



## Tough-talking

India must ensure it's not cut out of the resolution process with the Taliban

The Taliban reconciliation process is moving at a faster pace than was anticipated. Talks facilitated by Russia in Moscow this week, with mainstream Afghan politicians sitting around the table with Taliban leaders, are similar in their approach to the recent U.S.-Taliban talks in Qatar, though the two are rival processes. The U.S. and Russia have accepted the idea that peace in Afghanistan is not possible without major concessions to the Taliban, including dialogue without insisting on a cessation of violence. In the duration of the Moscow conference alone, Taliban fighters killed 47 security forces personnel in attacks in Kunduz, Baghlan and Samangan provinces. The U.S. and Russia have, in separate processes, agreed to sidestep the Ashraf Ghani regime in Kabul, and accepted the Taliban's condition that it will not negotiate with the elected Afghan government at this stage. And both the Russian and U.S. processes are dependent on cooperation from Pakistan, which retains its influence over the Taliban leadership. Clearly, the current talks with the Taliban are not within the "red lines" agreed to by all stakeholders in the past: they are not Afghan-led, owned or controlled, and the Taliban has not abjured violence, or sworn allegiance to the Afghan constitution before joining talks.

However, despite the deep and obvious misgivings in New Delhi, it would be pointless to ignore or reject the outcomes of the talks, where some progress has been made. The U.S. has managed to bring senior Taliban leaders to the table, and is discussing the contours of its ultimate withdrawal from the Afghan war. The Taliban has unequivocally renounced ties with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, and committed to preventing Afghan soil from being used by foreign terrorists. For its part, Russia has hosted conferences where Taliban leaders sat down with members of the Afghan High Peace Council and senior Afghan politicians, including some contesting in this year's presidential elections. While India's principled position that it will not directly or publicly talk to the Taliban until it engages the Afghan government remains valid, it is necessary that India stays abreast of all negotiations and isn't cut out of the resolution process. It is hoped that a robust channel is open between Indian intelligence agencies and all important groups in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, in order to ensure that Indian interests, development projects and citizens are kept secure. New Delhi must intensify its dialogue with regional and global stakeholders, and impress upon them that any dialogue with the Taliban must not come at the cost of the hard-fought victories of the Afghan people in the past two decades: on establishing constitutional democracy and the rule of law, and securing the rights of women and minorities.

## Checks and balance

Seeking a count of 50% of VVPAT slips is too much: the focus should be on ending glitches

In a significant and welcome change from their earlier demand for a return to paper ballots, representatives of a large section of the mainstream Opposition parties met the Election Commission (ECI) to demand changes to the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail counting process during the general elections. Returning to paper ballots will be regressive. The Electronic Voting Machine process, despite the plethora of grievances about its functioning from the Opposition parties, is a major improvement over paper-based voting. There has been no evidence of EVM-tampering as claimed by some parties, and administrative and technical safeguards instituted by the ECI and EVM manufacturers have held steady since the introduction of the EVM. Despite this, the ECI had fast-tracked the implementation of the VVPAT, an adjunct to the EVM that allows for a paper trail for voting and later verification of the electronically registered mandate in the ballot unit of the EVM. VVPATs are now deployed in all Assembly and parliamentary elections with EVMs. This implementation has not been without some misgivings. The Opposition's demand for a count of 50% of the VVPAT slips, as opposed to the current system of counting VVPAT slips in one randomly selected booth of each constituency, is aimed at ensuring that EVMs have not been tampered with. ECI safeguards are robust enough to prevent this, but VVPAT recounts could eliminate any remaining doubt about possible "insider fraud" by errant officials or manufacturers.

While the demand to count half of all the slips is an over-reaction, as a scientifically and randomly chosen sample of booths is a reasonable enough verification for the process, there remains the question whether counting one booth per constituency is a statistically significant sample to rule out errors. A more robust sampling technique that factors in the average size of the electorate in any constituency for each State and voter turnout, involving the counting of more than a single booth in some States, may be a better method. The ECI's response that it is waiting for a report on this from the Indian Statistical Institute should be encouraging. The other issue with the VVPAT is more significant: machine glitches. During the parliamentary by-elections in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and Assembly elections in Karnataka in 2018, VVPAT glitches resulted in machine replacement rates rising to 20% and 4%, respectively. Glitches in the VVPAT machines were largely due to spooling issues in the print unit, which was sensitive to extreme weather. Some hardware-related changes were introduced, which improved its functioning in the recent elections in five States. Machine replacement rates due to VVPAT failures came down to 1.89% for Chhattisgarh. Deployment of improved machines should help curb glitches in the Lok Sabha elections.

# Ayodhya and the challenge to equality

The Ram temple issue remains a metaphor for Muslim disenfranchisement



SUKUMAR MURALIDHARAN

In elections to three State Assemblies of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh late last year, candidates of the Muslim faith won 11 of the 520 seats in play. That would seem a modest tally, by no means evidence of disproportionate political influence. The myth of a pampered minority, though, refuses to die. On the campaign trail last November, Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the Congress party of pressuring Supreme Court judges, on pain of impeachment, to delay a final decision on the Ayodhya title suit. The charge stems from a lineage of propaganda invented by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which holds the Congress guilty of the cynical politics of Muslim appeasement.

Secularism in India has been variously characterised, though few of these have done justice to the vigour with which the issue was debated in the Constituent Assembly. In the aftermath of Partition, seen as the outcome of the community-based template of political competition introduced under British rule, secularism was an article of faith across the ideological spectrum, though only in a limited definition as a seamless sense of national identity.

**A superfluity**  
Minority representation was discussed at length and set aside as a superfluity. There was no case for assured representation on communal lines, since the guarantees of equality before the law and access to public services and employment would ensure fair out-

comes for all.

Ananthasayanam Ayyangar put it thus, addressing an interlocutor from the minority community in the Constituent Assembly: "I am a Hindu and if you allow me to represent you, I will come to you at least every four (sic) years. Similarly a Muslim man can come to Hindus. Ultimately, we will all come together." For Sardar Patel, the possibility of both separate communal electorates and assured representation was unthinkable, no less than an incentive for certain citizens to "exclude" themselves and "remain perpetually in a minority".

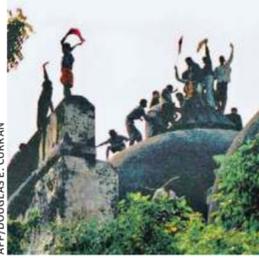
Equality embraced the right to be different, though not a difference in rights. Exceptions would be granted only where classes of citizens were known to have suffered a deficit of social and cultural capital on account of discrimination through history. The construct of a "minority" segued into a notion of social and educational backwardness, remediable over generations through procedures of affirmative action.

These were formulations steeped in unwitting upper caste privilege, a sense that the Constituent Assembly – elected on a very narrow franchise and voided of its more eloquent minority spokespersons by Partition – spoke for a true nationalism at risk of dilution by sectarian demands.

### A narrower identity

In the real world of dislocation and trauma, Partition witnessed a number of local vigilante efforts to inscribe a narrower identity on the incipient nation. The surreptitious introduction of idols into the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, where a dispute over building rights on an adjacent site had simmered since the late 19th century, was one such act, though by no means the only one.

It is on record that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wrote insis-



AP/DOUGLASE CURRAN

tently to the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh at the time, Govind Ballabh Pant, insisting that the idols smuggled into the Babri Masjid should be removed. Less known is his suggestion in a 1949 letter to the Minister, Mehr Chand Khanna, of a wider problem involving the expropriation of a number of Muslim places of worship.

Nehru's insistence on the reversal of these intrusions gradually receded from the attention span of governments at the State and local levels. Ayodhya, like numerous other incidents from the time, would have faded into the distant recesses of memory had not the politics of waning upper caste hegemony and the decline of the Congress provided occasion for it to spark back to life.

If equality was a constitutional promise impossible to reconcile with upper caste hegemony, identity was a serviceable alternative. From about the 1980s, the seamless spirit of the Indian nation that was so much a concern of the Constituent Assembly, gave way, at least in electoral competition, to the construct of a nation of multiple identities, contending for influence over the whole.

### The U.P. strategy

From its birth in the 1980s, the Ayodhya campaign has been a metaphor for a minority faith's disenfranchisement. And nowhere is this story told more eloquently than in India's largest State, Uttar

Pradesh, where Muslims constitute over 19% of the total population, and hold a mere 24 seats in a 403 member Legislative Assembly. This tally from the 2017 election is the lowest since 1991, when Muslim representation in a somewhat larger State Assembly, prior to the hill districts being hived off, stood at 21.

That year, when the BJP first won power in U.P., marked the prelude to the climactic act of destruction at Ayodhya. But political energies were spent once the offending 16th century monument was effaced. The BJP was unable to mobilise the same fervour in elections that followed, never gaining a majority of its own till the sweep of 2017.

Analysis by the Trivedi Centre for Political Data, at Sonapat's Ashoka University, shows that the BJP's electoral strategy in U.P. was built on a 60 versus 40 calculation. With Muslims and two other caste groupings – Yadavs and Jatavs – making up roughly 40% of the State's electorate, the BJP strategy targeted the remaining 60%. Key to the BJP's sweep of the U.P. elections was its success in drawing in a critical mass of votes from strata that had reason to feel aggrieved at their exclusion from the dominant coalitions shaping politics post-Ayodhya.

### Too loose a standard

The endless turmoil caused by Ayodhya compels a reexamination of other fundamentals of the Constitution. Articles 27 and 28 have been read as reproducing, though in a weaker fashion, the guarantee of secular statecraft of the U.S. First Amendment, which prohibits the establishment of any religion by law.

Though the Indian state is enjoined to neutrality, religion is allowed an active role in the public sphere under Article 25, which assures every citizen the freedom to

"profess, practise and propagate" any faith.

By definition, every religion enters the fray with a claim to universality; no religion is willing to accept a domain of application limited in time and space. The unfettered exercise of Article 25 rights in this sense puts the general will at risk of being bent to a majoritarian assertion. The restraint of "public order" mandated by the Constitution is too loose a standard to prevent the intrusion into politics of religious majoritarianism.

In his recent book, *A People's Constitution*, Rohit De speaks of how in the early years of Indian independence, "electoral minorities", i.e., communities of caste and religion that were unlikely to "represent themselves through electoral democracy", were over-represented in litigation invoking the writ jurisdiction of newly established constitutional courts. Clearly, the Ayodhya petition claiming the restitution of a monument commandeered in the name of another faith was one such instance.

With electoral compulsions now acquiring increasing urgency, the BJP government has demanded that the Supreme Court unfetter a large part of the land held in trust pending a final settlement of the case. Party spokesmen have also mused aloud about issuing an ordinance as an act of executive will to preempt an adverse judicial finding. This attempt to dismantle the last remaining restraint to the majoritarian will is sure to fuel a new fervour in the upcoming general election, putting further pressure on the institutions of governance and challenging their capacity to uphold constitutional integrity.

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# Trump and his generals

For all their discord, no one appears to know how to manage chaos at a time of U.S. retreat



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

Not even U.S. President Donald Trump's worst enemies would deny that he has fulfilled many election campaign foreign policy promises, including opting out of international agreements on climate change, the Iran nuclear accord and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the relocation of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, and pressuring allies to pay more for joint defence. A matter for surprise then, is that another Trump campaign pledge, to end the 'endless wars' and bring American troops abroad back home, specifically to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria and Afghanistan, is met with denunciation and open or indirect obstruction from both civilian and military circles.

### The opposition within

This opposition, marked by some high-level resignations such as Secretary of Defence James Mattis – which have been accorded hero-martyr status by the media – has been provoked by Mr. Trump's decision to repatriate some 2,000 forces from Syria and around 7,000, which is around half the total number, from Afghanistan. Mr. Trump's moves are condemned as

isolationist and favouring the 'enemies' of the U.S., especially Russia and Iran. Regarding Afghanistan, his opposition was not astute enough to perceive that the draw-down was a necessary prelude to direct negotiations with the Taliban. The objectors also imply that Israel is exposed to greater danger, a cause certain to enjoy bi-partisan favour. General Mattis, in his resignation letter, wrote he was leaving "because you have the right to have a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours." It is amazing that it took him two years to detect any misalignment.

No proposal to draw down the U.S. military presence abroad will be acceptable to Mr. Trump's critics, because the American military-industrial complex referenced by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1961 still holds the civilian authority in thrall, and since World War I, U.S. foreign policy has been totally militarised. To every international problem, Washington has only two responses: the application of sanctions, and the threat or use of force.

Mr. Trump is vilified as isolationist by the mainstream media, evidence that the neo-imperial spirit and god-given right to hold military hegemony is deeply internalised in the entire U.S. establishment. So also is the Francis Fukuyama prediction that "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution [is the] universalisation of Western liberal democracy as



the final form of human government." Insinuations about a self-lout foreshadow whatever contact Mr. Trump wishes to make with the only world power that can incinerate the U.S., though every previous U.S. leader held talks with his Russian counterpart to make the world a safer place. This has less to do with Special Counsel Robert Mueller's interminable inquiry about Russian collusion, and more with the imagining of America's role in the world. The *New York Times* writes of a "world order that the U.S. has led for 73 years since the Second World War", accusing Mr. Trump of reducing that "global footprint needed to keep that order together". The same theme is dutifully echoed by compliant European allies such as Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel, who in July 2018 bewailed that under Mr. Trump the U.S. could not be relied upon to "impose order". But whose order?

Mr. Trump is wrong in asserting that the U.S. destroyed the Islamic

State (IS) in Syria, not only because there are some remnants of it left, but because while U.S.-coalition aircraft have dropped ordnance from several thousand feet and killed innumerable civilians in the process, the actual fighting against the IS has been done by Kurds in northeast Syria, and the Assad government, Russians, Iranians and Hezbollah elsewhere. The small U.S. contingent of about 2,000 serves to train and supply the Kurds, constrain the Turks and obstruct progress towards a peace settlement. As elsewhere, the Americans are ready to fight till the last local soldier. Mr. Trump has the support of Congress, media and the military on a tough line on Iran – again, a campaign promise – but in West Asia, Mr. Trump outsources local action to allies such as Saudi Arabia, turning a blind eye to its criminal activities in Yemen and also the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

In the process of demonising Mr. Trump, accountability, responsibility and civilian oversight are discarded, while people in uniform and in the shadows – the ubiquitous U.S. intelligence services – are raised on lofty pedestals, encouraging dissidence. To no surprise, Mr. Trump's announcements have resulted in a flurry of alarmist reactions. As demanded by the media and Congress, the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration cancelled meetings with its Russian counterpart, and an end to U.S.-Russia col-

laboration in space appears probable. The Pentagon now reports that China seeks expansion by "military and non-military means" and military bases in Pakistan, Cambodia, and elsewhere that the American public have never heard of. The Pentagon concludes that China is "developing the capacity to dissuade, deter, and defeat a potential third-party [read, U.S.] intervention in regional conflicts". With a second summit between Mr. Trump and North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un in the offing, the media is predictably cautioning against any reduction of U.S. forces in South Korea as a result of any U.S.-North Korean détente, with head of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, weighing in to predict that China "probably poses the greatest threat to our nation by about 2025".

### Last word with Iran

The last word rests with Iran, regarded as an enemy by both Mr. Trump and his domestic adversaries. When U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed in January that "when America retreats, chaos often follows", Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif countered by tweeting, "Whenever and wherever US interferes, chaos, repression, and resentment follow." No one in the United States is listening.

*Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign Secretary*

## 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.

### Implementing the NRC

The ground realities as far as implementation of the National Register of Citizens in Assam are concerned – and that have been pointed out in the article, "A national register of exclusion (Editorial page, February 6) – are alarming. As usual, this is yet another instance by those in charge implementing an important policy decision without adequate preparation. In a country where corruption is rampant and elementary government work goes unsupervised, the sorry plight of those affected in Assam will only be prolonged unless the government quickly introduces a more refined and civilised way of compiling the NRC (Page 1,

"Home Ministry is trying to 'destroy' NRC process, says SC", February 6).

SRUTHI BABU,  
Thiruvananthapuram

■ Although the Supreme Court of India is supervising the NRC exercise, it does not appear that the issues of local identity and its authentication process are being addressed. A closer look at the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill and the NRC exercise reveals the potential to take away the political rights of the Scheduled Tribes of Assam, which is guaranteed in the Sixth Schedule – in particular, land rights. Rather than implementing Clause 6 of the Assam Accord and the provisions of the Sixth Schedule in letter and

spirit, the ruling party, both at the State and Central levels, appears to be playing the card of identity and religious politics only to garner votes. The Central government must rectify procedural complexities through necessary institutional arrangements to enable a smooth NRC exercise that does not exclude the citizenship rights of local people.

NAYAKARA VEERESHA,  
Bengaluru

### Bullet train route

It is sad to read about the clearance given to the 'bullet train' project between Mumbai and Ahmedabad which will lead to wildlife sanctuaries being affected (Page 1, "Bullet train gets green light via flamingo

haven, national park", February 6). Can development be at the cost of wildlife which is already suffering because of alarming human development? It is ironic that while we are well aware of the need for more power to be given to programmes such as "Save the Tiger" and other wildlife campaigns, we clear, without second thoughts, mega-projects that are detrimental to the eco-system. One only hopes that good sense prevails and alternative routes are found.

VARGHESE GEORGE,  
Secunderabad

■ Being a prestigious project that was initiated by none other than the Prime Minister, it is quite obvious that the ministries

concerned are on a fast-tracking approval spree just before the general election. One is not sure how far compensatory afforestation or site restoration proposals would prove effective in maintaining the ecological balance. Under the guise of development, India's forest lands are being encroached upon with impunity, leaving many species in distress. It is also disputable whether the bullet train project will be cost effective and completed in time, given the right of way issues that would surface from time to time.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai

### Team West Indies

There are several reasons behind the gradual decline of West Indies cricket ("Sport

page, "When West Indies do well, the world rejoices", February 6). With the retirement of some of the greatest cricketers names in the early 1990s, countries in the West Indies opted for athletics as their chosen field. The subsequent years too were mired in issues regarding payment due to a paucity of funds with the cricket board. As pointed out, the disharmony and clash of egos have also exacerbated the decline. There has only been mediocrity in the available pool of cricketers. It is only natural that rebuilding the side has been an extremely time-consuming process.

V. LAKSHMANAN,  
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

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# We need a leap in healthcare spending

India needs to focus on long-term investment, not only episodes of care



T.S. RAVIKUMAR  
& GEORGI ABRAHAM



GETTY IMAGES/STOCK PHOTO

The Central and State governments have introduced several innovations in the healthcare sector in recent times, in line with India's relentless pursuit of reforms. However, while the government's goal is to increase public health spending to 2.5% of GDP, health spending is only 1.15-1.5% of GDP. To reach its target, the government should increase funding for health by 20-25% every year for the next five years or more.

While the Interim Budget is responsive to the needs of farmers and the middle class, it does not adequately respond to the needs of the health sector. The total allocation to healthcare is ₹61,398 crore. While this is an increase of ₹7,000 crore from the previous Budget, there is no net increase since the total amount is 2.2% of the Budget, the same as the previous Budget. The increase roughly equates the ₹6,400 crore allocated for implementation of the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY).

## Per capita spending on health

According to the National Health Profile of 2018, public per capita expenditure on health increased from ₹621 in 2009-10 to ₹1,112 in 2015-16. These are the latest official numbers available, although in 2018 the amount may have risen to about ₹1,500. This amounts to about \$20, or about \$100 when adjusted for purchasing power parity. Despite the doubling of per capita expenditure on health over six years, the figure is still abysmal.

To understand why, let's compare this with other countries. The U.S. spends \$10,224 per capita on healthcare per year (2017 data). A comparison between two large democracies is telling: the U.S.'s health expenditure is 18% of GDP, while India's is still under 1.5%. In Budget terms, of the U.S. Federal Budget of \$4.4 trillion, spending on Medicare and Medicaid amount to \$1.04 trillion, which is 23.5% of the Budget. Federal Budget spending per capita on health in

the U.S. is therefore \$3,150 (\$1.04 trillion/330 million, the population).

In India, allocation for healthcare is merely 2.2% of the Budget. Per capita spending on health in the Budget in India is ₹458 (₹61,398 crore/134 crore, which is the population). (Medicare and Medicaid come under 'mandatory spending' along with social security.) Adjusting for purchasing power parity, this is about \$30 – one-hundredth of the U.S.

Admittedly, this runaway healthcare cost in the U.S. is not to be emulated, since comparable developed countries spend half as much per capita as the U.S. Yet, the \$4,000-\$5,000 per capita spending in other OECD countries is not comparable with India's dismal per capita health expenditure. The rate of growth in U.S. expenditure has slowed in the last decade, in line with other comparable nations.

The ₹6,400 crore allocation to Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY in the Interim Budget will help reduce out-of-pocket expenditure on health, which is at a massive 67%. This notwithstanding, per capita Budget expenditure on health in India is among the lowest in the world. This requires immediate attention.

## Health and wellness centres

Last year, it was announced that nearly 1.5 lakh health and wellness centres would be set up under Ayushman Bharat. The mandate of these centres is preventive health, screening, and community-based management of basic health problems. The mandate should include health education and holistic well-

ness integrating modern medicine with traditional Indian medicine.

Both communicable disease containment as well as non-communicable disease programmes should be included. An estimated ₹250 crore has been allocated for setting up health and wellness centres under the National Urban Health Mission. Under the National Rural Health Mission, ₹1,350 crore has been allocated for the same. The non-communicable diseases programme of the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke has been allocated ₹175 crore, from ₹275 crore. Allocation to the National Tobacco Control Programme and Drug De-addiction Programme is only ₹65 crore, a decrease of ₹2 crore. The allocation for each of the wellness centres is less than ₹1 lakh per year. This is a meagre amount.

History shows that where there is long-term commitment and resource allocation, rich return on investment is possible. For instance, AIIMS, New Delhi is the premier health institute in India with a brand value because of resource allocation over decades. AIIMS Delhi alone has been allocated nearly ₹3,600 crore in the Interim Budget, which is a 20% increase from last year. Similar allocation over the long term is needed in priority areas.

## Prevention and its link to GDP

NITI Aayog has proposed higher taxes on tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food in order to revamp the public and preventive health system. This has not found its way into the Interim Budget. A focused approach in ad-

ding tax on tobacco and alcohol, to fund non-communicable disease prevention strategies at health and wellness centres, should be considered. Cancer screening and prevention are not covered. There is no resource allocation for preventive oncology, diabetes and hypertension. Prevention of chronic kidney disease, which affects 15-17% of the population, is not appropriately addressed. The progressive nature of asymptomatic chronic kidney disease leads to enormous social and economic burden for the community at large, in terms of burgeoning dialysis and transplant costs which will only see an exponential rise in the next decade and will not be sustainable unless we reduce chronic kidney disease incidence and prevalence through screening and prevention.

Due to lack of focus in preventive oncology in India, over 70% of cancers are diagnosed in stages III or IV. The reverse is true in developed countries. Consequently, the cure rate is low, the death rate is high, and treatment of advanced cancer costs three-four times more than treatment of early cancer. The standard health insurance policies cover cancer but only part of the treatment cost. As a consequence, either out-of-pocket expenditure goes up or patients drop out of treatment.

Increase of GDP alone does not guarantee health, since there is no direct correlation between GDP and health outcomes. However, improvement in health does relate positively to GDP, since a healthy workforce contributes to productivity. We don't mean to say that funding must be redirected from current allocations to preventive care. The 1,354 packages for various procedures in PMJAY must be linked to quality. For various diseases, allocation should be realigned for disease management over a defined time period, not merely for episodes of care. Further, the health sector must be made a priority area, like defence. Since a major innovation in universal healthcare is being rolled out, it must be matched with a quantum leap in funding. Only if we invest more for the long-term health of the nation will there be a similar rise in GDP.

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# At the cost of quality

The decision to provide financial rewards for publication in science journals and patents is fraught with problems



R. PRASAD

On January 30, a little more than four years after the last hike, the Ministry of Science and Technology increased the fellowship stipend for PhD students by nearly 25%. The government says the hike will be reviewed periodically. Since the increase is far less than the 80% hike that research fellows have been demanding for the last six months, they have decided to continue with their protests. The government is also planning to provide "financial and academic incentives to enhance and recognise the performance of research fellows", for which an Inter-Ministerial Empowered Committee has been set up. Excerpts of the Committee's recommendations, tweeted by the Department of Science and Technology on February 2, provide a glimpse of the financial rewards to be given for publication and patents. While the modalities are yet to be worked out, offering financial rewards for publication is a bad idea.

## Cause for concern

Giving rewards based on papers published in journals, and determining the incentive based on whether the paper is published in an international or Indian journal, is fraught with problems. In China, for example, researchers were given about \$44,000 in 2016 for a single paper published in prestigious journals such as *Nature* and *Science*. The impact factor (a proxy for the relative importance of a journal) of journals was used to calculate the prize money for publication. This led to an unprecedented increase in unethical research practices and frauds committed by Chinese researchers. This could also happen in India, which already has an ignominious record in this area and has no nodal body to address scientific frauds and unethical practices.

In India, a one-time financial reward of ₹50,000 and ₹20,000 has been recommended for a paper published in an international and Indian journal, respectively. This is a "hare-brained scheme," says P. Balaram, former director of the Indian Institute of Science and former editor of *Current Science*. "Whoever has come up with this is ignorant of the history of scientific publishing. They will destroy research (with this scheme)." It is worth remembering that though the University Grants Commission's

intent to introduce Academic Performance Indicators was good, APIs were largely responsible for the spike in predatory journals published from India. There is little guarantee that the reward system based on publication will not lead to further erosion in the quality of science research in India.

In addition, giving greater rewards for publication in international journals makes no sense as international journals are not uniformly superior in quality to Indian ones. While *Nature*, *Science*, *Cell* and *The Lancet* are prestigious, there are many journals which are of poor quality. Similarly, some Indian journals are better than international ones despite having a low impact factor.

"If average or below average papers are submitted to Indian journals, the overall quality of the journals will be low compared with international titles," says Professor Balaram. By giving 60% lower stipend to students publishing in Indian journals, the government will unwittingly be widening the gap between Indian and international journals, which will be self-destructive in the long run.

Also, "Indian science suffers from deep-rooted, structural problems – fellowships get delayed and project funding is not released on time," says Gautam Menon, a computational biologist at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai. He argues that "the government should reward good research with generous funding and fewer constraints." With hundreds of papers being published each year, it is debatable whether the government will be able to provide incentives given that research labs have reportedly been facing a fund crunch of late.

## Reward for patents

The proposal to provide students an incentive of ₹1,00,000 on obtaining a patent (Indian or international) is a bigger recipe for disaster. While obtaining a patent is not difficult, it costs ₹10,000-₹30,000 to file a patent in India. Drafting the patent costs an additional ₹50,000 and there is also an annual renewal fee. Also, not all patents translate into products. The Science Ministry has not learnt from the mistakes of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). In late 2016, the CSIR instructed its 38 labs to stop indiscriminate filing of Indian and foreign patents. Then CSIR Director-General Girish Sahni had said that a "majority of patents are 'biodata' patents" and had been "filed for the sake of filing without any techno-commercial and legal evaluation". In such a scenario, a financial incentive for patent-filing will only exacerbate the problem.

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## SINGLE FILE

# A worrying approach

Will Ayushman Bharat hurt the spirit of cooperative federalism?

SUJATHA RAO



With West Bengal, Telangana, Delhi and Odisha not joining Ayushman Bharat, the question arises whether the scheme is hurting the idea of cooperative federalism. The Seventh Schedule of the Constitution makes States responsible for hospital services. The States have their own

schemes to provide financial risk protection to those seeking medical relief. Based on the ongoing centrally sponsored scheme, the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, the Central government launched an improved version in 2018 called the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) for a sum assured of ₹5 lakh per family per year.

The insistence to prefix Ayushman Bharat to existing State names and the despatch of a personalised letter to 7.5 crore families with only the Prime Minister's photograph were seen as attempts to attribute the entire credit to the current administration, though State governments are equal partners – funding 40% of the scheme, bearing the responsibility of its implementation and covering double the number of beneficiaries.

Given that the Central government transfers funds to States through the Finance Commission, Central Sector Schemes and the Centrally Sponsored Schemes, it is expected of the National Health Agency (NHA) to build an institutional architecture, standardise procedures, costs and access all data for effective monitoring. This is important as it is accountable to Parliament and the Comptroller and Auditor General for the proper utilisation of allocated funds. But such standardisation can stifle innovation and entail costly structures that may not accommodate local conditions, preferences, and cost-effective solutions. Instead, when funds are provided, subject to achieving certain goals, States have scope to innovate, model the design to fit their context, resource base, epidemiological status, level of development, take total ownership and be accountable for outcomes.

The NHA's approach does not appear to be built on consensus. Its model consists of outsourcing the vital functions of pricing services, pre-authorisations, scrutiny of bills, grievance redressal, and fraud detection to private companies and third-party administrators. This may increase administrative costs from the current 6% to 30%, as seen in the Medicare scheme of the U.S.

Besides, the policy of providing fiscal incentives to the private sector to establish hospitals in deficit areas without insulating government-owned facilities or the small and marginal hospitals that together provide 95% of hospital care will tighten the grip of corporates on secondary and tertiary markets. This will result in cost escalations – more so because of the rapid consolidation and aggregation of tertiary hospitals by foreign financial conglomerates and private equity funding agencies, impacting prices, access to tertiary care and the very sustainability of the NHPS.

The writer is a former Union Secretary at the Ministry of Health, Government of India, and author of 'Do We Care? India's Health System'



## FAQ

# Pension for informal sector workers

The government has allocated only ₹500 crore for the scheme

T.C.A. SHARAD RAGHAVAN

## What is the scheme?

A major announcement in the Interim Budget 2019-20 was the creation of the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan, a pension scheme for informal workers. Under this scheme, subscribers will receive an assured monthly pension of ₹3,000 per month from the age of 60 onwards. Towards this, they will have to contribute ₹55 a month (if they join at the age of 18 years), or ₹100 a month (if they join at the age of 29 years). The government will match these contributions. The government has reportedly set a cap on the age of joining at 40 years, but this is yet to be officially confirmed by the Labour Ministry.

## Whom does it include?

In his Budget speech, Finance Minister Piyush Goyal said half of India's GDP comes from the work

done by 42 crore workers in the unorganised sector, such as street vendors, rickshaw pullers, construction workers, rag pickers, agricultural workers, beedi workers, those engaged in the handloom and leather industries, and domestic workers. He said the government must provide these workers with a "comprehensive social security coverage" in their old age. The Shram Yogi Mandhan scheme is aimed at achieving that, and therefore includes all informal sector workers with an income of less than ₹15,000 per month. According to the government, this works out to 10 crore people.

Finance Ministry officials have suggested that the pension payouts could be made directly in the workers' accounts, which would be Aadhaar-linked.

## What will the government spend?

So far, the government has

allocated just ₹500 crore for the scheme, but this is likely to be increased in the full Budget that will be presented in July. An analysis of the Interim Budget documents shows that the allocation for the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan could possibly come at the expense of an existing pension scheme – the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) – announced last year to benefit more than three crore poor senior citizens, disabled people, and widows.

The NSAP had originally been allocated ₹9,975 crore in the 2018-19 Budget, which was reduced to ₹9,200 crore in the Interim Budget 2019-20, which is a drop of ₹775 crore.

## Will the scheme work?

Social sector workers have pointed out that creating a voluntary contributory pension scheme for informal sector workers is not likely to work as their salar-

ies are low. The argument is that they already pay large amounts as indirect taxes.

Further, for a salaried worker, the pension contribution can be cut from the salary. A daily wage earner or migrant labourer will, however, have to regularly deposit her income each month, which is an uncertain proposition.

## What lies ahead?

The government is silent on what happens to the scheme if an informal sector worker misses a contribution. Does the worker become disqualified from the scheme? If so, what happens to the amount already contributed? Will the government refund the worker that amount, or will that amount be forfeited? Another matter to be considered is what happens to a worker who transitions to the formal workforce. Answers are awaited on all these questions.

## FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 7, 1969

# 130 million tonne food target for Fourth Plan

The Planning Commission has accepted a food production target of 130 to 132 million tonnes by the end of the Fourth Plan. This target has been projected on the basis of a 100-million tonne potential this year. The production targets suggested for the major cash crops along with their estimated base-level production this year are: Oilseeds 10.90 million tonnes (8.90), sugarcane (gur) 15 million tonnes (12.50), cotton 8 million bales (6), jute 7.40 million bales (6.20), and tobacco 445 million kg. (345). While an annual growth rate of five per cent has been postulated for agriculture as a whole, the growth rate for foodgrains works out to 5.7 per cent. This is proposed to be achieved by continuing the intensive agricultural strategy.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 7, 1919

# Sir R. Tagore. Visit to Coimbatore.

Sir Rabindranath Tagore and Mr. C.F. Andrews arrived [in Coimbatore] by mail train from Ootacamund yesterday [February 5]. At the railway station a large gathering of Indian gentlemen of all shades of opinion and of standing assembled and accorded a fitting welcome. Rao Bahadur A.T. Tiruvengadasami Mudaliar, a much respected leader, as President, and Mr. K.S. Vaithianatha Aiyar, M.A., the Principal of the College and Secretary to the Reception Committee, received the world famous poet. Those prominent on the platform were Messrs. Sambanda Mudaliar, Municipal Chairman, C.S. Ratnasabapathy Mudaliar, non-official President, Taluk Board, Kollandavelu Pillay, leader of the local Brahma Samajam, Kirk Theosophical Education Trust, Miss Noble, Superintendent, Maranagaundens Free Girls School, Puniacoti Mudaliar, founder, Sri Sarada Free Girls' School, Rao Saheb Ramaswami Sivan, Secretary, National Indian Association, Rai Bahadur M. Rangachariar, Mr. K.V. Srinivasar and others.

