensors like the Litening Targeting pod that were employed are sophisticated systems which require highly-trained engineers and technicians to prepare. A host of ground radar and communication stations would also have been present to support the mission and to ensure that civil air flights are not disturbed. Aerial tankers were deployed from Agra to refuel the strike formation that took off from Gwalior on a 2,500-km round trip. Twelve Mirages had to be refuelled, presumably by two-three tankers, while in flight. It is not an easy exercise for 12 fully-loaded fighter aircraft to meet up and plug with the tankers on a dark night. It requires considerable skill and coordination.

Considering that the mission was flown between 2 and 5 am on a pitch-dark night, there was no room for error. The target itself was "buried" in foliage and surrounded by hills. It would be impossible to spot these in the dark without the aid of FLIR or other night-vision devices. The pilots would have to release the weapon flying low and fast in the dark, over hilly terrain on the very first pass and with no possibility of a re-run. These are demanding conditions not just for the pilots but for every member of the task group. Even if all goes as per plan, there are still many unknowns like the enemy air defence systems that impose the highest risks. These challenges require not luck but hard training and confidence. The IAF brilliantly demonstrated these qualities in mounting the mission. There is an equally large number of professionals that would have worked 24x7 analysing intelligence reports and planning the missions to the minutest details. Carelessness in planning could have imposed severe risks on the mission.

The nature of democracy is such that a civilian government would seldom know the complexities of military operations, especially about the employment of advanced technology and skill-based operations. It is important that a competent advisory body is available to the government within the political system. Such consultation is essential in any large defence-related project and

the management of PSUs and DRDO. It is vital that the Minister of Defence conducts regular reviews of the capabilities of the military, the state of inventory and training standards. The minister's participation at the Commanders Conference is often more of a ritual than an occasion to conduct an in-depth review of the issues that affect the quality of life and operational capability of our armed forces. Cost-effectiveness in management should seriously be pursued.

It is the responsibility of the government to consider all military options when it becomes inevitable to use force. For a developing economy, war is never an easy option. Military operations have reactions that can affect the economy, growth and infrastructure quite severely. Besides, the loss of the lives of and serious injuries to a large number of able-bodied youth in uniform is something that the country cannot afford. Only an extreme provocation can influence the government to use force.

The success of the pre-emptive mission is only the start but not an end in itself. The adversary is bound to react. Professionalism demands anticipating every move of the adversary and to be ready to face it. It is akin to getting into a boxing ring and delivering the first punch. One must know how to duck and give the counter punch. Combat operations are unforgiving and they have no place for emotion. The fighter pilot is alone in the cockpit; he fights to kill or to survive. Mission planners and leaders must be adaptive. The LoC is just a line on a map, lighter than the national border and could be easily ignored when compelled. Rules that apply to us may not be respected by the adversary. Their words cannot be trusted. Our forces must have reserve tactics and missions up their sleeve. Battles lead to the destruction of those who are weak-minded or lack skills or both. Winners do not hesitate to hit hard. But they also have the resilience to take a hard punch and get up again.

The writer is a former chief of the Indian air force

LITTLE, LATE

PM-Kisan is a good idea. But the scheme raises questions about its design and efficacy

THAT DIRECT CASH transfers (DCT) are the best way to support farmers — as opposed to subsidised supply of fertiliser and electricity or physical purchase of produce at above market prices — is a well established fact. The launch of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday is, therefore, welcome, except that it is too little too late. The scheme provides a flat Rs 6,000 per year to all small and marginal farmers owning up to 5 acres of land — an estimated 12 crore — payable in three instalments. There is no crop with a basic cultivation cost below Rs 10,000 per acre today. An instalment of Rs 2,000 under PM-Kisan would enable a farmer to barely buy Bt cotton seeds for two acres, meet his fertiliser requirement of wheat for two-thirds of an acre or harvest cane from one-sixth of an acre. So, even if the money is transferred directly into the farmer's Aadhaar-seeded bank sans any leakage, its utility from a purely agricultural standpoint is quite limited.

Equally questionable is the timing. If the objective was to help farmers with even one instalment, howsoever little, why announce the scheme so late — in the Interim Budget on February 1 — and set a deadline of February 20 for submission of applications? Giving state governments such a narrow time window and then blaming them — especially those ruled by the Opposition — for not showing interest in the scheme smacks of political opportunism. On the other side, Telangana and Odisha have come out with DCT schemes that, even if primarily politically-inspired, are more meaningful and effectively designed. If farmers, especially those with small marginal holdings, are provided DCT covering even up to a fifth of their total input costs, it is a cost worth bearing. And it can be borne jointly by the Centre and the states.

The Centre alone has, for 2019-20, budgeted a mammoth Rs 2,77,206 crore towards food, fertiliser and crop loan subsidies. This is over and above the Rs 75,000 crore provision towards PM-Kisan. By abolishing the subsidy on fertiliser and farm credit — both of which have no real economic rationale — and limiting that on food to maintaining a minimum buffer stock to enable market intervention if necessary, it would be possible to create a Central DCT fund. The money from this can be used not only for resource-poor landowning farmers, but even share-croppers, landless agricultural labourers and other vulnerable households in both rural and urban areas. Such support is welcome, especially because it is not market-distorting. And with Aadhaar-seeded bank accounts and digitisation of land records, it can be well-targeted too.

NEED FOR SPEED

The universe is expanding 9 per cent faster than was previously thought, and cosmologists are using antigravity to catch up

WHEN A GOVERNMENT prints cash to cover a deficit, that's bad economics. But when string theorists deploy antigravity to make up for a deficit in their models of the universe, it could be good physics. But dreaming up hitherto unimagined subatomic particles to explain the difference could be just as good. Choices, choices. There's a universe-load of choices out there, and it's creating much confusion in physics, much more than a fat finger could possibly do on the trading floor.

The source of the confusion is the Hubble constant, an index of the rate at which galaxies are flying apart in a universe which has been expanding at breakneck speed since the Big Bang. In 1929, Edwin Hubble discovered that the universe is expanding, and spectroscopy showed that distant galaxies are receding from us at a faster rate than nearer galaxies. And ever since, boffins from all over have been calculating the Hubble constant — the ratio of how fast a galaxy is receding to how far away it is. While the Planck space probe's figure, based on images of the early universe, was much admired — stuff from space generally is — it is at odds with recent work, which agrees on a different figure and shows a faster-moving universe.

And so the cosmologists at Johns Hopkins University have proposed an antigravity field which appeared 1,00,000 years after the Big Bang, about when Brahma had just had time for one eyeblink, and then disappeared. The hypothesis is based on string theory, which is itself purely theoretical and unproven. But then, the entire edifice of contemporary physics rests on that very theory, and who are we to complain if physicists don't? As Kurt Vonnegut, the perceptive philosopher who was often mistaken for a fiction writer, often wrote, "so it goes".

WHEN NUMBERS LIE

Some institutions need to be kept above the realm of politics



YOGINDER K ALAGH

WE HAVE SEEN and heard many strange notions and events in the last quinquennium — and, it must be admitted, we are lucky in saving money otherwise spent on entertainment because of such bizarreness around us in ready supply. For, where else would political news provide such fun, other than in Bharatvarsha? But, the notion that the largest sample statistical survey in the world — our National Sample Survey — is fake news, takes the cake and can only lead to much merriment.

The Indian National Sample Survey is respected the world over. Not just because of its size, but also for its sample design, that uses methods honed by some of the world's most reputed statisticians. Also, it is well known for methods that keep a tight control on errors.

That the statement — of NSS being "fake news" — comes from an authority-figure like a Union minister, only adds to the merriment and is laughable. There is no other way to treat this news. Otherwise, one can only cry. Perhaps that will become imperative once we are told that the weather is also fake news. Although that is a statement I need to believe. With one of my lungs working at 40 per cent efficiency level, as I breathe the Delhi air on my walks, I really need to believe that Delhi air, with all its pollution levels is, in fact, "fake news".

On a more serious note, though, since all parties play around with statistics and quote

numbers only when it suits them, should we not pressurise and ensure that some areas be kept above politics, as in most civilised countries? Just as in the case of the meteorological department, if the measuring rod is destroyed, we have no way of actually telling the weather. We would have to rely only on speculations.

Is debunking adversaries in democratic societies, particularly as it gets closer to election time, clever? Criticism of opponents is the essence of politics in free societies. But if all of it is wild criticism with little to do with reality, then such criticism simply appeals to a fanatical fringe.

The derision of an opponent regime is one issue. But the reversal of institutions is entirely another. For instance, V P Singh's regime derided technology planning, abolished five-year plans, went slow on Panchayat raj and stopped action on the zonal agro-climatic plans, much to the chagrin of environmentalists like Anil Agarwal. The additional secretary in charge of banking left because he felt unfair critiques led to the run on the rupee in the early Nineties.

The PV Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh governments paid lip service to the Eighties, but kept up the attack on received institutions after the devaluation, in the process of "reform". By now the model of "adding on" to something (like an institution or policy) without quite destroying it was well developed. Real reform was never

implemented.

The Gandhi and Nehru way had always been to construct better worlds for the future, but on solid foundations. Land rights, for example, followed the abolition of the zamindari system. However, more importantly, you don't just destroy one system without offering any valid reason and without any positive alternative. But these are different times when discussion and actionable policies are not based on serious foundations: In such circumstances, leaderships and the system itself gets eroded. Republics fall.

Perhaps it is too optimistic to expect the country's political system to accept a universal code that some "measuring rods" (such as the NSS) have to be above controversy. Maybe we should go back to the drawing board. Perhaps, we can start in every month a debate on the "Minimum Code of Behaviour"? As the Gandhian, the late Chhuni Kaka (Chhuni Vaidya), told me, "We have to do something, Alagh Saheb". So, tomorrow when you go for a walk, will you stop a few friends and spend a few minutes asking them their thoughts on the "Truth Imperative in Civic Behaviour"? Also try the same at the next social event you go to? Ask the question and force an answer. The priority right now is to fight those who lie by calling the truth "fake".

The writer is an economist and a former Union minister

FEBRUARY 28, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



BANARSI DAS IS CM
THE BLD-DOMINATED MINISTERIALISTS avenged their defeat of February 15 in the Uttar Pradesh Janata Party by getting their candidate, Banarsi Das, elected leader of the Janata legislature party, defeating the Jan Sangh-dominated pro-changers nominee, Raj Mangal Pandey, by a margin of 35 votes. Das will be sworn in as the CM tomorrow at 11 am at Raj Bhavan. He met the Governor G D Tapase and informed him about his election. The 67-year-old will be the second Janata CM within 20 months, succeeding Ram Naresh Yadav. As soon as the results were announced, the ministerialists raised slogans in favour of Charan Singh.

CABINET FORMATION
FORMAL CONSULTATIONS on the formation of the new ministry in Uttar Pradesh will begin in New Delhi after the arrival of the new UP Janata Legislature Party leader, Banarsi Das. Das will be sworn in as chief minister tomorrow and plans to fly to the capital in the afternoon. The main controversy will be about the participation of the Jan Sangh group in the new government. The BLD faction leaders and the chief minister-designate, an erstwhile old Congress stalwart, have been openly attacking the Jan Sangh constituent. But it is doubtful if a ministry can survive for long without the support of the Jan Sangh faction, which constitutes a 96-member sold

bloc in the state assembly.

FIGHT IN VIETNAM
VIETNAM HASSAID that fierce fighting is going on in a border province north-west of Hanoi where the country's forces claimed to have put out of action 800 more Chinese soldiers. The Voice of Vietnam from Hanoi said in its latest battle report that including the 800, a total of 2,200 Chinese had been eliminated in Hoang Lien Son province in the past three days. The fighting is said to be concentrated in the Cam Duong area, which sits astride the Red River delta corridor, which runs from the frontier to the Vietnamese capital city.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Modi’s Kashmir policy has further alienated people of Kashmir and any effort to dilute the special status of the territory will surely make matters worse.”
— THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE

How to kill a forest

Studies show Adivasis have preserved biodiversity. SC verdict turns a blind eye to such knowledge



A R VASAVI

THE RECENT SUPREME Court judgment (in the writ petition (civil) No 109/2008) has evoked much ire and anxiety, and the first reactions to the judgment have been against the suggestion that Adivasis and forest-dwellers be evicted. However, the petitioners, all conservationists, have qualified the objectives of their petition and highlighted the case for safeguarding the forests against “bogus claims to forest rights”, calling for the state to take action against the loss of forest cover. Even if we accept their standpoint as valid and read the judgment as an attempt to address the maladministration of forests, we must recognise the long-term neglect of the rights of Adivasis and forest-dwellers.

