



विचार

मानसिक शांति के अभाव में सारे सुख-वैभव व्यर्थ हैं

## सीबीआइ पर घमासान

हजारों करोड़ रुपये के घोटाले की जांच में सीबीआइ की भूमिका को लेकर पश्चिम बंगाल सरकार और केंद्र सरकार के बीच कोलकाता से लेकर दिल्ली तक जैसी तनातनी देखने को मिल रही है वह जितनी अभूतपूर्व है उतनी ही दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण एवं लज्जाजनक भी। किस्म-किस्म के घपलों-घोटालों में सीबीआइ की जांच को लेकर विभिन्न राज्य सरकारों ने पहले भी अपनी आपत्ति जताई है, लेकिन यह पहली बार है जब कोई राज्य सरकार अपनी पुलिस का इस्तेमाल सीबीआइ अधिकारियों को बंधक बनाने में करे। मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी ने न केवल ऐसा किया, बल्कि पूरे मामले को राजनीतिक रंग देने के लिए धरने पर भी बैठ गईं। इससे भी खराब बात यह हुई कि इस धरने में कोलकाता के वह पुलिस आयुक्त भी शामिल हुए जिनसे सीबीआइ अधिकारी पूछताछ करना चाह रहे थे। समझना कठिन है कि उन्होंने पुलिस अधिकारी के बजाय तृणमूल कांग्रेस के कार्यकर्ता की तरह से व्यवहार करना क्यों उचित समझा? यदि ममता बनर्जी को संघीय ढांचे और संवैधानिक मर्यादा की तिनक भी परवाह होती तो वह वैसा बिल्कुल भी नहीं करतीं जैसा किया। आखिर संघीय ढांचे के प्रति तनिक भी संवेदनशील कोई मुख्यमंत्री वैसी राजनीतिक अपरिपक्वता का परिचय कैसे दे सकता है जैसा ममता बनर्जी दे रही हैं? इससे भी हैरानी भरा सवाल यह है कि सीबीआइ जांच को मनमाने तरीके से रोकने के पश्चिम बंगाल सरकार के फैसले का विभिन्न विपक्षी दल समर्थन क्यों कर रहे हैं? क्या इसलिए कि आम चुनाव नजदीक आ गए हैं और ऐसे समय खुद को मोदी सरकार के खिलाफ दिखाना राजनीतिक रूप से लाभकारी हो सकता है? जो भी हो, यह देखना दयनीय है कि कई विपक्षी राजनीतिक दल और विशेष रूप से वह कांग्रेस भी ममता बनर्जी की मनमानी का पक्ष लेने में लगी हुई है जो एक समय उन पर घोटालेबाजों को बचाने का आरोप लगा रही थी।

क्या कांग्रेस एवं अन्य विपक्षी दल चुनावी चिंता में यह बुनियादी बात भूल गए कि सीबीआइ उन लोगों के खिलाफ जांच कर रही है जो लाखों गरीबों के हजारों करोड़ रुपये हड़प कर गए हैं? क्या इससे बुरी बात और कोई हो सकती है कि विपक्षी दल घोटालेबाजों का बचाव करते दिखें? ममता सरकार के साथ विपक्षी दलों का रवैया चिटफंड घोटालों में लुटे लाखों लोगों के साथ घोर अन्याय ही है। यह संभव है कि रोज वैली और सारधा घोटाले की जांच के क्रम में सीबीआइ अपना काम सही तरह न कर रही हो. लेकिन उसकी किसी कथित खामी के विरोध का यह मतलब नहीं कि उसके अधिकारियों को गिरफ्तार करने का काम किया जाए। आखिर न्यायपालिका किसलिए है? इस मामले में इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि इन घोटालों की जांच अदालत के आदेश पर ही हो रही है। यदि ममता बनर्जी को सीबीआइ के तौर-तरीकों पर आपत्ति थी तो उन्हें अदालत जाना चाहिए था। चूंकि सीबीआइ अदालत पहुंच गई है इसलिए उसे न केवल यह देखना चाहिए कि वह अपना काम सही तरीके से करे, बल्कि उसके काम में अड़ंगा लगाने वालों को सबक भी सिखाना चाहिए। इसी के साथ सुप्रीम कोर्ट को यह भी सुनिश्चित करना होगा कि सीबीआइ घोटालेबाजों को जल्द कठघरे में खड़ा करने में सक्षम हो।

## कार्यसंस्कृति जरूरी

समाज में सभी के लिए जिम्मेदारियां तय होती हैं जिन्हें जिम्मेदारी से निभाना उनका कर्तव्य है। कर्मचारी हिमाचल प्रदेश सहित किसी भी सरकार की रीढ़ होते हैं, जिनके जिम्मे सरकारी योजनाओं को धरातल पर उतारने का जिम्मा होता है। साथ ही उनकी जिम्मेदारी होती है कि लोगों को पेश आने वाली दिक्कतों को दूर करने के लिए समय रहते कदम उठाएं। अगर कर्मचारी ईमानदार हों तो प्रशंसा का पात्र बनता है और गलत तरीके से कार्य करने वाले कर्मचारी सरकार के साथ अपनी साख भी खो देते हैं। कई बार देखा गया है कि अपने हित साधने के लिए कर्मचारी न केवल पद का दुरुपयोग करते हैं, बल्कि सरकार के लिए भी परेशानी का कारण बनते हैं। ईमान डोलने से कर्मचारी की गरिमा ही मिट्टी में नहीं मिलती बल्कि लोगों के मन में पूरी व्यवस्था के खिलाफ गलत सोच पैदा होती है। अच्छा-बरा समझने की शक्ति इंसान में होती है, लेकिन स्वार्थ और प्रलोभन में आकर राह से भटकने के मामले भी कम नहीं हैं। रिश्वत के आरोप में किसी बड़े अधिकारी का पकड़ा जाना या किसी कर्मचारी का डयटी के दौरान नशे का सेवन कर पकड़ा जाना गंभीर मंथन का विषय है। आज के दौर में सरकारी नौकरी मिलना कितना मुश्किल है यह पीड़ा उन उच्च शिक्षित बेरोजगारों से पूछी जानी चाहिए जो नाममात्र वेतन पर निजी क्षेत्र में नौकरी कर रहे हैं। सरकारी नौकरी की चाहत इससे भी देखने को मिलती है कि एक-एक पद के लिए सैकडों आवेदन पहंच जाते हैं। कुछ समय पहले मंडी और सोलन जिलों से ऐसे मामले भी सामने आए थे जब युवाओं न नौकरी न मिलने की कुंठा में जान तक दे दी। ऐसा क्यों है कि कुछ लोग नौकरी पाने के बाद ऐसा व्यवहार करते हैं, जो असहनीय है और समाज के हित में बिल्कुल नहीं होता। सरकार का दायित्व है कि कर्मचारियों की कार्यप्रणाली पर तीखी नजर रखे। कार्यसंस्कृति को ठेंगा दिखाने वाले कर्मचारियों के प्रति उदारता दिखाना सही नहीं है। ऐसे लोगों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई होनी चाहिए, जो काम से जी चुराते हैं।

## विभाजनकारी मानसिकता का प्रदर्शन

(सिख, जैन और बौद्ध सहित) 88 प्रतिशत थे,

वहीं पाकिस्तान में यह संख्या 24 प्रतिशत और

बांग्लादेश में 28 प्रतिशत थी। किंतु आज जहां

पाकिस्तान में हिंदू-सिख 1.5 प्रतिशत रह गए हैं,

इसका कारण मजहबी कट्टरता, मतांतरण, हत्या

और सामाजिक शोषण है। 1970 के दशक में

अफगानिस्तान में हिंदुओं और सिखों की संख्या

लगभग ढाई लाख थी, जो 1990 में मजहब प्रेरित

गृहयुद्ध के बाद निरंतर घटते हुए अब महज कुछ

हजार ही रह गए हैं। त्रासदी देखिए कि जिस

भुभाग में सिंध्-सरस्वती नदी के तट पर वैदिक

साहित्य की रचना हुई थी, वहां उस मूल संस्कृति

का नाम लेने वाले सम्मान के साथ जीवन जीने

पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान

से मजहबी अत्याचार झेलने के बाद जो गैर-

मुस्लिम शरणार्थी भारत आए, आज उनकी

संख्या लाखों में है। इस पृष्ठभूमि में नागरिकता

संशोधन विधेयक का विरोध करने वाले.

विशेषकर मोदी विरोधी राजनीतिक दलों का

मख्य आरोप है कि यह संविधान के खिलाफ

के मौलिक अधिकार से वंचित हैं।



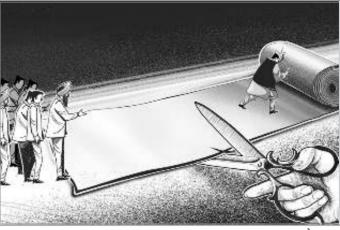
जहां स्वयंभू सेक्युलरिस्ट रोहिंग्या मुसलमानों को भारत में शरण देने के लिए आंदोलनरत हैं तो पड़ोसी देशों में प्रताड़ित अल्पसंख्यकों को नागरिकता देने के विरोध में जुटे हैं

ल में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के जम्मू-कश्मीर और पश्चिम बंगाल दौरे से 'नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक' फिर से सार्वजनिक विमर्श में है। लोकसभा से पारित होने के बाद यह राज्यसभा में लंबित है जहां विरोधी दलों के साथ सरकार के कुछ सहयोगियों ने भी मोर्चा खोल दिया है। इसके विरोध में असम और पूर्वोत्तर के कुछ हिस्सों में कई संगठन प्रदर्शन भी कर रहे हैं। इस प्रस्तावित कानून का उद्देश्य बांग्लादेश, पाकिस्तान और अफगानिस्तान से मजहबी अत्याचार के कारण 31 दिसंबर 2014 तक भारत में आए हिंदू, सिख, बौद्ध, जैन, पारसी और ईसाई शरणार्थियों को कुछ शर्तों के साथ नागरिकता प्रदान करना है। जम्मू के विजयपुर में तीन फरवरी को एक रैली में पीएम मोदी ने जो कहा है, वह काफी महत्वपूर्ण है। उनके अनुसार, 'मां भारती की कई संतानों ने पाकिस्तान, अफगानिस्तान और बांग्लादेश में अत्याचारों का सामना किया है। हम उन लोगों के साथ खड़े रहेंगे, जो एक समय भारत का हिस्सा थे, किंतु 1947 में विभाजन के कारण हमसे अलग हो गए थे। जब कांग्रेस सत्ता में थी तो उसने हमारे भाइयों और बहनों की पीड़ा पर ध्यान नहीं दिया। हम प्रतिबद्धता के साथ नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक लाए हैं। यदि धर्म के आधार पर उनके साथ भेदभाव हुआ है तो देश उनके साथ खड़ा रहेगा।' पश्चिम बंगाल की ठाकुरनगर रैली में भी उन्होंने ऐसे ही विचार व्यक्त किए थे।

अपने भाषणों में जिस विभीषिका का उल्लेख पीएम मोदी ने किया है आखिर उसे संचालित करने वाला दर्शन कौनसा है? क्या यह सत्य नहीं कि उसी चिंतन ने भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप में पहले मुस्लिम अलगाववाद की नींव डाली, जिस पर बाद में हजारों-लाखों निरपराधों के शवों पर विभाजन किया गया और आज भी इसका प्रयास किया जा रहा है? 19वीं शताब्दी के अंत में मुस्लिम समाज का एक बड़ा वर्ग जिस विकृत 'द्विराष्ट्र सिद्धांत' से स्वयं को जोड़े हुए था-उसे आवश्यक खुराक 'काफिर-कुफ' की उसी अवधारणा से मिल रही थी, जिसमें इस्लाम के जन्म से पहले की सभ्यता, संस्कृति और गैर-मुस्लिमों के प्रति घृणा का भाव था।

जब 1947 में मजहब के नाम पर विभाजन के बाद वैश्विक मानचित्र पर इस्लामी राष्ट्र के रूप में पाकिस्तान उभरा तब भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप को मजहबी संकट से मुक्त हो जाना चाहिए था, परंतु क्या ऐसा हुआ? फिलहाल भारत, पाकिस्तान और बांग्लादेश में विश्व के 22 फीसद से अधिक लगभग 170 करोड़ लोग बसे हैं जिनमें हिंदुओं (सिख, जैन और बौद्ध सहित) की आबादी 105 करोड़ है तो मुस्लिमों की 55 करोड़। स्वतंत्रता के समय यहां हिंदुओं की आबादी 73.5 प्रतिशत थी, जो वर्ष 2018 में 60 प्रतिशत रह गई है। स्वतंत्रता के समय ऐसे अनुपात के अनुसार फिलहाल हिंदुओं की संख्या 125 करोड़ होनी चाहिए थी, लेकिन यह 105 करोड़ है। शेष 20 करोड़ हिंदू कहां गए? आज जो दल नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक का विरोध कर रहे हैं, क्या वे इसका उत्तर दे पाएंगे ?

विभाजन के समय शेष भारत में जहां हिंदू



है और भाजपा इसके माध्यम से क्षेत्र का जनसांख्यिकी अनुपात प्रभावित कर स्थानीय संस्कृति और परंपरा को नष्ट करना चाहती है। यदि इस आक्षेप को आधार बनाया जाए तो वहीं बांग्लादेश में यह आंकड़ा आठ प्रतिशत है।

वे सभी उन राज्यों के बारे में क्या कहेंगे जहां अवैध घुसपैठ और बलात मतांतरण के कारण जनसांख्यिकीय अनुपात में व्यापक अंतर आ चुका है। असम की वर्तमान 3.12 करोड़ आबादी में से 1.91 करोड़ (61.4 प्रतिशत) हिंदू तो मुस्लिम 1.07 करोड़ (34.2 प्रतिशत) हैं। 1971 से 1991 के बीच यहां मुस्लिम जनसंख्या में 77 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि हुई है और उसके बाद प्रत्येक दशक में उनकी आबादी में 29 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी हुई है, जबिक 1991 से यहां हिंदुओं की वृद्धि दर निरंतर घट रही है।

वर्ष 1951 में पश्चिम बंगाल की कुल जनसंख्या 2.63 करोड थी जिसमें मुसलमानों की आबादी पचास लाख से कम थी, जो 2011 की जनगणना में पांच गुना से अधिक बढ़ गई। आज पश्चिम बंगाल की कुल जनसंख्या 9.5 करोड में से 2.5 करोड से अधिक मुसलमान हैं-यानी कुल आबादी का 27 प्रतिशत। कई इलाकों

में मुस्लिम आबादी 50 से 70 प्रतिशत तक पहुंच गई है। इसी तरह वर्ष 2001 में अरुणाचल प्रदेश में हिंदू 34.6 प्रतिशत थे जो 2011 में घटकर 29 प्रतिशत रह गए। 1971 में इस प्रदेश की कुल जनसंख्या 4.68 लाख में ईसाई एक प्रतिशत भी नहीं थे, किंतु 2011 में वह 30 प्रतिशत से अधिक हो गए। यहां बौद्ध अनुयायियों की संख्या भी 2001 में 13 प्रतिशत से घटकर 2011 में 11.7 प्रतिशत हो गई है। स्वतंत्रता से पूर्व नगालैंड कभी ईसाई बहुल नहीं रहा। 1941 में नगालैंड की कुल जनसंख्या में जहां ईसाइयो की आबादी लगभग शून्य थी, वह स्वतंत्रता के बाद वर्ष 1951 में एकाएक 46 प्रतिशत और 2011 में 88 प्रतिशत हो गई। जनगणना के अनुसार नगालैंड की कुल आबादी 19.8 लाख में 17.1 लाख अनुसूचित जनजाति से संबंधित हैं जिसमें 16.8 लाख लोग यानी 98.2 प्रतिशत ईसाई मतावलंबी हैं।

कालांतर में पाकिस्तान और बांग्लादेश से आए लाखों गैर-मुस्लिम शरणार्थी, नागरिकता संशोधन बिल के राज्यसभा से पारित होने की प्रतीक्षा कर रहे हैं। इनमें से अधिकांश मजहबी उत्पीड़न और इस्लामी कट्टरता के कारण पिछले कई दशकों से भारत में शरण लिए हुए हैं। ऐसे में विधेयक का सियासी विरोध अफसोसजनक है, क्योंकि ऐतिहासिक रूप से सभी हिंदू, सिख जैन, बौद्धों आदि का प्राकृतिक घर वहीं भारत है जिसका विभाजन कर दिया गया था। आज जो स्वघोषित सेक्युलरिस्ट या स्वयंभू उदारवादी विधेयक का विरोध कर रहे हैं और विदेशी मूल के रोहिंग्या मुस्लिमों को भारत में शरण देने के लिए आंदोलन करते हैं, उससे स्पष्ट होता है कि विभाजन के 72 वर्ष बाद भी भारत, पाकिस्तान को जन्म देने वाली जहरीली मानसिकता से मुक्त नहीं हो पाया है। कश्मीर सहित देश के कुछ अन्य

हिस्से, इसके प्रत्यक्ष उदाहरण हैं। (लेखक राज्यसभा के पूर्व सदस्य एवं वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं) response@jagran.com

## बौद्धिक विमर्श की भटकती राह

देश भर के 1,125 केंद्रीय विद्यालयों में सभी धर्म के छात्रों के लिए संस्कृत श्लोक 'असतो मा सद्गमय' वाली प्रार्थना की अनिवार्यता मौलिक अधिकारों का उल्लंघन है या नहीं, इसे लेकर जबलपुर के एक वकील ने गत वर्ष सुप्रीम कोर्ट में चुनौती दी थी। याचिका में कहा गया है कि केंद्रीय विद्यालयों में प्रार्थना का हिस्सा यह श्लोक एक धर्म विशेष से जुड़ा धार्मिक संदेश है। संविधान के अनुच्छेद 28(1) के अनुसार सरकार द्वारा संचालित किसी भी विद्यालय या संस्थान में किसी भी विशिष्ट धर्म की शिक्षा नहीं दी जा सकती, इसलिए इस पर रोक लगाई जानी चाहिए। याचिका में यह भी कहा गया है कि प्रार्थना के बजाय बच्चों में वैज्ञानिक सोच विकसित की जानी चाहिए जिससे छात्रों में बाधाओं और चुनौतियों के प्रति व्यावहारिक दृष्टिकोण की प्रवृत्ति विकसित होती है। बहस के दौरान यह बात भी उठी कि विवादित संस्कृत श्लोक हिंदू धर्म से जुड़े बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद से लिया गया है और इसलिए यह धर्म विशेष से जुड़ा हुआ है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट के दो जजों की पीठ ने मामले को अब संविधान पीठ को सौंप दिया है।

प्रसिद्ध अमेरिकी राजनीति विज्ञानी सैमुअल हटिंगटन ने लगभग ढाई दशक पहले 'क्लैश ऑफ सिविलाइजेशंस में कहा था कि शीत युद्ध के बाद लोगों की सांस्कृतिक एवं धार्मिक पहचान ही संसार में संघर्षों का मुख्य कारण होगी। वैश्वक परिप्रेक्ष्य में हटिंगटन के सिद्धांत की अपनी सीमाएं हैं, लेकिन भारत के संदर्भ में सांस्कृतिक संघर्षों की बात एक हद तक सही है। हालांकि इसकी शुरुआत हटिंगटन की घोषणा के बहुत पहले से हो गई थी। खासतौर से भारत की स्वाधीनता के बाद इसे भलीभांति रेखांकित किया जा सकता है, जिसका साकार रूप हमारे बौद्धिक और शैक्षणिक विमर्शों में स्पष्ट देखा जा सकता है। जिसमें एक तरफ वामपंथी और पश्चिम से प्रभावित तथाकथित उदारवादी बुद्धिजीवी थे तो दूसरी ओर वे लोग जो इस देश की मिट्टी और संस्कृति के माध्यम से अपनी पहचान बनाना चाहते थे। इस दूसरे पक्ष में गांधी जी की परंपरा से जुड़े लोगों के अतिरिक्त विभिन्न अन्य धाराओं के बुद्धिजीवी शामिल थे। दरअसल केंद्रीय विद्यालयों में प्रार्थना पर उठा यह विवाद इसी सांस्कृतिक-बौद्धिक संघर्ष से जुड़ा नया वाकया है। इस विवाद-मुकदमे में संविधानप्रदत्त मूल अधिकार के उल्लंघन का सवाल उठा है। वैसे देखा जाए तो प्रार्थना एवं अध्यात्म और वैज्ञानिक सोच के बीच संबंध के साथ-साथ इस देश के बौद्धिक विमर्श की दिशा सहित कुछ अन्य मुद्दे भी इससे जुड़े हैं।

यह सही है कि अनुच्छेद 28(1) के अनुसार सरकार द्वारा संचालित कोई भी संस्थान किसी भी विशिष्ट धर्म की शिक्षा नहीं दे सकता, लेकिन 'असतो मा सदगमय, तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय, मृत्योर्मामृतं गमय', जिसका अर्थ है, 'मुझे असत्य से सत्य की ओर ले चलो, मुझे अंधकार से प्रकाश की ओर ले चलो, मुझे मृत्यु से अमरता की ओर ले चलो' केवल इसलिए धार्मिक नहीं हो जाता कि यह हिंदुओं के उपनिषद से उद्धृत है। सॉलिसिटर जनरल तुषार मेहता ने कोर्ट में ठीक ही कहा कि 'असतो मा सदगमय' धर्मनिरपेक्ष है। यह सार्वभौमिक सत्य के वचन हैं जो सभी धर्मावलंबियों पर लागू होते हैं। मेहता ने यह दलील भी दी कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट के प्रतीक चिन्ह पर भी संस्कृत में 'यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः' लिखा है जो श्रीमदभगद्गीता से उद्धृत है। इसका मतलब यह तो नहीं हुआ कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट धार्मिक है।

मेहता का तर्क सही है, नहीं तो भारत का राष्ट्रीय आदर्श



'असतो मा सद्गमय' धर्मनिरपेक्ष प्रार्थना है।यह सार्वभौमिक सत्यवचन असल में सभी धर्मावलंबियों पर

लागू होता है प्रो. निरंजन कुमार



वाक्य सत्यमेव जयते भी एक धार्मिक वाक्य हो जाएगा, क्योंकि यह मुंडकोपनिषद से लिया गया है। और तो और हमारा राष्ट्रीय प्रतीक-चिन्ह अशोक स्तंभ भी धार्मिक हो जाएगा, क्योंकि सत्यमेव जयते अशोक स्तंभ के नीचे अंकित है। ज्ञातव्य है कि सम्राट अशोक द्वारा बनवाए इस सिंह स्तंभ में यह आदर्श वाक्य मुल रूप से नहीं है। इस वाक्य को राष्ट्रीय प्रतीक-चिन्ह में अलग से जोड़ा गया। इसे पंडि त नेहरू, डॉ. आंबेडकर और अन्य नेताओं ने 26 जनवरी, 1950 को स्वीकारा था। फिर जिस श्लोक की प्रार्थना पर विवाद हो रहा है वह कोई धार्मिक शिक्षा नहीं है और उसे कांग्रेस सरकार के समय शुरू किया गया था।

कोई प्रबुद्ध समाज अपनी गौरवशाली विरासत को नकार कर आगे नहीं बढ़ सकता। प्रसिद्ध अश्वेत चिंतक मारकस गार्वी लिखते हैं कि अपने अतीत, मूल और संस्कृति के ज्ञान के बिना व्यक्ति एक जड़हीन पेड़ की तरह है। चूंकि भारतीय सांस्कृतिक विरासत की बड़ी थाती संस्कृत परंपरा से आती है तो इसे कैसे छोड़ दिया जाए? फिर इस विरासत के प्रगतिशील, मानवतावादी और धर्मनिरपेक्ष तत्वों को ही अपनाने की बात की जा रही है, विशुद्ध धार्मिक प्रतीकों को नहीं। याचिका के तर्क को अगर मान लिया जाए तो स्कूल-कॉलेजों में पढ़ाए जा रहे हिंदी या अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं के पाठ्यक्रम से महान भिक्त साहित्य को ही बाहर कर देना पड़ेगा, जिसे देसी-विदेशी विद्वानों, यहां तक कि मार्क्सवादी साहित्यकारों और चिंतकों ने भी मुक्त कंठ से सराहा है।

प्रार्थना के विरुद्ध याचिका में दिया एक अन्य तर्क कि यह वैज्ञानिक सोच में बाधक है, भी सही नहीं है। सभी धर्मों में प्रार्थना पर जोर दिया जाता है, लेकिन इसका अर्थ वहां कर्म और वैज्ञानिक सोच से विमुख होना नहीं है। यहां प्रार्थना किसी विशेष वस्तु के लिए न होकर अपनी आत्मा और अंतःशक्ति को जागृत करने के लिए, स्वयं के परिष्कार के लिए है। और यह पूरे स्कूली कार्यक्रम और समय का अत्यंत छोटा हिस्सा है। फिर आज की जटिल होती जा रही जिंदगी में जब बच्चे, किशोर और युवा आत्मिक रूप से कमजोर होकर कई तरह की विकृतियों का शिकार हो रहे हैं उस स्थिति में 'असतो मा सद्गमय' जैसी पंक्तियां उनमें आत्मविश्वास और नैतिक शक्ति का संचार कर सकती हैं।

दरअसल आजादी के बाद से हमारा सांस्कृतिक, बौद्धिक और शैक्षणिक विमर्श जाने-अनजाने वामपंथी और पश्चिमी प्रभाव से आतंकित अंग्रेजीपरस्त लोगों के चंगुल में चला गया था, जहां भारतीय तत्वों के प्रति उपेक्षा या हीनता का और पश्चिमी चीजों के प्रति श्रद्धामिश्रित भय का भाव होता है। इसी भाव के कारण हम आज भी चाणक्य को भारत का मैकियावेली कहते हैं तो कालिदास को भारत का शेक्सपियर और समुद्रगुप्त को भारत का नेपोलियन, जबकि कालक्रम, प्रतिभा और उपलब्धियों-तीनों ही दृष्टियों से चाणक्य, कालिदास और समुद्रगुप्त ऊपर हैं। इसी मानसिकता के कारण भारतीय परिवेश में कानून की गुत्थियों को समझने के लिए किसी भारतीय कृति की जगह हैरी पॉटर को पाठ्यक्रम में शामिल किया जाता है। समय आ गया है कि इस सांस्कृतिक-बौद्धिक संघर्ष में हम अपने सांस्कृतिक अतीत की गौरवशाली जड़ों से जुड़ें। इसी में हमारा भविष्य है।

(लेखक दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय में प्रोफेसर हैं) response@jagran.com



### राष्ट्र प्रेम

प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को अपने राष्ट्र से प्रेम करना चाहिए जिस मिट्टी में हमने जन्म लिया, उसके हम सदैव ऋणी रहते हैं, इसलिए अपने राष्ट्र से प्रेम करके हम उसके प्रति आभार एवं कृतज्ञता व्यक्त कर सकते हैं। किसी भी व्यक्ति की पहचान उसके राष्ट्र से ही होती है, जबकि राष्ट्र किसी व्यक्ति की पहचान का मोहताज नहीं होता। हर व्यक्ति राष्ट्र के लिए होता है, राष्ट्र किसी व्यक्ति के लिए नहीं। हालांकि नागरिकों के चरित्र से किसी देश का चरित्र जरूर रेखांकित होता है। यदि नागरिक राष्ट्र हित में पूर्ण निष्ठा रखें और सभी नियम-कानूनों का पालन करें तो उस राष्ट्र की चारों ओर तारीफ होती है। राष्ट्र हित को न मानने से नागरिकों के साथ देश के चरित्र का भी पतन होता है।

जिस देश में लोगों के बीच आपस में नफरत और घृण व्याप्त होगी, विश्व में उस देश की छवि नकारात्मक होगी इसके विपरीत जहां लोग आपसी मतभेदों को भुलाकर समानता और त्याग का परिचय देंगे, उनके देश की छवि सकारात्मक होगी। राष्ट प्रेम एक ऐसी शक्ति है. जिसमे लोग अपने व्यक्तिगत हितों को त्यागकर सर्वप्रथम राष्ट्र के उत्थान एवं प्रगति के लिए प्रेरित होते हैं। जहां लोगों के बीच जितना ज्यादा आपसी प्रेम होगा, वहां राष्ट्र प्रेम की भावना उतनी प्रबल होगी। जिस प्रकार प्रेम के अभाव मे मनुष्य के अस्तित्व की कामना नहीं की जा सकती, उसी तरह आपसी प्रेम के बिना राष्ट प्रेम कदापि संभव नहीं है नफरत मनुष्य और देश दोनों को भीतर ही भीतर खोखला कर देती है। ऐसे में देश की जनता को आपस में प्रेम रखते हए एक साथ एक दिशा में अग्रसर होना चाहिए। हालांकि अलग-अलग धर्म और समुदायों के कारण देश की जनता के बीच आपस में मतभेद स्वभाविक हैं, पर उनके बीच मनभेद कभी नहीं होना चाहिए।

जब देश के नागरिकों के मन में सभी के लिए एक जैसा भाव, वचन से किसी को आघात न पहुंचे और कर्म देशहित में हो तो उस राष्ट्र में हमेशा शांति का माहौल बना रहेगा और वह तरक्की के नए सोपान तय करता है। वैसे भारत में बीते कुछ सालों से सामाजिक परिदृश्य पूरी तरह बदल गया है. जिसकी वजह से समाज में नफरत और वैमनस्य बढ़ रहा है। यदि देश में अशांति रहेगी तो हम कैसे खुश रह सकते हैं।

शंभनाथ पांडेय

## महापुरुष कर्म से बनते हैं षडयंत्र से नहीं

ाहले के जमाने में एक बार आप महापुरुष घोषित ो लिए तो फिर सर्वमान्य एवं सर्वकालिक ाहापुरुष होते थे। मरणोपरांत महापुरुष के नाम ार संड्क का नाम रखा जाता था और उनकी मूर्ति ौराहे पर लगा दी जाती थी। हालांकि महापुरुषों ी चौराहे पर लगी मुर्ति पर तब कबुतर आंकर ौठते और बीट किया करते थे, मगर परिंदे नादान ोते हैं। अतः उन्हें माफ कर देने की प्रथा रही है। बूतरों की बीट से सने महापुरुषों की मूर्तियों ो आमजन उतने ही श्रद्धा से नमन करते थे, जतना कि वह उन महापुरुषों के जन्म दिवस और गुण्य तिथि पर नहला-धुंला कर साफ-सुथरी की ाई मूर्ति के माल्यार्पण के दौरान करते। वह दौर ोल्फी का नहीं था, मगर ऐसे विशिष्ट महापुरुषों

लोग उनकी प्रतिमा को देख और उनके ादकर्मों के बारे में पढ़कर उनसे प्रेरणा प्राप्त रते और दिल में एक चाह रहती कि मैं भी नके पदचिन्हों पर चल कर एक दिन महापुरुष ानं। परीक्षा में जब महापुरुष पर निबंध लिखने ो आता तो तय रहता था कि 90 प्रतिशत ाच्चे तो महात्मा गांधी पर लिखेंगे ही। बाकी वामी विवेकानंद, नेताजी सुभाषचंद्र बोस,

े कर्म और उनकी मुर्तियों की छवि हर दिल और

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कुछलोग अपने देश के लिए बिना किसी लाभ की इच्छा किए कर गुजरते हैं कि ज उन्हें महापुरुष मान

चंद्रशेखर आजाद, भगत टैगोर, डॉ. आंबेडकर, पं. न वीर सावरकर आदि अनेक उनको महापुरुष मानना है या कोई विवाद न था। सबका अपना धर्म समझते थे। एक जाने क्या हुआ कि नए महाप गए। पिछले कितने दशकों म आया ही नहीं, एक दो अपवा साहब, अटल जी वैसे ही अ

दरअसल महापुरुष न त किसी फैक्टरी में बनाए ज समाज के प्रति संपूर्ण समर्पण व्यक्तिगत लाभ के त्याग भ ऐसा कर गुजरते हैं कि उन्हें जन-जन महापुरुष मान लेता है।

तिवारी जी से घंसू जानना चाह रहा है कि आजकल महापुरुष बन क्यूं नहीं रहे हैं? तिवारी जी का मानना है कि दरअसल नए जमाने के महापुरुष बनने के अभिलाषी जान गए हैं अपनी सीमाएं। अब उन्हें पता है कि वे एक खिंची हुई लाइन से बड़ी लाइन खींचने की क्षमता नहीं रखते हैं। अतः उनके पास बड़ा होने के लिए मात्र एक विकल्प है। पहले से खिंची हुई लाइन को मिटाकर छोटा करना ताकि वे उससे बड़ा नजर आने लगें और लोग भ्रमित होकर उन्हें महापुरुष मान लें। भ्रम का मकड़जाल फैलाने की महारत तो हासिल है ही। इसी कवायद में पुराने महापुरुषों को गलत ठहराने का अभियान चलाने की परंपरा भी चल निकली है ताकि उनको महापुरुषों की सूची से अलग किया जा सके।

कोई इनको कैसे समझाए कि महापुरुष कर्मों से बनते हैं, षडयंत्रों से नहीं। सेल्फी और तोड़-मरोड़कर बनाए गए वीडियो से अगर महापुरुष बनते होते तो अब तक लाखों फेसबुकिया महापुरुष का दर्जा पा गए होते।

( साभार : उड़न तश्तरी ब्लॉग में समीर लाल 'समीर')

#### मूल समस्या की अनदेखी

दुनिया के लिए समस्या बनता बेलगाम चीन शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में आरपी सिंह ने चीन की बढ़ती सैन्य शक्ति को दुनिया के साथ-साथ भारत के लिए भी चिंता का विषय बताया है, लेकिन यह भी हो सकता है कि चीन अपने सुरक्षातंत्र मजबत करने की कोशिश कर रहा हो और दुनिया इसे गलत नजरिये से देख रही हो। मैं लेखक से पूछना चाहता हूं कि अपने देश के सुरक्षातंत्र को मजबूत करने में आखिर बुराई क्या है? क्या किसी देश को अपनी रक्षा तैयारियों को मजबूत करने का अधिकार नहीं है? अन्य देश भी ऐसा करें, चीन ने ऐसा करने से उन्हें रोका तो नहीं है। अगर हम रक्षा और उद्योग क्षेत्र में पिछड़े हैं तो इसकी वजह भी हम ही हैं। समझ में नहीं आता कि भारत जैसे देश अपनी कमजोरियों को दूर कर सशक्त देश के रूप में उभरने के बजाय इसका ठीकरा चीन जैसे मजबूत देशों पर क्यों फोड़ते हैं? क्या यह सच नहीं है कि चीन को आर्थिक तौर पर मजबूत करने में भारत भी बड़ी भूमिका निभा रहा है। भारत अपने उद्योगों को आगे बढ़ाने के बजाय चीनी उत्पादों का बड़ा आयातक बना हुआ है। बेहतर होता कि लेखक यह बताते कि भारत को विकसित राष्ट्र बनने के लिए क्या करना चाहिए? वहीं अगर बेलगाम चीन दुनिया के लिए समस्या बनता नजर आ रहा है तो लेखक को यह भी बताना चाहिए था कि उस पर कैसे लगाम लगाई जानी चाहिए? चीन को रोकने का एक उपाय यह हो सकता है कि दुनिया के सभी देश एकजुट होकर दुनिया में उसके बढ़ते दबदबे को रोकने का प्रयास करें तो वह कभी भी अपनी सैन्य शक्ति के मद में बेलगाम नहीं हो पाएगा। उम्मीद करता हूं कि लेखक अपने अगले लेख में कुछ बेहतर उपायों का जिक्र करेंगे।

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#### मेलबाक्स

#### जिम्मेदारी निभाए नेतृत्व

आधुनिक दौर में भारतीय ग्रामीण समाज काफी हद तक भटक गया है। पहले जहां एक घर की महिलाएं दूसरे घर की महिलाओं से बीच में दीवार होते हुए भी बात कर लेती थीं। आज वही महिलाएं धारावाहिकों की दुनिया में खो गई हैं। यह बदलाव सिर्फ महिलाओं में ही नहीं, अपितु ग्रामीण परिवेश में रहने वाले बच्चों का भी हुआ है। जो बच्चे पहले गांव की मिट्टी में कबड्डी खेलते थे, अब वही बच्चे घर में बैठकर मोटू-पतलू, छोटा भीम या कोई अन्य कार्टून देखना पसंद करते हैं, जिसमें उनका शारीरिक विकास पहले के मुकाबले कम हो रहा है। पहले जो बच्चे रात होते ही दादी या नानी के आसपास पास जमा हो जाते थे कहानी सुनने के लिए, अब वही बच्चे यू ट्यूब पर समय बिताते हैं। देखा जाए हमारे समाज में हाल के दिनों में आईं कुछ समस्याएं इन्हीं की देन हैं। दुख की बात है कि हमारे देश का राजनीतिक और बौद्धिक जगत के प्रभावकारी लोग इस भटकाव को रोकने की गंभीर कोशिश नहीं कर रहे हैं। निखिल कुमार झा, शास्त्री पार्क, दिल्ली

#### रूढिवादी मानसिकता त्यागे समाज

समाज में आई आधुनिकता से महिलाओं की स्थिति बदल रही है, लेकिन समस्या यह है कि आधुनिकता और तरक्की के बावजूद भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं के पास सुखी जीवन व्यतीत करने लायक पर्याप्त धन, प्रत्येक स्तर पर सामाजिक सुरक्षा और सम्मान करने वाले माहौल का अभाव है। आज भी पढी-लिखी और रोजगार करने वाली स्त्री को समाज पुरुष के बराबर नहीं समझता। उन्हें समाज में दूसरे पायदान पर ही रखा जाता है। भारत में पढ़ी-लिखी बुद्धिमान आत्मनिर्भर और स्वतंत्र सोच वाली अकेली युवा महिलाओं को लेकर अहम चिंता यह है कि एक उपयुक्त जीवन साथी मिलने में कहीं ना कहीं उनकी सफलता ही अहम बाधा बन जाती है। इसके पीछे रूढ़िवादी मानसिकता है कि एक स्त्री का ओहदा हमेशा उसके पित से कम होना चाहिए। आज इसी मानसिकता के कारण बहुत सी स्त्रियां एकल जीवन जीना पसंद करती हैं। यही सोच उन्हें ऐसा करने के लिए प्रेरित करती है।

एकता, डॉ. भीमराव आंबेडकर कॉलेज

#### ऐसे कैसे रुकेगा भ्रष्टाचार

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने जब सीबीआइ को सारधा चिटफंड घोटाले की जांच का आदेश दिया है तो इसमें ममता बनर्जी का अड़ंगा डालना गलत है। केंद्रीय जांच एजेंसी की टीम को काम करने से रोकने के साथ ही आरोपित अधिकारी के समर्थन में धरने पर बैठना एक मुख्यमंत्री को शोभा नहीं देता। इस तरह भ्रष्टाचार को कैसे रोका जा सकेगा? कायदे से उन्हें धरने की राजनीति बंद करके आरोपों का सामना करना चाहिए।

नीरज कुमार पाठक, नोएडा

इस स्तंभ में किसी भी विषय पर राय व्यक्त करने अथवा दैनिक जागरण के राष्ट्रीय संस्करण पर प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त करने के लिए पाठकगण सादर आमंत्रित हैं। आप हमें पत्र भेजने के साथ ई-मेल भी कर सकते हैं।

> अपने पत्र इस पते पर भेजें : दैनिक जागरण, राष्ट्रीय संस्करण, डी-210-211, सेक्टर-63, नोएडा ई-मेल: mailbox@jagran.com

## टकराव और चुनौती

लकाता में रविवार को सीबीआइ और राज्य पुलिस के बीच जो कुछ हुआ, वह हैरान करने वाली घटना है। सीबीआइ के चालीस सदस्यों का दल सारदा चिटफंड घोटाले की जांच के सिलिसले में कोलकाता के पुलिस किमश्नर के घर पर छापा मारने पहुंचा था, लेकिन स्थानीय पुलिस ने सीबीआइ टीम को पुलिस आयुक्त के आवास में घुसने नहीं दिया। पुलिस सीबीआइ के पांच अफसरों को अपने साथ थाने ले गई और कुछ घंटे तक वहीं बिठाए रखा। मामला तब और गरमा गया जब इस घटना के तत्काल बाद स्थानीय पुलिस ने कोलकाता स्थित सीबीआइ के दफ्तर को अपने कब्जे में ले लिया। इसके बाद केंद्रीय गृह मंत्रालय के निर्देश पर सीबीआइ के कोलकाता दफ्तर के बाहर सीआरपीएफ तैनात कर दी गई। हालात तब और गंभीर हो गए जब राज्य की मुख्यमंत्री सीबीआइ की कार्रवाई के विरोध में धरने पर बैठ गईं और केंद्र-राज्य के बीच सियासी पारा तेजी से चढ़ना लगा। कोलकाता की यह घटना एक तरह से केंद्र और राज्य के बीच शक्ति-परीक्षण में तब्दील हो गई और इसके दूरगामी संदेश अच्छे नहीं कहे जा सकते।

इस घटना के राजनीतिक पहलू जो हों, लेकिन सीबीआइ और पुलिस के बीच टकराव को लेकर जो सवाल उठे हैं, वह गंभीर बात है। पुलिस और सीबीआइ के अधिकारी अच्छी तरह से उन नियम-कानूनों को जानते-समझते हैं जिनके तहत जांच और छापे जैसी कार्रवाई को अंजाम दिया जाता है। तो फिर टकराव की नौबत आनी ही नहीं चाहिए थी। अगर जांच एजेंसी स्वाभाविक रूप से अपना काम कर रही थी तो उसे करने दिया जाना चाहिए था। लेकिन सवाल सीबीआइ के अधिकार को लेकर उठा है। राज्य सरकार ने पिछले साल 16 नवंबर को दिल्ली पुलिस एस्टेब्लिशमेंट एक्ट के तहत सीबीआइ को दी गई मान्यता और सहमित वापस ले ली थी। इसके बाद कार्रवाई का सीबीआइ का अधिकार खत्म हो जाता है। क्या सीबीआइ के अफसरों को यह कानूनी पेंच पता नहीं रहा होगा! पुलिस कमिश्नर के खिलाफ तलाशी के लिए सीबीआइ को पहले राज्य सरकार से इजाजत लेनी थी, जो उसने नहीं ली। इसी को राज्य सरकार ने मुद्दा बना लिया।

