प्रवाह
निर्भीक पत्रकारिता का आठवां दशक
स्थापना वर्ष : 1948

शांति संघर्ष की अनुपस्थिति नहीं, यह संघर्ष को संभालने की क्षमता है...
- रोनाल्ड रीगन

अमेरिका के पूर्व राष्ट्रपति

पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने विंग कमांडर अभिनंदन को आज रिहा करने की घोषणा की है, यह भारत के कूटनीतिक प्रयासों का नतीजा है, जिसके कारण आतंकवाद के मुद्दे पर पड़ोसी मुल्क अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर अलग-थलग पड़ गया है।

बड़ी कूटनीतिक कामयाबी

पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने विंग कमांडर अभिनंदन वर्धमान को रिहा करने की घोषणा करते हुए इसे शांति की पेशकश बताया है, लेकिन यह उनका एक और छलावा है, जिसे हर कोई जानता है। वास्तविकता यह है कि भारत के कूटनीतिक प्रयासों और आतंकवाद के खिलाफ उसे मिल रहे अंतरराष्ट्रीय समर्थन के कारण पाकिस्तान को यह कदम उठाने को मजबूर होना पड़ा है। बालाकोट में भारतीय वायुसेना के विमानों द्वारा जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के आतंकी शिविर को ध्वस्त करने के बाद बुधवार को पाकिस्तानी लड़ाकू विमानों ने नियंत्रण रेखा पार कर भारत की सीमा में घुसने का दुस्साहस किया था और इसी दौरान इसका जवाब देते हुए विंग कमांडर अभिनंदन पड़ोसी देश की सीमा में चले गए थे। भारत ने पहले ही स्पष्ट किया था कि बालाकोट का उसका अभियान असैन्य अभियान था और उसके निशाने पर सिर्फ आतंकी शिविर था। जबकि पाकिस्तानी विमानों ने, जिसमें शामिल एक एफ-16 विमान को गिरा दिया गया, भारतीय वायुसीमा का उल्लंघन कर भड़काने वाली कार्रवाई की थी। फिर यह नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि 48 घंटों के दौरान पाकिस्तान के कई झूठ पकड़े गए हैं, जिसमें सबसे बड़ा झूठ तो यही है कि उसने एफ-16 विमान भेजने से इनकार किया, जबकि विमान और मिसाइल का जो मलबा मिला है, वह उसके इस झूठ का सबसे बड़ा सुबूत है। उसे एफ-16 विमान अमेरिका से इस संधि के तहत मिले थे कि वह इनका इस्तेमाल सिर्फ युद्ध के समय अपनी सुरक्षा के लिए करेगा! पुलवामा हमले के बाद पाकिस्तान लगातार अलग-थलग पड़ता जा रहा है, इसके बावजूद उसने अब तक जैश-ए-मोहम्मद और उसके सरगना मसूद अजहर के खिलाफ किसी तरह की कार्रवाई करने का न तो सुबूत दिया है और न ही ठोस आश्वासन। दूसरी ओर अमेरिका, ब्रिटेन और फ्रांस ने संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद से मसूद अजहर को अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवादी घोषित कर प्रतिबंध लगाने के लिए कहा है। यही नहीं, चीन ने भी पुलवामा हमले की निंदा करते हुए भारत का पक्ष लिया है। पाकिस्तानी विदेश मंत्री शाह मसूद कुरैशी की ओर से भारत से बातचीत की जो पेशकश की गई है, वह सिर्फ आंखों में धूल झोंकने की कोशिश ही है। आतंकवाद को लेकर भारत का दृष्टिकोण एकदम स्पष्ट है कि जब तक पाकिस्तान आतंकियों के खिलाफ ठोस कार्रवाई नहीं करता, उससे बातचीत नहीं हो सकती।

मुंहतोड़ जवाब के बाद

पाकिस्तान को मुंहतोड़ जवाब देने का हमारा मकसद पूरा हो गया है। उसके बाद न पाकिस्तान की ओर से भड़काऊ कार्रवाई हुई, न हमारी तरफ से। हम तनाव और सीमित युद्ध के बीच में हैं।

कपिल काक, एयर वाइस मार्शल (रिटायर्ड)

भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच इन दिनों जो हालात हैं, वे बताते हैं कि रिश्ते कितने खराब हो चुके हैं। हमने देखा है कि 26/11 के बाद दोनों मुल्कों के बीच कोई बातचीत नहीं हुई है। हां, प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने सार्क देशों के सभी प्रमुखों को अपने शपथ ग्रहण समारोह में आमंत्रित करके रिश्ते बेहतर बनाने की कोशिश जरूर की थी। लेकिन बातचीत की शुरुआत से पहले पाकिस्तान हुर्रियत के नेताओं के साथ बातचीत करना चाहता था, जिसके चलते भारत ने वार्ता बंद कर दी। उसके बाद पठानकोट एवं उड़ी में आतंकवादी हमला हुआ, जिसके जवाब में भारत ने सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक की। उसके बाद से लगातार दोनों मुल्कों के बीच तनाव लगातार बढ़ता ही जा रहा है। जैसी कि आशंका थी, विगत 14 फरवरी को पुलवामा में सीआरपीएफ के काफिले पर आतंकवादी हमला हुआ, जिसमें चालीस जवान शहीद हो गए। इससे देश भर में व्यापक आक्रोश फैला और भारत को इसका मुंहतोड़ जवाब देना ही था, इसमें कोई शक नहीं था।

मीडिया में और आम चर्चा में यह बहस चल ही रही थी कि भारत इसका किस तरह से प्रतिकार करेगा, क्या इसका कोई कूटनीतिक जवाब दिया जाएगा या अर्थव्यवस्था के पहलू से चोट पहुंचाई जाएगी या कोई सैन्य कार्रवाई होगी? और भारत ने पुलवामा बम धमाके को अंजाम देने वाले जैश-ए मोहम्मद के बालाकोट स्थित बड़े आतंकी ठिकाने पर वायुसेना के विमानों से हमला बोलकर इसका बदला लिया। भारत ने काफी सफलतापूर्वक आतंकी ठिकाने को तबाह कर दिया। भारतीय वायुसेना ने एक तरह से चमत्कार कर दिया, क्योंकि ऐसे हमले बहुत जोखिम भरे होते हैं, उसमें एक-दूसरे से तालमेल और संपर्क बनाए रखना होता है, लोडिंग करनी होती है, किन मार्गों के लक्ष्य पर निशाना साधा जाएगा, इन सब चीजों का ख्याल रखना पड़ता है।

पाठकों को यह जानकर हैरानी होगी कि बालाकोट में सैन्य कार्रवाई करने वाले विमानों ने ग्वालियर से उड़ान भरी थी, और उत्तरी कश्मीर के केरन से उन्होंने पाकिस्तान में घुसकर दक्षतापूर्वक लक्ष्य पर निशाना साधा। पुलवामा के जवाब में जो सैनिक कार्रवाई हुई, वह सही मायनों में अभूतपूर्व है। हालांकि हमारे विदेश सचिव ने कहा कि हमें यह खबर मिली कि भारत में फिदायीन हमला करने के लिए बालाकोट में आतंकियों को प्रशिक्षित किया जा रहा है, इसलिए हमें एहतियात के तौर पर गैर-सैनिक कार्रवाई करनी पड़ी। यह कोई सैन्य कार्रवाई नहीं थी, बल्कि आतंकवाद-विरोधी कार्रवाई थी। हालांकि उसमें वायुसेना के ही विमान का इस्तेमाल किया गया था।

इसका असर यह हुआ कि एक तो केंद्र में सत्तारूढ़ पार्टी को इससे बड़ी राहत मिली और घरेलू राजनीति में उसे बढ़त हासिल हो गई। दूसरी तरफ अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय को एक संदेश चला गया कि अगर भारत पर आतंकी हमला हुआ, तो भारत चुप नहीं बैठेगा और उसका मुंहतोड़ जवाब दिया जाएगा। इसके लिए हम कौन-सा विकल्प चुनेंगे, इसका फैसला भी हम स्वयं करेंगे। तीसरी बात यह हुई कि पिछले पंद्रह-बीस वर्षों से आतंकवादी हमलों के बावजूद हमने कोई सैन्य कार्रवाई नहीं की थी, जिससे लगता था कि भारत बेबस है। लेकिन सच यह है कि भारत एक बड़ा और जिम्मेदार देश है, जो परमाणु हथियारों के खतरे से दूर रहना चाहता था। इसलिए संयम बरतते हुए कूटनीतिक रास्ते अपना रहा था। लेकिन अब पाकिस्तान को स्पष्ट संकेत भेजा जा रहा है कि अगर आप आतंकवादी हमला करेंगे, तो उसका मुंहतोड़ जवाब मिलेगा।