The context, process, content, and implications of the judgement indicate that forests have, over the past two decades, become the new contested arenas between not only a range of people — Adivasis, other traditional forest dwellers and outsiders — but also between them and nature conservationists, the forest department, the extractive mining industry, the eco-tourism industry and a faltering political and administrative apparatus. Far from Jawaharlal Nehru’s commitment — based on Verrier Elwin’s advice that the tribals of India be allowed to have their own habitats and autonomy — and the Constitution’s consideration of Scheduled Areas, where tribals were to have special rights, we have seen the adverse integration of tribals into the most exploitative labour regimes and the most indifferent forms of administration. Displaced and hounded out of their original habitats, Adivasis are now largely internally-displaced refugees.

Hounded for the mineral wealth that their lands contain, cheated out of land rights by money lenders, and, caught between left-wing mobilisation, a life of penury and rampant alcoholism, many Adivasi communities live a disturbed life. Add to this pile of exploitative ventures, nature conservation programmes such as “Project Tiger” that seek to restore forests as pristine nature spaces. These programmes have transformed forest-dwellers and turned Adivasis into eco-refugees. Such re-territorialisation of forests into “nature only” spaces has not led to any restoration of these tracts. Instead, in most cases, the original inhabitants live in impoverished colonies outside the sanctuaries and parks while the forest department’s writ runs large over these terrains. Even as illegal regimes of forest extraction continue, administrative laxity has permitted the growth of a nature tourism industry. This industry uses the tag of “eco-tourism” to legitimise its presence in these forests.

If the petitioners are concerned about the degraded and shrinking forest cover, the question arises as to why they have sought administrative corrections only

when the cases pertain to the allocation of land under the Forest Rights Act. Why has the despoliation of India’s forests by the mining, timber and tourism industries not been addressed? How can the presence of large resorts and the heavy footfall of tourists on these sites be legitimised while the rights of their original inhabitants remain challenged?

Adding to the depletion of their habitats are a range of government programmes that go against the ways of lives of the Adivasis. Poor quality education means that these communities are not able to access mainstream advantages. At the same time, they have not been enabled to relate to their worlds. More recently, they have become targets of the Hindutva networks’ attempts to draw them into their ambit.

The Forest Rights Act was passed to enable them to regain their lost habitats. But there has been a failure of political will to implement this piece of legislation. That a large number of bogus claimants have emerged is indicative of the contest for forestland, which has been abetted by poor administrative measures. Further, the Adivasis’ lack of political constituency was evident from the fact that the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) and the Department of Forests and Environment did not bother to attend some of the hearings.

The judgment, despite the delay of nearly a decade, is myopic and undemocratic. It fails to provide a roadmap of how justice could be delivered to genuine forest-dwelling communities and address the issue of conserving and rejuvenating forests. Oblivious to the inadequacies of the administrative apparatus, the judgment stipulates the draconian measure of eviction. The petitioners noted that the fragmentation of forestland is one of the key reasons for the failure to restore and conserve fragile ecological spaces. Studies indicate the strength of tribal knowledge of forests and ecological resources. Such knowledge

enabled not only the conservation of flora and biodiversity, but also that of fauna. In the context of the negative fallout of decades of intensive chemical and technology-based agriculture and the recent impact of global climate change, which threatens natural resources and food production, it may be important to draw on such knowledge systems.

Today, the Adivasi has become a pawn in the games that an indifferent polity, a corrupt administrative apparatus and an aggressively ambitious dominant society are playing. Rendered into being subjects who cannot even represent themselves, the Adivasi must see this judgment as an occasion to assert themselves. Instead of seeking land rights on an individual bases, an Adivasi resurgence can claim collective rights on a format that recognises clan/tribal affiliation and work/production plans that can include restoration of habitats, ecological sustainability and autonomous governance. The strength of India’s democracy is that it recognises the pluralism of Indian society. If we are to safeguard this, the Adivasi must be recognised as key *dramatis personae* on the national stage.

The writer is a social anthropologist, based in Karnataka

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

END THE SILENCE

THIS REFERS to the editorial, ‘Whisper no more’ (IE, February 27). It is now high time that menstrual issues are discussed without any stigma or discrimination. It is disheartening to see that patriarchal norms force women to suffer unhygienic practices, shame and the possibility of serious disease. This discussion has just begun and there is a long way to go.

Divya Singh Singla, Patiala

DEBATING STRIKES

THIS REFERS to the editorial, ‘The new red line’ (IE, February 27). The best part about the air attack by IAF was that it caught Pakistan unprepared. In anticipation of another surgical strike along the LoC, it shifted many terrorists and trainers to a safer zone. Kudos to our intelligence system which provided crucial inputs. We must remember that it was first air attack after 1971 and that the country know its capabilities and has demonstrated it to the world. Pakistan will off course retaliate and the country needs to be on guard.

Bal Govind, Noida

THIS REFERS to the editorial, ‘The new red line’ (IE, February 27). While we congratulate ourselves over successful strikes on terror camps, one wonders if the problems in Kashmir can be contained in this manner. The government must reach out to the people of Kashmir, win their trust and address their problems.

Sangeeta Kampani, Delhi

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.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

CLEANING AIR

THIS REFERS to the article, ‘The thing about air’ (IE, February 26). Merely “political will” will not solve the problem of air pollution. “Social will” is also required. Air purifiers have become household necessities like air conditioners. There is a large market for this device. But this means that we have become dependent on another machine, and are not addressing the environmental reasons for the problem.

Anshuman Singh, Lucknow

The subject is national security

The size of the middle class, timing of the current India-Pak clashes, and the nature of the regime in Delhi will shape the narrative in days to come



ASHUTOSH VARSHNEY

CAN INDIA-PAKISTAN tensions alter India’s election scenarios?

Let us begin with the existing knowledge about the determinants of electoral behaviour. A distinction between mass politics and elite politics is relevant here. Historically, national security has been a matter of grave contestation in elite politics, but it has never inspired great passion in mass politics. The primary drivers of India’s mass politics have been religion and caste on the one hand, and prices and poverty on the other.

India’s countryside, where 65 per cent of the nation still lives, is the largest theatre of mass politics. Rural politics has generally been driven by caste (more so than religion), or when the rural economy runs into an abyss, by agrarian unrest. National security might grab the attention of TV channels and newspapers, but its reach rarely spreads beyond the urban middle classes. Security scholar Ashley Tellis has famously argued that India has always viewed itself as a developmental state, hoping the problem of national security would disappear. It does not. Yet, popular energies never focus on national security. According to this reasoning, until India is significantly more urban and considerably richer, national security will be irrelevant in electoral politics.

Does this argument still hold? There are three reasons to doubt its continuing validity: The size of the middle class, the timing of the current clashes, and the nature of the regime in Delhi.

Larger than ever, the middle class constitutes at least a third of the nation today. An estimated 41 per cent of the population is also, by now, online. While the tremors of Kandahar (1999) could not travel far and wide, and Mumbai (2008) did not penetrate the consciousness of the rural electorate, the current national security discourse has a much wider ambit. The urban population is also rapidly growing. Even if villages were to remain largely unaffected by national security issues, the urban vote, on the margin, could be decisive. Recall what happened in Gujarat in December 2017. The Congress won the rural seats convincingly, but it lost in the state as a whole because the BJP’s stellar urban performance — added to its second-place rural showing — placed it ahead. Margins may now matter more than the averages.

Also qualitatively different is the timing of the new tensions. Virtually all great past episodes of national security were distant from the national elections. The India-China war of 1962 broke out months after the third general election, the 1965 Indo-Pak war preceded the fourth general election by two years, the 1971 war against Pakistan came several months after the fifth general election, the Kandahar crisis erupted after the 1999 parliamentary elections, the 2001 attack on India’s parliament was out of sync with the election cycle and the Mumbai attacks took place five months before the 2009 elections.

Though different from the current conflict, Kargil was similar to it in terms of timing. The conflict flared up two-to-three months before the 1999 general elections. But recall how small the urban middle class



Suvajit Dey

was in 1999, and also how minuscule the cell phone and internet penetration was. Besides, Bill Clinton’s decisive intervention ended the conflict in early July; it did not last till the election. Any more retaliation and counter-retaliation will bring the current conflict remarkably close to the election cycle. That is why Pulwama and Balakot are more electorally significant than the earlier security episodes.

The nature of the regime in Delhi is the third most important variable. Hindu nationalists have always been tougher on national security than the Congress. And, with rare exceptions, national security does not dominate the horizons of regional parties, governed as they are by caste and regional identities.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has grown up in an organisation that believes in the folk dictum, *laaton ke bhoot baaton se nahin maante* (some people will always respond to force, not dialogue). If one talks to Hindu nationalist cadres, one often hears this aphorism. The ideological texts of Hindu nationalism also repeatedly speak of how only coercion and power can discipline a country like Pakistan (and Muslim assertion generally). Among the stalwarts of Hindu nationalism, only Atal Bihari Vajpayee departed from its core ideology, resolutely seeking peace and reconciliation. Within 15 months of a Jaish attack on Parliament, Vajpayee sent the country’s cricket team to Pakistan, arguing *khel bhi jeeto aur dil bhi* (win games as well as hearts). Modi is no Vajpayee.

The point is not that the Pulwama attack did not deserve a response. It did. Or that India-focused terrorists are not protected by Pakistan’s deep state. They are. Security scholars have no doubt that Pakistan has had two types of terrorist organisations: Those opposed to the Pakistani state, whom the armed forces crush and those fighting India, whom the military protects and uses as assets. With very few exceptions, governments

We will also witness the reappearance of an obdurate historical symbiosis: As unrest in Kashmir significantly worsens, Pakistan fishes in troubled waters, and as India-Pakistan head towards conflict, Kashmir’s genuine grievances return to the backburner. By relying heavily on coercion and thereby intensifying Kashmiri alienation, the Modi government has wasted the political advances made in Kashmir by Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh.

all over the world also believe that this systematic duality persists.

Pulwama was an invitation to Modi to show his Hindu nationalist toughness. Given the proximity of elections, an absence of response would have hurt Modi, opening him up for ridicule in the election campaigns. Not acting tough was not an option, though acting tough may not solve the problem.

We will also witness the reappearance of an obdurate historical symbiosis: As unrest in Kashmir significantly worsens, Pakistan fishes in troubled waters, and as India-Pakistan head towards conflict, Kashmir’s genuine grievances return to the backburner. By relying heavily on coercion and thereby intensifying Kashmiri alienation, the Modi government has wasted the political advances made in Kashmir by Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh.

India is perhaps headed towards its first national security election ever. Security will compete with unemployment and farm distress as a critical election issue, and depending on what happens to Indo-Pak tensions, it might even eclipse the significance of economics. If Pakistan goes for a military retaliation, which hurts India significantly, that might just gift an election victory to Modi, who looked quite vulnerable only a few weeks ago. Dealing with him will, of course, be tougher in the long run.

Caught in a quandary, India’s Opposition parties will also think about how to change the narrative before the elections. Their task is much harder now.

The writer is Sol Goldman Professor of International Studies and the Social Sciences and Professor of Political Science at Brown University, where he also directs the Center for Contemporary South Asia

Rules for the machine

There is need for a legal, organisational framework to regulate bias in algorithms



SOHINI CHATTERJEE AND SUNETRA RAVINDRAN

WHAT IS AN algorithm, and what is the big deal about permitting it to make decisions? After all, it is merely a set of instructions that can be used to solve a problem. The reasons for the increasing reliance on algorithms are evident. First, an algorithm can make decisions more efficiently than human beings, thus indicating its superiority to human rationality. Second, an algorithm can provide emotional distance — it could be less “uncomfortable” to let a machine make difficult decisions for you.

However, algorithms are susceptible to bias — and machine learning algorithms are especially so. Such bias may often be concealed until it affects a large number of people. We should examine their potential for bias as algorithms are being used to make evaluative decisions that can negatively impact our daily lives. Algorithms are also dictating the use of scarce resources for social welfare.

The use of AI in governance in India is still nascent. However, this will soon change as the use of machine learning algorithms in various spheres has either been conceptualised or has commenced already. For example, the Maharashtra and Delhi police have taken the lead in adopting predictive policing technologies. Further, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has planned to install facial recognition at airports to ease security.

The primary source of algorithmic bias is its training data. An algorithm’s prediction is as good as the data it is fed. A machine learning algorithm is designed to learn from patterns in its source data. Sometimes, such data may be polluted due to record-keeping flaws, biased community inputs and historical trends. Other sources of bias include insufficient data, correlation without causation and a lack of diversity in the database. The algorithm is encouraged to replicate existing biases and a vicious circle is created.

It is worth remembering that algorithms are premeditated to differentiate between people, images and documents. Bias can lead algorithms to make unfair decisions by reinforcing systemic discrimination. For example, a predictive policing algorithm used for foretelling future crimes may disproportionately target poor persons. Similarly, an algorithm used to make a hiring call may favour an upper-caste Hindu man over an equally qualified woman.

The extant law in India is glaringly inadequate. Our framework of constitutional and administrative law is not geared towards assessing decisions made by non-human actors. Further, India has not yet passed a data protection law. The draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018, proposed by the

Srikrishna Committee has provided the rights to confirmation and access, sans the right to receive explanations about algorithmic decisions. The existing SPDI rules issued under the IT Act, 2000 do not cover algorithmic bias.