## CONCEPTUAL

# Liquidity premium

FINANCE

Also known as the illiquidity premium, this refers to the additional return that an investor can earn from any investment that cannot be immediately liquidated for cash in the market. Risk-averse investors generally try to avoid investing in highly illiquid assets like real estate due to the time it takes to sell these assets. This causes successful investors in illiquid assets to earn a much higher return than other investors who prefer to invest only in highly liquid assets. By the same logic, since most investors would be willing to invest in highly liquid assets, the returns from such investments generally turn out to be lower than the returns from illiquid investments.

## MORE ON THE WEB

Music, a companion that knows how to soothe

<http://bit.ly/2DeOTN8>

# Opinion

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2019



## FACULTY RESERVATION

Prakash Javadekar, Union HRD minister

We are confident there will be justice and reservation will continue as per the earlier system. The government will ensure that reservation for SC/ST/OBC is not hampered

## Jubilant does a U-turn, but why was it so greedy first?

Given Domino's pizzas sell on the basis of the US firm's name and not Jubilant's, asking for a royalty was absurd

**WHAT EXACTLY CAUSED** the promoters of the Jubilant group to change their minds on the payment of a royalty fee to them by the group companies for use of the Jubilant brand is not clear. Tuesday's initial proposal, which envisaged the three group companies paying 0.25% of the annual consolidated revenues to a promoter holding company as royalty for the Jubilant brand, was withdrawn late in the evening. It is clear as daylight that Jubilant Foodworks' pizzas sell because they're sold as Domino's pizzas and the doughnuts as Dunkin' Donuts. The company is already paying them a royalty and justifiably so. There can be no conceivable reason to charge royalty for the Jubilant name.

Indeed, the growing trend by which promoters are attempting to pull out money from their companies, on one pretext or another, is disconcerting. Since many of these proposals are seen to be initiated 'in the ordinary course of business' they are not put to vote as special resolutions. However, since they are related party transactions and not part of the 'ordinary course of business', these proposals should be voted on only by minority shareholders. Unfortunately, the directors of the boards of most Indian companies appear to be willing to go along with the promoters even on proposals that are clearly unfair to small shareholders. For all the talk on improving corporate governance, going by the events of the last year, little is happening on the ground. Recently, in the case of Apollo Tyres, the board raised no objections to the managing director's re-appointment even though the remuneration was very high. It was only after minority shareholders voted against the resolution that the board decided to seek an independent view on the remuneration.

Again, the board of IL&FS clearly failed to do its job else the company would not have piled up the kind of debt that it has and would not be defaulting on its loans. Indeed, had the many nominees of banks and other institutional shareholders, as also independent directors, been more responsible, we wouldn't have seen so many companies going bankrupt. The list of companies where the directors have failed to red-flag problems is long—Ranbaxy, Fortis, Suzlon, to name a few. The trouble with corporate India and its many directors is that few are willing to stand up and call out errant promoters for fear of becoming unpopular. The sitting fees are far too lucrative to give up especially when one does not have a full-time job. There is little point in clamping down by way of rules and regulations because promoters seem to know exactly how to get around them. Again, there is little point in having more board meetings or capping the number of boards on which an individual can be a director unless directors want to improve corporate governance.

If Indian promoters, like those of Jubilant, want to charge royalties or brand fees, they need to invest in R&D, but few do. Indeed, even though it is very clear that several foreign brands and their technology—like Suzuki, for instance—are driving the sales of Indian firms, every now and then the government attempts to cap royalty payments by MNCs despite their having spent billions of dollars on developing technology and new products. This newspaper has argued that the outflows are not large. In 2017-18, the royalty and technical fees paid out by the Indian arms of a clutch of 30 MNCs were flat compared with the outgo in 2016-17 while the combined profits before tax of these arms grew 15%. Local businessmen need to build brands and invest in R&D and earn royalties the right way.

## Getting real about jobs

Low competitiveness depresses hiring of regular workers

**WHILE THE CONTROVERSY** over whether employment in the country has not just risen slowly but has even contracted rages on—thanks to a leaked NSSO report in *Business Standard*—it is important to focus on the role of bad policy, including everything that discourages faster growth of labour-intensive exports of the type that countries like Vietnam and Bangladesh have seen. This includes the high cost of capital and poor infrastructure like electricity and expensive office/factory space and time/cost of shipments. Bangladesh's total exports, for instance, grew by 82% in 2010-16 and Vietnam's 145% versus just 17% for India. And while India's overall exports fared poorly—they rose from \$179 billion in 2010 to \$304 billion in 2018—not only have non-oil imports risen faster, those from China have soared. In the same period, overall imports rose from \$288 billion to \$466 billion and Chinese imports from \$31 billion to \$76 billion; rising imports, in turn, restrict local employment.

And there is, then, the elephant in the room, the role of bad labour policy that prevents flexibility like that of hire-and-fire—after paying due compensation—and even overtime and puts a floor to wage levels that are not in keeping with India's competitiveness; unless India is in a position to effectively stop imports via smuggling, India's productivity-adjusted labour and other costs have to be comparable with those in competitor countries like China, Vietnam and Bangladesh if local manufacturing and jobs are not to be hit.

A new study by Radhicka Kapoor and PP Krishnapriya at ICRER examines the rise of contract labour in India's already small organised sector. While total employment in the manufacturing sector was just around 50 million of India's total workforce of around 450 million, the share of the unorganised sector within this was as high as 72% in FY16. And, as the study found, the share of contract workers in total employment increased sharply from 15.5% in FY01 to 27.9% in FY16, while the share of directly hired workers fell from 61.2% to 50.4%; at 8.4%, the growth of contract employment has outstripped the growth of regular employment at 3.2% over the last decade. While the traditional view has been that states which have more rigid labour laws, and industries that are more labour-intensive, tend to use more contract labour, the study found that this wasn't necessarily true. So, while the share of contract workers rose in states like West Bengal and Maharashtra that have unfriendly labour laws, the same had happened in states like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka that have better laws. And while the share of contract workers in the leather/handbag/footwear industry rose from 19% to 23% between FY01 and FY14, that in the automobile sector rose from 14% to 46%. And since this growing contractualisation is taking place despite contract wages rising faster than regular ones, the study concludes that contractualisation is a way to keep costs down as well as restrict the bargaining powers of trade unions while imparting flexibility to hiring and firing. So, while politicians may want to raise minimum wages, or raise them for contract workers, if this makes the industry uncompetitive, this will restrict employment growth.

## Mining Equality

Allowing increased participation of women in mining is a good move, govt should work towards allowing full participation

**GLOBALLY, THE VALUE-BASED,** economic and development imperatives for gender equality and women's economic empowerment are well-established. Mining is a sector which has the potential to be a key driver of economic growth, development and job creation in many developing countries. Yet, while mining has been traditionally been male-dominated across the world—a 2013 report by Women in Mining (UK) and PricewaterhouseCoopers stated that the mining industry has the lowest number of women on company boards of any industry group worldwide—India actually had laws that placed several restrictions on women working in the sector. The Mines Act 1952 expressly forbade the employment of women in underground mines, and allowed them to work in above-ground mines only between 6 am and 7 pm.

Now, however, the labour ministry has amended the rules to allow women to work in underground mines during the day and in open cast mines round the clock. Even so, the yoke of discriminatory labour laws is not fully lifted—women in underground mining can only occupy "technical, supervisory and managerial" positions. While this may help mining engineers—only in 2016 did IIT-Indian School of Mines Dhanbad, the premier mining engineering institute in the country, allow female students into the mining engineering problems—it doesn't help the blue-collar women workers in mining regions. However, with a start being made, the likelihood of further change to allow women miners has gone up. As per the last round of the Annual Employment-Unemployment Survey (EUS), conducted by the Labour Bureau in the year FY16, the worker population ratio (WPR) for females aged 15 years and above was 21.7% as compared to the male WPR of 72.1%. Allowing women to work in the mining sector bodes well for curbing gender disparity and boosting equal opportunities for women.

## INFLATION EXPECTATIONS

AS THE OUTPUT GAP CLOSES, WAGES WILL START RISING IN RURAL AREAS AS WELL. THIS WILL PUT PRESSURE ON FOOD INFLATION FROM BOTH THE DEMAND AND SUPPLY SIDE

# CPI will start rising to around 5% in a year

**WHEN HEADLINE AND** core inflation diverge so sharply—as is the case in India at the moment—the key question is which eventually converges to which? Does headline eventually converge to core? Or does core converge to headline? With India's headline inflation below 3% and core inflation at almost 6%, the directionality of convergence matters crucially and will determine the outlook of inflation and monetary policy in 2019. There are good theoretical reasons, a priori, for the directionality to run either way. If core inflation were to begin asymptoting towards that, markets will start pricing in an easing cycle. In contrast, if headline inflation starts converging to core inflation, talk of rate hikes will be back on the table. The purpose of this piece is not necessarily to ask why food inflation has decelerated so much. Or what sticky core inflation is telling us about output gaps. It is simply to use India's inflation history to ask a narrower, more technical, question. What does past data tell us? Does headline inflation eventually converge to core? Or does core revert to headline?

To answer this question, the standard approach followed by Cecchetti and Moessner (2008) and Anand, Ding and Tulin (2014) is utilised and monthly CPI inflation data (year-on-year growth rates) commencing in 2002 is used. In the baseline data, CPI-IW (industrial workers) is used because that enables a longer time series. Then, running the same analysis using the new CPI combined series starting in 2011, the results don't change. For CPI-IW, core inflation is defined as headline adjusted for food and fuel. A finer dis-

## SAJJID Z CHINYOY & TOSHI JAIN

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inction is not available due to data constraints. In the case of CPI combined, core is defined as headline adjusted for food, fuel, housing, and transport or communication.

The tests that have been run suggest that, in the 2002-2012 period, shocks to food and fuel were either persistent and/or had meaningful second round effects, thereby impacting core inflation. The transmission mechanism was likely through inflation expectations, which subsequently affected wage and price behaviour and eventually impacted core prices. Over time, therefore, core converged to headline. The important role that shocks to food and fuel played in influencing household inflation expectations, and thereby subsequently seeping into core inflation, underpinned the Urjit Patel Committee's choice of headline inflation as the inflation target. Interestingly, however, these results completely turn on their head over the last few years. In other words, over the last 5 years, headline inflation has converged to core, though not completely. To check that convergence has indeed changed over time—and is not an artifact of the chosen time periods—a series of rolling regressions for both equations across sub-samples was run. The results depict that, a decade ago, it was core that used to converge to headline, but over time, headline has progressively

converged to core.

The results are both decisive and robust to (i) the choice of CPI series (CPI-IW versus CPI combined) and (ii) different definition of core inflation. But how should one make sense of these results? Prima facie, it points to the evolving role of inflation expectations. To the extent that inflation expectations were elevated and unanchored—as was the case between 2009 and 2014—it is unsurprising that shocks to food and fuel would quickly translate into a more generalised inflation through wage and price-setting behaviour. In other words, second-round effects were large, inducing core to converge to headline. However, given the adaptive nature of inflation expectations, the sharp disinflation in recent years has likely caused expectations to both moderate (visible in RBI's household surveys) and get more anchored. The implication is that second round effects are much more muted, and shocks to food and fuel prices do not propagate as strongly into core inflation. Correspondingly, core inflation is relatively more responsive to slack. In other words, transitory shocks do not get generalised as completely or as quickly. Against this backdrop, it is understandable why headline eventually converges to core inflation, ultimately reflecting underlying slack. This also perhaps explains why food infla-

tion has seen such a sharp deceleration in the last few years and yet core has remained relatively sticky.

What these results suggest is the headline inflation—expected to be in the 3% handle in the near future—will eventually start converging, over a 12-month period, towards core inflation which is currently running above 5%. If this were to come to pass, space for any monetary policy easing cycle—notwithstanding a one-off rate cut in February or April this year—would virtually evaporate. How would the economic transmission occur, though? It would have to be through wage dynamics. Specifically, as output gaps close, wages would be expected to rise, eventually also translating into higher rural wages, which would be expected to pressure food inflation from both the demand and supply side. Real rural wages have already begun to tick-up, though largely reflecting the disinflation in the rural economy. Expansive fiscal policy—that both expedites the closing of output gaps and targets stimulus to the rural economy to push up wages and food prices—would simply reinforce and accelerate these dynamics. If these results hold, any monetary easing in early 2019, is likely to be transient and shallow.

It is also possible that, one can look at these results and draw the wrong conclusion. If headline inflation converges to core, should RBI target core inflation instead, as developed market central banks do? Why target headline? Reaching this conclusion, however, is fraught with risk. As has been previously found, inflation expectations in India are both adaptive and rational. Consequently, the transition to the inflation targeting framework has also played a role in anchoring expectations and, therefore, de facto contributed to shocks to food and fuel having less pronounced second round effects. In effect, therefore, headline inflation gradually asymptoting to core—and not the other way around—is perhaps the best testimony to the growing efficacy of flexible inflation targeting in India. Any backsliding from there runs the risk of causing expectations to get unhinged again, and for transitory shocks to get more generalised again.



## City-level data to boost governance

Changes in the way Indians consume data have yielded a deep base of personal information, from applications such as Ola and Swiggy, and insights drawn from this base can potentially solve some of the most complex and tangled governance issues

## DEVASHISH DHAR

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**THE APPROACH** to solve issues through a national level analysis perished long time ago in India. Following its demise, state-level and regional analysis informed decisions on reforming governance and growth. The state-level analysis focused on wide ranging indicators such as education and health, economic growth, job creation, police force, rainfall and agriculture output, service-level benchmarks, amongst many others.

This was followed by incessant state-level studies and investment summits. Essentially, states became the fundamental unit of analysis for improving growth and development in India. However, between 2014-16, something changed in how Indians consumed data. The new government launched the Digital India programme which focused on increasing internet connectivity and provisioning of government services.

At the same time, disruptions in telecom industry yielded exponential benefits and smartphone sales continued to clock robust growth. Apps such as Netflix, Hotstar, Amazon Prime, Saavn, Gaana, and Flipkart, amongst others, fuelled the growth in data consumption and literally speak volumes about preferences of music, movies, web-series and shopping at the pin code level. Uber and Ola provide insights on traffic at road level and have already begun to assist city governments in delivering insights on traffic movements. All this builds over the behemoth of digital infrastructure—Aadhaar, payment banks, Uni-

fied Payments Interface (UPI) and India Stack.

With this solid foundation, Indian cities are in an extremely sweet spot to disrupt governance and growth in cities. NITI Aayog's *Strategy for New India@75* document outlines strategies that can help cities leverage this opportunity. Under the section, 'Modernizing City Governance for Urban Transformation', it proposes to boost city economy by creating city economic councils and tracking key economic indicators through a city dashboard. Imagine if city dashboards and economic councils have representatives and data of the private companies mentioned above. The synergies can be enormous.

Given that this is a new terrain for city governments, the document also discusses developing model municipal talent and in/outourcing guidelines to leverage efficiencies generated by technology and outsourcing. For governance, it takes a bold stance by suggesting that ward committees and area *sabhas* should be activated with a technology enabled 'Open Cities Framework' and the use of digital tools for feedback and reporting.

Under the section, 'Smart Cities for Urban Transformation', the document argues for institutionalising cities' capacities to draw benefits from city-level data. It proposes the creation of digital transformation roadmaps for cities which can take a systems approach to all digital interactions in a city, while mapping all assets and using them for key governance activ-

ities such as grievance redressal, participatory budgeting, transparent works management, and contractor payments.

It also proposes to create data observatories at city level which will help in policymaking. The highlights of such data observatories will include flexible architecture, open-source accessibility and ensuring the privacy of citizens. If implemented, these policies will empower Indian cities to unbox the benefits of data which is generated within their geographical territories.

Use of technology reduces transaction costs. Initially, the returns are slow but as you accumulate knowledge (and data), the returns are compounding in nature and, after a threshold level, they become exponential. They build over the existing data and insights drawn from this wide and deep base can potentially solve some of the most complex and tangled issues of our times.

It took India close to five decades to move from a pan-India focus and one-size-fits-all approach to a state- and regional-level focus. But in less than two decades thereafter, the focus has shifted to cities. Once the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment gets fully implemented, it will be a matter of few years for the best practices of city-level innovations to be replicated and scaled across other cities. Thus, it is neither too optimistic nor too romantic to believe that city-level data will provide next the wave of disruption in governance and growth.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Coalition digging its heels in

The Congress-JD(S) coalition in Karnataka appears to be digging its heels in by adopting self-protection measures on the eve of the budget session of the legislature. Despite state BJP president BS Yeddyurappa denying any attempt to topple the government, the coalition is sparing no efforts to be on guard. Yeddyurappa also denied that there were no efforts to table a no-confidence motion against the government. But with the saffron party capable of pulling the rug from under the feet of the coalition and springing a surprise, the government would do well to keep Yeddy and company at bay  
— Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

### Market high

With the budget out of the way, and consumer-friendly public welfare initiatives expected to run till the General Elections, markets are showing signs of resilience and are pricing-in the likely outcome of key national/global events. Regulators have done well so far to infuse liquidity in the commodity/derivative segment and enforce stringent measures to monitor trade sessions. Although a large influx of capital by foreign funds is welcome, it is important that long-term holdings by institutional investors be encouraged over speculative trading. A balanced macroeconomic strategy and stable leading indicators are the need of the hour. Business-friendly regulations on fund raising and hedging of risks can reduce the cost of borrowings, render a higher liquidity and curtail forex outflow  
— Girish Lalwani, Delhi

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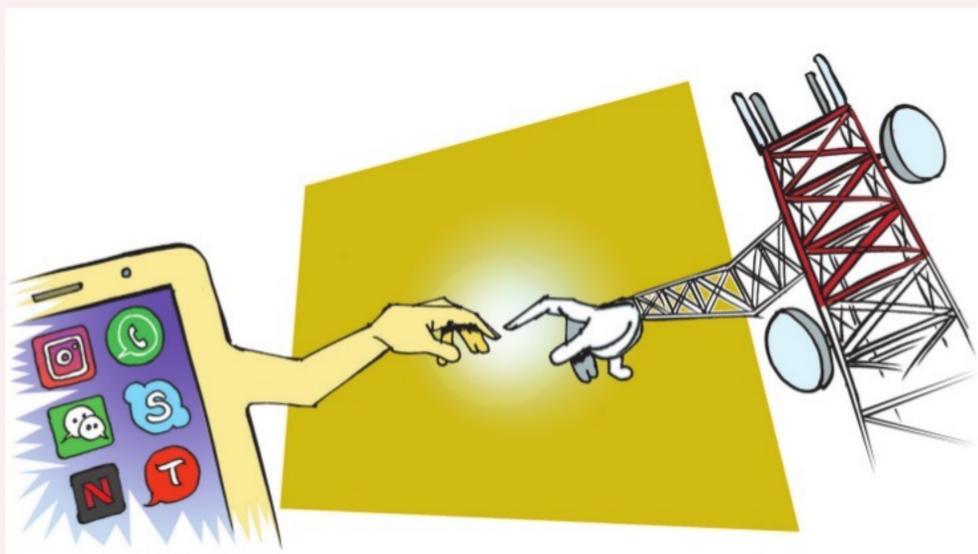


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

transfer of signs, signals..." (Sec.3.1AA). The Act's communication of 'message' is as "any communication sent by telegraph..." (Sec.3.3). Again, the key term 'telegraph' comes into focus when Sec.4 clearly stipulates that "...the Central Government shall have exclusive privilege of establishing, maintaining and working telegraphs."

It is obvious from the above that OTT, which is essentially an internet-based app and not owning or working telegraph as defined in the Telegraph Act, cannot be governed by that Act. Moreover, it is universally accepted to be under the Information Technology Act, 2000. Thus, it is incorrect to project any Telegraph Act requirement on to OTTs.

**Dissimilar circumstances between RIAs (OTTs) and TSPs:** Indisputably, the 'level-playing field' or 'same service, same rules' issue arises between parties only if they are placed in similar circumstances. But are OTTs and TSPs in similar circumstances? The answer is a resounding "no!"

TSPs enjoy several exclusive rights that include (1) the right to interference-free spectrum, (2) the right to numbering resources, (3) the right to interconnect with PSTN, and (4) the right of way to set up infrastructure. Apart from these invaluable rights, TSPs are also permitted to offer a vast basket of monetisable services. RIAs/OTTs have none of these precious rights and privileges. For example, OTTs enjoy no exclusive right to deploy their applications whereas TSPs can, and often do, provide their own OTT applications.

When OTT players neither have these privileges nor own network or control the access to infrastructure, how can they be licensed? OTTs are not substitutes of TSPs, but are dependent on them. In fact, going further, OTTs drive the exponential data growth in telecom networks providing large data revenues to telcos themselves.

**Security aspects to consider:** There are concerns expressed by a few quarters about the dynamic end-to-end encryption service of OTTs. Eliminating this is to attack the very foundation of these unique services—and our fundamental right to privacy provided by the Supreme Court. Any weakening of this aspect could kill the product and seriously harm modern commerce, communication, productivity and the right to privacy.

**The role of the regulator is to be progressive as in the past and accelerate our digital future:** For a fair resolution of the issue of TSPs versus OTTs, the role of the regulator is of paramount importance. Thanks to TRAI and policy-makers in the past, the original reform of Indian telecom did proceed in the right direction.

Similarly, if full support is extended by TRAI to RIAs (OTTs) and they are allowed a free play of innovative services, India could literally jump several higher orbits of digital excellence for decades to come.

TRAI has time and again demonstrated its visionary outlook to reforms and can be depended on to lead India down the right path again. However, TRAI is neither obliged to protect the revenues of incumbents nor shield them against disruptive innovations, but is expected to ensure healthy growth of the overall sector. Due to various legacy reasons, there are certain issues that are stifling the industry currently. The regulator should lead the charge to separately remedy these aspects urgently.

We are at an all-important juncture when the digital tide is at its flood and could lead on to fortune; omitted, it would surely take us to shallows and miseries.

## TV RAMACHANDRAN

The author is honorary fellow of IET (London) and an independent ICT consultant. Views are personal



### ● OTTs vs TSPs

# It takes two to tango

Why telcos and OTTs need to band together to drive our digital future; OTTs are powerfully driving data usage and revenue growth for telcos—one cannot exist without the other

incumbent created massive challenges by denial/delay in interconnection points, imposition of 'killer tariff' for PSTN (public switched telephone network) to mobile calls, and other hurdles. The fledgling cellular industry would have suffered a prenatal demise had it not been for the unfailing support of the newly-created TRAI, headed by Justice SS Sodhi.

**OTT is a gross misnomer. Service is a rich contributor to the economy:** OTT refers to media streamed over the internet. Unfortunately, the term suggests a negative and incorrect connotation of 'free riding'. RIA (Rich Interactive Application) is a more appropriate description of the services provided.

OTT or RIA platforms are rich in content and have a median number of as much as 8-9 functions. They have revolutionised every facet of daily life—whether ordering a taxi, or food, getting medicine, communicating through social media and video content, improving business productivity, and much more.

The benefits to GDP growth and personal life enhancement are enormous and quantified by expert bodies like ICRIER and WIK. The German expert agency, WIK, found a high annual consumer surplus contribution of \$98 billion or ₹7 lakh crore in 2017 based on a consumer study. An average of \$249 is nearly ₹18,000 consumer surplus annually. The reality is that the benefit is increasing exponentially every day. OTTs are powerfully driving data usage and revenue growth for telcos. One cannot exist without the other.

Unfortunately, there are many misconceptions about RIA/OTT apps—promoted by misunderstanding and by specific vested interests. To term the heavily-beneficial RIAs as OTTs is tantamount to stating that 'the entire internet is 'over the top' of telecom data networks—a patently absurd proposition!

**OTTs and telcos cannot have a level playing field; 'same service, same rules' does not apply:** One of the biggest misconceptions floating around is about a so-called 'level-playing field' requirement between TSPs and OTTs. It is a well-settled legal maxim that, for fair competition, only persons or entities placed in similar circumstances are entitled to be provided similar or non-discriminatory treatment. In certain quarters, this is wrongly applied to demand that OTTs be subjected to licensing and stifling regulatory conditions and levies.

Let's look at the facts

**The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, vis-à-vis RIAs/OTTs:** Experts opine that the Telegraph Act is most fundamentally based on the definition of 'telegraph' as "any appliance, instrument material or apparatus used or capable of use for

achievement warrant a far more nurturing treatment of this significant sector than they have experienced till now.

However, it is regretful that these very offspring of liberalisation seem to have forgotten their origins and are displaying an unfortunate incumbent mindset by opposing new technologies and services like OTT, reminding us of the great lament: "There is no remembrance of the former generations." (Ecclesiastes 1:11)

**As new entrants and challengers, telcos gained much from progressive policies:** In India, till 1994, telecom was regarded a natural monopoly and the rightful preserve of the incumbent government operator, which was not even a separated BSNL, but the service wing of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). Liberalisation with privatisation was then introduced by bringing in cellular mobile telephone service as a disruptive service.

Cellular entrants were allowed to own networks and were awarded various rights and privileges. The incumbent was heavily opposed to the 'new kids on the block' who began offering competing telephone services on the move. The

**THE TELECOM REGULATORY Authority of India (TRAI) intends to announce recommendations for the treatment of over-the-top (OTT) service providers vis-à-vis telecommunications service providers (TSPs) before February-end.** This marks the end of four years of consultations, discussions and debates. With huge consumer interests and economic benefits to the nation at stake, we are in for interesting times.

**Incumbent TSPs continued significantly to Indian telecom:** The nation owes much to the private mobile operators who, in 1994, were new entrants to our market and blossomed to be the powerful telcos of today. These operators, as the flag-bearers of privatisation and liberalisation, placed Indian telecom prominently on the world map, and made India the envy of most other nations. They invested nearly ₹10 lakh crore over 25 years to create world-class digital infrastructure with affordable user tariffs—without subsidies or fiscal support by the government. The tremendous growth from this sector provided the government with massive cash inflows. These

**THE INTERIM BUDGET OF 2019-20, the last one of the government before the Lok Sabha polls, was always headed towards being populist in nature.** The interim finance minister, Piyush Goyal, started off on a very positive note, and proudly stated that the current government has prepared the foundation for sustainable growth, progress and better quality of life for all the Indians.

In his Budget speech, he also highlighted some of the key measures taken by the government over the past five years and the progress made, which ranged from steps taken against corruption, cleanliness, banking reforms and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, demonetisation and the drive to eliminate black money, and farmers' progress, to name a few.

From a tax perspective, finance minister Goyal highlighted a few important measures undertaken over the past five years, which included reduced tax rates (for the common man), reduction in tax burden on the middle class, interface with the tax department being made simpler and largely faceless (returns, assessments, refunds and queries are all handled online), special benefits and incentives provided to small businesses and startups, the overall compliance process being simplified, the benefit of presumptive taxation extended to small professionals, and the implementation of GST.

The direct benefits resulting from the

# A Budget for a 'new India'

Even though it was an Interim Budget, the vision laid out by the government is aspirational

## DINESH KANABAR

The author is CEO, Dhruva Advisors LLP

above have been increased tax collections from ₹6.38 lakh crore in 2013-14 to ₹12 lakh crore this year, and increased number of returns being filed with an 80% growth in the tax base. The implementation of GST has also resulted in an increased tax base, higher collections and ease of trade.

Goyal also mentioned that the government has approved a path-breaking, technology-intensive project to transform the tax department to be more assessee-friendly. The objective is to ensure all returns are processed within 24 hours and refunds issued simultaneously.

The Budget proposals focus on the middle-class taxpayer. Currently, a tax rebate of up to ₹2,500 is provided for individuals having taxable income up to ₹3,50,000. This threshold limit is now being proposed to be increased up to ₹12,500 for individuals having taxable income up to ₹5,00,000. Accordingly, an individual having taxable income up to ₹5,00,000 will not have to pay any tax. Further, the existing standard deduction for salary income has increased from ₹40,000 to ₹50,000.

From a house property perspective,



currently, the annual value (on a notional basis) of a second self-occupied house property is taxable in the hands of the owner. It is now proposed to provide relaxation on the second self-occupied property to owners. In other words, the notional rent on the second self-occupied property would not be chargeable to tax. However, the aggregate amount of deduction under house property on account of interest on borrowed capital, for both the houses, in aggregate shall not exceed ₹2,00,000.

In the past, capital gains arising from

transfer of long-term capital asset, being a residential house, shall be exempt if the assessee has purchased one residential house 1 year before or 2 years after the date of transfer or constructed one residential house within 3 years after the date of transfer. It is now proposed that, if the amount of capital gains does not exceed ₹2 crore, the assessee is given an option to purchase two residential houses or construct two residential houses (as compared to one house earlier). However, this option is available only once to the assessee.

With respect to claiming deduction

### ● PENSION REFORMS 2.0

# Moving beyond DB-DC trials

## SAKET HISHIKAR

The author is an economist in the banking sector. Views are personal

Why we need to think beyond defined benefits and defined contribution

**THE FIRST-GENERATION FINANCIAL** sector reforms completed 25 years in 2018. In contrast, pension reforms, which began with OASIS Report of 1999 and fructified after a Cabinet decision to create PFRDA in 2003, are recent reforms.

The state, under Article 41, Directive Principles of State Policy, is bound to facilitate provision of old-age income within the limits of economic capacity. This makes pension reforms very important, requiring long-term planning and periodic evaluation to minimise moral hazard. But Article 41 does not specify how the provisions for old-age income support should be organised, i.e. the pension system design and financial engineering, is a matter of policy choice.

Drawing from the theory of actuarial science, a pension fund can take two financial forms—defined benefit (DB) wherein final income drawn after a certain age is defined, and defined contribution (DC) wherein the amount contributed is specified but not how much can be drawn after a certain age. Both methods of pension funding have their pro and cons. While DB offers cover for longevity, DC offers more choices and flexibility under high labour mobility.

The organisation of pension system can also take two forms—the pay-as-you-go (PAYG) unfunded-type financed by tax revenues (directly through budgets or through a special trust) and fully-funded type financed through individual contributions. Depending upon the choices made, there are four possible ways a pension system can be organised.

At times, a pension fund can also have both DB-DC characteristics. The DB-DC type pension funds have both PAYG and individual contributions features. The Atal Pension Yojana (APY) and the new Pradhan Mantri Shram-Yogi Maandhan (PMSYM) fall in this category. Even the EPS 1995, managed by EPFO, is a DB-DC scheme. The exempted PFs are also treated as DC funds with DB characteristics under AS15. India's experiment with DB-DC is quite old. EPS was formed in 1995 by merging the Family Pension Scheme of 1971, much before adoption of NPS. But once PFRDA was formed, the conventional policy thinking of the time agreed that PAYG-DB was unviable and individually-funded DC was the best choice. As a matter of principle, pension policy accepted a separation between 'savings objective' and 'redistribution objective' of the government.

But two successive experiments in DB-DC type pension somehow suggest a departure from this principle, blurring the lines between the two.

Although these experiments are justified and within the scope of Article 41, they fail on long-term viability. The 'limits of economic capacity' have both short and long-term tradeoffs. In state-sponsored DB-DC pension, these tradeoffs will spread across generations.

Take EPS. The finances of EPS became unsustainable after five years of operation. Long-term simulation of funds using World Bank's software indicated unsustainable finances. Srivastava Committee 2009 suggested parametric reforms to balance the fund. The EPS example shows that DB-DC arrangements are difficult to manage over time.

More recent cases are interesting. APY was launched in 2015-16 as a universal pension scheme to address longevity risks among workers in unorganised sector. Now, PMSYM also covers the unorganised sector workers with monthly income up to ₹15,000. What is the rationale to carve out a new category of individuals in the unorganised sector when a universal scheme is already in operation in the same sector? How will this segment be identified because those earning up to ₹15,000 need not file income tax returns.

For the exact fund position of APY, one has to wait for actuarial valuation report, for which expression of interest was invited in July 2018. However, under APY, for an individual aged 30, to draw ₹3,000 monthly pension, the actuarially determined contribution is ₹347, which is three times what is promised under PMSYM for a similar benefit.