कोलकाता के मौजूदा पुलिस किमश्नर खुद उस विशेष जांच दल के प्रमुख थे जिसने सारधा चिटफंड घोटाले की जांच की थी। उन पर सबूत नष्ट करने का आरोप है, इसलिए सीबीआइ उनके घर पर तलाशी के लिए पहुंची थी। सीबीआइ सुप्रीम कोर्ट के आदेश पर ही इस मामले की जांच कर रही है। सीबीआइ का कहना है कि कई नोटिसों के बाद भी पुलिस कमिश्नर जांच में मदद नहीं कर रहे, इसलिए उसे इस कार्रवाई का फैसला करना पड़ा था। इस मामले में सीबीआइ ने अब सुप्रीम कोर्ट का दरवाजा खटखटाया है। लेकिन इस पूरे घटनाक्रम ने जो सबसे बड़ा सवाल खड़ा किया है वह यह कि अगर राज्य दिल्ली पुलिस एस्टेब्लिशमेंट एक्ट के तहत सीबीआइ को दी गई मान्यता और सहमति वापस लेने जैसा कदम उठाने लगे और किसी भी मामले को राजनीति से प्रेरित बताते हुए उसमें शामिल लोगों की जांच की इजाजत नहीं दें तो सीबीआइ गंभीर घोटालों और मामलों की जांच कैसे कर पाएगी? फिर तो राज्य जिसके खिलाफ जांच कराना चाहें उससे पूछताछ की इजाजत दें और जिसके खिलाफ न चाहें, उसके लिए न दें। पिछले कुछ महीनों में वैसे ही सीबीआइ की साख को भारी धक्का लगा है। ऐसे में आमजन के मन में सीबीआइ और पुलिस के काम और राजनीतिक इस्तेमाल को लेकर सवाल उठने लाजिमी हैं। साथ ही, ऐसा टकराव देश के संघीय ढांचे के लिए भी चुनौती है।

सर जिस तेजी से दुनिया की सबसे गंभीर और जानलेवा बीमारी के रूप में सामने आया है, वह चिंताजनक है। आम धारणा तो यही है कि कैंसर का मतलब मौत होता है। लेकिन यह सही नहीं है। अगर समय पर निदान हो जाए तो इस बीमारी से निपटा जा सकता है। कैंसर के इलाज की दिशा में जो काम और शोध हो रहे हैं और इलाज की जो नई-नई तकनीक विकसित की जा रही हैं, उनसे काफी हद तक इसे रोक पाने में सफलता मिली है। हां, कैंसर पूरी तरह आज भी लाइलाज है, तमाम देशों के वैज्ञानिक इसका इलाज खोज लेने या इसके करीब होने का दावा करते रहे हैं, लेकिन आधिकारिक घोषित तौर पर चिकित्सा विज्ञानी इसका इलाज खोज पाने में कामयाब नहीं हो पाए हैं। समस्या यह है कि पर्याप्त इलाज और जागरूकता के अभाव में लोग कैंसर से लड़ नहीं पाते। फिर, कैंसर शब्द ही अपने में इतना खौफ पैदा कर देने वाला है कि मरीज की आधी जान तो इसका पता लगते ही निकल जाती है। इसलिए कैंसर नाम की बीमारी से निपटने के लिए दो चीजें सबसे जरूरी हैं, पहला- पर्याप्त इलाज और दूसरी- इस बीमारी के बारे में जागरूकता।

भारत में पिछले कुछ सालों में कैंसर के मरीजों की संख्या में बेहताशा बढ़ोतरी देखी गई है। महानगरों, शहरों–कस्बों में बढ़ता वायु-जल प्रदूषण और बदलती जीवन शैली इसके बड़े कारणों में से हैं। भारत के ज्यादातर शहर गंदगी और वायु प्रदूषण की मार झेल रहे हैं। इन समस्याओं से निपटने में हमारा शासन तंत्र पूरी तरह विफल साबित हुआ है। अगर लोगों को साफ हवा और खाने-पीने की चीजें ही शुद्ध नहीं मिलेंगी तो स्वस्थ जीवन की कल्पना कैसे की जा सकती है! वायु प्रदूषण से सबसे ज्यादा फेफड़ों के कैंसर के मरीज सामने आ रहे हैं और इनकी तादाद हर साल बढ़ रही है। लेकिन वायु प्रदूषण से निपटना सरकारों और प्रशासन की प्राथमिकता में कहीं नहीं है। मिलावटी खाद्य पदार्थ कैंसर का कारण बनते हैं, लेकिन मिलावट के कारोबार पर रोक लगाना कैंसर से लड़ने से भी ज्यादा मुश्किल है।

भारत में कैंसर का एक बड़ा कारण तंबाकू भी है। बीड़ी-सिगरेट और गुटखे का इस्तेमाल जिस तेजी से हो रहा है, वह दहलाने वाला है। बच्चों से लेकर बूढ़े तक तंबाकू का किसी न किसी रूप में धड़ल्ले से सेवन कर रहे हैं। महिलाएं भी इससे अछूती नहीं हैं। चौंकाने वाला तथ्य तो यह है कि मुंह के कैंसर के ज्यादातर मामले तंबाकू से सेवन से जुड़े हैं। हालांकि हर तंबाकू उत्पाद के पैकेट पर चेतावनी लिखी होती है, लेकिन जानते-बूझते भी लोग इसे छोड़ते नहीं है। सरकारें न तो इन उत्पादों का उत्पादन बंद कराने की दिशा में कदम उठाने की इच्छुक दिखाई देती हैं न ही उनमें इतनी हिम्मत है। शहर और महानगरों की बात तो दूर, गांवों-कस्बों तक में नशे की समस्या गंभीर रूप धारण कर चुकी है। ऐसे में सवाल है कि देश की आबादी को कैंसर होने से कैसे बचाया जाए! कैंसर के मरीजों की तादाद जिस तेजी से बढ़ रही है, उसकी तुलना में इलाज की सुविधाएं एक तरह नहीं के बराबर ही हैं। ज्यादातर मामलों में कैंसर का समय पर पता भी नहीं चल पाता और जब पता चलता है तब तक मरीज मौत के करीब पहुंच चुका होता है। अमीर लोग तो विदेश में इलाज करा लेते हैं, लेकिन मध्यवर्गीय या गरीब के पास न पैसा है, न सुविधाएं। कैंसर से निपटने के लिए जितना इलाज जरूरी है, उससे ज्यादा जरूरत है उन समस्याओं से निपटने की जो कैंसर का कारण बन रही हैं।

## कल्पमधा

अपवित्र कल्पना भी उतनी ही बुरी होती है, जितना बुरा अपवित्र कर्म होता है। –विवेकानंद

# रेल हादसे से उठे सवाल

योगेश कुमार गोयल

एक तरफ जहां पुरानी पड़ चुकी जर्जर पटरियों पर आधुनिक ट्रेनें सरपट दौड़ रही हैं, वहीं देशभर में लगभग सभी स्थानों पर पटरियां अपनी क्षमता से कई गुना ज्यादा बोझ ढो रही हैं। भारतीय रेलवे के कुल एक हजार दो सौ उन्नीस रेलखंडों में से करीब चालीस फीसद पर ट्रेनों का जरूरत से ज्यादा बोझ है। एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक दो सौ सैतालीस रेल खंडों में से करीब पैंसट फीसद तो अपनी क्षमता से सौ फीसद से भी अधिक बोझ ढोने को मजबूर हैं।

तीन दिन पहले सीमांचल एक्सप्रेस हादसे में सात से ज्यादा यात्रियों की मौत हो गई और कई लोग घायल हो गए। हादसे के समय ट्रेन पुरी रफ्तार से दौड रही थी। प्रारंभिक जांच में इस रेल हादसे का प्रमुख कारण पटरी टूटी होना बताया गया। इस हादसे के ठीक दो दिन पहले यानी एक फरवरी को जयपुर के पास जबलपुर से अजमेर जा रही ट्रेन भी पटरी से उतर गई थी। लेकिन तब ट्रेन की रफ्तार काफी कम थी, इसलिए बडा हादसा टल गया। पटरी से ट्रेनों का उतरना अब कोई नई बात रह गई है। शायद ही कोई महीना गजरता हो जब ऐसे हादसे न होते हों। जब भी कोई रेल हादसा होता है तो भविष्य में ऐसे हादसों की पुनरावृत्ति रोकने के लिए कड़े कदम उठाने का रटा-रटाया जवाब सुनाई देने लगता है। लेकिन चंद दिनों बाद जब फिर कोई बड़ा रेल हादसा सामने आता है तो रेलवे के पिछले दावों

की कलई खुल जाती है। ऐसे रेल हादसों के बाद प्रायः जांच के नाम पर कुछ रेल कर्मचारियों और अधिकारियों पर गाज गिरती है, लेकिन समुचा रेल तंत्र उसी पुराने ढरें पर रेंगता रहता है और इसीलिए हादसे थमने का नाम नहीं लेते।

हर रेल हादसे के बाद उसके कारणों को लेकर तरह-तरह की बातें कही-सूनी जाती हैं। कभी रेलकर्मियों की लापरवाही की बात सामने आती है तो कभी कहा जाता है कि बाहरी ताकतों ने इसे अंजाम दिया। हर दुर्घटना के बाद जांच के आदेश दिए जाते हैं और जांच के लिए उच्च स्तरीय समिति बनाई जाती है। लेकिन समिति की रिपोर्ट फाइलों में दब कर रह जाती है। यही कारण है कि किसी भी हादसे में कभी पता तक नहीं चलता कि दोषी कौन था? ऐसे में चंद अफसरों या कर्मियों पर कार्रवाई करने से हालात बदलने वाले नहीं हैं, बल्कि रेल मंत्रालय को उन मूल कारणों का उपचार करना

होगा, जिनकी वजह से इस तरह के हादसे सामने आते रहते हैं। रेल दुर्घटनाओं के मामले में भारतीय रेलों की क्या दशा है, इसका अनुमान रेल मंत्रालय के ही इन आंकड़ों से लगाया जा सकता है कि पिछले साढ़े चार वर्षों में साढ़े तीन सौ से भी अधिक छोटे-बड़े हादसे हो चुके हैं। 2017 की एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार 2014-15 में जहां एक सौ पैंतीस रेल हादसे हुए, वहीं 2015-16 में एक सौ सात और 2016-17 में एक सौ चार रेल हादसे सामने आए।

तत्कालीन रेलमंत्री ने संसद में बताया था कि 2012 से 2017 के बीच पांच वर्षों में देश में पांच सौ छियासी रेल हादसे हुए

जिनमें तीन सौ आठ बार ट्रेनें पटरी से उतरीं और उन हादसों में एक हजार ग्यारह लोग मारे गए। इनमें पटरी से उतरने वाली ट्रेनों ने ही साढ़े तीन सौ जानें ले लीं। रेलवे सुरक्षा और यात्री सुरक्षा से जुड़े एक सवाल के जवाब में बताया गया था कि रेल हादसों की बड़ी वजह रेलवे स्टाफ की नाकामी, सडक पर चलने वाली गाडियां, मशीनों की खराबी और तोड़-फोड़ रही। 2014-15 के एक सौ पैंतीस रेल हादसों में साठ, 2015-16 में हुए एक सौ सात हादसों में पचपन और 2016–17 में पिच्यासी में से छप्पन दुर्घटनाएं रेलवे कर्मचारियों की नाकामी या लापरवाही के चलते हुईं।

हालांकि 2016-17 के रेल बजट में रेल दुर्घटनाएं रोकने के लिए 'मिशन जीरो एक्सीडेंट' नामक एक विशेष अभियान शरू करने की घोषणा

की गई थी। इसके बाद रेल दुर्घटनाओं पर अंकुश लगाने के लिए त्वरित पटरी नवीनीकरण, अल्ट्रासोनिक रेल पहचान प्रणाली और प्राथमिकता के आधार पर मानवरहित रेलवे क्रॉसिंग खत्म किए जाने जैसे विभिन्न सुरक्षा उपायों पर काम भी चल रहा है, लेकिन अभी तीव्र गति से बहुत कुछ किया जाना बाकी है। 2016-17 के दौरान एक हजार पांच सौ तीन मानव रहित क्रॉसिंग खत्म की गईं जबिक चार सौ चौरासी मानव युक्त फाटकों को पुल या भूमिगत रास्ता बना कर खत्म किया गया। अगर इन सब उपायों के बावजूद रेल हादसों पर लगाम नहीं लग रही है तो इसके कारणों पर चर्चा करना बेहद जरूरी है। सवाल है कि रेल मंत्रालय वाकई रेलों की दशा

सुधारने के लिए कृतसंकल्प है और इस दिशा में गंभीर प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं तो रेल दुर्घटनाएं क्यों नहीं रुक रही हैं ? रेल दुर्घटनाओं पर लगाम न लग



पाने का एक बहुत बड़ा कारण है रेल पटरियों की जर्जर हालत, जिन पर सरपट दौड़ती रेलें कब किस जगह बड़े हादसे का शिकार हो जाएं, कहना मुश्किल है। एक तरफ जहां पुरानी पड़ चुकी जर्जर पटरियों पर आधुनिक ट्रेनें सरपट दौड़ रही हैं, वहीं देशभर में लगभग सभी स्थानों पर पटरियां अपनी क्षमता से कई गुना ज्यादा बोझ ढो रही हैं। भारतीय रेलवे के कुल एक हजार दो सौ उन्नीस रेलखंडों में से करीब चालीस फीसद पर ट्रेनों का जरूरत से ज्यादा बोझ है। एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक दो सौ सैंतालीस रेल खंडों में से करीब पैंसठ फीसद तो अपनी क्षमता से सौ फीसद से भी अधिक बोझ ढोने को मजबूर हैं। कुछ रेल खंडों में पटरियों की कुल क्षमता से दो सौ बीस फीसद तक ज्यादा टेनों को चलाया जा रहा है। इस वजह से भी अनेक हादसे

हो रहे हैं और रेल तंत्र इस आंखें मुंदे है।

भारतीय रेल तंत्र दुनिया का सबसे बड़े रेलवे तंत्र है। भारतीय रेलों में प्रतिदिन सवा करोड़ से ज्यादा लोग यात्रा करते हैं। लेकिन यात्रियों के बढ़ते बोझ के बावजूद पटरियों को उतना नहीं बढ़ाया गया, जितनी आवश्यकता थी। रेलवे की स्थायी सिमिति ने अपनी सुरक्षा रिपोर्ट में स्पष्ट कहा है कि वर्ष 1950 से 2016 के बीच दैनिक रेल यात्रियों में जहां एक हजार तीन सौ चवालीस फीसद की वृद्धि हुई है, वहीं माल ढुलाई एक हजार छह सौ बयालीस फीसद तक बढ गई है। लेकिन इसके विपरीत रेल पटरियों का विस्तार महज तेईस फीसद हो सका है। वर्ष 2000 से 2016 के बीच दैनिक यात्री ट्रेनों की संख्या में भी करीब तेईस फीसद की बढ़ोतरी हुई है।

स्पष्ट है कि रेल पटरियों पर बीते दशकों में कई गुना बोझ बढ़ा है। मालगाड़ियों की बात करें तो अधिकांश मालगाड़ियां भी पटरियों पर क्षमता से कहीं अधिक भार लिए दौड़ रही

हैं। रेल नियमावली के अनुसार मौजूदा ट्रैक पर चार हजार आठ सौ से पांच हजार टन भार की मालगाड़ियां ही चलाई जा सकती हैं। लेकिन पिछले कई वर्षों से सभी पटरियों पर इससे ज्यादा भार लेकर मालगाड़ियां दौड़ रही हैं। भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) की एक रिपोर्ट में निर्धारित भार से कई गुना ज्यादा लेकर चलने वाली मालगाडियों के परिचालन पर आपत्ति जताते हुए उन पर प्रतिबंध लगाने का सुझाव दिया था। लेकिन कमाई के फेर में रेलवे ने कैग के इस महत्त्वपूर्ण सुझाव

को रद्दी की टोकरी में डाल दिया।

भारत में जितने ज्यादा रेल हादसे होते हैं वे रेलवे की हालत को बताने के लिए काफी हैं। रेलों की लेटलतीफी कोई नहीं बात नहीं है। कुछ ट्रेनें तो चौबीस-छत्तीस घंटे तक की देरी से रेंगती रहती हैं और पिछले साल के आंकड़ें देखें तो उसमें औसतन पच्चीस ट्रेनें प्रतिदिन रद्द हुईं। रेलों में डकैती, लूटपाट और बलात्कार की बढ़ती घटनाओं से रेल यात्रियों की सरक्षा पर भी गंभीर सवाल उठते रहे हैं। यह विडंबना ही है कि इक्कीसवीं सदी में तमाम अत्याधुनिक तकनीकों के बावजूद हम रेल हादसों को रोकने में सफल नहीं हो पा रहे हैं और हर साल सैकड़ों लोग इन हादसों में मारे जाते हैं। बेहतर होगा, रेलवे तंत्र यात्रा को सरिक्षत बनाने की दिशा में ठोस कदम उठाए।

## स्वयंभू ईमानदार

## मुकेश पोपली

हुत छोटी उम्र में यह तो मालूम हो ही गया था कि चुनाव के दौरान खड़े होने वाले उम्मीदवारों में बडी पार्टी हो या छोटी, टिकट उसी को मिलता है जो चुनाव जीतने का दम रखता हो। बीकानेर में स्टेशन रोड पर स्थित हमारी दुकान पर स्कूल से आते-जाते मैं अक्सर कुछ देर के लिए रुक जाता था। चुनावों के दिनों में बाजार में बड़ी गहमा-गहमी रहती थी और शोर-शराबा भी बहुत होता था। लाउडस्पीकर लगे हुए तांगों पर उद्घोषक महोदय को 'कुड़ो-कुड़ो' कह कर लोग छेड़ते भी थे। दुकान के ठीक सामने ऊपर वाली इमारत में एक चुनाव कार्यालय भी खुला हुआ रहता था। भाइयो और बहनों, गरीबी और महंगाई से लड़ने के लिए, पानी, बिजली, सड़कों को जन-जन तक पहुंचाने के लिए, देश की अमन-शांति के लिए आप अपना कीमती वोट जनाब फलां साहब को दीजिए। जी हां, आप सबके सुख-दुख में साथ निभाने वाले, ईमानदार, कर्मठ, सुयोग्य और आप सबके चहेते उम्मीदवार का चुनाव चिह्न है- घोड़ा। घोड़े पर अपनी मृहर लगा कर भारी मतों से इन्हें विजयी बनाएं। याद रखिए- घोड़ा... घोड़ा... घोड़ा!' यों हर

नेता कहने को आपके सुख-दुख में साथ निभाने वाला ही होता है। यह बात अलग है कि अधिकतर नेता पांच साल में केवल दो बार अपनी शक्ल दिखाते हैं। एक बार तब, जब वोट चाहिए और दूसरी बार जब चुनाव जीत लिया जाता है, चाहे जैसे भी। इसलिए मेरा यह मानना है कि वोट डालने और नहीं डालने से मतदाता को न कोई लाभ है और न हानि। लेकिन केवल हानि-लाभ की गणना करने से देश

नहीं चल सकता, क्योंकि हमारा यह देश कोई दुकान नहीं है।

हमारे देश में बहुत-सी सरकारें, संस्थाएं, व्यापारिक प्रतिष्ठान, सरकारी कार्यालय, अस्पताल, विद्यालय आदि जगहों पर कुछ लोग वास्तव में ईमानदार हैं, जो जी-जान लगा कर अपना काम करते हैं और देश के प्रति अपने दायित्व निभाते हैं। इनके पास 'ऊपर की कमाई' नहीं होती। इनका हृदय कभी इस बात के लिए नहीं मानता कि काम करने के बदले में किसी से रिश्वत मांगी जाए। हां, इन ईमानदारों के नाम पर कुछ बेईमान लोग रिश्वत जरूर मांग लेते हैं, यह कह कर कि ऊपर भी देना होता है।

जब वोट डालने की उम्र आई तो खद पर गर्व हुआ कि अब हम भी अपनी पसंद का नेता चून सकेंगे। हाथ जोड़ते हुए उम्मीदवारों ने कहा भी- 'आप तो युवा हैं,

आपके कई सपने हैं, आपके सपनों को हम पूरा करेंगे। हम जानते हैं कि आपने कितनी मेहनत से शिक्षा प्राप्त की है, हम आपसे वादा करते हैं कि रोजगार दिलवाने में हम आपकी पूरी सहायता करेंगे। जहां भी हमारी सिफारिश की आवश्यकता हो, हमें बताइएगा। हमारी सरकार, हमारी पार्टी के सभी नेता आप जैसे युवाओं के सहारे इस देश को आगे ले जाने की कसम खा चुके हैं। आपके एक वोट से ईमानदारी की मिसाल कायम होती है। हमें पूरी उम्मीद

है कि आपका वोट हमारे कर्मठ, ईमानदार, आप सभी के प्रिय साथी और हमारी पार्टी के उम्मीदवार श्री श्री को ही मिलेगा। जय भारत, जय हिंद।

खैर, वक्त गुजरता गया, नेता बदलते गए, सरकारें बदलती गईं। लेकिन अभी भी झूठ बोल-बोल कर उन्हें शांति नहीं मिली है और न ही हमें सुकृन। वे सत्ता के भूखे हैं और हम अभी भी अपने कामों को परा कराने के लिए उन पर पुरी तरह से निर्भर। अफसोस इस बात का है कि ईमानदारी से भरपुर नेताओं की आज भी कमी है। ऐसे में सभी पार्टियां और नेतागण ईमानदारी की दुहाई दे रहे हैं। वे दिखावे के लिए यह तो कहते घमते हैं कि जनता से पूछ कर जनता के लिए योजनाएं बनाई जाएंगी, लेकिन जनता से यह नहीं पूछना चाहते कि हम अपनी पार्टी का टिकट किस तरह के व्यक्ति को दें। ले-देकर बात वहीं

आ जाती है कि मतदाता को सात–आठ उम्मीदवारों में से ही किसी एक को चुनने के लिए वोट देना है।

पिछले वर्षों में भ्रष्टाचार के खिलाफ अनेक आंदोलन हुए। सब नेताओं ने अपने आप को ईमानदार बताया। विपक्षी पार्टियों के नेताओं को बेईमान बोल कर वोट हासिल करना अपने आप में बेईमानी है। लोकतंत्र में सबको चुनाव लड़ने की छूट है। सोचना पार्टियों को है कि किसे टिकट दिया जाए और किसे नहीं। ऐसे स्वयंभू ईमानदार घोषित हो जाना ठीक वैसा ही है, जैसे हमारी आंखों को धोखा देकर सड़क छाप जादुगर द्वारा जादुई करतब दिखाना।

दुर्भाग्य से हमारे देश में स्वयंभू भगवान भी बहुत हुए हैं और सबकी पोल धीरे-धीरे खुल रही है। स्वयंभू ईमानदार बनने का परिणाम बहुत भयंकर हो सकता है। इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि देश में भ्रष्टाचार की जड़ें मजबूत हैं, केवल नेताओं को बेईमान बताना या उन पर आरोप लगा देना इस समस्या का समाधान नहीं है। अगर देश बदलना है तो चुनावों की परिभाषा भी बदलनी पड़ेगी। सभी पार्टियों को अपने भीतर झांकना होगा। अगर सार्थक कदम उठाए जाते हैं और फिर चनाव में उतरा जाता है तब तो इस देश की जनता से वोट मांगने का अधिकार बनता है। वरना लोकतंत्र के सामने अभी बहुत सारी बाधाएं मौजूद रहेंगी।

## भाषायी गुलामी

चर्चा सामयिक तो है ही, यह आत्मचिंतन के भी योग्य है। यह सही है कि पश्चिमी और अंग्रेजी भाषा से वैश्विक ज्ञान की गंगा में हम तैर सकते हैं लेकिन 'अधजल गगरी छलकत जाय' की करुण भूमिका ने भी हिंदी को अपने घर में कैद कर रखा है। मैकाले ने अंग्रेजी की दासता से हमें इतना बांध दिया है कि हिंदी बोलने वाला और सामने बैठा व्यक्ति जो अच्छी तरह हिंदी समझ सकता है- दोनों अंग्रेजी के धाराप्रवाह वार्तालाप से अपने स्टेटस यानी हैसियत और कुलीन व्यक्तित्व की रक्षा में मिथ्या मर्यादा के पालन में पारंगत बने दिखते हैं। मझे याद है कि 1981 में बिहार प्रशासनिक सेवा में प्रवेश के तुरंत बाद प्रशिक्षण वर्ग में एक अतिथि व्याख्याता ने आते ही हम सब प्रशिक्षण पाने वालों से पूछा था- आप लोगों से हिंदी या अंग्रेजी में से किस भाषा में बात करूं ? इसके जवाब में 90 फीसद पदाधिकारियों ने नौकरशाही की मजबूत चादर ओढ़े अंग्रेजी में ही बात करने का आग्रह किया था जबकि हम सब पर अपने राज्य में हिंदी में ही सरकारी कार्यों के संचालन की जिम्मेवारी थी। यह तो प्रशिक्षक महोदय की चतुराई रही कि उन्होंने कक्षा में हिंदी में ही बोलना शुरू किया यह कहते हुए कि 'त्रुटियां हिंदी और अंग्रेजी दोनों में होती हैं!'

हिंदी प्रदेशों में शीर्ष नौकरशाही आज भी अंग्रेजी का दामन पकड़े है। प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं में हिंदी आज भी उपेक्षा का शिकार बनी हुई है। करीब दो दर्जन विदेश यात्राओं का मेरा अनुभव साक्षी है कि हिंदी भाषी पर्यटक भी अपनी आन, बान और शान की रक्षा में हिंदी में बात नहीं कर अंग्रेजी की मान-मर्यादा के प्रतीक बने हुए पाए गए। दिल्ली से पटना आने वाले अधिकतर अंग्रेजी समाचार पत्र रोज हवाई जहाज से पहुंच कर अपने

अभिजात श्रेणी के पाठकों को तुप्त कर रहे हैं जबकि हम जैसे सामान्य पाठक रेलगाड़ी से चलकर तीसरे दिन आने वाले हिंदी अखबारों का बासी स्वाद चख पाते हैं। जहां तक हिंदी दिवस के आयोजन से इसके सर्वांगीण प्रसार और इसे बहुमुखी स्वरूप देने का उद्देश्य है- यह कछ समहों तक सीमित होकर रह गया है। उपाय यही दिखता है कि हम अपने घर में कैद हिंदी को आजाद कर आत्महीनता से उबरने की चेष्टा करें।

• अशोक कुमार, पटना, बिहार

विकास का माध्यम तालियों की गडगड़ाहट और वाह-वाह के बीच

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-८, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा २०१३०१, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

आप चाहें तो अपनी बात ईमेल के जरिए भी हम तक पहुंचा सकते हैं। आइडी है : chaupal.jansatta@expressindia.com

वित्तमंत्री पीयूष गोयल ने चुनावी साल का अंतरिम बजट पेश कर दिया है। सरकार ने अपने इस अंतरिम बजट में मध्य वर्ग का दिल जीतने की पूरी कोशिश की है और उसे सबसे बड़ा तोहफा देते हुए पांच लाख की सालाना आय को कर के दायरे से बाहर कर दिया है। इस बजट को समाज के लगभग हर तबके, मध्य वर्ग, किसान, महिला और रक्षा मोर्चे की कसौटी पर कसा जाए तो मौजूदा सरकार की सफलता के तौर पर ही इसे देखा जाना चाहिए। सत्ता पक्ष इसे यों ही विपक्ष पर लक्षित हमले यानी सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के तौर पर नहीं देख रहा है। कुछ दिन बाद होने वाले आम चुनाव में इन बजट प्रावधानों का लाभ सत्ता पक्ष को कितना मिल पाएगा यह तो भविष्य के गर्भ में है लेकिन हालिया पांच राज्यों के विधानसभा चुनाव और रफाल जैसे मुद्दे पर सियासत

करने वाले विपक्ष के लिए चुनौतियां तो बन ही गई हैं। बहरहाल, चुनाव को ध्यान में रखते हुए भी इसे विकास के व्यापक नजरिए और कार्ययोजनाओं वाले बजट की संज्ञा देना गलत नहीं होगा। वित्तमंत्री ने अपने बजट भाषण में कहा कि यह सिर्फ अंतरिम बजट नहीं बल्कि देश की विकास यात्रा का माध्यम है। चुनाव बाद कोई भी पार्टी सत्ता में आती है और इन योजनाओं को अमली जामा पहनाती है तो यह निश्चित ही समाज के सभी वर्गों को बेहतर जिंदगी देने के साथ ही भारत को पूरी तरह

सुरक्षित और दुनिया में प्रभावशाली

के तौर पर खड़ा करने में मददगार साबित होगा। अमन सिंह, प्रेमनगर, बरेली, उत्तर प्रदेश

## बेनामी पर शिकंजा

बेनामी संपत्ति भ्रष्टाचार का जरिया तो है ही, कालेधन को खपाने-छिपाने का स्रोत भी है। बेनामी संपत्ति धारक तमाम लोग राजनीति में भी सक्रिय बताए जाते हैं। नेताओं के साथ नौकरशाह भी बेनामी संपत्ति के जरिए अपनी काली कमाई ठिकाने लगाते हैं। यदि सरकार बेनामी संपत्ति वालों पर सचम्च शिकंजा कसना चाहती है तो उसे आयकर विभाग को आवश्यक संसाधनों से लैस करने के साथ ही यह भी देखना होगा कि बेनामी संपत्तियों के मामलों की सुनवाई के लिए न्यायिक प्राधिकरण अपनी पूरी क्षमता के साथ काम करने में सक्षम हो। अभी ऐसी स्थिति नहीं है और

इसीलिए करोडों रुपए की संपत्तियों की जब्ती के मामले अधर में अटके हैं। नए बेनामी संपत्ति निरोधक कानून के तहत सरकार को एक प्राधिकरण का गठन करना था, लेकिन अभी तक ऐसा नहीं हो सका है। इसके चलते बेनामी संपत्ति जब्ती के मामले तेजी से नहीं निपट पा रहे हैं। अभी इन मामलों का निपटारा धन शोधन निरोधक कानून संबंधी जो प्राधिकरण कर रहा है, वह पहले से ही काम के बोझ से दबा है।

हेमंत कुमार, ग्राम/पोस्ट-गोराडीह, भागलपुर

## मात का सफर

बिहार के जोगबनी से आनंद विहार (दिल्ली) तक चलने वाली सीमांचल एक्सप्रेस के लगभग दस डिब्बे पटरी में दरार होने के कारण हाजीपर में आधी रात को पटरी से उतर गए। इस हादसे में सात लोगों की मौत हो गई और लगभग 25 गंभीर रूप से घायल हो गए। हमारे देश में हर रेल हादसे के बाद रेलवे द्वारा भविष्य में ऐसा हादसा न होने देने के आश्वासन दिए जाते रहे हैं। सीमांचल एक्सप्रेस हादसे के पीछे साजिश बताई जा रही है। अगर यह साजिश थी तो रची कैसे गई? इसका जिम्मेदार कौन है? यदि यह रेलवे की लापरवाही है तो इतनी बड़ी लापरवाही कैसे हो गई? आखिर कब तक होते रहेंगे रेल हादसे? क्या मृतकों के परिजनों को मुआवजा देकर उनके घर की खुशहाली वापसी आ सकती है ? ऐसी बड़ी लापरवाही हर रेल हादसे में होती है मगर इन हादसों को राजनीति का मुद्दा बनाकर छोड़ दिया जाता है।

हर रेल हादसे के बाद जांच की जाती है। सवाल है कि हादसों से पहले ही सुरक्षा प्रबंधों और पटरियों-पूलों की जांच क्यों नहीं होती? क्या रेलवे जांच शुरू करने के लिए हादसे का इंतजार करता है ? रेलवे से अनुरोध है कि भविष्य में ऐसे हादसों को रोकने के लिए सख्त कदम उठाए ताकि तमाम निर्दोष लोगों की जान बच सके।

किशश वर्मा, एमसीयू, नोएडा

## बजट एवं वित्तीय घाटा

द्रीय बजट में 2008 तक बजट घाटे को तीन फी्सदी लाने का लक्ष्य अभी तक पूरा नहीं हो सका है. मौजूदा सरकार ने सत्ता संभालने के समय इसके लिए 2018 की सीमा तय की थी. अंतरिम बजट में प्रभारी मंत्री पीयुष गोयल ने 2019 और 2020 के वित्त वर्षों में यह घाटा 3.4 फीसदी तक रहने का अनुमान व्यक्त किया है. आर्थिक मामलों के सचिव सुभाष चंद्र गर्ग का मानना है कि 2019-20 में यह 3.3 फीसदी भी रह सकता है. सरकार 2020-21 में इसे तीन फीसदी तक लाने को लेकर भी आश्वस्त है. लेकिन, अनेक जानकारों और वित्तीय गतिविधियों पर नजर रखनेवाली संस्थाओं का मानना है कि यह मुश्किल है. सरकार को मिलनेवाले राजस्व और उसके खर्च के अंतर को बजट या वित्तीय घाटा कहा जाता है. इससे यह अनुमान भी मिलता है कि सरकार को कितना कर्ज लेने की जरूरत है. इस संदर्भ में दो तथ्य चिंताजनक हैं. महालेखा परीक्षक की एक ताजा रिपोर्ट में बताया गया है कि वित्तीय घाटे को कम दिखाने के लिए सरकार ने बजट प्रस्तावों से बाहर जाकर कर्ज उठाया है. सरकार पर भारतीय

वित्तीय अनुशासन एवं पूजी निर्माण पर जोर देकर ही वित्तीय घाटे को कम किया जा सकता है, लेकिन देश की बहुत बड़ी आबादी के लिए कल्याणकारी योजनाएं भी जरूरी हैं .

खाद्य निगम का ही एक लाख करोड़ रुपये से अधिक बकाया है. सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र द्वारा उधार लेने की जरूरत का आकलन सकल घरेलू उत्पादन के आठ फीसदी से भी ज्यादा है. वित्तीय उत्तरदायित्व एवं बजट प्रबंधन कानून, 2003 के तहत कुल कर्ज और कुल घरेलू उत्पादन के अनुपात को 2024-25 तक 40 फीसदी तक लाना है. वर्ष 2017-18 में यह 50.1 फीसदी था. पिछले बजट में इस आंकड़े को 2018-19 में 48.8 फीसदी, 2019-20 में 46.7 फीसदी

और 2020-21 में 44.6 फीसदी करने का लक्ष्य रखा गया था. इन वर्षों में बजट घाटे को क्रमशः 3.3, 3.1 और तीन फीसदी तक लाने का इरादा जताया गया था. निश्चित रूप से वित्तीय अनुशासन एवं पूंजी निर्माण पर जोर देकर ही इन लक्ष्यों को पाया जा सकता है, लेकिन हमें यह भी समझना होगा कि जानकार जिन कल्याणकारी योजनाओं को लोकलुभावन या चुनावी राजनीति से प्रेरित कहते हैं, वे देश की बहुत बड़ी आबादी की बुनियादी जरूरतों को पूरा कर उसे विकास की राह पर लाने के लिए बहुत जरूरी हैं. मनरेगा के लिए आवंटन में बढ़ोतरी, छोटे किसानों को छह हजार रुपये सालाना की सहायता तथा असंगठित क्षेत्र के कामगारों के लिए पेंशन योजना जैसी पहलों को महज खर्च के रूप में देखना ठीक नहीं है. ये करोड़ों वंचितों को आत्मविश्वास देने और उनकी जिंदगी को बेहतर बनाने की दिशा में ठोस निवेश के प्रयास हैं. विशेषज्ञों की यह आशंका सही हो सकती है कि बजट में उल्लिखित राजस्व वसुली के लक्ष्य पुरे नहीं होंगे. इससे मुद्रास्फीति और घाटे में वृद्धि हो सकती है. पर अभी मुद्रास्फीति बीते सालों की तुलना में कम है और उसमें मामूली बढ़त से अर्थव्यवस्था पर बहुत असर नहीं होगा. इसके बरक्स निम्न आयवर्गीय आबादी के हाथ में नगदी और बचत से मांग बढ़ेगी, जो कि उत्पादन और बाजार के लिए राहत की बात है.



## कतेत्य

वन के विभिन्न कर्तव्यों के प्रति मनुष्य का जो मानसिक और नैतिक दृष्टिकोण रहता है, वह अनेक अंशों में उसके जन्म और उसकी अवस्था द्वारा नियमित होता है. इसीलिए जिस समाज में हमारा जन्म हुआ हो, उसको आदर्शों और व्यवहार के अनुरूप उदात्त एवं उन्नत बनानेवाले कार्य करना ही हमारा कर्तव्य है. प्रकृति हमारे लिए जिस कर्तव्य का विधान करती है, उसका विरोध करना व्यर्थ है. यदि कोई मनुष्य छोटा कार्य करे, तो उसी कारण वह छोटा नहीं कहा जा सकता. कर्तव्य के केवल ऊपरी रूप से ही मनुष्य की उच्चता या नीचता का निर्णय करना उचित नहीं है, देखना तो यह चाहिए कि वह अपना कर्तव्य किस भाव से करता है. अपनी सामाजिक अवस्था के अनुरूप एवं हृदय तथा मन को उन्नत बनानेवाले कार्य करना ही हमारा कर्तव्य है. कर्तव्य-चक्र तभी हल्का और आसानी से चलता है, जब उसके पहियों में प्रेम रूपी चिकनाई लगी होती है, अन्यथा वह एक अविराम घर्षण मात्र है. यदि ऐसा न हो तो माता-पिता अपने बच्चों के प्रति, बच्चे अपने माता-पिता के प्रति, पति अपनी पत्नी के प्रति तथा पत्नी अपने पति के प्रति अपना-अपना कर्तव्य कैसे निभा सकें? कर्तव्य वहीं तक अच्छा है, जहां तक कि यह पशुत्व भाव को रोकने में सहायता प्रदान करता है. उन निम्नतम श्रेणी के मनुष्यों के लिए, जो और किसी उच्चतर आदर्श की कल्पना ही नहीं कर सकते, शायद कर्तव्य की यह भावना किसी हद तक अच्छी हो, परंतु जो कर्मयोगी बनना चाहते हैं, उन्हें तो कर्तव्य के इस भाव को एकदम त्याग देना चाहिए. कर्तव्य एक शरीर है और हमारी आसक्ति का आवेग मात्र है. जब कोई आसक्ति दृढ़ हो जाती है, तो उसे हम कर्तव्य कहने लगते हैं. जहां विवाह की प्रथा नहीं है, उन सब देशों में पति-पत्नी का आपस में कोई कर्तव्य नहीं होता. जब विवाह-प्रथा आ जाती है, तब पति-पत्नी आसक्ति के कारण साथ रहने लगते हैं. कई पीढ़ियों के बाद जब उनका यह एकत्रवास एक प्रथा-सा हो जाता है, तो वह कर्तव्य रूप में परिणत हो जाता है. स्वामी विवेकानंद

## कुछ अलग

## मोहब्बत में एक खूबसूरत मोड़

अच्छा ही हुआ कि सोहनी को महिवाल नहीं मिला और हीर रांझे की ना हो सकी! यह भी ठीक ही हुआ कि रोमियो और जूलिएट एक अधूरे इश्क के किरदार के तौर पर ही प्रेमकथाओं में दर्ज हुए! सोचिये जरा, अगर ये

सभी मिल जाते, तो इश्क करनेवाले किसकी मिसाल देते? अगर ये मिल जाते. तो हजारों ख्वाहिशों वाले जहान की तस्वीर कैसी होती ? क्या रोमियो 'सेवन ईयर इच' के बाद बदल जाता ? और कुछ ऐसा ही हाल हीर का भी होता? क्या फिर हम इन्हें याद करते? क्या अधूरे इश्क की पूरी कहानी ही याद रहती है या फिर प्यार मिल जाने पर यार बदल जाता है?

क्या यह सच है कि हद से ज्यादा प्यार ही प्यार का दुश्मन बन जाता है? इश्क, मोहब्बत, प्यार का भी कोई सेचुरेशन लेवल होता है, जिसके बाद प्यार करनेवालों का एक साथ दम घुटने लगता है ? यकीनन मैं गलत हं, पर यह सवाल मैं इसलिए पूछ रही हूं कि हाल ही में दुनिया के एक बहुत अमीर आदमी जेफ बेजोस के तलाक की खबर आयी. वह आदमी बड़ा है, सो तलाक का सौदा भी बेहद महंगा ही हुआ. लेकिन, खास बात तो यह थी कि दोनों ने 25 साल पहले हुए पहली नजर के प्यार को खत्म करते हुए कुछ शब्दों में ही अपनी जिंदगी बयान कर दी और कहा कि तलाक के बाद हम अच्छे दोस्त बनकर रहेंगे. साहिर लुधियानवी ने कहा है कि 'वो अफसाना जिसे अंजाम तक लाना न हो मुमिकन, उसे इक खूबसूरत मोड़ देकर छोड़ना अच्छा'. जेफ ने शायद ऐसा ही किया हो !

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इस घटना ने मेरे मन में कई सवाल खड़े किये हैं कि जिस प्यार के लिए इंसान दुनिया-जहान से बगावत कर देता है, अपनों को भुला देता है और खुद को भी बिसरा देता है, क्या वह प्यार भी कहीं जाकर दम तोड़

देता है ? एक प्यार के जोड़े के लिए ढाई दशक तक साथ रहना कोई छोटा लम्हा नहीं है. इसलिए सवाल उठते हैं.

िरश्तों को बनाने के लिए उन्हें मोहब्बत से बुनना पड़ता है और इस बुनाई में अगर गलती से भी कोई गांठ पड़ गयी, तो वह ताउम्र रह ही जाती है. क्या वाकई इश्क के मारे लोगों की दुनिया में कोई और गम नहीं होता मोहब्बत के सिवा? दुनिया की पहली जोड़ी आदम-हळा से शुरू हुई कायनात में रोटी, कपड़ा और मकान क्या मोहब्बत पर हावी रहते हैं या मोहब्बत इन सब पर? आखिर गालिब ने क्यों लिखा- 'मोहब्बत में नहीं है फर्क जीने और मरने का. उसी को देखकर जीते हैं जिस काफिर पे दम निकले.' गालिब ने यह शे'र किसको देखकर लिखा था, यह कहना बहुत मुश्किल है.

कहनेवाले तो यह भी कहते हैं कि प्यार को समझाया नहीं जा सकता. पर लगता है इसे समझा भी नहीं जा सकता. यानी जो समझा वह डुबकर ही पार हुआ, पर नया ट्रेंड तो डुबने की बजाय कूदकर पार करने में ज्यादा यकीन रखनेवाला दिखायी देता है. शरतचंद्र के कालजयी उपन्यास 'देवदास' का देवदास आज पारो के लिए अपनी जिंदगी तबाह नहीं करता, बल्कि कहता है- 'इसमें तेरा घाटा, मेरा कुछ नहीं जाता'.

