Up in arms

Has anyone noticed that Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief Parkash Singh Badal and party leader Sukhbir Badal... none of them have expressed any opinion on the Union Budget 2019-20? This is the first time that SAD, which praised the Budget last year, hasn't quite been eloquent about the Budget this time. Last week, on Friday, the general secretary of the party, Manjinder Sirsa had issued a general statement that if the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) did not stop meddling in the affairs of gurudwaras, the SAD could consider breaking the alliance and walking out of the coalition. This might be too extreme, but the provocation seems to be the moves made by the BJP to install Sikh members from its party to lead the bodies that run gurudwaras across the country — including in Nanded, Patna and Delhi. There are also reports that the Centre is mulling significant amendments in the Gurudwara Management Act. This has provoked SAD leaders to say that if this happens, the Sikhs will rise to defend their religion which is more important to them than anything else.

Making a move

A member of the Janata Dal United (JDU) and legislator of the Bihar council, Rishi Mishra has quit the JDU and joined the Congress. Mishra said he contested the election against the BJP. How could he now continue to justify his presence in the JDU when it had become an ally of the BJP? He made it clear that he has no problems with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar but could not stay as an alliance partner of the BJP.

DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?



"The demonetisation year was the best year of growth (8.2%) under Mr Modi. So, let's have another round of demonetisation. This time let's demonetise 100 rupee notes."

Former Finance Minister P Chidambaram in New Delhi,

CHECKLIST EDUCATION: WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS ACHIEVED IN FOUR YEARS

- ■Government spending (Centre and States): Total expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP has declined from 3.1 per cent in 2013–14 to 2.7 per centin 2017–18
- ■The Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA) was set up to promote the creation of high quality infrastructure in premier educational institutions. The HEFA has been tasked to mobilise ₹1,00,000 crore to meet the infrastructure needs of higher educational institutions by 2022.
- ■A draft Bill, Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Bill 2018, was released on June 27, 2018. The Bill seeks to repeal the University Grants Commission and sets up the Higher Education Commission of India.
- ■The Committee for Evolution of the New Education Policy (Chair: TSR Subramanian)

submitted its report on May 7, 2016. The report proposed a New Education Policy to improve the quality and credibility of education by addressing implementation gaps.

- ■The Ministry of Human Resource Development launched a scheme 'Samagra Shiksha', which seeks to provide holistic education from preschool to senior secondary levels. It subsumes three existing schemes, namely: (i) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, (ii) Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, and (iii) Teacher Education. The budget allocation for the scheme is ₹34,000 crore for 2018-19, and ₹41,000 crore for 2019-20 in July 2018.
- Government declared six institutions as 'Institutions of Eminence' on the recommendations of an expert committee. These included three finstitutions from private sector, and three from public sector.



Let us shape a new India that Gandhi dreamt of

am indeed pleased to be here to unveil the 150-squaremetre wall mural of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, which is made of terracotta kullads.

It is also a matter of great pride for us that at a time when the nation is celebrating Mahatma's 150th birth anniversary, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has decided to mark the occasion with a unique display of Gandhi's image made by the potters.

The image is a true reflection of Gandhi's belief in the potential of craftsmanship and village industries.

I am told that 150 potters from different parts of the country had gathered at Morbi in Gujarat – the birthplace of Rashtrapita – to produce this mural.

It is certainly a 'Tribute with difference'. It is an external manifestation of a deep reverence we have for the man who gave a timeless message through his life. It is a worthy tribute to the man who restored dignity to the manual labour. It is an artistic hymn created by village potters across the nation –from Leh to Maharashtra and from Chhattisgarh to Varanasi.

I would like to compliment KVIC for promoting village industries and the highly skilled potters because this mural is also a tribute to the exquisite craftsmanship of the potters.

I came to know that the concept of making this grand wall mural came after the huge success of KVIC's 'Kumhaar Sashaktikaran Yojana' in Varanasi, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi had distributed 280 electric potter wheels along with blungers, pug-mills and kilns to 300 potter families on September 18, 2018. It not only increased the income of village potters by four to five times, but also enhanced their output in the same ratio. This is an example of how up gradation of skills and technological advancement can transform rural economy.