जिस दिन बालाकोट में भारत ने सैन्य कार्रवाई की, तभी से लग रहा था कि पाकिस्तान भी कोई न कोई प्रतिक्रिया करेगा, क्योंकि वहां के शासक को भी अपनी जनता को संतुष्ट करना है। बुधवार को हमने देखा कि पाकिस्तान के दस विमान नियंत्रण रेखा की तरफ आ रहे थे, और उनका लक्ष्य था नौशेरा में ब्रिगेड मुख्यालय और उसके साथ की बटालियन। लेकिन हमारी वायुसेना के विमान उसी क्षेत्र में निगरानी कर रहे थे, जिसे कॉम्बेट एयर पेट्रोल कहा जाता है। खबरें हैं कि हमारे मिग-21 ने पाकिस्तान के एक एफ-16 को मार गिराया। यह भी समझने वाली बात है कि भारत और पाकिस्तान के विमानों के बीच यह डॉगफाइट 1971 के बाद पहली बार हुई है। अफसोस की बात है कि उस डॉगफाइट में हमें एक मिग-21 विमान का नुकसान सहना पड़ा और हमारा एक पायलट पाकिस्तान के कब्जे में है। जिनेवा कन्वेंशन के तहत अब यह पाकिस्तान की जिम्मेदारी है कि वह हमारे पायलट को सुरक्षित लौटाए। इससे पहले भी कारगिल युद्ध के दौरान फ्लाइट लेफ्टिनेंट नचिकेता पाकिस्तान के कब्जे में थे, जिन्हें बाद में पाकिस्तान ने भारत के हवाले किया था। पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री ने घोषणा की है कि शुक्रवार को पायलट अभिनंदन वर्धमान को छोड़ दिया जाएगा। यह हमारी बड़ी जीत है और शांति की दिशा में बढ़ने के लिहाज से महत्वपूर्ण हो सकता है।

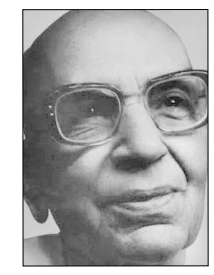
जहां तक आगे की बात है, तो हमें यह ध्यान में रखना होगा कि पाकिस्तान को मुंहतोड़ जवाब देने का हमारा मकसद पूरा हो गया है। मीडिया में कहा जा रहा है कि पाकिस्तान हमारे सैन्य ठिकानों पर हमला करने वाला था, जिसे हमने रोका। पर उसके बाद हमने देखा है कि न तो पाकिस्तान की तरफ से कोई भड़काऊ कार्रवाई हुई और न ही हमारी तरफ से। ऐसा लगता है कि यह एक सीमित युद्ध है, जो स्लो मोशन में है। हम इस वक्त तनाव और सीमित युद्ध के बीच में हैं। दोनों देशों पर अंतरराष्ट्रीय दबाव है कि इसे और न तूल दिया जाए। नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि यह सब कुछ परमाणु हथियारों के काले बादल के नीचे हो रहा है। इसलिए हमें संयम बरतते हुए सोच-समझकर कदम आगे बढ़ाना है। मेरी राय है कि भारत को एक जिम्मेदार राष्ट्र होने के नाते इस तनाव को कम करने की कोशिश करनी चाहिए। पाकिस्तान तो कह ही रहा है कि दोनों मुल्कों को बातचीत करनी चाहिए। बातचीत कब करनी है, कैसे करनी है, यह सरकार को सोचना है, लेकिन इस तनाव को आहिस्ता-आहिस्ता कम करना चाहिए और पुलवामा से पहले की स्थिति बहाल करनी चाहिए। हां, पाकिस्तान पर दबाव जरूर बनाना चाहिए कि वह आतंकवाद को खत्म करे। आज के जमाने में युद्ध के बजाय हमें अपने आर्थिक एवं सामाजिक विकास पर ध्यान देना चाहिए।

अंतर्ध्वनि

>> कन्हैया लाल मिश्र प्रभाकर

आंखों में समाया विजय का स्वप्न परास्त नहीं होता

खेत सदा से मेरे मित्र हैं, मैं अकसर उनके बीच से गुजरता हूं, कभी दौड़कर तो कभी धीमे-धीमे और सदा ही मुझे ऐसा अनुभव होता है कि मैं अपने सहृदय मित्रों की गोष्ठी में आ गया हूं, पर आज मुझे वैसा अनुभव नहीं हो रहा है। बात यह है कि मैं आज उनके बीच से, उनके पास गुजर ही कहां रहा हूं-उनके बीच से गुजर रही है एक्सप्रेस और उसमें बैठा हूं, तो उनका सुखस्पर्श कैसे पाऊं? तो क्या विज्ञान की हाट पर हम सुख के मोल सुविधा ही खरीद रहे हैं?



चांदनी बरस रही है, खेतों पर, पर्वतों पर, वृक्षों पर और मैं सोच रहा हूं उस चिड़िया की बातें, जो कलाबाजियां कर रही थीं! चांदनी बरस रही है और एक्सप्रेस छोटे स्टेशनों को छोड़ती, उन पर उपेक्षा की एक दृष्टि डालती चली जा रही है, जैसे ज्ञानी जगत के प्रलोभनों को देखता भर है, उनमें उलझता नहीं! यह आई फाटकचौकी, जिसकी छोटी-सी कोठरी में रहता है फाटकदार का परिवार, जिसे मिलते हैं थोड़े से सिक्के, जिनसे वह जी पाता है, पर अपनी दृष्टि में वह है एक अफसर कि जब चाहे दरवाजा बंद कर दे और टुकुर-टुकुर खड़ी ताका करे गांव के ठाकुर की बैलगाड़ी? मैं देख रहा हूं, उसका छोटा-सा कुत्ता पूरे वेग से गाड़ी के साथ दौड़ा जा रहा है। बेवकूफ, क्या खाक दौड़ेगा भला रेल के साथ! तीन पल में वह पिछड़ गया और अब वह धीरे-धीरे लौटकर जा बैठेगा, फिर फाटकदार की खाट के पास। रोज हारता है पर शर्म से डूब नहीं मरता। रोज-रोज की पराजय से उसकी आंखों में समाया विजय का स्वप्न और पैरों में उमड़ा अभियान का संकल्प कभी परास्त नहीं होता, चाहे वह फाटकदार का कुत्ता हो या किसी राष्ट्र का सिपाही, क्या एक प्रेरक चरित्र का संरक्षक नहीं है?

-दिवंगत हिंदी साहित्यकार

मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> मनोज कुमार

मनोरोग के विरुद्ध एक असरदार मॉडल

तब मुझे नहीं पता था कि देश की अधिकांश ग्रामीण जनसंख्या मानसिक बीमारियों की शिकार है। दस साल पहले मैं अपने मुल्क में काम करने के लिए ब्रिटेन छोड़कर भारत वापस आ गया था। जिस केरल राज्य से मैं आता हूं, वहां समाज के लिए काम करने वालों की कमी नहीं है। मैं एक मनोचिकित्सक हूं। पंद्रह वर्षों तक मैंने विलायत में रहकर डॉक्टरी की है। लेकिन अपने देश के लिए कुछ करने की भावना पैदा होते ही मैं अपने मुल्क लौट आया।

हमारे देश में मानसिक स्वास्थ्य पर बहुत कम खर्च किया जाता है। इसी तथ्य को ध्यान में रखते हुए मैंने 2008 में केरल के कोझिकोड में मेंटल हेल्थ ऐक्शन ट्रस्ट की स्थापना की थी। इस संस्थान का उद्देश्य था-ग्रामीण लोगों का मानसिक स्वास्थ्य बेहतर करना। इसके तहत पहले चरण में मैंने लोगों को इस समस्या की ओर जागरूक करने का काम किया। मैंने सैकड़ों स्वयंसेवकों को अपनी संस्था से जोड़कर उन्हें प्रशिक्षित किया कि किन संदेशों के साथ उन्हें समाज में लोगों के बीच जाना है। इन स्वयंसेवकों में गृहिणियां समेत अन्य रिटायर्ड पेशेवर लोग शामिल हैं। दरअसल इनके पास इतना वक्त होता है कि ये मरीजों के साथ कुछ वक्त गुजार सकते हैं। ये स्वयंसेवक ही रोगियों तक पहुंचने की पहली सीढ़ी होते हैं। उनकी हर जरूरत का ध्यान रखते हुए ये लोग मरीजों की पूरी रिपोर्ट तैयार रखते हैं। मल्लपुरम, वायनाड, कोझिकोड, पलक्कड, त्रिशूर, अलेप्पी, कासरकोड और कोट्टायम जिले के 55 केंद्रों पर हमारे हजारों स्वयंसेवक काम कर रहे हैं। प्रत्येक केंद्र विभिन्न गांवों में स्थित है। लेकिन यह पूरी प्रक्रिया शुरुआती चरण मात्र है। असल काम इसके बाद शुरू होता है। मैंने अपने जैसे कई अन्य मनोचिकित्सकों को इस काम से जोड़ा है। कई स्तरों पर हम मरीजों का इलाज करते हैं। यदि किसी मरीज तक हमारी सीधी पहुंच नहीं होती, तो हम तकनीक के प्रयोग से उस तक पहुंचते हैं। चूंकि मैं एक दिन में पचास से ज्यादा मरीजों को नहीं देख सकता, इसलिए व्हाट्सएप, स्काइप, गूगल हैंगआउट और दूसरे तरह के वीडियो कॉलिंग एप्स का प्रयोग करके मरीजों से ऑनलाइन बातें कर उनकी समस्या का निदान ढूंढने की कोशिश करता हूं। भले ही किसी भी तरीके से हम मरीजों तक पहुंचते हों, पर उनकी समस्या से जुड़ी प्रत्येक जानकारी हमारे सिस्टम में सुरक्षित रहती है। हम हर मरीज के इलाज को नियमित परखते हैं और जरूरी कदम उठाते हैं। इस पूरे तंत्र को चलाने के लिए मैंने अपने सहयोगियों को नियमित वेतन देने की भी व्यवस्था की है, जिसके लिए मुझे कई लोगों के व्यक्तिगत चंदे से सहारा मिलता है। जबकि मैं इस रकम से एक पैसा भी अपने लिए नहीं खर्च करता। मरीजों के लिए सभी तरह का इलाज बिल्कुल निःशुल्क होता है, क्योंकि मेरा मकसद कभी पैसा कमाना रहा ही नहीं।