Possible solutions to algorithmic bias could be legal and organisational. The first step to a legal response would be passing an adequate personal data protection law. The draft law of the Srikrishna Committee provides a framework to begin the conversation on algorithmic bias. The right to the logic of automated decisions can be provided to individuals. Such a right will have to balance the need for algorithmic transparency with organisational interests.

Second, a general anti-discrimination and equality legislation can be passed, barring algorithmic discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, religion, sexual orientation, disability etc in both the public and private sectors.

Additionally, organisational measures can be pegged to a specific legislation on algorithmic bias. In the interests of transparency, entities ought to shed light on the working of their algorithms. This will entail a move away from the current opacity and corporate secrecy. However, considering the complexity of most machine learning algo-

ritms, seeking absolute transparency alone may not be practical.

Instead, mandating accountability from developers and users is expedient. Developers should design fair algorithms that respect data authenticity and account for representation. Further, organisations could develop internal audit mechanisms to inspect whether the algorithm meets its intended purpose, and whether it discriminates between similarly placed individuals. Organisations could also outsource the auditing to certified auditors.

Entities relying on evaluative algorithms should have public-facing grievance redressal mechanisms. Here, an individual can confirm that an algorithm has been used to make a decision about them, and the factors that prompted it. An aggrieved individual or community should be able to challenge the decision. Finally, the use of algorithms by government agencies may require public notice to enable scrutiny.

Considering their pervasiveness, algorithms cannot be allowed to operate as unaccountable black boxes. The law in India, as well as companies reaping the benefits of AI, must take note and evolve at a suitable pace.

The writers are research fellows in public law at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, New Delhi



Calming Arunachal

The polity must foster a civic consciousness to allow equality of opportunity for all residents

The Bharatiya Janata Party-led government in Itanagar has decided not to act on the recommendations of a Joint High Power Committee granting permanent resident certificates (PRCs) to non-Arunachal Pradesh Scheduled Tribes of Namsai and Changlang districts. This decision follows violence in Itanagar, which included arson attacks on the residence of the Deputy Chief Minister. The government took this step to de-escalate tensions despite the fact that both mainstream parties, the Congress and the BJP, were on the same page on the demand to grant the PRCs. The non-APSTs include the Deoris, Sonowal Kacharis, Morans, Mishings, Adivasis and ex-servicemen belonging to the Gorkha community. Successive governments and members of these communities have said PRCs are needed to avail of job and educational opportunities elsewhere in the country, and currently the 26 tribes and numerous sub-tribes who claim to be native to Arunachal Pradesh enjoy this privilege. Members of some of the non-APST communities have been long-time residents of the reconstituted State, and to term them as "outsiders" reflects a chauvinistic mindset that denies a just demand. Previous governments, including one led by the Congress in 2010, had also buckled under pressure on the issue. The indigenous tribes opposing the move say this is one step away from providing Scheduled Tribe status for the non-APSTs, which they vociferously oppose. While this fear is overblown, the award of PRCs could ensure land rights that are otherwise denied to the non-APSTs.

The fact that the opposition to the demand took such a violent turn could be linked to a retaliation to attempts by the members of the non-APSTs to enforce an "economic blockade" of the State from the neighbouring parts of Assam last month. But these incidents suggest that barely any northeastern State is today free of the pattern of ethnic discord marked by some communities being branded "outsiders" and sought to be denied resident privileges. These include the Chakma issue in Mizoram, the hill versus valley disturbances in Manipur, the longstanding "migration" issue in Assam, the attacks on Sikh residents in Meghalaya, and even the Chakma/Hajong citizenship issue in Arunachal Pradesh itself. The pattern through all these is eerily similar, with ethnic identities trumping civic consciousness in bringing about discord that has even escalated into violence in some cases. Arunachal Pradesh has otherwise remained a peaceful State, and it is incumbent on the government and the polity to foster a civic consciousness that allows equality of opportunity for all residents in the State. This is a difficult task as identity issues persist and fester when there is inadequate economic development - which is the real bane of the Northeast today.

Buhari's return

The Nigerian President's re-election has raised hopes for economic reform

In handing President Muhammadu Buhari a huge overall margin in the polls, Nigeria has plumped for political continuity. In an election that had been postponed by a week, the anti-corruption crusader romped home with enough votes to avoid a run-off. In what had been set up as a close contest, Mr. Buhari, who heads the ruling All Progressives Congress, beat former vice-president Atiku Abubakar by about four million votes. The rumblings in the Opposition about vote-rigging by the ruling party may continue to be heard for a while, given the widespread delays and irregularities at polling booths, apart from incidents of violence and several fatalities. But some poll observers believe that the Opposition's claims are not backed by sufficient proof to make them legally sustainable. The question now is whether Mr. Buhari can convert his convincing mandate for a second term into policies that can boost investment and growth, generate jobs and narrow inequalities. The challenge of unemployment, at over 20% according to official figures, is made more formidable by the rapid increase in the working-age population. The prospects for change hinge on whether Mr. Buhari can live down his reputation as an old-fashioned interventionist leader and open the economy to competition. A test case of that makeover would be the passage of oil sector reform legislation aimed at the privatisation of the state-owned petroleum firm. Mr. Buhari's record in countering the Islamist Boko Haram in the north of the country and the conflict between herdsmen and farmers in the central region remain unfinished business. On the external front, of particular interest to investors would be the new Nigerian government's stance on joining the African free-trade agreement. Equally crucial would be Abuja's backing for Morocco's membership of the Economic Community of West African States, the 15-nation trading bloc.

Exactly 20 years since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999, Nigerians have decisively left behind the uncertainties of repeated military coups that marred their immediate post-colonial history. Equally significant, recent elections suggest limited progress in the conduct of transparent elections compared to the previous decade. But the postponement of the poll by a week, just hours before voters were to cast their ballot, did not inspire confidence. In 2015, the delay was as much as six weeks. Moreover, the large number of poll-related deaths in the last few days points to a disturbing absence of official accountability. A peaceful election is one of the crucial indicators of a credible transfer of power through the ballot. Calm must return in Abuja and the ruling party and the Opposition have a duty to respect the rule of law. Among sub-Saharan Africa's largest countries, Nigeria should strive to clean up its act.

Think like a civilisation

The biggest casualty of unquestioning enthusiasm for war is democracy and rational thought



SHIV VISVANATHAN

This essay is a piece of dissent at a time when dissent may not be welcome. It is an attempt to look at what I call the Pulwama syndrome, after India's bombing of terrorist camps in Pakistan. There is an air of achievement and competence, a feeling that we have given a fitting reply to Pakistan. Newspapers have in unison supported the government, and citizens, from actors to cricketers, have been content in stating their loyalty, literally issuing certificates to the government. Yet watching all this, I feel a deep sense of unease, a feeling that India is celebrating a moment which needs to be located in a different context.

Peace needs courage

It reminded me of something that happened when I was in school. I had just come back from a war movie featuring Winston Churchill. I came back home excitedly and told my father about Churchill. He smiled sadly and said, "Churchill was a bully. He was not fit to touch Gandhi's chappals." He then added thoughtfully that "war creates a schoolboy loyalty, half boy scout, half mob", which becomes epidemic. "Peace," he said, "demands a courage few men have." I still remember these lines, and I realised their relevance for the events this week.

One sees an instant unity which is almost miraculous. This sense of unity does not tolerate difference.

People take loyalty literally and become paranoid. Crowds attack a long-standing bakery to remove the word 'Karachi' from its signage. War becomes an evangelical issue as each man desperately competes to prove his loyalty. Doubt and dissent become impossible, rationality is rare, and pluralism a remote possibility. There is a sense of solidarity with the ruling regime which is surreal. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was encrusted with doubts a week before, appears like an untarnished hero. Even the cynicism around these attitudes is ignored. One watches with indifference as Bharatiya Janata Party president Amit Shah virtually claims that security and war are part of his vote bank.

Thought becomes a casualty as people conflate terms such as Kashmiri, Pakistani and Muslim while threatening citizens peacefully pursuing their livelihood. One watches aghast as India turns war into a feud, indifferent to a wider conflagration. The whole country lives from event to event and TV becomes hysterical, not knowing the difference between war and cricket. It is a moment when we congratulate ourselves as a nation, forgetting that we are also a civilisation. In this movement of drum-beating, where jingoism as patriotism is the order of the day, a dissenting voice is not welcome. But dissent demands that one faces one's fellow citizens with probably more courage than one needs to face the enemy. How does one begin a conversation, create a space for a more critical perspective?

What war feels like

Sadly, India as a country has not experienced war as a totality, un-



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like Europe or other countries in Asia such as Vietnam or Afghanistan. War has always been an activity at the border. It did not engulf our lives the way World War II corroded Germany or Russia. War is a trauma few nibble at in India. When our leaders talk even of surgical strikes, one is not quite sure whether they know the difference between Haldighati or modern war. They seem like actors enacting an outdated play. In fact, one wonders whether India as a society has thought through the idea of war. We talk of war as if it is a problem of traffic control. Our strategists, our international relations experts fetishise security and patriotism. The aridity of the idea of security has done more damage to freedom and democracy than any other modern concept. Security as an official concept needs a genocidal count, an accounting of the number of lives and bodies destroyed in pursuing its logic. The tom-tomming of such words in a bandwagon society destroys the power and pluralism of the idea of India as a society and a democracy.

The biggest casualty of such enthusiasm for war is democracy and rational thought. Our leaders know that the minute we create a demonology around Pakistan, we cease to think rationally or crea-

tively about our own behaviour in Kashmir. We can talk with ease about Pakistani belligerency, about militarism in Pakistan, but we refuse to reflect on our own brutality in Kashmir or Manipur. At a time when the Berlin Wall appears like a distant nightmare and Ulster begins appearing normal, should not India as a creative democracy ask, why is there a state of internal war in Kashmir and the Northeast for decades? Why is it we do not have the moral leadership to challenge Pakistan to engage in peace? Why is it that we as a nation think we are a democracy when internal war and majoritarian mobs are eating into the core of our civilisation? Where does India stand in its vision of the civility of internationalism which we articulated through Panchsheel? Because Pakistan behaves as a rogue state, should we abandon the civilisational dream of a Mohandas Gandhi or an Abdul Ghaffar Khan?

Even if we think strategically, we are losers. Strategy today has been appropriated by the machismo of militarism and management. It has become a term without ethics or values. Strategy, unlike tactics, is a long-range term. It summons a value framework in any decent society. Sadly, strategy shows that India is moving into a geopolitical trap where China, which treats Pakistan as a vassal state, is the prime beneficiary of Pulwama. The Chinese as a society and a regime would be content to see an authoritarian India militarised, sans its greatest achievement which is democracy. What I wish to argue is that strategy also belongs to the perspectives of peace, and it is precisely as a democracy and as a peace-loving nation that we should out-think and outflank

China. Peace is not an effeminate challenge to the machismo of the national security state as idol but a civilisational response to the easy brutality of the nation state.

Dissent as survival

In debating with our fellow citizens, we have to show through a Gandhian mode that our sense of Swadeshi and Swaraj is no less. Peace has responsibilities which an arid sense of patriotism may not have. Yet we are condemned to conversation, to dialogue, to arguments persuading those who are sceptical about the very integrity of our being. Dissent becomes an act of both survival and creative caring at this moment. One must realise that India as a civilisation has given the world some of its most creative concepts of peace, inspired by Buddha, Nanak, Kabir, Ghaffar Khan and Gandhi. The challenge before peacemakers is to use these visions creatively in a world which takes nuclear war and genocide for granted. Here civil society, the ashram and the university must help create that neighbourhood of ideas, the civics that peace demands to go beyond the current imaginaries of the nation state.

Our peace is a testimony and testament to a society that must return to its civilisational values. It is an appeal to the dreams of the satyagrahi and a realisation that peace needs ideas, ideals and experiments to challenge the current hegemony of the nation state. India as a civilisation cannot do otherwise.

Shiv Visvanathan is an academic associated with the Compost Heap, a group in pursuit of alternative ideas and imagination

Tailing a virus

The Zika outbreak response should not end when an outbreak ends



PRIYANKA PULLA

It is a time of peace and quiet for India on the Zika front. Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, which saw large outbreaks late last year, stopped seeing new cases before the year end. For health authorities, the temptation may be to consider the threat past, and move on to more pressing concerns, like the large number of H1N1 influenza cases this year. The truth, however, is that this is an excellent time to study Zika epidemiology in India. Public health officials must do this while disseminating data quickly and transparently, so that it can be analysed by the global scientific community. This is in India's best interests.

All strains can hurt

What are the data that health authorities should be collecting? First, they must leave no stone unturned in following up on every pregnant woman who was diagnosed Zika positive in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. When the epidemics began, there were worrying indications that Central and State health officials were downplaying the risk to pregnant women. Even though there is no evidence conclusively linking a particular viral strain or mutation with foetal anomalies, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said the Rajasthan strain did not have the S139N mu-

tation linked to microcephaly.