As per the Indian world view, the entire world is one large family. The following verse from the Ramayana encapsulates this universal vision. "Only the narrow minded categorise people as 'our own' and 'others'. For those who have a large heart, the entire world is just a large family"

One corollary of this view, which follows from the concept of the whole world being seen as one family, is the attitude of empathy, of sharing and caring, of a sharp focus on alleviating the agony of fellow human beings. His deep sense of compassion and inclusiveness permeated his outlook on human-

ity. Mahatma Gandhi's life embodied this attitude and value system.

It was he who said, "I am endeavouring to see God through service of humanity; for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in everyone".

He specially cared for the marginalised. He was a strong proponent of Gram Swaraj and truly believed that development of villages was vital for the development of the

country.

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This message of Gandhiji is vital at this juncture as India is at the cusp of transforming into a major economy. With a consistent growth rate of over 7 per cent, India is expected to become the third largest economy in the world in the coming

However, the fruits of development and prosperity must reach every section and every corner, particularly the rural areas. Efforts must be made on a war-footing by all stakeholders to end the urban-rural divide. Here, I would like to remind all of you that Gandhi ji had established the "All India Village Industries Association" at Wardha and devoted most of his time towards reorganization of Indian villages. He worked relentlessly towards revival of village crafts, agro processing industries, and promoted village cleanliness and sanitation.

Rural crafts do play a remarkable role in village development. Also, pottery plays an important role in studying culture and reconstructing the past. Recently, the Ministry of Railways has decided to use locally produced, environment-savvy terracotta products like Kullads, glasses and plates for serving catering items to passengers. This will certainly enable the local Kumhar community to earn higher income.

The life of Mahatma is all about internal reflection, self purification and harmonisation of individual and universal objectives. The principle of 'Ahimsa' so eloquently propounded by Mahatma encompasses all aspects of our personality ranging from our thoughts to our deeds. If every human being is at peace with himself or herself, there will be peace all around in the outer world.

Gandhi experimented with himself a great deal and never suggested anything to anybody in which either he did not believe himself or did not follow himself. That is how he had acquired the moral authority to suggest that "Be the change you want to be".

We are celebrating the 150th Birth Anniversary of that great soul this year. The best way of paying a genuine tribute to Mahatma is to sincerely introspect as to whether we are living the values of this great son of our country.

Let us practice some of the essential values he stood for like 'empathy' and 'service', 'truth' and 'non-violence', 'inclusion' and 'sustainable development'. Let each one of us shape a new India that Gandhi and other leaders had dreamt of just as the potters have given shape to a dream creation through

Speech by Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, after unveiling the 150square-metre wall mural of Mahatma Gandhi made of terracotta kullads, in New Delhi on January 31.



About 56 per cent of people surveyed in rural MP, Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh by research advocacy group Research Institute For Compassionate Economics (RICE) reported being aware of at least one of the three coercive practices — being stopped from open defecation, threats of withholding government benefits and threats of fines — deployed by the government staff or members of community vigilance groups, if they failed to build latrines or continued with open defecation. **Nikhil Srivastav**, director of research and sanitation at RICE, a graduate student of the Lyndon B Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas, and one of the co–authors of the paper explains to **Swagata Yadavar**.

'People will learn from examples'

After the launch of RICE and AI's working paper, some people asked why not talk about the improvements in reducing open defecation achieved by Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) post-2014, rather than about people who still practice open defecation. Your comment.

Our study finds that there is a 26 per cent reduction in open defecation in rural Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, but 44 per cent of rural residents in these states continue to defecate in the open. These are the facts.

We are also concerned about what happens after a region is declared open defecation free (ODF). Good examples of this are Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan [by October 2, 2018, 25 states and union territories had declared themselves ODF, *IndiaSpend* reported, but SBM

claims and data were questionable]. These states have been declared ODF, and now they lack resources for tackling open defecation where it is still going on. By talking about open defecation continuing in these 'ODF' regions, we want people to focus on the problem. Unless everyone accepts that the task is incomplete, we cannot hope the government will continue working on convincing rural Indians to use latrines.