देश में मानसिक स्वास्थ्य पर कम खर्च होने के कारण मैंने मेंटल हेल्थ ऐक्शन ट्रस्ट बनाया।

खास बात यह है कि समाज में कई ऐसे मनोरोगियों से मेरा सामना होता है, जो कि असल में किसी अन्य शारीरिक बीमारी की वजह से अवसाद में होते हैं। एड्स जैसी बीमारी इनमें प्रमुख है। सामाजिक कारणों से लोग इस पर खुलकर बात करने से डरते हैं और भीतर ही भीतर मानसिक परेशानियों का शिकार होते रहते हैं। मानसिक रूप से स्वस्थ समाज बनाने के लिए यह बहुत जरूरी है कि हम रूढ़ियों को तोड़कर हर मुद्दे पर खुलकर बात करना सीखें।

-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

आतंक का खात्मा ही समाधान है

जंगी जहाजों और बम धमाकों के शोर में पाकिस्तान में आतंकियों के पनपने का मुद्दा पीछे छूट रहा है। आज दोनों मुल्कों के बीच जंग जैसे हालात की वजह पाकिस्तान में जेहादियों और तालिबान की मौजूदगी है।

मरिआना बाबर
पाकिस्तानी पत्रकार

जब भी मैं बालाकोट के बारे में सोचती हूं, तब मुझे उस भयानक भूकंप की याद आती है, जो आठ अक्तूबर, 2005 को दोनों ओर के कश्मीर और खैबर पख्तुनख्वा में आया था। उस भूकंप में 80,000 से अधिक लोग मारे गए थे और उसमें बुनियादी ढांचे को भी भारी नुकसान पहुंचा था। उस भूकंप का केंद्र बालाकोट से 10 किलोमीटर दूर पूर्व में और मुजफ्फराबाद से 19 किलोमीटर दूर पूर्वोत्तर में था। मुझे यह भी याद है कि उस भूकंप से बालाकोट में इतने लोग मारे गए थे कि लाशों को पहनाने के लिए कफन कम पड़ गए थे। दो साल पहले छुट्टी के एक दिन मैं कार से बालाकोट से गुजर रही थी, तो मैंने देखा कि वहां एक नया शहर बस गया है और एक भी पुराना घर नहीं है।

कुछ दिन पहले 26 फरवरी को बालाकोट के लोग जल्दी ही जग गए, क्योंकि उन्होंने धमाकों की आवाज सुनी थी और उनके घर की खिड़कियां और दरवाजे हिलने लगे थे। बहुत लोगों ने इसे एक और भूकंप समझा। बाद में दिन निकलने पर जब वे बाहर निकले, तब उन्हें यह बात पता चली कि भारतीय जंगी जहाजों ने वहां बम गिराए थे। भारत सरकार ने वहां चल रहे जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के ट्रेनिंग कैंप को जमींदोज करने का दावा किया। जैश से जुड़ी कुछ चीजें सोशल मीडिया में आई हैं, जिनमें कहा गया है कि वह मदरसा ट्रेनिंग के लिए इस्तेमाल होता था।

जंगी जहाज और बम धमाकों के इस शोर में पाकिस्तान में आतंकियों के ट्रेनिंग लेने का मुद्दा पीछे छूटता महसूस हो रहा है। आज जंग जैसे जो हालात पैदा हुए हैं, उसकी असल वजह क्या है? इसकी वजह पाकिस्तान में जेहादियों और तालिबान जैसे नॉन स्टेट ऐक्टर्स की मौजूदगी है, जो पाकिस्तान के साथ-साथ उन देशों के लिए भी खतरा हैं, जहां वे आतंकी हमलों को अंजाम देते हैं। इस सिलसिले में भारत की संसद को निशाना बनाने की कोशिश के अलावा कारगिल, मुंबई, पठानकोट और पिछले दिनों पुलवामा में हुए हमले को याद किया जा सकता है, जिसकी जिम्मेदारी जैश ने ली।

मुझे याद है कि जब मुंबई में पाक जेहादियों ने आतंकी हमला किया था और मुंबई गुस्से से उबल रही थी, तब पाकिस्तान में उसका कोई असर नहीं दिख रहा था। लेकिन समय बीतने के बाद यह महसूस हुआ कि मुंबई के लोगों में पाकिस्तानियों के प्रति कितना गुस्सा है। यह बात मुझे पाकिस्तान में पूर्व भारतीय उच्चायुक्त टीसीए राघवन ने बताई थी कि उस हमले के बाद मुंबई के लोग कितने गुस्से में थे। चूंकि आतंकियों ने यह कार्रवाई दूसरे देश में की थी और पाकिस्तानियों को वह दुख झेलना नहीं पड़ा, इसलिए उसे वे बहुत जल्दी भूल गए। अलबत्ता पेशावर के आर्मी पब्लिक स्कूल में हुए भयानक आतंकी हमले को पाकिस्तान नहीं भूल सकता, जिसमें पाक तालिबान ने सैकड़ों स्कूली बच्चों और उनके शिक्षकों को निशाना बनाया था। वह हमला पाकिस्तानियों के लिए तमाम नॉन स्टेट ऐक्टर्स से निजात पाने का एक सबक होना चाहिए था।

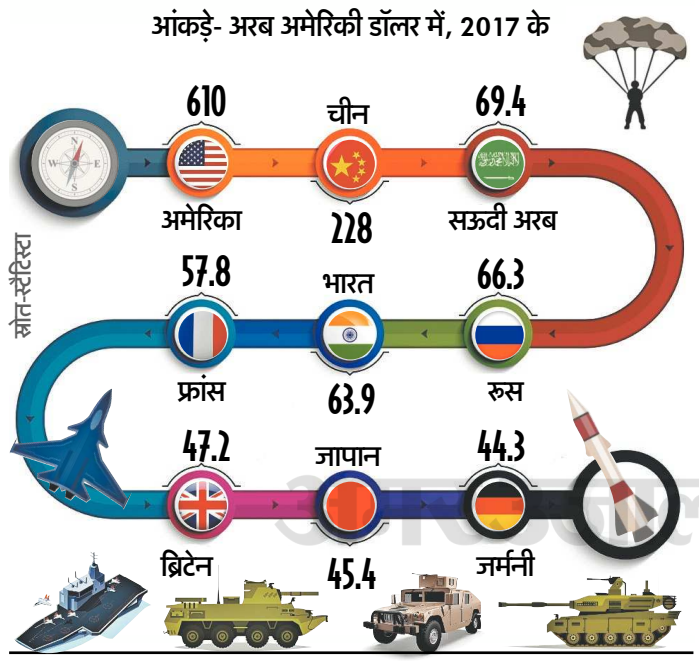
यह अच्छी बात है कि दुनिया के देशों ने जहां भारत और पाकिस्तान से तनाव कम करने के लिए कहा है, वहीं वे पाकिस्तान को आतंक के तमाम ढांचों को खत्म करने की भी याद दिला रहे हैं। मेरा मानना है कि भारत के सामने बातचीत की पेशकश करने के अलावा पाकिस्तान को अपने यहां चल रहे तमाम आतंकी कैंपों को नेस्तनाबूद करने जैसा ठोस और संजीदा कदम उठाना चाहिए और जेहादियों को रोकना चाहिए। इमरान खान को पाकिस्तान में आतंक का प्रसार रोकना चाहिए, तो इसलिए नहीं कि भारत और दूसरे देश इसकी मांग कर रहे हैं। उन्हें आतंकवाद पर इसलिए लगाम लगानी चाहिए कि यह पाकिस्तान और उसके लोगों के लिए अच्छा नहीं है।

खुली खिड़की

सैन्य खर्च

छह सौ अरब डॉलर से ज्यादा रकम के साथ अमेरिका सबसे ज्यादा सैन्य खर्च करने वाला देश है। वहीं दूसरे स्थान पर चीन है। भारत फिलहाल इस सूची में पांचवें स्थान पर है।