# बंगाल की खाडी से बवंडर

ल मंशा चाहे जो रही हो, केंद्र से आये सीबीआई के जत्थे का यकायक कोलकाता के पुलिस

संपादकीय प्रभात

🕥 कमिश्नर के घर पर नाटकीय धावा बोल देना बंगाल की खाड़ी से उठा एक बीहड़ बवंडर दिख रहा है. इसने देखते-देखते सारे देश को गिरफ्त में लेकर समुचे विपक्ष को ममता के पक्ष और केंद्र के खिलाफ लामबंद कर दिया है. यदि पता होता कि पांच साल पुराने मामले की जांच की बासी कढ़ी में यकायक उबाल लाकर सीबीआई मुखिया नागेश्वर राव अपने कार्यकाल के आखिरी दिन जाते-जाते ऐसी विपक्षी एकजुटता का सूत्रपात करते जायेंगे, तो देश का एक बड़ा वर्ग नियुक्ति के क्षणों से विवादित रहे अल्पकालिक सीबीआई प्रमुख राव के चरण पखार कर चरणोदक पान कर लेता.

यह सही है कि सीबीआई 2014 के तुरंत बाद से बंगाल में हुए चिटफंड घोटाले की पड़ताल कर रही थी. लेकिन, एक संघीय गणतंत्र में किसी भी राज्य के खिलाफ केंद्र द्वारा कोई संगीन कार्रवाई करने के भी कुछ नियम-कानून होते हैं. आम चुनाव से कुछ महीने पहले यकायक बिना बंगाल के उच्च न्यायालय को सूचित किये, बिना वारंट या पूर्व सूचना के पुलिस प्रमुख के घर की घेरेबंदी की ऐसी क्या हड़बड़ी थी? और क्या वजह थी कि इन चार सालों के बीच बिना कारण बताये तृणमूल तज कर भाजपा के चरण गह चुके इसी घोटाले के दो कथित दोषियों को चुपचाप सीबीआई की फेहरिस्त से हटा दिया गया? अगर गत चार सालों में राज्य के पुलिस प्रमुख के दो बार बुलावे पर नहीं गये थी, तो अब क्या वजह थी कि संस्था का धीरज इस तरह टूट गया कि सीधे उनकी मुश्कें बंधवाकर दिल्ली लाने की ठान ली गयी? ममता बनर्जी ने इन तमाम चूकों की अनदेखी नहीं की और सीधे राज्य पुलिस बुलाकर सीबीआई के दस्ते को (कुछ देर को ही सही) राज्य पुलिस की गाड़ियों से थाने भेज खुद पुलिस प्रमुख के घर के बाहर धरने पर बैठ गयीं. सतत उत्तेजित मीडिया

को मानो दौरा पड़ गया और बजटीय विश्लेषणों या प्रधानमंत्री के डल झील पर नौका-विहार या लद्दाखी टोपी पहने उनकी नयनाभिराम छवियों को परे करके पलक झपकते ममता दीदी हर चैनल पर छा गयीं. सोशल मीडिया की ताकत से वाकिफ दीदी ने अपने आधिकारिक ट्विटर पेज पर इस छापे के मुख्य लक्ष्य कोलकाता के पुलिस कमिश्नर की प्रशंसा करते हुए तत्काल यह भी दर्ज किया कि यह छापा बंगाली स्वायत्तता के खिलाफ भाजपा के शीर्ष नेताओं द्वारा लिया जा रहा निकृष्टतम राजनीतिक प्रतिशोध है. केंद्र जो अपने अधीन पुलिस बलों की मदद से बंगाल की अस्मिता और उसके लोकतांत्रिक संस्थानों की स्वायत्तता को बरबाद करने पर आमादा है, उसके खिलाफ उनका यह धरना एक स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन है! दिल्ली के मुख्यमंत्री केजरीवाल ने तुरंत ममता से सहानुभूति जताते हुए उनके साथ खड़े रहने का इरादा भी व्यक्त कर दिया. फिर तो झड़ी लग गयी और समूचा विपक्ष ममता के साथ होने की घोषणा करने लगा

अब जब बात तूल पकड़ चुकी है, तब विद्वान लोग पोथे बांच रहे हैं कि केंद्र द्वारा राज्यों के शासन में सीधे हस्तक्षेप के अधिकार कितने और किस तरह के हैं? सीबीआई के बेचारे नवनिर्वाचित मुखिया को अभी इस हड़बोंग के बीच पदभार संभालना है, जबिक कोलकाता की गलियों में



मृणाल पांडे

ग्रुप सीनियर एडिटोरियल एडवाइजर, नेशनल हेराल्ड

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भारत का लोकतंत्र बुनियादी तौर से बदलने की पहली शर्त यही है कि भाजपा या कांग्रेस के अलावा कुछ ताकतवर प्रांतीय दल भी इस देश की जनता के दमदार स्थानीय प्रतिनिधि बनकर

> उभरें. समाज बंग-भंग आंदोलन के दिनों से ही उत्कट रूप

> > धरता आया है. अगर वह फिर सतह पर आया, तो उसको राज्यपाल किस हद तक थाम पायेंगे, कहना कठिन है.

बहरहाल, प्रचार युद्ध का पहला राउंड ममता जीत गयी

भाजपा के हाथों से फिसलने से जिस

तरह घनीभृत होती जा रही है, उसमें

अक्सर हिंसा की कोई छोटी चिंगारी

साल 1905 के बंग-भंग प्रस्ताव

की ही तरह ममता इस कदम को

समुचे बंगाल की अस्मिता का

अपमान मनवा चुकी हैं, इसलिये वहां

एनडीए की गिरी हुई इज्जत की त्वरित

बहाली नामुमिकन है. बंगाल में अभी

अगर राष्ट्रपति शासन लागू हो भी

गया, तो भी इसकी संभावना नहीं कि

मोदीजी बंगेश्वर बन सकेंगे. बंगाली

भी देश में आग लगा सकती है.

हैं और दमन, जुल्म और संविधान की कब्र खोदने के जो तुणमूल और भाजपा के कार्यकर्ताओं बेबाक आरोप उन्होंने सीधे केंद्र सरकार के मुखिया तथा के बीच झडप होने की आशंका बढ रही है. यह सारा तनाव किसी बारीक उनकी सलाहकार टोली पर लगा दिये हैं, उन्होंने दीदी की वैधानिक मतभेद का नतीजा नहीं है. चिरविद्रोहिणी बंगहृदयहारिणी छवि उभारने में भारी मदद पहुंचायी है. खबर आयी कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट तक हांफती-यह इसलिए इस वीभत्स रूप में आन खड़ा हुआ है कि पिछले साढ़े चार कांपती भागती गयी सीबीआई की ममता दीदी के खिलाफ सालों में केंद्र ने साम-दाम-दंड-भेद अदालती अपमान की याचिका पर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय से तमाम तरह के भेदभाव गहराते हए सोमवार की बजाय मंगलवार की सुबह ही विचार करेगा. कश्मीर से कन्याकुमारी तक विपक्ष उत्तर प्रदेश से अखिलेश यादव ने उनके साथ एकजुटता प्रदर्शन के लिए अपना प्रतिनिधि भेजा है. अचरज नहीं कि शासित राज्यों को एक ऐसी अंधी गली में ला खड़ा किया है, जहां कतिपय और दल भी अपने-अपने प्रतिनिधि इस नये बंग उनको केंद्र सरकार से न्याय की कोई आंदोलन के पक्ष में भेज दें. उम्मीद नहीं है. विपक्षियों को आशंका है कि उनके खिलाफ केंद्र की बदला लेने की प्रवृत्ति हाल में पांच राज्यों के

इस घटनाक्रम से साफ होता जा रहा है कि संविधान भले पुकार-पुकार कर अखिल भारतीय दलों की मांग करता हो, दमदार भारतीय पार्टियां प्रांतीय बनती चली गयी हैं. कहीं अकाली, कहीं तृणमूल, कहीं बीजद, कहीं द्रमूक या तेदेपा. यह जरूरी भी है. भारत का लोकतंत्र बुनियादी तौर से बदलने की पहली शर्त यही है कि भाजपा या कांग्रेस के अलावा कुछ ताकतवर प्रांतीय दल भी इस देश की जनता के दमदार स्थानीय प्रतिनिधि बनकर उभरें.

भाजपा के कुछ नादान प्रवक्ता इतना उछल रहे हैं, मानो दीदी को और उनके पुलिस प्रमुख सहित कई विधायकों को वे जेल भिजवा कर ही दम लेंगे. संघीय लोकतंत्र एक फटे हुए फुटबॉल की तरह मैदान में लथेड़ा जाते देखकर भी वे प्रसन्न हैं. जाहिर है, उनको लोकतंत्र के महत्वपूर्ण चुनावी खेल के जिंदा रहने की अब कोई फिक्र नहीं है. यह खेल उनके लिए और केंद्रीय नेतृत्व तथा हिंदुत्व की कई उन्मादी एवं रक्तपिपासु टोलियों के लिए मानो एक युद्ध बन चुका है और युद्ध के कोई नियम नहीं होते. हो सकता है कि उनकी विचारधारा जीत जाये. लेकिन भगवान के लिए वे गणतंत्र की कविता को वैदिक स्वरों में गाना तो छोड़ ही दें.

# बुनियादी आय गारंटी योजना



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पूरे विश्व में, भारत से यूरोप तक, सार्वभौमिक बुनियादी आय का विचार अपनी जगह बना रहा है . वामपंथी और उदारवादी मानते हैं कि यह गरीबी और असमानता को खत्म कर सकता है. दक्षिणपथी मानते हैं कि कल्याण वितरण के लिए यह ज्यादा उपयुक्त और कम नौकरशाही का तरीका है.

टे किसानों को प्रतिवर्ष 6,000 रुपये नकद देने की योजना की सरकारी घोषणा एक शानदार कदम माना जा रहा है, जिससे चुनाव में राजनीतिक लाभ प्राप्त किया जा सकता है.

बजट में घोषित इस योजना के पहले दो बातें हुई हैं. पहली वह रिपोर्ट, जिसे सरकार ने दबा दिया है, जो कहती है कि बेराजगारी दर 45 वर्षों में सर्वाधिक है. दूसरी यह कि कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी न्यूनतम आय गारंटी की बात कर रहे हैं. भारत में किसानों के लिए ऐसी योजना पहले से ही मौजूद है. तेलंगाना में किसानों को प्रतिवर्ष प्रति हेक्टेयर आठ हजार रुपये दिया जाता है. मोदी सरकार की योजना उन किसानों के लिए है, जिनके पास दो हेक्टेयर से कम खेत (करीब पांच एकड़) है. ऐसे किसान को तेलंगाना में पहले से ही 40 हजार रुपये मिल रहा है. ओडिशा में सभी किसानों को पांच हजार रुपये नकद मिलता है. इसके अतिरिक्त, छोटे किसानों को बुवाई के पांच मौसमों में सहायता के लिए 25 हजार और प्रति भूमिहीन परिवार को तीन चरणों में 12,500 रुपये मिलता है. इन दोनों ही योजनाओं के आलोचक हैं, जो कहते हैं कि पहचान की मुश्किलों के कारण इसे लागू करना कठिन होगा (कोई यह कैसे निर्धारित करेगा कि कौन भूमिहीन हैं और कौन छोटे किसान हैं?) और जाहिर है कि संसाधनों की कमी है.

ऐसा लगता है कि यह ऐसी बात है, जिसका अनुकरण हर राज्य सरकार करने जा रही है, विशेषकर तब जब केंद्र सरकार भी ऐसा कर रही है और इसे राजनीतिक रूप से बहुत लाभकारी माना जा रहा है. यह विचार कि राज्य द्वारा सीधे नकद हस्तानांतरण के बिना कोई व्यक्ति जीवित नहीं रह सकता, भारत तक ही सीमित नहीं है और इस विचार की उत्पत्ति विदेश में ही हुई है. ब्रिटेन में बेरोजगार दंपति को सरकार से प्रति सप्ताह 114 पाउंड ( 42 हजार रुपये प्रतिमाह ) मिलता है. जिन परिवारों के पास मकान नहीं है या जो खराब हालत में रह रहे हैं, उन्हें अत्यधिक छूट वाले काउंसिल घरों में सरकारी आवास दिया जाता है. अमेरिका में भी बेरोजगारी लाभ और खाद्य टिकटों की पेशकश की जाती है. जून, 2016 में स्विट्जरलैंड में सभी के लिए बुनियादी आय गारंटी शुरू करने के प्रस्ताव, जैसा राहुल गांधी प्रस्ताव दे रहे हैं, को मतदाताओं ने अस्वीकार कर दिया था. जनमत संग्रह में स्विट्जरलैंड के 77 प्रतिशत नागरिकों ने ऐसी योजना के खिलाफ मतदान किया, जो प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को बिना शर्त मासिक आय प्रदान करती, चाहे उनके पास नौकरी थी या आय का कोई अन्य स्रोत. इस प्रस्ताव के समर्थकों ने प्रत्येक वयस्क को प्रतिमाह २,500 स्विस फ्रैंक (1.8 लाख रुपये प्रतिमाह) और प्रत्येक बच्चे को 625 स्विस फ्रैंक (45 हजार रुपये प्रतिमाह) देने का आह्वान

देश दुनिया से

आईएनएफ संधि के

खत्म होने के आसार

यूएस सेक्रेटरी ऑफ स्टेट माइक पॉम्पियो ने कहा

है कि अमेरिका अब रूस के साथ इंटरमीडिएट रेंज

फोर्सेज (आईएनएफ) संधि से हट जायेगा और

हथियार नियंत्रण समझौते से बाहर होने के लिए

180 दिनों यानी छह महीने की लंबी प्रक्रिया शुरू

करेगा. इसके जवाब में रूस के राष्ट्रपति व्लादिमीर

पुतिन ने कहा कि रूस खुद ही आईएनएफ संधि

से हट जायेगा. पुतिन ने यह भी कहा कि अमेरिका इस संधि को खत्म कर नये परमाणु हथियार बनाने

और नये हथियारों का परीक्षण करेगा. गौरतलब

है कि पिछले साल ही इस संधि से बाहर होने की

धमकी अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने दी थी,

जिसके अब सच होने के आसार नजर आ रहे हैं.

दरअसल, इस संधि को खत्म करने का अर्थ है

वैश्विक हथियार नियंत्रण प्रणाली को खत्म करने

की शरुआत करना. अगर यह संधि खत्म होती

है, तो सुरक्षा संबंधी खतरों का पुनर्मूल्यांकन करना

पड़ेगा और दुनिया की बड़ी शक्तियां इस बात को

फिर से परिभाषित करने की कोशिश करेंगी कि

आखिर में सुरक्षा को लेकर खतरा कितना बड़ा

है. अंततः इससे अंतरराष्ट्रीय संबंधों में फांस

TIMES

आनी तय है.

की बात कर रहा है,

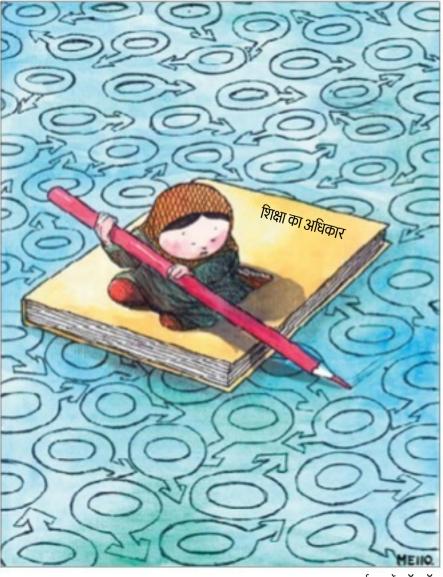
तो इस संबंध में रूस

खुद भी शोध करेगा

किया था. इस योजना के समर्थकों का यह तर्क था कि ऑटोमेशन के बढ़ने का मतलब यह होगा कि बहुत जल्द पश्चिमी देशों में लोगों के लिए नौकरियां उपलब्ध नहीं होंगी. वहीं विरोधियों का तर्क था कि इस तरह की योजना स्विट्जरलैंड में लाखों प्रवासियों को आकर्षित करेगी. पाठकों को यह जानने में दिलचस्पी होगी कि बहुत कम स्विस राजनेता इस प्रस्ताव के समर्थन में थे और कोई संसदीय दल भी इसके पक्ष में नहीं था. यह स्थिति भारत से एकदम अलग है, जहां स्विट्जरलैंड जितना पैसा तो नहीं है, लेकिन सभी दल नकद में पैसा देना चाहते हैं:

कुछ दिनों पहले ही फिनलैंड ने अपने दो वर्ष के परीक्षण, जिसमें 28 से 58 वर्ष की आयु के दो हजार व्यक्तियों को 560 यूरो (45 हजार रुपये प्रतिमाह ) दिया जाता था, को बंद कर दिया. स्पेन के शहर बार्सीलोना (यहां बेरोजगारी दर बहुत ज्यादा है) और नीदरलैंड के यूट्रेंच में भी इसी तरह के प्रयोग हो रहे हैं. पूरे विश्व में, भारत से यूरोप तक, सार्वभौमिक बुनियादी आय का विचार अपनी जगह बना रहा है. वामपंथी और उदारवादी मानते हैं कि यह गरीबी और असमानता को खत्म कर सकता है. दक्षिणपंथी मानते हैं कि कल्याण वितरण के लिए यह ज्यादा उपयुक्त और कम नौकरशाही का तरीका है. प्रधानमंत्री मोदी इस वादे के साथ सत्ता में आये थे कि वे मनरेगा जैसी योजनाओं को दफन कर देंगे, जिसे उन्होंने मनमोहन सिंह सरकार की असफलता का जीवित स्मारक कहा था. लेकिन, इस बजट में मोदी ने मनरेगा का आवंटन लगभग 10 प्रतिशत बढ़ा दिया है. यह दिखाता है कि मनरेगा को लेकर उनके विचार बदल गये हैं.

सच तो यह है कि दुनियाभर में नौकरियां कम हो रही हैं और यह कमी जारी रहेगी, खासकर वैसी नौकरियां, जैसी लोग चाहते हैं. कई विशेषज्ञ अगले डेढ़ दशक के भीतर अधिकांश उन्नत अर्थव्यवस्थाओं में बड़े पैमाने पर बेरोजगारी की भविष्यवाणी कर रहे हैं. इसका मतलब सार्वभौमिक बुनियादी आय पर अधिक से अधिक जोर है. भारत में पश्चिम की तुलना में समस्या कहीं बड़ी है. हम पश्चिम की प्रति व्यक्ति आय से बहुत पीछे हैं (एक औसत स्विस नागरिक एक औसत भारतीय की तुलना में तीस गुना अधिक कमाता है). इसलिए बहुत से लोगों को बहुत अधिक धन देने की आवश्यकता अन्य देशों की तुलना में भारत में जल्द ही पड़ेगी. इससे कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता कि हमारे पास एक प्रतिभाशाली प्रधानमंत्री हैं (वर्तमान की तरह) या विश्व स्तर पर सम्मानित एक उच्च प्रशिक्षित अर्थशास्त्री (जो पहले थे). यह एक संरचनात्मक समस्या है, जिससे हम बच नहीं सकते हैं और आगामी चुनाव में अन्य दल भी इस बारे में बात करेंगे.



साभार : कार्टूनमूवमेंटडॉटकॉम

# आपके पत्र

## संवैधानिक संकट की रिथति

पश्चिम बंगाल से लेकर ओड़िशा तक फैले करीब 25 सौ करोड़ रुपये के सारधा चिटफंड घोटाले की जांच के सिलसिले में कोलकाता पुलिस आयुक्त से पूछताछ करने गयी सीबीआइ की टीम को वहां तैनात पुलिसकर्मियों द्वारा रोका गया, उनके साथ धक्का-मुक्की की गयी और फिर उन्हें हिरासत में लेकर थाने ले गयी. समूचा घटनाक्रम अपूर्व और निंदनीय है. यह सही है कि कुछ समय पूर्व ही पश्चिम बंगाल ने सीबीआइ को राज्य में ऑपरेट करने की इजाजत देने से संबंधित आम सहमति को वापस ले लिया था, किंतु यह भी नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि सीबीआइ की उक्त जांच सुप्रीम कोर्ट के आदेश पर 2014 से ही चल रही है. राज्य सरकारें यदि केंद्रीय जांच एजेंसी के लोगों को हिरासत में लेना शुरू कर दे, तो भविष्य में किसी भी केस की जांच मुश्किल हो जायेगी. ऐसे में संघीय ढांचे के तहत जांच एजेंसी के अधिकारों को सुप्रीम कोर्ट को तुरंत स्पष्ट करना चाहिए, ताकि भविष्य में इस तरह के संवैधानिक संकट की स्थिति को उत्पन्न होने से रोका जा सके.

**चंदन कुमार,** देवघर.

## आखिर 'भारत रत्न 'कौन है

इस देश के लिए मर मिटने वाले शहीद त्रयी भगत सिंह, सुखदेव और राजगुरु से ज्यादा इस देश में किसने त्याग किया? भारत रत्न के लिए उन अमर सपूतों का कभी नाम तक प्रस्तावित नहीं किया जाता. क्यों? शहीद पंडित राम बिस्मिल, अशफाकउल्ला जैसे सपूत इसी देश के हित और यहां के लोगों की स्वतंत्र के लिए अपने प्राणों की आहुति दी. उन्हें कोई भारत रत्न नहीं दे रहा. सत्ता के कर्णधार अपने राजनीतिक स्वार्थ सिद्ध करने के लिए 'भारत रत्न' और अन्य पुरस्कार रेवड़ियां बांट रहे हैं, बांटते रहे हैं. हमारे विचार से भारत रत्न सहित सभी अन्य पुरस्कारों के लिए, सही लोगों के चयन के लिए, सत्तारूढ़ पार्टी से अलग सभी राजनैतिक दलों, समाजसेवियों, वैज्ञानिकों, कलाकारों, लेखकों, कवियों आदि की एक अलग कमेटी गठित होनी चाहिए. उसी का निर्णय माना जाना चाहिए.

**निर्मल कुमार शर्मा** ,गाजियाबाद

## कोचिंग संस्थानों के फेर में बच्चे

सैकड़ों कोचिंग संस्थान बिना रजिस्ट्रेशन के खुल रहे हैं. इनसे बच्चे और अभिभावक, दोनों परेशान हैं. एक तरफ बच्चों पर पढ़ाई का बोझ बढ़ता जा रहा है. वहीं अभिभावक के पॉकेट ढीले हो रहे हैं. हर संस्थान का टैगलाइन होता है भारत का नंबर-वन इंस्टिट्यूट. मां-बाप तय नहीं कर पाते कि किस पर भरोसा करें? सबको पता है कि करीब-करीब हर शहर में कुकुरमुत्ते की तरह पनप रहे ऐसे संस्थान केवल पैसे कमाने का जरिया हैं. एक ही टॉपर को अलग-अलग संस्थान अपनी ब्रांडिंग का जरिया बताने के लिए अपना छात्र बताते हैं. इस पर अंकुश लगाने के लिए सरकार भी तैयार नहीं है. इन संस्थानों की फीस का भी कोई पैमाना नहीं है. इस पर भी सरकार की नजर नहीं है. जाहिर है, इस मकड़जाल में हमारे बच्चे हर रोज फंस रहे हैं. सरकार को इस पर अविलंब सोचना होगा.

**प्रो सदानंद पॉल,** नवाबगंज, कटिहार.

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

## बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष ११ अंक ३०१

## लोककल्याण और पूर्वग्रह

गत सप्ताह पेश किए गए अंतरिम बजट के राजकोषीय विस्तारवाद का उदाहरण हैं। पहली बात, सरकार ने यह निर्णय लिया है कि दो हेक्टेयर से कम जमीन वाले छोटे

6,000 रुपये वार्षिक की जो राशि तय की दो प्रावधानों को अत्यंत विपरीत प्रतिक्रियाएं गई है वह अपेक्षाकृत कम है। यह राशि मिली हैं, हालांकि दोनों ही उपाय तीन किस्तों में किसानों के खाते में डाली जाएगी। देश में खेती का रकबा इतना बंटा हुआ है कि सैद्धांतिक रूप से इस योजना से बहुत बड़ी तादाद में लोग लाभान्वित होंगे। किसानों को केंद्र सरकार की ओर से आय वित्त मंत्री पीयष गोयल के मताबिक इससे समर्थन दिया जाएगा। हालांकि इसके लिए करीब 12 करोड लोगों को लाभ पहुंचेगा।

यह देश की आबादी का एक बड़ा हिस्सा है। बजट के मुताबिक अगले वर्ष इस योजना के चलते 75,000 करोड़ रुपये की राशि व्यय करनी होगी। एक अन्य निर्णय जिसने सर्खियां बटोरीं वह कर राहत के रूप में लिया गया। इसके तहत सालाना 5 लाख रुपये तक की आय वाले करदाताओं को कर में छुट प्रदान की गई है। कर नियमों में थोडे बहुत बदलाव के साथ यह खजाने पर 23,000 करोड़ रुपये का बोझ डालने वाली योजना है।

यह खेद की बात है कि सार्वजनिक बहस में इन दोनों नीतिगत निर्णयों को लेकर होने वाली बहस काफी बंटी हुई है। ऐसे समय में जबिक राजकोषीय सुदृढीकरण पर ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए, उस वक्त कल्याणकारी योजनाओं पर खर्च किए जाने की आलोचना करना एक बात है। लेकिन इसके बावजूद कर कटौती का स्वागत किया जाना कतई उचित नहीं है।

इसके साथ ही साथ देश के सबसे हाशिये पर मौजूद किसानों के लिए न्यूनतम आय समर्थन की आलोचना करना भी बिल्कुल विचित्र है। देश की प्रति व्यक्ति आय की बात करें तो 31 जनवरी, 2019 को जारी किए गए शुद्ध राष्ट्रीय आय के प्रथम संशोधित आंकड़ों के मुताबिक 2017-18 के लिए यह लगभग 1.1 लाख रुपये सालाना रही। दूसरे शब्दों में कहें तो 5 लाख रुपये तक की आय वाले लोगों को कर मुक्त करने का अर्थ यह है कि न्यनतम आय से पांच गुना तक आय अर्जित करने

वालों को भी अब आय कर चुकाने की आवश्यकता नहीं है।

यह अस्वाभाविक स्थिति है। अगर प्रति व्यक्ति आय शक्ति के हिसाब से आकलन किया जाए तो भी तस्वीर बहुत अच्छी नहीं है। 12,500 रुपये की कर राहत के हिसाब से देखा जाए तो देश के सबसे सीमांत किसानों को 6,000 रुपये प्रति परिवार की राहत बहुत अधिक नहीं है। इससे करीब 12 करोड़ लोगों को फायदा पहुंचेगा जबकि आयकर में छूट का लाभ अधिकतम 3 करोड़ लोगों तक ही पहुंचेगा। इसमें बहुत कम संदेह है कि प्राथमिकता किसे प्रदान की जाए। आय के अनुरूप कराधान अथवा आय के पनर्वितरण के सवालों को तो अभी छोड ही देते हैं।

मध्य वर्ग के विस्तारित पूर्वग्रह के साथ समस्या यह है कि कई बार इसका आकलन तथ्यात्मकता से दूर हो जाता है। यह बात अहम है कि कल्याणकारी उपायों तक के राजकोषीय तथा अन्य लाभों का आकलन अधिकतम निष्पक्ष होकर किया जाए। इस मामले में कर में कटौती की तुलना अगर किसानों को दिए गए आय समर्थन से की जाए तो वह एक राजकोषीय विलासिता है। किसानों को दी गई राहत को ग्रामीण संकट और आय की दिक्कत को दर करने का न्यूनतम उपाय माना जा सकता है। चाहे जो भी हो लेकिन इन दोनों उपायों के प्रति प्रतिक्रिया में एक का स्वागत और दूसरे को लेकर निराशा को पाखंड मानकर खारिज कर दिया जाना चाहिए।



बदलाव लाने के लिए कई पहल किए हैं.

लेकिन विलय एक अलग ही मामला है।

उनके सामने सबसे बड़ी चुनौती देना बैंक

और विजय बैंक के वरिष्ठ कर्मचारियों की

चिंताओं को साधने की होगी। इसमें कोई

शक नहीं कि इन वरिष्ठ कर्मचारियों के मन

में उनके साथ अनुचित भेदभाव होने का भय

सताता रहेगा। अगर देना बैंक का बहीखाता

जितना कमजोर दिख रहा है उससे भी कमजोर

दिखा तो यह मनोभावना और बिगड सकती

है। याद करें कि किस तरह सहायक बैंकों

के समागम के बाद एसबीआई का फंसा कर्ज

सरपट ऊपर भागा था। विलय के बाद

अस्तित्व में आने वाली नई इकाई एसबीआई

और एचडीएफसी बैंक लिमिटेड के बाद

भारत की तीसरी सबसे बडी कर्जदाता होगी।

इस इकाई की 9,489 शाखाओं में 85,675

अनुमति के बाद आईडीएफसी फर्स्ट बैंक

हो जाएगा, का बहीखाता 1.03 लाख करोड़

रुपये होगा। यह अपनी 203 शाखाओं और

454 ग्रामीण बैंकिंग प्रतिनिधि केंद्रों के जरिये

अपने 72 लाख ग्राहकों को सेवाएं मुहैया

कराएगा। कुल ऋण खाते में इसका खुदरा

ऋण खाता 32.46 प्रतिशत का योगदान देगा।

बहीखाता में वृद्धि करने और तकनीक को

तवज्जो देने के लिए खास तौर पर मशहर

वैद्यनाथन ने बैंक में ऊपरी स्तर पर फेरबदल

भी किए हैं। कैपिटल फर्स्ट से बैंक के खुदरा

कारोबार को मजबूती मिलेगी, वहीं वैद्यनाथन

के लिए सबसे बड़ी चुनौती कम लागत वाली

देनदारी के साथ आगे बढ़ने की होगी। इन

दोनों इकाइयों को छोड दें तो बंधन बैंक के

लिए गृह फाइनैंस का सौदा एक मजबूरी है।

बंधन बैंक देश में किसी सूक्ष्म वित्त इकाई

आईडीएफसी बैंक, जो शेयरधारकों की

## भारतीय बैंकिंग के क्षेत्र में तीन दिलचस्प विलय

जयकुमार और वैद्यनाथन भारतीय बैंकिंग क्षेत्र में इतिहास रचने की दहलीज पर खड़े हैं जबकि घोष के लिए एक बाध्यता है। इस बारे में विस्तार से बता रहे हैं तमाल बंद्योपाध्याय

एस जयकुमार, वी वैद्यनाथन और चंद्र शेखर घोष इन तीनों के साथ एक खास बात क्या है ? ये तीनों ही भारतीय बैंकिंग क्षेत्र में तीन सर्वाधिक दिलचस्प विलय प्रक्रिया को अंजाम देने में जुटे हैं। घोष के नेतृत्व वाले बंधन बैंक ने हाउसिंग डेवलपमेंट फाइनैंस कॉर्प लिमिटेड (एचडीएफसी) की सहायक इकाई गृह फाइनैंस लिमिटेड का अधिग्रहण करने की घोषणा की है। इसी तरह, वैद्यनाथन की कैपिटल फर्स्ट लिमिटेड का आईडीएफसी बैंक लिमिटेड के साथ विलय हो चुका है। एक अन्य महत्त्वपर्ण घटनाक्रम में दो अपेक्षाकृत छोटे सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों-देना बैंक और विजय बैंक- का जयकुमार के बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा (बीओबी) में विलय हो रहा है। जयकुमार और वैद्यनाथन दोनों ही इतिहास रचने की दहलीज पर खड़े हैं। वजह भी साफ है, क्योंकि इन दोनों को जिस कार्य की जिम्मेदारी दी गई है. उसकी मिसाल भारतीय बैंकिंग क्षेत्र के इतिहास में पहले देखने को नहीं मिली थी। बीओबी-देना-विजय बैंक का आपस में विलय भारत के सार्वजनिक बैंकिंग क्षेत्र में समेकन का पहला उदाहरण है।

ऋण परिसंपत्तियों में सरकारी बैंकों की हिस्सेदारी लगभग 70 प्रतिशत के करीब है। हालांकि इससे पहले भारतीय स्टेट बैंक (एसबीआई) के पांच सहायक बैंकों का विलय हो चुका है, लेकिन यह एक आंतरिक मामला था। वैसे इस विलय से देश का सबसे बडा कर्जदाता एसबीआई विश्व के शीर्ष 50 बैंकों की फेहरिस्त में शामिल हो गया था। इसी तरह, आईसीआईसीआई बैंक के सबसे युवा कार्यकारी निदेशक वैद्यनाथन, जिन्होंने एक उद्यमी बनने का निर्णय लिया, पहले

ऐसे पेशेवर हैं जिन्हें बिना आवेदन किए ही बैंकिंग लाइसेंस मिल गया ! सभी व्यावहारिक कारणों से उनकी गैर-वित्तीय बैंकिंग कंपनी कैपिटल फर्स्ट आईडीएफसी बैंक का अधिग्रहण कर रहे हैं। आईडीएफसी बैंक को अस्तित्व में आए उतना ही समय हुआ है, जितना बंधन बैंक को हुआ है। ये तीनों लोग निवेशकों की अपेक्षाओं को साधने में लगे हैं, लेकिन मैं उस पहलू पर ध्यान नहीं दे रहा हं। इसका कारण यह है कि सभी विलय पहले ही दिन से गुणवत्ता का समागम करेंगे ऐसा भी नहीं है, लेकिन शेयरधारकों को दीर्घ अवधि में जाकर इसका लाभ मिल सकता है। सेंचुरियन-बैंक ऑफ पंजाब का एचडीएफसी बैंक के साथ विलय इसका एक उदाहरण है।

बैंकिंग क्षेत्र में समेकन की प्रक्रिया स्पष्ट तौर पर दिख रही है. लेकिन बीओबी के साथ देना बैंक और विजय बैंक के विलय में देना बैंक को उबारने का भी उद्देश्य निहित है। देना बैंक को तथाकथित सुधार सुची (प्रॉम्प्ट करेक्टिव एक्शन/पीसीए) में डाल दिया गया है और इसकी सामान्य बैंकिंग गतिविधियों पर पाबंदी लगा दी गई है। दिसंबर, 2015 में बैंकिंग के फंसे कर्ज का आंकडों में इजाफा शुरू होने के बाद देना बैंक को सितंबर 2018 तक 5,000 करोड रुपये का नुकसान हुआ था। बैंक को इस दौरान 12 तिमाहियों में 11 में नुकसान उठाना पड़ा। इस अवधि के दौरान बैंक की सकल गैर-निष्पादित परिसंपत्तियां (एनपीए) 9.85 प्रतिशत से बढकर 23.64 प्रतिशत हो गईं। सरकार नियंत्रित बैंकों में यह एनपीए का चौथा सबसे बडा आंकडा था।

जयकुमार ने बीओबी का बहीखाता दुरस्त करने और इसके परिचालन में उपयुक्त है और प्रवर्तकों को हिस्सेदारी कम कर 40 प्रतिशत करना अनिवार्य है। बंधन बैंक की शुरुआत 23 अगस्त, 2015 को हुई थी और यह सुचीबद्ध भी हो गई है, लेकिन प्रवर्तकों की हिस्सेदारी जरूरी स्तर तक नहीं आई है। गृह फाइनैंस के अधिग्रहण के बाद प्रवर्तकों को उनकी हिस्सेदारी कुछ हद तक कम करने में मदद मिलेगी। ज्यादातर विश्लेषकों का मानना है कि बंधन बैंक और गृह फाइनैंस का सौदा दोनों ही इकाइयों के अल्पांश शेयरधारकों के लिए अच्छा नहीं है और वास्तविक लाभ एचडीएफसी को मिलेगा। एचडीएफसी के पास गृह फाइनैंस की बहुलांश हिस्सेदारी है। कुछ लोगों का यह भी कहना है कि सौदा बंधन के लिए ठीक है, लेकिन बैंक को इसके लिए अधिक भुगतान करना पड़ रहा है। विलय प्रक्रिया पूरी होने के बाद बंधन बैंक का ऋण खाता बढकर 50,000 करोड रुपये (सितंबर 2018 की कमाई के आधार

के बैंक में तब्दील होने का पहला उदाहरण है। आरबीआई के लाइसेंस संबंधी नियमों के तहत परिचालन शुरू करने के तीन साल

के भीतर इकाई को सूचीबद्ध कराना जरूरी

पर) हो जाएगा और यह अपने 1.5 करोड़ ग्राहकों को 4,182 बैंक शाखाओं से सेवाएं देगा। गृह फाइनैंस का आधा से अधिक कारोबार ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में होता है और इसका औसत ऋण आकार 9.4 लाख रुपये है। पश्चिमी और मध्य भारत में इसकी उपस्थिति से बंधन बैंक को कारोबार बढाने में खासी मदद मिलेगी। विलय से बंधन बैंक को पोर्टफोलियों संकेंद्रण से जुड़े जोखिम कम करने. कारोबार में विविधता लाने और गृह फाइनैंस की योजनाएं बेचने में भी मदद मिलेगी। हालांकि घोष के सामने कार्य करने की शैली से जुड़ी विविधताओं के साथ सामंजस बैठाने की चुनौती होगी। गृह फाइनैंस तकनीक पर अधिक जोर देती है और इसके वरिष्ठ अधिकारी बैंक के अपने समकक्षों के मुकाबले अधिक तवज्जो पाते हैं। हालांकि घोष ने बैंक की शुरुआत करने के समय नव नियुक्त बैंकरों और अपने सुक्ष्म-वित्त कर्मचारियों को बराबर तवज्जो देने में अच्छी भूमिका निभाई थी। (डिस्क्लेमर: मैं बतौर सलाहकार, रणनीति, इस बैंक के साथ अगस्त 2015 से अक्टूबर 2018 तक जुड़ा रहा)

राकेश शर्मा के सामने भी चुनौती कम नहीं है। फंसी परिसंपत्तियों के मामले में आईडीबीआई बैंक देना बैंक को टक्कर दे सकता है। भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम अधिग्रहण कर रहा है, जो एक बार फिर भारतीय बैंकिंग जगत में एक अनुठा प्रयोग है। शर्मा निजी क्षेत्र से ताल्लुक रखने वाले उन दो मुख्य कार्याधिकारियों (सीईओ) में शामिल थे (दूसरे जयकमार थे), जिन्हें एक सरकार नियंत्रित बैंक संभालने की जिम्मेदारी दी गई थी। हालांकि एलआईसी के अधिग्रहण की कवायद देखने के लिए मात्र छह महीने का कार्यकाल दिया गया है। जयकमार करीब एक साल तक रहेंगे। लिहाजा, दोनों हड़बड़ी में हैं, लेकिन वैद्यनाथन और घोष के पास हालात संभालने के लिए खासा समय है।

(स्तंभकार लेखक और जन स्मॉल फाइनैंस बैंक लिमिटेड में वरिष्ठ सलाहकार हैं। वह बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड के सलाहकार

## असल आंकड़ों को छुपा रही केंद्र की मोदी सरकार

दुर्भाग्य से अब यह व्यापक रूप से माना जाने लगा है कि हम भारत सरकार के आंकडों पर भरोसा नहीं कर सकते। मैं यहां सकल घरेल उत्पाद की गणना की 'नई शृंखला' को लेकर बात नहीं कर रहा। ना ही मैं इसी जीडीपी की भरोसे न करने लायक 'बैक सीरीज' की बात कर रहा हूं। मैं ईपीएफओ के आंकडों का इस्तेमाल कर रोजगार वृद्धि के किए गए दावों के बारे में भी बात नहीं कर रहा हं। मैं यहां बजट में पेश सबसे अहम वृहद आर्थिक संकेतकों के बारे में बात कर रहा हूं।

अंतरिम बजट के आंकडों को लेकर यह नहीं कहा जा सकता कि ये हकीकत को ठीक से बयां करते हैं। सरकार ने सभी परंपराओं की उपेक्षा की है और पूर्ण बजट पेश किया है। बजट में यह दावा किया गया है कि भारत लगातार 'राजकोषीय सुदृढ़ता की राह' पर चल रहा है और घाटा जीडीपी का 3 फीसदी रहेगा। इस पर भरोसा करना बहुत मुश्किल है।

संयुक्त प्रगतिशील गठबंधन के अंतिम वर्ष समेत 2013 के संकट के बाद शुरुआती कुछ वर्षों में घाटे को कम करने के लिए पूरी ईमानदारी से प्रयास किए गए। लेकिन ऐसा लगता है कि अब वे प्रयास बंद हो गए हैं। इस साल कोई प्रमुख वृहद आर्थिक संकट नहीं होने के बावजूद राजकोषीय घाटे का लक्ष्य फिर हासिल नहीं हो पाया। यह उन वर्षों की याद दिलाता है. जब संप्रग सरकार के वरिष्ठ अधिकारी लगातार ये दावे करते थे कि 8 फीसदी वृद्धि केवल 2-3 तिमाही दूर है।

बजट की बातें उसी तरह अविश्वसनीय हैं। इसका कोई सही जवाब नहीं दिया गया है कि वस्तु एवं सेवा कर की प्राप्तियां बजट अनुमान से 1 लाख करोड़ कम क्यों हैं। ये इस साल करीब 6 फीसदी बढ़ेंगी। ऐसे में हमें बजट का यह दावा क्यों मानना चाहिए कि वे अगले साल करीब 20 फीसदी बढेंगी ? अगर वे नहीं बढ़ीं तो बजट के अनुमानों का क्या होगा?