This is incorrect. Even though microcephaly was first observed as a consequence of Zika during the 2015 Brazilian epidemic, strains other than the Brazilian strain, which do not have the S139N mutation, have been linked with the abnormality. For example, in 2017, when the virus from a foetus with microcephaly in Thailand was sequenced, it did not have the S139N mutation. Researchers also showed that a 1966 Malaysian virus strain - isolated long before Zika was seen to cause microcephaly in Brazil - was as effective at infecting foetal mouse brains as the Brazilian one. In another 2017 study, published in *Development*, a strain from the African virus lineage, which was hitherto not thought to cause microcephaly, was seen to be more damaging to mouse brains than the Asian lineage (to which the Brazilian strain belongs). Given this research, we must assume that all Zika strains can cause microcephaly.

If this is the case, why did the link between microcephaly and Zika become evident only in the 2015 Latin American epidemic? Prior to this, numerous outbreaks had occurred in Southeast Asia. Yet, no one picked up on this phenomenon. Scientists have proposed several explanations for this mystery. One is that Zika has always caused microcephaly, although the link became obvious only in Brazil because so many people were infected. Another possibility is that poverty and malnutrition worsen the progression of the disease in pregnant women. This



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would explain why northeast Brazil, with its widespread poverty, was the most severely affected by microcephaly. Scientists are also probing whether simultaneous infection with dengue or chikungunya make the children of Zika-infected women more prone to foetal anomalies. Two studies published earlier this year show conflicting evidence for the role of dengue. The first, published in *Immunity*, showed that in mice, the presence of dengue antibodies led to more foetal damage and restricted foetal growth due to Zika. Another study in *Science* showed that people infected by dengue were protected against Zika during an outbreak in Salvador, Brazil.

Given this conflicting evidence, scientists are very far from understanding what makes Zika deadly to foetuses. This means that any data on how the pregnancies of Zika-infected women pan out in India can be enlightening. Careful studies must be carried out to see if there is increased prevalence of microcephaly, and to understand the risk-factors. Already, the TORCH (Toxoplasmosis, Other, Rubella, Cytomegalovirus, and Herpes) infections are known to

cause foetal abnormalities, including microcephaly, among newborns. Wherever women are screened for TORCH, they must also be screened for Zika.

It's also important to remember that the Zika risk doesn't end after the baby is born healthy. The experience of Latin America showed that even healthy newborns can go on to develop symptoms later. This has led to estimates of the incidence of birth defects being revised upwards.

Herd immunity

The other important bit of actionable information that health authorities can and should gather concerns population immunity. To study immunity, authorities must conduct seroprevalence surveys, in which they screen people in several States for antibodies to Zika. Many Indians could well have such antibodies, which means they are protected to some extent. The reason they are likely to have antibodies is because the Rajasthan outbreak virus was around in the State since at least 2016. Moreover, as a recent paper by researchers from the National Institute of Virology revealed, the Rajasthan strain is endemic to Asia, which means it could have been in India for decades now. Still, exposure to the virus does not guarantee a lifetime of protection. So, seroprevalence surveys are needed to identify pockets of low immunity in India. Health authorities can then focus their efforts on these regions, because they would be most vulnerable to future outbreaks.

It is true that seroprevalence studies are not easy to do, given

the cross-reactivity that plagues flaviviruses. The Enzyme-linked immunosorbent Assay (ELISA), which is commonly used in seroprevalence studies to detect antibodies, can throw up false positives for Zika if a person has dengue antibodies. This is because dengue antibodies can neutralise Zika and vice versa.

Separating dengue from Zika

The good news is that researchers are working to develop alternative tests that are specific to Zika alone. One multinational team, including Swiss firm Humabs BioMed, has developed an ELISA test that is able to distinguish Zika from dengue. The test was used in a survey at Managua, Nicaragua after a large epidemic hit the city in 2016. It found that in 2017, 56% of tested adults had antibodies to Zika, suggesting that the city wouldn't see another large epidemic in the near future. India should consider doing such surveys too.

The outbreaks in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have seemingly ended, which is good news. But given that the virus is already in these States, and these States have well connected transportation links, there is reason to expect future outbreaks when the mosquito season begins again. Outbreak response should not end when an outbreak ends, because that is when efforts to contain the next epidemic begin. If India is lucky, the next epidemic will not be a big one. But it is not an assumption that health authorities should make.

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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.

India's response

In the wake of the Pulwama incident, the response from India has left Pakistan isolated on every possible front (Page 1, "India bombs Jaish camp in Pakistan's Balakot" and "India gets support from Australia, France", both February 27). Economically it is on the verge of collapse. Therefore it is bound to follow its old tactic, of proxy war, by instigating elements in Jammu and Kashmir and existing modules in India. Now that the first step, of airstrikes, has been taken, India must strengthen its intelligence infrastructure so that we are prepared for the underhand tactics of Pakistan.

ASHISH KUMAR, Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh

While many are upbeat that India has responded after the Pulwama incident, we should not play down the circumstances which led to the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. There are some questions which need immediate answers: what was the source of the explosives used in the Pulwama attack? Why has the government been unable to stop the alienation of youth in the Valley? Unless the government tries to address the flaws in its Jammu and Kashmir policy, ending extremism will remain a pipe dream.

VIMAL VASUDEVAN, Alathur, Palakkad, Kerala

If Indian intelligence services had drawn flak for the security lapses in the wake of the Pulwama attack,

they have more than made up for it with the precision air strikes against terror elements in Pakistan. Amid speculation of the crisis escalating into another mutually destructive war, India, by virtue of being the larger country and a robust democracy, must agree to talks to defuse the tension in the subcontinent.

NALINI VIJAYARAGHAVAN, Thiruvananthapuram

India's pre-dawn air strike should not lead to triumphalism or chest-thumping. Pakistan has captured an Indian pilot. In the current highly volatile situation, it is important to ensure that the situation - with the electronic media having a field day - does not escalate into war. In a conventional war,

Pakistan cannot match India's forces. The consequences of the use of the nuclear arsenal would be too catastrophic to bear thinking about. The UN, the U.S., Russia, China and others should impress on India and Pakistan, which are home to a sixth of the world's population, the need to defuse the tension. Voices urging restraint and peace over belligerence and war should not be dubbed unpatriotic and drowned in the din of hyper-nationalism.

G. DAVID MILTON, Maruthanode, Tamil Nadu

It is no surprise that a rogue nation like Pakistan would retaliate. However, it is disheartening that one of India's fighter pilots has been taken into custody by Pakistan. The entire nation is

behind him and wants his safe return. India should act strongly, exploring all options, against Pakistan. SREERAG RAMAN SREENIVASAN, Thiruvananthapuram

Dogs under check

No doubt every living creature has the right to space but people who support community dogs should ask themselves how they would feel if they are chased and bitten by a

community dog even if the animal has been vaccinated (Chennai, "Corporation to intensify sterilisation drive against stray dogs", February 27).

The suffering can be very traumatic. Safe living is also a fundamental right, especially as Chennai city is estimated to be "home to 58,000 dogs".

SAMPATH R., Chennai

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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

The second deck headline that accompanied the report, "BJP spokespersons stress pre-emptive focus of strikes" (Feb. 27, 2019), erroneously said that the party MPs had been asked to stick to government line. Actually it was the spokespersons who had been asked to adhere to the government's line.

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

The vexatious question of Masood Azhar

India can take up its fight against terrorism at the United Nations Security Council in various ways



CHINMAYA R. GHAREKHAN

The UN Security Council adopted a statement on February 21 condemning the Pulwama terrorist attack of February 14, for which the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) took responsibility. India is applauding this development and it should. A lot of diplomatic effort had gone into achieving this result. But this statement should be looked at with a proper perspective.

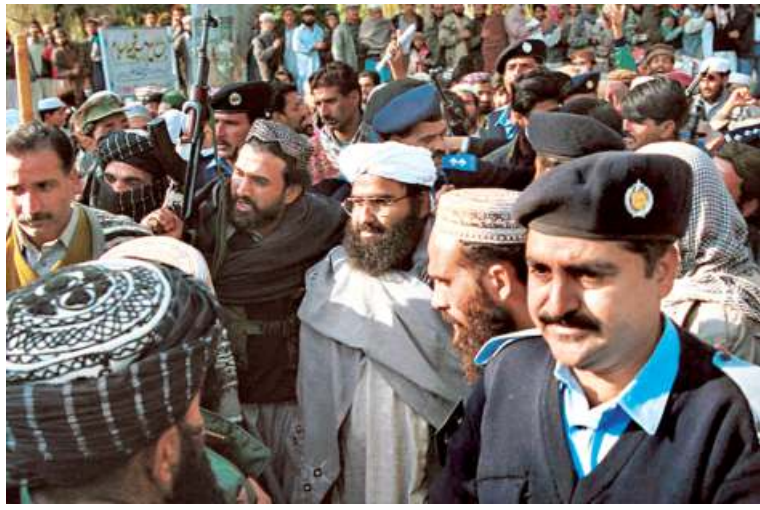
Hierarchy of actions

Some media organisations and analysts have mistakenly described the Council as having adopted a resolution. This is not true; the Council made a presidential statement. It may be worthwhile to understand the nuances of the action the Council takes in a given situation.

The least forceful action that the Council can take is to authorise the current month's President to speak to media representatives about the proceedings of the Council. There is no official record of these remarks.

The second level is when the Council adopts a presidential statement. A lot of negotiations are undertaken in the small room reserved for informal consultations next to the Council chamber where only members of the Council are present. Of necessity, it has to be a consensus, as distinct from unanimous, document, meaning that not all the members support everything included in it but go along since they do not have a serious problem with the text. Even if one member has strong objections to the text, the statement cannot be approved. The draft of the text could be prepared either by the President or by one of the members; for the most part, that member is the representative of one of the permanent members. Also, the statement could be issued either in the name of the Council or in the name of 'members of the Security Council'. The former is generally regarded as carrying more weight than the latter.

The third level is the resolution, which is the most authentic voice of the Council, carrying maximum



"The only consequence of naming Masood Azhar as a global terrorist is that he cannot travel to other countries and his funds in foreign accounts will get frozen." A file photo of the JeM chief in Islamabad, Pakistan. ■ AP

weight. Again, the resolution can be under Chapter VI or Chapter VII of the Charter. Resolutions adopted under Chapter VII are enforceable unlike those under Chapter VI (Resolutions regarding Kashmir are under Chapter VI).

Some analysts dismiss the statements and resolutions of the Council as of no consequence, arguing that the countries concerned should pursue their interests irrespective of the Council's action. In practice, the country against which the resolution or statement is aimed cares a lot about the text of the resolution because countries care about their image in the international community. Israel, which has the maximum number of resolutions critical of its actions, makes strenuous efforts, through its protector, the U.S., to have the resolutions moderated to make them less critical. Hours are spent on negotiations, discussing whether to 'condemn', 'deplore' or 'strongly deplore' something.

The February 21 statement was in the name of the members of the Council. It is not that it is not worth much; it is just that it is a notch below a statement that is issued in the name of the Council. A statement in the name of the members might also suggest that not all them were fully on board with the entire text. A statement in the name of the Council would suggest that all the 15 members are in agreement with the text.

The fact that China went along with the statement does not signify

much of a shift in its position, since the Council had already declared the JeM as a terrorist organisation. The statement does not name Masood Azhar. It is not known if the French, who took the initiative in this matter, had at any stage included Azhar's name in the text and took it out at China's insistence. From the French perspective, this initiative will earn them brownie points from India, without having to pay much of a price.

In 2016, India moved the sanctions committee to include Azhar's name, with the support of three permanent members: the U.S., the U.K., and France. Again, in 2017, India took a similar initiative, supported by the same countries. On both occasions, Russia did not actively support the proposal, though it went along with it. China vetoed it both times.

It is for consideration whether and why it is so important for India to have Azhar included in the list of global terrorists. The only consequence of naming an individual is that the person cannot travel to other countries and his funds in foreign accounts will get frozen. In Azhar's case, this will not cause him much discomfort. Is it worth India's while to invest so much effort and perhaps political capital in getting him named an international terrorist? Suppose China at some stage removes its veto on Azhar's name, which it will only do with Pakistan's approval, it will be doing a big favour to India. Will that be regarded enough of a conces-

sion by Pakistan for India to resume dialogue with it?

There is no doubt that India's relations with West Asia have improved significantly in the past five years. The invitation to External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to be guest of honour on March 1 at the Foreign Ministers meet is ample evidence of this. The past record of the OIC with respect to India is most objectionable. In 2017, the OIC adopted a resolution condemning "the intensified Indian barbarities since July 2016, after the extra judicial killing of Burhan Wani, against unarmed and innocent civilians in Indian occupied Kashmir" and "denouncing India" for refusing the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the OIC access to "IoK". It makes sense not to allow the present to be held hostage to the past. Ms. Swaraj has a challenging mission to accomplish. However, to regard the previous OIC resolutions regarding Kashmir as of no consequence is in the nature of rationalising the current approach. Hopefully, the OIC will respect India's gesture and refrain from embarrassing Ms. Swaraj after her departure.