Do you think that the challenges to achieving sanitation goals associated with social beliefs around caste and purity have reduced?

India, even before the SBM was launched, was seeing a decrease in open defecation at a rate of 1 per cent per annum. Now, under the SBM,

Some people switched to using latrines because they wanted to; others switched because they were coerced to. Our data shows that large [single] pit latrines remain more likely to be used, and small pit [including twin pit] latrines continue to be looked down upon. Rural Indians still worry about emptying pits, which they associate with manual scavenging, and thus continue to be averse to using smaller latrines like twin-pits, though these are inexpensive. People want large pits that don't have to be emptied for generations. They want a 10x10x10 feet pit [1,000 cubic feet capacity].

the rate is a little over 6 per cent per annum.

The ministry of drinking water and sanitation, responding to our report on the working paper's findings, said researchers failed to

distinguish between coercion and affirmative community action. So they don't consider actions like we have seen in many videos—of people being humiliated, punished and beaten up for defecating in the open—coercive?

There are publicly available sanitation, RICE videos on the internet that show some of the worst instances of coercion — poor villagers being beaten up by government officials, a woman being dragged out of fields by government workers, etc. Also, every now and then reports covering such coercive activities in rural areas surface in the national media. Local media covers these instances more frequently. Photos abound of government buildings bearing threatening messages that households without toilets will be fined and lose government benefits. One such poster, published by Dainik Bhaskar, said "Shasan ke aadesh anusaar: [toilet na banane par] 500 rupay ka jurmana aur ration bhi nahi diya jayega aur sarkari suvidha se vanchit kiya jayega" [By government orders: ₹500 fine, ration and government services will be withdrawn for not building toilets].

One out of every four households we surveyed told us that they had heard of threats to withhold government benefits like rations in their village. In India, people have a right to benefits like food.

There are two broader problems with such sanctions and coercive activities: one that many rural households depend on government rations and pensions, and taking these away means starvation for some families. The other is that such sanctions often reinforce the existing caste hierarchy in villages. A block level official, while explaining the process of forming Nigrani Samitis, told us that samiti members usually include the sarpanch, the MLA, a ward member and other respected people who the villagers listen to or even fear, such as lambardars [powerful zamindars]. The official said those are the people they ask for help in persuading villagers.

Of the 23 per cent people who own a latrine but continue to defecate in the open, do

you know how many of them had to build their own latrines and how many of these were twin-pits? Are they continuing to defecate outside because they are not happy with their twin-pit latrines?

People with twin-pit latrines are more likely to defecate in the open than people with large, single pit latrines that are normally emptied mechanically. Many people believe that a twin-pit latrine will fill up in a year or less, and are disgusted by the prospect of emptying it manually, even after the faeces has decomposed. I remember talking to a woman in MP. She was talking about a television advertisement [promoting twin-pit latrines issued by the SBM-Rural] featuring [Bollywood actor] Akshay Kumar, where he says that the faecal sludge becomes son khad [fertiliser]. She looked at me

and said, "Unhe karna hai to karne do, humse nahi hoga" (let them empty the pit if they want, I can't do it].

The kind of social ostracisation that Dalits [scheduled castes], especially Valmikis [a Dalit community who form the majority of manual scavengers who empty latrine pits] face is inhuman. "Hookah-pani band hoga" is one phrase we heard over and over again. It means that

people will face similar ostracisation and social repercussions if they empty the pits themselves.

So people underestimate the time it will take to fill a twin-pit latrine?

NIKHIL SRIVASTAVA

director, research and

Accountability Initiative's own study showed that 61 per cent of people underestimate the time it will take for their latrine pits to fill. The World Health Organisation says that a pit of 50 cubic feet will take around five years for a family of five members to fill. The government is pushing twin-pit latrines under the SBM, that add up to about that much volume, but what people really want is an even larger pit.