राजकोषीय स्थिति को नियंत्रित रखने का बहुत बड़ा श्रेय प्रधानमंत्री मोदी को दिया गया है। हालांकि अब तक के सबूत यह दर्शाते हैं कि यह कहना ज्यादा सही होगा कि वह इसका श्रेय लेना चाहते हैं, लेकिन खर्च को नियंत्रित रखने या राजस्व बढ़ाने



नीति नियम मिहिर शर्मा

के अनिच्छुक नजर आते हैं।

मोदी सरकार खर्च को नियंत्रित नहीं करना चाहती है. जिसके नतीजतन बजट घाटे का आंकडा अवास्तविक अनुमानों के कारण न केवल अविश्वसनीय है, बल्कि पूरी तरह भ्रामक भी है। सरकारी खर्च को सरकार के नियंत्रण में आने वाली अन्य नकदी से वित्त पोषित कर छिपाया जा रहा है।

एयर इंडिया को उबारने के लिए लघु बचत कोष का इस्तेमाल किया जा रहा है। पहले यह काम बजट आवंटन के जरिये किया जाता था। यह सरकार का कर राजस्व नहीं है, जिसे इस्तेमाल किया जाना चाहिए। ये हमारी बचत हैं। उदाहरण के लिए सार्वजनिक भविष्य निधि की धनराशि। इसका इस्तेमाल एयर इंडिया को बचाने जैसी राजनीतिक जरूरतों के लिए किया जा रहा है। लेकिन किसी की बचत का गर्दिश में जा रही उस विमानन कंपनी में निवेश होना बहुत ही बेकार है। इसमें करों से आने वाला पैसा खर्च किया जाना चाहिए। हम संकटग्रस्त किंगफिशर को ऋण देने को लेकर बैंकरों की आलोचना क्यों करते हैं. जब हमारी बचत की संरक्षक सरकार वही कर रही है।

विनिवेश का भी दुरुपयोग हो रहा है। अब इसका मतलब सरकारी नियंत्रण में कमी और इस तरह सरकारी क्षेत्र में लगी पूंजी की उत्पादकता में बढोतरी नहीं रह गया है। इसके बजाय विनिवेश सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र से सरकार को पुंजी हस्तांतरित करना बन गया है। फिर सरकार इसका इस्तेमाल खर्च के वित्त पोषण में करती है। यह सार्वजनिक संसाधनों का बेजा दरुपयोग है। इससे लगातार अर्थव्यवस्था में अकुशलता और पूंजी के गलत आवंटन में बढ़ोतरी हो रही है। सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की

ऑनलाइन जालसाजी

आजकल ऑनलाइन धोखाधड़ी के

मामले बहुत अधिक चर्चा में आ

रहे हैं। डिजिटल लेनदेन पर साइबर

हमले का खतरा, एटीएम टेंपरिंग

से रहें सावधान

जिन कंपनियों को अपना आरक्षित कोष निवेश के लिए इस्तेमाल करना चाहिए, उन्हें वह पैसा सरकार को देने के लिए बाध्य किया जा रहा है। सरकार की प्रमुख नीतियां पूरी करने के लिए सार्वजनिक एजेंसियों को कर्ज लेने के लिए बाध्य किया जा रहा है।

बजट में राजमार्ग मंत्रालय का आवंटन घटा दिया गया है। अगले साल के लिए बजट चालू वित्त वर्ष के संशोधित अनुमान की तलना में केवल 6 फीसदी बढाया गया है। इसके नतीजतन भारतीय राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग प्राधिकरण जैसी एजेंसियां सरकारी ऑर्डरों के लिए उधारी बढ़ा रही हैं। हालांकि बजट के आंकड़ों मे इसे नहीं दिखाया

जा रहा है।

एनएचएआई पर 1.5 लाख करोड रुपये का कर्ज है और उसकी आमदनी या नकदी प्रवाह नगण्य है। यह सरकारी गारंटी पर नए कर्ज लेकर अपने पुराने कर्ज चुका रहा है। यह जिन सड़कों पर कर्ज लेता है, वे उसकी नहीं बल्कि सरकार की संपत्ति हैं। आगे एनएचएआई के बाजार से 60,000 करोड़ रुपये और भारतीय खाद्य निगम के 1 लाख करोड़ रुपये जुटाने का अनुमान है। इस उधारी का निर्देश और गारंटी सरकार देती है, लेकिन यह बजट में नहीं दिखती है। इन सबका एक संभावित निष्कर्ष यह है कि मोदी राजकोषीय मितव्ययी होने का श्रेय पाने के हकदार नहीं हैं। असल में वह खर्चीले साबित हुए हैं। अगर निजी निवेश नहीं सुधरा तो इसकी वजह यह है कि सरकार ने बाजार को अपने बॉन्डों से पाट रखा है। सरकार को अपना खर्च करों से चलाना चाहिए।

आपको जीडीपी के आंकड़ों पर हंसी आ सकती है. जिनमें दावा किया गया है कि हम नोटबंदी के वर्ष में सबसे ज्यादा तेजी से बढ़े। लेकिन यदि आप जीडीपी के आंकड़ों में भरोसा रखते हैं तो आपको गौर करना चाहिए कि पिछले साल जीडीपी में भारी गिरावट आई है, जबकि उस दौरान उधारी में बढ़ोतरी हुई है। मोदी का बडा दांव नाकाम रहा है। उनका दांव था कि जब सरकारी खर्च को बड़ी बातों और छोटे सुधारों के साथ मिला दिया जाएगा तो निवेश शुरू हो सकता है। उन्होंने सधरती अर्थव्यवस्था अपने हाथ में ली थी, लेकिन उन्होंने इसे जमीन पर ला दिया।

## कानाफूसी

#### अंत में प्रार्थना...

संकट से जूझ रहे ज़ी समूह के चेयरमैन सुभाष चंद्रा ने पिछले सप्ताह निवेशकों से आग्रह किया कि वे ज़ी समूह और डिश टीवी के शेयर खरीदकर 'नकारात्मक ताकतों' को पराजित करने में सहायता करें। उन्होंने यह अपील तब की जब समूह की कंपनियों के शेयरों में तेजी से गिरावट आने लगी। उनकी इस अपील पर लोगों की दृष्टि पडनी लाजिमी थी क्योंकि आमतौर पर कंपनियों के प्रवर्तक अपनी कंपनियों के शेयर खरीदने के लिए ऐसी अपील नहीं करते। एक विश्लेषक ने कहा कि ज़ी समूह के मुखिया को लोगों से शेयर खरीदने की अपील करने के बजाय ट्राई की नई नीति के कारण उपजी अनिश्चितता के बीच दर्शकों से यह मांग करनी चाहिए थी कि वे कम से कम कंपनी के चैनलों को अधिक संख्या में सबस्क्राइब करें। दरअसल नए दिशानिर्देश आने के बाद पारदर्शिता बढ़ी है और उपभोक्ता अपनी पसंद के चैनल सबस्क्राइब करने के लिए भी स्वतंत्र हैं।

### नायडू की अगुआई

ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि तेलुगू देशम पार्टी के अध्यक्ष एन चंद्रबाब् नायडू ने महागठबंधन के बचाव के लिए आम आदमी पार्टी और कांग्रेस के बीच के मतभेद दूर करने के लिए आगे आने का निर्णय किया है। पिछले दिनों वह दिल्ली आए थे और उन्होंने कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी और आम आदमी पार्टी के संयोजक और दिल्ली के मुख्यमंत्री अरविंद केजरीवाल से मुलाकात की। उन्होंने कहा कि विपक्षी दलों का एक साथ आना लोकतांत्रिक अनिवार्यता हो चुकी है, हालांकि लोकसभा चुनाव के लिए साझा समूह खड़ा करते हुए भी राज्य स्तर पर

विभिन्न दलों की राजनीतिक अनिवार्यताओं का ध्यान रखना होगा। उनका यह वक्तव्य मायने रखता है क्योंकि आप और कांग्रेस के बीच अभी गठबंधन होना है। दोनों दल लगातार एक दूसरे को लेकर आक्रामक भूमिका में नजर आए हैं। दोनों लगातार यह कह रहे हैं कि वे आगामी चुनाव में अपने दम पर वुनाव लडेंगे।

#### आपका पक्ष

#### ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था को बनाएं मजबूत

भारत में बेरोजगारी की समस्या से

निपटने के लिए कुछ महत्त्वपूर्ण तथ्यों को ध्यान में रखने की जरूरत है। भारत एक कृषि प्रधान देश है और इस क्षेत्र में सुधार करने की बहुत अधिक आवश्यकता है। जब ग्रामीण स्तर पर रोजगार उपलब्ध होंगे तभी इस समस्या का स्थायी समाधान संभव है। इसके लिए कृषि से जुड़े विभिन्न घरेलू उद्योगों जैसे अचार, मुरब्बा, अगरबत्ती उद्योग, दाल, चिप्स आदि का प्रशिक्षण मुफ्त में दिया जाना चाहिए। इसके लिए आवश्यक है कि आधारभूत जरूरतों की पूर्ति की जाए। भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को प्रतिवर्ष 50-70 लाख रोजगार उत्पन्न करने की जरूरत है, जो सिर्फ सरकारी क्षेत्र में संभव नही हैं। इसलिए विभिन्न क्षेत्रो में रोजगार पैदा करने के लिए कौशल विकसित करने की जरूरत है। देश के 90 प्रतिशत से अधिक कामकाजी लोग अनौपचारिक क्षेत्र में काम कर रहे हैं। इस क्षेत्र में ना तो रोजगार सुरक्षित है और ना ही



केंद्र सरकार को बेरोजगारी दूर किसी तरह की सामाजिक सरक्षा है। हमें ये दोनों सुविधाएं देने की जरूरत है। भारतीय शिक्षा प्रणाली में भी कई समस्याएं हैं। यहां सिर्फ साक्षरता पर ध्यान दिया जाता है, व्यावसायिक तथा तकनीकी शिक्षा पर नहीं। इस व्यवस्था में सुधार करने की जरूरत है। साथ ही,

जनसंख्या पर नियंत्रण करने की

करने के लिए कौशल विकास पर अधिक जोर देना चाहिए

अत्यधिक भार ना पड़े। सरकारी योजनाओं का भी सही ढंग से क्रियान्वयन तथा भ्रष्टाचार मिटाकर पारदर्शिता लाने की जरूरत है । जरूरत है जिससे संसाधनों पर

संगीता चौधरी, जयपुर

और एटीएम कार्ड की क्लोनिंग जैसी घटनाएं बढ़ गई हैं। वित्तीय संस्थानों ने अपने एटीएम में सुरक्षा को बढ़ाने और धोखाधड़ी रोकने के लिए कई रणनीतियां लागू की हैं। इनमें एटीएम स्थापना के लिए सुरक्षित स्थान का चयन, कैमरों की स्थापना और उपभोक्ताओं की जागरूकता बढाना आदि उपाय शामिल हैं। हालांकि हमें एटीएम का उपयोग करते समय लगातार सावधानी बरतनी होगी। हमें आसपास घूम रहे किसी भी संदिग्ध की जानकारी तत्काल बैंक को देनी चाहिए। साथ ही, अपना एटीएम कार्ड और पासवर्ड किसी भी व्यक्ति

बैंकिंग के तहत लेनदेन करते समय सुरक्षित वेब ब्राउजर का ही इस्तेमाल करना चाहिए और कंप्यूटर या लैपटॉप को पासवर्ड फ्री रखना चाहिए।

से साझा नहीं करना चाहिए। इंटरनेट

पल्लवी शर्मा. लखनऊ

#### ठोस पहल की जरूरत

आज हमारा देश बेरोजगारी के बडे संकट से जुझ रहा है। अगर सरकार वास्तव में बेरोजगारी की समस्या का समाधान करना चाहती है तो उसे दो सकारात्मक कदम उठाने पडेंगे। पहले कदम के तहत सरकार को नीति बनाकर पूरे देश में समान काम, समान वेतन का नियम लागू करना चाहिए। दूसरा, सरकार पूरे देश में एक न्यूनतम वेतन को लागू करे। इसके जरिये सबसे गरीब आदमी को भी महंगाई से लड़ाई लंडने में सहायता मिलेगी। अगर सरकार ने बेरोजगारी की समस्या

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@bsmail.in उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।

## प्रवाह

विभीक पत्रकारिता का आठवा दशक







## हवा, पानी और प्रकृति के बिना जीवन संभव नहीं

पर्यावरण इंजीनियरिंग मेरा विषय है। मैं पानी का इंजीनियर हूं। हवा, पानी और प्रकृति मेरे लिए तकनीको विषय हैं और इनके बिना जीवन संभव नहीं है। मैंने गिट्टी, सीमेंट, ईंटों और कंकरीट को विषय बनाकर भी कविताएं लिखी हैं, किंतु अंततः मैं मनुष्य के जीवन से ही इन्हें जोड़ता हूं। तकनीकी संदर्भ होने के बावजूद मुझे कभी पाद टिप्पणी (फुटनोट्स) देने की जरूरत नही पड़ती। दरअसल तकनीकी ज्ञान और विज्ञान बहुत सरल होता है। हमारी शिक्षण



कठिन बनाती है। यह बात मेरे *उतनी* नहीं आएगी, जितनी क वि ता एं पढ़कर।

विज्ञान ने काफी समृद्ध किया है। मेरी पहली फिल्म अपने आंगन के नीम के वृक्ष के कटने को लेकर लिखी गई कविता पर बनाई गई थी. जिसका निर्माण. निर्देशन व लेखन मैंने ही किया। संयोग से उसे निर्देशित करने के लिए मुझे निर्देशन का राष्ट्रीय पुरस्कार भी मिला। फिल्म का नाम था-संबंध। इसके बाद मैंने लघु फिल्में और सीरियल बनाए, जिन्हें मैं मेरी काव्य प्रक्रिया का ही विस्तार मानता हूं, जैसे कि अपनी इंजीनियरिंग को। मैंने जो थोड़ा बहुत नाटक और संगीत संरचनाओं का काम किया है, उसे भी कविता की रचना प्रक्रिया से अलग नही मानता। भाषा हमने लगभग अंतिम कला के रूप में पाई है। उसमें लय, चित्रकला, अभिनय और संगीत स्वाभाविक रूप से आने चाहिए। जो देश अपनी भाषा में काम नहीं करते, वे पिछड़े रहते हैं। ध्यान दीजिए कि चीन चीनी भाषा में, जापान जापानी भाषा में और कोरिया अपनी भाषा में काम करके तकनीक में हमसे आगे हैं, अंग्रेजी भाषा में नहीं। अंततः अंग्रेजी इस देश को



पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री सीबीआई पर सवाल उठा रही हैं, मगर सच यह है कि कोलकाता के पुलिस किमश्नर राजीव कुमार ने केंद्रीय जांच एजेंसी के समन को लगातार नजरंदाज किया है और इससे भी विचित्र यह है कि वह खुद भी धरने पर बैठ गए।

## धरने पर मुख्यमंत्री और अफसर

करोड़ रुपये के शारदा और रोज वैली चिट फंड घोटाले की जांच के सिलसिले में कोलकाता के पुलिस कमिश्नर राजीव कुमार से पूछताछ करने पहुंची सीबीआई टीम के साथ पश्चिम बंगाल सरकार के टकराव ने अभूतपूर्व स्थिति पैदा कर दी है। यह

मामला अब सुप्रीम कोर्ट पहुंच चुका है, जहां आज सुनवाई होगी दूसरी ओर पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी न केवल धरने पर बैठ गई हैं, बल्कि मंत्रिमंडल का कामकाज भी धरना स्थल से निपटा रही हैं! हजारों छोटे निवेशकों की जमा पूंजी डुबाने वाला यह घोटाला 2013 में उजागर हुआ था, जिसमें पश्चिम बंगाल में सत्तारूढ़ तृणमूल कांग्रेस के अनेक नेताओं के नाम सामने आए थे। इसकी जांचे के लिए ममता बनर्जी ने राजीव कुमार की अगुआई में एसआईटी गठित की थी, लेकिन उन पर जांच को प्रभावित करने के आरोप लगे और मामला सुप्रीम कोर्ट पहंचा, तो उसने यह मामला सीबीआई को सौंप दिया था। दरअसल सीबीआई ने राजीव कुमार को कई बार समन भेजा, लेकिन उन्होंने इसे नजरंदाज कर दिया। जबकि उन्हें इस घोटाले से संबंधित सारे सबूत सीबीआई को मुहैया कराने चाहिए थे। जांच एजेंसी को संदेह है कि वह सबतों से छेडछाड कर सकते हैं। राज्य सरकार का कहना है कि कोलकाता हाई कोर्ट ने राजीव कुमार को 22 फरवरी तक जांच से बचने की छुट दे रखी है, लेकिन इसकी आड में ममता जिस तरह से धरने पर बैठ गई हैं, उसे जायज नहीं ठहराया जा सकता। उन्होंने केंद्र की मोदी सरकार

उन्हें पता होगा कि संघीय व्यवस्था केंद्र और राज्य, दोनों के सहयोग से चलती है। दूसरी ओर सीबीआई से यह पूछा जा सकता है कि ऐसे समय जब नए निदेशक काम संभालने वाले थे, उसने कार्यवाहक निदेशक नागेश्वर राव के कार्यकाल के आखिरी दिन यह कार्रवाई क्यों की! इसके बावजूद सबसे विचित्र बात तो यह है कि जिन पुलिस कमिश्नर राजीव कुमार पर हजारों करोड़ रुपये के घोटाले में संलिप्त होने का संदेह है, वह खुद मुख्यमंत्री के साथ धरने पर बैठ गए। सीबीआई और पुलिस जैसी संस्थाओं की गरिमा और उनकी स्वतंत्रता बनाए रखने के लिए जरूरी है कि सरकारें उनका राजनीतिक इस्तेमाल न करें और इसके साथ ही इन संस्थाओं के अधिकारियों की भी जिम्मेदारी है कि वे सरकारों के मोहरों की तरह काम न करें।

## दक्षिण के दांव-पेच



क्षिण भारत की राजनीति देश के अन्य हिस्सों से अलग है। दक्षिण भारत के छह राज्यों-आंध्र प्रदेश, तेलंगाना, तमिलनाड् केरल, कर्नाटक और पुड्डुचेरी में लोकसभा की कुल 139 सीटें हैं।

तमिलनाडु में लोकसभा की सबसे अधिक 39 सीटें हैं। वहां आठ प्रमुख क्षेत्रीय पार्टियां हैं। भाजपा एवं कांग्रेस जैसी अखिल भारतीय स्तर की पार्टियों की जड़ें वहां मजबूत नहीं हैं। कर्नाटक में देवगौड़ा की जनता दल (सेक्यूलर) विनाशकारी राजनीति कर रही है। तमिलनाडु में जयललिता और करुणानिधि के निधन के बाद दोनों द्रविड़ पार्टियां नेतृत्विवहीन हैं। 2013 में आंध्र प्रदेश के विभाजन के कारण कांग्रेस वहां अपनी मजबूत पकड़ खो चुकी है।

लोकसभा चुनाव को लेकर अनुमान है कि कर्नाटक में भाजपा को फायदा होगा, तो केरल में कांग्रेस को। तमिलनाडु में द्रमुक का काफी प्रभाव है, जबिक तेलंगाना में टीआरएस का दबदबा है। माकपा को लोकसभा में न्यूनतम सीटें मिलेंगी। दक्षिण भारत की राजनीति अजीब है। इन राज्यों में साक्षरता दर उच्च है। केरल ने सौ फीसदी साक्षरता दर हासिल की है। तमिलनाडु में बेहतर प्रशासन है। कर्नाटक और आंध्र प्रदेश के पास सांस्कृतिक एवं पारंपरिक विरासत है। खैर आइए, अब वास्तविक राजनीति की बात करते हैं।

आंध्र प्रदेश में मुख्यमंत्री चंद्रबाबू नायडू सत्ता-विरोधी लहर का सामना कर रहे हैं। उनके कट्टर प्रतिद्वंद्वी जगन रेड्डी और उसकी पार्टी वाईआरएस कांग्रेस ने वहां तेजी से पकड़ बनाई है। राज्य में जाति का वर्चस्व बहुत अधिक है। खम्मा और रेड्डी बारी-बारी से वहां सत्ता पर



दक्षिण भारत की राजनीति अव्यवस्थित है, लेकिन केंद्र की अगली सरकार में दक्षिण भारतीय राजनेताओं का ही वर्चस्व होगा, चाहे वह मोदी की सरकार हो या महागठबंधन की।

आर राजगोपालन, वरिष्ठ पत्रकार

पकड बनाते हैं। वाईएसआर को अगर लोकसभा में ज्यादा सीटें मिलती हैं, तो उसका फायदा निश्चित रूप से भाजपा को होगा। इसका कारण है कि जगन रेड्डी राहुल गांधी की पार्टी कांग्रेस के पूरी तरह से खिलाफ हैं। अगर भाजपा को बहुमत के जादुई अंक तक पहुंचने में थोड़ी मुश्किल आई, तो निश्चित रूप से वाईएसआर कांग्रेस उसे बचा लेगी। आंध्र प्रदेश को विशेष राज्य का दर्जा न दिए जाने के कारण नायडू

एनडीए से अलग हो गए। कांग्रेस की राज्य इकाई ने तेलुगू देशम के साथ गठजोड़ का विरोध किया था। कांग्रेस और टीडीपी के बीच गठबंधन बेमेल है। एनटी रामाराव की विरासत अब भी राज्य में प्रासंगिक है और कम से कम 10 फीसदी वोट एनटीआर के समर्थकों के हैं।

तेलंगाना के मुख्यमंत्री के चंद्रशेखर राव ने पिछले ही महीने भारी बहुमत से राज्य विधानसभा का चुनाव जीता है। उन्होंने

कारण यह है कि सत्तारूढ टीआरएस विपक्षी विधायकों के टूटकर उसके पाले में आने की उम्मीद कर रही है। टीआरएस को आसानी से चुनाव जीतने का सौभाग्य प्राप्त है, उसे कांग्रेस से कड़े विरोध का सामना नहीं करना पड़ा। ओवैसी की पार्टी एआईएमएमएस के साथ उसका गठबंधन मजबूत स्थिति में है। टीआरएस की धर्मनिरपेक्ष साख राज्य में उसकी पकड का स्वागतयोग्य संकेत है। राज्य विभाजन के लिए जिम्मेदार कांग्रेस ने इस उपलब्धि को वोट में बदलने के लिए अपनी सांगठनिक क्षमता में ज्यादा वृद्धि नहीं की। केसीआर की टीआरएस भी जरूरत पड़ने पर बहुमत जुटाने में भाजपा की मदद कर सकती है।

कर्नाटक में जेडीएस सत्तारूढ़ पार्टी है और इसके मुख्यमंत्री एचडी कुमारस्वामी ने दावा किया है कि वह दिहाड़ी मुख्यमंत्री हैं। कांग्रेस और जेडीएस के बीच गठबंधन मजबूत नहीं है। राज्य में कोई प्रशासन नहीं दिखता। राजनीतिक रूप से वहां भाजपा ज्यादा मजबूत है, क्योंकि राज्य में संघ परिवार की पकड़ है। कर्नाटक को दक्षिण भारत का गुजरात कहा जाता है। 2019 के लिए राज्य का चुनावी अनुमान यह है कि यहां भाजपा बेहतर प्रदर्शन करेगीं, बीएस येदियुरप्पा की भी राज्य में पार्टी पर मजबूत पकड़ है।

जहां तक तमिलनाडु की बात है, तो यहां से 39 सांसद चुने जाते हैं। जयललिता और करुणानिधि के निधन के बाद अब द्रमुक के अध्यक्ष एमके स्टालिन की परीक्षा होगी, क्योंकि उन्होंने राहुल गांधी को प्रधानमंत्री पद का उम्मीदवार घोषित किया है, लेकिन अखिलेश यादव और मायावती ने इसका समर्थन नहीं किया है। यहां तीन प्रमुख पार्टियां हैं-अन्नाद्रमुक, एमडीएमके और टीटीवी दिनाकरन की पार्टी।

कांग्रेस और भाजपा यहां अप्रासंगिक हैं। सीट जीतने के लिए कांग्रेस यहां द्रमुक पर निर्भर है, जबिक भाजपा को भी अन्नाद्रमुक पर निर्भर रहना पड़ सकता है। केंद्र के समर्थन से राज्य में पलानीस्वामी की सरकार टिकी है। रजनीकांत और कमल हासन का असर लोकसभा चुनाव पर होता नहीं दिख रहा, क्योंकि दोनों विधानसभा चुनाव पर अपना ध्यान केंद्रित कर रहे हैं। हालांकि दोनों द्रमुक का वोट काटेंगे और संसदीय चुनाव में अन्नाद्रमुक की मदद करेंगे। केरल में माकपा के पिनरई विजयन मुख्यमंत्री

हैं। सबरीमाला विवाद के कारण भाजपा यहां बहुत तेजी से अपनी पैठ बना रही है। ज्यादातर अल्पसंख्यक मतों पर निर्भर कांग्रेस हिंद वोटों के बीच फंस गई है, जो भाजपा के प्रति आकर्षित हो रहे हैं। निश्चित रूप से भाजपा लोकसभा चनाव में यहां एक या दो सीटें जीत सकती है। हिंदुत्व की भावना के उभार के कारण भाजपा के वोटों की संख्या में बढ़ोतरी हुई है। पुड़डुचेरी दक्षिण का सबसे छोटा राज्य है, जहां कांग्रेस के वी नारायणस्वामी की सरकार है। उनके मुख्य विरोधी एन रंगास्वामी कांग्रेस के विद्रोही नेता हैं। यहां अन्नाद्रमुक और द्रमुक की जड़ें मजबूत हैं लेकिन इस बात की काफी संभावना है कि यहां कांग्रेस अकेली सीट जीतेगी।

दक्षिण भारत की राजनीति उत्तर भारत से बिल्कुल अलग है। दक्षिण भारत में हर ढाई सौ किलोमीटर पर अलग जातियां, कई स्थानीय बोलियां मिलेंगी, पर एक बुनियादी बात यह है कि लगभग सभी राज्य केंद्र सरकार के प्रति नकारात्मक हैं। इसकी वजह हैं क्षेत्रीय क्षत्रप और संघीय व्यवस्था का वर्चस्व। केंद्र में अगली सरकार चाहे नरेंद्र मोदी की बने या महागठबंधन की, इतना तो निश्चित है कि दक्षिण भारतीय राजनेताओं का वर्चस्व रहेगा।



## मजिलें और भी हैं |

डेनियल मार्कस मैकवैन

## उन अनमोल कछुओं की कीमत थी सात हजार

सात वर्षों तक मैंने मुंबई के कई पब और होटलों में डीजे के तौर पर काम किया है। यही नहीं, मैं तीन साल तक फ्लोरिडा के मियामी में रॉयल कैरेबियन क्रूज के साथ भी जुड़ा रहा हूं। लेकिन एक वक्त के बाद मुंबई की व्यस्त जिंदगी से मेरा मोहभंग हो गया और मुझे लगा कि शहर छोड़कर अपनी जड़ों की ओर चलना चाहिए। तीन साल पहले मैंने पत्नी के साथ मणिपुर जाकर रहने का फैसला किया। हमने मुंबई छोड़ दिया और पूर्वोत्तर भारत की बेहतरीन जलवायु व सुंदर हरी घाटियों में रहने लगे। वहां रहते हुए हमें ऐसा लगा कि जैसे हम किसी नर्क से निकलकर स्वर्ग की

मगर कुछ समय के बाद हमने मणिपुर में कुछ ऐसा देखा, जिसने हमें बहुत परेशान किया। दरअसल मणिपर की कदरती खबसरती पर दाग लगाने का काम वहां के कुछ स्थानीय तस्कर कर रहे थे। ये लोग जंगली



मैंने जंगली जानवरों को बचाने और उन्हें दोबारा जंगल में छोड़ने के लिए अभियान

चलाया।

जानवरों और पक्षियों को नुकसान पहुंचा रहे थे। शिकारी जानवरों को पकड़कर अवैध व्यापारियों तक पहुंचाने का काम करते थे। अपराध के इस जंगलराज के बारे में जानकर मुझे बहुत तकलीफ हुई। मैंने जंगली जानवरों को बचाने और उनको दोबारा जंगल में छोड़ने के लिए अपना अभियान शुरू

> मैं शुरू में ताकतवर तस्करों से सीधी लड़ाई की स्थिति में नहीं था, इसलिए मैंने सबसे पहले उन जानवरों को अवैध बाजार से खरीदना शुरू किया, जिन्हें वे लोग जंगल से पकड़कर लाते थे। मैं इन जानवरों को या तो वापस जंगल में छोड़ आता या फिर उन्हें इंफाल जाकर राज्य के वन अधिकारियों के हवाले कर देता। सबसे पहले मैंने दो बडे एशियाई वन कछुआ बाजार से खरीदा, जिनमें प्रत्येक का वजन २७ किलोग्राम के आसपास था। उन अनमोल कछुओं को मैंने सात हजार रुपयों में खरीदा था। कछुओं को केयबुल

लामजाओ राष्ट्रीय उद्यान में बाद में छोड़ दिया गया। लेकिन मुझे पता था कि ऐसा लगातार कर पाना मेरे लिए संभव नहीं होगा। दुर्लभ किस्म के जानवरों की बाजार में कीमत बहुत ज्यादा होती थी।

मैंने आसपास के लोगों को जागरूक करना शुरू कर दिया। उन्हें उन खतरों से वाकिफ कराया, जो कि इन विविध जानवरों के जंगल में न रहने से हम इंसानों को उठाने पड़ सकते हैं। मैंने उन्हें प्रकृति की रक्षा के फायदे गिनाए। आगे चलकर मैंने इन बचाए गए पशुओं के लिए एक आश्रय स्थल की स्थापना की। आज हम दोनों पित-पत्नी पूरे मन से यहां रखे गए जानवरों की सेवा करते हैं। खासकर उन नवजात जानवरों की, जिन्हें अतिरिक्त देखभाल की जरूरत होती है। क्योंकि ऐसे नन्हें प्राणियों को जंगल

में भी नहीं छोड़ा जा सकता। कुछ समय पहले ही मैंने एक शिकारी से हजार रुपये में तेंद्र का एक शावक खरीदा था। उस शावक को जंगल में छोड़ने का मतलब था, उसे मार देना। हमने अपने आश्रय स्थल में उसे रखकर हर तीन घंटे में दूध पिलाया और उसकी हर जरूरत का ध्यान रखा। मगर दुर्भाग्यवश शावक को डायरिया हो गया और उसकी जान चली गई। मुझे उसकी मौत पर बहुत पछतावा हुआ। ऐसा लगा कि मैं भी उसकी मौत में बराबर का हकदार हूं। लेकिन आगे से ऐसा न हो इसके लिए मैंने कमर कस ली है। मैं अब अपनी देखभाल में मेडिकल सहायता को भी शामिल कर रहा हूं।

-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

## अपनों के ही निशाने पर

के साथ मिलकर अपने बेटे को ही मार डाला। महिला का मित्र उसके बेटे का ही दोस्त था। वह इस

संबंध का विरोध करता था। इस कारण मां ने ही उसकी जान ले ली। पित ने पत्नी से पीछा छुड़ाने के लिए उसे मार डाला, फिर लाश को टुकड़े-टुकड़े कर जंगल में ले जाकर जला दिया। यही नहीं, पकड़े जाने पर पुलिस को गुमराह करने की कोशिश भी पैसे न देने पर टोस्त की हत्या की। टोम्ब ने चाय के कर दी। पत्नी ने बॉयफ्रेंड के साथ मिलकर पति का गला दबा दिया। बेटे और पोती ने मिलकर दादी को मार डाला। बहू ने सास की इतनी पिटाई की कि वह मर गई। दहेज की मांग न पूरी होने पर बहू को जहर

इन सभी खबरों में एक बात समान है कि अपने परिवार के लोग ही अपनों को मार रहे हैं। लडिकयों की भ्रूण हत्या के मामले में यह बात लगातार सामने आती रही है। जब भी अपराधों की चर्चा होती है, किसी की हत्या कर दी जाती है, तो हमेशा उंगलियां बाहर वालों पर उठती हैं। पुलिस भी पहले बाहर के लोगों पर ही शक करती है। लेकिन अपनों द्वारा किए गए अपराध बढ़ते ही जा रहे हैं। समाज इतना कैसे बदल गया है कि नृशंसता भी हद से बाहर हो रही है? विशेषज्ञों की मानें, तो ऐसा इसलिए हो रहा है क्योंकि कोई हमें धैर्य रखना नहीं सिखाता। अपने क्रोध और बदले की भावना को कैसे जीता जाए, इसकी जानकारी नहीं दी जाती। इसके अलावा परिवार में अक्सर बातचीत का माहौल नहीं होता। बच्चों और परिवार के अन्य सदस्य एक-दूसरे को अपराध की खबरों में जो चीज समान है, वह यह कि परिवार के लोग ही अपनों को मार रहे हैं। आपसी विश्वास का खत्म होना बेहद डरावना है। अपनों की जान लेने के बाद उसे छिपाने, गलत सूचना देने या दूसरे पर आरोप लगाने से भी लोग नहीं हिचक रहे।



क्षमा शर्मा

सुनें और समझें, इसकी कोशिश परिवार के बड़ों द्वारा

नहीं की जाती।

किसी से दूरी बनानी हो, तो उससे दूरी के संबंध रखे जा सकते हैं। मगर किसी से दूर हटने का, छुटकारा पाने का आसान तरीका इन दिनों उसकी जान लेना हो गया है। हमारे दिलों में इतना क्रोध कैसे आ गया है कि दूसरे को मारकर ही हमें संतष्टि मिलती है? यों यह गाना हम हर रोज गाते हैं कि हम उस देश में रहते हैं, जहां का मूल मंत्र अहिंसा है। मनोवैज्ञानिक यह भी कहते हैं कि युवाओं को एंगर मैनेजमेंट या क्रोध से निपटने की ट्रेनिंग देनी चाहिए, क्योंकि क्रोध जब हम पर हावी हो जाता है. तो वह अच्छे-बुरे की पहचान भुला देता है। इस बात पर भी

ध्यान नहीं देने देता कि किसी को मारने के बाद हम भी नहीं बच पाएंगे। दस बच्चों की मां ने जब अपने ही बेटे को मारा, तब उसे अपने बच्चों का खयाल भा भा नहा आया। अपन बट का मात का सूचना उसने अपनी ही बेटी और दामाद को गलत रूप से दी। लेकिन उन्होंने उसकी बात नहीं मानी और पुलिस को सूचना दे दी। पता नहीं, पश्चाताप की भावना इन अपराधियों के मन में आती है कि नहीं! इसके अलावा यह धारणा भी खत्म होती जा रही है कि औरतें अक्सर इस तरह के अपराधों को अंजाम नहीं देतीं। बल्कि अब तो औरतें भी बढ़-चढ़कर ऐसे मामलों में लिप्त होने लगी हैं। जब भी अपराधी पकडे जाते हैं, वे रटा-रटाया वाक्य दोहराते हैं कि उन्होंने ऐसा नहीं किया। या कि अगर दो लोगों ने अपराध किया होता है, तो बचने के लिए वे एक-दूसरे का नाम लगाने लगते हैं कि मेरी तो यह मंशा नहीं थी। और मैंने किसी को नहीं मारा है, उसने मारा है। दिमागों का इतना अपराधीकरण कि परिवार के सदस्य की जान लेने के बाद उसे छिपाने, गलत सूचना देने, किसी और का नाम लगाने में भी अफसोस नहीं होता। आपसी विश्वास का लगातार खत्म होते जाना कितना डरावना है। अपने परिवार पर से ही अगर विश्वास उठने लगे, तो फिर किस



एक फर्जी विश्वविद्यालय के चक्कर में अमेरिका में कुछ भारतीय छात्रों की गिरफ्तारी का मामला गर्म है। गौरतलब है कि अमेरिका ही वह देश है, जिसे विदेशी छात्रों की आमद से सर्वाधिक आर्थिक लाभ होता है। इस मामले में ब्रिटेन दूसरे स्थान पर है।

विदेशी छात्रों से होने | आंकड़े-यूरो में,



किसी गांव में एक साधु रहता था, जो दिन भर लोगों को उपदेश दिया करता था। उसी गांव में एक नर्तकी थी, जो नाचकर लोगों का मन बहलाया करती थी। संयोग से दोनों की मृत्यु एक ही दिन हुई। इनके कर्मों और उनके पीछे छिपी भावनाओं के आधार पर इन्हें स्वर्ग या नरक दिए जाने की बात कही गई।

पर भरोसा किया जा सकता है!

साधु आश्वस्त था कि वह तो स्वर्ग ही जाएगा, क्योंकि उसने जीवन

भर लोगों को सदुपदेश दिए थे। जबकि नर्तकी अपने मन में ऐसा कुछ भी सोच नहीं रही थी। उसे सिर्फ फैसले का इंतजार था। तभी घोषणा हूई कि साधु को नरक और नर्तकी को स्वर्ग दिया जाता है। यह फैसला सुनकर साधु ने गुस्से से यमराज से कहा, यह कैसा न्याय है महाराज? मैं जीवन भर लोगों को उपदेश देता रहा और मझे नरक नसीब हुआ! जबकि यह स्त्री जीवन भर लोगों को रिझाने के लिए

नाचती रही और इसे स्वर्ग दिया जा रहा है। ऐसा अन्याय क्यों? यमराज ने शांत भाव से उत्तर दिया, यह नर्तकी अपना पेट भरने के लिए नाचती थी, लेकिन इसके मन में यही भावना थी कि मैं अपनी कला ईश्वर के चरणों में समर्पित कर रही हूं। जबकि तुम उपदेश देते हुए भी यह सोचते थे कि काश, तुम्हें भी नर्तकी का नाच देखने को मिल जाता! तुम शायद ईश्वर के इस महत्वपूर्ण संदेश को भूल गए कि इंसान के कर्म से अधिक कर्म करने के पीछें की भावनाएं मायने रखती है। अतः तुम्हें नरक और नर्तकी को स्वर्ग दिया

-संकलित

## हरियाली और रास्ता

पीछे रखने वाली भाषा सिद्ध होने वाली है।

-सुप्रसिद्ध हिंदी कवि

## विनोद, मां और रोशनी

एक मां की कहानी, जिसने अपने बेटे की जिंदगी रोशन की, लेकिन बेटे ने यह जानने में देर कर दी।



विनोद की मां की एक आंख नहीं थी। वह विनोद को बहुत चाहती थी, पर विनोद मां से चिढ़ता था। उसके पिता का देहांत हो चुका था और मां लोगों के घर में खाना बनाती थी। विनोद जब सातवीं क्लास में था, तब एक दिन वह अपना टिफिन लाना भूल गया था। उसकी मां टिफिन देने पहुंची, तो सारे बच्चे उन्हें देख डर गए। अपनी मां की वजह से दोस्तों के बीच वह शर्मिंदा महसस करने लगा। उस दिन के बाद विनोद के दिल में मां के लिए पहले जैसा सम्मान नहीं रह गया था। उसने ठान लिया कि वह पढ़-लिखकर कहीं दूर चला जाएगा। बारहवीं के बाद विनोद को एक विदेशी यूनिवर्सिटी में स्कॉलरशिप मिल गई। पढाई के बाद वहीं उसकी नौकरी लग गई। बाहर रहते हुए कई साल बीत गए, पर उसका कभी मन नहीं हुआ कि वह मां से मिलने जाए। मां ही उसे फोन करती थी, पर विनोद अक्सर बहाने बनाकर फोन रख देता था। मां के प्रति कठोर रवैये के बावजूद उसे पछतावा नहीं था।

एक दिन उसे मां के देहांत हो जाने का पता चला। अंतिम संस्कार के लिए भारत लौटने पर उसे मां की लिखी आखिरी चिट्ठी मिली। उसमें लिखा था, प्रिय विनोद, मेरा एक पल भी तुम्हें सोचे बिना अधूरा है। तुम्हें मेरी वजह से अपने दोस्तों के बीच अपमान सहना पड़ा, इसके लिए मैं शर्मिंदा हूं। शायद मैं कभी एक अच्छी मां नहीं बन पाई। तुम जब छोटे थे, तब तुम्हारे पिता तुम्हें घुमाने लेकर गए थे। तब किसी गाड़ी ने टक्कर मार दी और तुम्हारे पिता की जान चली गई। उस दुर्घटना में तुम्हारी एक आंख खराब हो गई थी। मैं नहीं चाहती थी कि लोग तुम्हारा अपमान करें। इसलिए मैंने अपनी एक आंख तुम्हें दे दी थी। मुझे गर्व है कि मेरा बेटा आज दुनिया को मेरी आंखों से देख पा रहा है।

अपने आसपास के लोगों की अहमियत समझने में हम अक्सर देर कर देते हैं।

## The burden of subsidies

The trend rate of expenditure on subsidies in April-Nov 2018 indicates a higher spend than indicated in the revised estimates for 2018-19



**RAISINA HILL** 

A K BHATTACHARYA

he government's response to those who may be questioning some of the revised estimates for 2018-19 in the interim Budget presented last Friday is that the finance ministry has access to information and data that gives it the confidence to put out those numbers. That should be a reassuring message. After all, these revised estimates are crucial to

the government meeting its revised fiscal deficit target of 3.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) for

A reality check on these numbers, nevertheless, should be useful. Let us look at the expenditure on major subsidies. The revised estimates for food subsidy during 2018-19 are ₹1.71 trillion, compared to the Budget estimates of ₹1.69 trillion. Before the interim Budget's presentation, monthly data for food subsidy was available till November 2018. That figure put the food subsidy bill already incurred between April and November at ₹1.42 trillion or a monthly run rate of about ₹17,800 crore. If one assumes the same run rate to continue in the remaining four months of the current financial year, the total food subsidy bill should increase to ₹2.14 trillion. This will then end up being at least ₹42,000 crore more than the revised estimates put out in the

interim Budget.

Fertiliser subsidies have two major components. Under urea subsidy, the interim Budget showed that the revised estimates for 2018-19 have been reined in at ₹44.985 crore, a little less than the Budget estimates of ₹44,989 crore. The monthly data on urea subsidy spent during April-November 2018 puts it at ₹33,294 crore, or a monthly run rate of ₹4,162 crore. If the same run rate continues in the remaining four months of the current year, the total urea subsidy bill will go up to ₹49,941 crore, about ₹4,956 crore higher than the revised estimates figure given in the interim Budget.

Similarly, the subsidy bill for nutrient-based fertilisers, as shown in the revised estimates for 2018-19, is ₹25,090 crore, exactly the same figure that was given in the Budget estimates a vear ago. But the expenditure already incurred under this head in the April-November 2018 period is ₹20,152 crore, or a monthly run rate of ₹2,519 crore. And if the expenditure continues to take place at the same rate in the remaining four months of the year, the total annual bill for nutrient-based fertilisers subsidies would go up to ₹30.228 crore, which will be ₹5.138 crore higher than the revised estimates put out in the interim Budget.

That leaves the petroleum subsidy bill, which the revised estimates in the interim Budget had put at ₹24,833 crore, which was actually lower than the Budget estimates of ₹24,933 crore for the same year. Crude oil prices had gone up steeply during the year and the subsidy bills for cooking gas and kerosene should have gone up. Indeed, the subsidy bill on petroleum incurred in the first eight months of the year was estimated at ₹23,142 crore, indicating a monthly run rate of ₹2,893 crore. If this run rate continues for the remaining four months, the total annual subsidy bill on petroleum would go up to ₹34,713 crore, which would be ₹9,880 crore more than the revised estimates put out by the interim Budget.

The total expenditure incurred on these major subsidies during 2018-19, as per the revised estimates, is ₹2.66 trillion, which is marginally higher

than the Budget estimates of ₹2.64 trillion. But if you extrapolate the data from expenditure already incurred on these subsidies in the April-November 2018 period to the full year, the slippage could be as high as ₹0.62 trillion and the actual major subsidies bill could go up to ₹3.28 trillion, compared to ₹2.64 trillion given in the revised estimates.