Raising issues in the Council

The successful preventive non-military strike carried out by the Indian Air Force on the JeM's terrorist training camp in Pakistan on Tuesday undoubtedly caught Pakistan by surprise. Apart from military action, which Pakistan has already taken, it will certainly try to raise the issue in the Council. It may be difficult to prevent it, since what has happened would certainly be regarded as threatening international peace and security. Pakistan's all-weather friend, China, may take the initiative on behalf of its protégé. According to Council rules, if a member of the Council asks for a meeting, the meeting has to be called. India must have spoken to the U.S. and others about this possibility. If the Council does meet, it would give India an opportunity to expose Pakistan's true face. It will no doubt screen footage and photos to buttress its case in the Council.

Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, a former Indian Ambassador to the UN, is the author of 'The Horseshoe Table: An inside view of UN Security Council'

A patchwork approach to GST problems

Transparency and simplicity in the tax regime are casualties of the GST Council's recent decisions



T.C.A. SHARAD RAGHAVAN

It has the best intentions, but the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council is nevertheless systematically eroding the strongest features of the new tax regime – simplicity and transparency.

From three to eight rates

Before the GST was introduced, the government set up a panel under the then Chief Economic Adviser, Arvind Subramanian, to come up with a suitable rate at which most items should be taxed under the GST. Mr. Subramanian came up with a standard rate of 15% for most items, a "low rate" for essentials, and a "high rate" for demerit goods. Presumably dissatisfied with just three rates, the government chose to introduce GST with five different tax slabs: 0%, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%. Still not satisfied, the GST Council then introduced two more highly specific rates: a nominal 0.25% for rough diamonds and 3% for gold. Those of a critical bent of mind immediately pointed out that the major beneficiaries of this would be Gujaratis. The latest GST Council meeting on Sunday took this a step further and introduced yet another rate of 1% for the sale of under-construction affordable houses. So, from what should have at most been three rates, we now have eight!

To be clear, the number of tax slabs does not affect the concept of 'One Nation One Tax', as a single product is still taxed at the same rate across the country. But specifying eight different GST rates is a blow to tax simplicity, which the GST was to provide.

That said, the GST Council has not spared the concept of 'One Nation One Tax' either. However necessary the government felt it was to provide Kerala additional funds for rehabilitation after the devastating floods of 2018, it had several options available apart from the one it chose, which was to allow the State to impose a 1% disaster relief cess. As a result, for two years, the Indian market will be divided into two: Kerala, where goods and services are 1% more expensive, and the rest of India. While it can be argued that the cess in Kerala is a one-off, the fact remains that this is a bad precedent to set. It's not too hard to imagine a situation where States start clamouring for a cyclone relief cess, drought

relief cess, flood relief cess, etc. Recovery from natural disasters is an expensive process, and additional funds must be made available. But mechanisms for this have already been put in place. There is a National Disaster Response Fund at the Central level and each State has a State Disaster Response Fund. Increasing budgetary allocations in these areas instead of spending on giant statues and advertising campaigns is an option.

Increasing opacity

Transparency is the other casualty of the GST Council's need to provide temporary fixes to problems. Sunday's decision to remove the input tax credit provision from the real estate sector will likely go a long way in increasing opacity in an already murky sector.

The input tax credit system was designed to create a seamless chain in the entire supply process. Normally, a company can claim credits for the tax it has paid on its inputs. Under a fully functioning GST system, the government can verify the amount of credits to be paid to the company by matching its invoices with those provided by the vendor. Such a system encourages honesty and transparency. This is the third time the Council has removed this vital provision, and its reason for doing so is weak. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that the Council had noticed that real estate developers were not dropping their prices in line with what they should be doing, considering they were getting the benefit of input tax credits. This happened before in the case of restaurants. In both situations, the government took the easy way out and simply removed the input tax credit provision altogether. So, rather than relying on the body it had created to handle such issues, the National Anti-Profitsteering Authority, the Council instead chose to weaken the entire tax system. This wouldn't have been too much of a problem if the real estate sector was as small as the restaurant industry or the sanitary pads industry (the third industry where there is no input tax credits). But the real estate industry is estimated to be at least ₹40,000 crore in size. Not to forget the fact that cement, a huge input in real estate, is taxed at the highest rate of 28%, and will now not be offset by credits.

In both cases – disaster relief and anti-profitsteering – the GST Council has chosen to ignore established institutions designed for those very purposes in favour of a patchwork approach that is likely to cause more problems than it solves.

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SINGLE FILE

Manufacturing unanimity

Giving cash grants to gram panchayats electing sarpanchs unanimously is antithetical to democracy

SATYA NAAGESH AYYAGARY



MUHAMMAD AREF

Using cash or other favours as an inducement to garner votes in any election, whether to Parliament, Assembly, or the gram panchayat, is a punishable offence in India. The logic is that voters must exercise their choice based on free will and the choice they make should be an informed one using a secret ballot. That is a cornerstone of democracy. While inducements of every sort are endemic during elections, what is to be done when the state itself is the inducer?

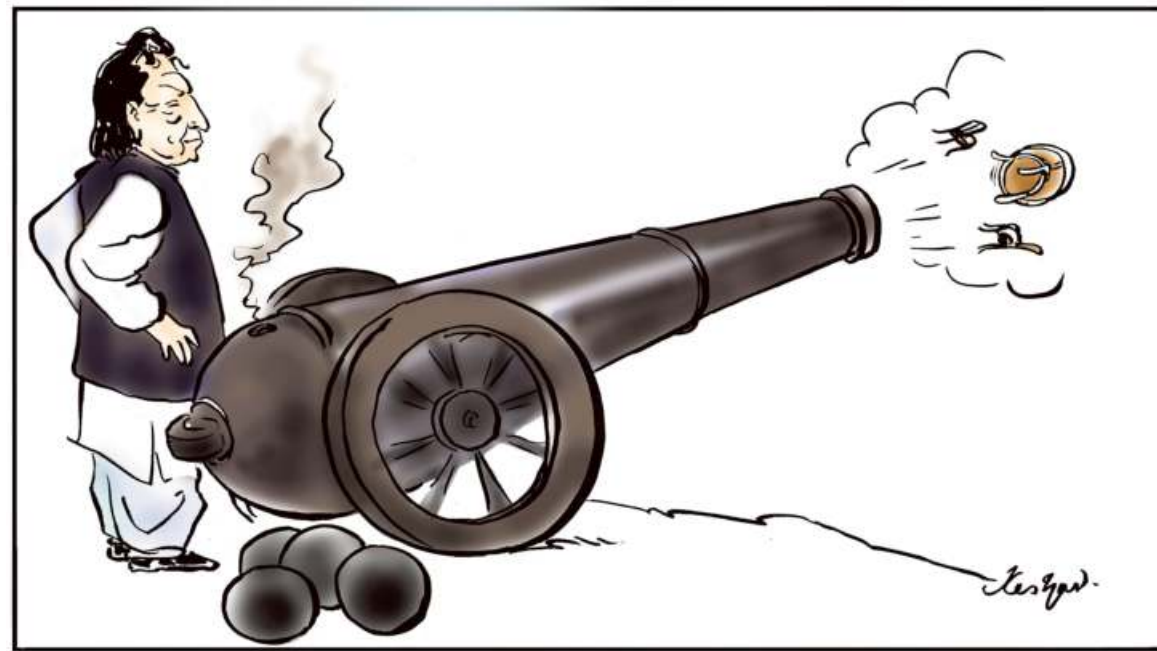
Consider this. In the run-up to the Panchayat elections in Telangana, the government led by the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) encouraged 'unanimous elections'. The carrot offered to those gram panchayats that elect their sarpanchs unanimously was a cash grant of ₹10 lakh for those with a population less than 15,000 and ₹25 lakh for those with a population more than 15,000. This had an unexpected fallout: large-scale 'auctions', which of course are illegal, were held in many gram panchayats across the State. The State Election Commission was seized of the matter when civil society groups cried foul.

This is not something new. It has a precedent. In fact, Andhra Pradesh has been encouraging unanimous elections for gram panchayats. A Congress-led united Andhra Pradesh in November 2008 issued a government order announcing ₹5 lakh for those gram panchayats with a population less than 15,000 and ₹10 lakh for those with a population more than 15,000, that elect their sarpanchs unanimously. This was revised, in August 2013 to ₹7 lakh and ₹20 lakh, respectively. The TRS-led government only made an inflation-adjusted increase.

United Andhra Pradesh and now Telangana are not the only ones encouraging this practice. In Gujarat, there was a scheme which began in 1992 that provided incentives for unanimous elections. It was revised and named Samaras-Yojana. States including Haryana and Punjab took a leaf out of the Andhra Pradesh strategy book, and in 2008 launched cash grants for unanimous election schemes. There was an echo in Himachal Pradesh too. There was criticism of this democracy-subverting practice, but nothing seems to have come out of it.

What was purportedly meant to save precious resources and avoid rancour among villagers is turning out to be something akin to manufactured unanimity, or manufactured consent, under duress or political pressure. How is this illegal practice being encouraged by States despite posing a threat to democracy?

The writer is a Hyderabad-based Editorial Consultant with The Hindu



FAQ

Regulating drug prices

More needs to be done to make medicines affordable

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

What has been the impact of market-based pricing?

The largest share of out-of-pocket expenditure on health is due to medicines (approximately 70%, according to the NSSO). This is a major access barrier to healthcare, especially for the poor. Health experts have criticised the Drug (Prices Control) Order (DPCO), 2013 for doing little to increase the affordability of medicines. Data from the Department of Pharmaceuticals show that the majority of medicines have price reductions of 20% or less.

How are prices regulated?

The DPCO controls the prices of all essential medicines by fixing ceiling prices, limiting the highest prices companies can charge. The National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) is drawn up to in-

clude essential medicines that satisfy the priority health needs of the population. The list is made with considerations of safety, efficacy, disease prevalence and the comparative cost-effectiveness of medicines, and is updated periodically by an expert panel set up for this purpose under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. This list forms the basis of price controls under the DPCO.

What is the mechanism for price capping?

The NLEM 2015 contains 376 medicines on the basis of which the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has fixed prices of over 800 formulations using the provisions of the DPCO. However, these formulations cover less than 10% of the total pharmaceutical market. The DPCO follows a market-based pricing mechanism. The ceiling price is worked out on the basis of the simple

average price of all brands having at least 1% market share of the total market turnover of that medicine.

Have any other methods been used?

Prior to 2013, the DPCO followed a cost-based pricing mechanism that was based on the costs involved in manufacturing a medicine along with reasonable profit margins. Health experts have argued that this policy resulted in comparatively lower prices than the current market-based policy.

Since the implementation of the DPCO, 2013, the NPPA has made certain departures from the market-based pricing mechanism, which was found to be insufficient for ensuring affordability. This has been done through the use of special powers to act in public interest under Paragraph 19 of the DPCO, to regulate the prices of cardiac stents and knee implants. These moves have brought about dramatic

price reductions: 85% in the case of stents and 65% in the case of knee implants.

What about cancer drugs?

"The government is planning to cap the trade margins for highly priced drugs for cancer and rare diseases to bring down their prices," says Malini Aisola, health researcher and co-convenor of the All India Drug Action Network. She explains that this move is in the wake of recent amendments to the DPCO that exempted patented medicines and rare disease drugs from price controls. But Ms. Aisola claims that the trade margin capping will not sufficiently bring down prices. "We urge the government to take serious policy measures to ensure true affordability such as through price controls, implementation of the national rare disease policy and the use of legal flexibilities under patent law," she says.

FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 28, 1969

India not for arbitration on Kachchativu island

The Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Dinesh Singh, today [February 27, New Delhi] ruled out in the Lok Sabha India agreeing, now or in future, to international arbitration for settling the dispute on Kachchativu island with Ceylon. Mr. Dinesh Singh was replying to a calling attention notice tabled by Mr. George Fernandes and four others on reports in newspapers that India had agreed to refer for arbitration the dispute on Kachchativu. India, Mr. Dinesh Singh said, had not had any doubt about (its ownership of) the Island. If there were any doubt on that score, India would not have talked with Ceylon. Raising the issue, Mr. Fernandes asked whether Ceylon had demanded that the matter be settled through arbitration, that the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar be partitioned in such a manner that Kachchativu should go to Ceylon and whether Government was clear in its mind that the island was Indian territory.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 28, 1919

Wars Without Casualties.