When we are talking about pits, we have to talk about two different sets of people--people who can afford to build large, expensive pits and those who cannot. The former are building expensive pits. Twin-pits are only being constructed under the SBM where people cannot afford to build latrines, and have faced pressure to build it

The government cannot build 10x10x10 feet pits for everyone, or even 7x4x6 feet pits for everyone. But everywhere in the world, including in Bangladesh and the west, there is the concept of out-houses which are inexpensive latrines with single pits of about 50 cubic feet. The government hasn't promoted such inexpensive latrines here. We have missed the opportunity to make people understand the benefits of inexpensive latrines.

Remember when the MDWS secretary emptied latrine pits? Those are the kind of actions that should happen. I hope one day the prime minister will set an example by emptying a latrine pit, and show that there is no shame in doing so. Everyone can and should do it.

Source: IndiaSpend

The house that nature built

From collecting rainwater to recycling used water, a startup in Bengaluru is changing the way people live, writes **Sneha Bhattacharjee**

THE OTHER

INDIA

arnessing natural light, wind and raindrops to make houses. This was the concept Abijith Priyam focussed on for his debut venture of building eco-friendly houses. His company, buildAhome.com, creates sustainable houses from naturally available resources.

An engineer by profession, Priyam, along with his team of 50 people, takes into

with his team of 50 people, takes into account simple concepts of everyday science to construct eco-friendly houses that can leave you impressed. The venture was started in 2016 and so far it has built 45 houses across the country.

The team recently worked on a house in Mangalore that is fittingly named "urvi", which means earth. It focuses on the principles of sustainable architecture and leaving minimal carbon impact on the environment. This seemingly simple

idea, however, was hard to implement in a city like Mangalore where there are two seasons of extreme weather – hot summers and incessant rains. "We wanted to build a home that did not need any additional cooling. That is, it will cool on its own and not with the help of air-conditioning." says Privam.

The company designed the concept of the house keeping the city's weather as the central theme. Hot summers meant long sunny days and so solar panels were installed on the roof that generate the entire electricity requirement for the house — from lighting bulbs to heating water. "We gave used solar roof tiles as well that not only generate heat, but act as a substitute for Mangalore tile. The PV (photo volta-

ic) panels too are used as a material for roofs," he adds.

The second defining feature of this house is the way it uses water. Most of the requirement is met by rainwater. A borewell is provided only as a backup for the dry months. The house has an underground tank, with a capacity of over 50,000 litres, and recharge pits to tap rain water

to replenish the ground water. The water used for everyday chores is also reused. "The house recycles and reuses its water through what is called a grey water filtration technique. In this, the water from the sinks, the kitchens and the showers get recycled, and is used for flushing and landscaping purposes," says

The recycling is done using an oil and grease trap, a rain water filter and a water filter with chambers that purifies the water. The house also

has a natural cooling system. Cool air comes from two water bodies within the vicinity and the draft enters the house via a 12-feet *jaail* wall and roof ventilators that have been incorporated in the design.

The eco-friendly concepts extends to every aspect of the house. The exterior of the house is made of clay products and locally-sourced materials. Although concrete is used in the core structure, the amount is half of the requirement of conventional houses. "We have used earthern pots and filler slabs for the concrete structure. This helps in cooling as well as reduces the use of cement and steel," says Priyam.

The flooring of the house, on the other hand, is made of *athamagudi* tiles that are handmade



The Mangalore house that was built by Abhijith Priyam and his team focuses on the principles of sustainable architecture and leaving minimal carbon impact on the environment

and thus more eco-friendly because factory-made tiles emit a large amount of greenhouse gas. For the stairs, the pond and master bedroom, hardwood flooring is used. The chipped off and leftover tiles from inside flooring and granite are used in the terrace. The terrace has a high-performing thermally-insulated and water-proof membrane that is protected by these broken tiles which prevent the roof from heating at all.

The wooden doors and windows are reclaimed from demolished homes. No new tree was cut for the doors or windows of the home. The glass window panes allows light to enter the house but not heat. The two skylights of the home too have the same high-performing glass and the false ceiling in the living room is made from locally available bamboo. The house

has an abundance of greenery inside as well as outside. Instead of a brick compound, the house is fenced by plants. There are plenty of plants inside too. Besides keeping the air fresh, these plants have properties that repel mosquitoes and reptiles away.