आंकड़े- अरब अमेरिकी डॉलर में, 2017 के



फल मुझे नहीं मिलेंगे

राजा शुद्धोधन एक दिन राज्य भ्रमण के लिए अपने महल से बाहर निकले, तो उन्होंने रास्ते में एक वृद्ध को पौधा रोपते हुए देखा। राजा वहीं रुक गए और चकित होकर उन्होंने उस वृद्ध से पूछा, इस उम्र में आप पौधा क्यों लगा रहे हैं? क्या इसका फल आपको मिलेगा? वृद्ध ने राजा का अभिवादन करते हुए जवाब दिया, नहीं महाराज, इसके फल मुझे नहीं मिलेंगे, क्योंकि यह पौधा जब पेड़ बनेगा और फल देगा, तब तक मैं इस पृथ्वी पर नहीं रहूंगा। लेकिन उससे क्या, हमारी आने वाली पीढ़ी को तो इसके स्वादिष्ट फलों का स्वाद मिलेगा। ठीक उसी तरह, जैसे आज हम अपने पूर्वजों के लगाए गए पेड़ों के फलों का स्वाद लेते हैं और उनको धन्यवाद देते हैं। इसी तरह मेरा यह पौधा जब बड़ा होकर फल देगा, तब मेरा नाम भी चलता रहेगा। राजन, मनुष्य इस दुनिया में न कुछ लेकर आता है और न ही कुछ लेकर यहां से जाता है। अगर इस दुनिया में कुछ शेष रहता है, तो वह है व्यक्ति के अच्छे कर्म। इसीलिए मैं स्नेह के साथ यह पेड़ लगा रहा हूं, ताकि मेरे जाने के बाद लोग मुझे याद करें। वृद्ध के इतने ऊंचे विचार सुनकर राजा शुद्धोधन काफी प्रसन्न हुए और बोले, बाबा, आपकी यह बात हमारे लिए भी संदेश है। आपने मेरी आंखें खोल दीं। अब मैं भी ऐसा ही करूंगा। यह कहकर राजा उस वृद्ध को धन्यवाद देते हुए आगे निकल गए।

सत्संग

-संकलित

हरियाली और रास्ता

हार और हीरे का फर्क

एक जौहरी की कहानी, जिसने अपने भाई के बेटे को तराश कर हीरा जैसा बना दिया।

नारायण के पिता जौहरी थे। पूरा परिवार आराम से जीवन यापन कर रहा था कि एक दिन उनका निधन हो गया। नारायण अभी बहुत छोटा था। पिता के जाने के बाद परिवार टूट गया। कुछ ही दिनों में हाल यह हो चला कि खाने-पीने के लिए भी कुछ नहीं रहा। एक दिन मां नारायण को एक हार देकर बोलीं, इसे अपने चाचा की दुकान पर ले जाओ और बेचकर कुछ रुपये ले आओ। नारायण हार लेकर गया। चाचा ने हार को देख कहा, बेटा, मां से कहना कि अभी बाजार मंदा है। इसे थोड़ा रुककर बेचना, तो अच्छे दाम मिल जाएंगे। नारायण को थोड़े से रुपये देकर वह बोले, तुम कल से मेरी दुकान पर काम करने के लिए क्यों नहीं आ जाते? अगले दिन से नारायण दुकान पर जाने लगा। काम करते हुए उसे एक साल बीत गए। अब वह रत्नों का बड़ा पारखी बन गया था। लोग दूर-दूर से अपने हीरे की परख कराने उसके पास आने लगे। उसके घर का कर्ज अदा हो गया और अच्छी कमाई भी होने लगी। एक दिन उसके चाचा ने कहा, बेटा, अपनी मां से वह हार लेकर आना। अब उसके अच्छे दाम मिल जाएंगे। मां से हार लेकर नारायण ने खुद उसे परखा, तो पाया कि वह तो नकली है। वह उसे घर पर छोड़कर दुकान लौट आया। चाचा ने पूछा, तुम हार नहीं लाए? नारायण बोला, वह तो नकली था। तब चाचा बोले, जब तुम पहली बार हार लेकर आए थे, मैं तभी जान गया था कि वह हार नकली है। पर अगर तब मैं उसे नकली बता देता, तो तुम सोचते कि बुरे वक्त पर चाचा हमारी चीज को भी नकली बताने लगे। लेकिन मैं जानता था कि तुम्हें पैसों की जरूरत थी। इसीलिए मैंने हार न लेकर एक हीरे को तराशना बेहतर विकल्प समझा। और देखो, आज मेरा हीरा उस हार से कहीं ज्यादा कीमती निकला।

बुरे वक्त में जो मदद का हाथ बढ़ाए, वही हमारा असली हितैषी होता है।

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड
वर्ष 12 अंक 12

अनुमान से कमतर

केंद्रीय सांख्यिकी एवं कार्यक्रम कार्यान्वयन मंत्रालय ने वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 के सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) के दूसरे अग्रिम अनुमान गुरुवार को जारी किए।

इन अनुमानों में वित्त वर्ष की तीसरी तिमाही यानी अक्टूबर से दिसंबर 2018 की अवधि के तिमाही अनुमान शामिल हैं। ये आंकड़े नकारात्मक हैं और इसलिए थोड़ा चौंकाते हैं। इतना ही नहीं, इनके चलते वर्ष 2018-19 में पूरे वर्ष के जीडीपी वृद्धि अनुमान को पिछले 7.2 फीसदी के स्तर से कम करके 7 फीसदी करना होगा। दरअसल जीडीपी वृद्धि में गिरावट स्पष्ट नजर आ रही है। तीसरी तिमाही में केवल 6.6 फीसदी की वृद्धि दर्ज की गई।

यह सच है कि तीसरी तिमाही में भारत की वृद्धि दर अभी भी चीन से तेज है जिसने दिसंबर तिमाही में केवल 6.4 फीसदी की दर दर्ज की। लेकिन यह हमारे लिए कोई बड़ी सांत्वना नहीं है।

दूसरी तिमाही यानी जुलाई से सितंबर 2018 के बीच 7 फीसदी की वृद्धि दर देखने को मिली और अप्रैल से जून में वर्ष की पहली तिमाही के दौरान 8 फीसदी की जीडीपी वृद्धि देखने को मिली थी। यह मामूली गिरावट नहीं है। चिंतित करने वाली एक बात यह भी है कि वर्ष 2017-18 में 5 फीसदी की मजबूत वृद्धि के बाद कृषि क्षेत्र के चालू वित्त वर्ष में केवल 2.7 फीसदी की दर से विकसित होने की आशंका उत्पन्न हो गई है। यह अनुमान मूलभूत कीमतों पर सकल मूल्यवर्धन के रूप में लगाया गया है। खाद्य पदार्थों की थोक कीमतों में 0.8 फीसदी की ऋणात्मक अपस्फीति के साथ यह संभावित कृषि संकट की ओर भी संकेत करता है जिस पर सरकार को तत्काल ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है।

ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि धीमी वृद्धि दर की एक वजह सरकारी व्यय की दर में कटौती भी हो सकती है। केंद्र सरकार का राजस्व व्यय जिसे इस व्यय का अहम संकेतक माना जाता है (शुद्ध ब्याज भुगतान और सब्सिडी) उसमें अप्रैल से दिसंबर 2018 के दौरान केवल 9.2 फीसदी की दर से बढ़ोतरी हुई जबकि एक वर्ष पहले की समान अवधि में यह दर 16.7 फीसदी थी। सरकारी क्षेत्र के लिए मूलभूत कीमतों पर सकल मूल्यवर्धन के चालू वित्त वर्ष के दौरान 8.5 फीसदी की दर से बढ़ने का अनुमान है जबकि पिछले वित्त वर्ष में यह वृद्धि दर 12 फीसदी थी। इससे यह संकेत मिलता है कि अतीत की वृद्धि को सरकारी व्यय ने काफी हद तक सहारा दिया था और अब राजकोषीय गणित कुछ ऐसा है जो इस वृद्धि मॉडल का स्थायित्व छीन रहा है।

बहरहाल, कुछ अच्छी खबर भी है जो यह बताती है कि देश में निजी निवेश आधारित वृद्धि की राह स्थायी और सामान्य हो सकती है। सकल स्थायी पूंजी निर्माण या जीएफसीएफ के चालू वित्त वर्ष के दौरान मौजूदा और स्थिर कीमतों पर जीडीपी के क्रमशः 28.9 फीसदी और 32.3 फीसदी रहने का अनुमान है।

यह गत वित्त वर्ष की क्रमशः 28.6 फीसदी और 31.4 फीसदी की दर से बेहतर है। जीएफसीएफ की दर वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 की तीसरी तिमाही में भी पिछले वित्त वर्ष की समान तिमाही की तुलना में बेहतर है। यह बात भी ध्यान देने लायक है कि विनिर्माण क्षेत्र में चालू वित्त वर्ष के दौरान 8 फीसदी से अधिक की दर से वृद्धि होनी है जबकि पिछले वर्ष यह बमुश्किल 6 फीसदी की दर से बढ़ा था।

इसका आकलन मूलभूत कीमतों पर सकल मूल्यवर्धन के आधार पर किया जाता है। अगर सब सटीक रहा तो हमें इसका फायदा निजी कारोबारी जगत की आय में सुधार के रूप में देखने को मिलेगा क्योंकि विनिर्माण उत्पादन में उसका योगदान तीन चौथाई से अधिक है।

अजय मोहंती

नाकाम कंपनियों से निजात अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए बेहतर

देश में मंदी का सिलसिला लंबा चलने की एक वजह यह भी है कि हमारे यहां नाकाम कंपनियों का बंद होना उतना आसान नहीं है। इस विषय में विस्तार से जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं **अजय शाह**