A Soldier who is bomb, bullet, and shell proof, who does not mind either liquid fire or the most vicious kind of gas, has been invented by a Danish engineer. He has taken out patents on a device known as the "Automatic Soldier". The "automatic soldier" consists of a special double steel cylinder made of shell-proof Tungsten steel or the like. There is one outer stationary cylinder, and a second inner cylinder, the latter telescoping into the stationary one. The entire device is set into trenches, the contrivance taking the place of a human soldier. When the "soldier" goes into action the inner cylinder rises 18 in., which brings it above the parapet of the trench. In other words, the automatic soldier normally is invisible, and only can be seen when the inner cylinder rises. The gun, as well as the entire mechanism, is entirely controlled by wireless.

CONCEPTUAL

Sub-replacement fertility

DEMOGRAPHY

This refers to any fertility rate below the replacement rate that would cause the population of a certain group of people to decrease over time. A population's fertility rate falls below the replacement rate when adults fail to produce enough offspring to even replace themselves. The sub-replacement fertility rate is generally considered to be anything below the replacement fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman in developed countries. The replacement rate, however, differs across the globe. For instance, it is much higher in developing countries where the infant mortality rate is much higher than in the developed world due to various reasons.

MORE ON THE WEB

The magical effects of a good surgical strike

http://bit.ly/goodsurgicalstrike

The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

Perfect preemptive strike

A bleeding nation sews up its wounds

WE as a nation have been for long at the receiving end of jihadi terror attacks planned and launched from the Pakistani soil. The Pakistani deep state's involvement in these attacks has been well documented, be it the Kargil incursion or the Mumbai attack. The expose of the role of Col R Sadatullah of the Special Communications Organisation of the Pakistan army in aiding the 2008 Mumbai attackers did not make our neighbour desist from pursuing its doctrine of a thousand cuts to bleed India. A bleeding nation at some point has to sew up its wounds and stop the sabre that stabs. If Pakistan does not respond to actionable intelligence, India would obviously be forced to act on it. The immediate provocation was obviously the massacre of 40 CRPF soldiers at Pulwama on February 14. The pre-dawn retaliatory strike by the Indian Air Force Mirage-2000 aircraft on Tuesday on the Jaish-e-Mohammed camp at Balakot in Pakistan has been termed by the government spokesperson, Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale, as an intelligence-led 'non-military preemptive action'.

Gokhale has made out an effective argument that the Indian attempt was not to launch an attack against Pakistan's military assets or harm its civilian population. The air strike was meant only to deter imminent jihadi attacks, precisely targeting a terror factory. Initially, Pakistan claimed that the Indian aircraft did no damage and escaped when confronted. Later, Pakistan's National Security Committee rejected the Indian claim as reckless and fictitious, yet termed the strike an uncalculated aggression to which Pakistan shall respond at 'the time and place of its choosing'.

This is a day of reckoning. Terror attacks and counter-strikes should be seen in the context of their own and should not spill over into open hostilities. Nuclear-armed nations can neither afford nor attempt military adventurism. JeM had openly claimed responsibility for the Pulwama attack, leaving no doubt about the perpetrators. After the Uri surgical strike in 2016, it was fairly clear that India has a new doctrine of effective visible response to terror attacks. So, if Pakistan attempts to retaliate militarily to the air strike, what unravels will be a larger plot for a deadly strife in South Asia triggered by the Pulwama attack.

Food in trains

Portal to put quality on the right track

THERE is no passenger of the Indian Railways who has not felt harassed and stressed for some reason or the other. While at times one may be lucky to catch the train on time, the quality of food served on trains almost every time leaves a bad taste in the mouth. The meals hover in the range of tolerable to stale, rancid and inedible. The damning report of CAG in 2017 which found that the food and water provided in the coaches of the 80 trains and at 74 stations it inspected were 'unfit for human consumption' finally steered the Railways to improving its catering arm. Last year, the Railways received 7,500 complaints of bad quality of food served. The fines imposed on vendors till October and action against the guilty contractors/suppliers should be a deterrent.

The Rail Drishti Dashboard, a portal launched by Railway Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday, is another effort designed to put the travel experience on the right track. The website promises to be a window to information for the passengers. It enables them to keep track of the movement of trains, stations and tickets. Access to live feed of how their meals are cooked and packed at IRCTC kitchens is a sure recipe for cooks preparing appetising dishes in a hygienic environment. Complaints regarding contaminated water or ingredients unprotected from flies etc. should reduce with the cameras on them. Next, the Railways should focus on improving the 400 pantry cars run on long-distance trains. One-third of them are in a bad condition and the LPG gas used is a fire hazard.

A satisfied traveller getting to sample fresh and hygienically cooked local cuisine of the area that he is passing through would cherish his journey. But for him to become an ambassador for the Railways, the network has much distance to be covered yet. In addition to bettering onboard catering services, the areas of rail safety, sanitation in trains and stations, and punctuality leave much to be desired.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Words may inspire but only action creates change. —

Simon Sinek

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1919

Political Nomenclature.

HOW rapidly party names in India are changing their meaning! When only three years ago the Home Rule Leagues were established, the terms "Home Rulers" and "Extremists" were interchangeable in the minds of most of those who used them, with only this difference that it was not every "Extremist," who was a member of a Home Rule League. To-day not only are the two terms used to indicate two different classes of politicians, but the Home Rulers are actually looked upon as the less dreadful of the two. Nothing else could have been meant by the Delhi Correspondent of the *London Times* when he wired to his journal on the morrow of the last session of the Congress: "Indian politics are now divided into three parties, the Extremists, the Home Rule League and the Moderates." Of course the division was not without plausibility.

A Panjabi in the Royal Flying Corps.

IT is gratifying to learn that Lieutenant Malik Hardit Singh, who is the first Indian to have secured a permanent Commission in the Royal Flying Corps, is now on a visit to India on leave. Malik Hardit Singh belongs to Rawalpindi and is son of Malik Mohan Singh, Reis and Honorary Magistrate of that town. He distinguished himself in the war by taking an active part in the operations on the Western front and in Italy, and was twice wounded in France. He landed at Karachi on the 23rd instant and was accorded a hearty and enthusiastic welcome by the gentry and Sri Guru Singh Sabha of Karachi, headed by the Hon'ble Mr Harchandrai Vishindas, President of the Karachi Municipality, who in a short speech welcomed the gallant Lieutenant to the Motherland.

The barrier is broken

Balakot action is sure to damage Pakistan's nuclear overhang doctrine

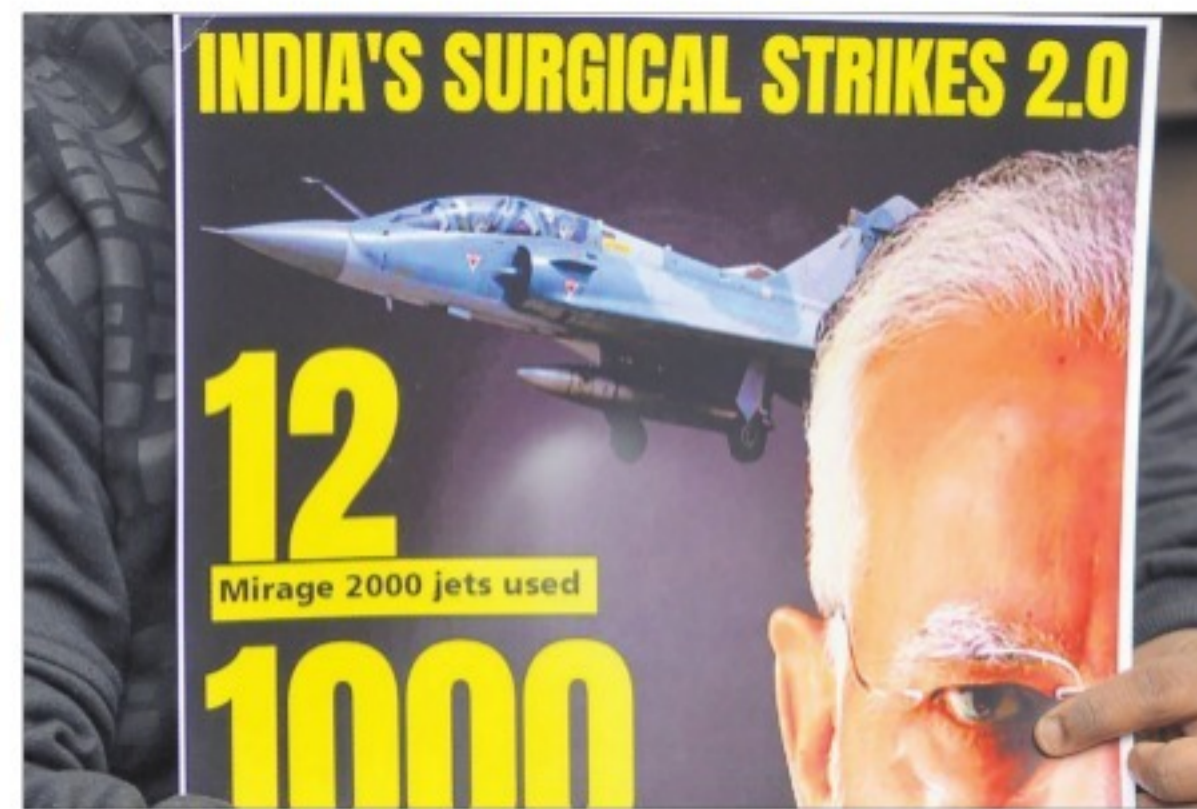


VIVEK KATJU

EX-SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

TILL the strike against Jaish-e-Mohammed's (JeM) 'massive training facility' at Balakot, the post-Pulwama internal political and external diplomatic landscape had striking similarities to the situation that was prevalent after earlier attacks from Pakistan-based terrorist groups. This action may, however, bring about a radical departure and set a new standard of public expectation in the way India deals with beyond-the-acceptable terrorist attacks from Pakistani soil. It would be futile, though, to expect that this correct and justified action will end Pakistani terrorism. That would require sustained, comprehensive efforts and a firm and continuing exercise of national will.

PM Modi has clearly and laudably resisted the temptation, in the immediate aftermath of the Balakot strike, to exult to take political advantage. While that will, undoubtedly, come during the campaign, his first objective now was to provide Pakistan an escape route from undertaking a kinetic response. Hence, only the Foreign Secretary was deployed to issue a measured and restrained statement informing India and the international community about the 'non-military preemptive action' against the JeM camp. Through this somewhat confusing formulation, India sought to emphasise that it had undertaken a counter-terrorist strike based on intelligence reports that the group was planning to launch a major terrorist strike in India. The Foreign Secretary refrained from giving any details of the nature of the Indian action, except to note that it was against a training facility that was led by Masood Azhar's brother-in-law, Yusuf



ACTION MAN: The strike will be used to burnish Modi's credentials as a decisive leader.

Pakistan may react by sponsoring some action to embarrass Modi during the forthcoming poll process.

Azhar, also known as Ustad Ghauri.

The government has clearly thrown the ball in Pakistan's court. While Imran Khan had publicly threatened India to expect immediate retaliation and Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor, Director-General of Pakistan's Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), had reiterated the warning, Rawalpindi's first reaction was designed to give it space to avoid an immediate armed retaliatory step. Ghafoor tweeted that Indian aircraft had crossed the LoC. They were chased out by the Pakistan air force and were compelled to drop their payload in uninhabited areas, thereby causing no damage either to human life or property. This tweet would assuage the Pakistani public's prickly self-esteem and notions of *izzat* but just about if the news of what actually happened gets known.

It is true that the Indian media has carried reports based on leaks and perhaps behind-the-scenes briefings of the Indian strike. In the absence, though, of any official Indian word to challenge Ghafoor's comments, India has signalled both to Pakistan and the international community that it does

not wish that matters escalate. The fact that Modi did not refer to the Balakot action in his speech immediately after the CCS meeting yesterday and Sushma Swaraj and not Modi (as per reports) called an all-party meeting also indicate that India does not wish to put Pakistan in a further spot.

There is little doubt that the US, already engaged with India and Pakistan in what was according to President Trump a very dangerous situation would not want a distraction as President Trump meets North Korea's Kim Jong-un in Vietnam and as the US-Taliban talks proceed in Qatar. Thus, it can be expected to press Pakistan to proceed to use diplomatic levers and not kinetic power. Following Ghafoor's tweet, Pakistan deployed not PM Imran Khan, but Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi to announce that the LoC was violated and his country had the right to give a suitable response in self-defence. This, too, indicates that for the time being, Pakistan is not wishing to up the ante. All this is logical, but history shows that Pakistani generals do not always behave rationally in their dealings with India.

Hence, they may react by sponsoring some action, including by terrorists, to seek to embarrass Modi during the forthcoming election process, even if they now hold their hand.

The response of the other major powers to Pulwama had been entirely predictable till the Balakot action. Thus, there was swift condemnation and expressions of sympathy. Going further, the UNSC, after days of discussion, issued, for the first time, a statement condemning the attack. China was persuaded to accept the formulation that the JeM had acknowledged it and departing from the traditional UN phraseology that it had taken place in J&K as distinct from 'Indian-administered Kashmir'. These powers, except China, can be expected now to counsel restraint to both countries and stress the need to control terrorist groups. The Chinese will, no doubt, find some way of showing solidarity with their all-weather friend.