As India approaches 20 years of first-generation pension reforms, one has to ask how to evaluate the progress? On what basis should future policy be formulated? The trajectory of pension policy in India had very different conditions precedent in 1947. Neither had we the war-torn generation like the in Europe, which justified creating PAYG-DB plans, nor we had large-scale industrialisation that led to Anglo-Saxon model of employee-sponsored DC pension funds. Pension reform 2.0 must explore solutions that meet our needs.

**Pension reforms 2.0 must explore solutions that are conducive to our conditions**

in respect of profits and gains from affordable housing projects, the time limit for getting an approval from the competent authority has been extended to March 31, 2020.

To give impetus to the real estate sector, the annual value of the property that is held as stock in trade and is not let out shall be nil, for a period of 2 years from the end of the financial year in which the certificate of completion of construction of property is obtained (as against 1 year earlier).

From a year-holding tax perspective, threshold limits for applicability of tax deduction at source have been enhanced from ₹10,000 to ₹40,000 for interest on bank and post office deposits (the existing limit of ₹50,000 for senior citizens shall continue to apply). Further, from a withholding tax perspective for payment of rent, the limit has been enhanced from ₹1,80,000 to ₹2,40,000.

From a corporate tax perspective, the corporate base tax rate remains unchanged at 30%. For domestic companies with turnover in financial year 2017-18 not exceeding ₹250 crore, the tax rate remains unchanged at 25%. The rates of surcharge and cess shall also remain unchanged for financial year 2019-20.

All in all, given Budget proposals were far and few, while the fact that this was an Interim Budget, the overall progress achieved, and the vision laid out by the government, is aspirational.

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Square pegs, round holes

Possibly the most problematic aspect of evaluating the budget is the opaqueness of the underlying data



AMARTYA LAHIRI

WELCOME STEP BACK

Whatever be its motive, VHP lowering the Ayodhya heat opens up space for issues less polarising

FOR ONCE, THE Vishva Hindu Parishad is making news for holding back, not rushing forth. It will not agitate or mobilise for the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya for the next four months, or till Lok Sabha elections are over, it declared on Tuesday. The announcement is immensely welcome. It is also a retreat. After all, the outfit had been holding "dharma sabhas" across the country demanding that the government bring in an ordinance to enable construction of a temple. As recently as last week, it held a "dharma sansad" at the Kumbh mela on the issue. And days ago, BJP president Amit Shah urged the Opposition not to get in the way of the temple. Of course, this sudden discovery of scruple and compunction over the politicisation of the sensitive matter does not quite ring true. It may be that the VHP decision has actually been forced on it by the belated realisation that the fervour which framed the Ram temple issue in the early 1990s has dissipated, cannot be worked up again. Or it could be that the Sangh Parivar "fringe" has bowed to counsel from more mainstream shades of political saffron looking at the prospect of courting allies after the elections to make up the numbers. Whatever the reason behind it, the VHP announcement can free up valuable space for the parliamentary poll campaign to focus on the less polarising issue.

The country has changed since the time the Ram temple mobilisation dominated the polity in the 1990s, altered the language of politics, and shifted its centre of gravity rightward. It is even possible to argue that in its success lay the seeds of its irrelevance. The fact that it changed the larger political narrative and conversation has also made it all the more difficult for political actors to use it as a pretext for a new mobilisation. Also, a new generation of voters has come of age after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. For them, the temple is a less immediate, less pressing narrative, or at the very least, one that must compete for their attention with other claims and stories of national politics. In this context, therefore, the VHP's step back is a good omen for the impending election campaign which can concentrate on matters such as jobs and agricultural distress, the competing models of growth and welfare, the health of federalism and institutions. Even if these issues do not become the stuff of election campaign — unfortunately, they seldom do — a calmer, less inflamed run-up to the election will itself be a good thing.

The fringe has spoken, and this time the mainstream must follow. The Centre has moved the Supreme Court, seeking its permission to return the 67 acres in Ayodhya adjacent to the disputed site to the original owners, including the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas. The government must let the matter rest there — and wait for the court.

THE INTEREST IN this year's Union budget had been high for obvious reasons. It being an election year, there were expectations of a major spending package focused on struggling sectors such as agriculture. The budget didn't disappoint as the finance minister announced an income support programme for farmers, raised the tax-free income ceiling, handed out sops to the real estate sector, and others.

So how is all of this going to be financed? The budget has assumed that total tax revenues are going to grow by 13.5 per cent in 2019-20 on the back of GST and corporation tax revenue growth of around 15 per cent each. Since taxes are levied on nominal incomes, the realism of these assumptions rests on the realism of the Rs 210 lakh crore nominal GDP figure which has been assumed for 2019-20. The government arrived at this number by assuming 11.5 per cent nominal GDP growth in 2019-20.

This is where things start becoming a bit strange. On January 7 of this year, a CSO release stated that nominal GDP for 2017-18 was Rs 167.7 lakh crore. Further, it projected the 2018-19 nominal GDP to be Rs 188.4 lakh crore, a nominal growth rate of 12.3 per cent. Since the CSO was forecasting 7.2 per cent real GDP growth in 2018-19, this implied a GDP deflator inflation rate of 5.1 per cent for the year. The problem, though, is that all the inflation numbers that have come out this year which indicate that the 2018-19 CPI inflation rate may be well closer to 3 per cent. While inflation computed by the deflator and the CPI methods are different, they typically do move together.

A lower inflation rate would, of course, lower nominal GDP in 2018-19 which has fiscal implications. As an example, a two percentage point reduction in nominal GDP growth in 2018-19 would imply a reduction

in nominal GDP of over Rs 3 lakh crore. Since tax revenues are about 12 per cent of GDP, this translates to a Rs 40,000 crore decline in tax revenues, or a fiscal deficit of 3.65 per cent of GDP in 2018-19. Clearly, the assumption on nominal GDP matters.

Are the nominal GDP numbers going to hold up with subsequent releases? Given the surprising upward revision of both real and nominal GDP growth for 2016-17 and downward revisions in other years, it is hard to predict. But this is risky budgeting since the downside risk to the deficit is huge.

A second factor that kept the fiscal deficit from deteriorating too much was the reduction in the states' share of tax revenues by Rs 27,000 crore. This compensated for the Rs 23,000 crore shortfall in gross tax revenues this year, giving the government windfall gains of Rs 4,000 crore during a period of aggregate revenue scarcity! Of course, the states are now short by Rs 27,000 crore and will, most likely, borrow to keep their spending programmes going. The relevant deficit number for the country is the combined central and state deficit to GDP ratio, which should now rise by another 0.12 percentage points.

As the two examples showed, small adjustments to budgetary assumptions can have massive effects on the fiscal deficit. The central government fiscal deficit would have come in closer to 3.7 per cent absent these two adjustments. Put differently, there has likely been a large fiscal slippage this year that has been camouflaged, for now. Indeed, the combined public sector deficit including central, states and PSUs is above 8 per cent.

Will the announcements have the intended political dividend, particularly from the distressed agrarian sector? The announced support of Rs 500 per month for those with land holdings below 2 hectares

seems rather low to have a tangible electoral payoff. The budget is also silent on the issue of jobs which has been a second major talking point of the Indian economy. The budget is thus unlikely to satisfy either the middle-class urban voters anxious about jobs for their children or the distressed agrarian sector.

Possibly the most problematic aspect of evaluating the budget is the opaqueness of the underlying data. The government budgets on a cash basis, which implies that expenditures can be pushed into the next financial year so that they do not count against the current year. There is no way of determining the quantum of such postponed expenditure items. In addition, the assumptions underlying the 2018-19 and 2019-20 GDP numbers are themselves now the subject of much debate. In this environment, we have an unhappy situation where markets, agencies, the media and foreign investors are all making their own assumptions regarding the fiscal deficit and GDP growth.

This is a dangerous situation for any country, leave alone an emerging economy. The crying need of the hour is the creation of a constitutionally mandated Central Budget Office (along the lines of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India's office) which would be tasked with certifying budget numbers that the government puts out. In addition, restoring the sanctity of the CSO and the National Statistics Commission in collecting and disseminating data should become a priority for whichever government is elected in the upcoming election. The Niti Aayog should not become the nodal office for official Indian statistics.

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SAME OLD BULL

The cow appears to be the great equaliser, as a Congress government in MP fails to leave behind excesses of BJP

BETWEEN 2007 AND 2016, the BJP government of Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Madhya Pradesh had booked at least 22 people under the National Security Act for suspected cow slaughter. The state has changed hands since then, but Kamal Nath's Congress government seems to be just as enthusiastic about using maximum legal force on this issue. The state party spokesperson has stated that the Congress is sensitive to bovine matters, and indeed, during the election campaign, it had promised to establish a cowshed in every panchayat. Meanwhile, the BJP has approvingly noted that its successor in Bhopal is continuing its policies with the forthcoming general elections in mind. The use of the NSA, which represents maximum legal force, is deplorable twice over. First, the MP Prohibition of Cow Slaughter Act is specific, but the NSA, a draconian law, was invoked because it allows detention for upto a year. Second, it appears to have been a response to a threat of public unrest by the Bajrang Dal. By all accounts, one group of people was arrested to placate another group, which is outrageous.

Madhya Pradesh is not the only state where the Congress has been showing its commitment to the cow, and taking forward the legacy of a BJP government. In the last week of December, the cow welfare department of the Congress government of Rajasthan passed an order encouraging people to adopt indigent cows. Again, the BJP pointed out that this was a routine step initiated by its government before it was voted out of office. It was blocked by the imposition of the model code of conduct, and the BJP was happy to find the Congress finally doing its bit for cows. This could actually have been a humane initiative for bettering the lives of unwanted cattle and preventing them from damaging standing crops, rather than a continuation of Hindutva policy. But the Congress's sudden and excessive zeal for bovine welfare is bound to invite speculation over its political motives.

In seeking to electorally encash the cow, the Congress may fail to distinguish itself from its main opponent. And anyway, it must know that the cow is not an infallible investment. Chouhan had announced the establishment of a cow ministry days before the model code of conduct for the assembly election kicked in, but it did not appear to help his prospects.

BEYOND BLACK & WHITE

Oscars have done well to increase diversity in the awards. More needs to be done

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT that since 2015-16, when there was an outcry over #OscarsSoWhite, the Academy has taken steps to ensure that its overwhelming bias towards Caucasian men is addressed. Most significantly, the pool of members that select the nominees and winners has been expanded to become more representative in terms of both race and gender. And, on the face of it, the initiatives seem to be working. Both *BlackKkklansmen* and *Black Panther*, for example, are up for Best Picture, as was *Get Out* last year and *Moonlight* the year before that.

But does nominating and awarding films that have minority and immigrant themes and settings at their core mean that the Oscars are now truly progressive? It is obvious that the Academy's great diversity push came as a reaction to sustained bad publicity rather than a genuine desire to reward artistic diversity. Second, apart from a handful of exceptions, minority actors tend to be nominated and awarded for minority roles, where there is a danger of exoticisation in the name of diversity and representation. Finally, on the matter of gender, the Academy has miles to go. Apart from women-only categories (Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress), there is a gross under-representation of women. For example, over the Oscars' 90-year history, only one woman has been awarded Best Director and just five have been nominated.

The Oscars are, of course, an easy target. An award show is easier to attack than an entire industry which has long lived with the mindset that "unconventional" equals unprofitable. In recent years, though, with films like *Black Panther* and *Ocean's 8* becoming commercial successes, that logic is no longer justifiable. As films are made by more diverse casts and crews, more and more of them will be up for the Golden Statue.



VINAY KAURA

A CROSSROADS IN KABUL

With US withdrawing from Afghanistan, India must find ways to maintain presence

INDIA'S AFGHAN POLICY is at a crossroads. A period of adjustment has become essential following US President Donald Trump's unilateral announcement that he is pulling US troops out of the conflict-ridden country. Another development is the "framework" deal between the US and Afghan Taliban after six days of discussions at Doha. Washington's hasty timetable — 18 months — to disentangle itself from the Afghan quagmire has narrowed the US's options. India too is trapped in a strategic blind-spot in Afghanistan.

Trump is the third, and perhaps the last US president, to try to wind up America's costly military involvement in Afghanistan. But the announcement of a drawdown before the final peace deal with the Taliban is concluded was certainly a blunder. More fighting and political instability in Afghanistan would be damaging, as much for Indian interests as for regional stability.

For Pakistan's security establishment, Trump's frustration at the current military stalemate in Afghanistan is a godsend — it can re-engage with Washington, largely on its own terms. Trump has frequently criticised Pakistan for turning a blind eye to the Taliban's insurgency. But he now appears reconciled to Pakistan's centrality to the endgame in the region. The role of Pakistan is going to expand significantly, with the US depending upon it to implement the interim deal. This will be a diplomatic victory for Pakistan.

James Mattis, who was forced to resign as secretary of defence following irreconcilable differences with Trump, was against the pull-out. The head of the US Central Command, Lt General Kenneth McKenzie, had argued that Afghanistan would be doomed to a downward spiral if abandoned by the US at this critical juncture. But Trump decided to ignore Pentagon's advice.

Despite being one of the most important stakeholders in Afghanistan, India finds itself increasingly marginalised in negotiations involving key regional players. New Delhi is concerned about the vital role that all the powers are giving to Pakistan. Iran and Russia, two of India's closest allies during the Northern Alliance's battle against the Taliban regime in the 1990s, seem out of sync with New Delhi's interests.

Fully aware of the deadline, the Taliban are playing their hand well, trying to secure maximum concessions from Zalmay Khalilzad, the US special envoy, without offering anything meaningful in return. The Kabul government is nowhere in the picture. The Taliban's determined refusal to engage the Kabul regime constitutes the biggest obstacle to a meaningful intra-Afghan dialogue.

In all probability, the Trump administration is going to finalise the deal with the Taliban without consulting President Ashraf Ghani, leave alone taking into consideration New Delhi's concerns. All talk of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process has vanished. The Afghan presidential election, originally scheduled in April, stands postponed till July. But if Trump expects a positive outcome from the Khalilzad-led negotiations before July, he seems to have set an unrealistic target.

Despite being an important stakeholder in Afghanistan, India finds itself increasingly marginalised in negotiations involving the key regional players. New Delhi is concerned about the vital role that all the powers are giving to Pakistan. Iran and Russia, two of India's closest allies during the Northern Alliance's battle against the Taliban regime in the 1990s, seem out of sync with New Delhi's interests.

Since the Taliban's ouster, Washington's financial, diplomatic and military support to the Kabul regime has allowed New Delhi to avoid direct military involvement in the Afghan conflict. India's developmental approach has earned it immense goodwill among the Afghan people. However, the "soft power" strategy has limitations. The manner in which Trump hit out at India's contribution towards Afghan stabilisation is largely symptomatic of his fundamentally transactional view of India's relationship with the US. India cannot send troops to Afghanistan

since there is a domestic consensus against it. But ironically, without any military footprint, India cannot convincingly push for Pakistan's exclusion from the peace process. New Delhi today has little influence over Afghanistan's future.

An emboldened Taliban is sure to impinge on security scenario in India's troubled Kashmir Valley. The outfit seems positioned to emerge as the ideological bulwark of Kashmir's renewed insurgency. Pakistan's security establishment, in cahoots with the Taliban, will likely project a potential American exit from Afghanistan as a vindication of its policies.

Trump is unlikely to be bothered even if America's disengagement in Afghanistan is viewed as a strategic defeat. Trump's criticism of India's Afghan policy and his plans to exit could cast serious doubt on the US's role as a strategic ally for India. Trump's ill-conceived strategy gives India a chance to reconsider its long-standing belief that it has the US's backing in Afghanistan.

Drawing attention to the ongoing diplomatic manoeuvres over Afghanistan, India's army chief, General Bipin Rawat, recently asserted that India "cannot be out of the bandwagon" because if "you are not sitting on the high table you will not know what is happening". It is time for New Delhi to engage the Taliban to secure its interests. India also needs to reassess its policy choices in close coordination with Russia and Iran, constantly reminding them that a complete surrender to the Taliban's demands will be detrimental to their own security.

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FEBRUARY 7, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

**BHUTTO TO HANG**  
THE PAKISTAN SUPREME COURT, in a 4-3 decision, upheld the conviction and sentence of death by hanging against the deposed Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The court then rejected an oral request by Bhutto's lawyer for a 30-day stay of execution to carry out a final legal review of the case. The highest court assured, however, that Bhutto will not be hanged during the standard one week allowed for clemency petitions and advised the defence to file a formal request for more time. Chief Justice Anwar ul Haq wrote the decision upholding the March 18, 1978 verdict of the Lahore High Court convicting Bhutto and four co-defendants of conspir-

acy and arranging a political murder, and sentencing all five to hang. Three judges concurred with his decision.

**TURKEY AND BHUTTO**  
IN 1960, ZA Bhutto was sent by General Ayub Khan to Ankara to plead for the lives of Turkish civilian leaders who had been condemned to death following a military takeover. General Gersel, the then president, told Bhutto that "the problem will be solved by executions". Bhutto replied: "The problems of Turkey will begin with these executions." Little did Bhutto realise then that his words would one day be relevant to the situation in Pakistan. It is apparent that his execution will

only aggravate the country's difficulties. The problem before the military junta, which ousted Bhutto nearly two years ago, will be how to meet the situation if the execution is carried out. Not that Bhutto has become popular, it is the military regime which has become unpopular. In the absence of an opposition, Bhutto has filled the void.

**INTERNAL AFFAIR: PM**  
PRIME MINISTER MORARJI Desai and the External Affairs Minister A B Vajpayee declined to comment on the Pakistan Supreme Court verdict on Mr Bhutto. "It is their internal affair and I do not want to interfere," Desai said.

# 15 THE IDEAS PAGE

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“China and the US couldn’t resolve all the disputes. But the consensus between the two countries’ leaders has provided the political and strategic momentum to overcome differences.” — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

# The unexamined collective life

Case against Mallikarjun Kharge, arrests of Hindu Mahasabha members, leave untouched a fundamental problem — the legal recourse forestalls a debate on national ideals



SANJAY SRIVASTAVA

THE FOUNDATIONS OF a well-functioning society are laws that reflect socially-just but flexible notions of right and wrong. However, when laws become the first resort towards dealing with social fractures, we are likely to end up with a society that refuses to deal with its most deep-seated regressive attitudes. Two recent events and the reactions to them point to our tendency to assume that the quick-fix of the legal route is the best way to deal with matters that might be considered socially reprehensible. The law, however, can only deal with symptoms. The habitual reduction of complex social issues to legal ones, in fact, lies at the heart of our desire to lead an unexamined collective life.

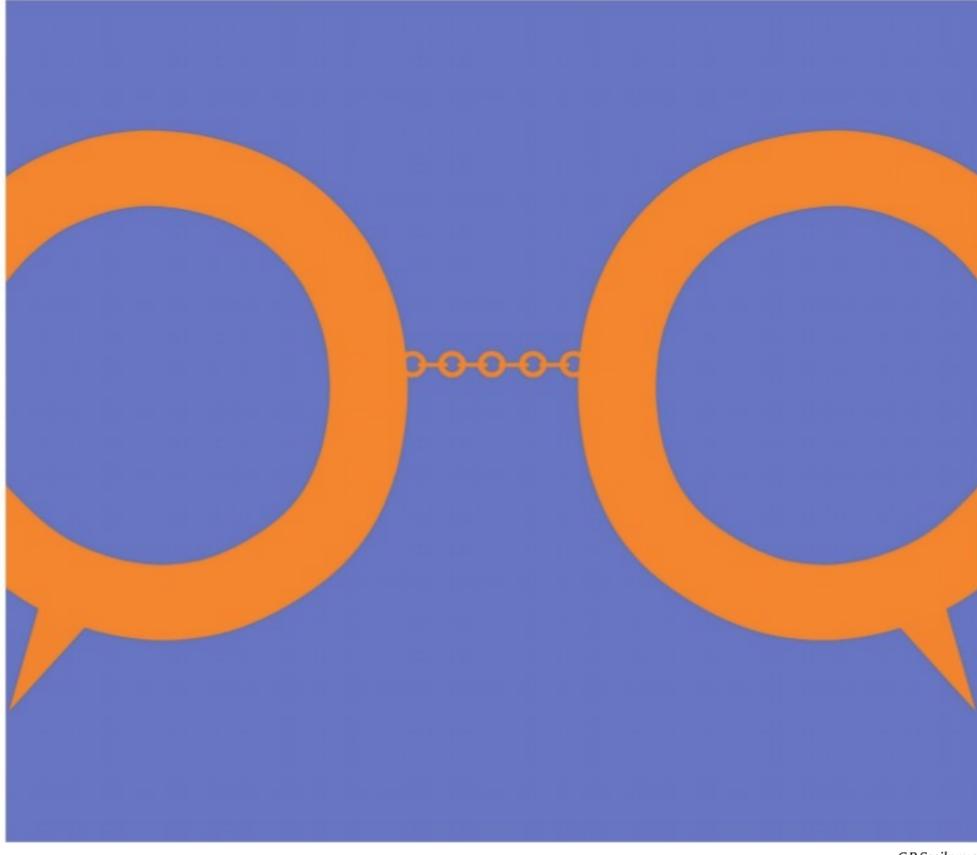
On January 26, the great Assamese singer Bhupen Hazarika was conferred India’s highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna. Soon after, senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge criticised the conferment, suggesting that a more deserving awardee might have been the recently-deceased Lingayat religious leader, Shivakumara Swami. The latter, Kharge seemed to imply, was a person of greater substance than someone whose fame lay in his skill as a singer. Soon after, acting on a complaint by the head of an Assamese socio-cultural organisation, the police registered a case against Kharge for “hurting the sentiments of the Assamese people”.

On January 30, the date of Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination in 1948 by Nathuram Godse, members of the Hindu Mahasabha’s Aligarh unit announced and re-enacted the murder. Media images showed a cheery saffron-clad woman pointing a pistol at an effigy of Gandhi. She was surrounded by a seemingly like-minded group that looked on as if inspecting an ice-cream menu at a pushcart at India Gate. The insouciance, fostered by the distance that time imposes and nurtured by hate, is a thing to behold. Subsequently, a group of so-called seers came out in support of the act, a variety of commentators unequivocally condemned it and a tweet by TV personality Ravish Kumar implied — somewhat confusingly — that the faux murderers were the actual “anti-nationalists” and their not being branded thus was a victory of Gandhian values.

Following a public outcry — given the glib relationship to Gandhian values nowadays, the depth of such feelings is difficult to determine — the police arrested some participants of this contemporary Danse Macabre. The Indian Penal Code’s provisions invoked for the purpose include those that deal with acts which promote “enmity between different groups”.

A recourse to legal procedure has thus been the response to acts that sullied the memories of two significant public figures. A discussion on the mindset behind Kharge’s comments or the processes that produce actions like those of the Hindu Mahasabha activists has been forestalled by the apparent salve of a police case.

Our public culture oscillates between hagiography and vilification. There is no middle ground upon which we can question the



CR Sasikumar

thoughts and ideas of our “great men”. We either raise them to saintliness or condemn them as pure evil — but do not explore their ideas in all their frailties. For Kharge, Bhupen Hazarika was a “mere” singer and singing does not carry a value that is equal to that represented by the life of a religious leader. For Hazarika’s followers, on the other hand, he is beyond questioning, a god-like figure whose divinity proscribes inquiry into his role as, say, a political figure. Kharge’s simplistic evaluation (a singer is too insubstantial a figure for the Bharat Ratna) is met by an equally uncritical response (anything but a deferential attitude towards Hazarika is an insult to an entire culture). Hazarika was a remarkable artist, but he was also a very significant figure within the 1960s and 1970s politics of “authentic” Assamese cultural identity, particularly in relation to “tribal” claims of the significance of their life-ways. We needed a debate about what we consider valuable human attributes and the complex nature of a public figure’s legacy. But all we are left with is a police case.

Similarly, the arrest of the Hindu Mahasabha activists does away with the need for any discussion about Gandhian-ness in our present time. As mindless as their re-enactment was, the reaction to it also eradicated the possibility of a public debate: Why is our only response to such acts via an unchanging “Father of the Nation” approach? The re-enactment is only the end-product of a series of contexts and processes. These include the normalisation of violence in public life (television ads are full of pretend-soldiers selling tiles and cars), an unquestioning atti-

Our public culture oscillates between hagiography and vilification. There is no middle ground upon which we can question the thoughts and ideas of our ‘great men’. We either raise them to saintliness or condemn them as pure evil — but do not explore their ideas in all their frailties.

tude towards Gandhi (recent objections by African scholars to his attitudes on race narrate another story), the cynical use of “Gandhigiri” to sell products and entertainment and the hierarchy of ideas that such events demonstrate — over the past two years, western UP has witnessed a rash of vandalism of Ambedkar statues, without garnering similar publicity.

Filing a police case and making arrests have, sadly, if unwittingly, become methods through which genuine public debate is forestalled. Is there not greater value to thinking about the place of art in public life and Bhupen Hazarika’s role as a political figure than filing a case against Kharge? And, if those who disrespect the memory of the “Father of the Nation” are sent to jail, should we countenance similar action against those who, at other times and places, question what is done in the name of the nation?

The problem with invoking a law under which the Mahasabha’s members have been arrested is that we close off the possibility of developing a public discourse that can, without fear, interrogate issues of national identity. For, in this case, those who oppose the Mahasabha and its ideology may feel satisfied that a national offence has been rectified. However, they leave untouched a fundamental problem: It is dangerous to invite the law to define ideals of national life. That task is best left to open public debate.

The writer is professor, Institute of Economic Growth

# A labour of law

Constituent Assembly debates were full of disagreement, humour and hope. Will the dreams of the founding fathers come true?



SOLI J SORABJEE

ON DECEMBER 9, 1946, the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly was held. The business was formal. Sachchidananda Sinha, who was elected as temporary chairman, concluded his excellent inaugural address with an apt Biblical quotation — “where is no vision the people perish”.

The next meeting was on December 13, 1949, when the Objectives Resolution was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru, during which he said “the Declaration is a pledge and an undertaking. A time comes when we have to rise above party and think of the nation, think sometimes of even the world at large of which our nation is a great part”. Thereafter Dr Radhakrishnan in a moving speech said “this declaration, which we make today, is of the nature of a pledge to our own people and a pact with the civilised world”.

The next meeting was on August 14, 1947, at 11:00 pm. The first item on the agenda was the singing of the first verse of Vande Mataram which, was rendered by Sucheta Kripalani. Thereafter, Nehru made his celebrated “tryst with destiny” speech.

The subject of fundamental rights was crucial. It was debated for 38 days, during which M Ananthasayanam Ayyangar plaintively asked, “Is there a single word in the Constitution that imposes on the future governments the obligation to see that nobody in India dies of starvation?” The main problem that loomed large was whether these rights should be unqualified, or be subjected to restrictions, and the nature of the restrictions. Most important: Who should have the final word in determining the necessity for the restriction? The legislature or the judiciary?

Quite a few members felt that the guaranteed freedoms were hedged in with so many restrictions that, according to P S Deshmukh, “they are neither fundamental nor have much of rights in them”. Muhammad Ismail bemoaned that “the exceptions have actually eaten up the rights”. Several members complained of the legislative legerdemain of giving fundamental rights with the right hand and taking it away “by three or four or five left hands”. Algu Rai Shastri drew inspiration from the arts: “Freedom is a great art — even greater than the art of music and dancing. He (an artist) cannot sing and dance out of tune and time, in an unrestricted manner. He remains fully bound to the rules.”

An irreconcilable gulf seemed to divide the two sides, which was overcome by the suggestion of Thakurdas Bhargava, who advocated that the word “reasonable” be inserted before the expression “restrictions”. B R Ambedkar readily accepted the proposal and the vital principle of judicial review implicit in it.

Provisions relating to preventive detention generated sharp controversy. Bakshi Tek Chand condemned them as most reactionary, and according to Mahavir Tyagi, the business of the Constitution makers was to guarantee the rights of people and not to

make laws to deprive them.

The debates had their lighter side. Lawyers were a frequent butt of ridicule and sarcasm. Lok Nath Mishra referred to the profession as one which “feeds on fat fees and forged facts”. H V Kamath moved an amendment for the insertion of the words “in the name of God” in the beginning of the Preamble. Rohini Kumar Choudhary explained that he belonged to the Shakti cult and protested that “if we bring in the name of God at all, we should bring in the name of Goddess also”. Rajendra Prasad was not amused.

The founding fathers did not mince words when it came to criticising one another. Ambedkar got it in the neck because of his remark that “democracy in India is only a top dressing on an Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic” and also for his disparaging references to the village as a “sink of localism, a den of ignorance”. Kamath described Ambedkar’s attitude “as typical of the urban highbrow”. N G Ranga retorted that obviously Ambedkar had not studied Indian history “with as much care as he seemed to have devoted to the history of other countries”.

Tempers did run high on occasions. During the debate on official language, T T Krishnamachari complained that “hon’ble friends from UP do not help us in any way by flogging their idea of Hindi imperialism”. Abdul Kalam Azad indignantly said that he “was totally disappointed to find out that from one end to the other, narrow-mindedness reigned supreme” and “that with such small minds we cannot aspire to be a great nation”. The arch protagonist of Hindi, Govind Das, thundered that the passing of the Constitution “in a foreign language after the attainment of independence would forever remain a blot on us.”

Ambedkar, in a sombre mood, delivered many home-truths. He declared that “on the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of democracy which this Constituent Assembly has so laboriously built up.” He cautioned people “not to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institution. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, Bhakti or hero worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship”.

On November 26, 1949, we came to the end of the Constitutional Yatra. Rajendra Prasad’s words on that day have a ringing appeal. “If the people who are elected are capable and men of character and integrity, they would be able to make the best even of a defective Constitution. If they are lacking in these, the Constitution cannot help the country. India needs today nothing more than a set of honest men who will have the interest of the country before them.”

Is it utopian to expect these words will become a reality?

The writer is a former Attorney-General of India

# Missing the gender-infrastructure link

Why Niti Aayog’s evaluation of Sustainable Development Goals has room for improvement

SIMRIT KAUR, SANCHITA JOSHI, VAIBHAV PURI

THE NITI AAYOG should be complimented for releasing the “SDG India Index Baseline Report 2018”. The document tracks India’s progress at the sub-national level on 13 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The launch of an index that maps India’s endeavours at sustainable development is significant in several ways. The performance of the world’s second-most populous country would have a great influence on the success or failure of the SDGs. A rigorous evaluation of India’s performance is thus critical to ensure that the UN’s Agenda 2030 does not remain on paper.

The report classifies states as “achievers” (index score = 100), “front-runners” (score: 65-99), performers (score: 50-64), and “aspirants” (score < 49) based on their performance on 13 indices, each representative of an SDG. The country’s performance has been exemplary with respect to “life on land” (Goal 15), “reduced inequality” (Goal 10) and “peace, justice and strong institutions” (Goal 16) with scores of 90, 71 and 71 respectively. However, the performance has been abysmal on goals pertaining to industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9, henceforth Infra-9), sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11) and gender equality (Goal 5), with scores of 44, 39 and 36 respectively.

The performance on gender equality is particularly lamentable, given the intrinsic and instrumental importance of this SDG. The sub-indicators adopted by the NITI Aayog to formulate the gender equality index are based

on sex ratio at birth, wage-gap, domestic violence, women in leadership, labour-force participation and adoption of modern family planning methods by women. At the state-level, Kerala (50), Sikkim (50) and Chhattisgarh (49) have emerge as the top performers, while Uttar Pradesh (27), Manipur (25) and Bihar (24) trail far behind. Kerala’s lead can possibly be attributed to its legacy advantages, including high literacy rates and low gender literacy gap. To assume that “expenditure” creates a distinction between front-runners and under-performers is not necessarily true since the gender budget allocation of Kerala is a fraction of that of Bihar. In such respects, governance matters as well.

Gender inequality is determined by an interplay of complex economic, demographic and socio-cultural factors such as income, health, education and religion. Several studies, including the World Bank’s *Engendering Development* (2001) and *World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development* (2012) and the Asian Development Bank’s *Sectoral Perspectives on Gender and Social Inclusion* (2011) point out that infrastructure development has a significant bearing on gender equality. The Niti Aayog’s report too underlines that Infra-9 is closely intertwined with gender equality. Our findings, however, do not indicate a strong positive relationship between gender equality and Infra-9 scores in the agency’s report (a correlation of -0.3). This raises two queries. How representative is the Infra-9 index as compiled by NITI Aayog

vis-a-vis the UN’s comparable description of “industry, innovation and infrastructure”? Second, how representative is the term “infrastructure” in Infra-9 a-vis the generally acceptable definition of infrastructure?

The Niti Aayog considered only two sub-targets (9.1 and 9.2) under Infra-9 pertaining to physical and wireless connectivity. This negates the importance of sub-targets related to financial inclusion, sustainability of industrial activities and research and developments (sub targets 9.3 to 9.5). The scope of the Niti Aayog’s targeting exercise would be enhanced by the addition of the relevant sub-indicators for the missing targets.