पिछले दिनों इसी समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशित टी एन नाइनन के आलेख में हमने देखा कि कैसे निजी कारोबारियों को खराब कारोबारी माहौल में कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। हमारे देश में राज्य और बाजार के बीच के रिश्तों की व्यवस्था भी कठिनाइयों से भरी हुई है। इस बीच आशा की किरण भी है: कमजोरों के बाजार से बाहर जाने से बचे हुए कारोबारियों का मुनाफा बढ़ता है क्योंकि कच्चे माल की कीमत कम होती है और उत्पादन मूल्य बढ़ता है। दिवालिया सुधार के साथ कारोबार से बाहर निकलने की प्रक्रिया तेज हुई है। बहिर्गमन की प्रक्रिया सहज होने से कारोबारी चक्र में धीमापन भी कम अवधि के लिए आता है।

कारोबारी मंदी का संबंध निजी क्षेत्र के आशावाद और निवेश से भी है। देश में आशावाद कम क्यों हो रहा है? बुनियादी क्षेत्र की हर कंपनी के पास बताने के लिए यह किस्सा है कि सरकार समय पर भुगतान नहीं करती और सरकारी तंत्र अनुबंध उल्लंघन से हिचकिचाता नहीं है। इसी प्रकार, नियमन की अस्थिरता, कराधान और एजेंसियों ने कई कारोबारों को प्रभावित किया है। सरकारी सुसंगतता की कमी और विधि के शासन के अभाव ने कारोबारी भावना और निवेश को कमजोर किया है। निवेश में तेजी तभी आती है जब सुधार से जुड़ी टीम इन दिक्कतों को दूर करती हैं।

यह एक प्रतिस्पर्धी लड़ाई है जो हर प्रासंगिक बाजार में नजर आती है। विभिन्न कंपनियों का अंत बची कंपनियों के मुनाफे में इजाफा करता है। हम यहां इसी प्रक्रिया पर ध्यान केंद्रित करेंगे।

कारोबारी चक्र की परिस्थितियों में सन 2011-12 में बदलाव आया। उस वक्त करीब 40 फीसदी भारतीय कंपनियों पर भारी कर्ज था और उनका राजस्व और मुनाफा अत्यंत कमजोर थे। अधिकांश मामलों में एक जगह से उधार लेकर दूसरे का कर्ज चुकाया जा रहा था। इसमें वे बैंक भी मददगार थे जो बुरी खबर छिपाना चाहते थे।

बुरी खबरें लगातार सामने आती रहीं। आईबीसी ने इसमें सहायता की। बैंकिंग नियमन में भी थोड़ा सुधार हुआ। सबसे पहले ऋण बैंकों से म्युचुअल फंड और फिर एनबीएफसी की ओर स्थानांतरित हुआ। अगस्त 2018 में आईएलऐंडएफएस के डिफॉल्ट के बाद अब अधिक सतर्कता बरती जा रही है और ऋण का स्थानांतरण मुश्किल हो रहा है।

हम अर्थशास्त्रियों के पास चिंतित निजी कारोबारियों के लिए भी अच्छी खबर है। कुछ निजी कारोबारों की विफलता बची हुई कंपनियों के लिए मददगार साबित होगी। हमने कंपनियों के अंत के लिए एक आशावादी जुमला गढ़ा-रचनात्मक विनाश।

जापानी अर्थव्यवस्था में लंबे ठहराव ने एक नये शब्द को जन्म दिया था- जॉम्बी फर्म। यानी ऐसी कंपनी जो मृत प्राय हो लेकिन कृत्रिम तरीके से बाजार में अपना अस्तित्व बनाए हो। इन कंपनियों की मौजूदगी प्रतिस्पर्धी कंपनियों की सेहत और उनके निवेश को प्रभावित करती है।

एयर इंडिया की मौजूदगी और हर वर्ष उसमें करदाताओं का पैसा लगाने से समूचे विमानन उद्योग की सेहत पर असर पड़ता है। जब हम जॉम्बी कंपनियों का पोषण करते हैं तो इन पर होने वाले व्यय का असर समूचे औद्योगिक क्षेत्र पर पड़ता है।

मिसाल के तौर पर रिलायंस कम्युनिकेशंस के बाजार से बाहर जाने से दूरसंचार क्षेत्र में प्रतिस्पर्धा कम हुई और बची हुई कंपनियों का मुनाफा बेहतर हुआ है। यह प्रक्रिया हर उद्योग में चल रही है और किसी कंपनी के पतन पर बची हुई कंपनियां राहत की सांस लेती हैं।

इसके अनुकूल प्रभाव कहीं अधिक गहन होते हैं। अगर एक एयर इंडिया कारोबार से बाहर होती है तो बची हुई कंपनियों को संसाधन मिलते हैं। जब उसके विमान चालक अन्य निजी कंपनियों में रोजगार तलाशते हैं तो उनकी लागत में कमी आती है। जब एयर इंडिया कारोबार से बाहर होती है तो ऋण के नए माध्यम तैयार होते हैं और अन्य कंपनियां इसका प्रयोग कर सकती हैं।

जब देश भर में मौजूद एयर इंडिया की अचल संपत्ति की बिक्री होगी तो इससे सबके लिए उनका मूल्य कम होगा। चूंकि इनमें से कई जगहें अन्य विमानन कंपनियों के लिए भी अनुकूल होंगी तो जाहिर है उन्हें इसका अधिक फायदा मिलेगा। रिलायंस कम्युनिकेशंस द्वारा स्पेक्ट्रम की बिक्री से शेष सभी कंपनियों के लिए वह सस्ता होगा।

यानी बची हुई कंपनियों को उत्पाद बाजार में उत्पाद मूल्य और कारक बाजार में उत्पाद कारक, दोनों जगह राहत मिलेगी। जमीन, श्रम और पूंजी की कम कीमतों के कारण मंदी के बाद के दौर में मुनाफा सुनिश्चित करने में मदद मिलेगी। इस दलील के आधार पर देखें तो खस्ताहाल कंपनियों का जितनी जल्दी बहिर्गमन हो, अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए उतना ही बेहतर होता है। नाकाम कंपनियों का परिचालन जारी रखना अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए बेहद नुकसानदेह होता है। उनको निपटाकर आगे बढ़ना ही उचित विकल्प है। दिवालिया संहिता के पीछे यही दलील है और इसी वजह से दिवालिया प्रक्रिया में नकदीकरण और निस्तारण को लेकर कोई पूर्वग्रह नहीं होना चाहिए।

हाल के दशकों की बात करें तो सन 1990 के दशक में निवेश में तेजी आई। उसके बाद सन 1998 से 2002 तक मंदी रही। 2003 से 2011 तक फिर अच्छे दिन आए और 2011 से मंदी का चक्र फिर चला। सन 1998 से 2002 और 2011 से अब तक का समय काफी कठिनाई भरा रहा है। सवाल यह भी है कि हमारे यहां मंदी का चक्र इतना लंबा क्यों चलता है। एक वजह तो यह है कि कमजोर प्रदर्शन करने वाली कंपनियों का बहिर्गमन धीमा होता है। बैंकिंग नियमन और सरकारी तंत्र अब तक ऐसे रहे हैं कि मृतप्राय कंपनियों को ढोया जाता रहा है। आईबीसी के आगमन के बाद हालात बदल रहे हैं। आधुनिक बैंकिंग नियमन और दिवालिया प्रक्रिया के साथ कम उत्पादकता वाली कंपनियों का निपटान तेज हुआ है। इससे मंदी का चक्र धीमा होगा। टी एन नाइनन का आलेख पढ़ते हुए मुझे लगा कि कुछ कंपनियों का नाकाम होना प्रतिद्वंद्वियों के लिए कितना अच्छा रहा होगा। अर्थव्यवस्था की दृष्टि से भी ऐसी कंपनियों का नकदीकरण अच्छी पहल है।

कम उत्पादकता वाली किसी निरंतर परिचालित फर्म के साथ यह जोखिम हो सकता है कि उसके अंशधारक भावुक हों या अवैध तरीके से नकदी का परिचालन हो रहा हो और इसलिए अंशधारक कम पूंजी प्रतिफल वाली कंपनी से जुड़े हुए हों। ऋण, चुकता करने का दबाव और दिवालिया प्रक्रिया ऐसी भावनाओं पर अंकुश लगाते हैं। नकदीकरण का दबाव कंपनी को मजबूर करता है कि वह प्रदर्शन सुधारे या बाजार से बाहर हो जाए। यह अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए भी अच्छा है।

(लेखक नई दिल्ली स्थित नैशनल इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ पब्लिक फाइनैंस ऐंड पॉलिसी में प्रोफेसर हैं। लेख में प्रस्तुत विचार निजी हैं।)

शिक्षा के प्रसार से भी नहीं बढ़ी कार्यशील महिलाओं की तादाद

इंसानी पहलू

श्यामल मजूमदार

भारत में महिला श्रम भागीदारी की दर में भारी गिरावट आना चिंताजनक है, लेकिन इससे भी चिंताजनक बात ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में और तेजी से गिरावट आना है। एक अन्य चिंताजनक पहलू यह है कि जो महिलाएं काम कर रही हैं, उनमें से भी ज्यादातर को कम पारिश्रमिक वाला रोजगार मिला हुआ है। इसके दोहरे प्रभाव हुए हैं। आम तौर पर उनका पारिश्रमिक काम के घंटों की तुलना में बहुत कम होता है, जिससे उनमें नौकरी को जारी रखने का उत्साह कम हो जाता है।