Remember that the monthly figures on the subsidies expenditure already incurred are compiled and released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) every month. Of course, the CGA's numbers are unaudited and provisional. Also, the trend rates logic may not apply in each and every case. The Budget makers have more access to information and data, which may have given them the confidence to put out the revised numbers. It is also possible that its impact on the final fiscal deficit figure could be neutralised by underspending, compared to the revised estimates, under some other heads. Or has a part of this expenditure been deferred to the next year? But a deviation from the trend rate by as much as ₹0.62 trillion on major subsidies alone could have serious implications for the quality of the government's overall fiscal consolidation programme.

## RBI may change stance; rate cut unlikely

If data supports, we could see a rate cut next financial year but that may not signal the beginning of a new cycle



BANKER'S TRUST

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

**¬** oday, if we take a poll of Indian industrialists on their expectations from the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) last bi-monthly policy for the 2019 fiscal year, 10 out of 10 will pitch for a rate cut. They are also rooting for a cut in the banks' cash reserve ratio (CRR) — or the portion of deposits kept with the RBI — to release money into the system.

Indisposed finance minister Arun Jaitley too has asked for a rate cut, albeit indirectly — saying, India cannot have a real rate of interest that's higher than anywhere else in the world.

The chorus for the cut has grown ever since the retail inflation data for December 2018 was released. Retail inflation in December dropped to its 18-month low of 2.19 per cent, lower than what most analysts had expected, driven by continued deflation in food prices (-2.5 per cent). Since July 2018. retail inflation has been on a slide.

The RBI is committed to achieve a medium-term target of 4 per cent retail inflation on a durable basis within a band of plus or minus 2 per cent, while supporting growth. In its December olicy review the Monetary

Policy Committee (MPC), Indian central bank's rate-setting body, projected 2.7-3.2 per cent inflation in the second half of 2019 and 3.8-4.2 per cent in the first half of 2020 (with upside risks). The projection was revised downward after RBI's earlier estimate undershot the actual data.

Even the December inflation projections for the second half of the current fiscal year as well as the first half of the next year could be high. This and a sharp drop in the index of industrial production (IIP) in November are behind the rising demand for a rate cut. The so-called base effect alone cannot explain 0.5 per cent IIP growth in November as the decline is broadbased. An area of particular concern is the contraction in manufacturing production. Does this signal a slow down ahead? Indeed, headline retail inflation is

hovering below expectation but the socalled core inflation or non-food, nonoil, manufacturing inflation in December remained unchanged at 5.7 per cent. In fact, core inflation, excluding transport and communication, actually rose to 6 per cent in December from 5.6 per cent in November, driven by higher inflation in health, education, household and personal goods. Had there been no dramatic fall in crude prices, which had led to a drop in the retail prices of petrol and diesel, the inflation figure would have been different.

It is difficult to get a hang of things when global crude prices are so volatile. From \$86 a gallon in October it dropped to \$49 in December to climb back to \$62 in January, the level it is trading now. In tandem, the movement of the 10-year treasury bill yield vo-yoed from 8.24 per cent to 7.21 per cent and closed



The interim Budget's push for consumption and growth stimulus may give a fillip to the equities but the bond story may be over

at 7.61 per cent on Friday. And the Indian currency, which dropped to 74.48 a dollar in October, strengthened to 69.18 in the first week of January. Last week, it closed at 71.3.

The RBI has been buying bonds to infuse liquidity in the system. So far, it has bought ₹2.36 trillion worth bonds. The pressure on liquidity has eased and this may continue to mid-March when Indian corporations pay advance tax on their estimated profits for the quarter.

The biggest joker in the pack is the state of the fiscal situation. The budgeted fiscal deficit target of 3.3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) won't be met; it will be marginally higher at 3.4 per cent and, more importantly, next year too it is estimated to be 3.4 per cent. The government's market borrowing has been raised this year and also for fiscal year 2020 even as the tax revenue projections are rather optimistic

Clearly, it is turning out to be a structural issue. The interim Budget is expansionary, populist and inflationary on the margin. Its push for consumption and growth stimulus may give a fillip to the equities but the bond story may be over. Last Friday, the 10-year bond yield rose 11 basis points from the day's low after the Budget presentation. One basis point is a hundredth of a percentage point.

Irrespective of which political party comes to power after the May elections, it will be difficult to claw back most of the welfare schemes which will inflate the government spend and fiscal responsibility will be the casualty.

Against this backdrop and around 5.8 per cent six-month average core inflation, a rate cut is unlikely but I will not rule out a change in the stance of the monetary policy — from "calibrated tightening" to neutral. If economic activities remain muted, the pressure on core inflation will ease and the next

rate cut could be as early as in April. just ahead of the general elections

After the last meeting of the MPC in December (which left the policy rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent), former RBI governor Uriit Patel had said "if the upside risks to inflation do not materialise, there is a possibility of space opening up for appropriate RBI action". The decision on a no-change policy rate was unanimous, while one of the six members of the MPC, Ravindra Dholakia, voted in favour of changing the stance to neutral.

Some analysts say the February policy could turn out to be the governor's policy. How? Here's what they say: Among six MPC members, Michael Patra and Viral Acharya will surely vote against a rate cut but Pami Dua may join Ravindra Dholakia for a cut. A lot will depend on Chetan Ghate and Shaktikanta Das; if there is a tie, Das will have the casting vote.

If indeed the tie happens because Das is against a rate cut (and Ghate in favour it), his casting vote will only reaffirm that. This will also be case, if he favours a rate cut (and Ghate opposes it). So, either way, it will be the governor's policy.

But my take is the MPC meet will be devoid of any such drama. If at all there is a tie, it could be on the stance of the policy and not the action. The interim Budget has sealed the outcome of the MPC meeting — no rate cut and a likely change in policy stance. If data supports, the earliest we could see a rate cut is in April but even if that happens, it will not signal the beginning of a new cycle.

The columnist, a consulting editor with Business Standard, is an author and senior adviser to Jana Small Finance Bank Ltd. Twitter: @TamalRandy

#### **CHINESE WHISPERS**

On a wing and a prayer



Chairman of trouble-hit Zee group Subhash Chandra last week urged investors to defeat the "negative forces" by buying shares of Zee and Dish TV following a sharp slide in their value. The plea raised many eyebrows as promoters do not often ask people to buy shares in their companies. "Instead of asking people to buy its shares, the Zee group chief should have asked them to subscribe to their channels amid the uncertainty created by Trai's new policy," said an analyst. Aimed at transparency, the new broadcasting guidelines give users more leeway to choose channels they prefer.

#### Naidu takes the lead

It seems Telugu Desam Party President N Chandrababu Naidu has taken it upon himself to iron out the remaining differences between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Congress for the sake of the mahagathbandhan. He was in Delhi last Friday and met both Congress President Rahul Gandhi and AAP Convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. He said there is a "democratic compulsion" for all the Opposition parties to come together; however, "the political compulsion of each party at the state-level must be taken into account" while forming a united force before the Lok Sabha polls. His statement assumes significance because an alliance between the AAP and the Congress is yet to materialise as both sides continue to attack one another and assert they would be going solo for the upcoming polls.

#### Adopt a cow

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath was reportedly aghast that there were not many government-run cow shelters in a state that was ruled by the BJP for 15 years. He told a gathering, "Nare to khoob lagate hain – pandra saal aise hi nikal diye." (They spout many slogans, but did little over the last 15 years.) To make good, Nath has proposed a scheme under which ordinary people of the state can adopt a cow. The idea is to open at least 1,000 cow shelters in the state by May this year. The proposed adoption will ensure economic viability of these shelters. According to an estimate, the government will spend ₹450 crore to build these shelters.

**AS I SEE IT** 

## An 'unconventional' interim Budget

Was Friday's Budget an act of constitutional impropriety, as the government's opponents have proclaimed, or was it justified, as its ministers insist?



KARAN THAPAR

ith a speech that stretched over a hundred minutes the interim Finance Minister has announced major, new and sweeping policies that will have a significant impact on our people and economy. He called it an interim Budget but it definitely wasn't. It was a full-fledged Budget. Not only does it bear no comparison to the interim Budgets delivered by Jaswant Singh in 2004, Pranab Mukherjee in 2009 and P. Chidambaram in 2014 but few full-fledged Budgets have been as ambitious as this one.

So was this an act of constitutional impropriety, as the government's opponents have loudly proclaimed, or was it justified and legitimate, as its ministers insist?

Yashwant Sinha, a distinguished former Bharatiya Janata Party finance minister, has said that to use an interim Budget to announce major new policies involving sizeable expenditure and significant tax changes would be "unconstitutional". His arguement is simple. Convention is as much a part of our Constitution as its written articles and today it's a well-established convention that interim Budgets are just votes on

account to ensure that the business of government continues. You could, if you want, add a moral

argument to the constitutional one. No doubt the Modi government is a fullfledged one with a majority in the lower house and a mandate till the May 26 but on April 1, when the new financial year starts, it will only have 46 days left. Is it fitting for it to present a full-fledged Budget valid for 365 days which covers 319 under its successor? Having done so, it's tied the next government's hands in two important senses: given their populist appeal, it would be difficult not to continue with these policies and, additionally, it might have to find the resources to fund them.

The government's grounds for presenting a full Budget three months before the elections seems equally persuasive. To begin with, in India conventions don't have the same force as they do in Britain. You could also argue that a convention exists only as long as it's bserved. When it's not, it ceases to be.

More importantly, nothing in the Constitution actually disallows a government with just three months left from presenting a full-fledged Budget. Indeed, as Yashwant Sinha has admitted, "the constitution does not have a proviso that specifically deals with the presentation of the Budget". So if it's not specifically disallowed you could argue it's permitted.

Finally, there's Arun Jaitley's view which is based on the needs and exigencies of the economic situation. "The larger interests of the economy always dictate what should be in the interim Budget", he has said. At the present, he adds, there are challenges which "cannot afford to wait (and) there's a necessity to address some of them".

This is not such a singular standpoint. In 2014, when P. Chidambaram made a series of changes in excise duty and service tax, he justified his actions with the following logic: "the current economic situation demands some interventions that cannot wait for the regular Budget". Of course, Piyush Goyal went a lot further than P. Chidambaram. But you could say that's a matter of detail. The justification is the same.

Piyush Goyal's interim Budget also defies convention in one other sense and how it's hereafter treated by Parliament might be another. The farmers' income support scheme has been announced with retrospective effect. That's not just unusual it's never been done in an interim Budget. But then there's always a first time.

The manner in which Parliament handles the Goyal Budget could constitute another breach. NK Singh, a former Finance Secretary, has pointed out that so far changes to the Income Tax Act have always been referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance. Will that happen this time? It will be novel if it doesn't. But doesn't Parliament have a right to decide whether or not it should?

Now, when the Prime Minister describes the Budget as "a trailer" is he only alluding to the possibility his government has more surprise announcements up its sleeve or is he also hinting there are other conventions that could be disregarded as the government burnishes its electoral appeal? I hope not but, after Friday's Budget, you can't be sure.

#### **LETTERS**

#### Revamp fiscal plan



This refers to the article "Time to improve the fiscal architecture" (February 1). The three suggestions by A Prasanna relating to the creation of a Fiscal Council, the adoption of a 'deficit neutral' rule by the government and advance annual ceiling for market borrowing make sense in the context of the government's search for external remedies for internal debilities.

The government's efforts to camouflage fiscal deficit using surreptitious methods like deferring payments due and pressurising government-owned bodies to divert funds or pay extra or advance dividends have invited adverse observations by analysts. There is one school of thought that considers explaining a higher deficit with more prudent and transparent accounting system a better and desirable alternative than the present tightrope walking that brings embarrassment to several organisations.

The long-term solution lies in mapping the nation's unaccounted for wealth and considering a realistic taxation policy that covers high income groups and agricultural income.

M G Warrier Mumbai

#### Time for scrutiny

President Ram Nath Kovind, while highlighting the various achievements of the National Democratic Alliance government when he was addressing a joint sitting of both the Houses of Parliament, hailed the efforts to build a new India and touched upon issues

like surgical strikes, the Rafale deal, Swachh Bharat, the Triple Talag Bill, Citizenship Amendment Bill. These might be great achievements for the government but I want to ask what it has achieved with regard to core issues such as unemployment, poverty, rape, mob violence and a rapidly declining economy. These are the issues crying

#### for attention. Mohd Faheem Mumbai

Partial analysis

This refers to "What not to do in a corporate crisis" (February 1) by Aakar Patel. Mr Patel is grossly unfair to Dewan Housing Finance Corporation (DHFL) and overly favourable to the Zee Group — the two companies he has chosen to compare from the point of view of their response to the recent crisis situations.

In his eloquent write up, he tries to run down one highly respected (before the crisis) company and, at the same time, is strangely charitable to the other! He is purportedly commenting on the "corporate communication skills" of large Indian companies in general -"still executed by multi-billion dollar businesses in a crisis as if they were mom and pop shops" — but uses his immense capabilities and flowery word play to just run down one and find good in the other. My respect for him - as an exceptionally good independent columnist — has gone down several



notches after reading this article, which smacks of outright partiality.

Without going into the faults of the two companies involved — as I do not have any knowledge about their working —I think DHFL's response is very specific, businesslike and to the point. Its only mistake perhaps was that it was not signed by their top man and, in contrast, Subhash Chandra (pictured), chairman of Zee, seems to have written one, full of irrelevant family history and internal feuds. In another report, he had even alluded to "negative forces sabotaging his outfit" - hardly suitable when defending your company in the face of alleged loan repayment defaults. Krishan Kalra Gurugram

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

**HAMBONE** ANYWAY, I BET MAGGIE DOG'N DUCK WILL BE GLAD YOU STOOD UP FOR HER!

MUMBAI | MONDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2019

## Unsustainable welfarism

India needs a strong bond market to check electoral populism

ddressing a political rally in Durgapur, West Bengal, on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the interim Budget for 2019-20 as a "historic" step towards empowering peasants, workmen and the middle class, and promised more benefits for all sections in the full Budget if his party returned to power after the Lok Sabha polls. The interim Budget had several steps towards creating a welfare state, including an income support scheme for farmers owning up to 2 hectares — about 120 million households — who would receive income support worth ₹6,000 a year. It introduced a pension scheme for unorganised sector workers — with the government making a matching contribution — to provide a pension of ₹3,000 a month after 60 years of age. Then there was an income tax rebate for those with a taxable income of up to ₹5 lakh.

What is creditable is that the government has managed to do all this with a limited impact on the fiscal deficit. The broader point, however, is whether a country with relatively meagre financial resources can afford such open-ended welfare programmes. It would be unfair to blame this government alone; in fact, Mr Modi deserves compliments for coming out strongly against more damaging measures such as farm loan waiver because they destroy credit discipline while doing precious little to improve the condition of farmers. It's a different matter that the Bharatiya Janata Party did nothing to stop the Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra governments from announcing the same in the runup to the state elections. Competitive populism is something the opposition parties have also adopted with enthusiasm — Congress President Rahul Gandhi, for example, has said he would not allow Mr Modi to sleep till a pan-Indian farm loan waiver was announced and has promised a minimum income guarantee for all if re-elected in the Lok Sabha elections in May.

What these promises underline is a steady move towards welfarism that can't be reversed, binding the Indian state into fiscal commitments that would be increasingly difficult to sustain. Indeed, the evidence of the developed world over-committing and then slipping, as a result, is there for all to see. It would appear that the Indian political system is also making the same mistake. The truth is India's decision-makers do not have any effective guardrails to hold them back from promising something that could be exorbitantly costly. In a big way, the question is about the financial cost of such schemes. For example, in the absence of a well-developed bond market, there is no fully effective way for the markets to raise the red flag by means of higher yields and interest rates. India's half-hearted efforts to wean its lenders to the bond market have met with limited success. A strong bond market is a necessary institutional mechanism to check unrestrained fiscal populism. Its success would hinge on liquidity for lower-rated paper, investor appetite for the entire debt spectrum, adequate hedging mechanism, and an increasing supply of bankable papers. Given that the inexorable appeal of populism is unlikely to disappear soon, India must prioritise the development of a bond market.

## Back to Feb 28

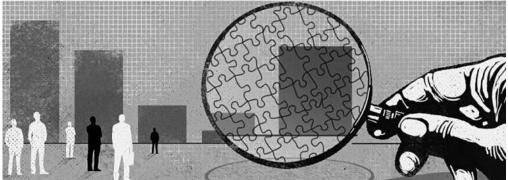
Advancing the Budget by a month not working out

he interim Budget — which was more like a full Budget than previous votes-on-account - was presented on the first day of February, as has been the case for the two preceding Union Budgets. This follows a decision taken during the 2016-17 financial year to advance the Budget presentation date by a month, ending the long tradition of presenting it on the last day of February. The first indication of this change came on October 26, 2016, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi — while chairing one of his meetings on timely implementation of schemes with states — urged bureaucrats to align their planning to this new schedule so as to benefit as much as possible from it. The hope was that an earlier Budget date would be able to provide greater certainty earlier in the year, and front-load expenditure somewhat. There had been complaints from various centres of expenditure in the Union and state governments that they tended to be somewhat short of disbursements in the first quarter of any financial year, as the government machinery responded too slowly to the Budget decisions announced in end-February. Legislative approvals for all spending should ideally have been undertaken during the month of March, so as to be ready for the new financial year in April — and sometimes there were delays.

But in the two financial years that this practice has been in place, the decision's drawbacks have become clear. Most importantly, there simply isn't enough data in place for a proper and effective budgeting process. Consider, for example, the headline numbers of any Budget — the fiscal deficit for the ongoing year, and the fiscal deficit target for the next financial year. While the latter is always an unknown value, the current year's fiscal deficit depends on the data available of spending and revenue over the months so far and expectations for the remaining months. When presented on February 1, not only is less known about expenditure — this is a surmountable problem, given expenditure choices are the government's — there is crucially too little known about revenue. This has led to revenue projections in the Revised Estimates being often the same as the Budget Estimates. If we don't have real revised numbers, it becomes harder to budget accurately for the new year. This takes away from the credibility of the fiscal deficit number. Even more worrying is the denominator of how the fiscal deficit is generally presented — as a fraction of gross domestic product (GDP). Unfortunately, the first Revised Estimates for GDP are only known by the end of January. The Advance Estimates of GDP, which are used instead, have been subject to major revisions recently. Some government officials highlighted, after the interim Budget, the difference that using the Revised Estimates would make to the Budget's predictions regarding the fiscal glide path.

There are several other ways in which the paucity of data makes a Budget-preparation exercise that targets February 1 far less useful than one targeting February 28 or 29. The only way to correct this is to return to the original date on which Budgets were presented — while improving the speed of disbursements of funds. There is no substitute for a sensible and clear Budgeting process.

ILLUSTRATION BY AJAY MOHANTY



# Hiding the real numbers

Contrary to expectations, Narendra Modi's government may have been more fiscally profligate than UPA-II

**POLICY RULES** 

MIHIR S SHARMA

nfortunately, it is now widely accepted that we can no longer trust the Indian government's numbers. And here I am not talking about the widely discussed "new series" calculations of gross domestic product; I am not talking about the discredited "back series" of that same GDP; and I am not even talking about the claims made about job growth using EPFO statistics, which measure formalisation of the economy. I am talking about the most fundamental macro-economic indicators: Those presented in the Budget.

In the interim Budget presented last week the numbers cannot be said to fairly reflect reality. Consider the claim that India continues to be on a "fis-

cal glide path" to a deficit of 3 per cent of GDP. This is increasingly hard to believe. The years after the near-crisis of 2013, including the last year of the United Progressive Alliance, featured apparently genuine attempts to cut the deficit. But those attempts appear to have been given up on.

This year, although there is no major macro-economic crisis, the fiscal deficit target has again been missed — and we are supposed to believe that, once again, we will make the 3 per cent target not this year, not next year, but the year after next. This is like when senior UPA officials constantly claimed that 8 per cent, growth, we they to three deepers are properly to the three of the senior of the senior trought was true, to the senior three deepers are properly as the senior of the senior trought was true, to the senior trought was true to the senior of the senior

cent growth was two to three quarters away. Government officials can truthfully point out that the slippage was only from 3.3 per cent of GDP to 3.36 per cent of GDP. However, the "glide path" can no longer be taken seriously, and deserves the same scepticism that the UPA's insistence received.

Other projections in the Budget are similarly untrustworthy. No real answers have been given as to why the receipts from the goods and services tax are ₹1 trillion less than the Budget estimates. If GST revenue increase by about 6 per cent this year, why does the Budget claim that it will go up by about 20 per cent next year? If it does not, what happens to the Budget's projections?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been given considerable credit for being a fiscal hawk. The evidence suggests, however, that while he wants credit for being a fiscal hawk, he is unwilling to actually rein in spending or increase revenue. It seems that it was in fact the UPA that worked harder on fiscal compression. If you don't believe that, why not listen to Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash C Garg? He pointed out this week to the *Financial Express* that "the real expenditure growth during the entire five-year tenure of the previous government was only about two per cent".

As a consequence of the Modi government's unwillingness to control spending, the Budget deficit figure

is not just unbelievable, thanks to the unrealistic projections, but also downright deceptive. Government expenditure is being hidden by financing spending through other pools of cash that are under government control. A comparison with the first UPA's off-Budget liabilities, such as "oil bonds". is revealing. That process was more transparent. The then finance minister, who justly built up a reputation for depending on off-Budget items and spending rollovers, did at least himself acknowledge the problem in his speech: "As a first step, I have shown these liabilities clearly... I intend to

request the 13th Finance Commission to revisit the roadmap for fiscal adjustment [to take these off-Budget liabilities into account]". No such transparency is on display at the moment.

The mechanisms being used are unprecedented and problematic in a manner quite different from the oil bonds. The small savings fund, for example, is being used to prop up Air India — something that was in the past done out of Budget allocations. This is not the government's tax revenue to use. It is our savings — our public provident fund money, for example. It is being used for political ends, such as protecting Air India,

even though that failing airline is a uniquely awful destination for anyone's savings. This money should have come out of taxes. Why are we blaming bankers for throwing good money after bad to Kingfisher when the government, as the protector of our savings, is doing exactly the same with Air India?

Then there is the misuse of disinvestment — which no longer implies the reduction of government control and thus increasing the productivity of capital tied up in the public sector. Instead disinvestment has become an exercise in shifting capital from the public sector to the government, which then uses it to fund expenditure. This is a scandalous misuse of public resources and constantly increases inefficiency and capital misallocation in the economy. Public sector enterprises should use their reserves to invest.

Other public agencies are being forced to borrow in order to meet government policy priorities, since direct funding has been slashed. The Budget squeezed the highways ministry, for example, raising next year's outlay by only 6 per cent. The consequence is that agencies like the National Highways Authority of India, although they have no real balance sheet strength, are upping borrowing considerably, at government orders — without this being reflected in the Budget numbers. The NHAI owes ₹1.5 trillion, and has negligible earnings or cash flow. It finances its past debt by taking on new debt, all with a sovereign guarantee. The roads it borrows against are not its to give away — they are the property of the government. Most expect that the NHAI will be borrowing ₹60,000 crore from the market and the Food Corporation of India will be borrowing ₹1 trillion. All of this borrowing — directed and guaranteed by the government is invisible in the Budget.

Analysts have begun to point to these negative debt dynamics. Pranjul Bhandari of HSBC has pointed out in these columns that the net supply of government paper has gone up from 6.6 per cent of GDP to 8.2 per cent of GDP in just two years. Sajjid Chinoy of JPMorgan argues that the public sector borrowing requirement has remained "close to" 8.2 per cent of GDP for five years, and so household financial savings "have fallen in recent years from 22 per cent of GDP to 16 per cent". Most directly focusing on the Centre, Prithviraj Srinivas of Axis Bank points out that the "government directed borrowing has net increased" under Mr Modi: Public sector enterprises now borrow 1.6 per cent of GDP more, while the government has reduced its stated fiscal deficit by only 1.1 per cent of GDP.

There is only one possible conclusion: Mr Modi deserves no credit for fiscal prudence. He has in fact been more profligate than wise. If private investment has not revived, it is because the government is crowding out private borrowing — flooding the market with its own paper, instead of paying for its spending out of taxes like it should. You can rightly laugh at GDP numbers that claim we grew faster in the demonetisation year than in any other in our history. But if you do believe the GDP numbers, then you should note that there has been a sharp slowdown last year — at the same time that borrowing hit high gear. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy said last month that new project starts are at a 14-year low. This is stagnation, not growth. Mr Modi's big bet — that government spending could kick-start investment when combined with big talk and a little painless reform — has failed. He took over a recovering economy with a tight deficit reduction programme and ran it into the ground.

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## Why is bad behaviour in FIs widespread?

spate of corporate scandals and cases of poor governance have been hitting the headlines regularly for the past few months: The tottering behemoth Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services, the sinking Dewan Housing Finance Ltd, alleged improprieties by the former managing director of ICICI Bank, the shock and horror show unleashed by the Zee promoters, unknown issues in YES Bank and Axis Bank, whose chiefs have been shown the door, and, of course, the continuing self-serving behaviour of some promoters like that of Sterlite/Vedanta, and so on.

Each of these events has led to a sudden and massive erosion in shareholder value. DHFL is the most

egregious of all, whose stock has fallen from just under ₹700 to about ₹110 now, a crash of 85 per cent since early September 2018. The shares of YES Bank have more than halved. IL&FS is an unlisted company but its impact has reverberated across the financial sector with liquidity drying up and risk aversion rising.

Coming in quick succession, these events have once again showed how little shareholders can possibly know about what is going on inside a publicly listed company. This applies as much to institutional shareholders as to retail shareholders. Can some-

thing be done to avoid situations like these? At one extreme, each time an "accident" happens, some will call for stricter regulation. At another extreme, some tend to shrug and say, "You can't regulate bad behaviour," meaning accidents will always happen and regulation cannot stop them. Is it possible to have a more meaningful perspective other than these two extremes, and, if so, a more effective solution to the problem of bad corporate behaviour?

We can reduce accidents only if we look deeper and isolate what is by far the biggest component of the issue

of bad corporate behaviour. Notice one thing common among the names IL&FS, DHFL, ICICI Bank, YES Bank, Axis Bank...? They are all financial firms. Also remember, India's economic growth has been severely held back by the massive loot of the largest segment of the organised financial sector — public sector banks (PSBs) — by netas, babus, bankers and businessmen. Between them, PSBs and rogue financial firms have inflicted the maximum damage to savers at the micro level and to the economy at the macro level

If there is a systemic crisis, if there are fears of a contagion, if the money of retail savers is at risk, you can bet that one or more financial firms would have caused

it. The financial crisis that started in the US and spread like wildfire from Iceland to India was entirely caused by lenders with the help of stockbrokers and institutional investors — the key players in the financial sector.

It isn't that non-financial firms cannot be blamed for large-scale wealth destruction through financial frauds. But such instances are rare. And over the years, regulation and disclosure in securities markets have ensured that sensible investors can avoid accidents by staying away from promoters with a poor record of governance. Supervising financial firms,

however, is another matter. Financial firms need stricter rules of operations. If they are publicly listed, they have to be supervised by two regulators at least—the securities market regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India, and the financial markets regulator like the Reserve Bank of India. Housing finance firms are additionally supervised by the National Housing Bank. If financial firms are the cause of repeated crises, could it be that the regulators are not doing their job properly? Try to answer these questions:

PSBs have needed repeated bailouts over the last 20

years with public money. How many people have been held accountable for it?

→ That a lender must have enforceable collaterals throughout the term of a loan is something even a school student would understand. Who has been held responsible and punished for the ₹10 trillion which went bad at PSBs and may not be recovered because they don't have any enforceable collateral?

● Why has the ministry of finance been funnelling public money into PSBs for three decades without doing something fundamental — bringing in a system of positive and negative incentives?

• If Dewan Housing Finance collapses, would the National Housing Bank be questioned?

● How could IL&FS, supervised by the RBI, be allowed to run by a small cabal of professionals like their private fief for almost three decades? Or allowed to create a web of almost 350 companies that borrowed more than ₹1 trillion?

● Didn't the RBI brass fail to act on multiple letters from an IL&FS whistleblower and its own inspection report? If so, shouldn't someone be punished?

This is just a small sample of lawlessness that is rampant in the financial sector, which needs stricter, not more relaxed, regulation, one that must be followed in practice and not remain on paper. What we have, instead, is regulatory capture by crooked players due a combination of corruption and incompetence among regulators. Hence, the way to avoid systemic risks is to make regulators, especially those directly in charge of financial firms, accountable for every major slip. The question is: Who can supervise the regulators? It is the ministry of finance and the prime minister's office since they function like a strong command and control centre. But over five years of maximum governance, neither of these offices has made financial regulators accountable.

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## Chris Christie's testament



DWIGHT GARNER

When Chris Christie first met Donald Trump, over dinner at the Manhattan restaurant Jean-Georges in 2002, the developer ordered for both of them. This power move has received insufficient study.

Trump had waiters bring Christie the seared scallops and the roasted lamb loin. "I'm allergic to scallops," Christie recalls in his new memoir. He adds, "I've always hated lamb."

The future governor of New Jersey was gleaning lessons in domination. He was an apt pupil. *Let Me Finish* is a superficial and ungainly book that tries to cover so many

justifications, it's a master class in sucking up and kicking down, it's a potted memoir, it's a stab at political rehabilitation — that reading it is like watching an octopus try to play the bagpipes.

At heart it's a reminder that, before Bridgegate, before the 2016 presidential election and before the infamous photographs of him sunbathing on a closed beach during a 2017 state government shutdown, Christie was the favourite political intimidator of many Americans. An alternative title for this unintentionally poignant book might have been, "You Used to Really Like Me, Remember?"

Because Christie was positioned to be the brashest candidate in 2016, he had the most to lose from a Trump insurgency. He saw the threat instantly. After the first Republican debate, he said to his wife,

"We've got a problem."

"From a stylistic perspective," Christie writes, "he was everything I was — but on iet fuel."

After he dropped out of the 2016 race, Christie became the first governor to endorse Trump. Christie drew on his long friendship with Trump and became a close adviser. Often enough, in his own estimation, he was the only adult in the room. He nearly became Trump's running mate.

He was repeatedly stymied by Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law. Like a fawn, Kushner is seen in this book grazing on what Christie calls "his typical salad."

Bambi was bent on payback. Christie had helped send Kushner's father, the prominent New Jersey real estate developer Charles Kushner, to prison in a lurid case that involved tax evasion and witness tampering. According to Steve Bannon, Christie writes, Jared Kushner was "obsessed with destroying me." Every chair Christie sat in had a trap door underneath.

Christie saves his real fire in this book — which was written by a ghostwriter named Ellis Henican — for Bannon, the one-time chief executive of Trump's campaign. He

calls Bannon "self-impressed," a "snake" and "the only person I have ever met who can look pretentious and like an unmade bed at the very same time."

IRRATIONAL CHOICE

**DEBASHIS BASU** 

Christie accuses Bannon of peddling lies about him to Bob Woodward, among other journalists. More crucially, he remains apoplectic over Bannon's decision, alongside other advisers, to toss out Christie's monumental 30-volume plan for Trump's transition.

Trump's transition.

Trump didn't want to talk about the transition. Bad karma, he thought. Expecting Trump's other senior advisers to read 30 volumes, especially from Christie, was like waiting for monkeys to begin typing Shakespeare. In Christie's view, trashing the transition plan was the original sin of the Trump administration.

of the Trump administration.

The president didn't get the right people. Instead he got "the revolving door of deeply flawed individuals — amateurs, grifters, weaklings, convicted and unconvicted felons — who were hustled into jobs they were never suited for, sometimes seemingly without so much as a background check via Google or Wikipedia."

If Trump had only listened to him,

Christie writes, he would have fired James B Comey, then director of the FBI, at the start of his administration. His later firing would become, according to Bannon, the worst mistake in modern political history.

If you skim through *Let Me Finish*, nearly all you will see is Christie saying, in so many words, I told you so.

He told Trump that retired Lt Gen Michael T Flynn was trouble. He told Trump to stop picking on Khizr Khan, the Gold Star father. He was the only one who could tell Trump when he'd done poorly in a debate. Christie's sense of being right at every moment is wearying. Like a fan that blows for too long, his grille fills with dust.

As a literary performance, this book is nylon, not wool or silk. If you want to read an excellent book about Christie and about New Jersey politics, find a copy of Matt Katz's 2016 biography, American Governor: Chris Christie's Bridge to Redemption. It's cleareyed but sympathetic. Christie is vastly more likable in it than he is here.

Trump himself comes off rather well in this book. Christie remains a believer. He praises Trump as a father. He writes: "He

knows who he is and what he believes in. He has a keen understanding of what regular people are feeling. He commands extraordinary loyalty from his supporters and has unique communication skills." He thinks it's not too late for Trump to turn things around.

Is Let Me Finish a plea to be let back in, at a high level, to Trump's administration? Is it a platform from which to run for president in 2020 if Trump drops out? Do voters want him back? This self-serving book doesn't make the most appealing case. Is anyone longing for another in-your-face president? And does he have too much baggage? It may be true that, as Karl Ove Knausgaard put it in one of his "My Struggle" novels, "What's done is dung and cannot be undung."

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Trump, the Kushners, Bannon, New Jersey, and the Power of In-Your-Face Politics
Chris Christie with Ellis Henican
Hachette Books
420 pages; \$28

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# Dinion Monday, February 4, 2019

## **BOOST TO TRADE**

Piyush Goyal, Union finance minister

Indian customs is introducing full and comprehensive digitalisation of export/import transactions and leveraging RFID (radio-frequency identification) technology to improve export logistics

# Piyush bats for growth, RBI may have to play spoiler

High government borrowings, not all reflected in budget, will raise interest rates; that will dampen investment

HE GOVERNMENT'S EXPANSIONARY stance, reflected in the slippage of the fiscal deficit both in FY19 and FY20, may bring succour to some, but will drive up inflation and interest rates that will end up hurting growth. The extra fiscal impulse of 30 basis points in FY20 (the deficit was originally pegged at 3.1%) will most certainly compel RBI to not just stay put on rates, but could also prompt it to alter its current neutral stance to one of calibrated tightening. Going by the fairly sharp spike in yield on Friday, of 13 basis points, the bond markets are already very nervous. That is understandable, given the government plans to borrow around ₹50,000 crore more in FY20 in comparison with FY19, with the total net borrowing pegged at ₹4.73 lakh crore. Indeed, given the appetite in the markets, the government will most certainly crowd out private sector investments, while leaving the cost of money elevated.

It is not just the market borrowing that is worrying the bond market. The bigger concern is the huge extra-budgetary borrowing that the government has resorted to. If one added in the off-budgetary borrowings, the deficit would be significantly higher; what matters is not just central borrowings, but those of the states as well as central and state PSUs. Sajjid Chinoy of JPMorgan estimates India's total public sector borrowing requirement (excluding that of state PSUs since the data is incomplete) remains above a hefty 8.5% of GDP in both FY18 and FY19. Given how the growth in household savings has slowed sharply over the years, from 23% of GDP to 17%—net financial savings are just 7% of GDP—this is a big problem since private borrowers will now find themselves being crowded out of the market. The irony is that, despite this massive borrowing, there isn't enough capex happening. Indeed, the government expenditure itself may need to be pruned because many of the revenue-growth assumptions are quite optimistic.

For example, aggregate GST collections have grown at barely 7% over the last six months—the total collections have struggled to hit ₹1 lakh crore a month—but the CGST has been budgeted to grow at 21% next year. While there has been a fair bit of buoyancy in personal income tax collections—at a growth of 16%—the target for even this year looks difficult. Under the circumstances, given much of the benefits from better compliance would have kicked in, hitting next year's target of ₹6.2 lakh crore or a growth of 17% could be a tall ask. Should there be a shortfall in tax collections—or non-tax revenues for that matter—the government will be left with very little fiscal room and, therefore, will need to cut expenditure.

Since the scope to trim revenue expenditure is limited, it is capital expenditure that will take a hit. The current run rate for capex, as Chinoy points out, is a modest 4%, and could end the fiscal year at close to 1.5% of GDP. That is lower than the 1.6% seen last year and the expectations for the current year of 1.6% of GDP. The target for FY20 is 1.5% of GDP, but could slip to lower levels should the revenue assumptions not play out as planned. Consequently, overall capex could remain sluggish given the private sector is unlikely to make meaningful bigticket investments in the next couple of years. While large companies will be able to cope with rising interest rates, smaller companies will feel the pinch. That is unfortunate because, while the revised GDP may show the economy is doing well, the reality on the ground and data from non-government sources suggests a very different picture.

## **Budget mysteries**

If the economy is humming, why is so much stimulus needed?

OST OF THE criticism of the CSO raising its estimates of GDP just the day before the Interim Budget, not surprisingly, was about the possibility that this was done to give the government more room to show a lower deficit number. This, however, didn't happen since, while the FY18 nominal GDP was raised to ₹171 lakh crore from ₹168 lakh crore earlier, the government retained the same advance estimate for FY19 GDP that was made in the first week of January; had it raised the GDP estimate for FY19, it would have been able to accommodate a higher fiscal deficit since the level is calculated as a proportion of GDP. Of course, it can still do this later and then show that the fiscal slippage was not as large as was earlier made out.

There are, however, several mysteries that arise from these—and earlier—GDP revisions such as the ones made while calculating the GDP back-series. If GDP during the NDA years is averaging around 7.7% over the last five years, why does it continue to need the kind of pump-priming that is being seen? Indeed, the 3.4% of GDP fiscal deficit number is not really what you need to look at, it is the combined public sector deficit—the Centre, the states and the PSUs—that matters. The extra-budgetary funding of the FY20 budget—via the PSUs—is around ₹6 lakh crore, an amount that is just slightly lower than the central fiscal deficit of ₹7 lakh crore. Add to this, the state government deficit and, according to a JPMorgan Chase research note, the total public sector borrowing was around 8.5% of GDP in both FY18 and FY19. If this is the kind of pump-priming required now, how much will it be when GDP really collapses?

The other mystery revolves around the relative efficiency in the use of capital. During the UPA-2 years, bank credit grew by around 16.3% on average every year and investment levels—as measured by Gross Fixed Capital Formation—were around 33.2% of GDP; the average GDP growth during this period was 6.7%. During the last five years, however, credit growth has around halved to 8.6% while investment levels have fallen to 29%. So, if a lower investment level and a much lower credit—partly due to the reduction in inflation, it is true—is yielding a higher GDP growth, this means the levels of productivity in the economy are up sharply. Is the GDP data incorrect, as many non-government economists suggest, or is it time to rewrite the investment-GDP playbook for the country?

## BuniyaadSuccess

The Delhi govt's initiative to drive up learning levels in govt schools is a template other states can use

HE SUCCESS OF the Delhi government's Mission Buniyaad—that aimed to improve reading and maths abilities of students in Class III-IX at government and municipal corporation schools—is a lesson for other states. Prompted by the National Achievement Survey's dismal findings on science, maths and language learning levels in government schools, the Delhi government had initiated Mission Buniyaad—an intensive in-school coaching programme to bridge learning gaps amongst students—in April 2018. By December 2018, 62.5% of Class III students in Delhi government schools could read text in Hindi that was of their grade-level, while, in April, just 35.9% could. The corresponding jump at the Class VIII level, The Indian Express reports, was from 54.6% to 71.25%. Against the April numbers, students in Classes III and IV registered massive maths-abilities gains—from 18.6% to 53.9% and 27.9% to 64.3%, respectively. Though the number of students who demonstrate grade-level maths and language abilities is much lower than what the Delhi government unofficially targets, the progress is significant.

Under Mission Buniyaad, students were given learning support to bridge crucial gaps via "summer camps" organised at the school during the annual summer holidays. Parents—many of whom are likely migrants from other states—were persuaded to stay back in the city during the holidays to ensure that kids could attend the "summer camp" without disruption. Buniyaad complements another AAP government programme to improve learning levels—Chunauti—under which students from Class VI to Class IX were mapped for learning levels and the weaker students got special focus from teachers. The Centre has taken some steps to spur states into working on improving learning levels. Perhaps, the Delhi template could be one that could be of use to them.

## BUDGET & MPC

THE INTERIM BUDGET TRIES TO STRIKE A BALANCE, BUTTHE REAL STORY IS OFF-BALANCE SHEET; RBI IS A CLOSE-CALL NEXT WEEK

# A delicate balancing act

to strike a balance between fiscal prudence and responding to the agrarian distress in the Interim Budget. For starters, the fiscal deficit for the FY19 came in close to our expectations, narrowing to 3.4% of GDP (JP Morgan: 3.3%) from 3.5% of GDP in the previous year, thereby belying some market fears of a large fiscal slippage. In fact, net of asset sales, the Centre consolidated its deficit by 0.2% of GDP in FY19. Furthermore, the FY20 budget

included a new programme of cashtransfers for farmers, against a backdrop of rural distress. The cash-transfers turned out to be more targeted and less expansive than had been expected in some quarters, entailing an annual transfer of ₹6000 (~\$85) for small and marginal farmers. Authorities estimate that this will cost ₹750 billion in FY20 or about 0.4% of GDP on an annualised basis, but the programme begins retrospectively from December 2018. However, this in conjunction with tax rebates for the middle-class—which are expected to cost 0.1% of GDP—meant that new budgetary commitments added up to about 0.5% of GDP. Consequently, the Centre's fiscal path going forward is less austere than markets had expected, with the government pegging the deficit for FY20 at the same level of 3.4% of GDP, even as we had expected some modest consolidation (0.2% of GDP), mainly as a signaling mechanism.

Furthermore, if one looks below the hood, the FY20 budget is not without risks. The entire 0.5% of GDP in new commitments is expected to be financed by assumed tax buoyancy in FY20. This is because we expect that when the actual numbers for this year print, tax collections will be lower than currently forecasted, resulting in expenditures having to be correspondingly curtailed. Therefore, the increase in Tax/GDP projected for FY20—over what eventually materialises this year—is expected to, de facto, bear most of the burden of financing the 0.5% of GDP in new commitments.

For example, aggregate GST collections have grown less than 7% over the last six

Chinory is chief India economist & Jain is economist, JP Morgan

months, but the Centre's GST collections are effectively budgeted (given where we think they end up this year) to grow at an aggressive 25% next year. Furthermore, even personal tax collections may be a chal-

lenge to achieve. They are growing at 16%

ayearthus far, and need to sharply re-accel-

erate in the next few months, just to meet

this year's forecast. Even if that is achieved,

personal taxes will need to grow over 20%

SAJID Z CHINOY

next year (taking into account the rebates)—on a forecasted nominal GDP growth of 11.5%—tomeetnextyear's budgeted target. If this year's forecast is not achieved, the asking rate is even higher.

Expect rates by 2019.