The company is now working on a project

The company is now working on a project in Bengaluru and Mysuru each. "More and more people now are willing to go for an ecofriendly house," says Priyam. The only reason people do not want a green house, he says, is lack of awareness and misconceptions about costs. "This entire Mangalore house, including the fittings, cost ₹57 lakh. So, it is not that building a green house will cost you more. The difference is only in the products that go into building the house, and how you procure them," says Priyam.

Behind the speech

Budget speeches conceal more than they reveal

here is one thing that all Budget speeches have in common. The finance minister delivering the speech may be interim or permanent; the poet quoted may be Tamil, Bengali, or North Indian; the emphasis may be on farmers, or on the middle class, or on government employees — but all Budget speeches conceal more than they reveal. It is not the purpose of a Budget speech to reveal and explain the details of the Union Budget, but in fact to conceal them. This is not because of a search for cheap applause lines — multiple such applause lines might exist in a speech, but unlike an American president's State of the Union address, they are not the point of the Budget speech. The

point of a Budget speech is in fact to guide the interpretation of the Budget, and specifically to guide the eye away from those clauses of the Finance Bill or entries in the Demands for Grants that actually matter.

In the interpretation of Budget proposals, what matters is understanding the trade-off that is made. As even a first-year economics student knows, budgeting is by definition an exercise in trading off one need against another, subject to a constraint. For governments, the macro tradeoff is between fiscal rectitude, expenditure, investment, and taxation. Within this, there are multiple smaller trade-offs to make who bears the brunt of taxation, who will benefit from extra spending, which social

and economic priorities will receive funding. Yet it is rare to discover a Budget speech that makes this trade-off explicit. Parliamentarians expect to hear a long list of things that are being funded, and not those that are being defunded or taxed. The sole exception was, perhaps, taxes on cigarettes, which multiple finance ministers in the past have been happy to specifically name. It is remarkably easy, on listening to a Budget speech, to be lost in admiration of the genius of the finance minister in question — any finance minister — who has somehow managed to provide something to everyone without apparently straining the finances of the government unduly.

It is only when the Budget papers are carefully scrutinised that the true picture emerges. The observer will discover then, for example, that defence expenditure might have been squeezed — even if a finance minister has pointed out in his

speech that the allocation is "the highest ever". For example, the latest speech has told you the defence budget has crossed ₹3 trillion for the first time. But the actual allocation will show that the outlay has barely kept pace with inflation — as has been the case over and over again across governments.

When ministers have significantly increased the allocation to a department or a scheme, they are happy to tell the world how much higher the allocation is than the previous Budget estimates in percentage terms. If the increase is not significant, they will instead mention the difference in rupee terms. But when they have squeezed it, they will likely instead state in their speech just the allocation without mentioning the previous year's outlay. If, during the course of a financial year, the allocation for a scheme has been increased — as happens with NREGS frequently — then the minister will mention how much higher

the new allocation for the coming year is than the previous Budget estimates, and not how much higher it is than the Revised Estimates. If instead that ministry, department or scheme found that the finance ministry had not disbursed money over the year, then the speech will highlight how much higher the new outlay is than the Revised Estimates.

Sometimes, the most crucial aspect of the Budget — and the one that determines how the Budget is remembered or written about — is only discovered hours or days after the speech, because it is hidden somewhere in the Finance Bill. Such was the case, for example, with the famous Vodafone retrospective tax amendment which startled observers noticed only several hours after then finance minister Pranab Mukherjee had stopped speaking. The truth is that a Budget speech is often terrific entertainment — but it is rarely useful.

How to build defence capabilities

India needs to move beyond being a licensed weapons producer, and acquire the capability of developing globally competitive weapons systems that meet its requirements



here has been considerable discussion about India's defence industry, including the ongoing debate in Parliament over the purchase of Rafale aircraft, connected offsets and the technical capability of our leading defence PSUs. It is a sad commentary that even 70 years after attaining independence, India is incapable of designing and developing its own MMRCA, and there are doubts whether its premier aerospace company — HAL — is capable of manufacturing these aircraft under transfer of technology. This holds good for most other defence PSUs which may be required to manufacture other complex weapon systems.