इन आंकड़ों को लेकर अचंभा नहीं करना चाहिए। अमेरिकी जनसंख्या प्रभाग के एक अनुमान में कहा गया है कि भारत में महिला श्रम भागीदारी दर 14 एशिया-प्रशांत राष्ट्रों की सूची में केवल फिजी से अधिक है। बांग्लादेश जैसे देश भी भारत से काफी आगे हैं, जिसकी मुख्य वजह वहां संगठित परिधान उद्योग की अच्छी प्रगति है। बांग्लादेश में महिला कामगारों की आबादी में तेजी से सुधार आ रहा है। वहां निर्यात प्रसंस्करण जोनों में कामगारों में महिलाओं की हिस्सेदारी करीब 72 फीसदी है। यह मलेशिया से अधिक और कोरिया तथा फिलिपींस के बराबर है।

भारतीय महिलाओं की कार्यबल में कम भागीदारी के लिए कई सामाजिक कारण भी जिम्मेदार हैं। समाज में महिलाओं से परिवार की देखभाल करने की उम्मीद की जाती है। ऐसे में जो महिलाएं नौकरी करने की कोशिश करती हैं, उन्हें अन्य महिलाओं और परिवार के विरोध का सामना करना पड़ता है।

इसके अलावा भी कई कारण हैं। महिलाओं को न्याय दिलाने के क्षेत्र में काम करने वाले एक गैर-सरकारी संगठन-साक्षी के सर्वेक्षण के मुताबिक 80 फीसदी उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि उनके कार्यस्थल पर यौन शोषण होता है। वहीं, 53 फीसदी ने कहा कि पुरुषों और महिलाओं को कार्यस्थल पर समान अवसर नहीं मिलते हैं।

भारत में एक प्रमुख कमी यह है कि आर्थिक गतिविधियों में उच्च शिक्षित महिलाओं की भागीदारी बहुत कम है। इससे यह साफ है कि शिक्षा का प्रसार बढ़ने के बावजूद भारत में कार्यशील महिलाओं की तादाद में इजाफा नहीं हुआ। इस अनुसंधान ने दिखाया है कि महिला कार्यबल की भागीदारी और शिक्षा के स्तर में नकारात्मक संबंध है क्योंकि शिक्षा के स्तर में बढ़ोतरी के बाद कार्यबल की भागीदारी घटती है। इसलिए अशिक्षित महिलाओं के शिक्षित महिलाओं की तुलना में नौकरी करने की ज्यादा संभावना होती है। इसकी वजह यह है कि देश में जिस तरह की आर्थिक वृद्धि की प्रकृति है, उससे उन क्षेत्रों में बहुत से रोजगारों का सृजन नहीं हुआ है जिनमें महिलाओं को आसानी से रोजगार मिल सके। उदाहरण के लिए उच्च शिक्षा में महिलाओं के नामांकन का हिस्सा 38 फीसदी है, लेकिन उनकी कार्यबल में भागीदारी यहां तक कि शहरी भारत में भी काफी कम है। इसकी वजह महिलाओं को दी जाने वाली नौकरियों का स्तरहीन होना और भारत का सामाजिक ढांचा है। उदाहरण के लिए साक्षी सर्वेक्षण में दर्शाया गया है कि विनिर्माण में दो-तिहाई महिलाएं उत्पादन ऑपरेटर या मैनुअल वर्कर के रूप में काम कर रही हैं। सेवा क्षेत्र में भी महिलाएं लिपिक, बिक्री एवं सेवा जैसे रोजगार में हैं, जिन्हें परंपरागत रूप से महिलाओं के पेशे माना जाता है।

अंतरराष्ट्रीय श्रम संगठन का अध्ययन एक रोचक नजरिया पेश करता है। अपर्याप्त रोजगार पैदा होने के बावजूद परिवारों की आय बढ़ी है। इससे महिलाओं की प्राथमिकता में बदलाव आया है, जिससे सहायक गतिविधियों में महिलाओं की भागीदारी में कमी आने के आसार हैं। इसके लिए मुख्य वजह अन्य आय प्रभाव है। अगर महिलाओं की खुद की आमदनी के अलावा परिवार की आय अधिक है तो महिलाओं के श्रम बल में शामिल होने के कम आसार होते हैं।

हालांकि शहरी इलाकों में हालात बेहतर हैं। लेकिन भारत में कनिष्ठ से लेकर मध्यम स्तर तक के पदों पर महिलाओं के प्रतिनिधित्व में भारी गिरावट आई है। यह रुझान अन्य एशियाई देशों से अलग है, जहां ऐसी गिरावट मध्यम से उच्च स्तर के पदों पर आती है। इससे उच्च पदों पर कर्मचारियों की आपूर्ति प्रभावित होती है। आंकड़े दर्शाते हैं कि घर पर बच्चे की देखभाल की व्यवस्था न होने के कारण एक-तिहाई महिला कर्मचारी फिर से नौकरी शुरू नहीं कर पाईं। इससे यह अवधारणा खारिज हो जाती है कि कार्यबल में शामिल होने या बाहर होने के महिलाओं के फैसले पर संगठनों का नियंत्रण होता है। कार्यस्थल पर उदार नीतियों या अवकाश में बढ़ोतरी से उन महिलाओं को कुछ मदद मिल सकती है, जो अपने करियर की महत्त्वाकांक्षा रखती हैं। इससे ऐसे देश में बहुत मदद मिलेगी, जहां 78 फीसदी योग्य महिला स्नातक संगठित कार्यबल का हिस्सा न बनने का फैसला करती हैं।

बिडंबना यह है कि चीन में कुल आबादी में कुशल महिलाओं का प्रतिशत कम है, लेकिन फिर भी उनके कार्यबल में शामिल होने की ज्यादा संभावना होती है। इसकी वजह यह है कि चीन में महिलाओं की श्रमबल में भागीदारी की दर भारतीय महिलाओं से दोगुनी है।

चीन की कंपनियों के लिए इस बदलाव को सहज बनाने के लिए अन्य कोई रास्ता नहीं है। इसका मतलब है कि 9 से 5 बजे तक के काम के घंटों से इतर विकल्प तलाशने होंगे या कर्मचारियों के बच्चों के लिए दिन में देखभाल की सुविधा देनी होगी। इसके अलावा परिवार से संबंधित कुछ फायदे देने होंगे। इनमें काम के समय में लचीलापन, घर से काम, परिवार के लिए छुट्टी और साझा नौकरी आदि को शामिल किया जा सकता है। सबसे अहम बात यह है कि इसके लिए सोचने के नजरिये में यह बदलाव लाना होगा कि कोई भी रोजगार स्त्री या पुरुष विशेष के लिए नहीं हो सकता।

कानाफूसी

राय की दावेदारी

व्यापमं व्हिसल ब्लोअर डॉ. आनंद राय मध्य प्रदेश विधानसभा चुनाव में इंदौर-5 विधानसभा सीट से कांग्रेस के टिकट की उम्मीद कर रहे थे। परंतु कांग्रेस ने उन्हें टिकट नहीं दिया। राय इससे नाराज भी हुए और उन्होंने अपनी नाराजगी छिपाई भी नहीं। अब जबकि लोकसभा चुनाव करीब हैं तो राय इंदौर से लोकसभा सीट का टिकट चाहते हैं। फिलहाल इस सीट से भाजपा सांसद और लोकसभा अध्यक्ष सुमित्रा महाजन सांसद हैं। जानकारों के मुताबिक राय ने कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी के करीबी लोगों तक पहुंच बनाई है और उन्हें गंभीरतापूर्वक यह समझाने का प्रयास किया है कि राय की विश्वसनीयता और उनकी छवि पार्टी के काम आ सकती है। मालवा क्षेत्र में भाजपा की मजबूत पकड़ को देखते हुए राय की ईमानदार छवि

अमेठी पर नजर

ऐसा प्रतीत हो रहा है कि अब अमेठी सबकी निगाहों में है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी आगामी 3 मार्च को अमेठी पहुंचेंगे और वहां कई आम सभाओं को संबोधित करेंगे। गौरतलब है कि अमेठी कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी का संसदीय क्षेत्र है। भारतीय जनता पार्टी के कार्यकर्ताओं ने प्रधानमंत्री की यात्रा की तैयारियां भी शुरू कर दी हैं। राज्य के मुख्यमंत्री आदित्यनाथ भी अमेठी में इन तैयारियों का जायजा ले रहे हैं। केंद्रीय कपड़ा मंत्री स्मृति इरानी ने बीते रविवार को उन स्थानों का जायजा लिया जहां-जहां प्रधानमंत्री जाने वाले हैं। सन 2014 के आम चुनाव में इरानी गांधी के खिलाफ चुनाव लड़ी थीं लेकिन उनको हार का सामना करना पड़ा था। माना जा रहा है कि इस वर्ष अप्रैल-मई में होने वाले आम चुनाव में भी वह अमेठी से चुनाव मैदान में उतरेंगी।