With respect to targets pertaining to physical connectivity, the Niti Aayog’s exercise uses only the data pertaining to all-weather roads under schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. And with regards to targets under wireless connectivity, the exercise covers only mobile tele-density, internet connectivity and e-governance through BharatNet. In both respects, therefore, Niti Aayog’s exercise covers “infrastructure” under Infra-9 partially. This limitation can be overcome if the exercise evaluates the country’s performance on Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy) and Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities). Exercises like the Asian Development Bank’s report, *Meeting Asia’s Infrastructure Needs* (2017) and the World Economic Forum’s *Global Competitiveness Report 2017-18* underscore the salience of in-

corporating these SDGs in any evaluation of infrastructure.

Our analysis, which links a single un-weighted composite-index of Goals 6, 7, and 11 with gender equality, establishes a significant and positive relation (correlation of 0.6). Schemes like Swachh Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, AMRUT and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana are progressive steps in strengthening such plurality of relations. So SDGs pertaining to energy, water-sanitation and sustainable cities must be aligned with Infra-9 in order to establish the linkage between gender and infrastructure comprehensively.

Despite paucity of disaggregated data, the NITI Aayog has done a commendable job in compiling the “SDG India Index Baseline Report 2018”. Constant review and monitoring of the progress in achieving SDGs is important not only for honouring the country’s commitments in this respect but for effective policy-making as well. We hope that Indian statistical organisations take cues and work towards capturing and collating comprehensive micro-level data sets that cover the SDGs in all their facets.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CHANCE IN A CRISIS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Writ in snow’ (IE, February 6). The ICIMOD study on the receding Himalayan glaciers is a wake up call for the developing countries in the Hindu Kush region. The Paris Climate Pact is only a humble attempt to stave-off climate change and it may not save the Hindu Kush Himalayas. South Asian countries and China depend heavily on coal. Clean energy options have not fructified yet. Scientists have warned of water scarcity in this region. The International Solar Alliance spearheaded by India is a step in the right direction but the alliance needs to rope in China.

Nishant Parashar, Chandigarh

### CARIBBEAN REVIVAL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Falling in love again’ (IE, February 6). The West Indies is, indeed, everyone’s second favourite cricket team. For all those who started watching the game in the late 1990s and saw the fall of a once mighty side, the West Indies’ recent victory over England brings hope. The 2004 Champions Trophy victory, the World T20 wins and the odd test wins against Australia, South Africa and England have raised the bar for the West Indies fan — as has the individual brilliance of some modern players. Jason Holder has led the side well and one hopes the recent series win is not a flash in the pan. The ban on Holder is unjustified.

Shubhomoy Sikdar, Delhi

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

### ARAB SPRING

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘A visit, a milestone’ (IE, February 6). Pope Francis’s visit to the UAE, at a time when the Arab World is grappling with multiple problems, is significant. No matter what religion people follow, it is time that the world comes together and helps the Arab world in freeing itself from the grip of terrorism and other problems.

Anish Esteves, Mumbai



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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to [explained@expressindia.com](mailto:explained@expressindia.com)

## TELLING NUMBERS

92,000 schools have single teachers, 1/3 of them in 2 states



Photo for representation only. Archive

### STATES WITH 3,000+ SCHOOLS WITH SINGLE TEACHERS

Madhya Pradesh	18,307
Rajasthan	12,052
Uttar Pradesh	8,092
Jharkhand	7,564
Andhra Pradesh	7,483
Karnataka	4,767
Assam	4,624
Telangana	4,587
West Bengal	3,756
Bihar	3,483

Source: HRD Ministry reply in Lok Sabha

AS MANY as 92,275 elementary and secondary schools in India are running with a single teacher, the Ministry of Human Resource Development stated in reply to a question in Lok Sabha during the ongoing budget session. This is as per provisional figures of the Unified District Information System of Education (UDISE), 2016-17. Under UDISE, the pupil-teacher ratio at national level should be 23:1 for primary, 17:1 for upper primary, and 27:1 for secondary schools, the government reply said.

Madhya Pradesh (18,307) and Rajasthan (12,052) have the highest number of single-teacher schools, to-

gether accounting for nearly one-third of the total of 92,275. When these two are counted together with Uttar Pradesh (8,092), Jharkhand (7,564) and Andhra Pradesh (7,483), the five states add up to more than half of India's total.

In contrast, Delhi has 5 schools running with a single teacher. There are no such schools in Odisha, Tripura and four Union Territories — Chandigarh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Lakshadweep, Sikkim has 1 single-teacher school while Daman & Diu has 3. Other states with less than 100 are Nagaland (31) and Mizoram (66).



SHYAMLAL YADAV  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 6

AT ITS Dharma Sansad in Prayagraj last week, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) passed a resolution that it will not launch any new programme on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue for the next four months, until the Lok Sabha elections are over. A look at the events leading up to the decision, and what it could mean for the Lok Sabha elections:

#### What reason has the VHP given?

It has said it wants to prevent the issue from being exploited politically. The resolution states: "An election is the national festival of democracy... The *sant samaj* shall not give the pseudo-secular pack the opportunity to drag this holy and important movement of Sri Ram Janmabhoomi into a political vortex and swamp. Therefore, we are not announcing any new phase of the movement now." It adds that its ongoing programmes will continue.

#### Has the move come as a surprise?

It was sudden. The VHP has, however, justified it on the basis of a recent petition to the Supreme Court by the BJP-led government seeking permission to return 67 acres in Ayodhya to the original owners, Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas. The VHP resolution acknowledged this: "The Dharma Sansad welcomes this effort of the central government and expresses confidence that with this undisputed land, it will also make every possible effort to hand over the alleged disputed land to the Hindus promptly."

Until the VHP announced its decision, the BJP was under pressure going into the elections. The leadership of the BJP as well as the RSS, besides the government, had come under criticism in a meeting of around 200 top functionaries of the RSS and frontal organisations at Mantralayam in August-September last year. The RSS itself was putting pressure on the government. On October 18, at the annual Vijaya Dashami speech in Nagpur, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat asked the government to consider introducing legislation for construction of a Ram Temple. RSS leaders including *sar-karyawah* Bhaiyaji Joshi have made this demand on several occasions. The

## Why is VHP now lowering the Ayodhya heat?

# A govt petition as ground, a party under less pressure

A strong temple agitation could have made campaign tough for BJP. Besides, VHP has its own struggles



BJP, RSS, VHP leaders at an event in memory of VHP leader Ashok Singhal. Archive

government petition in the court has served as a face-saver for both the BJP and the RSS.

#### What can the move mean for the BJP in the election campaign?

An agitation for a temple during the campaign could have created divisions among cadres of various Sangh Parishad units. It could have embarrassed the BJP, especially when NDA partners such as Lok Janshakti Party have clarified that Ayodhya is not an issue for them. The VHP move eases the pressure on the BJP, and allows it to focus on development and other issues. It also preempts criticism from opposition parties about why the temple issue was being revived just before the elections. As Bhagwat said at the Dharma Sansad: "Whatever programme we take in the coming days, it will impact the election atmosphere."

#### What can it mean to the VHP?

The essential message from the resolution appears to be that the VHP will support the BJP in the elections and will take up the mandir issue only after that. Its move comes at a time when its leadership has eroded. No present VHP leader carries the clout of the late Ashok Singhal, while the assertive Praveen Togadia has now been removed from the VHP. Both of them were bold enough to take on for the BJP. Besides, VHP cadres are divided into two camps, and its programmes are often marked with low turnouts.

The VHP, however, may now have to watch while other groups make efforts to

seize the temple narrative. A day before the Dharma Sansad began, a Param Dharma Sansad organised by religious leader Shankaracharya Swaropanand Saraswati concluded, with a resolution to lay the foundation stone for a Ram temple on February 21. The Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad has extended support to the proposal.

#### How has the Sangh Parishad's relationship been with the present government and BJP leadership?

During the previous NDA government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, prominent Sangh Parishad leaders like Dattopant Thengadi and Singhal often questioned the Prime Minister. Then *sar-sanghchalak* K S Sudarshan had even said that some "inefficient people" were sitting in the PMO.

Not many leaders in Sangh Parishad organisations today raise questions about the present government and BJP leadership. One exception was K C Mishra, Sangathan Mantri of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, an RSS frontal organisation. On June 1, 2015, he told *The Indian Express* that Prime Minister Narendra Modi does not know the real meaning of *garibi* (poverty) and suggested that he look at eastern India to understand what it means. A few months later, Mishra went on leave and has since been "taking rest" in Bhubaneswar. While RSS chief Bhagwat wields influence, he has rarely been heard attacking the government and BJP leadership.

Throughout the present regime, Sangh

Parivar leaders have been largely silent on issues such as uniform civil code and Article 70. On Ayodhya, events have compelled them to take a public stand. With the Supreme Court having declined to hear the Ayodhya matter on a regular basis, and with the government having made it clear that it would go by court orders, Sangh Parishad organisations have issued statements from time to time to pacify their cadre. Although BJP Rajya Sabha MP Rakesh Sinha announced on November 1 that he would bring a private member's Bill on Ayodhya, he has been silent since then.

#### How has this relationship been historically?

At a national level, various Sangh Parishad units have defined roles. The RSS is the fountainhead. The BJP was formed in 1980, when Balasaheb Deoras was RSS chief; its earlier version, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, was formed by a group of RSS *pracharaks* such as Deendayal Upadhyay. The VHP was founded in 1964 as an outfit "to organise-consolidate the Hindu society and to serve-protect the Hindu Dharma". It took up the Ram temple movement that year, when former Congress leader Dau Dayal Khanna passed a resolution in the then Dharma Sansad for the "liberation" of the temples of Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi.

On the ground, workers and activities of these organisations are often closely linked. The RSS deputed its *pracharaks* to work in the BJP and the VHP. After the formation of the BJP, the RSS initially maintained a little distance, until the temple movement brought them more visibly together. After VHP *rath yatras* in 1984 and 1985, the BJP passed the Palampur resolution in 1989 at its national executive meeting: "People's faith must be respected and Ram Janmabhoomi should be handed over to Hindus. It should be resolved through mutual dialogue between the two communities or, if this was not possible, through an enabling legislation. Litigation is in no way a solution for this matter."

#### NEXT

#10 Can Cong showing in Assembly polls translate to Lok Sabha?  
PART 1: MADHYA PRADESH

## TIP FOR READING LIST

### MORAL VALUES OR MATERIAL GAIN? HOW THE BRAIN MAKES THE CHOICE

WHEN A person donates to charity or does volunteer work, the action is guided by moral values. In other words, such persons are putting someone else's needs before their own, and forgoing their own material interests in favour of material values. What goes on inside the brain when it makes the choice? Neuroeconomists at the University of Zurich have investigated in which area of the brain the conflicts between moral and material motives are resolved. Their study is online at <https://elifesciences.org/articles/40671>.

Led by UZH professor Christian Ruff, the researchers focused on the right Temporal Parietal Junction (rTPJ) — an area of the brain that is believed to play a crucial role in social decision-making processes. In an experimental set-up, participants had to decide whether and how much they wanted to donate to various organisations. Through electromagnetic stimulation of the rTPJ, the researchers were then able to determine what kinds of considerations are processed in this area of the brain. The researchers found

that people have a moral preference for supporting good causes and not wanting to support harmful or bad causes. However, depending on the strength of the monetary incentive, people will at one point switch to selfish behaviour. "If we don't let the brain deliberate on conflicting moral and monetary values, people are more likely to stick to their moral convictions and aren't swayed, even by high financial incentives," Ruff said on the UZH website.

Although people's decisions were more social when they thought that their actions were being watched, this behaviour was not affected by electromagnetic stimulation of the rTPJ. This means that considerations regarding one's reputation are processed in a different area of the brain. In addition, the electromagnetic stimulation led to no difference in the general motivation to help. Therefore, the authors concluded that the rTPJ is not home to altruistic motives per se, but rather to the ability to trade off moral and material values.

Source: University of Zurich

## THIS WORD MEANS: STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

# When the US President speaks to the people

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 6

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump's State of the Union (SOTU) Address to Congress in Washington DC on Tuesday night was his second, and the 96th in-person Address/Annual Message in the history of the United States. Franklin D Roosevelt's 1945 address was read to a Joint Session of the US House and Senate — since the President did not deliver it himself, it is not officially counted as an in-person address.

**ORIGINS:** According to a historical note on the website of the US House of Representatives, the formal basis of the State of the Union Address lies in the US Constitution: Article II, Section 3, Clause 1 states the President "shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient".

From 1790, when President George Washington delivered the first of these messages, to 1946, the address was formally known as the Annual Message. Between 1942 and 1946, it was informally called the "state



(Left) On December 13, 1913, Woodrow Wilson gave the first in-person Annual Message since President John Adams on November 22, 1800; President Donald Trump speaks on Tuesday night in Washington, DC. Library of Congress/Reuters



of the Union" message/address; since 1947, when President Harry S Truman gave his message to Congress (January 6), it has been officially known as the State of the Union Address.

**CONTENT:** Annual Messages by earlier Presidents included agency budget requests and general reports on the health of the US economy. Subsequently, Congress required more in-depth reports on these aspects, separate from the Annual Message. The Budget Message was instituted by a 1921 law, and the Economic Report by an Act of 1946.

Since 1913, when President Woodrow Wilson revived the practice of speaking to Congress in person after a gap of 113 years, the SOTU has served as a platform for the President to rally support for his agenda.

President Calvin Coolidge gave the first SOTU address to be broadcast on radio (1923), President Truman presented the first televised address (1947), and President George W Bush delivered the first address that was webcast live (2002) — consistently enabling Presidents to speak directly to increasing

numbers of the American people. **WHERE, WHEN:** Modern SOTU addresses have been delivered in the House Chamber. Prior to the move of the Capitol to Washington, DC, the Annual Message was often delivered in the Senate Chamber. A House concurrent resolution sets aside the day and time for a Joint Session to receive the communication. Until 1934, the Annual Message was delivered every December; since then, the Annual Message/SOTU has been delivered every January or February.

**LONGEST, SHORTEST:** The longest written address was by Jimmy Carter (33,667 words) in 1981; the longest spoken address was by Bill Clinton (9,190 words) in 1995. The first address, by George Washington in 1790, was the shortest — 1,089 words.

The average address in the 19th century was about 10,000 words; from the late 20th century, it has been about 5,000 words.

FDR gave the most Messages/Addresses — 12, of which 10 were personal appearances before Congress. President Zachary Taylor delivered only 1, and Presidents William Henry Harrison and James A Garfield, none.

All information: US House of Representatives

# Tougher scanning, looser encryption: what new Rules want from Web firms

SHRUTI DHAPOLA  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 6

THE GOVERNMENT on Wednesday published 609 pages of suggestions and comments from a range of relevant parties on a new set of guidelines for intermediaries that it issued at the end of last year. The Intermediaries Guidelines (Amendment) Rules, 2018 could have far-reaching impact on the way social media websites, and the Internet as a whole, operate in India. Counter-comments will be accepted until February 14.

The Rules, read under Section 79 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, make 'intermediaries' such as Facebook, Google, WhatsApp, and others responsible for actively monitoring the content they host. They also ask the intermediaries to allow the tracing of information on their plat-

forms by government agencies — a requirement that could create difficulties in the India operations of global end-to-end encrypted products like WhatsApp or Signal.

Internet companies with more than 50 lakh users will be required to register themselves in India, and have an office in the country.

#### Changes in content

The Rules notified by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) on December 28, 2018 ask for greater due diligence from intermediaries on the regulation of the content they host.

First, all intermediary companies will have to "deploy technology based automated tools or appropriate mechanisms, with appropriate controls, for proactively identifying and removing or disabling public access to unlawful information or content".

Open-source companies like Wikipedia,

GitHub, and Mozilla have formally protested to IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. They have argued that it would not be possible for them to employ automated tools to monitor "unlawful" content. GitHub is an online repository of code, Wikipedia content is generated, edited, and moderated by users, and Mozilla's Firefox is a popular open source browser.

For many startups in India, monitoring and removing content might not always be viable or possible, given the resources that would be required. Plus, companies will have to inform their users "at least once every month" that in case of non-compliance, their accounts and content would be removed. Exactly how this will be achieved is unclear.

In addition to the earlier stipulation about content that is grossly harmful, defamatory, obscene, etc., they must now also filter content that "threatens public health or safety;

promotion of cigarettes or any other tobacco products or consumption of intoxicant including alcohol and Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS) & like products that enable nicotine delivery..."

Any content which "threatens critical information infrastructure" is not allowed under the new Rules.

#### Question of encryption

Companies will have to help government agencies in locating the origin of content, if required to do so by law. For many, this could mean choosing between breaking their end-to-end encryption in India, or stopping the service in the country altogether.

The new Rules say that if there is a lawful order, "then intermediary shall, within 72 hours of communication, provide such information or assistance as asked for by any government agency or assistance..." The lawful order could be in matters of state se-

curity, cyber security, investigation of any offence.

Also, "The intermediary shall enable tracing out of such originator of information on its platform as may be required by government agencies who are legally authorised."

For apps like WhatsApp, Signal, etc., tracing the originator of information could create problems, besides forcing them to go against the core of what their product stands for.

End-to-end encryption on WhatsApp or Signal ensures that no one can read the messages shared between two users — no government, no third-party, no cyber criminals, not even the company itself. The Rules then, could amount to making it impossible for these firms to work in India in their current avatars. Would the services be banned for non-compliance? That isn't clear so far.

#### Registration in India

All players with more than 5 million users in India have to be incorporated under The Companies Act. This will touch more companies than just the well-known ones. The companies will need to have a "permanent registered office in India with a physical address". Also, these norms, although currently applicable to only the 5 million-plus firms, can be "extended to any intermediary, which is specifically notified by the Government of India", according to the Rules.

Again, the Rules only say "fifty lakh users in India" — it is unclear whether they mean monthly active users or daily active users, which are the key metrics that Internet companies use to define their user base. A service that has 5 million monthly active users in India — i.e., users who log in once a month — might not see the sense in having an office in the country.

# All eyes on Walmart

Will Walmart stay put in India or will the policy flip-flop make it review its plans?



## NOT FOR PROFIT

NIVEDITA MOOKERJI

American brokerage firm Morgan Stanley put out a warning note earlier this week that Walmart may exit Flipkart, similar to what Amazon had done in China, if there's no clear path to profitability. While Flipkart chief executive Kalyan Krishnamurthy countered that theory immediately in a communication to the company employees, it's surprising that Morgan Stanley mentioned

Amazon's exit from China but not Walmart's from several foreign markets over the years.

Even though a few changes, however life-changing they may be, in the e-commerce rules may or may not make the American retail major leave India, exit is nothing new for Walmart. Last year, it realised that it was tough to win the UK market alone. So, it sold a majority stake in its UK arm ASDA to UK's second biggest supermarket chain Sainsbury for around \$10 billion. It was around the same time that it was buying a controlling stake in Flipkart for \$16 billion. Brazil was yet another market where it sold some 80 per cent stake to private equity firm Advent International as recently as in June 2018. While it wanted to beat the top player Tesco in the UK through the deal with Sainsbury, the move in Brazil was prompted by an under-performing business.

Walmart's exits had started more than a decade ago when it didn't have a good going in Germany and South

Korea. China hasn't been a great story either for Walmart till it partnered with JD.com to take on Alibaba. In Japan too, it recently withdrew from general merchandise retailing so that it could use its resources more effectively in other geographies. There have been other break-ups as well, including the one with the Bharti group a few years ago, though Walmart stayed on looking for a better future in India. And then Flipkart happened.

That brings us back to the current confusion over Walmart's India plans. If conspiracy theories are to be believed, the American major has not exactly been on top of the world after the much anticipated Flipkart deal due to shareholders' concern. According to one such theory, Walmart may have been looking for a way out of the deal soon after its shares plunged and market cap eroded. A "no" from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) may have provided the company an escape route, but Walmart swam through the regula-

tory processes. There was no doubt then that the biggest retailer of the world was here to stay in India, though its multi-brand retail dreams had been shattered long ago.

Online looked like a safe bet despite some fringe protests by trade bodies against international hold over e-commerce companies and deep discounts that they were offering. Once the Flipkart founders — Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal — were out of the scheme of things, Walmart had settled down to compete with Amazon and plan things ahead of Reliance's entry into e-commerce.

But the e-commerce universe turned upside down when the government issued revised foreign direct investment (FDI) guidelines that meant doing the online retail business in a completely different way from February 1. Walmart-owned Flipkart and Amazon were at the receiving end, while domestic traders' bodies such as CAIT claimed victory as the government refused to even extend the February 1 deadline. The most obvious interpretation was that the government didn't want to annoy domestic traders' lobby, a large voter base, ahead of a crucial Lok Sabha poll. After all, throughout its term, this government held on

to its promise made to the traders back in 2014 that FDI wouldn't be permitted in multi-brand retail.

In the middle of all the chaos when Amazon and Flipkart (Walmart) are busy restructuring sellers and products on their respective marketplace platforms to comply with the latest e-commerce rules, conspiracy theorists are again wondering if the regulatory changes may offer an escape route to the international majors from a market that looks tough to operate in. As foreign investors depend more rigidly on board approvals for every investment and business decision, policy stability is critical to them. A continuing policy flip flop, like the one in e-commerce currently, could possibly force them to look out.

For now, Walmart has said it remains optimistic about India. That could change without prior notice. Flash back to October 2013: Then Walmart Asia chief executive Scott French had chosen Bali to famously say, "Frankly, the FDI has passed". That ended a partnership that had begun on long-term promise.

Exit, whether partial or full, is not uncommon for any business, including in retail. Tesco, Walmart, Carrefour and others — everyone has done it routinely. And it can happen again.

## CHINESE WHISPERS

### Maya's Twitter debut



Twitter is treating this as nothing short of a coup. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president, Mayawati (pictured), has finally debuted on the social media platform. In the past, Mayawati had not just disapproved of her party members officially joining the platform, but a youth leader was publicly ticked off for operating a quasi-official Twitter handle in the name of the party, and had to eventually quit the party. On Wednesday, an anodyne press statement from the BSP stated that Mayawati "has for the first time decided to join Twitter for speedy interaction with media and masses, besides expressing her views on various issues of national and political importance through Twitter". The BSP chief's Twitter handle is @SushriMayawati, and the first tweet on it was posted on January 22. However, no one took it seriously until the official statement considering previous similar handles were termed fake by the party.

### Together we can

Bravado is probably a necessary requirement for a politician's job profile. On Wednesday, Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) leader Abhay Singh Chautala rejected reports that his party's alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) was under strain after the drubbing it received in the Jind bypoll, asserting that the two would jointly contest the coming Lok Sabha polls. Abhay is the younger son of INLD president and former Haryana chief minister Om Prakash Chautala. In the Jind bypolls, Digvijay Chautala of the Janayak Janata Party (JJP) finished at number two, while the INLD candidate lost his security deposit and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged the winner. Abhay's brother Ajay Singh Chautala, currently serving a jail term, is a patron of the JJP and his two sons — Digvijay and Dushyant — are spearheading the party in his absence. Interestingly, BSP chief Mayawati, in a press statement issued on Monday, said her party would not have any truck with the INLD till the warring family reunites.

### Missing in action

The Congress and Janata Dal (Secular) coalition government in Karnataka has moved from one crisis to another since it was formed last May. On Wednesday, Congress general secretary K C Venugopal rushed to Bengaluru following reports that at least four Congress legislators were missing on the first day of the Assembly session. On Tuesday, a whip had been issued to all MLAs of the ruling coalition to be present in the Assembly on all days of the Budget session. That was seen as a move by the ruling coalition to pre-empt any plans of disgruntled Congress MLAs on the radar of BJP to stay away from the Assembly and threaten the government. Former chief minister and Congress leader Siddaramaiah served a second notice to the MLAs who did not turn up for the meeting. Congress sources claimed some of the BJP legislators have also gone missing.

# GMS 2.0: Banks' participation key to success

The scheme's inability to convince big players like temples has to be sorted on a war footing

RAJESH BHAVANI

After three years of launching the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS), the central government is planning to overhaul the entire scheme to attract physical gold hoarders. The reason: The scheme has collected less than 20 tonnes. To put the number in perspective, two years back, the World Gold Council had estimated that Indian households held as much as 24,000 tonnes of gold.

Banks have been the main culprit in this fiasco. That is, 14 banks have indeed signed tripartite agreements with seven refineries and 47 hallmarking centres to run the scheme. However, they have not returned signed agreements with the respective centres to start the process. In other words, they have not launched the scheme.

The only bank that seems to have some kind of scheme in place is the State Bank of India. And that too because it has been running a gold deposit scheme for years, and has its systems in place. "We are getting several inquiries from depositors who wish to deposit gold ranging from 30 gram (which is the minimum) to 5 kg in the Gold Monetisation Scheme," said Kolkata-based Harshad Ajmera, president, Indian Association of Hallmarking Centres (IAHC), adding that if banks show interest, a few hundred kilograms of gold may be deposited in a very short time. Another bullion refiner from Kochi said he had even approached the finance ministry for

guidance after getting customers' queries. But nothing happened.

The GMS, introduced by the government in 2015, has these key features. There are three kinds of deposits — short, medium and long term. Under the short-term (one to three years) scheme, banks are allowed to lend to jewellers, collect it back and return to depositors on maturity. Under the medium- and long-term schemes (five to 15 years), the liability of the deposit is with the government. The mobilised gold is to be auctioned by the MMTC on behalf of the government, and the money collected will be treated as market borrowings. If the price of gold goes up on maturity, the government will pay back the higher amount to the depositor.

The Narendra Modi-led government's plan to unlock the gold held by temples and individuals was introduced after India's current account deficit shot up to 4.7 per cent of GDP, or \$88 billion, in 2012-13, necessitating the need to reduce gold imports for which India was spending \$50 billion-plus on import bills. The government decided to unlock the value of idle gold through GMS. The idea was to mobilise gold and lend it to jewellers. This was expected to reduce the import bill. The World Gold Council, two years back, had estimated that 24,000 tonnes of gold might be with Indian households (worth over 440 per cent of GDP). This holding figure has only increased now.

Last week, the finance ministry stated in its Interim Budget document that



## GLITTERING FACTS

**24,000 tonnes** of gold are estimated to be in Indian households

**20 tonnes** have been mobilised under the GMS

**13 tonnes** are to be auctioned by MMTC

Deposit from temples are estimated to be around **2-3 tonnes** under the new GMS-2015

**16 tonnes** were mobilised under old gold deposit scheme which is closed now

The target under the scheme is to mobilise **50 tonnes of gold** per annum

**47 collection centres** ready, over 700 more ready to participate in GMS

"broad guidelines for amendment of Gold Monetisation Scheme has been prepared and is under consideration." While the government's proposals are yet to be made public, the Reserve Bank of India has already started taking some concrete actions. For example, last month it allowed banks to accept gold from government agencies (those confiscating gold for any reason are potential depositors) and trusts.

According to the source, the government is planning to ask banks to open a gold metal deposit account, which

will allow banks to return gold in the metal form on maturity instead of the equivalent value in cash. This move could be particularly attractive to temples, which hold around 3,500 to 4,000 tonnes, as they would like to get back gold in metal format instead of cash.

Apart from some big temples, several small temples across the country can potentially deposit 25-50 kg gold in GMS. However, they are managed by trusts that have deeds that do not allow selling of gold. And the GMS, in its present format, gives back cash over

the medium or long term — this tantamounts to selling gold, which is prohibited by the trust deeds.

Experts suggest that the government consider more moves. For example, James Jose, secretary, Association of Gold Refiners and Mints said: "The government should open a GMS portal giving details of banks that will accept gold with branches and designated officials. Also, information about locations of hallmarking centres — the first point for customers to melt and weigh gold and issue certificates — should also be provided in this portal. Banks will open gold deposit accounts, based on the certificates issued by hallmarking centres. Such information will help customers who want to deposit gold."

Another issue that needs attention is the lack of availability of bills. Many potential depositors do not want to go through the hassle of depositing gold, as they don't have supporting bills. Some might not even know the origin since they may have received family heirloom held to many decades. They would be clearly worried about the income-tax department's queries. Professor Arvind Sahay, chairperson, India Gold Policy Center, IIM-A recommended the government should give a clarification that up to 1 kg of gold deposited by the gold under GMS will not go through any tax scrutiny. At today's price 1 kg gold bought 25 years back would be around ₹33 lakh.

To encourage banks, Sahay suggested incentivising banks to make them feel that GMS is a profitable business proposition. "This can be done by providing monetary incentives, allowing gold collected under GMS to be treated as part of the cash reserve ratio and other moves," he added.

## INSIGHT

# India's employment: The challenges

In the concluding part of the series, the author says India's next challenge is to meet the aspirations of people who are employed but want higher incomes



AMITABH KANT

So what is the true picture of employment in India? We now have extensive data available on people contributing to social security benefits are provided through the Employee Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), the Employee State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) and the National Pension Fund (NPS). Between September 2017 and November 2018, a total of 73,50,786 new subscribers were added to the EPFO, an average of 490,000 subscribers each month. ESIC tells a similar story. On an average, between September 2017 and November 2018, approximately 1-1.1 million subscribers were added each month. Even if we consider a 50 per cent overlap with EPFO data, it yields about 1 million workers being added to the formal workforce per month, or 12 million annually. An analysis of NPS shows that we are adding close to 600,000-plus jobs in central and all state governments.

Another complementary measure of employment can be based on the transport sector. Consider the sale of commercial vehicles. The net of

exports, approximately 750,000 vehicles were sold in FY18 in India. Considering a replacement rate of 25 per cent, this still translates to 560,000 new commercial vehicles added to the transport sector. Assuming a capacity of employment for each commercial vehicle at two, we can infer that 1.1 million jobs are annually added in this sector alone. To this if one added the sales of cars, three-wheelers and tractors, around 30-plus lakh jobs are created in this sector alone yearly.

Self-employment is also a critical source of employment generation in India. Job creation among professional service providers such as chartered accountants, lawyers and doctors is also robust, as per data from their respective regulatory bodies. Income Tax (IT) data provides an indication on the number of new self-employed professionals. As per data available, an average of 150,000 tax paying professionals were added annually between assessment year (AY) 2014-15 and AY 2017-18. One can further assume that most of these professional tax payers hire support staff, likely to be below the threshold of 20 employees which then makes social security registration mandatory. Assuming each professional hires a support staff of five, this indicates an average of 750,000 jobs being created annually. Under MUDRA Yojana, 155.6 million loans have been disbursed amounting to over ₹7 trillion. Over 40 million first time borrowers have started their business enterprises. Such a huge



magnitude of loans being given to small entrepreneurs has created gainful employment.

A study by McKinsey Global Institute titled "India's Labour Market — A New Emphasis on Gainful Employment" has highlighted that increased government spending, rise of independent work and entrepreneurship have boosted incremental job for 20-26 million people during 2014-17. According to an analysis by the Ministry of Tourism, the tourism sector alone has created 14.62 million job opportunities in the country during last four years.

While the above statistics do not present the full extent of employment generation, they do lend irrefutable and concrete evidence of the extent of employment being generated across the country. There is certainly enough evidence to doubt and even contradict the narrative of joblessness with shrinking workforce and rise in unemployment.

Does this mean that India has no challenges related to employment?

That's also not true. Over the last few years, India's next challenge is to meet the aspirations of people who are employed but want higher incomes. This requires creation of enough well-paying jobs for existing industrial workforce and for those who want to move out of agriculture. This requires policies that encourage productivity growth in the country, which necessitate concerted efforts towards formalisation, urbanisation and industrialisation of Indian economy. Regarding the PLFS, I feel that the experience of the pilot should be used to improve the survey through use of technology, accessing real-time data, and increasing the sample size. The draft estimates just do not add up. The above are issues I would have raised if I had been presented a copy beforehand as member of the Commission or if the full Commission had met to discuss the draft report. (Concluded)

The author is CEO of NITI Aayog. Views expressed are personal.

## LETTERS

### Beyond the drama

The drama involving the West Bengal government and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been both disturbing and unedifying. To the non-aligned, both parties' behaviour fails the smell-test. The Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar should have joined the investigation much earlier. If he had apprehensions that he might be framed or coerced, then he could have sought the presence of his lawyer. The CBI team should have been treated with greater courtesy. Similarly, the CBI could have come at normal hours, not at 7 pm, and with less show of strength. The CBI's inaction over the past four years, the fact that it's not pursuing others allegedly involved, the timing of the visit, that is, on the last day of the interim chief of the agency, and doing all that just a few months before the elections — can be seen as part of a script.

This, however, brings up the bigger question of Union-state relations. By design, the Union government has been successful in extending its say over matters that can be better handled at the state level. The inter-state National Development Council is hardly functional. Another example is the duality over the cadre distribution of the Indian Administrative Services and the Indian Police Services officers. Once allotted to a state, these officers logically should be under the sole administrative authority

of that state. The other is the post of the governor. He/she is the most senior unelected constitutional authority but there is little transparency in the appointment. The governor's ability to seek dissolution of an elected state government on his own determination, should have had no place in a democratic Constitution.

Our states are not to the Union of India what a district of the state is to the state.