Clearly, over the past seven decades, India has failed to put in place a robust defence industrial base capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century. With the cost of imported weapon systems increasing prohibitively, we can no longer afford to acquire such systems from foreign states/companies that require a steady increase in defence budgets. The country has to move beyond being a licensed weapons producer and must rapidly acquire the capabilities and capacities to design and develop weapon systems that meet its requirement and are globally competitive.

Among the challenges that arise in setting up a modern defence industrial base, three factors stand out. First and foremost is the requirement to have a large reservoir of research talent in advanced technology disciplines. Without sustained availability of a quality technology base, no country can be globally competitive in the defence sector. Sadly, India lacks advanced technology human resources capable of quality research work. A recent report by Clarivate Analytics that lists 4000 of the world's most influential researches is most depressing. Only 10 Indians are mentioned in the list (the US tops with 2639, UK has 546 and China 482).

While there are many reasons for this poor performance, one of the most important aspects that promote a deeper understanding of the research work required for complex weapon systems is systems sciences, or systems engineering. This crucial aspect of technological competence is missing from the syllabi of our IITs and engineering colleges. Most leaders and programme managers of high-end technology projects are graduates of

systems engineering (MSc/equivalent), while in India, our scientists tend to learn on the job, leading to time and cost over-runs and poor quality. The country needs tens of thousands of systems engineers if we aspire to be selfcontained in our research for design and development of weapon systems.

The second attribute of a defence industrial base is a high-end technology infrastructure that enables research work for design and development. To be fair, at the time of Independence, India had no defence infrastructure in place, strange for a country that had a robust defence manufacturing capability even in the 16th century. The Mughals developed advanced capabilities for manufacture of heavy and light cannon, and the Marathas set up a thriving ship-building industry towards the end of the 17th century. During British rule, this manufacturing capability was suppressed and later demolished.

A concerted effort was put in place in the 1950s and 1960s to set up capacities for research and manufacturing

Capacities for defence research and manufacture were set up in the 1950s and 1960s but the private sector was ignored

through the creation of the DRDO Ordnance Factories and Defence PSUs. Crucially, the private sector was ignored, a grave mistake that even 70 years later the country is struggling to rectify. In later years, no effort was $made\,to\,modernise\,this\,infrastructure$ to respond to the challenge of the 21st century. The result: The weapon systems produced in the country have failed to satisfy our own armed forces, leave alone attracting global attention for exports.

The third and most important requisite for a defence industrial base is the presence of an R&D system that is self-sustaining and economically rewarding. The current system of a state-controlled and monopolistic R&D stifles motivation and is a constant drag on the need for innovation and modernisation of systems and procedures. Up to the end of the Second World War, most defence R&D was state-funded and high-end defence technologies enabled a wide variety of civilian technologies to ride piggyback, especially in the fields of aerospace, electronics and telecommunication. Today the roles have been reversed, with defence technologies borrowing heavily from advances made in the industrial sector. The technologies of today contained in a cell

phone may well be used to provide a vital function in a

By definition, a defence industrial and technological base incorporates the industrial and technological assets of a country that are of direct or indirect importance for the production of defence equipment and war-fighting capability. It is obvious therefore that the defence sector's needs should be coordinated with other technologyintensive fields such as space, civil aviation, telecommunication, electronics, atomic energy and ship-building. The Indian defence industry must shift its current R&D, which is focused on a "product strategy", to a broader investment and focus on a "capability strategy" around the various disciplines that comprise the defence industrial base.

At a conservative estimate, India imports over \$50 billion worth of telecom and electronics products every year. A broader engagement and investment in R&D projects will enable economies of scale, reduce financial risk in R&D and incentivise private sector participation in the design and development of weapon systems required by our armed forces. This R&D model, also known as "convergence strategy" for its union of technology in defence and industry, is a vital requirement to respond to the wide range of technology applications in

The three attributes of a defence industrial base are connected and heavily dependent on each other. A sustained availability of skilled researchers with access to modern and high-end infrastructure can be harnessed to work on a convergence strategy of R&D that is globally competitive. To achieve this, India needs to lay out a roadmap with clear-cut executive action plans for implementation, to ensure that in 10 years we have an adequate pool of quality research scientists and systems engineers, modernised infrastructure through the setting up of research institutes in collaboration with the private sector, and an entrepreneurial system of R&D in place based on a convergence strategy. A frank and open debate in Parliament is needed and a political consensus arrived at to provide continuity to the implementation of the programme of modernising our defence industrial and technology base.