The Balakot action will be used by the BJP to burnish Modi's credentials as a decisive leader who has dealt firmly with national security. The immediate response of the Opposition has been to laud the Air Force, but soon enough, it will seek to challenge Modi on this issue. Congress spokespersons have been raising questions about intelligence lapses, about Modi's insensitivity in the immediate hours after the attack and the 'failures' of his Pakistan and Kashmir policies. They were also demanding that he should act as decisively as Indira Gandhi had done in 1971 and achieve the same results. The inherent taunt in these comments was not difficult to discern. Will all this play with the electorate remains to be seen. Prima facie, it looks doubtful.

The real significance of the Balakot action lies in the damage it will do to Pakistan's nuclear overhang doctrine. It had sought to paralyse India against deploying its conventional defence assets after a terrorist attack. India has shown that it has given space to its armed forces for specific punitive measures. While Pakistan strategists will factor this in, they are unlikely to easily abandon the use of terror.

These shows we can do without

COL DS CHEEMA (RETD)

ON February 19, two Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team aircraft collided, killing Wg Cdr Sahil Gandhi and injuring two officers during the 12th edition of the Aero India show at Bengaluru. The IAF has already given the 'Missing Man' salute. After the probe report, the matter will rest at that. The Indian Navy, too, conducted a similar probe, when on October 1, 2002, two IL-38 reconnaissance aircraft of the Winged Stallions squadron collided midair, killing nine highly qualified, trained and experienced pilots during the Navy Week celebrations in Goa. There have been many other such accidents when Army units celebrate their raising days or golden jubilees

and other important historic landmarks. Years ago, the EME Corps lost two men and two were grievously injured at Secunderabad during preparations for the golden jubilee celebrations. Why must such accidents continue to take place and why must the nation remain a mute spectator to such ghastly happenings?

Every citizen of India is proud of its gallant armed forces and knows very well that they are among the finest fighting machines in the world. They have earned the gratitude of the nation by laying down their lives for the national cause. They have displayed remarkable grit and professionalism in war and peace and are seen as the bright North Star in a corrupt system. When they lose their brave men and material worth hun-

dreds of crores, it is bound to become a concern for every citizen.

Admittedly, golden jubilees, raising days and other such historic occasions mean a lot to the armed forces. Such events remind them of their unique culture of gallantry and inspire young soldiers. Also, different governments wanting to showcase the nation's superior military power is also a laudable goal and meets many objectives. Both have many benefits. But must it be done at such a terrible cost? Time, energy and money spent on such activities could certainly be better utilised. These celebrations and displays consume months of preparations involving hundreds of men and huge material resources. Could that time and money be put to better use for training so

that officers and men shed lesser blood during war?

It is unfortunate that many a time our armed forces have the compulsion of using ageing weapon systems and equipment during such celebrations and displays, increasing the risk of accidents. Under these circumstances, must they continue using such systems and equipment for ceremonial functions? Our annual celebrations like the Republic Day parade, which showcases our military might, give suitable message to our enemies and convince our own people that the security of the nation is in the right hands. They are good enough. The IAF and the Navy must stop these dangerous aerobatics, since these in no way enhance their combat effectiveness.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No limit to loss

Reference to 'India-Pak impasse unlikely to alter soon' (Feb 26); India and Pakistan must understand that everything in the world is driven by economics. Isolating one nation or calling the bluff by giving threats of other nations won't make a difference. The tightrope politics practiced by Saudi Arabia is a case in point. There is a need to initiate dialogue and discussion, be it back-channel diplomacy or formal, balanced diplomacy. Otherwise, there would be more and more loss of resources — human, financial, military and national.

DIVYA SINGLA, PATIALA

Not a soft State

Finally, the day has come for which the whole nation was waiting for. The latest IAF strikes are a huge victory for our country. This kind of revenge was needed as it is high time for India to show that we are no more a soft nation.

SRISHTI BANSAL, AMBALA CANTT

Raise the stakes

Today, the soul of our martyrs will rest in peace. We should raise the stakes for Pakistan. It should realise how the

heart burns when a mother's son, a sister's brother, a woman's husband is taken away forever.

MUSKAN MEHNDIRATTA, AMBALA CITY

It's a fight for peace

Indians are happy about the IAF strikes, destroying terrorist bases in the POK, and are praising the Modi government. Terrorists who create horror in India and those who help them must be eliminated. The message to the world is that India wants to live in peace, but if a terrorist tries to spread unrest in our country, he will be given a fitting reply.

SHAKTI SINGH, KARNAL

Sin to be middle class

Refer to the edit 'Poll push' (Feb 26); the working middle class should remain prepared for a heavy dose of taxes after elections. It is becoming a sin to be a hardworking middle class in this country. This class is being targeted to bleed taxes to pay to those who do not need to work, thanks to the plethora of subsidies and allowances, ranging from unemployment to different types of pensions. How can there be jobs when governments are not leaving any scope for a man to seek employment, unless it is a cushy

government job?

BHARTENDU SOOD, CHANDIGARH

Make it easier for women

As a topic of discussion, menstruation is still a taboo in India ('Oscar glory for India-set film on menstruation'; Feb 26). With the media and films taking the responsibility of presenting such issues with ease, it has come as a rescue operation for girls and women who either can't afford pads or aren't aware of them or prefer traditional ways, which are unhygienic. Men should come forward and provide women a comfortable space to talk about such issues. For now, the steps taken by several educational institutions to install sanitary napkin-vending machines and organising seminars are praiseworthy.

SARTHAK BHARDWAJ, CHANDIGARH

Take on taboo issues

Refer to the documentary 'Period. End of Sentence'; the stigma of menstruation has prevented girls and young women from getting an education, worshipping in temples, and having access to basic sanitary products. By winning an Oscar, it has set a benchmark and will motivate Indian filmmakers to go deep into such issues and bring them into limelight,

so that there is no place for stigma to various issues in our country.

SATYAM SHARMA, PATHANKOT

Orthodox mindset

Menstruation is still an issue discussed behind closed doors in most parts of the country and women are fighting this deep-rooted stigma. Still, there are some religious places where females are not allowed to enter as they are considered impure during periods. This orthodox thinking must change. I have come across many girls who use cloth and stay absent from school and are not allowed to enter the kitchen. We have reached the moon, but are unable to change our mindset.

HARKAWAL JEET KAUR, MOHALI

Reckless deforestation

With the Haryana Government hell-bent on reducing the forest cover in the state, the responsibility falls upon the denizens to remind the government to discharge its duties, the prominent among which is the right to a healthy life and sustainable livelihood to all. The amendment to the PLPA would only benefit realtors, while the local populace will bear the brunt of pollution.

SURBHI NEGI, NEW DELHI

IAF set for big role in counter-terror ops



PRAVIN SAWHNEY
STRATEGIC AFFAIRS EXPERT

IN the first such operation, the Indian Air Force (IAF) carried out a strike against the largest training camp of Jaish-e-Mohammed in Balakot, Pakistan. The official confirmation of the strike came around noon in a terse statement issued, curiously, by Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale, who called these 'non-military preemptive action' against terrorists, their trainers and handlers.

Three takeaways of the air strike are: One, a retaliation by the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) is unlikely since by India's own admission, the targets were non-military (terrorists) and avoided civilian casualties; two, with no military objectives, the strike would work to burnish the image of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a strongman; and three, major world powers would now worry about an escalation of hostilities between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan.

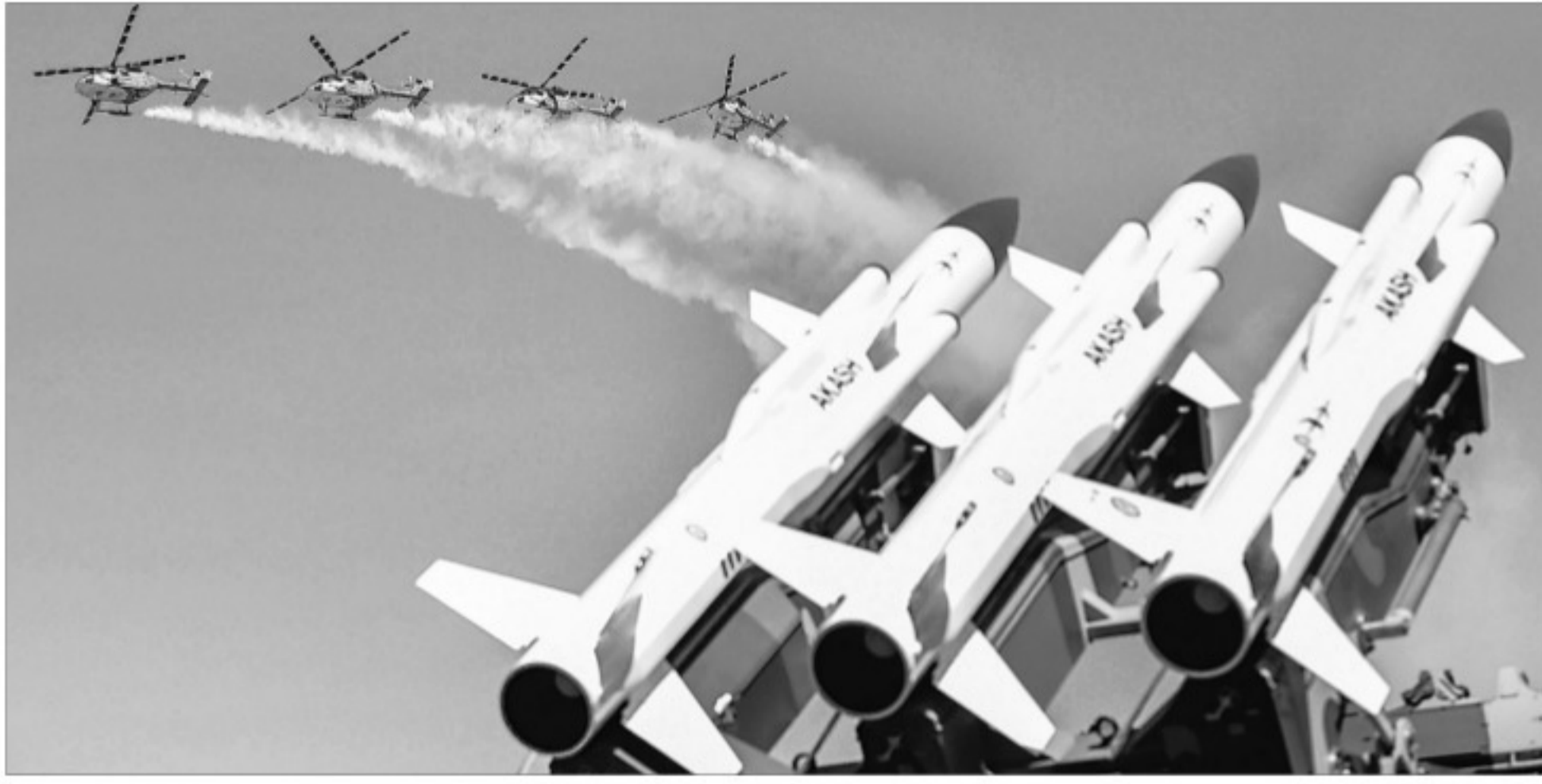
First, a few technical details. The multi-role Mirage-2000 aircraft that crossed over would have done so at the speed of about 900 km per hour. While the Mirage is capable of flying at about 2,300 kmph, when it is armed with designation pods, electronic warfare equipment, a few laser-guided 1,000-kg bombs and so on, and flying at a low level to evade the enemy's air defence radar, it would fly between 800 km and 900 km per hour.

While there are two Balakots — one near Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the other in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — the latter is 90 km from the Line of Control. With precision-guided munition getting released at the stand-off range of 20 km, the distance covered by the Mirage would be about 70 km. Thus, given the speed of the Mirage, it would not have been in hostile airspace for more than three to four minutes. Since there was a single target, called Designated Mean point of Impact (DMI), only one Mirage would have crossed the LoC.

The IAF managed this feat because: (a) it would take any air force more than five minutes to detect and react (PAF reportedly did scramble its aircraft), unless war is on or is imminent, and (b) detection only by ground-based air defence systems (GBADS) without airborne early warning aircraft (which cannot stay airborne for more than 24 hours at a time), so the reaction cannot be very quick. Moreover, the strike time of 3:30 am, chosen by the IAF, was when GBADS observers would have been most inactive. After all, constant vigil in peacetime is not possible.

That said, the IAF did spring a surprise. Somebody in the PAF would pay the price for this lapse.

Having learnt a lesson from the earlier so-called 'surgical strike' by the Army in September 2016, no IAF official accompanied Gokhale for the briefing (the Foreign Secretary is not expected to know the technicalities), no questions were taken, and the term 'surgical strike' was avoided. Fully aware that the term is used only for blitzkrieg action against legitimate military targets or civilians, which air forces (and not armies) undertake,



TARGET: The Indian Air Force would now look for a role greater than mere operational support.