P Datta New Delhi

### Improve skill sets

This refers to "Challenge is to create more organised jobs" (February 6). The economy, as rightly pointed out in the article, has to be more organised and infrastructure needs to be of a better quality to ensure access to basic requirements such as health care, education and financial services. This inadequacy and a lack of connectivity are responsible for the high level of informal employment currently. Adequate geographical and regional connectivity is essential to ensure growth in formal organised employment and encourage the informal sector to switch over.

C Gopinath Nair Kochi

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

## HAMBONE



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## Premature assumptions

Opposition parties lack a coherent alternative plan

With the interim Budget out of the way, the focus is now on the next general elections in May. Opinion polls have started on whether the Indian voter will return Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led National Democratic Alliance government (NDA) to the Centre or not. The Opposition parties are seemingly determined to form a grand alliance, or mahagathbandhan, to challenge the ruling party. Several age-old opponents such as the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh have announced that they will fight elections together. The Congress party is hoping to ally with parties that it opposes bitterly at the state level such as the Trinamool Congress or even the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Indeed, on January 19, leaders from as many as 20 parties shared a common platform in West Bengal to signal their combined challenge to the NDA. But it is not going to be an easy task, as evident from the SP-BSP's decision to keep the Congress out of the alliance and Mayawati's assertion that she would reconsider her support to Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan governments if some of her conditions are not met.

Going by some of the recent opinion polls, it would appear that the NDA is way ahead of the grand alliance, though it might fall short of a majority in the House. One of the opinion polls, unveiled in January-end, assessed what the performance of the leading political alliances would be in case the elections were held immediately. The BJP-led NDA, according to this poll, is poised to get 252 seats — 20 short of the majority mark of 272 in the 543-seat Lok Sabha. Though this is considerably less than what the NDA managed in 2014, the fact is that it is within sniffing distance of the critical mark. The result suggests that the NDA will become the largest pre-poll alliance by a significant margin. The Congress-led United Progress Alliance is pegged at 147 seats and all the rest, a sort of a non-BJP, non-Congress front, is slated to get 144 seats. Two other surveys, however, predicted a less flattering picture of NDA fortunes. The verdict in both the surveys was that it will be a hung House, with NDA stopping at 233-237 seats, while the UPA might have to settle for less than 170 seats.

There are many reasons why one should not jump to conclusions based on these opinion polls. The fact is these are early days and the easy assumptions made by many about an Opposition alliance unseating Mr Modi may be premature. For instance, there is no overriding seat adjustment in key states such as UP. With little time left before the polls, there is still no clarity whether the Congress is with the SP-BSP combine or whether there will be a triangular contest. Moreover, several regional parties that rule states such as Odisha and Telangana have stayed away from the emerging mahagathbandhan. It is not difficult to see them siding with the party most likely to reach the majority mark. And NDA has a clear edge in all the surveys. Lastly, the grand alliance per se has not yet gone beyond an anti-Modi rhetoric; they have not presented a coherent alternative plan, except for criticising the NDA. The only real promise so far is Rahul Gandhi's minimum income guarantee scheme, which could be an operational nightmare since it would mean assessing beneficiaries' income first. It's time for the opposition alliance to wake up and smell the coffee.

## Sticking to his guns

Mr Trump promises bipartisanship, but his speech was divisive

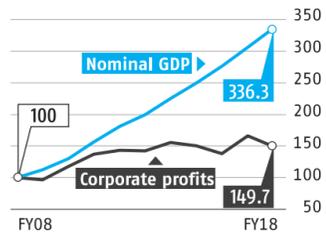
United States President Donald Trump's annual State of the Union address to both houses of the US Congress was billed by the Republican administration as an exercise in bipartisanship. That is what, presumably, is necessary at a time when once again the US has to deal with a House of Representatives that is controlled by one party and a White House that is controlled by another. But that is not at all how things turned out. While Mr Trump did gesture towards bipartisanship at times, most of his speech was focused on energising his base, and he showed no sign of abandoning his hard line on several issues — particularly immigration. He spoke of an "urgent national crisis" at the US border with Mexico, demanding funds to build the border wall that has already this year shut down the government for over a month.

He also made it clear that in his view, "legislation" could not co-exist with "investigation" — that, in other words, House Democrats should not examine his record, his ties with Russia, or other problematic aspects of his 2016 campaign. The only moments of genuine bipartisan applause were when he committed to eliminating HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, in 10 years, and when he mentioned criminal justice reform that became law in December with support from both Democrats and Republicans. The record number of women legislators — all female Democrats in Congress dressed in suffragette white for the speech — was also another shared applause line.

Mr Trump praised the strength of the US economy, and warned that only "war and investigation" could derail it. While he is wrong about those two — and his unmistakable desire to get out of Afghanistan as soon as possible will vastly imperil the security of South Asia and the world — it is certainly true that the economic recovery is fragile and a divided Washington will struggle to keep the revival going. Infrastructure building, for example, which both parties agree is necessary, might be impossible to put into place given the sharp divisions in polity. Another aspect of his speech with economic implications was his continuing tough line on China. "The theft of American jobs and wealth has come to an end," said Mr Trump, underlining his economic nationalist approach. Mr Trump also asked for more tariff-setting authority for the White House — but, although the Democrats have traditionally been less of a free-trade party than the Republicans, it is not sure that the House majority will be willing to cede more power to a Trump White House. Indeed, bipartisan legislation has been introduced last week to limit, and not expand, the president's powers to prosecute a trade war.

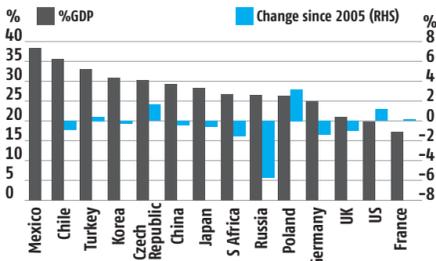
For the world and for India, the implications of a divided Washington are worrying. An inward-looking US will continue to see its role in the world diminish. Those areas of bipartisanship that remain are likely to be net negative for India — such as the possibility that the US will strike a bad deal with the Taliban and exit precipitately from Afghanistan.

CHART 1: TREND IN CORPORATE PROFITS AND INDIA'S NOMINAL GDP



Indexed to base 100. Sources: Capitaline, Reserve Bank of India. Compiled by BS Research Bureau

CHART 2: GROSS CORPORATE PROFITS % GDP



Sources: OECD, latest data as 2015 for all countries other than China, South Korea and South Africa, which are to 2014.

# Guns or butter, both need investments

Our common interest requires building a consensus on cash flows

"Money, money, money... makes the world go round". This line from a musical set in the 1930s Berlin is inescapable in the commercial, economic, and often the political aspects of reality. While the show emphasised escaping through make-believe, the real-world actually follows closely along.

Take India's economy: Despite growth, without commensurate profits, employment, and wellbeing, we are marking time. Analysts point out that corporate profits languished since 2008, trending down as a percentage of GDP from 2010, excluding a minor improvement in 2017. In fact, profits have not grown in real terms despite annual GDP growth of about 7 per cent for 10 years. This comes through powerfully in Chart 1.

In the boom from 2003 to 2008, profits to GDP doubled from 2.8 per cent to 5.5 per cent. Growth was driven by investment and exports as well as by consumption. After the subprime crisis of 2008 and the recession, profits in India slumped, partly because of excess capacity, and the rising costs of additional debt caused by inflation targeting (the components being wages, taxes, corporate profits, interest payments and rents).

Although profits recovered somewhat, they trended downward, and by 2018 were 3 per cent, the same as in 2003. By comparison, US figures (after a low of 4.95 per cent in Q4 2008) ranged from 9 to 11.7 per cent. Gross profit to GDP in the US was 20 per cent in 2015, while in China (2014) it was nearly 30 per cent (Chart 2). Surpluses are essential for investment and development, because neither can happen without them. Only thereafter is a higher wage-share affordable.

Of the decline in India from 2008 to 2018, about nine-tenths happened in four sectors: PSU banks (36 per cent), oil and gas (19), metals (18) and telecom (15). During this period, consumption replaced

investment as the driver, with growth in sectors such as automobiles, consumer durables and retail. Some commentators expect these trends to continue, with some optimism on the revival of investment.

The counterfactual is that we haven't had any required reforms of structure and organisation for surpluses to grow in PSU banks, utilities or telecom. For instance:

- In banking, the NPA crisis remains, but the focus has moved away to elections.

- Reliable electricity supply needs financial sustainability and stable pricing, and neither is available. Coal mine auctions haven't resolved resource costs and availability, while financial gambits in the form of race-to-the-bottom bids to start projects and sell out early, instead of staying for profits from operations, aggravate problems in pricing and delivery for renewable energy as for conventional fuels. The financial incapacity of state electricity boards has created another set of problems, compounded by continued populism (unsustainable prices).

- In telecom there has been only one major reform for 5 GHz spectrum for WiFi, despite the new National Digital Communications Policy.

Meanwhile, electoral wrangling threatens to further deplete the treasury, whereas the problem is the opposite: Lack of surpluses (profits, and ultimately, cash). Profits have been stagnant for a decade starting from UPA-II, partly because of the excess capacity of the boom.<sup>2</sup> This has constrained development spending, because low surpluses have kept investments down. By contrast, investments and exports were strong from 2003-2008.

Several other social forces add to the downdraft.

- One is a political system that encourages splintering and divergence. As large parties have established hierarchies, it's easier to start anew to get and control funding for splinter parties around



SHYAM PONAPPA

# India's management conundrum

When you line up people from India Inc who have dominated news from the latter half of 2017 to the end of 2018, examples of poor management, due diligence, business judgement and outright fraud abound.

Nirav Modi, Vijay Mallya, Naresh Goyal, Subhash Chandra, IL&FS, Chanda Kochhar, the Ruia family, Anil Ambani, Shikha Sharma, Rana Kapoor...

The notable successes, on the other hand, are conspicuously few: Mukesh Ambani, Ritesh Agarwal of Oyo and Flipkart duo Sachin & Binny Bansal (but only for making a successful sale).

So: Are Indian businesspeople, managers and bankers sub-par or are they victims of a sub-optimal business environment, where lobbying trumps rules and policy-making is capricious?

A bit of both, if you scan the two lists above. Vijay Mallya, Naresh Goyal and Subhash Chandra all confessed to poor decision-making. For the first two the principal failing has been a basic one: Cost-control, the bread and butter of any airline anywhere in the world.

In Mr Goyal's case, it would be wrong to attribute only soaring oil prices to his current woes. His struggles with cost, and its related challenge, people management, date back at least a decade, the legacy of the decision to buy the sinking Air Sahara in 2006.

Recall the drama played out on TV when he sacked some 1,900 employees — cabin crew, ground staff etc — and then reinstated them after a dramatic late night press conference in 2008. Few Bollywood blockbusters could have matched the histrionics of this episode. Youthful protesters gathered in their bright yellow Jet Airways uniform and

dark glasses, surely one of the most glamorous *dharanas* in recent memory. Then came Mr Goyal's turn at the presser, where he teared up and swore on his late mother that he bore them no ill will.

Mr Mallya has long cultivated a theatrical persona, but Kingfisher Airlines' crash landing was unprecedented in its drama. As with Jet Airways, an ill-judged acquisition, this time of Air Deccan, to beat government rules for flying overseas routes, proved his undoing as did his weird strategy of offering business class facilities to economy class passengers. An 18th birthday present for a son with a personality resembling Donald Trump Jr, Mallya pater called it a business failure.

The banks, owed more than ₹7,000 crore, begged to differ. Questions arose as to how aviation came to be designated "infrastructure lending" when he, a Rajya Sabha MP, was accessing loans. By 2012, the airline closed leaving scores of employees jobless. Then came reports of spectacular assets being requisitioned by lenders — zillions of cars, luxury homes, private jets. Topping this out were his flight to England after selling his core liquor business to Diageo, extradition hearings that involved an improbable photo of an Indian jail where he would be incarcerated to assure a British judge that he would not be mistreated.

Subhash Chandra, whose Essel group saw its stocks hammered last week, offered a point-by-point explanation of why he's in this predicament: "Incorrect bids" in infrastructure; a "key error" in acquiring D2H; shouldering a major debt when the family businesses were separated; the IL&FS crisis which "diminished" his ability to service borrowings. Bar his core

divergent special interest groups.

■ Another is incomplete or dysfunctional design, whereas expenditure must produce surpluses. For example, a new metro service in one part of the National Capital Region does not connect with the Delhi Metro. What's more, the interchange is separated by several kilometres, and is reportedly designed to end ultimately with a gap of 350 metres at street level. A "rapid transit" system that slows you down? If this were designed by enemy action to tie up resources and make people unproductive, they could not have done better. Similar problems assail the design of communications systems that often don't "connect the pipes" all the way through, such as spectrum regulations that hinder communications, hastily applied GST regulations, or expressways with bottlenecks.

■ A third is behavioural acts of omission or commission that increase costs and reduce surpluses. Ignoring laws, rules and regulations, whether it's driving down the wrong side, lane indiscipline, jumping traffic lights, breaking queues, littering, polluting, and such other lapses, including government agencies not paying bills.

■ Yet another is accepting mediocrity, ignoring standards and protocols required for quality outcomes, products or services.

If we are to achieve surpluses, we will have to build a consensus focused on cash flows. The building blocks are 'trainable' virtues, with appropriate structures, processes, and behaviour. Social disciplines such as a sense of responsibility for and a desire to maintain good order, working logically, cooperatively, to plan — an 'objective oriented, project management approach' for individual and group gain — needs to be taught, ideally from the cradle, and reinforced in our activities, provided the connectivity and content are built to support this. These values can also be introduced at any level. Playing for group stakes and open, direct communication can be habituated through practice, by educational, economic and political systems treating them as worthy of inculcation and reward.

A necessary adjunct is to embrace long-horizon plans and group gains through bipartisan activity. For example, export initiatives are needed using digital technologies that feed into a digitally informed foreign trade policy (DIFTP).<sup>3</sup> Such initiatives require diligent collective effort, recognising that short cuts are at the cost of larger gains. Until we practice such convergent, national-gain behaviour, we are unlikely to generate the surpluses we wish for.

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1: "Corporate profit to GDP: Analyzing growth across cycles - 2018 mirroring 2003 bottom": <https://www.motilaloswal.com/site/rreports/63684004127672228.pdf>

2: <https://thewire.in/political-economy/what-explains-india-incs-corporate-earnings-conundrum>

3: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/RASHMI\\_BANGA/publication/330824656\\_Is\\_India\\_Digitally\\_Prepared\\_for\\_International\\_Trade](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/RASHMI_BANGA/publication/330824656_Is_India_Digitally_Prepared_for_International_Trade)



SWOT

KANIKA DATTA

# Countering India's e-commerce cacophony



## BOOK REVIEW

AJIT BALAKRISHNAN

In *When It Clicks: Field Notes from India's E-Commerce Revolution*, an India Railway Reservation pioneer tells his story in a world that is awash with misgivings about what the internet revolution has wrought. Such misgivings range from accusations that e-commerce is destroying the livelihood of small shopkeepers, who employ half of India's young who are desperately seeking jobs in urban India to escape the misery of rural India, to accusations that the internet is being used to fix elections. In this dismal scenario, the book shines a

bright light on an achievement most Indians will probably agree on: the availability of online reservations on Indian Railways. Gone are the days of waiting for hours in queue at dawn or dealing with sleazy brokers in dark alleys to get a railway ticket to go see your parents. And this book is by one of the key people who fought against overwhelming odds to make the Online Railway Reservation system happen.

Few people would have dared to take on a job as gigantic as this. The Indian Railway system has 7,300-plus railway stations that carries millions of passengers every year over 67,000-plus kilometres in the country. Imagine also the task of making it happen in an organisation that employs more than 1.3 million people. Amitabh Pandey's book is about how he went about enthusing teams inside the Indian Railways and facilitating

online reservations — with all its complexities of keeping track of seats availability across thousands of trains, to taking the booking, getting payment systems implemented and ensuring that tickets are delivered safely to ticket buyers across the vast expanse of India.

The Indian Railways website went live in August 2002 complete with online payments at a time when most Indian corporate bosses viewed the internet as a playing thing where their teenage children went and listened to pirated music and films or viewed pornography. Yet in those early days, when telephone lines barely worked and most banks did not offer online payment facilities, online ticketing at Indian Railways leapt from a few hundred tickets a day to several thousand tickets a day in a few months. The cliché is that real start-ups get started in garages. Mr Pandey and the online Railway Reservations team

were given a stretch of corridor in an Indian Railways building where they created a small room barely large enough to house three server racks and his team.

We are a country in which selfless, faceless civil servants undertake some truly heroic acts, but the media glory is focused on "start-ups" and business tycoons. Enabling the online booking and payment for Indian Railway tickets is one such case. Having toiled in the internet industry for two decades, I can venture to say that just about the only worthwhile achievement of India's e-commerce industry is this: creating the online reservation and payment of the Indian Railways. The rest of India's e-commerce industry seemed to be devoted to flooding the Indian market with cheap Chinese fake-name consumer electronic goods and running up astronomical losses. Reading this book, I suddenly recalled

how much of the foundation of India's later success in Information Technology services was laid by outsourcing contracts that the India Railways (and later the nationalised banks) handed out in the late 1980s to Indian entrepreneurs. These projects enabled and nurtured the early IT services companies and helped them prepare to capitalise on the worldwide Y2K boom of the late 1990s.

The author devotes some of his book to an overview of the online travel industry in India, particularly the venture-funded air-travel portion of it. He analyses the various segments of this industry and concludes that "the pattern is slightly disturbing". He says that there is a "tendency towards hubris when large sums of money are available to burn..." and that there is an attitude "of 'get me the best there is, money is no object'! This leads to unnecessary waste". He concludes that maybe "venture capital perhaps needs to introspect..." and adds that "most VCs have their roots in the West". He asks, like many others, about the e-

commerce industry, "How long will ...loss-making operations last?" and follows it up with an interesting discussion on whether the market share they have acquired by discounting prices be lost once the discounting stops.

These questions, plus the ones he raises on "Dark-Suited Bankers" in India who, in his view, never take risks, and on whether electronic transactions can replace "overworked, often rude and ill-informed and unhelpful 'babu'" and thus make the life of ordinary citizens in India a little more bearable, should make this book appealing to all thinking people. Mr Pandey accomplishes all of this in a mere 156 pages, something you can easily read, let's say, on a Bombay-Delhi flight.

## WHEN IT CLICKS:

*Field Notes from India's E-Commerce Revolution*  
Amitabh Pandey  
Pan Macmillan, ₹299, 156 pages

# The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

## Mallya's extradition on course

Law catches up with high-profile fugitives

**H**ARD times are in store for the King of Good Times. The UK has finally ordered the extradition of business tycoon Vijay Mallya, who is accused of defrauding banks and laundering money to the tune of Rs 9,000 crore. The development is a shot in the arm for India's diplomatic efforts to bring back the high-profile fugitive. Mallya still has a lifeline — he can file an appeal with the UK High Court against the Home Secretary's order — but it's clear that he is running out of legal options.

In December last year, the Westminster Magistrates' Court had ordered the liquor baron's extradition after being convinced by India's assurance on the suitability of Mumbai's Arthur Road jail for his incarceration. As and when that happens, the breakthrough will help Britain contest the notorious tag of being a 'haven for richie-rich offenders'. Facing pressure from India and other countries, the UK had late last year decided to suspend the 'golden visa' scheme under which an investment of £5-10 million was enough to secure permanent residency, never mind the investor's dubious credentials. However, the move was controversially put on hold.

The two countries had signed an extradition treaty back in 1993, but India has so far been successful in bringing back only one person — Samirbhai Vinubhai Patel, an accused in the 2002 Gujarat riots. The poor track record has been attributed to the Indian law enforcement agencies' apparent failure to make the cases watertight and the UK government's alleged laxity. There are a few big fish who have taken refuge there over the years, including IPL founder Lalit Modi. In 2013, India had come tantalisingly close to extraditing retired naval officer Ravi Shankaran, who is suspected of involvement in the naval war room leak case. However, a year later, the England and Wales High Court upheld his appeal against the lower court's verdict, while raising doubts about the CBI's evidence. Hopefully, the same won't happen in Mallya's case. Well and truly in the election mode, the Modi government is expected to go the whole hog to take the matter to its logical conclusion.

## Punjab schools bloom

Philanthropy propels govt schools to betterment

**T**HE metamorphosis of 2,524 government schools in Punjab from ramshackle buildings to sought-after institutions of learning is like the blooming of lotus flowers in a muddy pond. While government efforts towards the improvement of the school sector betray ineptitude and lack of will, it is heartening that philanthropic endeavours by the general public, NRIs and corporates have borne fruit in the short span of a year. Moved by the decline in the condition of schools, the concerned people seem to have taken the onus of improving the state of affairs. It is no surprise that their faith in the ability of the government authorities to do so has taken a beating. For, the ground reality only points to the muddy pond becoming muddier.

Year after year, as students take board exams or answer questionnaires of various surveys, their results mostly indicate a poor standard of education imparted to them. Intricately enmeshed in the inability of children to solve sums or read chapters of even three classes lower than their present class is the quality of teachers. A lot of them can be found more in the streets, agitating for their demands than in engaging productively with the children in classrooms. Whether it is the issue of postings and transfers or of wages, the authorities have floundered. Ditto as far as infrastructure goes. Run-down, leaky school buildings housing students huddled in cold corridors, awaiting winter uniform through the season and textbooks unavailable for months in an academic session are a common plight.

In this bleak scenario, the philanthropic Punjabis present a ray of hope. The culture of giving one-tenth of one's earnings in charity that is ingrained in them comes to the fore as they willingly part with their savings for the needy students. A principal could garner Rs 70,000 aid on day one of his campaign and it encouraged him to collect more funds for the blossoming of his school. Just as the other 2,523 lotuses blooming across the state. But it does not absolve the state of its duty to ensure that its teachers are a satisfied lot and that the children get quality education.

### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The visionary starts with a clean sheet of paper, and re-imagines the world. — **Malcolm Gladwell**

### ON THIS DAY...50 YEARS AGO

## The Tribune.

AMBALA, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1969

### POLICE OPEN FIRE ON VIOLENT MOB; FOUR HURT

**HYDERABAD, February 5 (PTI, UNI)**-Police opened fire to quell a riotous mob of colliery workers near Bellampalli in Adilabad district yesterday afternoon, according to an official report received here today. Four persons were injured as a result of the police firing while two constables sustained injuries in stone-pelting by the crowd. About 500 to 600 workers were brought out of the mines and marched in a procession by office-bearers of the workers union. They later went to the colliery colony at Ramakrishnapuram and attacked the house of the Assistant Manager said to be hailing from Andhra region, and ransacked his house. The report added the police made a lathi-charge and used tear-gas. When it proved ineffective they opened fire injuring four. A platoon of Armed Reserve Police was rushed from Warangal this morning. The workers did not report for work in some pits in the area following the incidents at Ramakrishnapuram.

### Parliament Session In South Not Feasible.

**NEW DELHI, Feb. 5 (UNI)**-The holding of a Parliament session in the South is not a feasible proposition, according to a consensus arrived at by the Committee of MPs headed by Mr. S.R. Rane. The committee's views will be submitted to the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs next month. It met recently to finalise its broad conclusions. A report embodying the committee's views is now under preparation and this will be adopted at its next meeting in March. Most of the members, including several Opposition leaders, are reported to have held that the cause of national integration was not likely to be significantly advanced by holding a session in the South.

# What Kairon meant for Punjab

The visionary CM set the state on path of industrialisation & scientific farming



M RAJIVLOCHAN

PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, PANJAB UNIVERSITY

**F**EW today recall that Punjab had once dreamt of being an industrial state. That was the dream of Partap Singh Kairon: CM of Punjab for over eight years. His assassination on February 6, 1965, killed that dream. Successor CMs rolled back his schemes for promoting industries and refused to provide assurances that industrialists needed to invest in a border state.

Squabbles among politicians of those days were a rootless phenomena. Lala Jagat Narain, the newspaper magnate, put this on record several years after Kairon's killing: 'We only fought for power. It was never a conflict over ideas or principles,' he said a few years before his death for an interview archived at the Nehru Memorial Library.

Looking back, what one is struck by, is the unwavering vision that Kairon harboured of an industrialised, progressive and prosperous Punjab, where all communities lived comfortably with one another. 'This is because of my education in economics at the University of California at Berkeley,' he would say. Translating those ideas into action meant creating strategies to improve food production and to industrialise.

For a Punjab that had been torn asunder by Partition, with an agricultural landscape characterised by the small peasant, tilling land of an indifferent quality, this was no small achievement. Wherever there was a difficult decision to be made, whether it was by way of implementing the Land Ceiling Act, or by forcing the Consolidation of Land since that was imperative for improving agricultural productivity or by imposing a betterment levy on irrigated lands to pay for



**A CUT ABOVE:** Among all CMs, Kairon (R) alone seemed to take forward Nehru's ideas.

Kairon's generosity and vision were legendary. Had he not been assassinated, he would have changed Punjab's destiny.

the Bhakra Nangal project, Kairon never backed down.

Economic progress entails certain costs and hard decisions. Kairon showed a clear recognition of the costs and a willingness to pay them. In a political landscape dominated by narrow and communal kind of demands, whether it was over the Hindi or Punjabi language, he towered over all others and resisted those demands. This was something even his enemies acknowledged. Dressed in a khadi *kurta-pyjama*, Kairon would urge the use of the latest techniques in agriculture. He would pester his officers to help peasants enter the world of scientific agriculture. Punjabi was his preferred language of communication. So much so that when Nehru began to send foreign guests to Punjab to see the economic transformation, many doubted if Kairon would be able to deal with these sophisticated foreigners.

He kept a sharp eye on black marketers and often convinced them that it was safer and more profitable to have a legitimate business. That helped the growth of the textile industry in Amritsar and metal works at Jagadhari and Mandi Gob-

indgarh. A unit of HMT, a public sector unit, was started in Punjab. He even reached out to the Geological Survey of India to survey the land of Punjab in the hope that some hidden mineral or oil deposits may be found that would boost economic growth.

It was not just economic progress he talked about but also equity and education. He alone among all Chief Ministers seemed to take forward Nehru's ideas of developing modern institutions underpinned by a scientific temper. The PGIMER, Chandigarh, was one such; other states would make efforts to set up such institutes 50 years later. Remarkably, while setting up the PGI, Kairon involved people best suited to lead it. It was of no consequence that many of them like Dr Santokh Singh Anand and Dr PN Chuttani had been his critics. Similarly, he did not hesitate to appoint Hardwari Lal as the Vice Chancellor of Kurukshetra University despite being a staunch critic. He also persuaded the Ludhiana agriculture college to upgrade to a top agriculture research university, the PAU.

It was this largeness of heart and of vision that distinguishes him

above all. Combined with his propensity to take tough decisions, it made him one of the most successful Chief Ministers of his times. *The Tribune* Editor Prem Bhatia would not hesitate to issue the headline 'Most powerful Chief Minister of India' while describing Kairon's achievements.

Kairon would make efforts to reach out to people. Neera Grover, who retired as the head of the department of music, SNDT University, Mumbai, recalls how Kairon went about promoting Punjabi. Her father, a professor, was sitting out in the sun in Chandigarh, reading papers in his small garden, when someone walked in, tapped him on the shoulder and congratulated him for reading Punjabi. It was the CM himself, walking through the sector, stopping by at homes and taking feedback from people on the use of Punjabi that the government had recently made compulsory.

A teetotaler and non-smoker, he would reach the home of his Chief Secretary, EN Mangatrai, ICS, to have a *sarkari* chat. 'You can't work without your smoke and whisky' he would tell Mangatrai, 'better that I come to your house for work rather than force you to come to mine and make you miss out on the drink.'

When in 1962, the Union government urged the states to implement prohibition, Kairon organised a number of events across the state to educate people on the benefits of shunning alcohol. The China war that started in the autumn of that year stopped prohibition from being implemented in Punjab. Without people's support, Kairon would say, such a policy will not succeed. His enemies repeatedly accused him of corruption. In India of those times, the ideal of correct conduct was Ram Dasrathi, the legendary prince of Ayodhya, who demanded his wife Sita enter the fire to prove her purity. Kairon underwent such a test and came out unscathed. Had it not been for the assassin's bullet, he would have reclaimed Punjab's leadership, for the people were already with him.

# So kids may be able caregivers...

NEELA SOOD

**I**HAD a chance to visit a couple who had put three posters on the wall of the drawing room of their house. The first poster, relatively small in size, showed their son as a child; the second poster, bigger than the first one, had an imaginary photograph of their son as a middle-aged man with a loving wife and children around him, all in a joyous mood; and in the last frame, which was the biggest in size, again, an imaginary photograph of him as a bed-ridden old man in a dingy room, with nobody to take care of him.

A bit perplexed, I asked the host

what it meant. 'This is a human's life cycle. My son should always keep his old age in mind,' said the man. The next day, when I got up, I was surprised to see his 10-year-old son cleaning the toilet. 'Yes, it is the first job he is asked to do without fail in the morning before going to school. If he remembers these things and does not look at cleaning human excreta with aversion, he will be able to take care of old and incapacitated persons. It may be me or his mother or anybody else,' his father said, as a matter of fact.

He went on to add: 'Parents should not only fuel ambitions in their children, but also make them

aware of their responsibilities as a member of the family and also society when they grow up.'

I could see enough substance in what he said, considering that in the coming years, we won't get people who would provide personal care to the elderly, even if paid well. And if at all they do it, it would be too impersonal and cold to provide any degree of satisfaction to the needy. In the end, only the kin will have to take care of their elderly. Further, it is very important to acquaint students with the human life span and the ageing process, with the main focus on old age, in the school curriculum.

Thanks to the present-day exces-

sive commercialism, when children have holidays, we are served with pamphlets inviting parents to send them for dance and painting workshops and other such vocational 'fun' classes. I think this is the time when children should be made to spend time with the elderly persons in their family, especially in meeting their basic needs.

A Bangladeshi folk tale has a lesson for all: A disabled grandfather was being carried by his son in a basket, to be abandoned in a forest. On seeing this, the grandson called out, 'Father, please be sure to bring back the basket. I will need it when you grow old.'

Let us sensitise our children.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Mallya's luck runs out

Apropos 'UK orders Mallya's extradition to India' (Feb 5), the Central government deserves credit for making a convincing case and pursuing it steadfastly to ensure Mallya's extradition. With the UK Home Office upholding the lower court's ruling, the tycoon's sunny days seem to have come to a close. The CBI, which played a significant role in engineering the extradition, also deserves a mention. Criminals who flee the country to seek a safe haven on foreign shores should be clear that they can't escape retribution by hoodwinking government agencies.

VIMAL SETHI, KAPURTHALA

#### Drama in Bengal

The whole country is watching the unfortunate happenings in Kolkata over the questioning of the Commissioner of Police by the CBI with regard to the Saradha chit fund scam, under the supervision of the SC. But Mamata Banerjee has been shielding the senior-most officer under her umbrella, for fear of being exposed in the scam and the reported connivance of TMC workers and its leaders. When the SC has allowed the questioning of the Commissioner of Police, how is it a moral victory of Mamata Banerjee? Is she trying to gain politically by project-

ing herself as an alternative to all opposition parties, as a possible prime-ministerial candidate in case the BJP fails to emerge as the single-largest party?

PRAVEEN KHANNA, PATIALA

#### Cheap political stunt

Apropos the editorial 'Battlefield Kolkata' (Feb 5), it is a shame that Mamata Banerjee is hell-bent on resorting to a cheap political stunt to nurture her political ambition to become PM. Her action of sitting in on a dharna is unbecoming of a CM. Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal was rebuked by then President of India for indulging in similar tactics. Mamata is playing havoc with the federal structure of the Union. The shielding of the state police chief, who knows about the availability and traceability of records and evidence, becomes all the more questionable. She could have knocked at the door of the apex court if she felt aggrieved.

SHAM MURARI SHARMA, BY MAIL

#### Mamata taking it too far

Apropos 'Battlefield Kolkata' (Feb 5), the dharna being led by Mamata Banerjee to prevent the CBI from questioning the police chief shows the breakdown of the constitutional system in the state. It is for the first time

in the constitutional history of our nation that the CM of a state has gone on an indefinite dharna with a public servant of her state. Though Mamata Banerjee has accused PM Modi and the BJP president of trying to organise a coup, one can't deny that the way she has adopted to stand for democracy and the Constitution is unlawful. Why is she so agitated regarding the interrogation of Rajeev Kumar, alleged to have a connection with the chit fund scam? To maintain the integrity of the state police and the administration, she should immediately end her dharna and remove the police force deployed outside the CBI's office.

TUSHAR ANAND, PATNA

#### Is Bengal foreign state?

That Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath were not allowed to land in West Bengal is a sad commentary on the functioning of democracy in the state. What a queer thing that the CM of one state is not allowed to speak in another state? Is West Bengal a foreign country? Are Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath foreign nationals? The freedom of expression is the essence of a free society and must be safeguarded at all costs, failing which there will be anarchy in the country. Politicians, please mend your ways.