The writer is Managing Director, Firmbase Consulting, a defence consulting company

Right to inherit land a myth for Indian women

There is a drastic

between genders

inherit land. Over

a decade after the

Hindu Succession

Act was amended,

only one in ten

women inherit

agricultural land

in the right to

difference

AKANSHA DUBEY

he World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2018 ranks India 108th out of 142 countries, with no improvement over 2017. India ranks lower on all pillars of the gender gap - economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival ranking, and political empowerment. We see significant economic disparity between genders in India.

There is a drastic difference between genders in the right to inherit land. More than a decade has passed since Hindu laws that govern succession were amended. Termed as a moment of triumph in 2005, daughters were recognised as copartners in a joint Hindu family and were made joint holders of family property. Until 2005 only Hindu males could rightfully hold a share in family property. Now daughters are entitled to a share in ancestral family property after their father's death under section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 (Act). However, in a 2013 study Landesa found that even eight years after the 2005 amendment only one in ten women inherited agricultural land.

State-specific laws governing devolution of rights in agricultural land present a grim picture. Personal laws like the

Hindu Succession Act, 1956 apply to devolution of rights in agricultural land only in a few states such as Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. In Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, daughters and sisters do not inherit agricultural land. These states give limited rights to widows and widowed mothers where, in case

of remarriage, their right of inheritance is of the state legislature, where Parliament lost. Local laws in these four states prefer has no power to legislate. The court assertmale relations (through the male line) in the order of succession to agricultural land. Only male descendants primarily inherit family agricultural land.

Widows of male lineal descendants are preferred in Jammu and Kashmir but are given low preference in the order of succession. Low preference leads to very low chances of inheritance for women in the family. Delhi gives inheritance rights to widows over agricultural land, but not daughters. In Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, daughters and sisters do inherit agricultural land, though married daughters have a lower preference. At least UP gives an unmarried daughter a primary right of inheritance to a male Hindu's property, but in Uttarakhand an unmarried daughter is quite low in the order of succession. Besides, many states are silent on whether personal religious laws apply to agricultural property. This silence can be interpreted to mean either recognition or thwarting of women's inheritance rights.

The Indian Constitution demarcates

the legislative domain of the Centre and states. "Wills, intestacy and succession" and "transfer of property other than agricultural land" (entries 5 and 6) are part of the Concurrent List and can be legislated upon by Parliament and state legislatures. "Rights in or over land" and "transfer and alienation of agricultural land" (entry 18) are state subjects and cannot be legislated upon by Parliament. Under the Indian Constitution these subjects are the exclusive domain of states. Following this most states in independent India enacted local laws that govern devolution of tenancy and succession rights in agricultural land.

Here the 2005 amendment creates a strange scenario. Under the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, Parliament recognised a daughter's share in family property along with another controversial and less noted change. Prior to 2005 the Act did not apply to any law related to fragmentation of agricultural land, fixation of land ceilings and devolution of tenancy rights in agricultural land. The 2005 Amendment repealed this provision in section 4(2) of the Act with the aim of encouraging women's rights to agricultural land. Since matters relating to agricultural land were considered a state subject under entry 18, repealing section 4(2)

of the Act creates confusion among states. Does this removal extend the Act to all aspects of agricultural land? Or does it throw the ball back to the states?