In case this tax buoyancy is not realised, the worry is that expenditures—particularly capital expenditures—may again have to bear the brunt. Capex growth is currently running at just

4%, and we believe it will end the year close to or below 1.5% of GDP, below both where it printed last year (1.6% of GDP) and what authorities expect for this year (1.6% of GDP). Next year is already budgeted lower at 1.5% of GDP, and the risks are to the downside, given aggressive revenue assumptions. All that said, this is an interim budget. All of these assumptions could be revisited when the full budget is presented by the next administration in July.

However, looking at the Centre's deficit is to miss the fiscal forest for the trees. First, "off-balance borrowing" has been on the rise, something that was reaffirmed in today's Budget. For example, Food Corporation of India (FCI)—that

should ordinarily be financed only from budgetary allocations—borrowed 1.3% of GDP from other sources in FY18, apart from what it received from the budget. Similarly in FY19, FCI borrowed 1% of GDP from other sources. This helps the Centre's fiscal math, but the "effective deficit" must include FCI borrowings, and therefore should be commensurately higher.

More generally, if one were to add the Centre, and the combined

deficit of the states (which have expanded sharply in **Expect RBI to cut** recent years), off-balancerates by 25bps in 1H sheet borrowing (e.g. FCI) **2019.** While our and borrowing by all cenbaseline call tral public sector enterprises, India's total public remains a cut, it will sector borrowing requirecome down to how ment (PSBR) remains the MPC interprets above a hefty 8.5% of GDP the Interim Budget in both FY18 and FY19. Furthermore, this is likely a lower bound, because it

does not include state public sector enterprises on account of data constraints.

To be sure, some of this borrowing—particularly by states and CPSEs—is to finance much-needed capex. But borrowing of this quantum constitutes a large claim on domestic household savings, which have fallen in recent years from 23% of GDP to 17% of GDP. In fact, net household financial savings are at just 7% of GDP, suggesting all of it—and more—is being absorbed by the public sector.

As previously discussed (goo.gl/Xd4ztE), against the backdrop of these borrowing pressures, it is no wonder India's yield curve steepened in recent years. In other words, for any

given overnight policy rate, benchmark borrowing costs for the economy are higher now than in previous years. One can argue that large public sector borrowings are justifiable because private investment has been depressed. But what if private investments were to pick up, as is fervently hoped? It would need to be accommodated by the public sector reining itself in. Else, borrowing costs would rise further—and crowd out some private activity—or India's current account deficit would swell, and private investment would need to be financed by (more risky) foreign borrowing.

Unexpected extra borrowing for FY19 by ₹350 billion—to help finance the retrospective start to the cash transfer programme—and the lack of consolidation in FY19, meant that borrowing was higher than markets expected. As such, net borrowing for FY20 is pegged at ₹4.73 trillion and gross borrowing at ₹7.1 trillion, also reflecting the fact that the "maturity switches" that were expected this fiscal did not materialise either. Consequently, bonds sold off, with the yield on the benchmark bond firming by 13 bps.

The sustained downward surprise to food prices has meant that headline inflation has significantly undershot RBI's and market expectations in recent months, and is on course to undershooting their 4% mediumterm target for at least the first half of 2019. At a minimum, this will induce the MPC to change its stance from "calibrated tightening" to "neutral" at next week's policy review.

Furthermore, despite growth holding up and a slightly-less austere fiscal path, we believe the headline undershoot will be too compelling for the MPC to ignore, given its mandate of keeping headline inflation close to 4% on a durable basis. We therefore expect RBI to cut rates by 25bps in the first half of this year. While our baseline call remains a cut for the next MPC meeting, it has become a toss-up between the February and April reviews and will come down to how the MPC interprets the Interim Budget.

## Chaos on the jobs front

If the economy has been growing at 7% on average for five years, a 10% drop in employment would imply a 17% rise in labour productivity which would be the highest ever in the world

MY VERY FIRST published article, way back in 1962, threw doubt on NSS estimates of expenditure on food with official estimates of food-grains output. The two sides of the transaction—supply and demand—did not tally. Thus, despite its high reputation, NSS has not always got things right. The debates on measurement of consumption for poverty estimate has proved so controversial that further rounds of NSS surveys have been halted. But the contradictions in rival data estimates on the employment situation are just bizarre. The latest leak of NSSO data says unemployment was 6.4% in 2017-18, apparently the highest in 45 years! This is despite a fall in Labour force participation rate from 39.5 % in 2011-12 to 36.9 % in 2017-18. This would mean a 10% drop in employment.

If the economy has been growing at 7% on average for five years, a 10% drop in employment would imply a 17% rise in labour productivity which would be highest ever in the world. The data on jobs are just not making any sense. (The new estimate of GDP growth for 2016-17 as 8.2% is also hard to credit.)

Compare the CMIE estimates of

the unemployment rate with those in the Annual Labour Force Survey. I list the CMIE first and the Labour Force survey second. The first is a point estimate. while the second is annual—September 2016 8.46%/ 2015-16 average 3.7% // December 2017 4.77% / 2016-17 3.9%. The gap between the two estimates is large, almost 2/1 and the direction of change is contradictory.

The situation is equally dire on jobs

created. Surjit Bhalla and Tirthtanmoy Das have a paper on the website of the Prime Minister's Council of Economic Advisers where they have discussed all aspects of measurement. Compare their estimates of employment with that of CMIE and you feel they live in two different countries. Here are the estimates of employment (in millions), Bhalla-Das first and CMIE next: 2016 437/417.9 // 2017 449.8/ 407.9. Thus, the difference between the two is not merely in size but also in the direction of change. Between them the difference over the two years is 61 million jobs, equal to about 7% of the labour force. This is hard to credit.

Since both sources A lot of debate about are respectable, the disjob creation is about crepancy must be about definitions or measureformal sector jobs ment techniques. But, it and it is not clear is too wide to be comwhether flexible fortable. One reason definitions of jobs may be the way jobs are defined especially in a are used in recent largely informal econcalculations or omy. Here, the pakowhether the formal dawala example is apt. sector definition of The *pakodawala* has a livelihood—a *rojgar*, but iobs dominates not a *naukri*. Does an Ola driver count as

ing the No Confidence debate last July, Narendra Modi talked of the jobs created in a variety of different ways. Formal sector jobs can be measured by looking at Employee Provident Fund subscribers. But, the prime minister also gave example of jobs created as a result number of three-wheelers bought. As these vehicles are driven

doing a job or not? Dur-

round the clock, each could be providing jobs for two people. He also cited the number of new cars bought. A large proportion would require drivers. Newly qualified doctors would start practise and hire assistants. Thus, he pointed out that jobs come in various shapes and sizes.

**MEGHNAD** 

Prominent economist and

DESA

labour peer

It is not clear whether such flexible definitions are used in recent calculations or whether the formal sector definition of jobs dominates. A lot of the debate on job creation is about formal sector jobs.

Young people queue up for government jobs as they are lifelong employ-

ment till retirement. The salary gets upgraded with every Pay Commission. Then, there is a pension, also upgraded. This is why government jobs are at a premium and, furthermore, there are few unreserved jobs—each is a rare gem. No wonder thousands apply for a single opening.

Obviously, there is a problem with Indian statistics in the measurement of many variables. Sudipto Mundle chaired a commission on statistics, but his recommenda-

tions do not seem to have been accepted. After the elections are over, the new government should look at this issue of unreliable statistics. An international panel should be constituted to look at this issue. If India is to be the fastest growing economy for the next decade or two, it is time it got itself credible statistical services.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Clarification

In A dangerous and wasteful

'solution' dated January 30, 2019, Isher Judge Ahluwalia and Almitra Patel made a statement that the WtE plant in Okhla bears no resemblance to the original EIA which was issued to IL&FS. The authors would like to add that, subsequently, the Okhla plant has been implemented and operated by another private company, and not IL&FS

## Better implementation Regulatory reforms in the recent past

have increased relevant participation across various market segments, encouraged longer-term fund holdings at lower expenses and rendered greater portfolio diversification and segregation to mitigate investment risks. To generate visible results on the ground, producers must be provided greater financial resources, higher leverage and in-depth understanding of risk-hedging derivative instruments, especially when increased overlap or alignment with international markets is likely to promote institutional participation on an intraday basis — Girish Lalwani, Delhi

## Global trade slowdown

While individual nations would gladly tap into the advantages provided by globalisation, they show reluctance to share common problems of a unified economy. The popular theory that exports would provide an escape route from the crisis has failed. In good times, the trade generated by a country's growth bolsters global growth. But, in times of crisis, trade spillovers have the opposite effect. Trade imbalances influence global growth prospects.

— Janaki Narayanan, Mumbai

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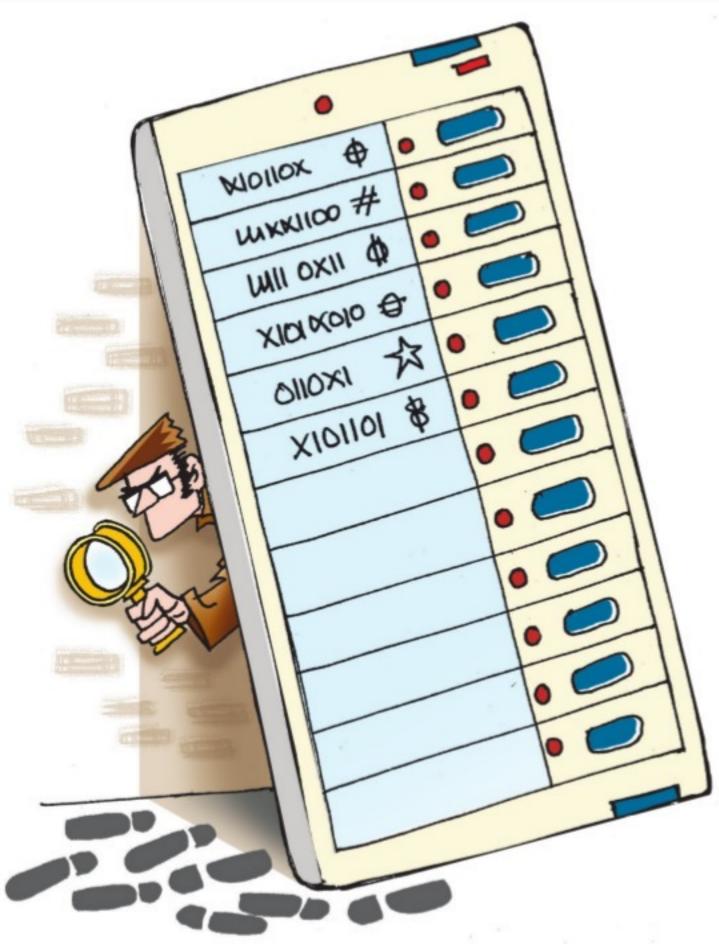


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

We must ponder

what institutional

structures have to

be created and

what regulatory

checks imposed to

ensure the

algorithmic world

does not abridge

our democratic

rights

VIKRAM S MEHTA

The author is chairman & senior fellow, Brookings India. Views are personal

**OVER THE BARREL** 

# The tension between technocracy & democracy

The usage of EVMs has, no doubt, reduced the incidence of voter fraud, double-counting and strong-arm tactics, but that does not mean it has assuaged the concerns of the techno-illiterate that perhaps their votes might be misappropriated by an electronic intermediary

WO FORMER CHIEF Election
Commissioners (CEC) and the
current CEC have verbally,
and in writing, rebutted the
suggestion that the electronic
voting machine (EVM) is hackable and
that the Election Commission (EC)
should safeguard public franchise by
reverting to a form of paper balloting.

This controversy is about the electoral process in India. It bears, however, upon a deeper issue—the tension between technograpy and demograpy

nocracy and democracy.

The disclosure that Facebook had allowed consultant firm Cambridge Analytica to access the private data of its users, which was then passed onto the Donald Trump election campaign, raised

concerns about data privacy and, more fundamentally, the power of the owners of data to abridge democratic rights. The most eloquent votary of this concern has

been the historian Prof Yuval Noah Harari.

In a talk at Davos, Switzerland, in 2018, followed by other lectures and his latest book '21 Lessons for the 21st Century', Prof Harari spelled out the potential consequences of an algorithmic world. He acknowledged the huge benefits of the digital age, but forewarned of a scenario in which human beings acquire the potential to "hack into the bodies, minds and brains of other

human beings" and where algorithms"knowindividuals better than the individual knows himself." This scenario is imaginable because of the advancement in computing power (infotech) and the agglomeration of biometric and biological data (biotech). When the two 'tech' revolutions merge, the handful of companies that own data will fashion the greatest revolution ever, overturning the laws of Darwinian selection with the "laws of intelligent design."Theywill have the power to "control

the fate of humanity" and possibly "that of life itself." Democracy could be replaced by "digital dictatorship."

replaced by "digital dictatorship."

Fascinating, science fiction, alarmist
... one may use any one or a combination
of these words to describe Prof Harari's
prognostications, but there is no ignoring the many questions that his descrip-

Practical questions: What regulatory checks and balances should be imposed on companies that monopolise data (Amazon, Google, Tencent, Alibaba, Facebook)? Should these companies be broken up? And if so, who should be given the authority to keep data and to decide how and in what manner this asset should be

given away? Surely, not the politicians!
Philosophic questions: How does one control phenomena (technology and data) that is "everywhere but nowhere," and that recognises no physical or polit-

ical barriers and is universal in scope and impact? Can an algorithmic world be managed through institutional structures of governance built on the bedrock of Westphalian principles? The treaties of Westphalia (between 1644 and 1648) brought to an end the religious wars in Europe. They established three principles that still define the nature of international affairs today—the principle of state sovereignty, the principle of non-interference in the affairs of other states, and the principle of the equality (legal) of states.

Prof Harari admits he does not have the answers to these questions. He believes that a collective of poets, philosophers and statesmen should be tasked to develop the answers.

Whether that should be the way forward or not can be debated. But what is becoming clear is that questions like those posed above cannot be answered by drawing on the past or projecting from the present. An "out of the box" approach is required that recognises that technology and innovation have not been an unmixed blessing, and that the current rules, institutions and structures of governance will need to be refashioned to address the emergent challenges.

The Industrial Revolution laid the foundations for decades of sustained development and economic prosperity. But it also led to the planetary crisis of global warming. Nuclear scientists generated the prospects of clean, affordable and abundant energy, but they also raised the spectre of a thermonuclear holocaust. The digital revolution opened up phenomenal vistas of knowledge and information, but, as suggested by Prof Harari, created the potential of digital dictatorship. The issue is that whilst humanity has harnessed the benefits of technology and innovation, it has not yet created the institutions for managing its consequences.

I am reminded of a rhetorical question that Robert Kennedy asked in his short memoir 'Thirteen Days' on the Cuban missile crisis. "What if any circumstance or justification gives this government or any government the moral right to bring its people and possibly all people under the shadow of total destruction." To remind, in October 1962, the US discovered that the Soviets were placing offensive nuclear missiles in Cuba. President John F Kennedy gathered together his advisers and for 13 days these people deliberated on the US response. The military advocated a pre-

emptive air strike; others, a blockade. Whatever the response, the risk existed of a nuclear fallout with global consequences. In the end, the crisis was averted, but it did remind everyone of the paradox of democratic governance. Elected leaders are subject to checks and balances to prevent absolutism of power. And yet, on one occasion, the world came to the edge of a nuclear conflict, and the fate of the humanity (in a sense) rested in the hands of a few people. President Kennedy and his advisers

decided on how to respond. No one else. More than 60 years on, the world is still struggling to contain the exercise of plenipotentiary powers. Except that now, in addition to limiting the power of individuals, it has to find a way of limiting the 'power of data'.

I have no doubt that the usage of EVMs has reduced the incidence of voter fraud, double counting and strong-arm tactics, but that does not mean it has assuaged the concerns of the techno-illiterate that perhaps their votes might be misappropriated by an electronic intermediary. We must not, therefore, duck the question: What institutional structures must be created and what regulatory checks imposed to ensure the algorithmic world does not abridge our democratic rights? This is the same question that Prof Harari and others are asking in the context of the impact of the digital age on humanity.

INTERIM BUDGET

# Sets the stage for real estate revival

**ANUJ PURI** 

The author is chairman, Anarock Property Consultants

**S ANTICIPATED, THE** Interim Budget did turn

out to be a vote bank-facing exercise, predom-

Banking on the initiatives undertaken so far, the government scripts the next chapter for real estate growth

inantly cheering farmers and labourers. But the government kept the best for the last—a pleasing boost to the housing sector in more ways than anticipated. The provisions made will certainly boost consumer sentiment, stimulate affordable housing demand and incentivise investors hoping for rental returns.

The major positives included a full tax rebate for income up to Rs 6.5 lakh (including investment under Section 80C),

The major positives included a full tax rebate for income up to Rs 6.5 lakh (including investment under Section 80C), which is likely to push demand for affordable homes, though not much in mid-income segment. There was an extension of Section 80IBA for an additional year; it will push affordable housing and cheer developers active in this segment.

The Budget increased the tax exemption limit for rents earned to Rs 2.4 lakh from the previous Rs 1.8 lakh limit. This will make property investment more attractive and help boost housing sales. Another positive for investors was the rollover of capital gains tax on the sale of residential property. This benefit now applies to two houses instead of the previous single one. Importantly, the Budget provided tax exemption on notional rent of a second home, which again makes property investment more attractive and also gives a fillip to the second home segment.

The period for taxing unsold inventory held by developers has been extended up to two years. As per Anarock data, this will benefit nearly 85,000 ready units that are unsold on the market, of the total 6.73 lakh units across top seven cities. The Budget put a clear onus on boosting infrastructure by allocating more funds for development of airports, railways, etc. While infrastructure deployment doubtlessly benefits real estate industry, it remains to be seen how much

While real estate

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demonetisation

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fully recovered yet

of it is actually implemented.

All in all, the real estate sector received its due share of

tor received its due share of consideration in this balanced Budget, despite the massive electoral pitch. To be fair, the incumbent government has certainly invested heavily into the real estate sector.

Among its achievements,

the Narendra Modi government has aptly set the stage for Indian real estate to become a healthy, flourishing industry in the long-term. However, the proviso is 'long-term'. This government has definitely tightened its grip on real estate,

which was the single-largest dumping ground for black money hoarders in previous years.

It has also introduced some high-impact schemes to benefit genuine end-users of real estate. There have been major policy overhauls, amendments in Acts, a visible impetus to infrastructure development, and slightly over-ambitious visions like 100 Smart Cities and Housing for All by 2022.

The triple-policy tsunami of demonetisation, RERA and GST brought about a paradigm shift in the way real estate business is carried out in the country, resulting in vastly improved transparency and efficiency. The confidence of property buyers and investor confidence is now being restored, albeit gradually, and real estate is beginning to look more favourable as an asset class.

That said, the Centre's aim to enforce RERA in each state is still way behind schedule. As of today, quite a few states have not notified their respective RERA rules as yet, while in others buyers are fretting over the dilution of the rules that have been notified. Also, while the real estate sector braved both GST and demonetisation and will reap the due long-term rewards, they dealt the industry a very hard blow, from which it has not fully recovered yet. In fact, the arrival of a flat 12% of GST on under-construction was not exactly an improvement for buyers.

Certainly, this government has done a lot for the real estate sector, not least of all with its latest Budget. However, the stage that has been set is for long-term growth and not short-term firework displays. Will the momentum that has been infused into the real estate sector continue long enough for a real revival to take place? All eyes are on the forthcoming general elections.

## **INTERIM BUDGET**

## Betting big on mainstays

This is a credible Budget; it takes a practical approach



MD, Private Equity, KKR India

of the current economic environment, the Interim Budget lends credible impetus to the economy's two big mainstays: farmers and the middle class. This will potentially lead to higher household savings, thereby setting the stage for consumption-led growth in the months to come.

Ahead of the elections and conversations around farm distress, a special package for farmers was largely expected. The government also announced a 5% interest rate subvention on timely repayment of farm loans. Over and beyond its widely targeted approach, the Budget stands out in its attempt of striking equilibrium between the immediate needs of the middle-

income class and the agenda of driving large-scale rural reforms. This is evident in the suite of initiatives to alleviate farmers' distress, complete tax rebate on an annual income of Rs 5 lakh and below, hike in TDS exemption limit from Rs 10,000 to Rs 40,000 on post office savings, to name a few.

A notable highlight is the focus on reducing taxation on MSMEs. The Budget has a sharply-defined focus on empowering the MSME sector, with faster turnaround times for loan approvals and a 2% interest subvention for loans up to Rs 1 crore.

The government continues to have a significant thrust on the rural economy, infrastructure and affordable housing. These factors will continue to drive domestic demand, and have a multiplier effect on employment, construction equipment, taxation and revenues.

The affordable housing sector will benefit tremendously in wake of sops announced with regards to exemption of TDS on house rent of up to Rs 2.4 lakh a year, exemption of tax on notional rent of second self-occupied home, and capital gains available on two house properties. Also, notional rent-free period on ready inventory having been increased to two years and greater incentivisation to MSMEs will render the industry poised for growth.

India attracted good FDI in the previous year. This, along with the government's focus on debt consolidation and fiscal consolidation, sets the stage for a strong economic outlook. Fiscal deficit for the next year is projected to be 3.4%, assuming 15% hike in direct taxes and 13% rise in indirect taxes. These numbers look a bit ambitious given the current trajectory of economic growth. The cumulative effect of cash transfer to farmers and the middle-income class will be a boost to consumption.

Overall, it's a credible Budget; it takes a practical approach that is notable, against the backdrop of elections and low inflation. The government focused on better tax collection. The rebates will potentially bring about a structural change in consumption, thereby driving growth.

## Balances prudence & aspiration

May have a far-reaching effect on farmers, the poor and the needy

## VAIBHAV SANGHAVI

Co-CEO, Avendus Capital Public Markets Alternate Strategies

HEAD OF THE Budget, market participants were debating whether it's a Vote on Account or an Interim Budget or a full Budget. There was some sense of disinterest, given the Street wasn't expecting anything major. However, this turned around quickly, as the finance minister began his speech. By the end, it was an eventful Budget with far-reaching implications.

It has been a judicious mix of populism and careful allocation of resources. While expectations of populism were largely prevalent, big-bang announcements like the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi and a rebate in income tax for an assessee with up to Rs 5 lakh of

income came as a surprise. What it effectively does is puts money in the hands of people, which may boost consumption. With the measures announced, the Budget is likely to have a far-reaching and broad-based effect on farmers, the poor and the needy.

In terms of important macro numbers the markets watch closely, the data is mixed. On the positives, fiscal deficit is budgeted at 3.4% for FY20, which is comfortable, given there is an additional allocation for compensating farmers, under the PM Kisan scheme. The debt-to-GDP number is also comfortable at 48%. The total expenditure is based on the assumptions of overall growth in tax revenues at 14%, which again is reasonable. Revenue from nontax sources is what will need some monitoring. Since resources are limited, there has been minor growth on capital expenditure. Also, the gross borrowing number is relatively high, which has led to a rise in 10-year benchmark rate. However, I do not expect inflation to rise meaningfully.

On the corporate side, while there wasn't any major announcement, the measures taken to revive the real estate sector are heartening. Announcements on treatment of capital gains, house property tax and affordable housing incrementally lends support to the ailing sector.

What it means for markets? It is clear that the biggest beneficiary is the consumer sector (staples and discretionary). The Budget is likely to provide a material push to GDP, and higher borrowings may have some pressure temporarily on bond prices, which can affect financials. The Budget is indifferent to industrials, IT and pharma. I believe the Budget would be discounted very quickly, and markets would again start looking at global economies, where the action is.

The Budget has tried to address income inequality. I consider it as a very big and long-term positive. It is a fine balance of support, prudence and aspiration, though limited by the nature.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2019

# THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

DRINK LEVELS ALL MANKIND. IT IS THE ULTIMATE DEMOCRAT, IF YOU LIKE THAT SORT OF THING.

— TERRY PRATCHETT

## **♦**TheIndian **EXPRESS**

S FOUNDED BY S RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## THE SPECTACLE

Manner and timing of CBI action in Bengal reek of politics of vendetta. Court must read the law to both Centre and state

HE GRACELESS SPECTACLE in Kolkata since Sunday evening captures a drama that incriminates all its players. To begin with, the CBI team, made up of 40-plus officers, landing up, allegedly unannounced and warrantless, at the residence of the state police chief. A face-off between the state police and the CBI. The Chief Minister of West Bengal sitting on a dharna, a "satyagraha" against the Centre's "coup" attempt, daring it to impose President's Rule, her top cop by her side. And on the other side, the BJP projecting West Bengal as a "state of anarchy". The war of images and words has almost completely overtaken the issue ostensibly at the heart of it all—the investigation into Saradha and other chit fund scams in which thousands of small investors were cheated, and which allegedly involve politicians in the ruling TMC even as some prominent accused have since crossed over to the BJP.

But then, the Saradha probe may not be at the heart of the showdown politics in West Bengal at all. Behind the loud invocations of Corruption, Constitution, Democracy and Federalism by both sides may lie no higher scruple or principle — only a narrow, short-term electoral calculus. With general elections in a couple of months' time, it may be that the images from Sunday are related to that earlier photo-op from West Bengal — the show of strength on a Kolkata stage of 23 Opposition parties under the aegis of the TMC in January. If that be the case, both ruling parties, at the Centre and in West Bengal, have much to answer for. And in this bid to mis-use state resources to launch their respective electoral campaigns in a state where the TMC is dominant and the BJP is on the rise, the BJP-led Centre seems more to blame.

The BJP government at the Centre must know that both the manner and timing of the CBI action in West Bengal reek of a politics of vendetta against a political opponent. In the short term, the party may even make electoral gain from the riveting showdown in Kolkata — as may Mamata Banerjee, who is clearly revelling in her return to street politics and is using this moment to rally behind her potential allies in the Opposition. But in the longer term, the Kolkata vaudeville carries troubling consequences in a constitutional democracy. In its visible undermining of due process, it threatens to deepen distrust and strengthen cynicism. It is now up to the judiciary — the CBI has gone to court and the Supreme Court is scheduled to take up the matter on Tuesday — to read the rule-book and the law to the dramatis personae.

## TALKING IT OUT

Taliban still holds the cards, but India does well to engage actors in the peace process in Afghanistan

HE URGENCY WITH which the Trump Administration is pushing ahead for a deal with the Taliban has caused understandable nervousness in several capitals in the region. After the last round of talks in the Qatar capital of Doha, the chief negotiator for the US, Zalmay Khalilzad, declared that an agreement had been reached in principle. From what little has emerged from the American side, the Taliban have committed to not allowing Afghan territory to be used to launch terrorist attacks against the US; in return, the US has agreed to the top Taliban demand that American troops should leave. But the agreement hangs on the Taliban declaring a ceasefire and agreeing to talks with the Afghan government, which has so far had no role in the process. The Taliban have not said yet whether they agree to these conditions. Given their unsavoury track record, the expectations from this "peace process" are low.

More rounds of talks are in the pipeline, but whatever the details and commitments, what happens after the US exit will depend entirely on the Taliban. A rerun of the 1990s when the Taliban fought an assortment of warlords to seize power is not entirely ruled out. For India, which has built on its centuries-old ties with Afghanistan with \$3 billion in development assistance over the last 10 years, the spectre of a Pakistan proxy in power in Kabul is now looming large. Delhi is said to have conveyed its apprehensions to Khalilzad when he visited in January, including its opposition to the rumoured plan for an interim government to oversee power-sharing between the Taliban and other Afghan groups and changes to the Constitution.

Holding no trump cards in this game, India is now engaging with China and Iran, and with a range of Afghan actors including former President Hamid Karzai, who is said to be playing a key role in the US-Taliban process. India aims to secure its own strategic and economic interests in Afghanistan, while backing the position taken by the government in Kabul on the talks. President Ashraf Ghani said recently that since he took office in 2014, over 45,000 Afghan troops have been killed, and that Afghans yearn for peace more than anything else. But he has also expressed reservations at the haste in the Trump administration to close a deal and urged the Taliban to talk to the Afghan government. The day may not be far when India has to consider what has seemed unthinkable as yet — reaching out to the Taliban, at least sections of it that are independent minded.

## GOT BEER!

More evidence emerges that in prehistoric times, the human race refreshed itself as industriously as it does today

EW ROADWORKS BETWEEN Cambridge and Huntingdon in the UK have thrown up evidence of Britain's oldest beer. Dating from about 400 BC, this Iron Age brew has kindled speculation among archaeologists in the world's only nation to value warm beer. Was it a way to secure a clean source of hydraffon? Or was it used ceremonially? The former is unconvincing, since the region fresh water. And the latter proceeds from the modern, secular human's ridiculous need to posit ritual as the explanation for all primordial human activity. Incisive application of Occam's Razor would suggest that people in Iron Age Cambridgeshire drank beer because it made them feel good. A religious justification is unnecessary.

But a 400 BC beer is actually a very young vintage because last year, a brew from 13,000 years ago was discovered in a cave near Haifa. Attributed to a semi-nomadic group of the Natufian culture, it turned traditional thinking about the remote past on its head. Utilitarian archaeologists had always assumed that grains were first bred for mak- ingbread, and that alcohol was a byproduct. The Natufian find predated evidence for the common use of bread, causing many to wonder if the agricultural revolution, the foun- dation of modern human civilisation, was driven by thirst rather than hunger. Indeed, would hunter-gatherers turn peasants and trade their personal freedom for backbreak- ing agricultural work if they weren't assured of a pint in the evening to drown their sor- rows in?

However, ancient beer wasn't exactly craft quality. The Natufian brew, for instance, was more like porridge than Stella or Guinness. A mere food, rather than a beverage that re-freshes parts that others fail to reach. And now, we learn that the Cambridge brew as made without hops, which were not used until the 15th

# Managing the stimulus



The income transfer scheme was the highlight of the budget. But its success will need deft manoeuvring

NEELKANTH MISHRA

LIKE IN EACH of the previous two years, the run-up to the budget this year was rife with fears of significant fiscal slippage if the government caved in to political compulsions. And like in prior years, these fears turned out to be exaggerated. The decline in fiscal deficit ratios has indeed stalled, and at nearly 6 per cent, India continues to have one of the highest general government (that is, states plus Centre) deficits globally. But an important message was that the downward glide path of fiscal deficits was not disrupted.

A measure of "crowding out" is government borrowing from bond markets as a share of incremental deposits in the banking system: This ratio is now down to 33 per cent as the net bond issuance budgeted for the next financial year is unchanged from levels seen eight years back, a period in which the economy has grown substantially. That is, the government's excess spending, funded through borrowings, is now appropriating a smaller part of the financial savings and leaving more for the private sector.

It's not all rosy, however. In the current financial year, extra-budgetary spending was Rs 1.4 trillion higher than what had been budgeted. Ninety per cent of that amount was from the Food Corporation of India. While higher inventory holding likely explains a large part of this Rs 1.2 trillion increase, one wonders if some unfunded food subsidy may have contributed too.

Governments also have this tendency to give aggressive tax collection targets that make the deficit appear low, but then later in the year are forced to make course corrections. Are the tax targets for the next year too aggressive? They appear to be somewhat stretched, but achievable. The economic growth estimate of 11.5 per cent, taking the GDP to Rs 210 trillion, may be slightly optimistic, given how weak inflation has been in the past several months, even if the government's consumption stimulus shores up activity levels. Budgeted growth in direct tax collections at 15 per cent appears high, but is lower than what has been achieved over the past two years and thus more credible, given the significant widening of the tax base, and The highlight of the budget was the Rs 750 billion income transfer scheme for farmers. Even though this was widely anticipated, this is a policy innovation whose impact is hard to model. Most income transfer schemes so far have been experiments on small sets of people in particular villages or townships. The impact of

a scheme with 117 million

be significantly different.

farm-land owners is likely to

some recovery in corporate earnings.

The 18 per cent estimated growth for GST collections seems to assume an improvement in compliance. As government functionaries have frequently stated in the last few quarters, GST collections thus far have been nearly completely voluntary. There has been very little enforcement and follow-up. Post elections, the government may re-start the move towards e-way bill or invoicematching, and also permit tax officials to question the accuracy of the self-assessments made by entities.

The highlight of the budget was the Rs 750 billion income transfer scheme for farmers. Even though this was widely anticipated, this is a policy innovation whose impact is hard to model. Most income transfer schemes so far have been experiments on small sets of people in particular villages or townships. The impact of a scheme with 117 million farmland owners is likely to be significantly different.

How will the recipients use these transfers? Will some microfinance companies create loan products where these payments become the instalments, and the recipient gets Rs 25,000 upfront instead of Rs 2,000 thrice a year? Will these funds be used to repay existing loans from money lenders? Will these funds be used to buy Rs 500 of better food every month, send the kids to a private school, invest in sowing the next crop, or used to buy a bicycle? Will they save all or

part of it? Each of these choices will very

likely be made by some individuals, but the

collective impact would depend on how

many chose to do what.

Will it be inflationary? Theoretically, a sudden rise in demand where supply takes time to respond should create inflation. If for argument's sake, everyone used these funds to send children to private schools, there could be a shortage of schools and teachers and the price of schooling would rise. But this risk is low: At about a third of a per cent point of GDP, this is small. The diffused nature of this transfer (a small sum to a large number of people), makes it unlikely to cause a de-

mand surge for any particular good or serv-

ice. Rs 6,000 per year may mean a 30 per cent addition to some households' income, and 5 per cent to others: This would show up in how they spend these funds as well.

If this had been structured as a monthly income scheme, with double the transfer per recipient for half as many beneficiaries, the impact on inflation may have been higher. Such a scheme would have most likely boosted food demand: This is nearly 60 per cent of the consumption basket of the target population. If you have ever asked how a country with one of the lowest milk consumption per capita can have an oversupply of milk for several years, the answer is that milk at current prices is unaffordable to many. If the demand for milk, meat, fruits and vegetables, that is, more expensive calories, was boosted, the stalled channel of income transfer from the rich to the poor, which is food prices, would have restarted.

This stimulus should boost growth, which has been fading rapidly in the last several months. Most indicators of economic activity had been showing a steady slowdown in the last several months. There were some measures in the budget to support the realestate market as well as developers, but we believe that the challenges of the non-banking finance sector are likely to overwhelm any positive impact of the fiscal measures announced.

An income transfer scheme was somewhat inevitable, and such a scheme will likely continue for many years. After a certain stage of economic development, it becomes difficult for average per capita agricultural incomes to keep pace with the rest of the economy, as land productivity becomes a limiting factor. Moving workers away from agriculture is the only sustainable solution: In the interim, such schemes can provide temporary relief. But given how little we understand about its potential impact, policy-makers need to be agile in making design changes to maximise the gains without having damaging side-effects.

The writer is India strategist and co-head of Asia Pacific Strategy for Credit Suisse

## MEANING OF A VISIT

Pope's visit underscores UAE's message of hope, tolerance and moderation

AHMED AL BANNA

POPE FRANCIS, THE head of the Roman Catholic Church, is currently in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on a three-day historic visit. The visit of the Pope crowns the close ties between the UAE and its Christian community on the one hand and the growing fraternal bonds between the UAE and the Vatican on the other. It is truly historic because it is the first-ever visit of a Pope to the Arabian Peninsula. More importantly, the visit and the interesting range of inter-faith and Christian events scheduled rekindle hopes of a future where the forces of tolerance and moderation will prevail over the myriad varieties of zealotry, xenophobia and isolationism that thrive in the world today. This is particularly significant in our region, where conflicts triggered by narrow exclusivist visions abound.

Although the UAE established diplomatic relations with the Vatican only in 2007, the informal ties go back a long time. Rare pictures of UAE's founder, the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, visiting the Vatican in 1951 (20 years before the formation of the UAE) recently emerged, highlighting an ancient and inclusive cultural legacy that celebrated diversity and accepted people of various persuasions. In September 2016, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, paid a visit to the Vatican, during which he met with the Pope and invited him to visit the UAE.

Visiting the UAE along with the Pope is

The meeting between two of the topmost figures of Islam and Christianity in Abu Dhabi, in the presence of leaders of other faiths, sends to the world a message of hope and peace, and the promise of a future built on the foundations of mutual respect and cooperation. This is a message we want to disseminate, especially in the face of narrow extremist versions of faith and culture that prevail in several parts of the world.

Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif Ahmed Tayeb, the topmost religious figure in Sunni Islam heading the oldest and most prestigious seat of Islamic learning. Both the dignitaries will interact with a host of spiritual personalities representing various faiths and countries at the International Interfaith Meeting on Human Fraternity, organised by the Muslim Council of Elders. This event aims to bridge the divides that stand in the way of inter-religious and inter-cultural harmony and amity across the world. That the Pope will celebrate a mass, whose congregation will represent almost every country on earth with a Catholic presence, is a remarkable aspect of the visit. The mass will be attended by over 1,35,000 people.

The UAE believes that religious and cultural tolerance, a foundational characteristic of the country, is a precondition for fostering peace in the world. Respect and accommodation for religious diversity along with full rights to worship for all is guaranteed in the UAE Constitution. Religious and cultural diversity is an integral part of the UAE's civilisation and heritage. Archeological excavations in the UAE have unearthed churches dating back to the 7th century AD. The first Catholic church was established here in 1965.

Today, the UAE has 76 places of worship for different faith communities, including around 50 churches. A grand Hindu temple is under construction in Abu Dhabi, signifying the UAE leadership's commitment to religious diversity and utmost respect for the Indians living in our midst. Not only are people of all faiths free to worship the way they want, but also allowed to wear their religious attires and symbols. The UAE's wise leadership, and her people, share a vision that stresses peace and prosperity in the world is impossible unless the conditions for peaceful co-existence of all cultures and faiths exist everywhere.

It is this vision, and its flawless implementation, that attracted around 200 nationalities to live and work in the UAE. The UAE was chosen for the first ever visit by a Pope to the Arabian Peninsula precisely because of the spirit of togetherness and pluralism that marks all aspects of life in our country.

The meeting between two of the topmost figures of Islam and Christianity in Abu Dhabi, in the presence of leaders of other faiths, sends to the world a message of hope and peace, and the promise of a future built on the foundations of mutual respect and cooperation. This is a message we want to disseminate, especially in the face of narrow extremist versions of faith and culture that prevail in several parts of the world.

In conclusion, I must emphasise that the culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence that the UAE strives to foster is one of the principal characteristic we share with India, with which our relations have grown into a natural strategic partnership in the past few years.

The writer is UAE ambassador to India



## February 5, 1979, Forty Years Ago

IRAN TURMOIL

IRAN'S PRIME MINISTER Shahpour Bakhtiar said he would not oppose creation of a shadow government by the opposition leader, even as both sides talked grimly of a showdown. Opposition sources said they expected Khomeini, who returned to Iran after forcing Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi from the country, to designate a prime minister for his Islamic provisional government within a week. Ibrahim Yazdi, a close adviser to the Ayatullah, said he hoped Bakhtiar would "submit to the will of the people" and resign. "If not we are ready for confrontations". Bakhtiar said he was willing "to make"

maximum use" of Khomeini's views and

plans for Iran but expressed doubts about the religious leader's vision of an Islamic republic. "This Islamic republic is incomprehensible to me," Bakhtiar said.

SHAH PANEL ACTION

NO ACTION HAS been taken against most of the officers named or indicted by the Shah Commission for involvement in Emergency excesses. The most that has happened is that Union government officers who came under a cloud were sent back to their parent states, and those in the states despatched to the Centre. In some states, police officers have been suspended or otherwise punished but no action has been taken against the IAS

mandarins involved. The most glaring case is of the Karnataka police officers indicted by the Shah Commission for the torture and illegal detention of Lawrence Fernandes, brother of George Fernandes. The Karnataka government has taken no action.

MOHINDER HITS TON

MOHINDER AMARNATH SCORED a chanceless, unbeaten 101, and Kapil Dev plundered an electrifying 62 as India climbed from 498 for four wickets overnight to their highest ever Test score of 644 for seven declared. The West Indies replied with 137 for two by the close of the third day's play at the Green Park Stadium, Kanpur. India leads the series 1-0.

# THE IDEAS PAGE

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"As the first leader of the Catholic church to visit the Arabian peninsula, Francis knows his contact with Muslims will be as important as the mass he hosts for the Christian minority." —THE GUARDIAN

## Secularism comes to Arabia? Pope Francis's visit to UAE, the first by a pontiff to the region, could signal the beginning of separation of religion and state in the Middle East

# Raja Mandala

## BY C RAJA MOHAN

THE ON-GOING visit of Pope Francis to Abu Dhabi over the last couple of days will certainly go down as a landmark event. For no Pope has ever set foot on Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, until this week. But the story, arguably, is less about the Pope and more about the United Arab Emirates that is hosting him.

To be sure this Pope is a historic figure in himself. He is the first non-European Pope in the long history of the Christian church. Hailing from Latin America, the Pope has naturally embraced the poor and has raised the Vatican voice in favour of economic justice and against growing inequality around the world. Pope Francis has also campaigned for tolerance and co-existence among various faiths. He has made a special effort to counter the perception that Islam is the source of the global terror threat. The Pope has travelled frequently to various Muslim countries to build trust with the Islamic religious leaders.

The first-ever papal visit to Arabia, Pope Francis hopes, will "turn a new page in the history of the relations among religions". But what is the rationale behind UAE's ruler Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan's bold decision to invite Pope Francis?

The invitation to Pope is very much part of UAE's surprising charge for religious tolerance, inter-faith harmony and separating religion from the state in the Middle East.

Under MbZ, as the Crown Prince is known by his initials, the UAE has unveiled the grand political project to build a "moderate Arab centre" that can fend off religious extremism and the politicisation of Islam that have thrown the Middle East into turmoil and emerged as a grave threat to many regions of the world over the last four decades, including the Indian Subcontinent.

No one is betting that the relatively new federation of seven small sheikhdoms (set up in 1971 after the British pulled out of the Gulf as part of the withdrawal from East of Suez) can change the political narrative in and about the Middle East. But few countries have a bigger stake in UAE's success than India.

Pope Francis will spend barely 48 hours in the UAE but will hopefully make some contribution to the promotion of religious tolerance in the Arabian peninsula, where the denial of religious freedoms to non-Muslims was taken for granted. The Pope's itinerary in the UAE includes a large public mass on Tuesday in the Abu Dhabi Sports Stadium. More than 1,30,000 devotees are expected to attend. The UAE has an expat population of nearly 8 million. This includes nearly one million Catholics, many of whom are from the Philippines and India.