KR BHARTI, HAMIRPUR

#### The EVM row

Apropos 'Match 50% EVMs with paper trail: Oppn to EC' (Feb 5), it is unfortunate that the controversy regarding the efficacy of EVMs still remains unabated, in spite of the clear stand taken by the EC on the issue. The demand of paper trail will still not solve the basic problem in case inherent deficiency in the machines persists. Then, the other 50% will be treated as shady and liable to be questioned by parties losing the election. Since the general election is knocking at the door, the issue needs to be finalised for once and all. Let Parliament take a call and settle the matter permanently in the backdrop of the best options available.

JAGDISH CHANDER, JALANDHAR

#### Not easy to give up!

Apropos 'Poor me, don't pour me that drink' (Feb 4), the middle made for an interesting read. A friend of mine once told me to stop drinking. I said it was difficult to stop, to which he replied: 'Look at me. I stopped six times!' It is fun to stop and start! I am reminded of a verse by Mirza Ghalib: *Chhut ti nahin hai kafir/ Munh se lagi hui/ Raat ko thodi si peeli/ Subah ko tauba karli.*

MS TANDAN, AMBALA CANTT

# Farmers need much more than cash dole



**DEVINDER SHARMA**  
FOOD & AGRICULTURE SPECIALIST

Union data. The question that needs to be asked is how did the policy-makers conceive the idea to provide a paltry direct support which will not even make an iota of a difference.

Considering that the average income worked out by NABARD's All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey 2016-17 stands at just Rs 8,931 per month, it is certain that the direct income support of Rs 500 per month will not be enough to achieve the objective of doubling the farm income. Nor is this amount fit enough for any significant farm investments the farmer would like to make. The Economic Survey-2016 had computed the average income of a farmer in 17 states at a pitiful Rs 20,000 a year. In other words, the average income of a farming family in roughly half the country stood at less than Rs 1,700 per month. I shudder to think how several million farmers survive on that miserly income.

Borrowing the idea from Telangana, the government has already made an annual budgetary provision of Rs 75,000 crore for the PM-Kisan Scheme (beginning with the full-fledged Budget expected after the elections), but there is no reason why the direct payment amount couldn't have been doubled. At Rs 12,000 per small farmer, the budgetary allocation would have doubled to Rs 1.5 lakh crore. To the question where will the money come from, the best and easy instrument available for the Finance Minister was to immediately scrap the annual fiscal stimulus package of Rs 1.86 lakh crore being doled out to the industry, in operation since the global economic meltdown in 2008-09. While there is no economic justification for the package, it continues to be paid. A total of Rs 18.60 lakh crore has been paid to the industry since 2008-09, but no question has



**UNFAIR:** If only the farmers were paid their legitimate dues, the face of agriculture would have been bright.

Providing direct payment to small and vulnerable groups is the first step for augmenting farm income. This has to be followed by the setting up of the Farmers' Income Commission with the mandate to ensure a minimum monthly income of ₹18,000 per farming family.

ever been raised about the fiscal imbalance accruing. I see no reason why this money couldn't have been transferred to the farmers' account.

Like in Telangana's Rythu Bandhu scheme, the Centre, too, has kept the direct income support limited to land-owning farmers. The only difference being that while the Rythu Bandhu scheme is open-ended, which means even if a farmer has 10 acres, he will get proportionate support, the Centre is restricting it to farmers owning less than 2 hectares. It, however, excludes tenant farmers, who form 40 to 50 per cent of the farming population, from getting the same benefits. At the same time, direct cash payments landing into the bank accounts of absentee landlords remains a big problem.

Nevertheless, as someone who has

been a strong advocate of direct income support, it is gratifying to see direct payments now becoming an economic necessity. Agriculture has been and still remains a victim of the tyranny of markets. For more than four decades now, agricultural income had remained static, with many studies providing an empirical evidence of declining real farm income. Agriculture has been deliberately kept impoverished to keep the economic reforms alive. Keeping the food inflation low and by ensuring a cheaper raw material for the industry, the entire economic burden has been quietly passed on to the farmers.

An economic model, where agriculture is treated with disdain and has been very cleverly projected as an uneconomic activity, has to be reversed. To say that the Rs 500 a

month cash dole to small farmers may be increased in the future as the government's resources grow is a reflection of the same faulty economic thinking. As a result, most economic resources have been slowly and steadily shifted to the industry. Since 2004-05, the industry has got Rs 55 lakh crore of tax concessions. NITI Aayog estimates these concessions to be 5 per cent of the GDP. Knowing that income saved is income earned, this is no less than direct income support. In addition, the industry has been provided with massive incentives, which in reality are subsidies. On the other hand, an OECD-ICRIER (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development-Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations) study has worked out a total loss of Rs 45 lakh crore in the period between 2000 and 2017 on account of low farm prices.

If only the farmers were paid their legitimate dues, the face of agriculture would have been bright. Also, I fail to understand why governments have refused to take steps for ease of doing farming. Agriculture alone has the potential to reboot the economy and can sustain millions of livelihoods, thereby reducing the pressure on job creation.

Providing direct cash payment to small and vulnerable groups is the first step for augmenting farm income. I am sure the direct cash amount will see an incremental increase with the passage of time. This has to be followed by the setting up of the Farmers' Income Commission with the mandate to ensure a minimum monthly income of Rs 18,000 per farming family. This will open the doors to agriculture receiving more public sector investments, more holistic reforms, and in the bargain, being turned into an economic activity.

# CBI caught in crossfire between political foes



**SANKAR SEN**  
FORMER DIRECTOR, NATIONAL POLICE ACADEMY, HYDERABAD

THE country is witnessing a sad and unprecedented confrontation between the West Bengal Government and the CBI.

Never before has the investigating agency faced such open bellicosity from the state police or the government. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has accused the CBI of transgressing its jurisdiction and seeking to arrest a senior officer of the state without a warrant or intimation to her government. She has accused the Centre, particularly Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, of indulging in vendetta politics.

CBI sources point out that the Saradha and Rose Valley chit fund scam cases are being monitored by the Supreme Court. The investigation is being done by the CBI in pursuance of court directions. Hence, seeking the consent of the state government for carrying out the investigation within the jurisdiction of the state does not arise.

There were reports in sections of the Press that fearing imminent arrest, Commissioner of Police Rajeev Kumar went absconding. This disinformation has been contradicted by the Chief Minister and the Additional Commissioner of Police, who, during a press conference convened at the state police headquarters, called it 'bogus and motivated'.

The CBI approached the Supreme Court to direct the state government and the Commissioner of Police not to impede the investigation, ensure



**RETALIATION:** The CBI operation's timing was perhaps intended to expose corruption under Mamata Banerjee's rule. She, in turn, used it to score brownie points against the NDA.

the safety of CBI officers, and order the Commissioner of Police to hand over to the agency necessary papers and documents.

The CBI vs Kolkata police imbroglio is fraught with disturbing consequences. In a federal structure, different agencies of the state and Central governments must act in cohesion to serve the people and achieve the desired result. The purpose is defeated if they work at cross purposes. This applies more so in the case of the CBI, whose officers in the field constantly require help of the police for protec-

tion and field operations. From my long years of service in the police, I can say that normally the police extend all help to the CBI; without police assistance and cooperation, the CBI's work in the field would become very difficult, if not hazardous. Hence, it is not understood what prompted the CBI authorities to despatch a team of about 15 officers to the house of the Commissioner of Police to question him on a Sunday evening. Perhaps they might have had a plan to arrest him, if necessary. The investigation into the scams has been dragging on

for years. Hence, the tearing hurry was uncalled for. The new CBI Director has just assumed charge, and it should have been left to him to take a call in this sensitive case. Acting Director Nageswara Rao acted hastily and perhaps exceeded his brief, giving rise to the suspicion that it was a command performance. In this case, possibly, the warrant for search and questioning was not obtained from the court. The acting Director perhaps tried to be more loyal than the king, and dragged the CBI into an avoidable controversy.

It has been reported by the media that the Commissioner of Police had obtained an order from the Kolkata High Court, giving him leave from joining the CBI investigation till February 12, and forbidding coercive action till then. If there had been such an order, it could have been shown by the Commissioner to the CBI team and the latter sent back without any fuss.

The gravamen of the CBI charges is that the Commissioner of Police was not appearing before the investigators for questioning and destroying evidence.

The Supreme Court has now ordered that Kumar cooperate with the investigation into the Saradha chit fund scam case. The apex court has also said that Kumar will appear before the CBI at Shillong (Meghalaya), and that the central agency cannot arrest him. The CBI had alleged that investigating officers of the West Bengal

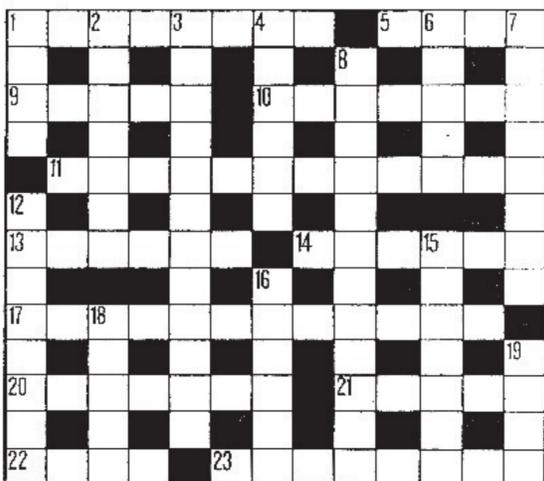
Police, working under Kumar, had handed over crucial evidence to the accused persons. Local authorities attempted to destroy evidence prior to the transfer of the case to the CBI by the Supreme Court. The court has also directed issuance of notices to the DGP, Chief Secretary and the Commissioner of Police on the contempt petition.

The unsavoury episode shows how the CBI is caught in the crossfire between rival political parties. The timing of the CBI operation was perhaps intended to expose corruption under Mamata Banerjee's rule, and she, in turn, used it for scoring brownie points against the BJP-led NDA government. The parties in power have been using the CBI for their partisan ends.

One does not know how far the new Director will be able to assert himself, rebuff the political masters, and make the CBI a neutral professional organisation. It will be possible to build a powerful and effective anti-corruption agency only if there is a strong political will. The CBI must have an Act, laying down its duties and functions. The Act should seek to insulate the CBI from extraneous pressures and make it apolitical and independent. Another alternative is to have a parliamentary committee to oversee the functioning of the CBI on the pattern of the Australian model. The apex court called CBI a 'caged parrot' and wanted to liberate it. The liberation is yet to come.

The CBI vs Kolkata police imbroglio is fraught with disturbing consequences. One does not know how far the new Director will be able to assert himself, rebuff the political masters, and make the CBI a neutral professional organisation. It will be possible to build a powerful and effective anti-corruption agency only if there is a strong political will.

## QUICK CROSSWORD



### ACROSS

- 1 Evasive (8)
- 5 Highest point (4)
- 9 Aspect (5)
- 10 Go ahead (7)
- 11 Exposed to public view (3,2,3,4)
- 13 American wildcat (6)
- 14 Constant (6)
- 17 A thriving business (5,7)
- 20 Wipe out (7)
- 21 Doubly (5)
- 22 Sodium chloride (4)
- 23 Spendthrift (8)

### DOWN

- 1 Demanding little effort (4)
- 2 Comprise as part (7)
- 3 Cavilling (12)
- 4 Fame (6)
- 6 Charging low prices (5)
- 7 Put at risk (8)
- 8 Tame (12)
- 12 US federal legislature (8)
- 15 Ardent (7)
- 16 An affected person (6)
- 18 Drive forward (5)
- 19 Small room (4)

**YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION**  
**Across:** 1 Irascible, 8 Mango, 9 Actuate, 10 Mishap, 11 Fringe, 12 Reveille, 15 Embolden, 18 Output, 20 Artist, 21 Dolphin, 22 Chide, 23 Newsprint.  
**Down:** 2 Recur, 3 Squint, 4 In the red, 5 Empire, 6 Anthill, 7 Coup d'etat, 11 Freelance, 13 Venomous, 14 Abstain, 16 Lessen, 17 Stupor, 19 Union.

## SU DO KU

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

MEDIUM

## CALENDAR

**FEBRUARY 6, 2019 WEDNESDAY**

- Vikrami Samvat 2075
- Shaka Samvat 1940
- Magh Shaka 17
- Magh Parvishite 24
- Hijari 1440
- Shukla Paksh Tithi 2
- Vari Yoga up to 9.54 am
- Dhanishta Nakshatra up to 9.08 am
- Moon in Aquarius sign

### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

## FORECAST

**SUNSET:** WEDNESDAY 18:02 HRS  
**SUNRISE:** THURSDAY 07:10 HRS

Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy	Rainy	Foggy
<b>CITY</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MIN</b>		
Chandigarh	19	11		
New Delhi	23	12		
<b>PUNJAB</b>				
Amritsar	19	11		
Bathinda	19	07		
Jalandhar	19	09		
Ludhiana	18	09		
<b>HARYANA</b>				
Bhiwani	20	10		
Hisar	20	11		
Sirsa	19	09		
<b>HIMACHAL PRADESH</b>				
Dharamsala	14	04		
Manali	11	-03		
Shimla	13	04		
<b>JAMMU &amp; KASHMIR</b>				
Jammu	12	09		
Leh	01	-08		
Srinagar	02	0		
<b>UTTARAKHAND</b>				
Dehradun	19	10		
Mussoorie	13	07		

TEMPERATURE IN °C

## बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 11 अंक 303

### बुनियादी क्षेत्र की चिंता

अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी के नेतृत्व वाली राष्ट्रीय जनतांत्रिक गठबंधन (राजग) की पहली सरकार ने बुनियादी विकास को प्राथमिकता दी थी और उसे देश में रोजगार निर्माण और आर्थिक वृद्धि का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण इंजन बनाया था। पिछले चार बजट को देखें तो प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के कार्यकाल में भी इन बातों पर ध्यान दिया गया है। परंतु हालिया

अंतरिम बजट में पूरा ध्यान समाज के वंचित वर्ग पर रहा है। काफी हद तक सरकार की बजट प्राथमिकता चुनावी दबाव से संचालित रही है। चुनाव के पहले लगभग हर राजनीतिक दल के सुर लोकलभावन हो जाते हैं। यही कारण है कि सरकार का ध्यान इस बार छोटे और सीमांत किसानों को प्रत्यक्ष आय समर्थन, असंगठित क्षेत्र के श्रमिकों के

लिए पेंशन योजना और 5 लाख रुपये तक की सालाना आय वाले लोगों को आयकर में छूट पर केंद्रित रहा है। कुल मिलाकर देखा जाए तो ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि सरकार को अपने संसाधनों को तार्किक बनाने की आवश्यकता पड़ी। पीएम-किसान और आयकर छूट जैसी योजनाओं की वजह से पड़ने वाले अतिरिक्त बोझ को समायोजित करने के लिए सरकार को बुनियादी विकास की योजनाओं के लिए किए जाने वाले बजट आवंटन में कमी करनी पड़ी।

परंतु इसका यह अर्थ नहीं है कि वित्त मंत्री पीयूष गोयल ने बीते पांच वर्ष के दौरान सरकार की उपलब्धियां नहीं दर्शाईं। उन्होंने उड़ान (उड़े देश का आम नागरिक) योजना का खासतौर पर उल्लेख किया। इस योजना

के परिणामस्वरूप देश में परिचालित हो रहे हवाई अड्डों की संख्या 100 का स्तर पर कर चुकी है। यही वजह है कि घरेलू विमान यात्रियों की संख्या बीते पांच वर्ष में बढ़कर दोगुनी हो गई। उन्होंने सुरक्षा के मामले में भारतीय रेल की सफलता का भी जिक्र किया। सफलता की इस दास्तान का एक बड़ा पहलू यह तथ्य भी है कि ब्रॉड गेज पर मौजूद तमाम मानवरहित रेलवे क्रॉसिंग को समाप्त कर दिया गया है। इन बदलावों की बदौलत देश के दूरदराज इलाकों तक पहुंच की गति तेज हुई है। उदाहरण के लिए अरुणाचल प्रदेश अब देश के विमानन मानचित्र पर नजर आने लगा है और मिजोरम तथा मेघालय जैसे प्रांत पहली बार देश के रेलवे मानचित्र पर दिखने लगे हैं। एक अन्य

घटना जो पहली बार घटी है वह यह कि कोलकाता से वाराणसी के बीच पहली बार जलमार्ग से माल ढुलाई की शुरुआत की गई। सड़क और रेल के मोर्चे पर भी पीछे मुड़कर देखने पर खुश होने की कई वजह नजर आती हैं। प्रति दिन लगभग 27 किलोमीटर का राजमार्ग निर्माण कार्य हुआ है। हाल के महीनों में यह गति और तेज हो गई है। हमारा देश राजमार्ग निर्माण की गति के मामले में दुनिया में सबसे आगे है।

इन सफलताओं के बावजूद अंतरिम बजट इस मोर्चे पर निराश करता है। साफ देखा जा सकता है कि राजनीतिक दृष्टि से प्रेरित पुनर्वितरण योजनाओं ने इस क्षेत्र के आवंटन पर असर डाला है। ऐसे में हालांकि रेलवे को 1.57 लाख करोड़ रुपये का उच्चतम

पूजीगत व्यय आवंटित हुआ है और इसे 64,587 करोड़ रुपये का उच्च बजट समर्थन मिला है लेकिन सड़क और विमानन क्षेत्र इतने भाग्यशाली नहीं हैं। उदाहरण के लिए सरकार ने भारतीय राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग प्राधिकरण को मिलने वाली बजट राशि में 631 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की कमी की है। यही वजह है कि प्राधिकरण को अब उधारी और सड़क परिसंपत्तियों के मुद्रीकरण की मदद से फंड जुटाने की कवायद करनी होगी। इसी प्रकार सामरामाला परियोजना के लिए बजट आवंटन को वित्त वर्ष 2020 के लिए कम करके 550 करोड़ रुपये कर दिया गया है। इससे पहले वित्त वर्ष 2019 में भी सरकार 600 करोड़ रुपये के आवंटन में से केवल 381 करोड़ रुपये ही खर्च कर सकी थी।



विनय सिन्हा

# चीन-जापान की करीबी और भारत की दूरी

भारत ऐसा कोई अवसर नहीं मुहैया करा पा रहा है जिसकी तुलना चीन की 'मेड इन चाइना 2025' पहल से की जा सके। इस संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं श्याम सरन

अमेरिका और चीन के कारोबारी युद्ध की बातों के बीच हम एक अहम घटना पर ध्यान नहीं दे पाए हैं। पिछले कुछ दिनों में चीन और जापान के तनावपूर्ण राजनीतिक रिश्तों की बर्फ कुछ हद तक पिघलती नजर आई है और उनके बीच व्यापारिक और आर्थिक रिश्तों में नई जान आ रही है। चीन के प्रधानमंत्री ली कच्छयांग मई 2018 में जापान की यात्रा पर गए थे। वह एक शुरुआत थी जिसके बाद अक्टूबर 2018 में जापानी प्रधानमंत्री चीन गए। यह 11 वर्ष में पहला मौका था जब कोई जापानी प्रधानमंत्री चीन गया था। दोनों के तनावपूर्ण रिश्तों में नरमी की शुरुआत तब हुई जब अमेरिका के ट्रंप प्रशासन ने व्यापारिक मसलों पर इन दोनों देशों की निशाना बनाना शुरू कर दिया। चीन के लिए जापानी उद्योग एवं व्यापार का महत्व यह है कि अमेरिकी बाजारों और उन्नत तकनीक तक उसकी पहुंच लगातार सीमित होती जा रही है। उधर जापान कुछ सीमाओं के साथ एक आकर्षक विकल्प बना हुआ है। हाल के दिनों में हुआवेई का जापानी दूरसंचार बाजार से बाहर होना ऐसी ही एक घटना है। चीन और जापान के रिश्तों में तनाव नई सहस्राब्दी के आगमन के समय क्षेत्रीय और

सुरक्षा मसलों को लेकर हुआ। सन 2012 में विवादित सेंकाकु द्वीप को लेकर हालात बहुत नाजुक हो गए थे। वर्ष 2012 में चीन में जापानी एफडीआई 740 करोड़ डॉलर के उच्चतम स्तर पर पहुंचा था लेकिन अगले कुछ वर्षों में इसमें गिरावट आई और यह 2016 में 310 अरब डॉलर रह गया। सालाना सर्वेक्षणों की बात करें तो अधिक से अधिक जापानी कंपनियां चीन से बाहर निकलने पर विचार कर रही थीं जबकि वहां विस्तार करने की इच्छा रखने वाली कंपनियां बहुत कम थीं। दोनों देशों के बीच अत्यंत तनावपूर्ण रिश्तों के कारण जापान ने अपना निवेश चीन के अलावा अन्य क्षेत्रों में फैलाना शुरू किया। यही वह वक्त था जब जापान ने भारत की ओर ध्यान दिया। यह ध्यान सुरक्षा साझेदार के रूप में भी था और जापानी व्यापार और निवेश के केंद्र के रूप में भी। तेजी से विकसित होती भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को चीन के समतुल्य पेशकश वाला बाजार माना जाने लगा। भारत में जापानी एफडीआई 2006-07 के 8.5 करोड़ डॉलर के रूप में थी। 2016-17 में 470 करोड़ डॉलर हो गया। चीन में कुल मिलाकर 10,000 करोड़ डॉलर की जापानी पूंजी है। भारत में यह केवल 2,500 करोड़ डॉलर है। अब जबकि चीन

एक बार फिर जापानी निवेश के लिए उपयुक्त केंद्र बनकर उभर रहा है तो कहा जा सकता है कि भारत पर हाशिये पर चले जाने का खतरा मंडरा रहा है। चीन में जापानी एफडीआई 2017 में सुधारकर 320 करोड़ डॉलर हो गया और माना जा रहा है कि इसमें आगे और सुधार होगा। जापान के बाह्य व्यापार संगठन (जेट्रो) के एक अधिकारी के मुताबिक, 'हमारा मौजूदा निष्कर्ष यह है कि जापानी कारोबार चीन में निवेश को लेकर आगे और सकारात्मक रहेगा।' जापान-चीन व्यापार में भी वर्ष 2012 के बाद आई गिरावट अब पलटी है और सुधार निवेश को मिल रहा है। 2017 में यह करीब 30,000 करोड़ डॉलर रहा। भारत-जापान व्यापार में हाल के वर्षों में गिरावट आई है और यह 2012-13 के 1,850 करोड़ डॉलर से घटकर 2016-17 में मात्र 1,350 करोड़ डॉलर रह गया। इसी अवधि में भारतीय निर्यात 610 करोड़ डॉलर से कम होकर 380 करोड़ डॉलर रह गया। जापान का कारोबारी जगत चीन की मेड इन चाइना 2025 पहल को एक बड़े अवसर के रूप में देखता है। इस पहल में 10 क्षेत्रों को चिह्नित किया गया है जिनमें कृत्रिम मेधा, रोबोटिक्स, इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स व्हीकल और

क्वांटम कंप्यूटिंग आदि शामिल हैं। चीन का लक्ष्य सन 2025 तक इन तमाम क्षेत्रों में अच्छी काबिलियत हासिल करने का है। जापान इन क्षेत्रों में पहले ही अहम काबिलियत हासिल कर चुका है। हाल ही में जापान की रोबोट निर्माता कंपनी यासकावा और चीन की वाहन कंपनी चेरी ने इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन निर्माण को लेकर समझौता किया है। नैशनल पैनासोनिक के शांघाई स्थित शोध एवं विकास केंद्र ने चीन की अलीबाबा और बायडू से कनेक्टेड डिवाइस और नई पीढ़ी के वाहनों के इंस्ट्रूमेंट पैनेल बनाने के लिए समझौता किया है। अमेरिकी और पश्चिमी यूरोप के देश जहां मेड इन चाइना पहल को अपने तकनीकी दबदबे के लिए चुनौती के रूप में देख रहे हैं, वहाँ जापान का रुख इसके उलट है। भारत के पास इसके समतुल्य अवसर नहीं है।

सन 2013 में जापान ने चीन की बेल्ट एंड रोड पहल का विरोध किया था। परंतु 2015 में उसने गुणवत्तापूर्ण बुनियादी ढांचे में सहयोग के साथ प्रतिक्रिया दी और एशिया तथा अफ्रीका के देशों में वित्तीय सहायता का व्यवहार्य तथा पारदर्शी विकल्प उपलब्ध कराया। सन 2017 में भारत और जापान ने मिलकर एशिया-अफ्रीका इकॉनॉमिक ग्रोथ कॉरिडोर (एएईजीसी) की घोषणा की ताकि एशिया और अफ्रीका के देशों में बुनियादी विकास को संयुक्त फंडिंग की जा सके। बहरहाल, जून 2018 में जापान के प्रधानमंत्री शिंजे आबे ने इसके लिए चीन का हाथ थाम लिया। अक्टूबर 2018 में उनकी चीन यात्रा के दौरान ऐसी 50 परियोजनाओं की घोषणा की गई। इनमें थाईलैंड की एक रेल परियोजना भी शामिल थी। जापान अब बेल्ट रोड पहल में चीन के साथ है।

जापान का कारोबारी जगत भारत में निवेश के माहौल को लेकर भी चिंतित रहता है। भारत-जापान बिज़नेस लीडर्स की हालिया संयुक्त रिपोर्ट में जापानी पक्ष ने भारत सरकार से मांग की कि वह जीएसटी व्यवस्था को सुसंगत और गतिशील बनाए तथा उससे जुड़ी प्रक्रियाओं को भी ठीक करे। इसके अलावा कर व्यवस्था को सुधारने, उसमें अतिरिक्त स्तर पर निरंतरता लाने आदि जैसी बातें भी कही गईं। इसमें मास्टर फाइल की जरूरतों की समीक्षा, संशुद्धियों को मजबूत बनाना और उनमें संशोधन करना, डेटा स्थानीयकरण को लेकर नियमों को सहज कर डेटा का मुक्त प्रवाह सुनिश्चित करना, बुनियादी विकास को बढ़ावा देना, परियोजनाओं की बोली प्रक्रिया में सुधार, पारदर्शिता लाना, कानूनी और संस्थागत ढांचों के प्रवर्तन में निरंतरता उत्पन्न करना, प्रशासनिक प्रक्रियाओं के आम नियमों का विकास करना और उनका डिजिटलीकरण करना आदि तमाम बातें शामिल हैं।

आज चीन में एफडीआई को लेकर कोई बहुत बेहतर शर्तों की पेशकश नहीं है लेकिन इसके बावजूद जापान को भारत के बजाय चीन तथा दक्षिण पूर्वी एशिया के देशों के साथ कारोबार करना ज्यादा रास आ रहा है, उसे इसमें अधिक सहजता महसूस हो रही है।

(लेखक पूर्व विदेश सचिव और वर्तमान में सीपीआर के वरिष्ठ फेलो हैं। लेख में प्रस्तुत विचार पूरी तरह निजी हैं।)

## सब्सिडी का बोझ अनुमान से अधिक रहने के आसार

पिछले शुक्रवार को पेश अंतरिम बजट में वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 के कुछ अनुमानों को संशोधित किया गया है, जिन्हें लेकर कुछ लोग सवाल उठा सकते हैं। लेकिन ऐसे लोगों को सरकार का जवाब यह है कि वित्त मंत्रालय के पास ऐसे ब्यौरे और आंकड़े उपलब्ध हैं, जो उसे ये आंकड़े जारी करने का भरोसा देते हैं। यह बयान अत्यंत करने वाला होना चाहिए। आखिरकार ये संशोधित आंकड़े सरकार के लिए राजकोषीय घाटे के अपने संशोधित लक्ष्य को हासिल करने में अहम होंगे। यह लक्ष्य वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 के लिए सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) का 3.4 फीसदी है।

इसके बावजूद इन आंकड़ों की हकीकत की पड़ताल उपयोगी साबित हो सकती है। सबसे पहले हमें देश में प्रमुख सब्सिडी पर खर्च को देखना चाहिए। खाद्य सब्सिडी का संशोधित अनुमान वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 के लिए 1.71 लाख करोड़ रुपये है, जबकि इसका बजट अनुमान 1.69 लाख करोड़ रुपये पेश किया गया था। अंतरिम बजट से पहले नवंबर 2018 तक का खाद्य सब्सिडी का मासिक आंकड़ा उपलब्ध था। इस आंकड़े के अनुसार अप्रैल से नवंबर तक खाद्य सब्सिडी का बिल 1.42 लाख करोड़ रुपये या करीब 17,800 करोड़ रुपये प्रतिमाह था। अगर यह मानकर चलते हैं कि चालू वित्त वर्ष के शेष चार महीनों में खाद्य सब्सिडी की औसत मासिक दर यही बनी रही तो कुल खाद्य सब्सिडी बिल बढ़कर 2.14 लाख करोड़ रुपये पर पहुंच जाएगा। यह अंतरिम बजट के संशोधित अनुमान से करीब 42,000 करोड़ रुपये अधिक होगा।

उर्वरक सब्सिडी के भी दो अहम हिस्से हैं। अंतरिम बजट दर्शाता है कि यूरिया सब्सिडी का संशोधित अनुमान वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 के लिए 44,985 करोड़ रुपये है। यह बजट अनुमान 44,989 करोड़ रुपये से मामूली कम है। अप्रैल से नवंबर 2018 के दौरान यूरिया सब्सिडी पर खर्च 33,294 करोड़ रुपये रहा है, यानी हर महीने 4,162 करोड़ रुपये। अगर चालू वर्ष के शेष चार महीनों में भी खर्च इसी दर से बढ़ा तो कुल यूरिया सब्सिडी बिल बढ़कर 49,941 करोड़ रुपये पर पहुंच जाएगा, जो अंतरिम बजट में दिए



दिल्ली डायरी

ए के भट्टाचार्य

अप्रैल-नवंबर, 2018 के दौरान सब्सिडी पर खर्च की औसत दर यह संकेत देती है कि वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 में इन पर खर्च संशोधित अनुमानों की तुलना में अधिक रहेगा

गए संशोधित अनुमान के आंकड़े से करीब 4,956 करोड़ रुपये अधिक होगा।

इसी तरह पोषण आधारित उर्वरकों का सब्सिडी बिल 2018-19 के संशोधित अनुमानों में 25,090 करोड़ रुपये दिखाया गया है, जो एक साल पहले बजट अनुमानों में दिए गए आंकड़े के समान है। लेकिन इस मद पर अप्रैल-नवंबर 2018 की अवधि में 20,152 करोड़ रुपये पहले ही खर्च हो चुके हैं यानी हर महीने 2,159 करोड़ रुपये। अगर वर्ष के शेष चार महीनों में खर्च इसी रफार से बढ़ा तो पोषण आधारित उर्वरकों की सब्सिडी का सालाना बिल बढ़कर 30,228 करोड़ रुपये पर पहुंच जाएगा। यह अंतरिम बजट में पेश किए गए संशोधित अनुमान से 5,138 करोड़ रुपये अधिक होगा।

अंतरिम बजट में पेट्रोलियम सब्सिडी बिल का संशोधित अनुमान 24,833 करोड़ रुपये है, जो इसी वर्ष के बजट अनुमान 24,933 करोड़ रुपये से कम था। चालू वित्त वर्ष के दौरान कच्चे

तेल की कीमतें तेजी से बढ़ी थीं, इसलिए रसोई गैस और केरोसिन के सब्सिडी बिल बढ़ने चाहिए। असल में चालू वित्त वर्ष के पहले आठ महीनों में पेट्रोलियम सब्सिडी पर 23,142 करोड़ रुपये का खर्च आने का अनुमान है यानी हर महीने 2,893 करोड़ रुपये का खर्च आया है। अगर चालू वित्त वर्ष के शेष चार महीनों में पेट्रोलियम सब्सिडी का खर्च इसी रफार से बढ़ा तो कुल बिल बढ़कर 34,713 करोड़ रुपये पर पहुंच जाएगा। यह अंतरिम बजट के संशोधित अनुमान से 9,880 करोड़ रुपये अधिक होगा।

संशोधित अनुमानों के मुताबिक इन प्रमुख सब्सिडी पर 2018-19 के दौरान कुल 2.66 लाख करोड़ रुपये खर्च होंगे। यह राशि बजट अनुमान 2.64 लाख करोड़ रुपये से मामूली अधिक है। अगर आप अप्रैल से नवंबर 2018 के दौरान इन सब्सिडी पर आए खर्च के आधार पर पूरे साल के खर्च का अनुमान लगाएंगे तो पाएंगे कि खर्च 0.62 लाख करोड़ रुपये अधिक रह सकता है। प्रमुख सब्सिडी का वास्तविक बिल 3.28 लाख करोड़ रुपये तक पहुंच सकता है, जबकि इनका संशोधित अनुमान 2.64 लाख करोड़ रुपये ही है।