आपका पक्ष

बाल विवाह रोकने के प्रयास मजबूत हों

विश्व के लगभग प्रत्येक देश के लिए बाल विवाह पुरातन काल से ही गंभीर चिंता का विषय रहा है। विश्व के कोने-कोने से बाल विवाह संबंधित खबरें आती हैं। कुछ समुदाय विशेष की परंपरा बाल विवाह को प्रोत्साहित करती रही है। लड़के व लड़की के जन्म के समय या बचपन में माता पिता द्वारा रिश्ता तय किए जाने जैसी कुप्रथाएं बाल विवाह को बढ़ावा देती रही हैं। लेकिन शिक्षा एवं संचार क्रांति के युग में जागरूकता के कारण इस प्रकार की कुप्रथाओं में काफी हद तक कमी देखी गई है। आज जबरन कराए जा रहे बाल विवाह में संगठित रूप से अपराध करने वाले अपराधियों के समूह की भूमिका प्रमुख हो गई है। ऐसे गिरोह के सदस्य निर्धन परिवार की बच्चियों को काम के बहाने उन्हें झांसे में लेकर दूसरे राज्य अथवा देश में रसूखदार लोगों को बेच देते हैं। बाल विवाह के परिणाम स्वरूप बिना मजबूत शरीर के मां बनने के

कारण बच्चियां असमय काल का ग्रास बन जाती है। एक आंकड़े के अनुसार विश्व में करीब 65 करोड़ लड़कियों की शादी 18 वर्ष से पहले कर दी गई थी। वैश्विक स्तर पर बाल विवाह की दर 1.2 करोड़ प्रतिवर्ष है। दक्षिण एशिया में कुल वैश्विक बाल विवाह का 40 प्रतिशत और सहारा देशों में 18 प्रतिशत है। हालांकि पिछले एक

बाल विवाह रोकने के लिए सरकार को कठोर कानून बनाने की जरूरत है

दशक में भारत में बाल विवाह की दर में कमी आई है। वर्ष 2005-06 में भारत में होने वाले विवाहों में 47 प्रतिशत बाल विवाह थे जबकि 2015-16 में यह आंकड़ा 27 प्रतिशत पर आ गिरा है। लेकिन भारत जैसे विशाल आबादी वाले देश में आंकड़ों में आई कमी भी बाल विवाह की एक बहुत बड़ी संख्या को समेटे हुए है जो चिंताजनक तथा भयावह है। भारत के संदर्भ में बाल विवाह के आंकड़ों में कमी को सरकारी योजनाओं की सफलता का परिणाम कहा जा सकता है। सरकार द्वारा बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ जैसे विभिन्न प्रोत्साहन योजना का परिणाम सकारात्मक रहा है। लेकिन इसे और अधिक मजबूती से आगे बढ़ाने की जरूरत है। संगठित रूप से अपराध करके बाल विवाह करवाने वाले गिरोहों पर शिकंजा कसना होगा। इसके लिए पुलिस में एक विशेष सेल गठित करने पर विचार करने की जरूरत है। निर्धनता के कारण काम की तलाश में अपराधियों की शिकार बनने से बच्चियों को बचाने के लिए ऐसे जरूरतमंद बच्चियों तथा उनके परिवारों तक सामजिक सुरक्षा योजनाओं की पहुंच सुनिश्चित करनी होगी।

ऋषभ देव पांडेय, कोरबा

आतंक के खिलाफ जंग जरूरी

जम्मू कश्मीर के पुलवामा में आतंकी सगंठनों के हमले से सीआरपीएफ के कई जवानों की मौत हो गई थी। आतंकी संगठन भारत में हमले करते आ रहे हैं। इन आतंकी संगठनों को पाकिस्तान आश्रय देता रहा है। लेकिन पाकिस्तान हर बार भारत से सबूत की मांग करता रहा है। इस बार आतंकी संगठनों को जड़ से खत्म करने का बीड़ा उठाना चाहिए। भारत ने पहल भी की है और एलओसी से पार जाकर कुछ आतंकी ठिकानों को निशाना भी बनाया है। लेकिन यह काफी नहीं है और आतंकी संगठनों के पनाहगारों को भी सबक सिखाने की जरूरत है।

अभिनव कुमार, नई दिल्ली

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

दैनिक जागरण

कार्य की योजना बनाएं और योजना के अनुरूप कार्य करें

बहानेबाज पाकिस्तान

यह राहत भरी खबर है कि पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने यह घोषणा कर दी कि भारतीय वायुसेना के विंग कमांडर अभिनंदन वर्तमान को रिहा कर दिया जाएगा। पाकिस्तानी संसद में इस आशय की घोषणा करते हुए उन्होंने यह भी रेखांकित किया कि वह ऐसा शांति की पहल के तौर पर करेंगे। यह सही है कि पाकिस्तान जेनेवा संधि का पालन कर रहा है, लेकिन यह मानने का तो सवाल ही नहीं उठता कि वह शांति के प्रति अपनी प्रतिबद्धता दिखा रहा है। अगर पाकिस्तान शांति के प्रति तनिक भी समर्पित होता तो वह जैश ए मुहम्मद जैसे आतंकी संगठन को संरक्षण देने के साथ ही ऐसा न करने का बहाना नहीं बना रहा होता। यदि इमरान खान और उनका नया पाकिस्तान शांति का सचमुच पक्षधर है तो उसे जैश सरगना मौलाना मसूद अजहर को उसके सुरक्षित ठिकाने से निकालकर भारत के हवाले करना चाहिए। उसे जैश और लश्कर सरीखे आतंकी संगठनों पर पाबंदी लगाने का स्वांग करना भी छोड़ना चाहिए। वह एक अर्से से न केवल यही कर रहा है, बल्कि दुनिया से छल भी कर रहा है। इसी कारण अमेरिका, ब्रिटेन, फ्रांस आदि देशों को बार-बार यह कहना पड़ रहा कि वह अपने यहां के आतंकी ढांचे को नष्ट करे और फाइनेंशियल एक्शन टास्क फोर्स उसे ग्रे सूची से बाहर नहीं कर रहा।

हैरत नहीं कि अभिनंदन को रिहा करने के फैसले के पीछे पाकिस्तान का मूल मकसद दुनिया को अपना नकली चेहरा दिखाना और अंतरराष्ट्रीय दबाव से मुक्त होना हो। एक अन्य मकसद भारत के आक्रामक तेवरों से पिंड छुड़ाना भी हो सकता है। सच्चाई जो भी हो, भारत को उसके इस नए झांसे में बिल्कुल नहीं आना चाहिए कि वह शांति का संदेश देने के लिए भारतीय पायलट को छोड़ने जा रहा है। अभिनदंन की वापसी की प्रतीक्षा के साथ हम भारतीयों को इसका भी भान होना चाहिए कि उन्होंने पुराने माने जाने वाले युद्धक विमान मिग-21 के जरिये कहीं अधिक उन्नत किस्म के पाकिस्तानी लड़ाकू विमान एफ-16 को ध्वस्त करने का जो शौर्य दिखाया वह भारतीय वायुसेना और उसके पायलटों के युद्ध कौशल का एक ऐसा अप्रतिम प्रमाण है जिसे पाकिस्तान आसानी से नहीं भूल सकता। भारत को ऐसे जतन जारी रखने चाहिए जिससे पाकिस्तान इस भारतीय योद्धा के पराक्रम के साथ यह भी न भूल सके कि अगर उसने अपने आतंकियों के सहारे उसे तंग करने का सिलसिला कायम रखा तो बालाकोट दोहराया जा सकता है। पाकिस्तान जब तक सुधरता नहीं तब तक उसे दंडित करने का कोई मौका छोड़ना नहीं चाहिए। निःसंदेह वह भारत की आक्रामकता से सहमा है, लेकिन अभी ऐसे कोई संकेत नहीं कि वह सुधरने के लिए तैयार है। अच्छा हो कि इस बात को हमारे वे राजनीतिक दल भी समझें जो राजनीतिक कारणों से ऐसे कठिन समय में भी एकजुटता का परिचय देने में हीलाहवाली कर रहे हैं। अगर इस समय भी दुनिया को राजनीतिक तौर पर एकजुट होने का संदेश नहीं दिया जाएगा तो कब दिया जाएगा? यह वह समय है जब राजनीतिक लाभ-हानि से अधिक महत्ता देश के मान-सम्मान को दी जानी चाहिए। अफसोस कि यह सामान्य सी बात रेखांकित करने की जरूरत पड़ रही है।