On Monday, Pope Francis participated in an interfaith conference that has brought religious figures from across the Middle East, organised by the Council of Muslim Elders. The Council seeks to promote moderate Islam and is headed by

Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Cairo's Al-Azhar seminary, Sunni Islam's most prestigious centre of learning. The Pope and the Grand Imam have met frequently in recent years to promote understanding and harmony between the faithful of Christianity and Islam. The United Arab Emirates is among the

more liberal states in Arabia and allows pub-

lic worship by followers of non-Muslim faiths. It has allowed churches, temples and gurdwaras to flourish. Reports say the UAE has recently permitted its small Jewish community to found a synagogue in Dubai At the other extreme is Saudi Arabia that prohibits the practice of non-Islamic faiths As the Emiratis expand religious freedoms, some would hope the House of Saud will

follow suit. Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, aka MbS, has initiated small steps like letting women drive, controlling the clerical influence and reining in the morality police at home. When he travelled to Egypt last year, MbS visited the largest Coptic Cathedral in Cairo and sat down with the Coptic Pope

Tawadros II. He was signalling his opposition to Muslim extremist attacks on the Coptic churches and support for peaceful co-existence between Egypt's different religious communities.

Although there is widespread scepticism about Salman's vow to return Saudi Arabia to moderate Islam, there is no doubt Saudi Arabia is at an inflexion point, For both UAE and Saudi Arabia, the new emphasis on separating religion from politics and confronting "political Islam" is not a question of defining an abstract theory of the state. It is a considered response to the grave challenges they face.

Four decades ago, in 1979, Arab Middle East moved in the other direction to counter the Shia theocracy that came out of the Iranian revolution against the Pahlavi monarchy and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The Gulf regimes backed by the West, supported the forces of religious extremism abroad and Islamic conservatism at home. The forces unleashed by that strategy back then threaten the prospects for peace and progress in the Middle East.

As Iran, Turkey, Qatar, Muslim Brotherhood, and the Islamic State push different variants of political Islam, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are now promoting an agenda of religious and political moderation. Delhi should wish Abu Dhabi, Riyadh and Cairo well.

For the decline of the forces of moder-

ation and modernisation in the Middle East, the inevitable export of radical ideologies and the mobilisation of religious identities for political purposes has had a devastating impact on the Subcontinent's politics — internal, intra-regional and external. The success of the UAE's project for a moderate Arab centre would hopefully make it easier for India and its neighbours to revitalise the great Subcontinental tradition of inter-faith harmony. Arabia's embrace of the Pope, paradoxically, is also about the virtue of separating religion from state, a principle that India has been dangerously tempted to devalue.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express



# Missing the healing touch

Modest increases in budgetary allocation to health should have been directed towards reviving primary healthcare — not an insurance scheme that does not cover a majority of the treatments



Sourindra Ghosh and Imrana Qadeer

PUBLIC INTEREST IN the Union budget was particularly pronounced because this is an election year. People expected some measures to strengthen the country's ailing public healthcare system. There is, indeed, an increase of more than Rs 7,000 crore in nominal terms from last year's expenditure on health in this year's budget — the outlay has increased from Rs 56,045 crore to Rs 63,298 crore. Accounting for inflation, this amounts to a 9.2 per cent increase in real terms.

However, the much-needed strengthening of the country's primary healthcare system has, once again, taken a backseat, indicating the government's misplaced priorities. Allocation under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) — which provides funds for rural primary healthcare — has been reduced in real terms (accounting for inflation). Its share in the health component of the budget has declined steeply over the past four years — from 52 per cent in 2015-16 to 41 per cent this year. Within the NRHM, there have been budget cuts for reproductive and child healthcare projects and maintenance of rural healthcare infrastructure. The allocation for controlling communicable diseases under the NRHM has been reduced in real terms. Communicable diseases like TB, diarrhoea, pneumonia, hepatitis and other infections are still a major problem for India. Conversion of health sub-centres to health and wellness centres that put more emphasis on non-communicable diseases does not

augur well for primary care in the country. Neglecting these major components of primary care seems to be a continuation of the policies that have led to the virtual dismantling of the rural public health infrastructure.

The National Urban Health Mission has been allocated only Rs 950 crore — this, when the estimated average yearly budgetary requirement for the mission is Rs 3,391 crore from Central funds. Allocation for tertiary care components — the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (a programme for building-AIIMS like institutes), for example has also remained stagnant in real terms. Funds for upgrading district hospitals have

been reduced by 39 per cent in real terms.

Majority of the increase in the budget's health component has gone to fund the Rs 6,556-crore Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY). The scheme is supposed to give a Rs 5-lakh annual coverage for in-patient care to 10-crore poor families. However, the budgetary allocations do not match up to that promise. The National Sample Survey's (NSS) health data of 2014 shows that out of an estimated total 24.85 crore families in India, 5.72 crore had to resort to hospitalisation. By that calculation, out of the 10-crore families, there would be roughly 2.3 crore hospitalisations in a year. This means that from the Rs 6,556 crore government funds, health insurance agencies on average have only Rs 2,850 to pay per hospitalisation (assuming there are no administrative costs or insurance overheads). The average out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) per hospitalisation is much higher — around Rs 15,244 as per NSS 2014 data, which amounts to Rs 19,500 in 2019-20 assuming a 5 per cent annual inflation. The PMJAY's budgetary provisions for insurance agencies will barely cover 15 per cent of this expenditure.

In the allied sectors, there was an alarming under-utilisation of funds in the 2018-19 fiscal. The revised estimates for the year show

The allocation for controlling communicable diseases under the NRHM has been reduced in real terms. Communicable diseases like TB, diarrhoea, pneumonia, hepatitis and other infections are still a major problem for India. Conversion of health subcentres to health and wellness centres that put more emphasis on noncommunicable diseases does not auger well for primary healthcare in the country. Neglecting these major components of primary care

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that the National Rural Drinking Water Mission and the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana have utilised only 78 per cent and 50 per cent of the budgeted funds, respectively. The government's flagship programme, Swachh Bharat Mission (rural), also did not fully utilise the Rs 15,343 crore allocated in 2018-19. Its allocation has been further reduced to Rs 10,000 crore for 2019-20. The neglect of the ICDS under the UPA government has accelerated since 2014. This year's budgetary allocation for the scheme, in real terms, is still a touch below the expenditure of 2013-14.

The modest increase in budgetary allocations in health should have been prioritised towards improving the worn-out public sector district hospitals, community health centres, primary health centres and sub-centres in under-served areas. Instead, public money has been inefficiently used for the more expensive intervention of insurance, which can cover just 15 per cent of only in-patient OOPE.

NSS 2014 data shows that 97 per cent episodes of illnesses in India are treated in out-patient care centres and this accounts for 63 per cent of the overall medical expenditures. So, a majority of the treatment and expenditures are not even covered by the insurance scheme for in-patient treatment. Neglecting public health infrastructure and public provisioning to make way for monetary support in the form of insurance for buying healthcare services from the private sector is not pro-poor policy. It is transfer of public funds to the corporate sector in the name of pumping technological interventions. There is no surprise that the private sector has welcomed the government's insurance initiative.

Ghosh is a PhD scholar at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, INU. Qadeer is a Distinguished Faculty at Council for Social Development, Delhi

## A budget for Bharat and India

Both fiscal prudence and growth have remained priorities

FOR THE FIRST time, an accounting professional (a merit ranked chartered accountant) presented a budget which balanced the needs of an election-bound government and an economy wanting to grow at a faster pace for better inclusion. It is a budget which boosts consumption through support to farmers and the rural economy, by providing direct income transfer, to middle-class taxpayers through tax rebates and to entrepreneurs through ease of doing business. More importantly, the path of fiscal prudence is not missed while creating a growth momentum for the economy.

The budget comes against the background of pioneering work done to make India more healthy through Swachh Bharat and Ayushman Bharat missions. Most of the places I visited in the last few years have seen a remarkable improvement in cleanliness. Work has also been done to make India more tax compliant. Our tax to GDP ratio for the bulk of our history was comparable to poor African nations. Through the launch of progressive taxation like GST and disruptive reform like demonetisation, the tax base has been expanded by more than 60 per cent in the last five years.

With the promulgation of insolvency laws, bankers have the authority to discipline big borrowers and recover their dues. Indians i

vest a large part of their savings in gold. This results in foreign exchange reserves being spent on the import of gold. Índia is like a patient who wants to improve her health but is donating blood rather than receiving a blood transfusion. Our import of gold is far more than the net foreign direct investment received in the last 17 years. This is despite the fact that in the last few years, Índia has become the largest FDI recipient in the world, overtaking China. The launch of gold bonds and the improvement in tax compliance have led to an increase in financial savings.

Much has been done to tame the Mahisasur of the economy — inflation. Through fiscal and monetary discipline, inflation has been brought down from double digits to low single digits. Inflation is a silent killer. It hurts the poor most.

The budget introduced the path-breaking provision of an income transfer of Rs 6,000 per year to 12 crore rural families. This will transfer Rs 75,000 crore to poor farmers every year. This, along with the increase in minimum support prices and the MGNREGA allocation, will support rural consumption.

Lower-middle class taxpayers will have more disposable income because of the tax rebate for income up to Rs 5 lakh and the relaxation on capital gains with respect to investment in a second property. They will also benefit from the relaxation of tax on notional rental income of a second self-occupied property.

Entrepreneurs will receive more through the increased allocation to MUDRA loans and experience less hassle on income tax assessment and scrutiny. The real estate sector gets special attention with tax-free profits for affordable housing development getting oneyear extension and tax on notional rent on unsold inventory being available for two years.

The expenditure growth is muted on the capital side, as being a vote on account, there was limited flexibility to enhance capital expenses. The tax revenue growth assumption in the revised estimate for FY 19 includes a slowdown in GST collections and is likely to be achieved through increased corporate tax collections. The size of the net borrowing programme for FY 20 is little ahead of market expectations but it is manageable. The current year's net borrowing programme is reduced due to increased mobilisation of small savings and is likely to continue in the next year. It will be important for the government to have a Plan B ready with strategic divestment and asset monetisation to fund additional capital expenditures next year if needed. The extent of fiscal discipline is visible with the net borrowing programmes as a percentage of bank deposits declining by more than half over the last eight years.

This budget is a calculated call to boost growth through a higher disposable surplus in the hands of rural as well as urban Indians. While urban consumption and government spending on infrastructure is on the front foot, private investment over the last few years has been on the back foot due to high real interest rates and tight liquidity. The boost to consumption can push demand higher, resulting in improved capacity utilisation, which in turn can act as a catalyst for increased private in-

vestment. The debt market, while taking comfort from the path of fiscal prudence, will keep a watch on RBI policy in the next week. It will be interesting to see if the RBI gives an actual policy rate cut or guidance to rate cuts in the future to support the growth momentum. The equity market will focus on Q4 business momentum and election results to chart out its

The budget, which meets the aspirations of Bharat and India, also comes up to the expectations of the global rating agencies as well as foreign investors by supporting growth with a firm grip on fiscal discipline.

The writer is managing director, Kotak AMC Ltd

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## DEBATING CBI

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Stand your ground' (IE, February 4). The CBI has been in the news for all the wrong reasons recently. Its former chief and his deputy have washed dirty linen in public. The appointment of the agency's new chief, Rishi Kumar Shukla, has also been controversial. But now, when his clean image has prevailed over his inexperience, Shukla should ensure that the agency sheds its image of being a caged parrot.

Bal Govind, Noida

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Stand your ground' (IE, February 4). To expect the newly-appointed CBI director to set the agency's house in order is asking for too much. It is well-known that the CBI's top echelons have to be amenable to government of the day. The agency is exploited to serve political ends and is a strong weapon for the government against its adversaries. **Deepak Singhal,** Noida

## SMALL CATCH

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'CBI officer, tehsildar arrested in Yamuna e-way land scam' (IE, February 4). This process of arrests of senior officers associated with Yamuna e-way (YEA) has been going on for more than a year. But these

## LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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are small fish. If the CBI talks to allottees of plots and farmers of the area, it will unearth more leakages. Plots were allotted in YEA in 2009. No development has been undertaken in these 10 years. However, money has been collected from the allottees.

A L Agarwal, Delhi

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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@expressindia.com

FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

# WHY IS PALGHAR BEING REPEATEDLY JOLTED BY EARTHQUAKES?

**SRINATH RAO** MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 4

DAHANU TOWN in Maharashtra's Palghar district has been hit by some 30 low-intensity earthquakes since November last year, leading to more than 10,000 residents of 40 villages moving out of their homes into tents erected by the district administration and National Disaster Response Force. On Friday, a two-year-old girl died after falling while rushing outdoors with her family during an earthquake. Why are so many tremors hitting this area? Are they foreshocks of a larger disaster that is on the way?

WHEN DID IT START? The first quake hit on November 11, and was followed by others measuring between 2 and 4 on the Richter scale. Walls have cracked and collapsed in Dhundalwadi gram panchayat. The strongest so far has measured 3.9. The National Centre for Seismology (NCS) under the Ministry of Earth Sciences and the CSIR laboratory National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), Hyderabad, have set up 5 stations with seismometers in Dahanu and Talasari to identify the source of the earthquakes and understand their cause.

**IS IT A SWARM?** Data collected so far point to an "earthquake swarm", a series of many (sometimes thousands) low-intensity earthquakes without a discernible main shock that can occur over weeks in active geothermal areas. A swarm lasting over 3 weeks killed 500 people on or around the Indonesian island of Lombok in July-August 2018.

In India, sequences of low-intensity quakes are common in areas that have been hit previously, like Saurashtra in Gujarat and Koyna in Maharashtra, but they are also seen in areas without a history of seismic activity. Dr Srinagesh D, who heads the Seismological Observatory at NGRI, said swarms are normal in peninsular India. Scientists have found no mining activity to explain the quakes, and have ruled out a small reservoir nearby as the cause. The measuring stations have isolated the epicenter to within 5-10 km of the quake sites, nudging scientists from the Gujarat government's Institute for Seismological Research (ISR) towards the swarm hypothesis.

**BUT IT'S PROBABLY TOO EARLY.** Seismologists are wary of drawing a def-



NDRF personnel at the earthquake site in Dhundalwadi Friday



inite conclusion without more data. They have not ruled out the possibility of either the quakes now subsiding or of a big one coming. NCS Director Dr Vineet Kumar Gahalaut said identifying the quakes as a swarm would suggest there is little threat of a deadlier one hitting in the near future. Dr M Ravi Kumar, ISR Director General, said: "We still don't know whether the earthquakes are a result of seismic activity, hydro-seismicity due to water percolation post-monsoon, or magmatic activity in the region." If they continue, "a closer look" would be needed, Dr Kumar said.

MEANWHILE: A study by the Structural Engineering Division of IIT-Bombay's Civil Engineering Department last year concluded that *kachcha* homes, about a third of the buildings in areas hit by the quakes, would be especially vulnerable in a large quake. Division Head Prof Ravi Sinha said district authorities must draw up a community disaster management plan, with Standard Operating Procedures so that the large number of industries in the district do not suffer debilitating damage.

SIMPLY PUT

# The Saradha story

What is the alleged scam that has led to the current unprecedented political standoff between the Centre and Mamata Banerjee? How are the TMC and the Kolkata Police Commissioner linked to the allegations?

**DEEPTIMAN TIWARY**NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

### The Ponzi scheme

IN THE early 2000s, businessman Sudipto Sen set up the Saradha Group, and launched what the securities market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) later categorised as a collective investment scheme. The Saradha Group used a consortium of companies to tap small investors, promising them very high returns. Like in a classic Ponzi scheme, money was collected through a wide network of agents, who were paid commissions of over 25%.

In a few years, Saradha's raised about Rs 2,500 crore. It built its brand through filmstar endorsements, investments in popular football clubs, ownership of multiple media outlets, and sponsorship of cultural events such as Durga Pujas. The scheme expanded to Odisha, Assam, and Tripura, and the number of investors reached close to 17 lakh.

### How Saradha operated

Saradha began by issuing secured debentures and redeemable preferential bonds to the public in violation of SEBI rules that bar companies from raising capital from more than 50 people without issuing a proper prospectus and balance sheet. Companies must also have SEBI permission to operate, and must get their accounts audited.

After SEBI raised a flag in 2009, the Group diversified, opening 239 companies, and building a complex corporate structure. Through schemes involving tourism packages, forward travel and hotel booking, timeshare credit transfer, real estate, infrastructure finance, and motorcycle manufacturing, the Saradha Group continued to raise capital from ordinary people. The bulk of the investors put in around Rs 50,000 each.

Many others invested through chit funds under the Chit Fund Act, 1982. Chit funds are regulated by the state government.

## When the scam broke

By 2009, politicians in West Bengal had begun to discuss Saradha's alleged fraudulent ways. In 2012, SEBI, which was already watching the Group, asked it to stop accepting money from investors until it got the regulator's permission. Alarm bells started to ring in January 2013, when for the first time, the Group's cash inflow was lower than its outflow — another classic event in a Ponzi scheme.

By April 2013, the scheme had collapsed, and investors and agents lodged hundreds of complaints with the Bidhannagar Police. Sudipto Sen fled West Bengal after writing an 18-page letter, in which he accused several politicians of arm-twisting him into making poor investments that led the company to collapse. An FIR was registered, and Sen was arrested along with his associate Debjani Mukherjee in Sonmarg on April 20, 2013.

Investigations found the company had

laundered investments in locations such as Dubai, South Africa and Singapore. Mamata Banerjee's government set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the case after clubbing all the FIRs. Around the same time, the CBI began investigations in Assam after the state government handed over the probe to it. Based on state police FIRs, the Enforcement Directorate registered cases of alleged money laundering, and arrested sev-

In May 2014, the Supreme Court transferred all cases to the CBI, given the interstate nature of the alleged scam. The SIT, which had by now conducted a year-long probe, had to hand over to the CBI all case papers, evidence, and the accused it had arrested.

## The Trinamool connection

eral people.

Along with his brand, Sen had worked on building political relations. He had acquired media organisations and invested in the Bengali film industry. Actor and TMC MP Satabdi Roy and former Bollywood hero and Rajya Sabha member Mithun Chakraborty were Saradha's brand ambassadors. Then TMC MP Kunal Ghosh was appointed CEO of the media group in which Saradha invested Rs 988 crore and hired close to 1,500 journalists. By 2013 it was running eight newspapers in five languages. Ghosh was said to be drawing a salary of Rs 16 lakh per month.

Another then TMC MP, Srinjoy Bose, was involved in the Group's media operations. Then West Bengal Transport Minister Madan Mitra headed the Group's employees' union.

Saradha gifted patrol motorcycles to Kolkata Police. The government deployed and distributed ambulances and motorcycles sponsored by Saradha in Naxalism-hit areas of the state.

Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at her dharna on Monday. Partha Paul

The Group allegedly also had connections with Congress leader and former union minister Matang Sinh, and the Assam BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma, who was then in the Congress. The ED questioned Sarma's wife Rinki in February 2015 for accepting money from the Saradha Group to run advertisements on her TV channel in Assam. The agency also questioned TMC MP Arpita Ghosh in the case.

The CBI questioned over a dozen TMC MLAs and MPs, and arrested Srinjoy Bose, Madan Mitra and Kunal Ghosh. Among those questioned were then TMC vice president and former West Bengal DGP Rajat Majumdar, Trinamool Youth Congress chief Shankudeb Panda, and MPs Satabdi Roy and Tapas Paul.

Mukul Roy, who was once among Mamata's closest confidents and is now with the BJP, was also questioned, as were the Assamese singer and filmmaker Sadananda Gogoi and former Odisha advocate general Ashok Mohanty.

Former Assam DGP Shankar Barua committed suicide after CBI questioned him and searched his house.

## Where top cop comes in

Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar headed the SIT constituted by the Mamata government, which investigated the Saradha case for a year. CBI has claimed that it has been trying to question the members of the SIT, including Kumar, for one and a half years to get information on some missing evidence, but Kumar and his colleagues have been avoiding the agency.

CBI sources claim communication, notices, and summons to members of the SIT and the West Bengal Police asking for cooperation in the investigation have been sent on 18 occasions since September 2017, but no one has turned up for questioning. The sources say that the Kolkata Police and SIT officials have given ill health or personal engagements as reasons to stay away, and then asked for a mutually agreeable venue to sit and discuss the case.

According to CBI Joint Director Pankaj Srivastav, who is in charge of the Kolkata zone, Rajeev Kumar alone has been sent five notices and summons to appear before CBI since October 2017. The first of these summons was sent on October 18, 2017, and the latest one on December 8, 2018.

To the last summons, the West Bengal DGP replied that queries could be sent in writing which would be replied to and, in case the need arose, a meeting could be arranged between the CBI and SIT at a "mutually convenient place", CBI sources said.

According to CBI, the SIT had not handed over a diary of Sudipta Sen that has details of payments made to prominent people, apart from other evidence. "Our multiple requests to hand over all documents seized by the SIT have fallen on deaf ears. They have the diary, interrogation reports of several accused — some of them recorded on video — some pen drives, and material recovered from a bank locker owned by Sen. Several of these things were not brought on record by the SIT. We learnt of them during interrogation of the accused," Srivastav told *The Indian Express*.

# DECISION 2019 THE QUESTIONS THAT MATTER

## Maharashtra: What factors are at play in the Congress-NCP alliance?

# Reunited by the need for numbers and relevance

Congress sees a lot to gain in Maharashtra, where BJP did well in 2014, while NCP needs as many seats as possible to be able to regain its old muscle. After the split and poor results in Assembly polls, the two cannot afford to go separate and also need smaller allies

MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 4

THE CONGRESS and the NCP, which broke

SANDEEPASHAR

their alliance in the 2014 Maharashtra Assembly elections, have reunited for the Lok Sabha elections. They are trying to forge a larger alliance in Maharashtra with various smaller parties. A look at what is at stake:

## How important is Maharashtra to the Congress?

The Congress is putting a lot of focus in states that powered the BJP's landslide win in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Karnataka together gave the BJP more than 80% of its 282 seats. Given that Maharashtra, with 48 seats, has witnessed tensions between the BJP (22 seats in 2014) and the Shiv Sena (18), the Congress is looking at tactical alliances with regional parties to prevent a split in the anti-BJP vote. In 2014, the BJP had forged a mahagathbandhan involving smaller caste-based parties and a farmers' political outfit; it worked.

## How significant is the revival of the Congress-NCP alliance?

The reunion is out of compulsion. Though some lack of mutual trust remains — the NCP was formed a result of a split in the Congress in 1999 — both parties know they need to fight unitedly. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, which the two parties had fought together, the combine got 34% of the vote. In the state polls that year, when they fought separately, the

Congress ended with 18% and the NCP with 17%. The Congress's vote share declined from the national elections. Contesting separately worked against them, because both parties appeal to identical voter segments. In North Maharashtra, Vidarbha, and Mumbai, the NCP is comparatively weak and ended up spoiling the Congress's prospects. In Western Maharashtra and Marathwada, the NCP is stronger but the Maratha and minority vote split, helping the NDA.

## What is at stake for the NCP? It needs seats to stay relevan

It needs seats to stay relevant. For Sharad Pawar to flex his muscle at national level, NCP leaders feel they need at least 10-12 from Maharashtra. Last time, the NCP had four. If neither the BJP nor the Congress has the numbers to form the government, the NCP will hope to have enough seats for Pawar to be able to play kingmaker, and bag a good deal for the NCP.

Since the 2014 polls, the NCP has suffered the highest number of defections, followed by the Congress. Past voting trends also show that the Muslim and the Dalit vote, traditionally with the Congress, is more likely to be transferred to the NCP when they contest together.

In rural Maharashtra, leaders of both parties, NCP in particular, draw their clout from government-promoted cooperatives sector. Returning to power in Maharashtra is essential for them to keep their flock together; they will need the alliance to continue in the Assembly elections.

Which other parties are in the alliance?
The Congress and the NCP are wooing Dr
Bhimrao Ambedkar's grandson Prakash
Ambedkar, and negotiating with former NDA



On December 12, Sharad Pawar's birthday, in 2017 in Nagpur, (from left) Prithviraj Chavan, Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil, Ashok Chavan, Ghulam Nabi Azad (all Congress); Pawar, Praful Patel, Sunil Tatkare, Supriya Sule, Dhananjay Munde, Vijaysinh Mohite Patil (all NCP); Jayant Patil (PWP); Abu Azmi (SP) Express Archive

constituent Swabhimaani Shetkari Sanghthana, the Bahujan Vikas Aghadi, the CPM, the Samajwadi Party and others.

The tie-up with Prakesh Ambedkar, who leads the Bharip Bahujan Mahasangh (BBM), is important because neither the Congress nor the NCP has a Dalit face. While no Dalit leader has risen from the Congress in the state after former CM Sushilkumar Shinde, the NCP hasn't projected a face at all. For two decades, Dalit leader Ramdas Athawale helped fill this void with his association with

the Congress, but he is now a Union minister in the NDA government.

The BBM's presence, however, is limited to a few Vidarbha districts. It has no representation in the current Lok Sabha, and has just one MLA. Prakash Ambedkar last won a parliamentary election in 1999. Yet both the Congress and the NCP believe his presence will help them counter the BJP, which repeated invokes the Ambedkar legacy.

Congress leaders agree that seat-sharing talks with the BBM, which has been de-

## DIVIDED THEY FELL

2014: WHEN CONG, NCP FOUGHT SEPARATELY

	Seats	Vote
	won	share(in%)
Cong	42	17.95
NCP	41	17.24
BJP	122	27.81
Shiv Sena	63	19.35

## 2009: WHEN CONG, NCP FOUGHT TOGETHER

	Seats	Vot
	won	share (in %
Cong	82	21.0
NCP	62	16.3
BJP	46	14.0
Shiv Sena	44	16.2

288 Assembly seats in Maharashtra; Cong-NCP split after 2014 LS polls

manding 12, have not really been progressing. Also, the BBM has declared a tie-up with Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM. So, the Congress is also focusing on other small organisations.

## What are the major challenges for the alliance?

Differences continue over how the two main allies share three to four seats, which are now being resolved at the national level, with Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Pawar involved. They are yet to work out how

many seats they can afford to shed from the respective quotas for the likely smaller allies. Leaders of the two parties are not keen to leave more than seven seats, in all. Also, in several districts, local Congress and NCP leaders are rivals. Infighting and the possibility of rebel candidates will hurt the alliance.

Having ceded considerable ground in Maharashtra's urban belts, the alliance will have to depend mainly on the rural segments. Out of the 60 Assembly segments in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, the Congress and the NCP hold just four each. In Nagpur district, 10 of the 11 segments are with the BJP. In 2009, a substantial chunk of the Sena's Marathi vote bank had swung towards Raj Thackeray's party MNS, benefiting the Congress-NCP. The MNS sway over this Marathi vote bank has declined since, and the failure of the Congress-NCP to tap into this vote has swung most of it towards the BJP.

## Can anyone play spoiler for the alliance? The Congress is warry of an AIMIM impact

The Congress is wary of an AIMIM impact on the Muslim vote bank, 14% of the electorate. After inroads into Maharashtra through the Nanded urban body poll in 2012, AIMIM has been gradually increasing its presence. It has two MLAs, but hadn't contested the last national election from the state. In the Mumbai Metropolitan Region and Nashik, the Congress will be hoping the MNS does not split the anti-BJP vote among the Marathi community.

#8 How is the newly introduced EWS quota playing out in Bihar?

## Visa crackdown

Students should be made aware of the risks of falling afoul of U.S. immigration laws

The arrest of 129 Indians on the charge of wilfully violating immigration laws to stay and work in the United States sends a stark message to youth looking for better prospects abroad: their efforts should begin with due diligence and strictly follow the letter of the law. In the sting operation carried out by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which threatens to encompass many more Indians in the 'University of Farmington' case, the contentious issue is whether they fell victim to unscrupulous recruiters who offered to secure an I-20 student document that allowed them to undertake paid work using the provision for Curricular Practical Training, or knowingly engaged in fraud. Going by the indictment of eight recruiters of Indian origin, they knew they were violating U.S. immigration law when they enrolled students using fraudulent and unlawful means, and their profits included negotiated referral fees paid into their accounts by undercover agents. The prosecution has alleged that each student who enrolled in the 'university' was aware that there would be no classes, credit scores or academic requirements, and the intention was merely to "pay to stay" and gain access to employment. These statements are, of course, subject to scrutiny during the trial of the alleged recruiters. The Ministry of External Affairs has made the correct distinction between students who may have been duped and the recruiters. Students who are eligible to pursue studies at an authorised university in the U.S. should, therefore, get a further opportunity and not be subjected to summary deportation or humiliation. It must also not prejudice the prospects of such students who may apply in future for legal entry.

The University of Farmington case in Michigan is not the first instance of Indian students falling foul of U.S. immigration laws, although it stands apart as a racket exposed by a sting operation. Others such as Tri-Valley University and Herguan University were degree mills run by individuals that used false claims and documents to enable youth to unlawfully stay in the U.S. and, in many cases, pursue employment. These trends reinforce the need for good communication that would help students identify credentialed institutions that meet the requirements of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program, and highlight the serious nature of visa fraud. If the averments in the Michigan case are correct, the prospect of working in America attracted many of the 600 students who were recruited. This should serve as a reminder to India's policymakers that access to higher education, job-creation and raising of living standards to meet the aspirations of youth must receive priority. Talk of an impending demographic dividend is meaningless without creating opportunities at home.

## The peace holds

A harsher penalty in the 2008 Assam serial blasts case could have led to wider trouble

ocked by protests against the Centre's proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, Assam's Bodopopulated areas were on edge for another reason last week. Over a decade after nine serial bombs ripped through four towns, the clamour for the death penalty to be awarded to the perpetrators had put the State on alert, after a district and sessions court set up for the CBI case had convicted 14 of them. The October 30, 2008 bombings exacted a severe toll. Eighty-eight deaths, 53 of them in Guwahati, with 540 injured, it was argued, passed the Supreme Court's 'rarest of the rare' test. And yet, mindful of the "entire facts and circumstances of the case", the judge on January 30 sentenced 10 of the convicted, including Ranjan Daimary, to life and handed out limited terms to the others. Most of the convicts belong to a faction of the National Democratic Front of Boroland, of which Daimary is the chairman. The NDFB(R) has had a ceasefire agreement with the Assam and Union governments since May 2005. The NDFB (Progressive), led by Gobinda Basumatary, is also in peace talks. Recent incidents in Bodo areas - including the May and December 2014 attacks against Muslim migrants and Adivasis, in which over 100 civilians were killed – have been attributed to the rebel NDFB faction, led earlier by I.K. Songbijit and now by B. Saoraigwra.

These groups and their predecessors, many of which have given up arms and joined the formal political process, espouse causes ranging from secession to a Bodoland State carved out of Assam. The violent phase peaked in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but ebbed with the creation of the Bodoland Territorial Council in 2003. It absorbed the likes of Hagrama Mohilary, formerly a Bodo Liberation Tigers militant, whose Bodoland People's Front has been an alliance partner of both the erstwhile Congress-led State government and the current BJP regime of Sarbananda Sonowal. While NDFB(R) supporters chanted slogans demanding Bodoland to protest against the judicial order, a death sentence for Daimary could have sparked wider convulsions, and pushed some of the fringe groups back into militancy, creating a 1990s redux. The BJP has backed the creation of smaller States, but Bodoland is unlikely to be realised any time soon. The Bodo case for statehood is also hamstrung by the fact that non-Bodos account for nearly 70% of the population in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts that will comprise the core of such a State. New Delhi is focussing instead on devolving more powers with its constitution amendment Bill likely to be introduced in Parliament this week - to bring 10 autonomous district councils under the purview of the Central Finance Commission. Along with ideologically agnostic partnerships with the State government in Dispur, this is the way forward for now.

## A national register of exclusion

There are few parallels anywhere else of the state itself producing statelessness in the manner that it is doing in Assam



HARSH MANDER

y requiring long-term residents of Assam to prove their citizenship by negotiating a thicket made up of bewildering and opaque rules and an uncaring bureaucracy, the Indian state has for the past two decades unleashed an unrelenting nightmare of wanton injustice on a massive swathe of its most vulnerable

Distressing cycle

The official presumption that they are foreigners has reduced several million of these highly impoverished, mostly rural, powerless and poorly lettered residents to a situation of helplessness and penury. It has also caused them abiding anxiety and uncertainty about their futures. They are required to persuade a variety of usually hostile officials that they are citizens, based on vintage documents which even urban, educated, middle-class citizens would find hard to muster. And even when one set of officials is finally satisfied, another set can question them. And sometimes the same official is free again to send them a notice, starting the frightening cycle

On February 2 and 3, I was in Guwahati listening to heart-breaking accounts from 53 people from 13 districts of Assam. This was as part of a people's tribunal on the National Register of Citizens (NRC), along with Justice Venkate Gopala Gowda, Colin Gonsalves,

Monirul Hussain and Sanjoy Hazarika. What emerged were numbing stories of unyielding official bias and arbitrariness, of the denial of elementary "due process" and, above all, the complete absence of public compassion. Even old men frequently broke down as they spoke of all that they had endured.

It emerged that the names of many persons were dropped from the draft NRC only because of minor differences in the spelling of Bengali names in English in different documents. We encountered several instances where the variation of a single letter, for example between Omar and Onar, was enough to rule that a person is a foreigner. Likewise, the rural unlettered are typically vague about their dates of birth. A person could be excluded from citizenship if she told the tribunal that she was 40 when her documents recorded her to be 42.

Tougher on women

Women are especially in danger of exclusion from the citizenship register. Typically, they have no birth certificates, are not sent to school, and are married before they become adults. Therefore, by the time their names first appear in voters' lists, these are in the villages where they live after marriage, which are different from those of their parents. They are told that they have no documents to prove that they are indeed the children of the people they claim are their parents. There were cases of being excluded from citizenship on this ground alone.

Impoverished migrant workers often travel to other districts of Assam in search of work, as construction workers, road-builders and coal-miners. In the districts to

which they migrate, the local police frequently record their names as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The police then mark them out as illegal immigrants. They receive notices from foreigners' tribunals located in districts where they might have worked years earlier, far away from their home districtsthey have to travel to for every hearing, adding further to their costs.

The NRC is not the only institution through which the state challenges them to prove their citizenship. A second process began in the mid-1990s when the then Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan, as a one-time measure, directed officials to identify "doubtful voters" by marking a "D" against their names on the voters' list. This would temporarily bar them from voting or standing for elections, until an inquiry was completed.

But this temporary measure became permanent. The power was vested permanently with junior officials who could doubt the citizenship of any person at any time without assigning any reason. Those with the dreaded "D" beside their names had no recourse for appeal under the rules, with years passing without any inquiry. The "D" also debarred them from being included in the draft NRC.

A third process empowers the Assam Police to identify anyone it suspects to be a 'foreigner'. Again, all that the police claim in most cases is that the person was unable to show them documents establishing his or her citizenship. People consistently deny that the police even asked them from documents. Why would they not show them these, when they all know the dangers of not allaying the suspicions of the police?

**Opaque processes** 

All cases referred by the police are heard by Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs). Earlier, retired judges were appointed to these tribunals. The Bharatiya Janata Party government has appointed many lawyers (often members of the ruling party or the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) who have never been judges. There are now FTs in which not a single person has been declared an Indian citizen over several months. Many allege that both the police and presiding officers in FTs work to fulfil informal targets to declare people foreigners.

Even if a person finds her name in the NRC, the police can still refer her case to an FT: an election official can even deem her to be a "D"-voter. Article 20 of the Constitution includes as a fundamental right that "no person shall be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once". But this principle has been waived for FTs. We found that even after an FT had confirmed a person to be an Indian citizen, another FT and often the same FT can again issue notice to the same person to prove her legitimate citizenship once more. A person is never be allowed to feel secure that the state has finally accepted that she is an Indian citizen.

In this way, the sword permanently hangs low over their heads. Who will be challenged before which institution to prove that they are Indian citizens? Will they or their loved ones be stripped of their citizenship rights, and by processes that are opaque, unreasonable and discriminatory?

No person in any one of the testimonies that we heard was given legal aid by the state, which is bound to deploy lawyers paid by the state to fight their cases in the FTs and higher courts. People instead spoke of panic spending, of enormous amounts of money to pay lawyers, as well as for costs of travel of witnesses who they bring with them to testify in their favour. For this, they have had to sell all their assets or borrow from private moneylenders. The large majority of them are poorly educated and very impoverished, doing lowpaid work such as drawing rickshaws, or working as domestic work or farm labour.

With the entire burden of proving citizenship on their shoulders and the arbitrary and opaque multiple forums to which they are summoned, people deprived of both education and resources are caught in a Kafkaesque bureaucratic maze from which they find it hard to emerge

Trapped at the crossroads of history, their destinies depend on institutions that treat them with undisguised hostility and bias. There are indeed few parallels anywhere in the world of the state itself producing statelessness on the scale and in the manner that it is doing in Assam.

Harsh Mander is a human rights worker,

## An appeasement Budget

The Interim Budget makes clear the class hierarchy in the Modi government's scheme of populism



nterim Budget 2019 has sought to make amends for all the wrongs of almost five years of the Narendra Modi government. For example, the debilitating impact of demonetisation on the informal sector that employs nearly been suspected on the basis of anecdotal evidence. The findings of the National Sample Survey Office's surveys - leaked last week after they were approved by the National Statistical Commission show that unemployment rose to a 45-year high in the demonetisation year. The note ban, these findings suggest, has caused severe

#### Some social security

To reach out to the segment worst hit, the Interim Budget announced the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan for unorganised sector workers with monthly incomes of less than ₹15,000. With a token allocation of ₹500 crore, a direct benefit transfer of ₹3,000 a month as old-age pension has been proposed. Pensioners will receive the payments once they attain the age of 60. To be eligible, workers will

have to start contributing ₹55 every month from the age of 18. Those over 29 will have to contribute ₹100 every month. The government will match these contributions. The scheme targets workers in sectors such as leather, handloom and construction which took a body blow from demoneti-

A possible inference can be that the Modi government does not expect - nor is it promising - upward mobility for this class to better quality jobs over the span of their working lives.

#### For the farmer

The Modi government's tenure has been marked by acute rural distress. Among the reasons to which it can be ascribed are legacy farm sector policy issues which no government has addressed in a meaningful way. In this, Mr. Modi's government has been no different. The minimum support prices and procurement policies it followed were more ineffective than is normal. In fact these policies reversed some of the corrections made by the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in the terms of trade for agriculture. The Modi government has also failed to respond adequately to the back-toback droughts of 2014 and 2015. The import-export policy errors it made added to the gluts caused by bumper harvests in 2017 and 2018, which further depressed market prices and increased farmer



The non-farming classes did profit to an extent from these policy failures. Falling food prices fited kitchen budgets in middleclass households that had suffered from severe inflation under the

The Interim Budget offers farmers a peace offering in the form of income support of ₹6,000 a year, or ₹500 a month, financed fully by the Central government. The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) – inspired by Telangana's Rythu Bandhu – targets only landed farmers who own up to 2 hectares, while bypassing landless cultivators, the most vulnerable class in the agriculture sector.

In handing out these fiscal giveaways, Mr. Modi has bitten the bullet by reaching out to a class of voters who are traditionally not a constituency of the BJP. But these giveaways suffer from the same populist, rather than reformist, approach seen earlier with demonetisation which was planned as a

big bang intervention to downsize the black economy, and the design and implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). These measures, which were not thought through properly, led to perverse consequences.

#### The downside In a similar way, the PM-KISAN

scheme is likely to encourage further fragmentation of already much fragmented landholdings. Farming households holding larger land parcels will try to split holdings to try to qualify for the benefits under the scl the scheme been dovetailed with a replacement of the highly distortionary fertilizer subsidy with a direct benefit cash transfer, not only would a long-pending reform have been accomplished but the income support offered to farmers could have been nearly twice as much as has been announced. Bureaucrats had made a case for adding the fertilizer subsidy as a cash component to the income support, but Mr. Modi showed no appetite for the reform.

Even so, the Interim Budget leaves no doubt about which class of voters Mr. Modi is most eager to please. The gifts showered on the middle class outstrip those to the poorer sections who have borne the brunt of demonetisation and an incompetently designed GST. The income-tax rebate for individuals drawing incomes of up to ₹5 lakh will leave nearly ₹1,000 a

month more in their wallets. This is twice the amount farmers will receive from the PM-KISAN

And, middle class Indians will not, unlike unorganised sector workers, have to wait till they are  $\bot$ 60 to receive the rebate or the other tax benefits announced, such as on fixed deposits and two selfowned houses.

There was something for the rich too. The most positive, and the only reforms-oriented announcement, was reserved for them – a promise of a complete experience dealings with the income-tax department. This could end the excessive harassment and the tax terror that have been unleashed in the past couple of years.

#### **Compromising economics**

Finally, apart from making clear the class hierarchy in Mr. Modi's scheme of populism, the Interim Budget provides evidence, if any more was needed, that Indian electoral politics is dependent even more now on schemes involving handouts and fiscal goodies. That the need to spend money on the voting classes is felt by successive governments confirms that no serious gains from economic reforms are reaching the non-rich. Politicians appear to be compromising good economics with increasing ease and relish.

Puja Mehra is a Delhi-based journalist

### 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.

#### **Protest in Kolkata**

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has taken her political hostility towards the Bharatiya Janata Party to a dangerous level (Page 1, "Mamata goes on stir after CBI tries to quiz Kolkata police boss" February 4). The action of stopping Central Bureau of Investigation officials from discharging their duties is a serious breach of constitutional propriety because she has interfered in the due process of the law. It appears that she has embarked on a dangerous brinkmanship because of her inability to distinguish between Central agencies and the ruling party at the Centre. Victimhood loses its legitimacy when it turns into paranoia. V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,

■ The showdown in Kolkata is a sad chapter in Indian

politics. Leaders such as Ms. Banerjee and Arvind Kejriwal, being the street fighters, subsequently continue to behave like what they were. In a democratic system, State governments should work within the framework of the Constitution and respect the Central government irrespective of party affiliations. Otherwise, it will result in anarchy and chaos. Why is Ms. Banerjee shying away from the Central Bureau of Investigation? Has she forgotten that this is an investigation into activities that siphoned off life-long earnings from the poor? SHALINI MURTHY.

■ If one knows Ms. Banerjee well, her reaction causes no surprise. When she was in the Opposition there were often calls for 'strikes' on even the flimsiest reasons, in turn disrupting normal life.