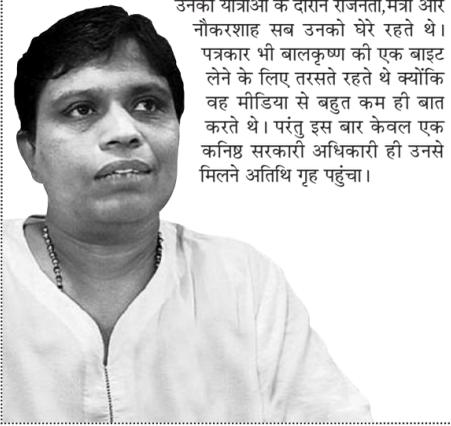
यह बात ध्यान देने लायक है कि इन सब्सिडी पर खर्च के मासिक आंकड़े (नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (सीपीजी) हर महीने जारी करता है। निस्संदेह सीपीजी के आंकड़े ऑडिट नहीं किए हुए और अस्थायी हैं। इसके अलावा यह वास्तविक है कि बीते महीनों के खर्च की रफार हर मामले में लागू न हो। बजट बनाने वालों की सूचनाओं और आंकड़ों तक ज्यादा पहुंच होती है। इनसे उन्हें संशोधित आंकड़े जारी करने का भरोसा मिलने की संभावना है। यह संभव है कि राजकोषीय घाटे के आंकड़े पर इसके असर को कुछ मदों में संशोधित अनुमानों की तुलना में कम खर्च करके बेअसर कर दिया जाए। या इस खर्च के हिस्से को अगले साल तक टाल दिया जाए? लेकिन प्रमुख सब्सिडी पर ही संशोधित अनुमान के मुकाबले 0.62 लाख करोड़ रुपये अधिक खर्च होने से सरकार के राजकोषीय मजबूती के कार्यक्रम की गुणवत्ता पर प्रतिकूल असर पड़ेंगे।

### कानाफूसी

मन की बात राहुल से पिछले दिनों कांग्रेस पार्टी के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी दिल्ली के एक रेस्तरां में छात्रों के एक समूह के साथ चर्चा करते देखे गए। पार्टी ने इस कार्यक्रम का एक छोटा सा वीडियो सोशल मीडिया पर भी डाला। इसे प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के कार्यक्रम मन की बात का जवाब बताया जा रहा है। राहुल ने अपना परिचय देने के बाद कहा, 'अपनी बात राहुल के साथ' कार्यक्रम की पहली कड़ी में आपका स्वागत है। बाद में कांग्रेस के नेताओं ने कहा कि यह स्वतःस्फूर्त बातचीत थी जहां छात्रों से कहा गया था कि पार्टी के एक नेता उनसे बात करेंगे लेकिन जब उन छात्रों ने राहुल को अपने बीच देखा तो वे चकित रह गए। राहुल ने कहा कि उन्हें लगा कि उन्हें युवाओं से बातचीत करके उनकी सोच के बारे में जानकारी मिलेगी। गौरतलब है कि सन 2014 के आम चुनाव के पहले कांग्रेस का घोषणापत्र जारी करने के पहले भी राहुल ने ऐसी ही चर्चाएं आयोजित की थीं।

### बदला दौर

योग गुरु से कारोबारी बने रामदेव के करीबी सहयोगी और पंतजलि आयुर्वेद के सह संस्थापक आचार्य बालकृष्ण को पिछले दिनों मध्य प्रदेश के रोवा स्थित एक विश्वविद्यालय से डीलिट की उपाधि प्रदान की गई। रोवा जाने से पहले बालकृष्ण कुछ समय के लिए राजधानी भोपाल के एक वीआईपी अतिथि गृह में रुके। इन मसलों पर गौर करने वालों के मुताबिक बालकृष्ण की यह यात्रा उनकी पिछली कुछ यात्राओं से एकदम अलग रही। पहले उनकी यात्राओं के दौरान राजनेता, मंत्री और नौकरशाह सब उनको घेरे रहते थे। पत्रकार भी बालकृष्ण की एक बाइट लेने के लिए तरसते रहते थे क्योंकि वह मीडिया से बहुत कम ही बात करते थे। परंतु इस बार केवल एक कनिष्ठ सरकारी अधिकारी ही उनसे मिलने अतिथि गृह पहुंचा।



### आपका पक्ष

#### परंपरागत ऊर्जा बनाम रसोई गैस

देश में रसोई गैस के आगमन से पहले परंपरागत ऊर्जा का इस्तेमाल किया जाता था। ग्रामीण भारत में कुछ जगह अभी भी परंपरागत ऊर्जा का ही इस्तेमाल किया जाता है। गांवों की महिलाएं बाग-बगीचे, खेत-खलिहान से जलावन लकड़ी चुनकर लाती हैं। घर में पाले गए मवेशियों के गोबर से चूल्हे बनाए जाते हैं। इसका उपयोग रसोई में चूल्हा जलाने में किया जाता है। लकड़ी कोयला और खान से निकले कोयले से भी चूल्हा जलाया जाता है। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में आज भी जगह-जगह पर गोबर के उपले सूखते दिख जाएंगे। छोटे ढाबे और होटलों में कोयले के चूल्हे जलते मिल जाएंगे। ये सभी परंपरागत ऊर्जा के स्रोत हैं लेकिन इसके हानिकारक पहलू भी हैं। चूल्हे से निकलने वाले धुएं से सांस जिनत बीमारियां होती हैं। इस बीमारी की चपेट में कितने प्रतिशत लोग आते हैं। इसका कोई आंकड़ा शायद ही उपलब्ध हो। इस चूल्हे से निकलने



वाला धुआं भी पर्यावरण को नुकसान पहुंचाता है। भारत कार्बन उत्सर्जन में तेजी से बढ़ रहा है। ग्रामीणों पर काम भी कर रहा है। दूसरी ओर सरकार रसोई गैस को बढ़ावा दे रही है। प्रधानमंत्री उज्वला योजना के तहत हर लोगों को मुफ्त में गैस के कनेक्शन दिए जा रहे हैं। सरकार का लक्ष्य है कि हर घर में रसोई गैस से खाना पके जिससे महिलाओं

केंद्र सरकार की उज्वला योजना का मकसद हर घर में रसोई गैस कनेक्शन देना है।

को परंपरागत चूल्हे से निकलने वाले धुएं से निजात मिल सके। सरकार की यह पहल सराहनीय है तथा इससे रसोई घर की रौनक भी बढ़ जाती है। घर में खाना पकाना

आसान हो गया है तथा परंपरागत चूल्हे को जलने में लगने वाला समय भी बच जाता है। गैस चूल्हा तुरंत जल उठता है लेकिन परंपरागत चूल्हे में लकड़ी, कोयले या उपले को जलाने समय लगता है। अगर हम परंपरागत ऊर्जा का सही तरीके से इस्तेमाल करें तो धुआं जिनत रोग तथा पर्यावरण को होने वाले नुकसान को कम कर सकते हैं। रसोई में ईंधन के रूप में होने वाला खर्च भी बच सकता है। मवेशियों के गोबर से बने उपले, खेत तथा बाग-बगीचे से निकलने वाले जलावन का समुचित इस्तेमाल किया जा सकता है।

किशोर कुमार, नोएडा

#### सेवा क्षेत्र का हो विस्तार

रोजगार सृजन के लिए सरकार को देश के सेवा क्षेत्र में नए प्रयोग

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



## नागरिकता का सवाल

असम में राष्ट्रीय नागरिकता पंजीकरण यानी एनआरसी के काम को रोकने संबंधी केंद्र सरकार की अपील को सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने टुकरा दिया है। उसने स्पष्ट कर दिया है कि किसी भी हाल में एनआरसी की तिथि जुलाई से आगे नहीं बढ़ाई जाएगी। आम चुनावों के मद्देनजर केंद्रीय गृहमंत्रालय ने मांग की थी कि चूंकि चुनाव के दौरान केंद्रीय सशस्त्र पुलिस बल व्यस्त रहेगा, इसलिए एनआरसी का काम दो हफ्ते के लिए टाल दिया जाए। पर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने तल्लख टिप्पणी की कि केंद्र सरकार इस काम को बर्बाद करना चाहती है। दरअसल, एनआरसी को लेकर असम में शुरू से ही विवाद चल रहा है। सरकार का मानना है कि असम में बड़ी तादाद में विदेशी घुसपैटिए आकर बस चुके हैं। उनकी पहचान करना जरूरी है। घुसपैठ कर आए लोगों के जरिए आतंकवादी संगठन देश की सुरक्षा व्यवस्था को चुनौती देते हैं। इसलिए पिछली जुलाई में असम में राष्ट्रीय नागरिकता पंजीकरण की प्रक्रिया शुरू की गई थी। इसके तहत जो पहली सूची आई, उसमें करीब चालीस लाख लोगों के नाम नहीं थे। उनमें से साढ़े सैंतीस लाख लोगों के नाम पूरी तरह खारिज किए जा चुके हैं, जबकि ढाई लाख लोगों के नाम विचाराधीन सूची में हैं। इसे लेकर वहां लगातार विरोध प्रदर्शन हो रहे हैं।

असल में एनआरसी के लिए जो पहली सूची जारी की गई थी, उसमें उन लोगों के नाम छोट दिए गए थे, जिनके पास उचित नागरिकता प्रमाण-पत्र नहीं थे। मगर बहुत सारे लोगों का कहना है कि वे अपनी नागरिकता संबंधी प्रमाण-पत्र बनवाने को लेकर सजग नहीं थे, जबकि वे पीढ़ियों से वहां रह रहे हैं। फिर सरकार के पास खुद ऐसा कोई पुख्ता आंकड़ा नहीं है, जिससे बाहर से आकर बसे लोगों की वास्तविक संख्या का पता चलता हो। अलग-अलग बयानों में वहां की सरकार विरोधाभासी आंकड़े बता चुकी है। दरअसल, यह इसलिए हुआ कि सरकार ने पहले बाहर से आए लोगों के बारे में जानकारी नहीं जुटाई, उसने सीधा पंजीकरण का काम शुरू कर दिया। ऐसे में बहुत सारे ऐसे लोगों के नाम सूची से बाहर हो गए, जिनके पास किसी वजह से कोई प्रमाण-पत्र नहीं था। ग्रामीण इलाकों में रहने वाले लोग आमतौर पर जन्म और मृत्यु प्रमाण-पत्र जैसे कागजात रखने, अपनी पहचान संबंधी दस्तावेज संजोने के मामले में लापरवाह देखे जाते हैं। कुछ गड़बड़ियां ग्रामीण प्रशासन के स्तर पर भी होती हैं, जिसके चलते बहुत सारे लोगों के पास उनकी नागरिकता प्रमाणित करने वाले कागजात नहीं होते। इसलिए राष्ट्रीय नागरिकता पंजीकरण में ऐसे लोगों की पहचान संदिग्ध हो गई है।

ऐसे में जहां इतनी बड़ी संख्या में लोगों के अपनी जगह-जमीन से उजड़ने और किसी पराए देश में जाकर शरण पाने की यातना झेलने का संकट हो, उस काम में देरी करना उचित नहीं जान पड़ता। इस काम को जितनी जल्दी और जितनी पारदर्शिता से हो सके, निपटाने की कोशिश होनी चाहिए। यह सही है कि चुनावों में सशस्त्र बलों की जिम्मेदारी बढ़ जाती है, उनकी संख्या भी सीमित है, इसलिए दो कामों में उनकी तैनाती परेशानी पैदा कर सकती है। पर चुनाव के नाम पर नागरिकता की पहचान को टालना ठीक नहीं है। चुनाव प्रक्रिया को संपन्न कराने के लिए दूसरे सुरक्षा बलों की भी मदद ली जा सकती है, बाहर से सेना की टुकड़ियां बुलाई जा सकती हैं। ऐसा अनेक बार होता भी है। इसलिए एनआरसी के काम को रोकने पर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय की आपत्ति उचित कही जा सकती है।

## प्रत्यर्पण की उम्मीद

बैंकों का पैसा डकार कर विदेश भागने वाले आर्थिक अपराधियों को वापस लाने की दिशा में सरकार और जांच एजेंसियों के प्रयासों के नतीजे अब सामने आने लगे हैं। इस दिशा में पहली सफलता तो यही है कि विजय माल्या को ब्रिटेन से भारत लाने का रास्ता खुला। लंबी न्यायिक प्रक्रिया और कानूनी पेचीदगीयों की वजह से भले इस प्रक्रिया में और देर लगे, लेकिन माल्या के प्रत्यर्पण को हरी झंडी देकर ब्रिटेन की सरकार ने एक रास्ता तो बनाया। लंदन की मेट्रोपॉलिटिन अदालत में प्रत्यर्पण संबंधी मुकदमा हारने के बाद माल्या को भारत प्रत्यर्पित करने के आदेश पर ब्रिटेन के गृहमंत्री ने दस्तखत कर दिए। इसी से भारत को उम्मीद बंधी है कि अब माल्या सहित दूसरे भगोड़ों को जल्दी भारत लाना संभव हो सकेगा। तीन मार्च, 2016 को ब्रिटेन के भारत से भागने के एक साल बाद फरवरी, 2017 में भारत ने माल्या से उसके प्रत्यर्पण का अनुरोध किया था। माल्या के मामले में अब तक भारत को जो कुछ हासिल हुआ है उसे एक बड़ी कूटनीतिक जीत इसलिए भी माना जा रहा है कि दुनिया में ब्रिटेन के प्रत्यर्पण कानून सबसे जटिल हैं और इसी का फायदा उठा कर अपराधी वहां शरण लेते हैं।

माल्या के प्रत्यर्पण को ब्रिटिश सरकार ने हरी झंडी भले दे दी हो, लेकिन उसकी भारत वापसी इतनी आसान भी नहीं लग रही। माल्या के पास बचाव के कानूनी रास्ते हैं जो उसके प्रत्यर्पण में बाधा बन सकते हैं। पिछले साल दिसंबर में लंदन की अदालत ने जब माल्या के खिलाफ फैसला सुनाया था और उसके प्रत्यर्पण का आदेश दिया था तब माल्या ने उस फैसले को उच्च अदालत में चुनौती नहीं दी थी। उसे उम्मीद थी कि ब्रिटिश सरकार उसका साथ देगी। लेकिन अब माल्या के पास गृहमंत्री के प्रत्यर्पण के आदेश के खिलाफ अपील करने का अधिकार है और इसका वह पूरा फायदा लेगा। इसके खिलाफ वह ब्रिटेन के हाईकोर्ट और सुप्रीम कोर्ट तक जा सकता है और चाहे जितना जल्द इस प्रक्रिया को पूरा किया जाए, इसमें कम से कम छह महीने तो लग ही सकते हैं। ऐसे में आम चुनाव से पहले उसे भारत लाने की सरकार की कोशिशों को झटका लग सकता है।

माल्या जिस तरह भारत से भागा और उसके प्रत्यर्पण के मामले में सरकार ने शुरु में जैसी शिथिलता दिखाई, उससे भी कई सवाल खड़े होते हैं। अगर भारत की खुफिया और जांच एजेंसियां जरा भी सतर्कता दिखातीं तो माल्या के लिए देश छोड़ना आसान नहीं होता। पिछले साल लंदन की अदालत के बाहर माल्या ने कहा था कि आने से पहले वह वित्तमंत्री से मिला था, हालांकि वित्तमंत्री ने बाद में इसका खंडन किया। माल्या के भागने से लेकर उसके प्रत्यर्पण अनुरोध में भारत सरकार ने एक साल लगा दिया। सरकार को शायद यह उम्मीद रही होगी कि माल्या खुद आ जाएगा और बैंकों का पैसा चुका देगा। माल्या जैसे तमाम बड़े घोटालेबाज भारत के लचर तंत्र का फायदा उठा कर ही देश से भागे हैं। पीएनबी घोटाले को अंजाम देने वाले मेहुल चौकसी ने भाग कर एंटोगुआ की नागरिकता ले ली और भारत को टेंगा दिखा दिया। अब भारत सरकार के पास हाथ-पैर माने के अलावा कुछ नहीं बचा है। लेकिन जिस तरह से जांच एजेंसियों और प्रवर्तन निदेशालय ने माल्या, नीरव मोदी जैसे भगोड़ों के खिलाफ अब सख्ती दिखानी शुरू की है, उससे यह संदेश तो गया है कि अगर सत्ता तंत्र चाहे और ईमानदारी से काम करे तो ऐसे अपराधियों पर लगाम लगा पाना कोई मुश्किल काम नहीं है। बस इच्छाशक्ति की जरूरत है।

## कल्पमेधा

**अगर एक देश को भ्रष्टाचार मुक्त होना है तो मैं यह महसूस करता हूं कि हमारे समाज में तीन ऐसे लोग हैं जो ऐसा कर सकते हैं और वे हैं पिता, माता और शिक्षक।**

**–एपीजे अब्दुल कलाम**आम की ज़रूरत है।

# जनसत्ता

शम्स तमन्ना

## सरकारी स्कूलों की खराब होती गुणवत्ता के लिए शिक्षा विभाग के अधिकारियों की उदासीनता और लापरवाही जिम्मेदार है। अधिकारी और शिक्षक सरकारी खजाने से वेतन और अन्य सुविधाएं तो प्राप्त करते हैं, लेकिन अपने बच्चों को पब्लिक स्कूलों में पढ़ाते हैं। जरूरत है 2015 में दिए गए इलाहाबाद हाईकोर्ट के उस फैसले को सख्ती से लागू करने की, जिसमें कोर्ट ने सभी नौकरशाहों और सरकारी कर्मचारियों के लिए उनके बच्चों को सरकारी स्कूलों में पढ़वाना अनिवार्य किया था।

## इस बार 2019-20 के बजट में शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में करीब चौरानवे हजार करोड़ रुपए आबंटित किए गए हैं। पिछले वित्त वर्ष की तुलना में यह आबंटित 3.6 दस फीसद अधिक है। इसमें उच्च शिक्षा के लिए 37,46,61.01 करोड़ रुपए और स्कूली शिक्षा के लिए 56,386.63 करोड़ रुपए रखे गए हैं। केवल राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा मिशन में 38573 करोड़ रुपए के बजट का प्रावधान किया गया है। इन राशियों में जहां कक्षाओं का डिजिटलीकरण करना शामिल है, वहीं शिक्षकों के पढ़ाने का स्तर सुधारना और उन्हें प्रशिक्षण देना भी शामिल है। विशेषज्ञों के अनुसार इस वित्त वर्ष में शिक्षा के बजट में 3.69 फीसद का इजाफा हुआ है।

केंद्र और राज्य सरकारों द्वारा अपने-अपने बजट में स्कूली शिक्षा पर एक बड़ी राशि खर्च करने के बावजूद देश के सरकारी स्कूलों की हालत किसी से छिपी नहीं है। विशेष रूप से, शिक्षकों के पढ़ाने का स्तर इस पूरी शिक्षा व्यवस्था की सबसे कमजोर दुनिया रहस्यमय है, इसे सुलझाने वाला उलझता ही चला जाता है। जीवन बेहद उलझा हुआ है, डराने और भयभीत कर डालने वाला है। यही कारण है कि जीवन को सहज बनाने के लिए भीड़ मंदिरों के चक्कर काटती देखी जा सकती है। पूरा एक सप्ताह पत्नी के साथ इस भीड़ का हिस्सा बन कर ऐसा ही लगा। सिर्फंदराजवत काम से जाना हुआ तो पत्नी को अच्छा अवसर मिल गया, बोलीं-‘क्यों न तिरुपति बालाजी के दर्शन कर लिए जाएं!’ मरता क्या न करता! सो योजना में मंदिर भ्रमण शामिल कर लिया गया। हैदराबाद बिड़ला मंदिर से शुरुआत हुई। हर प्रदेश की राजधानी में बिड़ला मंदिर

## रमेश चंद मीणा

दुनिया को समझने के लिए एक जीवन बहुत छोटा होता है। कुछ इसे समझने, समझाने और निपटने का दावा करते हुए नेतृत्व कर लेते हैं। कुछ शासक बन जाते हैं, तो बाकी बचे शासित होने के लिए रह जाते हैं। दुनिया अपनी रफ्तार से चलती रहती है। औरों की तो छोड़िए पति-पत्नी जिंदगीभर दो छोर पर बने रहते हुए जी लेते हैं। वे एक-दूसरे को बदलने की उम्मीद में लगे रहते हैं।

दुनिया रहस्यमय है, इसे सुलझाने वाला उलझता ही चला जाता है। जीवन बेहद उलझा हुआ है, डराने और भयभीत कर डालने वाला है। यही कारण है कि जीवन को सहज बनाने के लिए भीड़ मंदिरों के चक्कर काटती देखी जा सकती है। पूरा एक सप्ताह पत्नी के साथ इस भीड़ का हिस्सा बन कर ऐसा ही लगा। सिर्फंदराजवत काम से जाना हुआ तो पत्नी को अच्छा अवसर मिल गया, बोलीं-‘क्यों न तिरुपति बालाजी के दर्शन कर लिए जाएं!’ मरता क्या न करता! सो योजना में मंदिर भ्रमण शामिल कर लिया गया। हैदराबाद बिड़ला मंदिर से शुरुआत हुई। हर प्रदेश की राजधानी में बिड़ला मंदिर

## भ्रष्टाचार का रोग

किसी भी समाज में भ्रष्टाचार उस दीमक की तरह है जो भीतर ही भीतर उसकी जड़ों को खोखला कर देती है। अगर जड़ें ही खोखली हो जाएं तो समाज किसके सहारे खड़ा होगा। हमारे देश में भी हर जगह यह दीमक लग चुकी है। पुलिस, प्रशासन, राजनीति कुछ भी इससे अछूता नहीं है। सरकारी विभागों में मृत्यु प्रमाण पत्र बनवाने तक के लिए रिश्वत देनी पड़ती है तो सार्वजनिक हित के लिए बनने वाली योजनाओं पर भ्रष्ट नेताओं और अधिकारियों की गिद्ध दृष्टि टिकी होती है। घोटाले अब करोड़ों और अरबों के इतने लगे हैं। बोफर्स से शुरू हुई कहानी टू-जी स्पैक्टम तक पहुंच चुकी है। जनता की गाढ़ी कमाई का जो पैसा देश के विकास पर खर्च होना चाहिए वह नेताओं और अधिकारियों के लॉकरों में पहुंच जाता है।

भ्रष्टाचार के प्रति समाज का नजरिया तक बदल चुका है, किसी हद तक हम उसे स्वीकार भी कर चुके हैं। बहुत-से उदाहरणों में गड़बड़ियों को हम यह कह कर टाल देते हैं कि इतना तो चलता ही है! हम अपनी सहूलियत के हिसाब से भ्रष्टाचार के मानक तय कर लेते हैं और अपने आराम के लिए इसे बढ़ावा भी देते हैं। बात जब बड़े स्तर की होती है, तो बड़ी योजनाओं में शामिल लोग अपने स्तर पर यही करते हैं और मौकापरस्त बन जाते हैं।

हाल ही में विश्व बैंक की एक रिपोर्ट में कहा गया कि भारत में सालाना 6,350 करोड़ रुपए रिश्वत का लेन-देन होता है। यह आंकड़ा 2005 से कम है। तब सालाना 20,500 करोड़ रुपए की रिश्वत का लेन-देन होता था। रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक मध्य भारत के राज्यों के मुकाबले दक्षिणी राज्यों में भ्रष्टाचार ज्यादा है। रिश्वत देने में सबसे आगे 77

# गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा की समस्या

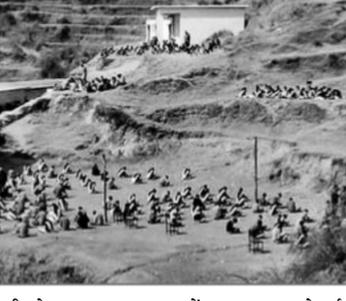
कड़ी है। देश के सबसे बड़े हिंदी भाषी राज्य उत्तर प्रदेश और बिहार के सरकारी स्कूलों में बड़ी संख्या में अप्रशिक्षित शिक्षकों की भर्ती ने इस समस्या को और गंभीर बना दिया है। परिणामस्वरूप अभिभावक अब अपने बच्चों को सरकारी स्कूल की बजाय निजी स्कूल में पढ़ाने को प्राथमिकता दे रहे हैं। कई गैर सरकारी संस्थाओं ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में अभिभावकों के इस रुझान को सामने लाकर सरकारी स्कूलों की हालत और शिक्षकों के पढ़ाने के स्तर जैसी खामियों को उजागर किया है।

आंकड़े बताते हैं कि बिहार और उत्तर प्रदेश में अभिभावकों का सरकारी स्कूलों से मोहभंग हो रहा है। 2015-16 की तुलना में 2016-17 में इन दोनों राज्यों के सरकारी स्कूलों में नामांकित बच्चों की संख्या में करीब 24.79 लाख की कमी दर्ज की गई। अकेले बिहार में ही पंद्रह लाख बच्चे कम नामांकित हुए। वर्ष 2015-16 में जहां बिहार के सरकारी स्कूलों में दो करोड़ पैंतीस लाख बच्चों का नामांकन हुआ था, वहीं 2016-17 में यह आंकड़ा घट कर दो करोड़ उन्नीस लाख रह गया। इसी अवधि के दौरान उत्तर प्रदेश में यह आंकड़ा एक करोड़ बासठ लाख की तुलना में घट कर एक करोड़ बानव लाख रह गया। हालांकि केरल, तमिलनाडु, तेलंगाना और कर्नाटक के सरकारी स्कूलों में भी बच्चों के नामांकन में मामूली गिरावट आई है। कुल मिलाकर देश भर के सरकारी स्कूलों में छप्पन लाख से ज्यादा बच्चों के नामांकन में कमी आई है और इन आंकड़ों में अकेले बिहार और उत्तर प्रदेश का हिस्सा तैतालीस फीसद है।

सरकारी स्कूलों में नामांकन में आई कमी का सीधा-सा मतलब है कि अभिभावक अब अपने बच्चों को पढ़ाने के लिए सरकारी स्कूलों से ज्यादा निजी स्कूलों को तरजीह दे रहे हैं। दरअसल, सरकारी स्कूलों में गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा में आ रही लगातार गिरावट से अभिभावकों को यह एहसास होने लगा है कि यहां उनके बच्चों का भविष्य उज्ज्वल नहीं है। गलाकट प्रतिस्पर्धा के इस दौर में जहां निजी नौकरियां ही एकमात्र विकल्प हैं, ऐसे में यदि उनके बच्चों को आगे रहना है तो सरकारी नहीं बल्कि पब्लिक स्कूल ही उचित होगा। उन्हें इस बात का यकीन है कि प्राइवेट कंपनियों की कार्य-संस्कृति और उस चातावरण को तैयार करने की क्षमता पब्लिक स्कूलों में होती है। यह कार्य-संस्कृति वास्तव में अंग्रेजी भाषा से जुड़ी है। अभिभावकों को लगता है कि सरकारी स्कूलों में अंग्रेजी केवल एक विषय के रूप में पढ़ाई जाती है, वह भी नाममात्र

के लिए, जबकि पब्लिक स्कूलों में हिंदी विषय को छोड़ कर अन्य सभी विषय न केवल अंग्रेजी में पढ़ाए जाते हैं बल्कि स्कूल परिसर में छात्रों को अंग्रेजी भाषा में ही बात करने के लिए प्रेरित भी किया जाता है। अंग्रेजी भाषा से स्कूली पढ़ाई करने वाले बच्चों को भविष्य में मेडिकल, इंजीनियरिंग, कानून, प्रबंधन और मीडिया जैसे पेशेवर क्षेत्रों की पढ़ाई कराने वाले देश के उच्च शिक्षण संस्थाओं में आसानी से प्रवेश मिल सकता है। जबकि सरकारी स्कूलों में हिंदी माध्यम से पढ़ने वाले बच्चों को इन्हीं क्षेत्रों में प्रवेश पाना मुश्किल हो जाता है।

बिहार और उत्तर प्रदेश जैसे राज्यों में पब्लिक स्कूलों के प्रति अभिभावकों के बढ़ते रुझानों के पीछे उनकी आर्थिक स्थिति में सुधार भी एक बड़ा कारण है। पिछले कुछ दशकों में इन दोनों राज्यों में प्रति व्यक्ति आय में काफी सुधार हुआ है। केंद्रीय सांख्यिकी कार्यालय की एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार 2004-05 में बिहार में प्रति व्यक्ति आय 8560 रुपए



थी जो बढ़ कर 2014-15 में 16652 रुपए हो गई। उत्तर प्रदेश में इसी अवधि के दौरान यह 14580 रुपए से बढ़ कर 22892 रुपए प्रति व्यक्ति तक पहुंच ग। घर की अच्छी आमदनी ने बच्चों की गुणवत्तापूर्ण पढ़ाई के प्रति अभिभावकों के नजरिये को भी बदला है।

सरकारी स्कूलों में गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा में लगातार गिरावट आने का बड़ा कारण शिक्षकों की कमी भी है। देशभर में सरकारी स्कूलों में तकरीबन साठ लाख शिक्षकों के पद स्वीकृत हैं, लेकिन अलग-अलग स्तरों पर जारी किए गए सरकारी आंकड़ों और कई संस्थाओं के शोध-सर्वे में यह बात सामने आई है कि इस वक्त देशभर में सरकारी स्कूलों में शिक्षकों के लगभग दस लाख पद खाली हैं। इनमें अकेले नौ लाख पद प्राथमिक स्कूलों में खाली हैं। प्राथमिक स्तर पर सबसे ज्यादा दो लाख चौीस हजार से ज्यादा पद उत्तर प्रदेश

## दर्शन की भीड़

स्थापित है। सो हैदराबाद कैसे बच सकता था! पत्नी ने लोगों का बहाना बनाया कहा-‘यहां लोग कह रहे हैं बिड़ला मंदिर से बहुत अच्छा दृश्य बनता है, क्यों न देख लिया जाए?’ जबकि बिड़ला मंदिर जयपुर में देखा जा चुका है, वैसा ही है, इसमें देखना क्या है? सवाल अंधर में लटका रह जाता है और मंदिर यात्रा की शुरुआत होती है, हैदराबाद के बिड़ला से।

बिड़ला मंदिर जयपुर की ही तरह हैदराबाद में भी पहाड़ी पर स्थित है। फर्फ इतना है कि यहां भीड़ का अच्छा खासा जमावड़ा था। भीड़ रुक-रुक कर आगे बढ़ती है। मंदिर के चारों तरफ दूर-दूर तक जहां तक नजर जा सकती है, हैदराबाद का फैलाव अंधेरी रात में रहस्यमय दिखाई देता है। रात की जगमग रोशनी में नहाया हैदराबाद बेशक बड़ा खूबसूरत लगता है। मैं नहाया के साथ बिजली की रोशनी में शहर देख कर चमत्कृत होता हूं और अगले पायदान पर तिरुपति के लिए बढ़ जाता हूं। ‘दर्शन दुर्लभ है बालाजी के।’ बार-बार सुना जाता है। सो पहले से ही सारी व्यवस्था चाकचैबंद करके उस जगह सुबह ही पहुंच जाते हैं, जहां हम खड़े हो जाते हैं लाइन वहीं से शुरू होती है की भावना के साथ। हर दर्शनार्थी के हाथ में वीआइपी टिकट हैं।

प्रतिशत लोगों के आंकड़ों के साथ कर्नाटक है। दूसरे स्थान पर आंध्र प्रदेश 74 प्रतिशत और तीसरे नंबर पर तमिलनाडु 68 प्रतिशत है। वहीं हिमाचल प्रदेश सबसे कम भ्रष्टाचार वाला राज्य है जहां केवल तीन फीसद लोगों को रिश्वत देनी पड़ी।

ट्रांसपैरेंसी इंटरनेशनल की ओर से जारी किए गए भ्रष्टाचार संबंधी सूचकांक में भारत की रैंकिंग गिरी है। पिछले साल के मुकाबले तीन स्थान खिसक कर भारत 79वें नंबर पर आ गया है। अब हमारे समाज और न्याय व्यवस्था को कुछ बड़े उदाहरण पेश करने होंगे। लोगों के भीतर एक डर भी बैठाना होगा, भ्रष्टाचार के

उत्तरे रहने के लिए अच्छे इंतजाम नहीं हैं? और आखिर में मूल प्रश्न यह कि क्या उन पर मानसिक व शारीरिक दबाव इतना अधिक होता है कि उसके चलते वे ऐसे कदम उठाने को मजबूर होते हैं? इन सब प्रश्नों का सही उत्तर यही हो सकता है कि सरकार और उच्च पदस्थ अधिकारी सेना के जवानों पर विशेष ध्यान दें और उन्हें समय-समय पर वाजिब अवकाश भी दें ताकि वे कुछ समय अपने परिवार और बच्चों को भी दे सकें।

● ***प्रदीप कुमार सारण, कृष्णा नगर, बीकानेर***

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

परिणाम का। हालांकि कुछ मामलों में प्रशासन और न्याय व्यवस्था ने मिसालें भी पेश की हैं लेकिन काम सिर्फ मिसाल से नहीं चलने वाला। बुगई की एक-एक शाखा को ढूँढ़-ढूँढ़ कर खत्म करना होगा।

● ***भरत रायदत्त, बीएचयू, वाराणसी***

### घातक तनाव

पिछले दिनों भारत-पाक सीमा (बाड़मेर) पर तैनात सीमा सुरक्षा बल के एक जवान ने छुट्टी न मिलने के चलते अवसाद की गिरफ्त में आकर अपने दो साथियों को गोली मार कर जख्मी कर दिया। जवानों में बढ़ता अविसाद और इस तरह की सनसनीखेज घटना कई तरह के सवालों को जन्म देती है कि क्या वाकई जवानों को समय पर छुट्टी नहीं मिलती? उन्हें पौष्टिक आहार नहीं मिलता?