Recently, in Archna vs Director Consolidation and Others, the Allahabad High Court upheld that the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 does not apply to agricultural land in UP. Agricultural land was considered an exclusive domain

ed that repealing section 4(2) cannot lead to an automatic application of the Act to agricultural land. Existing state laws and Parliament's lack of clarity on repealing section 4(2) of the Act create an avoidable

This gap creates a lack of uniformity in inheritance rights even within a religious sect (Hindus). Varying interpretations by state high courts limit the reach of this welfare amendment. Such loopholes fuel orthodox mindsets of a male-dominated agricultural sphere. Right of inheritance and subsequent ownership of agricultural land further women's empowerment and financial independence. Inheritance rights to agricultural land are instrumental in elevating women in rural areas. There is a dire need to push for state amendments to local laws. Women are equal representatives of the family legacy. No primitive law or customary interpretation can take this away.

The writer is a Stanford Fellow, Landesa. These views are personal

▶ OTHER VIEWS

Chanda Kochhar case raises systemic governance issues

The bank's board first gave her a clean chit, so regulators must up their game

The inquiry by former Supreme Court judge Justice BN Srikrishna into the allegations against former ICICI Bank CEO Chanda Kochhar has taken eight long months to confirm what seems apparent - that she did not conduct herself as she should have in relation to conflict-of-interest issues. It was only last week that the Central Bureau of Investigation filed an FIR against Ms Kochhar, her husband Deepak Kochhar, head of the Videocon group Venugopal Dhoot and ICICI Bank executives for sanction of credit facilities in violation of rules, that caused a loss of ₹1,730 crore to the bank. But clearly, Ms Kochhar erred, and badly at that, in not disclosing to the bank's board her husband's business connections with the Videocon group, which was a client of the bank.

The inquiry report holds her guilty of violation of the bank's "code of conduct, its framework for dealing with conflict of interest and fiduciary duties, and in terms of applicable Indian laws, rules and regulations." The bank's board has accepted the report and decided to treat her voluntary resignation from the bank in October as "termination for cause", also deciding to claw back all bonuses paid to her since April



option entitlements. These are strong penalties, but the question is: How did the board give her a clean chit as recently as March last year? Clearly, regulators need to up their game.

The Hindu, February 1

Obfuscation solves nothing

Sanctity of data should be respected

The resignation of two nongovernmental experts of the National Statistical Commission, including its acting chief, in protest against the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) withholding or delaying the release of its jobs data, report points to blatant political intervention in the work of autonomous bodies that do crucial datagathering tasks. Leaked data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18 suggests a major crisis over unemployment, much of which can be traced back to the disruptive force of the November 2016 demonetisation exercise. The stalled report is said to have revealed that unemployment — at 6.1 per cent in 2017-18 has been at its highest in the past 45 years, according to

NSSO figures. The comparative figures for 2012 are 2.2 per cent. The youth unemployment rate, which is probably more relevant to today's troubled times, is now at "astronomically high levels" of between 13 to 27 per cent.

There is something sacrosanct about gathering data, which loses credibility if there is government intervention. Data helps not only governance but also private enterprise in a country with a burgeoning population. An ostrich-in-the-sand act is obviously not going to help in the face of what is a huge national challenge of finding jobs for hundreds of millions, even as millions more youth join the workforce every year.

The Asian Age, February 1

It's a bid for electoral victory

BJP falls back on *mandir*

The leopard never changes its spots. The Bharatiya Janata Party-led government at the Centre, headed by Narendra Modi, has proved that old adage all over again. It is back to the Ram mandir construction issue. Building the Ram mandir is one sure way of satisfying the devotees of Ram, as well as the restive Rashtriva Swayamsevak Sangh, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and its ideological siblings. The BJP-led government has asked the Supreme Court's permission to return the "non-disputed" part of the government-acquired land to its original owners, a claim that is being contested. These include a trust formed to monitor the construction of the temple. The BJP's request is being cheered by members

of its government as well as its sibling outfits as a step towards temple-building.

The government is going by the measurements suggested by the Allahabad High Court's 2010 verdict and the earlier 1994 Supreme Court ruling that restrictions would only apply to the "disputed" area. It is the 2003 Supreme Court verdict that status quo be maintained in the whole area that the government is politely pretending not to have noticed. The government's request seems to be a nudge in that direction as well as a reassurance to the mandir's champions. The BJP has fallen back on its oldest theme in its bid for elec-

The Telegraph, February 1