One feels sorry for the people of West Bengal. V.S. GIRI,

■ While Ms. Banerjee's angry response was a needless over-reaction to what is being made out to be a routine attempt to initiate an inquiry, one is left wondering why a little more decorum and protocol was not shown by the CBI. Had the Kolkata police commissioner cooperated with the inquiry, much of the sting in the action would have been taken out too. It is also very odd that a large posse of CBI officers landed up unannounced at the commissioner's residence late on Sunday evening. The ponzi scheme scam is certainly not one that warrants such dramatic action by the CBI. This oddity makes the episode appear to have been hatched

at the behest of the Central

the face of recent snubs that the TMC has inflicted on the BJP. One waits to see what the Supreme Court will have ANAND ARAVAMUDHAN,

government, especially in

■ As can only be expected, the Opposition has quickly rallied around Ms. Banerjee and wasted no time in lambasting the Central government for using agencies like the CBI to further its own ends. What supports the Opposition claim is that in almost all the cases so far, the targets have been States where the Opposition parties are in power and the spotlight is on leaders who could pose a threat to the BIP. C.V. ARAVIND,

A tradable commodity Beginning with "the caricaturing of scientific

crisis in public education (OpEd page, "Imagining alternative futures", February 4) tells us how fictionalised data are attempting to lull us into a dream of development from which we may never wake up. That education, far from being a right reinforced and guaranteed by a constitutional amendment, continues to be "a tradable commodity" is a nauseating truth being fed to young people, as public education buckles under the pressure to privatise being imposed by transnational capital. The implications for the quality and credibility of knowledge created in India are as unpalatable a truth as the subversion of facts being churned out to suit a regressive social agenda. VASANTHA SURYA,

Bengaluru

inquiry" that took place at

recently, the article on the

the Indian Science Congress

#### **Derailment** It is disconcerting that the

derailment of the Delhibound Jogbani-Anand Vihar Seemanchal Express happened just a few days after Union Minister Piyush Goval said in his Budget speech that Indian Railways "experienced the safest year in its history" (Page 1, "Seemanchal Express derails in Bihar; 6 dead, 30 injured", February 4). Funds must be devolved to restore and upgrade tracks, which is a basic necessity, instead of expending on luxuries such as bullet train projects. The accident, which took place in Vaishali district, Bihar, highlights the amount of work that still needs to be done to make train journeys accident-free and safe across the vast rail network in India. Y. MEENA,

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

THE HINDU DELHI TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2019

## America has lost the Afghan war

Once U.S. troops leave, the Taliban is sure to challenge Kabul one way or the other



STANLY JOHNY

The Remnants of an Army, a famous oil on canvas by Elizabeth Butler, is a lasting image of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842). It depicts William Brydon, a medical officer in the British Indian Army, arriving in Jalalabad from Kabul on horseback in 1842. Both Brydon, who was wounded, and his horse look exhausted. Brydon was the only survivor of the 16,000 soldiers and camp followers who were retreating from Kabul after the British invasion went awry.

One hundred and thirty-seven years later, the Soviet Union sent troops to Afghanistan to bolster its client communist regime. A decade passed before the Soviet troops too withdrew in ignominy. And again in 2001, the U.S., the sole superpower of the post-Soviet world, sent troops to Afghanistan launching its 'War on Terror'. Now, after 17 years of the war, with the U.S. and the Taliban agreeing 'in-principle' to a framework for peace that would provide the Americans a face-saving exit from Afghanistan, it's hard to miss the echoes from history.

#### Repeating mistakes of the past

Afghanistan has historically been a difficult place for external invaders, thanks to its complex tribal equations and its rugged mountainous terrain. It's a classic example of a country whose geopolitical destiny is defined by geography. The British Empire sent troops to Afghanistan in 1839 as part of the 'Great Game'. They feared that the Russians would take over Afghanistan and be at the border of India, "the jewel in the British Crown". To pre-empt that, they conquered Kabul, toppled the Emir of Afghanistan, Dost Mohammad Khan, and installed their protege Shah Shujah Durrani in power. When the invasion became unsustainable in the wake of the violent resistance by tribal fighters, mainly the faction led by Dost Mohammad's son, Akbar Khan, the British decided to withdraw. But while withdrawing, all their troops but Brydon were mas-



"After 17 years of fighting, the war has reached nowhere." An injured American soldier in Arghandab Valley, Afghanistan, in 2010. • REUTERS

sacred, and Dost Mohammad went on to recapture Kabul.

The Soviets made the same mistake. They sent troops to Afghanistan after an intra-party coup in the country. The Soviets were wary of Hafizullah Amin, who captured power and assassinated Nur Mohammad Taraki, the leader of the 1978 communist coup. In December 1979, Leonid Brezhnev deployed troops to Afghanistan. The Soviets staged another coup, murdered Amin, and installed Babrak Karmal, a Moscow loyalist, as President.

Given their defeat in the Vietnam War and their loss of Iran following the 1979 Revolution, the Americans saw the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as an opportunity. They began supporting the mujahideen, the tribal warriors who were fighting both the communist regime and its Soviet backers, with help from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which were worried about the expansion of communism to the Muslim world. A decade later, the Soviets realised that the occupation had become unsustainable and pulled back.

When the U.S. decided to attack

the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001, President George W. Bush said the 'War on Terror' would not end "until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated". This was a tall order. The U.S. toppled the Taliban quickly and Afghanistan eventually got an elected government under President Hamid Karzai. But after 17 years of fighting, the war has reached nowhere. Since 2009, when the United Nations started documenting the casualties of the war, nearly 20,000 Afghan civilians have been killed in conflict and another 50,000 wounded. The U.S., which has spent some \$877 billion on the war, has lost at least

#### An unsustainable war

istan since the war began.

And what did it get in return? The Taliban, which retreated in 2001, is on the comeback trail. Some estimates suggest that nearly half of Afghanistan, mostly the mountainous hinterlands, is now controlled by the Taliban. In the east, a small cell of the Islamic State is well-entrenched and has carried out a series of sectarian

2,000 military personnel in Afghan-

attacks in recent months, killing hundreds of Hazara Shias. The government is grappling with chronic corruption, and regional satraps call the shots outside Kabul.

U.S. President Donald Trump has made it clear many times that he wants to bring American troops back home. Yet he decided to send more troops to Afghanistan in 2017 to step up the fight against the Taliban. Since then, the U.S. has carried out large-scale air operations in Afghanistan, but it has failed to arrest the Taliban's momentum. The group continues to hold sway in rural Afghanistan and retains the capability to strike anywhere in the country. Just since 2014, Afghanistan has lost some 45,000 soldiers in battle. Amid mounting losses and an inability to break the stalemate in the conflict, the Americans, like the British Empire in the 19th century and the Soviets in the 20th century, seem to have realised that the first major war of the 21st century is no longer

#### The role of the Taliban

The question is, what next? The U.S. says it has got assurance from the Taliban that the group won't provide a safe haven to terror groups in Afghanistan. It will also push for a ceasefire and intra-Afghan talks. But the fact remains that the U.S. has already conceded a lot to the Taliban. The Taliban said it would not talk to the Afghan administration; it does not acknowledge the government's legitimacy. The Americans accepted this and held direct talks with the insurgents, who negotiated from a position of strength. The U.S. has also agreed, in principle, to pull out troops, the biggest Taliban demand, without any clear agreement on the future role of the Taliban. This shows how desperate the U.S. is to get out of Afghanistan, a war it has lost badly. It will be exiting on terms largely dictated by the Taliban. It would be naive to say that the Taliban fought the war for 17 years only to reach an agreement with the Americans. It fought for power, which it lost with the arrival of American troops in 2001. And it's certain that once the Americans leave, the Taliban will challenge Kabul one way or the

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## Wrong on the Rohingya

Deportation of refugees is legally and morally problematic



THULASI K.RAJ

In Januarys, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) called for a report from India on the deportation of a group of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar in October 2018. India's repatriation of the refugees contravenes international principles on refugee law as well as domestic constitutional rights.

#### **Global framework**

Refugee law is a part of international human rights law. In order to address the problem of mass inter-state influx of refugees, a Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the UN adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951. This was followed by the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1967. One of the most significant features of the Convention is the princi-

ple of non-refoulement. The norm requires that "no contracting State shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion,

nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." This idea of prohibition of expulsion lies at the heart of refugee protection in international law.

It is often argued that the principle does not bind India since it is a party to neither the 1951 Convention nor the Protocol. However, the prohibition of non-refoulement of refugees constitutes a norm of customary international law, which binds even non-parties to the Convention. According to the Advisory Opinion on the Extraterritorial Application of Non-Refoulement Obligations, UNHCR, 2007, the principle "is binding on all States, including those which have not yet become party to the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol."

Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. Moreover, Article 51 of the Constitution imposes an obligation on the state to endeavour to promote international peace and security. Article 51(c) talks about promotion of respect for international law and treaty obligations. Therefore, the Constitution conceives of incorporation of international law into the domestic realm. Thus the argument that the nation has not

violated international obligations during the deportation is a mistaken one.

#### **Domestic obligations**

The chapter on fundamental rights in the Constitution differentiates citizens from persons. While all rights are available to citizens, persons including foreign citizens are entitled to the right to equality and the right to life, among others. The Rohingya refugees, while under the jurisdiction of the national government, cannot be deprived of the right to life and personal liberty.

The Rohingya are "among the world's least wanted and most persecuted people," according to a BBC report. In Myanmar, they are denied citizenship, the right to own land and travel, or to even marry without permission, says the report. According to the UN, the Rohingya issue is one of systematic and widespread ethnic cleansing by Myanmar.

Therefore, the discrimination that the Rohingya face is unparalleled in contemporary world politics. In *National Human Rights Commission v. State of Arunachal* 

Pradesh (1996), the Supreme Court held: "Our Constitution confers... rights on every human being and certain other rights on citizens. Every person is entitled to equality before the law and equal protection of the laws. So also, no person can be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to pro-

cedure established by law. Thus the State is bound to protect the life and liberty of every human-being, be he a citizen or otherwise..."

India lacks a specific legislation to address the problem of refugees, in spite of their increasing inflow. The Foreigners Act, 1946, fails to address the peculiar problems faced by refugees as a class. It also gives unbridled power to the Central government to deport any foreign citizen. Further, the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill of 2019 strikingly excludes Muslims from its purview and seeks to provide citizenship only to Hindu, Christian, Jain, Parsi, Sikh and Buddhist immigrants persecuted in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The majority of the Rohingya are Muslims. This limitation on the basis of religion fails to stand the test of equality under Article 14 of the Constitution and offends secularism, a basic feature of the Constitution.

The American philosopher Ronald Dworkin argues that if we claim international law to be law, we must understand it as part of the greater morality. In such a conception, the deportation of refugees by India is not only unlawful but breaches a significant moral obligation.

Thulasi K. Raj is a lawyer at the Kerala High Court

#### SINGLE FILE

## The danger of cash transfers

It might incentivise the state to shirk its constitutional responsibility of providing basic entitlements to all

AKRITI BHATIA & CHANDAN KUMAR



With the general election around the corner and NSSO data revealing that the unemployment rate has hit a 45-year high, there is a spike in concern for the economic security of the people. Several recent proposals – whether the Congress's preemptive announcement of a minimum income guarantee scheme, or

the Interim Budget's promise of a range of income transfers to farmers (albeit as low as ₹3 per day for a family of five) and a pension scheme for workers aged over 60 years in the unorganised sector, or the government's announcement of a 10% quota for the "economically weaker sections" in the general category – might appear promising but raise questions about their impact on the working poor.

If uplift of the poor is a priority, why not provide decent employment opportunities, minimum wages and social security to all workers? Why not spend on universalising access to, and provision of, basic public services to all? Why, contrarily, are there periodic cuts in social sector spending, including on public education and primary health; amendments in labour laws in favour of corporates; and privatisation and contractualisation even within the public sector?

In this context, cash transfers to the "poor" – also subject to gross exclusionary errors of identification – do not ensure accessibility, affordability or even sustained economic security given falling real wages. The scheme also doesn't indicate where that money would be spent by the beneficiaries. More importantly, the concern is that these cash transfers could replace, rather than supplement, existing schemes that provide subsidised goods and services. This would imply that citizens could be left at the mercy of private, for-profit players to avail even basic services. This might incentivise the state to shirk its constitutional responsibility of providing basic entitlements to all.

Case studies around Direct Benefit Transfers have shown that they play an instrumental role in dismantling existing welfare schemes and deprive ASHA and Anganwadi workers of their wages. These workers have been pillars in creating an ecosystem for ensuring nutritional security to women and children. Even in Europe, wherever guaranteed basic income has been implemented, provision of services has increasingly moved towards greater privatisation.

Finally, it is surprising that the same government that earlier opposed cash transfer schemes as "doles" is now advocating them. Politically the scheme seems to be the most viable option now, given the unemployment catastrophe. Hurried income transfers before the election could be considered as 'cash for votes', but the larger danger entails the state's diminishing accountability towards its citizens, of upholding their rights to basic entitlements and to work.

Akriti Bhatia is a Ph.D. Scholar at the Delhi School of Economics. Chandan Kumar works with the Working Peoples' Charter, a collective that works with informal labour across India



#### NOTEBOOK

#### 'Why must we tell you?'

Often people revisit traumatic memories only to tell journalists their stories

MEERA SRINIVASAN

As journalists, we are often guilty of behaving like an entitled bunch. We ask questions, demand answers, call people at odd hours with or without an apology, or trouble a friend for a phone number we have lost.

It is one thing to pose difficult questions to those in power, those who are accountable to the people, or those who think privilege ought not to be challenged. But it is quite another to nudge people who are in the lap of danger or adversity to share their stories with us, so we can tell them

It was late 2003, and I was in journalism school. A group of us were taken to Pappapatti, Keeripatti and Nattamangalam in Madurai district to try to understand, and report on the entrenched caste hegemony that was reflected in the periodic violence that mili-

tant sections of the dominant Thevar caste group unleashed on the oppressed Dalits. Despite the panchayats being reserved for Dalit candidates, most were forced to stay out of the contest. The few who took a risk paid with physical injury or, at times, life.

We approached a middle-aged woman in the Dalit village, hoping to get her perspective. "Why must we tell you?" she screamed. "Who are you? So many media folk come here and ask us questions, but has anything changed for us? Can you assure me that you can publish the truth and make a difference?" Obviously, we couldn't promise change, but we reported what we saw.

About a decade later, in 2012, I went to Idinthakarai in Tirunelveli district to report on how locals felt about the imminent commissioning of the controversial Kudankulam nuclear power plant. I walked

towards a woman seated in front of her house and even before I could say a word, she said: "What? Interview? We don't need the nuclear plant." Clearly she was in no mood to tell us. But after some time, when more women joined her, she began speaking with less anger, and explained in painstaking detail why they were opposed to the plant that, they believed, would endanger their health, community and village.

From time to time, I sense scepticism among some people I meet in the war-affected areas of Sri Lanka, especially those under continuing military surveillance. After speaking to them, we reporters might come back with a compelling human story, but the residents have to continue living there, at risk and experiencing anxiety everyday. Invariably though, a few minutes into the conversation, they begin sharing very personal stories of love, pain, loss and distress. Retelling them means revisiting traumatic memories but they still do. They let a complete stranger into their homes, serve tea, and are willing to trust sooner than we'd think.

For a decade now, Sri

Lankan activist Sandya Ek-

naligoda has been cam-

paigning for the truth about her disappeared husband, the dissident journalist-cartoonist Prageeth Eknaligoda. challenges powerful politicians boldly, turns up for every other protest on enforced disappearances – be it in Colombo or in the north. She has given many interviews to local and foreign media, meticulously sharing details of Prageeth's disappearance each time. Some time ago I asked her, "How do you agree to tell this story again and again, it must be hard." She said: "Yes, it is. But since giving up is not an op-

tion, I do it."

#### CONCEPTUAL

#### **Matching hypothesis**

PSYCHOLOGY

This refers to the idea that people are more likely to be romantically attracted towards people who are as attractive as themselves than those less or more attractive. While physical attractiveness can determine the mating preferences of people to a significant extent, social and other non-physical forms of attraction can also determine mating patterns prevalent across various human societies.

About 1 O'clock this afternoon [February 4] a report of a revolver was heard in Taj Mahal Hotel [in Bombay]. The waiters,

thinking that it must have been the sound of the bursting of a

motor tyre at the taxi stand below, took no notice of it. A little

later someone was heard calling out for help from room No.

442, and on a waiter peeping through the half-closed doors he

found a gentleman lying flat on his chest on the floor. The wai-

ter immediately rushed downstairs to the Manager's Office to

obtain help. On his way down he was stopped by an officer

who enquired of him as to what was the matter. On the waiter

informing him that something serious had happened in room

No. 442 the officer at once rushed upstairs to the room, picked

up the gentleman and put him on his cot. Assistance came in

promptly and the gentleman, whose name is Lt. H.R. Playfair,

was placed in a motor ambulance and removed to Colaba War

Hospital. He had a bullet wound on his right shoulder. Lt. Play-

fair has been staying at Taj Mahal Hotel for some time and he

was alone in his room when the revolver was heard to go off.

The police found a revolver in his room with an empty car-

tridge in one of its chamber. The matter is under investigation.

MORE ON THE WEB

The Hindu explains: What is the polar vortex?

http://bit.ly/Polarvortex

## The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

## NSC controversy

Data integrity is of vital importance

HEmanner in which the government has dealt with the National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO) periodic labour force survey (PLFS) has left much to be desired. It courted controversy by not releasing the report of the National Statistical Commission (NSC), which resulted in the resignation of the last two non-government members of the Commission, PC Mohanan and JV Meenakshi, a few days ago. The two complained that the government was sidelining the organisation, and pointed out that they had approved the report in December. The suggestion that the survey had found that the country's unemployment rate was at a 45-year high of 6.1 per cent during 2017-18 has not been convincingly refuted so far.

Given the political sensitivity of the data that could be a reflection on the impact of demonetisation on the economy, the government should have ensured greater transparency and responsiveness. What it did was the opposite. It referred the report to the NITI Aayog, instead of releasing it, on the specious grounds that the data in the NSSO survey was 'not verified'. The argument does not cut much ice, and Opposition leaders naturally slammed the government on this issue. The NITI Aayog has yet to come out of the rough patch it found itself in over the delayed release of the GDP back series data.

The resignation of the NSC members is not the starting point of this avoidable controversy; rather, it is the inflexion point at which the matter has come into the public domain. It is also reflective of the current political atmosphere. The attempt to call the interim Budget a full Budget was another instance of the government's disconnect with the nuances that ought to govern its conduct. The vacuum left by the lack of officially released data has been filled by what is being termed 'not verified' data. The only way to counter that is for the government to release 'verified data'. The integrity of statistics released by the government must be unimpeachable. A pity that this has to be reiterated.

## HAL takes a beating

Mirage crash raises question over upgrade ability

HE crash of the multirole fighter Mirage 2000 as it was taking off in Bengaluru and the death of two intrepid test pilots has dealt a heavy blow to the Indian Air Force and the ambitious Make in India initiative. It has also knocked the wind out of the sails of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). What adds to the worries is the fact that the Mirage was freshly upgraded and serviced by HAL under a 2015 contract and was being test-flown by young ace pilots before its re-induction into the Air Force.

The horrendous crash rate of MiG-21 — dubbed 'flying coffins' — is still fresh in public memory. In recent months, there have been a slew of crashes, including a Jaguar aircraft, a MiG-29 and Sukhoi 30 MKI. Though the overall annual crash rate has come down after the induction of the British Hawk Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT), it hovers close to the red line, as the bulk of our air frames are, alarmingly, over two decades old. Some Sukhoi-30 squadrons are the exceptions.

Mirage 2000 was first inducted into the force in 1984 and proved its worth during the Kargil War with its accurate bombing runs that snapped the Pakistani supply line to intruders on mountain-top fortifications. The Friday crash was the 11th such, bringing down the three-squadron fleet of the IAF to 48. In 2011, India had inked a \$2.4-billion contract with the original manufacturers to upgrade the fleet. While two aircraft were upgraded in France, it fell upon HAL to pick up the baton for the rest.

The probe will establish the actual cause, but prima facie HAL stands humbled in public perception. The spotlight is back on its technical capabilities. Several of its projects, including the Mirage upgrade, are trailing behind schedule. As imports often lead to political fracas which delays replacements, India must pump in funds to reduce foreign dependence. It speaks of our national security commitment when the IAF is expected to fix-and-fly refurbished planes. The 'make do' approach comes at an exorbitant cost, of both man and machine.

## THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

A budget takes the fun out of money. — Mason Cooley

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1919

"New India" and the Congress.

WE learn from a Poona contemporary that *New India* has in a recent article described the Delhi Congress as being a popular crowd rather than a deliberative assembly as it used to be. In the most important matter that divided Mrs. Besant and her friends and followers from the rest of the progressive party, namely, the resolution on Provincial Autonomy our sympathies are entirely with the former. But that does not prevent us from reminding Mrs. Besant that angry words leave a most unpleasant memory behind. The Congress never was and never could be a deliberative assembly in the same sense in which the British Parliament or the American Senate is a deliberative assembly, for the simple reason that five thousand men cannot sit down to deliberate together. From the earliest years the real deliberation of the Congress has been carried on at subjects committee meetings while the open Congress has, generally speaking, only ratified the decisions arrived at by the committee.

## Primary Education and Backward Classes.

THERE is one aspect of the new proposals regarding primary education which should not be lost sight of by those interested in the progress of the Province, namely, their bearing on the classes who have hitherto remained backward in education, and who constitute the bulk of the population. If, as is evident from the draft Bill as amended by the Select Committee, the fifth class is the bulk of the schools in the rural areas will go, will it not curtail the facilities existing at present and still further retard the progress of the backward classes? How are these classes then to make up the lee-way? Will not a larger period as proposed by the Punjab Educational Conference prove to their advantage?

## A bagful of fiscal trouble

The new dispensation is sure to have a first-class problem on its hands



SUBIR ROY

SENIOR ECONOMIC ANALYST

VERY Budget has a political context and the 2019 interim one is no exception. The ruling NDA is looking at the prospect of failing to get an absolute majority in the parliamentary elections due in a few months, a sharp reversal from the large majority it had secured in 2014. The Opposition is in a resurgent mood, regional parties (SP and BSP) have tied up for crucial UP and no one can call a reborn Rahul Gandhi 'Pappu' anymore.

In this scenario, Narendra Modi could be expected to go the full political hog and has lived up to that expectation. First, the Budget seems to have breached convention by proposing major changes in tax laws, which an interim Budget does not. Second, it has done two things in one go — offered goodies to virtually every section of the electorate and simultaneously appearing to retain fiscal prudence.

The goodies come in the form of income support for farmers with small landholdings, a pension scheme for the workers in the unorganised sector with low incomes, and several measures to benefit the middle class — increase in the limits for rebates, standard deduction and the TDS threshold for interest income.

But this will not upset the fiscal balance. The fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP has been projected for 2019-20 at the same 3.4 per cent as in the revised estimates for 2018-19. This key ratio, indeed, remained within the Budget estimates for three years (from 2014-15 to 2016-17), but exceeded it in 2017-18 (Budget estimate versus actuals)



**ON SLOW BOIL:** Negative statistics cannot be suppressed beyond a point.

## Resources for the proposed big-ticket items will be hard to find while keeping the fiscal deficit in check.

as also in 2018-19.

How will staying within limits in 2019-20 be achieved? Corporation tax and income tax revenue are projected to go up by far more than they are expected to do in the current year (Budget estimate versus revised estimate). The difference in the case of income tax is, in fact, huge. In 2018-19, the Budget and revised estimates for income tax collection are likely to remain the same, but in the coming year the revenue is expected to go up by a massive 17 per cent over the revised estimates for 2018-19.

There are many ways of fudging the fiscal deficit, outlined by the CAG. One of them is by not passing on to public sector enterprises what is due to them within the financial year, notably in the case of the Food Corporation of India. Take the loss-making public sector banks. Instead of recapitalising them, the government has gone in for merging loss-making ones with profitable ones and also got one particular bank in the red to be taken over by the LIC.

If this is the way the interim Budget has managed to keep the fiscal deficit in check, what is it laying up in store for the final Budget to be placed later on in the year by whichever formation comes to power? The new government, by all accounts, will have a first-class fiscal problem on its hands.

It is not as if any of the key political formations are different from the others. Just before the interim Budget, Rahul Gandhi promised an income guarantee scheme. Now the NDA has come up with its income support scheme for farmers. These are very big-ticket items, resources for which will be hard to find while keeping the fiscal deficit in check.

What is fascinating is that the NDA under Modi had over the first few years of its tenure tried to abide by the fiscal balance dharma, symbolised by the refusal to go in for farm loan waiver, and succeeded. The Congress, on the other hand, has announced farm loan waivers immediately on coming to power in the three Hindi belt states. Clearly, the Assembly elec-

tion upsets have made the NDA government change its approach.

What is disappointing is that there is little in the interim Budget which addresses the root cause of the two most critical problems facing the economy — rural distress and lack of jobs. Not only is the income support scheme for farmers with small landholdings poorer than the schemes in the same genre announced by Telangana and Odisha (farmers' organisations have described the Rs 6,000 promised as a 'pittance'), but also there is nothing in the Budget to address the condition of tenant farmers and agricultural labourers who form the core of rural poverty. Additionally, there is no attempt to address the market inefficiencies which have led to farmers not getting a proper price. The main reason for not announcing things that really matter in addressing rural distress (income support is no substitute for adequate market prices) is that the NDA government does not have a sense of the farm crisis. It woke up to the issue once farmers' demonstrations hit the streets.

As for the job crisis, when the issue of the missing jobs that were promised first began to surface in public debate, it was argued that the jobs were there, but the numbers that say so were hard to find. Now we know that the report of a nationwide statistical exercise, which found unemployment at a historical high, has simply not been released.

George Orwell, in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, depicting a dystopia fashioned in the light of the excesses of the Soviet Union under Stalin, spoke of people who disappeared being 'unpersoned'. In India, we are seeing official statistics being 'unnumbered'. Again, negative statistics cannot be suppressed beyond a point. When the truth is out, the government of the day, after the next elections, will have to come to terms with it and pay for the populist sins of the political class across the board.

## Poor me, don't pour that drink...

LAKHINDER JIT SINGH VOHRA

AP MP Bhagwant Mann put alcohol right, left, front and centre in our drawing rooms, chilled with guilt and drowned with apologies with a hangover of repentance. Better late than never. Alcoholism is a progressive disease of the mind, an allergy of the body, and a spiritual malady.

The first step in overcoming an alcohol addiction is admitting being powerless and that life has become unmanageable.

I am a recovered alcoholic. My date of sobriety, as it is called in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), is the last time I took a drink — November 24, 2013. I distinctly remember

the time and place where I was, when I consciously put the glass down saying enough is enough. My body simply could not take the two or three double Patiala pegs of Double Black Johnnie Walker on the rocks every night. I am sure that if I had not stopped, like many others we hear or know, I would have been dead by now.

A big part of alcoholism, which we often lose sight of, is the people in your life, who aid and abet — the enablers. It could be a coterie of so-called well-wishers, the freely flowing booze at political fundraisers, weddings, bootleg brands behind closed doors, one-for-the-road Army brats. It could also be family members who turn a blind eye and

never acknowledge a drinking problem, or show tough love so the alcoholic gets help. Mann, in a brave act, had showed

up with his mother and announced that he was giving up. But for many alcoholics, the cause of drinking is deep-rooted in family and early childhood trauma, lack of an emotional connection with parents or siblings, or family pressures that justify an escape to solitude and drinking.

However, faith in the Almighty; seeking professional help, such as a mental health professional; staying away from booze-filled occasions; clearing out the liquor cabinet... is more tough than half-admitting at a political rally

that you are promising to quit, even though you claim you do not have a drinking problem. In India, you have to be half-apolo-

getic and give many explanations to near and dear ones why you stopped drinking or how bad the drinking problem had gotten! You are made to feel guilty even for quitting! What most people do not realise is that an alcoholic has to say no to the first drink because like most other normal drinkers, once he takes the first drink, he is powerless to say 'no'. For him, one is too many and one thousand is never enough.

Hope Mann was not trying to draw sympathy in the election season.

Like they say in recovery — poor me, pour me a drink.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Can't take them for a ride Apropos the editorial 'A poll-centric

Budget' (Feb 2), the government's attempt to overwhelm the electorate with a multiplicity of schemes through the interim Budget is a clear manifestation of the realisation that citizens cannot be taken for a ride by merely hyphenating words in a juxtaposition disguised as reforms. It can mock the Opposition for its unenthusiastic response and inability to comprehend the heavy usage of economic jargon, but cannot shy away from the fact that the shadow of the underlying agrarian crisis and uncertainty over job creation falls squarely on its proposals. However, the fact that India stands out as the sixth largest economy, despite tumultuous international developments and radical domestic policy, shows that the macroeconomic stability continues to be the foundation of India's economic success.

SHREYANS JAIN, NEW DELHI

## **Crude bid for votes**

Apropos 'A poll-centric Budget' (Feb 2), why did the government take so long to announce and implement these long-awaited welfare measures? These should have been initiated by the NDA dispensation in its very first Budget. At this late stage, it has all

makings of a crude attempt to placate various classes of the electorate. It is neither here nor there, as these measures will come into operation only when the final Budget is passed, by which time, the new government might well be holding the reins of power. The meagre amount proposed for farmers is humiliating. The nation might witness yet another episode of the 'Shining India' fiasco.

MK BAJAJ, ZIRAKPUR

MK BAJAJ, ZIRAKPUF

## No benefit in real terms

The proposed schemes in the interim Budget for the poor and tax incentives to the middle class will not benefit these groups in real terms. It is just a populist scheme ahead of the general election. The government should rather raise the expenditure in the health and education sectors by giving more scholarships and medical facilities at cheaper rates, respectively, which can't be availed by the poor with the Rs 6,000 annual dole. Cash benefits can be given to the workforce that can't go to the labour market, like pensions to the elderly, widows and the disabled. The best solution to poverty is enabling citizens to earn livelihood by pro-

viding quality jobs. **AMANDEEP SINGH DHILLON, BATHINDA** 

## **CM Window ineffective**

by the Haryana Government is nothing but a hoax, as complaints are not taken seriously. A complainant is informed about the receipt of the application, but is not contacted. After a few days, officers of the department concerned send an action-taken report, but no action is taken on the ground. Then, data is published in newspapers, giving the number of complaints received and complaints resolved, which is fallacious.

YOGINDER SINGHAL, KURUKSHETRA

## Obsession with religion

Refer to 'Mirroring Pakistan's obsession with religion' (Jan 26); the writer has blamed Hindus in truncated India for 'obsession with religion in public affairs'. Hindus of all shades, Sikhs and Buddhists have always suffered at the hands of Muslims, not only in the past, but in the present too. The country is only 75 per cent of the India before 1947. The rest has become the homeland for Muslim population, from Pakistan and Bangladesh, where Hindus and non-Muslims have no place, and have been reduced from 25% in 1947 to 1%, and 30% to 7%, respectively. The writer has shown victims as accused, and accused as victims. Such persons are having full

freedom only in truncated India to condemn people of their own country.

ANAND PRAKASH MADAAN, PANCHKULA

## Let all pitch in

Every working person above 18 years of age and under 60 years should contribute Rs 50 per month to build schools, hospitals, etc., and their maintenance. Imagine the amount raised on a monthly basis. Let us do something and create ourselves also something for our coming generations, instead of gifting them with air, water and land pollution. Why do we always complain that the government is doing nothing? We can also share some responsibility directly. Now, please don't say we are paying taxes. It is not enough.

ARUNJIT S BUTALIA, FEROZEPUR CANTT

## Action needed

Reference to 'IAF moots action against two officers over Pathankot attack' (Jan 31); the Chief of the Air Staff has taken strict action and must be appreciated for turning this into a lesson for other senior officers. Top commanders accept awards with open hands, they should digest reprimands, too.

VISHAL SAPEHIA, KANGRA

Letters to the Editor, typed in double space, should not exceed the 200-word limit. These should be cogently written and can be sent by **e-mail to: Letters@tribunemail.com** 

**OPED** The Tribune CHANDIGARH | MONDAY | 4 FEBRUARY 2019

# Ensure women get equal share of party ticket



**PREM CHOWDHRY** 

AUTHOR AND ACADEMIC, DELHI UNIVERSITY

HERE are only 11.8 per cent women members in the current Lok Sabha and 9 per cent in the state Assemblies — with Mizoram and Nagaland having none. In contrast, India's neighbours Nepal and Bangladesh have 32.8 and 20 per cent representation of women, respectively, in their Legislative Parliament, according to the 'Women in Politics 2017 map' brought out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women. India ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of

women in Parliament. There is a rising demand from the National Association for Women's Reservation Bill and other organisations that the NDA government bring in this long-awaited Bill. This is also a reminder to the BJP-led dispensation that it is obliged to fulfil its election promise of 50 per cent reservation, not 33 per cent, for women. Before this demand could be addressed, the BJP's attention got diverted to the passage of the Bill to provide quota to the poor upper castes — 10 per cent reservation in jobs and education to the economically poorer sections of society in the general category. The BJP's justification was that the government was attempting to build consensus among the political

parties for the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill. The participation of women is crucially related to political consciousness and political activism and also to their involvement in the decisionmaking process.

#### 'Most delayed Bill'

The Women's Reservation Bill or The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill is one of the longest pending legislations in Parliament. It has been introduced in Parliament several times since 1996, but its status remains undecided primarily due to lack of political consensus. Dr Ranjana Kumari, Director at the Centre for Social Research, has rightly called it "the most delayed Bill in the history of India".

However, the politicians have increased their outreach to women, having recognised that women's participation and work in political parties is becoming more crucial to the success of the party, especially in getting female votes. Three largest parties in India — the BJP, the Congress and the Communist Party of India — have fully functional women's wings, namely the Mahila Morcha (BJP), the All India Mahila Congress and the National Federation of Indian Women (CPI). This involvement of women in political parties has been instrumental in their increasingly articulated demand for equal rights and participation in decision-making.

#### Flawed arguments

This demand has hardly evoked enthusiasm from male politicians. The main argument against the Bill, voiced by several male MPs, is that



**LAGGARD:** India ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament.

Significant indicators of the status of women in society are political participation and their say in the decision-making bodies. Women's dream of being equal citizens remains unfulfilled.

it would benefit only women from the privileged strata of society, so it is advocated that there should be 33 per cent reservation within the women's category for those belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes; now, we may add 10 per cent from the general category as well. It is further pointed out that the Bill would only help female relatives of current politicians to enter public space and thereby defeat the purpose of the Bill. According to

them, women in modern India do not need reservation. Reservation, if need be, should only be at the level of distribution of the party ticket. Although it is acknowledged that nepotism exists, it exists regardless of gender. Most male politicians are relatives of others or the ticket is distributed on the basis of caste and community considerations.

It is also claimed that women are not winnable candidates. However, Tara Krishnaswamy, a civic activist and convener of an initiative to

bring more women into electoral politics, has quoted the Election Commission's statistics about women candidates winning at a rate 3 to 20 per cent greater than that of their male counterparts.

#### **Fresh perspective**

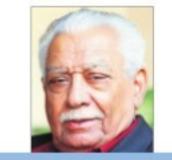
Women bring a fresh perspective to policy-making because of their being rooted firmly in the family structure and having experienced discrimination and injustice from childhood itself. Numerous articles on panchayats show that women leaders prioritise health, education and sanitation and deliver better projects with less corruption.

A UN study of more than 4,000 Assembly constituencies from 1992 to 2012 showed that women-led constituencies experienced 15 per cent more economic growth and contributed 1.8 per cent more per year to the GDP. In terms of qualification also, 53 per cent of the women candidates in India are graduates as against 48 per cent men.

The Indian republic had started its journey with the ideals of liberty, equality and justice. The significant indicators of the status of women in society are political participation and say in the decisionmaking bodies. Women's dream of being equal citizens, however, remains unfulfilled.

If women are not included in the political process, it may result in politics reflecting only the male perspective. It may also lead to the allocation of resources and decisions which may not be in the best interest of women. It is high time we rectify this anomaly and make women equal partners in nation-building.

# Soldiers need user-friendly system to cast vote



LT GEN VIJAY OBEROI (RETD) FORMER VICE CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF

The major impediment to soldiers casting their vote is that the Election Commission of India has classified them in a new category called 'service voters', while others are called 'ordinary residents'.

The result is that only a minuscule number of serving military personnel vote and even their votes rarely reach in time for counting.

N the eve of Republic Day, President Ram Nath Kovind, in his address to the nation, urged all Indians to cast their vote as a 'sacred act'. Perhaps the President, who is also the Commanderin-Chief of the Armed Forces, is unaware that most serving military personnel do not vote!

Indian democracy has been remiss in providing serving military personnel a proper set-up for casting their vote. Consequently, the 14 lakh armed forces personnel and their approximately 10 lakh adult family members are unable to cast the ballot in any election. The present options for voting by them are impractical and not in sync with the spirit of the Constitution and the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

The major impediment to soldiers casting their vote is that the Election Commission of India (ECI) has classified them in a new category called 'service voters', while others are called 'ordinary residents'. The result is that only a minuscule number of serving military personnel vote and even their votes rarely reach in time for counting.

The ECI has given the 'service voter' three options. First, visit the constituency, which is a no-go option as no commanding officer can give leave of absence to the bulk of his command at a particular time.

The second option is postal ballot. It is hoped that it will reach within the tight time frame available to a voter. There is no guarantee that the ballot will reach its destination in time to be counted.



**ANOMALY:** The Election Commission of India has failed to evolve a registration system for soldiers at their place of service.

The postal ballot was designed for service personnel posted overseas during World War II. Unfortunately, the ECI continued with the concept even after Independence, when the Indian military was stationed within the borders of the country. The only personnel abroad now are the few thousand serving in UN Missions; those posted in our embassies/High Commissions; and those undergoing military training. So, why should personnel serving in India be forced to vote through postal ballot?

The third option is proxy voting, which assumes that the soldier will first find out from his village/city who all and of which party are in the fray; thereafter, he will request someone to cast his vote and then send him his proxy vote, duly

**EASY** 

counter-signed by his commanding officer, with a request to cast it. Since time is at a premium, a proxy vote may meet the same fate as the postal ballot. In addition, extraneous factors of caste, creed, religion, unlawful inducements and vote-bank pressures may result in the soldier's vote being cast elsewhere without his knowledge.

None of the three options are really workable. They were probably formulated for the following reasons: First, our political leadership did not give much thought to voting by serving military personnel after Independence. Second, without any visible push from the political leadership or the military hierarchy, the ECI and the bureaucracy were blasé about changing it, although it was their duty

to ensure that all eligible adults take part in the electoral process.

Third, our military hierarchy is so wedded to the word 'apolitical', which was and continues to be an article of faith with the military, that they convinced themselves, naively, that voting by serving personnel would mean that the armed forces had become 'political'. This was a result of not fully understanding the meaning of being 'apolitical'. An individual, a group or an institution gets politicised when they align themselves to a political leader/party and then toe its line. Being aware of political events and/or voting does not make one 'political'.

Another reason cited is that 'security' will get diluted as candidates and political parties will want to enter military installations for canvassing. This again is an excuse dished out without application of mind. Many methodologies are available to overcome these impediments. In any case, now that the Defence Minister has opened all cantonments to the public, where is the problem?

In 1971, the Supreme Court had ruled that 'service qualification' cannot take away the 'right to be registered at the place of service, if residing there'. However, the ECI has failed to evolve a registration system for soldiers at their place of service. Despite these lacunae, bold military leaders who understood the importance of serving personnel casting their votes had successfully ensured that personnel under their command were accepted as 'ordinary residents' and did vote in the elections. Two cases come readily to mind — 2008 (Uttar Pradesh) and 2014 (Punjab). In both cases, voting by serving military personnel at their place of posting went without a hitch. Yet, there has been a clampdown later for no understandable reason.

The major reason why political parties do not want serving soldiers to vote at their place of posting as 'ordinary residents' is their strong conviction that their 'vote bank' calculations will go awry, as soldiers are an unknown category, neither influenced by promises nor by doles and freebies. They vote as per their conscience.

When soldiers opt for voting at the place of their posting, the infirmities highlighted get removed. Administrative problems, such as the quantum of access to be given to candidates for canvassing, keeping in view security aspects, non-obstruction of training schedules and daily routine of the soldiers and related issues are resolvable in consultation with local officials of the ECI. In our cantonments, we do have the Cantonment Board elections and these are conducted smoothly, without disrupting the routine in the station.

Before the coming General Election, it must be the endeavour of the ECI and the military hierarchy to ensure that all military personnel as well as eligible adults in their families are registered as 'ordinary residents' at their places of posting so that they can cast their vote. Let the three Chiefs show the way by immediately registering as 'ordinary residents' at their place of residence (New Delhi). The rest of the defence forces will follow suit.

**FORECAST** 

## **QUICK CROSSWORD**

## SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

Straight, 15 Bravado, 17 Heroic, 20 Learn, 21 Stem.

Across: 1 First strike, 9 Explain, 10 Ranch, 11 Onyx, 12 Wayfarer, 14 Debate, 16 Tended, 18 Unawares, 19 Slog, 22 Slang, 23 Outface, 24 Forthcoming. **Down:** 2 Imply, 3 Sway, 4 Sundae, 5 Rarefied, 6 Kindred, 7 Second-guess, 8 Third degree, 13

- **ACROSS** 1 Prevent from speaking (7)
- 4 To quibble (5) Wander (4)
- 8 Throw doubt upon (8) 10 Firearms smuggling (10)
- 12 Of one's own accord (6) 13 Large fish-eating bird (6)
- 15 An exile (10) 18 High praise (8)
- 19 Search minutely (4) 20 South Arabian

#### country (5) 21 Useful hint (7)

#### **DOWN** 1 Gesture of

- indifference (5) 2 Fragrant plant (8)
- 3 Of horses (6) 4 US Mafia (4,6) 5 Unavailing (4)
- 6 Protracted (7) 9 US white supremacists (2,4,4)
- 11 An escape from jail (8)
- 12 Far-fetched notion (7) 14 Short of money
- 16 A glowing fragment (5) 17 Swindle (4)

## 9 6 3 3 5 6 6 5 4 8 4 6 4

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## CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 4, 2019 MONDAY					
■ Vikrami Samvat	2075				
■ Shaka Samvat	1940				
■ Magh Shaka	15				
■ Magh Parvishte	22				
■ Hijari	1440				

- Krishan Paksh Tithi 15, up to 2.34 am
- Sidhi Yoga up to 7.58 am ■ Shravan Nakshatra up to 6.01 am
- Moon in Capricorn sign

■ Ama	awas							
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#### MONDAY 18:00 HRS **TUESDAY** 07:12 HRS **Partly Cloudy Cloudy** CITY MAX | MIN 22 11 Chandigarh 80 New Delhi 21 PUNJAB 21 08 Amritsar 07 0 19 Bathinda 09 21 0 Jalandhar Ludhiana 22 10 0 HARYANA 20 11 Bhiwani 0 18 10 Hisar 0 19 80 Sirsa HIMACHAL PRADESH Dharamsala 14 0 04 -03 0 Manali 11 Shimla 13 04 O JAMMU & KASHMIR 20 80 Jammu Leh 01 -11 06 01 3 Srinagar UTTARAKHAND Dehradun 24 08 0 03 Mussoorie 14 O

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