उत्तर प्रदेश में इसी अवधि के दौरान यह 14580 रुपए से बढ़ कर 22892 रुपए प्रति व्यक्ति तक पहुंच ग। घर की अच्छी आमदनी ने बच्चों की गुणवत्तापूर्ण पढ़ाई के प्रति अभिभावकों के नजरिये को भी बदला है।

सरकारी स्कूलों में गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा में लगातार गिरावट आने का बड़ा कारण शिक्षकों की कमी भी है। देशभर में सरकारी स्कूलों में तकरीबन साठ लाख शिक्षकों के पद स्वीकृत हैं, लेकिन अलग-अलग स्तरों पर जारी किए गए सरकारी आंकड़ों और कई संस्थाओं के शोध-सर्वे में यह बात सामने आई है कि इस वक्त देशभर में सरकारी स्कूलों में शिक्षकों के लगभग दस लाख पद खाली हैं। इनमें अकेले नौ लाख पद प्राथमिक स्कूलों में खाली हैं। प्राथमिक स्तर पर सबसे ज्यादा दो लाख चौीस हजार से ज्यादा पद उत्तर प्रदेश

में खाली हैं। इसी तरह बिहार में दो लाख से ज्यादा प्राथमिक स्कूल शिक्षकों के पद खाली हैं। पश्चिम बंगाल और झारखंड के प्राथमिक एवं माध्यमिक स्कूलों में भी शिक्षकों के औसतन एक तिहाई पद खाली हैं। इसके बाद मध्यप्रदेश और छत्तीसगढ़ का नंबर आता है, जहां स्थिति कुछ बेहतर है लेकिन इसे भी संतोषजनक नहीं कहा जा सकता है। इसके विपरीत गोवा, ओड़ीशा और सिक्किम में प्राथमिक स्कूलों में शिक्षकों का कोई पद खाली नहीं है। सिक्किम देश का एकमात्र ऐसा राज्य है जहां प्राथमिक और माध्यमिक स्तरों पर शिक्षकों के शत-फीसद पद भरे हुए हैं। जबकि माध्यमिक स्तर पर देश में शिक्षकों की सबसे ज्यादा कमी झारखंड में है। बिहार में भी माध्यमिक स्तर पर शिक्षकों के स्वीकृत सहह हजार से अधिक पद खाली हैं। देश के सबसे अशांत राज्य जम्मू-कश्मीर में भी इक्कीस हजार से अधिक माध्यमिक स्तर पर शिक्षकों की जगह खाली है।

समस्या केवल शिक्षकों की कमी की नहीं, प्रशिक्षित शिक्षकों की कमी की भी है। सेंटर फॉर बजट एंड गवर्नेस अकाउंटबिलिटी (सीबीजीए) और चाइल्ड राइट एंड यू (क्राई) के एक शोध के अनुसार योग्य शिक्षकों की कमी देश के लगभग सभी राज्यों में है। समूचे देश में शिक्षक-छात्र अनुपात, शिक्षकों की संख्या और उनके प्रशिक्षण के मामले में बिहार की स्थिति सबसे खराब है, जहां खाली पड़े पदों को भरने के लिए अतिथि शिक्षकों के नाम पर बड़ी संख्या में अप्रशिक्षित शिक्षकों की भर्ती कर दी गई। बिहार के प्राथमिक स्कूलों में अड़तीस फीसद से ज्यादा अध्यापक प्रशिक्षित नहीं हैं, जबकि माध्यमिक स्तर पर ऐसे शिक्षकों की संख्या

पैंतीस फीसद है। दूसरे स्थान पर पश्चिम बंगाल आता है जहां प्राथमिक स्तर पर 31.4 और माध्यमिक स्तर पर 23.9 फीसद शिक्षक प्रशिक्षित नहीं हैं।

सरकारी स्कूलों की खराब होती गुणवत्ता के लिए शिक्षा विभाग के अधिकारियों की उदासीनता और लापरवाही जिम्मेदार है। अधिकारी और शिक्षक सरकारी खजाने से वेतन और अन्य सुविधाएं तो प्राप्त करते हैं, लेकिन अपने बच्चों को पब्लिक स्कूलों में पढ़ाते हैं। जरूरत है 2015 में दिए गए इलाहाबाद हाईकोर्ट के उस फैसले को सख्ती से लागू करने की, जिसमें कोर्ट ने सभी नौकरशाहों और सरकारी कर्मचारियों के लिए उनके बच्चों को सरकारी स्कूलों में पढ़वाना अनिवार्य किया था। जब सरकारी अफसरों और कर्मचारियों के बच्चे सरकारी स्कूलों में पढ़ेंगे तभी इन स्कूलों की हालत सुधर पाएगी।

लगता है और बालाजी की शक्ति को सारा श्रेय दे डालते हैं। देखो कितनी शक्ति है! सबकुछ इनके बल पर ही संपन्न हो रहा है। लोग किस तरह से व्यवस्थित, सुनियोजित और अनुशासनबद्ध हैं!! घोर आश्चर्य और आस्था में नत सिर और मन श्रद्धा के अथाह सागर में डूब जाता है। कौन मूर्ख होगा जो सवाल उठाएगा? पत्नी इस निगाह से देखती है जैसे कह रही हो-‘देखो बालाजी का प्रताप! कितना धन? कितना सोना? और कितने लोग दान किये जा रहे हैं? यू ही नहीं है यह सब?’

कार्यकर्ता नुमा भक्त डंडा लिए दो सेकंड में आगे धक्का मार देते हैं-‘आगे बढ़ो, आगे बढ़ो।’ लोग एक झलक पाकर खुश हो लेते हैं। भीड़ खुश है, समंदर की लहर की तरह स्वतः ही बढ़ रही है, कई किलोमीटर से आ रही है। और वे जो तिरुपति स्टेशन से ही पैदल चलकर आ रहे हैं? वाह क्या आस्था है? भक्तों में कितनी श्रद्धा है? यही तो भीड़ का मनोविज्ञान है। यही भीड़ लोकतंत्र का भी बेड़ा गकं किए दे रही है और वही भीड़ यहां है। जनता भोली, भक्त भोले और जब भक्त भीड़ में होता है तब वह अपने को बली समझता है। यह भारत देश की सामाजिकता और पारंपरिकता रही है जो अब राजनीतिक सच्चाई भी हो चली है।

सबीबीआइ की टीम को गिरफ्तार किए जाने के बाद यह राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर बहस का विषय बन गया।

संविधान के जानकार इसे बंगाल पुलिस और सीबीआइ विवाद के इतर केंद्र-राज्य विवाद के रूप में देखने लगे। हालांकि ममता बनर्जी के धरने पर बैठने के बाद इसे केंद्र-राज्य विवाद के रूप में देखना कोई आश्चर्य की बात भी नहीं है। हाल के घटनाक्रम से पता चलता है कि केंद्र सरकार हो या फिर राज्य सरकार, देश के संवैधानिक एवं सरकारी निकायों के दुरुपयोग के आरोप दोनों पर लग रहे हैं। यही कारण है कि आम जनमानस में देश के संवैधानिक और सरकारी निकायों के प्रति अविश्वास बढ़ता जा रहा है। निहित सियासी स्वार्थों से ऊपर उठ कर आम जनमानस में इस विश्वास को फिर से कायम करना आज बहुत जरूरी है।

● ***कुंदन कुमार ‘क्रांति’, वाराणसी***

### हादसों की वजह

राजधानी दिल्ली में सड़क हादसों में मरने वालों की संख्या 6.5 फीसद बढ़ गई है जो चिंताजनक है। देश में वाहनों का जाल फैलता ही जा रहा है। सड़क हादसों में मरने वालों में सबसे ज्यादा साइकिल सवार और पैदल चलने वाले हैं। ज्यादातर हादसे रात नौ से तीन बजे तक होते हैं। यातायात संबंधी नियम-कानून होने के बावजूद तेज गति से या शराब पीकर वाहन चलाना, हेलमेट न पहनना आम हैं। आज भी सड़कों पर स्कूली बच्चे बाइक भगाते देखे जा सकते हैं। इसे उनकी जिद कहें या परिजनों की लापरवाही! हमारी सड़कें पैदल चलने वालों की लिए महफूज नहीं हैं। पुलिस और सरकार को सख्ती से यातायात नियमों को लागू करना होगा तभी स्थिति में सुधार हो सकता है।

● ***आशीष, राम लाल आनंद कॉलेज, दिल्ली***





## वैचारिक संपदा लेखक की रचनात्मक पूंजी है

मैंने जिस समय लिखना शुरू किया, हिंदी साहित्य का वातावरण बहुत ही रचनात्मकता का था, बहुत कम लोग लिखने वाले थे। उस समय किसी विधा में प्रसिद्ध नाम दस-बीस से अधिक नहीं थे। पढ़ने के लिए अच्छी रचनाएं स्कूल, कॉलेज और नगर पुस्तकालयों में पर्याप्त मात्रा में उपलब्ध थीं। लेखन कर्म मेरे लिए कोई विवशता नहीं थी, यह एक सहज श्राव्य कर्म था। हाई स्कूल पास करते ही मैंने कविता लिखी। प्रसाद, निराला, महादेवी, पंत, बच्चन और नरेंद्र शर्मा की कविताएं मुझे बहुत आकर्षित करती थीं। इन कविताओं से अनुप्राणित होकर मैंने कविता की संवेदिता ग्रहण की। मेरी कहानी विधा को चुनने का मुख्य कारण था कि उस समय प्रायः आत्मपरक कविताएं और गीतों की रचनाएं होती थीं, जो मुझे जन-जीवन के कठिन संघर्षों को पूर्णरूपेण व्यक्त करने में असमर्थ दिखाई देती थीं। मैंने हिंदी और अंग्रेजी में अनुदित विश्व की श्रेष्ठतम साहित्यिक रचनाएं पढ़कर यह जान लिया था कि बहुत बड़े समुदाय को अपनी रचनात्मकता से परिचित कराने के लिए कहानी तथा उपन्यास ही सर्वश्रेष्ठ माध्यम हैं। प्रत्येक रचनाकार की अपनी रचियां, प्रवृत्तियां और वैचारिक संपदा उसकी रचनात्मक पूंजी होती है।



मैं दृष्टि समाज के निम्न मध्यवर्गीय जनजीवन से संबद्ध हूँ, इसलिए उसके संरोकारों से रिरितर जुड़ा रहा हूँ और साधारण जनजीवन के जो चहुंमुखी संघर्ष हैं, उससे मेरा अनुभव के स्तर पर निकटतम संपर्क है। इसी कारण निम्न मध्यम वर्गीय जीवन का लेखन मेरा रचना संसार है। लेखक का बड़ा संरोकार बड़े विचार से अनुभूत होता है, किंतु वह किसी राजनीतिक विचारधारा का अनुकरण नहीं कहा जा सकता है। कोई भी विचारवान लेखक अपनी रचना को श्रेष्ठतम और अंतिम नहीं मानता है।

हिंदी के सुप्रसिद्ध कथाकार-उपन्यासकार

प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना पर कुछ राज्यों की गैर-राजग सरकारों द्वारा सवाल उठाना केंद्र और राज्यों के संबंधों के बीच तकरार का एक और उदाहरण है। इससे पहले आयुष्मान भारत योजना को भी कई राज्य सरकारों ने लागू नहीं किया है।

## योजनाएं और राजनीति

### प्रधानमंत्री

किसान सम्मान निधि योजना पर कई राज्यों की गैर-राजग सरकारों ने जिस तरह सवाल उठाए हैं, वह केंद्र और राज्यों के बीच राजनीतिक तकरार का एक और उदाहरण है। इससे पहले आयुष्मान भारत योजना को कुछ गैर-राजग सरकारों ने लागू न कर टीक ऐसे ही रवैये का परिचय दिया था। मध्य प्रदेश, ओडिशा और केरल की सरकारों ने प्रधानमंत्री किसान योजना पर सिर्फ सवाल ही उठाए हैं, जबकि पश्चिम बंगाल सरकार ने तो इसे लागू न करने का संकेत भी दिया है। दरअसल पश्चिम बंगाल में किसान बंधु नाम से पहले ही एक योजना चल रही है, जिसके तहत किसानों को प्रति एकड़ सालाना पांच हजार रुपये दिए जाते हैं।

लोकसभा चुनाव से पहले खुद ममता सरकार किसान बंधु योजना की जगह प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान योजना लागू कर राजनीतिक जोखिम नहीं उठाना चाहेंगी। इस तरह की स्थिति आई है, तो इसकी कई वजहें हैं। संविधान के तहत कृषि और स्वास्थ्य राज्यों के विषय हैं, लिहाजा राज्यों को इनसे जुड़ी योजनाएं तय करने का अधिकार है। जो कि सबसे ज्यादा है और सैन्य ताकतों में कमी करनी चाहिए। हालांकि आलोचक तथ्यों के बारे में नहीं जानते। पहला, पेंशन बजट का हिस्सा नहीं होती है। पेंशन बजट हालांकि अलग होता है, जिसमें रक्षा विभाग के असेन्यकर्मियों शामिल होते हैं, जो ताकत में 25 फीसदी होने के बावजूद पेंशन बजट के 40 फीसदी का उपभोग करते हैं। इसका कारण यह है कि सैन्यकर्मियों न्यूनतम सेवा करते हैं और जल्दी सेवानिवृत्त हो जाते हैं और इस तरह कम पेंशन पाते हैं, जबकि हर असेन्यकर्मियों 60 वर्षों तक नौकरी करता है और ज्यादा पेंशन पाता है। वेतन में भी यही पैटर्न लागू होता है। दूसरी बात यह है कि केवल प्रायोगिकी के इस्तेमाल से ही मैनुअल कर्मियों को बचत हो सकती है। हालांकि इसकी भी एक सीमा है। दुश्मन को घुसपैठ करने से रोकने के लिए दोनों मोर्चों पर सीमाओं के साथ रक्षा बल को मजबूत किया जाना चाहिए। इसके अलावा ऑपरेशन शुरू करने के लिए बलों की आवश्यकता होती है। जहां संभव है, वहां तकनीक का इस्तेमाल किया जाता है। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण है रक्षा बजट योजना से जिन असेन्य कर्मीयों को भुगतान किया जाता है, उनकी क्षमता कम करना। तीसरी बात, रक्षा बजट केवल सशस्त्र बलों के लिए नहीं होता है। इस बजट से असेन्य नागरिकों को भी भुगतान किया जाता है, जिनकी भारतीय रक्षा योजनाकारों को यह सोचने को मजबूर किया है कि सबसे बदतर यही हो सकता कि दोनों मोर्चों पर एक साथ युद्ध छिड़े। इसका

केंद्र को इन योजनाओं में भी राज्य सरकारों को निश्चित राशि खर्च करनी पड़ती है, जबकि उन्हें इसका राजनीतिक लाभ ही मिलता दिखाई देता। सिर्फ यही नहीं कि इस तरह के दृश्य हाल के कुछ दशकों से देखने को मिल रहे हैं, जब केंद्र और राज्यों में अलग-अलग सरकारें हैं, बल्कि इस तरह की तकरार के पीछे केंद्र की अपनी राजनीति भी काम करती है। संविधान के तहत जो विषय राज्यों के अधीन हैं, वैसे मामलों में केंद्र को एकरतफा योजनाएं घोषित करने से यथासंभव परहेज करना चाहिए। योजनाएं लागू करने के मामले में केंद्र और राज्य के बीच तालमेल हो, तो एक वर्ग के लिए कई योजनाएं चलाने की जरूरत ही न आए। केंद्र और राज्यों के बीच जनहित से जुड़ी योजनाओं पर होने वाली तकरार से आम लोगों का ही नुकसान होता है।

# रक्षा क्षेत्र में आधुनिकीकरण की दरकार



पहली बार रक्षा बजट तीन लाख करोड़ रुपये को पार जरूर कर गया है, लेकिन रक्षा क्षेत्र के आधुनिकीकरण के लिए यह पर्याप्त नहीं है, क्योंकि अब भी बड़ा हिस्सा वेतन और रख-रखाव पर खर्च होता है।

हर्ष कक्कड़, सेवानिवृत्त मेजर जनरल



वर्तमान बल प्रोफाइल इसी धारणा पर आधारित है। केवल एक मजबूत सैन्य और आर्थिक शक्ति होने के नाते भारत उन्हें दुस्साहस से रोक सकता है। इसलिए भारतीय सशस्त्र बल कभी असावधान नहीं रह सकते। आलोचक कहते रहे हैं कि बजट में आवंटित अधिकांश राशि सेना के वेतन और पेंशन के लिए निर्धारित है, जो कि सबसे ज्यादा है और सैन्य ताकतों में कमी करनी चाहिए। हालांकि आलोचक तथ्यों के बारे में नहीं जानते। पहला, पेंशन बजट का हिस्सा नहीं होती है। पेंशन बजट हालांकि अलग होता है, जिसमें रक्षा विभाग के असेन्यकर्मियों शामिल होते हैं, जो ताकत में 25 फीसदी होने के बावजूद पेंशन बजट के 40 फीसदी का उपभोग करते हैं। इसका कारण यह है कि सैन्यकर्मियों न्यूनतम सेवा करते हैं और जल्दी सेवानिवृत्त हो जाते हैं और इस तरह कम पेंशन पाते हैं, जबकि हर असेन्यकर्मियों 60 वर्षों तक नौकरी करता है और ज्यादा पेंशन पाता है। वेतन में भी यही पैटर्न लागू होता है। दूसरी बात यह है कि केवल प्रायोगिकी के इस्तेमाल से ही मैनुअल कर्मियों को बचत हो सकती है। हालांकि इसकी भी एक सीमा है। दुश्मन को घुसपैठ करने से रोकने के लिए दोनों मोर्चों पर सीमाओं के साथ रक्षा बल को मजबूत किया जाना चाहिए। इसके अलावा ऑपरेशन शुरू करने के लिए बलों की आवश्यकता होती है। जहां संभव है, वहां तकनीक का इस्तेमाल किया जाता है। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण है रक्षा बजट योजना से जिन असेन्य कर्मीयों को भुगतान किया जाता है, उनकी क्षमता कम करना। तीसरी बात, रक्षा बजट केवल सशस्त्र बलों के लिए नहीं होता है। इस बजट से असेन्य नागरिकों को भी भुगतान किया जाता है, जिनकी भारतीय रक्षा योजनाकारों को यह सोचने को मजबूर किया है कि सबसे बदतर यही हो सकता कि दोनों मोर्चों पर एक साथ युद्ध छिड़े। इसका

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स बार बजट में प्रत्यक्ष आयकर में दी गई रियायत एवं किसानों को आर्थिक सहायता दिए जाने को लेकर काफी चर्चा हुई, पर पहली बार रक्षा बजट तीन लाख करोड़ रुपये के पार चला गया, इस पर कोई खास चर्चा नहीं हुई। हालांकि रक्षा बजट की घोषणा होते ही संसद की दीर्घाओं में जोरदार तालियों के साथ इसका स्वागत किया गया, लेकिन जैसे ही तालियां थमीं, सच्चाई सामने आने लगी। पिछले वित्त वर्ष की तुलना में इस बार रक्षा बजट में मामूली तीन फीसदी की बढ़ोतरी हुई है। चूंकि मुद्रास्फीति 3.6 फीसदी पर पहुंच गई है, इसलिए इसे बेहतर नहीं कहा जा सकता। अगर जीडीपी से इसकी तुलना करें, तो यह पिछले 1.6 फीसदी से भी कम है, जबकि मांग जीडीपी के करीब ढाई-तीन फीसदी की है। रक्षा बजट के लिए जीडीपी प्रतिशत का वैश्विक औसत दो से ढाई फीसदी के बीच है। पाकिस्तान का रक्षा बजट जीडीपी का 2.36 फीसदी है, जबकि चीन में यह आंकड़ा 2.1 फीसदी है। चीन की अर्थव्यवस्था हमसे पांच गुना बड़ी है।

इसमें एकमात्र अच्छी बात यह है कि बजट की पूंजीगत हिस्सेदारी में दस फीसदी की बढ़ोतरी हुई है। यानी उपकरण और बुनियादी ढांचे के आधुनिकीकरण के लिए आवंटन में 10 फीसदी की वृद्धि हुई है। इसमें यह नहीं बताया गया है कि लिखित देयता कितनी है। ये पिछले वर्षों की खरीद के लिए इस वर्ष भुगतान किए जाने वाले आंकड़े हैं। इसे हटाकर ही आधुनिकीकरण के लिए किए गए आवंटन के सही आंकड़े स्पष्ट होंगे। वास्तव में ये आंकड़े कम हो जाएंगे। राष्ट्र किस खतरे का सामना कर रहा है, इस पर ही सेना की ताकत, उसके उपकरण और उसके बुनियादी ढांचे निर्भर

मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> प्रमोद लक्ष्मण महाजन

## देश भर में फैलाई अंगदान के प्रति जागरूकता

मैं महाराष्ट्र के सांगली में रहने वाला एक किसान हूँ। करीब अट्ठारह साल पहले की बात है। मेरे गांव के निवासी सेना के एक जवान की दोनों किडनियां फेल हो गई थीं। मैंने उसे अपनी एक किडनी दान देने का फैसला किया था। मेरी किडनी लगने से उसकी जान बच गई और वह बहुत जल्द स्वस्थ होकर सामान्य जिंदगी बिताने लगा। इलाज के बाद सोलह वर्षों तक वह जिंदा रहा। इस दौरान उसकी दो संतानें भी जन्मीं। 2016 में किसी दूसरी बीमारी की वजह से उसकी मौत हो गई। लेकिन मौत से पहले उस सैनिक की उम्र में सोलह साल जोड़कर मुझे इतनी खुशी हुई कि मैंने अंगदान के प्रति लोगों को जागरूक करने का अनोखा रास्ता अपनाया।

मैंने तय किया कि मैं पूरे भारत में घूमकर लोगों को अपनी कहानी सुनाऊंगा और उनसे अग्रह करूंगा कि वे भी मरणोपरंतव या जीवित रहते हुए अंगदान करके किसी दूसरे की जिंदगी संवार सकते हैं। मैंने लक्ष्य रखा कि मैं सौ दिनों में दस हजार किलोमीटर मोटरसाइकिल चलाकर अपना अभियान पूरा करूंगा। पिछले साल मैं प्रतिदिन सौ किलोमीटर के अपने सफर पर निकल पड़ा। मेरे नेक उद्देश्य को देखते हुए कई वनजीओ ने मेरी मदद की। कुछ महीने पहले ही मैंने अपना अभियान पूरा किया। इस दौरान मैंने महाराष्ट्र, कर्नाटक, तमिलनाडु, गुजरात, राजस्थान, हरियाणा, दिल्ली, पंजाब, उत्तराखंड, उत्तर प्रदेश, बिहार समेत कुछ अन्य राज्यों में भी भ्रमण किया।

मैं लोगों को बताता था कि देश के लोगों को अंगदान की कितनी जरूरत है। मैंने अपनी मोटरसाइकिल को चारों ओर से अंगदान से जुड़े संदेशों से सजा दिया था, जिस वजह से लोग आकर्षित होकर कोतूहलवश मुझे देखते थे। मेरा मकसद यही था कि लोग मुझ पर ध्यान दें, जिससे मैं उन तक अपनी बात पहुंचा सकूँ। भोपाल का वह वाक्या मैं कैसे भूल सकता हूँ, जब मैंने करीब ढाई सौ लोगों को

इकट्ठा करके उन्हें अंगदान करने की शपथ दिलवाई थी। उन लोगों में पुलिस कमिश्नर भी थे। कई जगह संवाद की दिक्कत आई, लेकिन यह दिक्कत भी मेरे इरादों के आगे नहीं टिक पाई। वैसे भी मेरी भाषा शब्दों से ज्यादा प्रभावी होती है। लोगों ने हर जगह मेरी बातों को बखूबी समझा। कई लोग मुझसे सवाल करते हैं कि अंगदान करने से शरीर पर दुष्प्रभाव पड़ने की कितनी आशंका होती है। मैं उनसे कहता हूँ कि पचास की उम्र में किडनी दान करने के कुछ दिनों बाद ही मैं खेतों में काम करने लगा था। और आज करीब सत्तर की उम्र में भी मोटरसाइकिल से भारत भ्रमण कर सकने की क्षमता बरकरार है।

इस काम के अलावा मैं हार्ट, ब्रेन, किडनी और जॉइंट बॉल का ऑपरेशन फ्री में करवाने के लिए भी लोगों की मदद करता हूँ। इसके लिए हम मरीजों को मुंबई के टाटा हॉस्पिटल तथा सत्यसाई अस्पताल पुडुचेरी में लेकर जाते हैं। अपने नेटवर्क की वजह से मैंने कई लोगों का इलाज मुफ्त में करवाया है, जो यदि वे अपने बल पर कराते, तो शायद उन्हें लाखों रुपये खर्च करने पड़ते। अंगदान के कानून को लेकर मेरा मानना है कि सरकार ने इससे जुड़े नियमों को पहले के मुकाबले सरल बनाया है। पहले अंगदान की बहुत संकीर्ण सीमाएं थीं, जिसे अब काफी हद तक विस्तृत बनाया गया है। अंगदान से जुड़े गोरखधंधे से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता, लेकिन इसके भय से हमें इस नेक काम से पीछे नहीं हटना चाहिए।

विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

## व्यवस्था को चुनौती देते माफिया

सो

शल मीडिया पर जिले के मुखिया को ही लगता है डर, तो आप लोग कैसे लडेंगे? शोषक से जिलाधिकारी गौतमबुद्धनगर की सुरक्षा के बारे में जोर-शोर से चर्चा है। यह विचार का विषय है कि जिले में प्रदेश सरकार के सबसे बड़े प्रतिनिधि को स्वयं की सुरक्षा की चिंता है! गौतमबुद्धनगर में बिल्डरों तथा भू-माफियाओं की गैरकानूनी गतिविधियां लंबे समय से चल रही थीं, पर यह पिछले साल तब प्रकाश में आई, जब जिले के शाहबेरी गांव में एक बहुमंजिला भवन के गिरने से कुछ लोग मारे गए। राष्ट्रीय राजधानी क्षेत्र में होने के कारण इस पर खूब शोर-शराबा हुआ, तब जिला प्रशासन ने 17 संस्थाओं एवं व्यक्तियों के विरुद्ध पुलिस रिपोर्ट की। गैंगस्टर ऐक्ट तथा रासुका के अंतर्गत भी कार्रवाई की गई। इसी कारण अवैध निर्माणों में लगे माफिया से जिलाधिकारी को स्वयं की सुरक्षा की चिंता सता रही है। जिलाधिकारी की स्वयं की सुरक्षा की मांग ने बिहार के गोपालगंज की याद ताजा कर दी है, जहां के जिलाधिकारी की हत्या वहीं के लोकसभा सांसद ने, जो माफिया सरगना भी था, दिन दहाड़े कर दी थी!

राष्ट्रीय राजधानी क्षेत्र का अहम हिस्सा तथा दिल्ली से सटे होने के कारण बीती सदी के 80 के दशक में उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार ने इसे औद्योगिकीकरण का केंद्र बनाने के लिए यहां पर नवीन ओखला औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण की स्थापना की, जिसे नोएडा के नाम से पुकारा जाता है। इसके लिए 1984 के भूमि अधिकांश कानून का प्रयोग किया गया तथा बड़े पैमाने पर भूमि का अधिग्रहण हुआ।



शिवदान सिंह

इसको आगे बढ़ाकर ग्रेटर नोएडा और यमुना विकास प्राधिकरण को भी इसमें जोड़ा गया। इस पूरे क्षेत्र को मिलाकर अलग जिला गौतमबुद्धनगर बना दिया गया! इन तीनों में मुख्य उद्देश्य औद्योगिकीकरण था और यहां पर अधिकतर भूमि का उपयोग 70 प्रतिशत उद्योगों तथा 30 प्रतिशत व्यावसायिक तथा आवास के लिए होना था। पर राजनताओं तथा बिल्डर माफियाओं ने नौकरशाहों की मदद से लैंड यूज बदल कर इसे रियल एस्टेट की मंडी बना दिया। इससे पूरे गौतमबुद्धनगर तथा पड़ोसी गाजियाबाद में ज्यादातर भूमि पर घर बन गए और थोड़ी-सी भूमि पर नाममात्र के लिए औद्योगिक यूनिटें स्थापित हुईं, जिनमें रोजगार के अवसर न के बराबर हैं।



खुली खिड़की

### साइबर क्राइम

दिनांदिन उन्नत होती तकनीक ने सहुलियतों के साथ कई किस्म की दुरचारियां भी पैदा की हैं। हिंदुस्तान साइबर क्राइम से दुनिया का चौथा सबसे ज्यादा प्रभावित मुक्त है।

साइबर क्राइम के दायरे में ऐसे अपराध आते हैं, जिसमें कंप्यूटर और किसी इंटरनेट का प्रयोग किया जाता है। बैंकिंग साइबर क्राइम का सबसे मुफीद क्षेत्र है।

साइबर क्राइम के जरिये हुआ नुकसान  
आंकड़े-2017 के, अरब अमेरिकी डॉलर में



## सर्वश्रेष्ठ दान

शिष्यों की परीक्षा लेने के लिए गुरुदेव ने पूछा, यह बताओ कि सर्वश्रेष्ठ दान कौन-सा है? एक शिष्य ने कहा कि गुरुदेव, धन का दान सर्वश्रेष्ठ दान है। दूसरे छात्र ने कहा, गौ-दान सर्वश्रेष्ठ दान है। तीसरे शिष्य का कहना था कि भूमि-दान से बड़ा कोई दान नहीं है। गुरुदेव ने कोई उत्तर नहीं दिया। उन्होंने पहले शिष्य को कुछ धन देकर दान कर देने को कहा।

वह शिष्य गुरुकुल से निकला और थोड़ी दूरी पर बैठे एक भिक्षुक को वह धन दान में दे दिया। ऐसे ही दूसरे शिष्य को उन्हें एक गाय और तीसरे शिष्य को कुछ जमीन दान दे देने के लिए कहा। संयोग से उन दो शिष्यों ने भी गाय और जमीन उसी भिक्षुक को दान में दे दी, जिसे पहले शिष्य ने धन दान में दिया था। कुछ दिनों बाद गुरुदेव ने उन तीनों शिष्यों को कहा कि जाकर देखो कि तुम्हारे लिए दान से यावक की स्थिति में कुछ फर्क पड़ा है या नहीं। वे यह देखकर चकित रह गए कि धन, गाय और जमीन मिलने के बाद भी वह व्यक्ति पहले की ही तरह भिक्षा मांग रहा था। उन्होंने लौटकर सारी बात गुरुदेव को बताई। गुरुदेव हंसते हुए बोले, वत्स, ज्ञान दान सर्वश्रेष्ठ दान है। भौतिक वस्तुओं के दान से व्यक्ति का जीवन नहीं बदलता, लेकिन ज्ञान के दान से बदलता है। मैं आशा करता हूँ कि गुरुकुल से वापस जाने के बाद तुम लोग ज्ञान का दान करने में गंभीरता दिखाओगे।

-संकलित

हरियाली और रास्ता

## किम, उसका बेटा और गुलदस्ता

एक कामकाजी महिला की कहानी, जिसे उसके मासूम बेटे के उपहार ने बदल दिया।



किम दफ्तर से घर लौट रही थी। उसे घर पहुंचकर पति और बेटे के लिए खाना भी बनाया था। उस दिन किम को दान और वह व्यक्ति एक-दूसरे से बड़ी विनम्रता से क्षमा मांगने लगे। फिर दोनों अपने-अपने रास्ते चल दिए। घर पहुंचते ही किम किचन में घुसकर खाना खत्म किया और फिर सोने के लिए लेट गई। लेटते ही किम को याद आया, जब उसका बेटा किचन में आया था, तब उसके हाथ में कुछ था। वह झट से उठी और किचन में जाकर ढूंढने लगी कि उसका बेटा क्या लाया था। उसने देखा, वहीं एक कोने में नीले फूलों का हाथ से बना एक गुलदस्ता पड़ा हुआ था। किम सोचने लगी, जब उस अनजान व्यक्ति से जय-सी ठोकर लग गई, तो मैंने कितनी विनम्रता से उससे माफी मांगी। और जब मुझसे मेरे अपने बेटे को धक्का लगा, तो मैंने माफी मांगने के बजाय उसको कितना डांटा। जबकि वह मेरे लिए गुलदस्ता बनाकर लाया था। किम रात भर सोचकर सो नहीं पाई, लेकिन उसके भीतर कुछ बदल गया था।

हम अक्सर अपने नजदीकी लोगों की भावनाओं की अनदेखी कर देते हैं।