The Indian Air Force, which had for long been clamouring for increased visibility and status like the Army, has tasted blood with the Balakot strike. The military's focus over the past several years has been on counter-terror operations, where the Army has taken centre stage. The scenario would no longer be the same.

Gokhale's briefing was meant as much for the domestic as for the international audience.

The terrorists' casualty figures remain debatable since Gokhale merely mentioned 'large numbers'. Since the government had come under criticism on the earlier occasion for immediately informing Pakistan about the surgical strike, this time a different tack was adopted. Pakistan was not informed, but its claim that no casualties took place was left unchallenged.

With the strike out of the way, the friendly social, electronic and print media would now step in to both glorify and valorise the strike for political purposes. Already, stories are afloat that 12 Mirage fighters were used to kill more than 300 terrorists. It is nigh impossible for 12 fighters to

enter Pakistan air space and come back unscathed. Moreover, retaliation, too, would have been assured. But this logic would not deter the believers. Nor would it affect the intensity of the proxy war by the Pakistan army in Jammu and Kashmir.

However, what will get strengthened is India's case that Pakistan sponsors terrorism inside Jammu & Kashmir. Indian and international analysts are already active on social media, drawing the escalatory ladder. While the use of air power is definitive and escalatory, no nation would have thought of using it for political grandstanding. In that sense, this has been a masterstroke, which will accrue unexpected benefits. It is expected that major powers like the US would now make more efforts to rein in Pakistan's proxy war.

Though the stakes for China are extremely high, with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor designated as the flagship of the Belt and Road Initiative, China is unlikely to penalise Pakistan. While Beijing privately raps Rawalpindi for risking a conflict, it would continue to wholeheartedly support Pakistan, as both all-weather friends understand the difference between war fighting and political grandstanding.

There is likely be another outcome of the strike. The IAF, which had for long been clamouring for increased visibility and status like the Army, by asking for a role in counter-terror operations (CT ops), has now tasted blood. Since no one (including those in the defence services) believes that India would go to war, the military's focus in the past several years has been on CT ops, where the Army has taken centre stage. This would no longer be the case, as the IAF would now look for a role greater than mere operational support.

However, these benefits will come at a cost for the IAF, the impact of which will be felt over the years, just as it is being felt in the Army. Since the air force is likely to be consulted by the political leadership on CT ops now (along with the Army), over time it will deflect attention from its core competencies. The military threats to India come from the disputed borders with Pakistan and China. The IAF, given the nature of modern war, is India's only conventional deterrent against China. One can only hope that this does not get compromised.

The big question, though, is whether Pakistan has got the message that India means business. Unlikely. That message would only be received when India starts to reinforce its conventional war-fighting capabilities.

The puppets and puppeteers of Pakistan



RK KAUSHIK
SECRETARY, GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB

The world, especially India, faces the unpleasant reality that the nuclear-armed Pakistan army would rule by proxy in the years to come. The military powers that be are here to stay. Seemingly, there is no political leader likely to emerge in the near future who can take up the cudgels against them.

THE Pulwama attack and its aftermath have again drawn the attention of the world to the dubious activities and nefarious designs of Pakistan's Establishment (the Army and the ISI). Prime Minister Imran Khan's stand reinforces the fact that he is a pusillanimous vassal and an actor of a script written and implemented by the all-pervasive Establishment.

In the 71-year history of Pakistan, there have been only two phases when the Establishment was not in control of defence, foreign and internal security affairs. The first was from August 14, 1947, to October 21, 1951 — the day Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated; the second began on December 20, 1971, when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto took charge, and lasted till July 5, 1977, when he was overthrown in a military takeover.

During the rest of its journey, Pakistan has had the conspicuous and humongous presence of the Establishment controlling foreign, defence, internal security and nuclear affairs, not allowing civilian leaders to interfere in these matters.

The reason why democracy became so fragile in the neighbouring country is not hard to find. The structural dynamics of the Muslim League at the time of Independence answer that question. Even in 1937, there was only one member of the Muslim League in the 175-member Punjab Assembly in Lahore. The League had no presence in Balochistan and a meagre representation in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP).



LETDOWN: Prime Minister Imran Khan has largely failed to walk the talk.

It was only in 1945 and 1946 that the League started having leaders and workers from the Unionist Party and other groups as its members in Punjab and from the Khaksars and Jamaat-e-Islami in the NWFP. They were self-seeking politicians who, after the death of Liaquat Ali Khan, sided with the Army to share power and perks. The Establishment also brought rich landlords, businessmen etc. into politics to play second fiddle to it in governance.

The Establishment never allowed independent-minded leaders to grow. The moment anybody tried to encroach upon its domain, he was made a horrible example for others. The fate of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif (in his third term) proves this fact.

In Pakistan, terrorist organisations such as Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA, presently known as Harkat-ul-Mujahideen), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (HUJI), Muttahida Jihad Council (MUC), Jammu & Kashmir National Liberation Army and Al-Umar Mujahideen are funded, encouraged, guided, weaponised and controlled by the Establishment. The latter has paramount hatred for India. India remains the big enemy and is discussed and confronted during various war games and strategies.

Pakistan lacks homogeneity due to its critical lack of commonality. Its history, social institutions, languages and eth-

nicities are not constructive of a common sentimentality as a State. They have always been divergent and divisive. In pursuing a commonality based on religion, one can only bind those that have a consideration for religion in their affairs; this approach becomes parochial in the modern world.

Imran Khan's growing dependence on the armed forces to provide a panacea for the crisis in the civil administration appears to be sustaining its image of a 'praetorian' or 'garrison' State despite the military leadership professing outwardly that it has no desire to rule the country. But in reality, it is present everywhere. This trend is evident from increasing military involvement in wide-ranging administrative activities: from managing essential services and monitoring state-owned schools to conducting the census and building non-military roads. Today, the military, under democratic governance, has a wider and deeper participation in civil administration than it had in the past.

When political leaders indulge in undermining each other through unfair means, including the use of state institutions, they lower their image in the eyes of the people and ultimately become a hostage of their own doings. One can give several examples from Pakistan's history to illustrate how important it is for institutions to reorient their thinking and stay within the constitutional boundaries. This is a major condition for graduating towards a 'Naya Pakistan'. Mere cosmetic changes and statements, as Imran Khan makes regarding the

Establishment that "we are on the same page", may temporarily make a feel-good impression, but no substantial gain would be achieved.

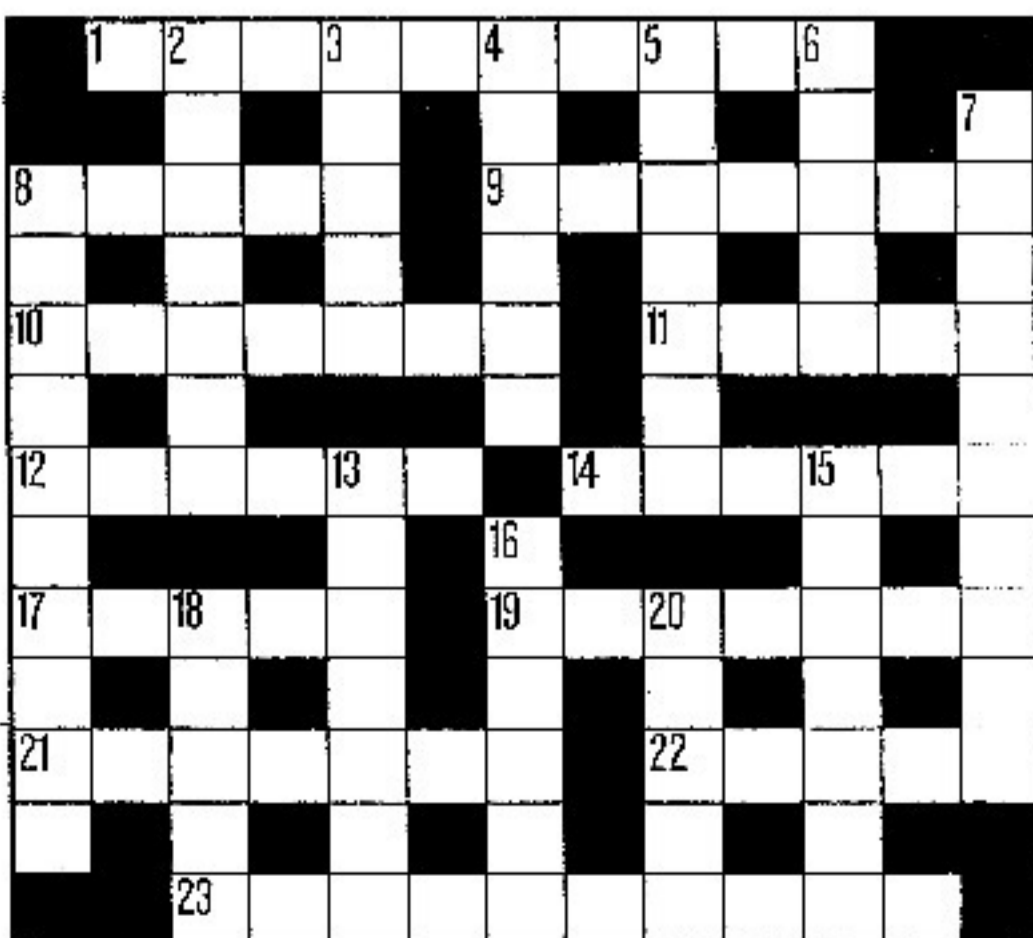
During his third term as PM — which started in June 2013 — Nawaz Sharif tried to pursue an independent foreign policy, but the Establishment got livid with him. He became a pejorative and loathing topic of discussion in monthly corps commanders' meetings, leading to his every action getting critically examined there.

That was the time when the Establishment decided to bring in Imran Khan after rejecting the names of then Interior Minister Nisar Ali Khan and then Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Imran's victory march was planned and dexterously manipulated, leading to his takeover in August 2018. The powers that be are not going to wither away; seemingly, there is no leader likely to emerge in the near future who can take up the cudgels against them.

So, the world, and especially India, faces the unpleasant reality that the nuclear-armed Pakistan Establishment, which bears animosity towards India, would rule by proxy in the years to come. The recent reports of a likely US withdrawal from Afghanistan is also making it more confident and pompous.

India has no option but to tackle the situation stoically and bravely, and return the compliment as and when possible. We also have to galvanise and improve our intelligence and security apparatus to preempt Pulwama-type incidents.

QUICK CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Refuse, 4 Strong, 9 Fervour, 10 Utter, 11 Thong, 12 Achieve, 13 Bring to book, 18 Macabre, 20 Lower, 22 Abuse, 23 Cutlass, 24 Artery, 25 Breezy.
Down: 1 Refute, 2 Forgo, 3 Shotgun, 5 Tough, 6 On the go, 7 Garnet, 8 Break the ice, 14 Recruit, 15 Bolster, 16 Impala, 17 Trusty, 19 By ear, 21 Weave.

ACROSS

- 1 In great demand (2,1,7)
- 8 Sudden intense effort (5)
- 9 Bring charge against (7)
- 10 Small-time gangster (7)
- 11 Up to the time of (5)
- 12 People of a state (6)
- 14 Hatful (6)
- 17 Push one's way rudely (5)
- 19 As a whole (7)
- 21 Quick retort (7)
- 22 Quick to take offence (5)
- 23 Northeast part of US (3,7)

DOWN

- 2 A muster (4-3)
- 3 Part of a flower (5)
- 4 Mysterious situation (6)
- 5 Confiscate (7)
- 6 Intended (5)
- 7 Very easy task (6,4)
- 8 In jail (6,4)
- 13 Supervised (7)
- 15 Enthusiastic reception (7)
- 16 To rule (6)
- 18 To mature (5)
- 20 Support for blackboard (5)

SU DO KU

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

V. HARD

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 27, 2019 WEDNESDAY

- Vikrami Samvat 2075
- Shaka Samvat 1940
- Phalgun Shaka 8
- Phalgun Parvishite 15
- Hijari 1440
- Krishan Paksh Tithi 9, up to 6:41 am
- Harsh Yoga up to 10:12 am
- Jyeshtha Nakshatra up to 12:46 am
- Moon enters Sagittarius sign at 12:46 am.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

FORECAST

SUNSET: WEDNESDAY 18:19 HRS

SUNRISE: THURSDAY 06:51 HRS



CITY	MAX	MIN
Chandigarh	18	10
New Delhi	21	11

PUNJAB

Amritsar	16	09
Bathinda	18	07
Jalandhar	17	09
Ludhiana	17	08

HARYANA

Bhiwani	23	10
Hisar	24	09
Sirsa	18	08

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Dharamsala	12	02
Manali	05	-04
Shimla	10	01

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Jammu	20	09
Leh	02	-08
Srinagar	11	0

UTTARAKHAND

Dehradun	18	10
Mussoorie	10	0

TEMPERATURE IN °C