वन भूमि हस्तांतरण

उत्तराखंड में जून 2013 में आई प्राकृतिक आपदा के बाद सड़क समेत अन्य योजनाओं और परियोजनाओं के लिए वन भूमि हस्तांतरण के संबंध में राज्य को मिले अधिकार की मियाद खत्म होने के बाद इसकी दोबारा बहाली न होने से सरकार की चिंता बढ़ गई है। हालांकि राज्य सरकार की ओर से इस विषय को पूरी गंभीरता के साथ केंद्र सरकार के समक्ष उठाया जा रहा है, मगर अभी तक कोई फैसला नहीं हो पाया है। ऐसे में 71 फीसद वन भूभाग वाले उत्तराखंड में तमाम योजनाओं के लिए वन भूमि की उपलब्धता सुनिश्चित कराने में दिक्कतें पेश आ रही हैं। थोड़ा पीछे मुड़कर देखें तो जून 2013 की आपदा में हुई भारी क्षति को देखते हुए केंद्र सरकार ने फरवरी 2014 में राज्य को वन भूमि पर प्रस्तावित योजनाओं के निर्माण के लिए एक हेक्टेयर तक वन भूमि हस्तांतरण के लिए अधिकृत किया था। इसके बाद केंद्र ने वर्ष 2015 में आपदा प्रभावित जिलों में पांच हेक्टेयर तक वन भूमि हस्तांतरण की स्वीकृति का अधिकार भी एक साल के लिए राज्य को दिया। जाहिर है कि इससे उत्तराखंड का काफी फायदा मिला और तमाम योजनाओं के लिए भूमि संबंधी दिक्कतों का निस्तारण हुआ। इस बीच 31 दिसंबर 2018 को एक हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र तक के अधिकार की अवधि भी खत्म हो गई। राज्य को उम्मीद थी कि केंद्र सरकार इस अधिकार को जल्द ही बहाल कर देगी, मगर अभी तक ऐसा नहीं हो पाया है। हालांकि मुख्यमंत्री और वन मंत्री की ओर से इस बारे में केंद्र में लगातार दस्तक दी जा रही है। राज्य सरकार का तर्क है कि विषम भूगोल और तमाम जटिलताओं के बावजूद उत्तराखंड पर्यावरण संरक्षण में अहम योगदान दे रहा है। सालाना करीब तीन लाख करोड़ रुपये की पर्यावरणीय सेवाएं इसकी बानगी हैं। यही नहीं, वन कानूनों एवं वन्यजीवों के कारण अलग से दुश्वारियां भी झेलनी पड़ रही हैं। सरकार का कहना है कि वन भूमि हस्तांतरण का अधिकार न होने से राज्य के विकास कार्यों पर असर पड़ रहा है। ऐसे में जरूरी है कि इस अधिकार की जल्द बहाली की जाए, क्योंकि सवाल राज्य के विकास से जुड़ा है।

पुरानी धारणाएं तोड़ते मोदी

प्रदीप सिंह

उड़ी का बदला दस दिन में और पुलवामा का बारह दिन में, यह नया भारत है। इससे मोदी ने वह मिथक भी तोड़ा है कि परमाणु हथियार संपन्न पाकिस्तान पर सैन्य कार्रवाई संभव नहीं

रामचरित मानस में एक प्रसंग है। समुद्र पार करने के लिए भगवान राम समुद्र से विनय करते हैं, पर वह उनकी विनती सुनने को तैयार नहीं हुआ। गोस्वामी तुलसीदास लिखते हैं-'विनय न मानत जलधि जड़ गए तीन दिन बीति, बोले राम सकोप तब भय बिन होइ न प्रीति।' पाकिस्तान ने आतंकवाद से बाज आने की भारत की विनती को स्वीकार नहीं किया तो 26 फरवरी को तड़के भारत ने बता दिया कि हमारी विनम्रता कमजोरी नहीं है। वायुसेना के 12 मिराज-2000 लड़ाकू विमान पुलवामा हमले के 12 दिन बाद तथा हमारे शहीदों की तेरहवीं से पहले अजहर मसूद और पाक सेना के आतंकियों की अंत्येष्टि करके आ गए। वायुसेना के गोलों की गूंज और आग की तपिश पूरी दुनिया ने महसूस की। पहली बार दुनिया भर के देशों ने कहा कि भारत ने ठीक किया।

जो बीती छब्बीस फरवरी को हुआ वह पिछले अड़तालीस साल में नहीं हुआ था। पूरा देश पिछले तीस साल से इस दिन का इंतजार कर रहा था। लोग थक गए थे, शहीदों के ताबूत गिनते-गिनते। सवा सौ करोड़ का देश स्वयं को असहाय महसूस कर रहा था। लगता था कि यही हमारा प्रारब्ध बन गया है। हमारे जवान शहीद होते रहेंगे और नेता उस हमले की निंदा फिर और कड़ी निंदा करते रहेंगे। सत्ता में कोई दल हो, कोई नेता हो वह जवाब देने की बात करते रहेंगे, पर स्थिति वही ढाक के तीन पात वाली रहेगी। लोगों के मन में हताशा और आक्रोश का भाव स्थायी हो गया था। साल 2016 में सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के बाद थोड़ी उम्मीद जगी थी कि भारत बदल रहा है, परंतु पुलवामा ने लोगों को फिर से पुरानी मनःस्थिति में पहुंचा दिया। ऐसे में लोग चाहते क्या थे? सिर्फ इतना कि देश के हुक्मरान हमारी फौज के हाथ खोल दें और मातम दुश्मन के घर में मनाया जाए, भारत में नहीं।

पुलवामा हमले के बाद जब प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने कहा कि पाकिस्तान ने बहुत बड़ी गलती कर दी है और उसे इसका भारी नुकसान उठाना पड़ेगा तो बहुत से लोगों को लगा था कि इतिहास दोहराया जा रहा है। आखिर अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी ने भी आर-पार की लड़ाई की बात कही थी। मनमोहन सिंह ने भी करारे जवाब की बात कही थी। पर नहीं, अब और नहीं। छब्बीस फरवरी भारत के इतिहास का ऐतिहासिक दिन बन गया। संसद पर हमले के बाद जो वाजपेयी नहीं कर पाए, मुंबई हमले के बाद जो मनमोहन सिंह नहीं कर पाए वह नरेंद्र मोदी ने कर दिखाया। भारतीय वायुसेना की कार्रवाई के बाद विपक्ष और बुद्धिजीवियों के एक वर्ग ने प्रतिक्रिया देते समय इस बात का खास ध्यान रखा कि कहीं मोदी की तारीफ न हो जाए। इन लोगों ने दिल खोलकर वायुसेना की प्रशंसा की, जो निश्चित रूप से होनी भी चाहिए। भारतीय वायुसेना ने अपनी जांबाजी और रणकौशल का लोहा एक बार फिर पूरी दुनिया से मनवा लिया। ऐसे दुर्गम स्थान पर हमला करके लौट आए और दुश्मन हाथ मलता रह गया। पर हे विद्वतजनों और विघ्नसंतोषियों हमारी वायुसेना, थल सेना और नौसेना पहले भी इतनी ही ताकतवर और जांबाज थीं। पर उनके हाथ बंधे हुए थे। दिसंबर 2001 में संसद पर हमले के बाद सेना सीमा पर पहुंच गई और करीब डेढ़ महीने बाद वापस आ गई। मुंबई हमले के बाद वायुसेना के लड़ाकू विमान हमले के लिए तैयार थे। पायलट कॉकपिट में बैठे थे, लेकिन दिल्ली से आदेश नहीं आया।

पुलवामा के बाद जब मोदी ने कहा कि फौज के हाथ खोल दिए हैं तो बहुत से लोगों ने मजाक उड़ाया कि क्या अभी तक बांधे हुए थे। उड़ी का बदला दस दिन में और पुलवामा का बारह दिन में, यह नया भारत है। यह मुमकिन हुआ है, क्योंकि मोदी हैं। भारत में कितने ही आतंकवादी हमले हों, पर भारतीय सेना नियंत्रण रेखा पार नहीं करेगी इस मिथक को मोदी ने तोड़ दिया। मोदी ने इस मिथक को भी तोड़ दिया कि परमाणु हथियार संपन्न पाकिस्तान से तनाव बढ़ाना या उस पर कोई सैन्य कार्रवाई करना संभव नहीं है। मोदी ने पाकिस्तान ही नहीं पूरी दुनिया को बता दिया कि आतंकी हमला होगा तो भारत की फौजें एक बार नहीं, बल्कि बार-बार नियंत्रण रेखा पार कर सबक सिखाने से गुरेज नहीं करेंगी।

भारत का यह आत्मबल केवल बेहतर फौज, फौजियों और हथियारों के कारण ही नहीं है। यह आत्मबल मोदी सरकार की पिछले साढ़े चार साल की विदेश नीति के कारण भी है। भारत चीन और सऊदी अरब को छोड़कर दुनिया के अधिकांश देशों को यह समझाने में कामयाब रहा है कि पाकिस्तान में चल रही आतंक की फैक्ट्री पूरी दुनिया के लिए खतरा है। यह भी कि उसे आतंकवादी हमलों का जवाब देने का हक है। यही कारण है कि भारत ने केवल पाकिस्तान के कब्जे वाले कश्मीर में ही नहीं पाकिस्तान के खैबर पख्तूनख्वा में जैश-ए-मुहम्मद के सबसे बड़े आतंकी शिविर को जमींदोज कर दिया। जैश-ए-मुहम्मद भारत के खिलाफ पाक सेना का बड़ा हथियार है। पिछले तीस वर्षों में पहली बार पाकिस्तान के पाले-पोसे आतंकी संगठनों और उनके जरिये पाकिस्तानी सेना को इतना बड़ा नुकसान हुआ है। भारत के आत्मबल का तीसरा और आज की परिस्थिति में सबसे बड़ा कारण है, मोदी के रूप में एक ऐसे प्रधानमंत्री का होना जिसके पास कड़े फैसले लेने की राजनीतिक इच्छाशक्ति है। जो देशहित में जोखिम लेने को तैयार है। मोदी ने तय किया कि सुविधाजनक तटस्थता का समय चला गया है। लोकनायक जयप्रकाश नारायण के आंदोलन के दौरान राष्ट्रकवि रामधारी सिंह दिनकर की एक कविता क्रांतिगीत बन गई थी। उसकी एक पंक्ति है- 'दो राय, समय के रथ का घर्घर नाद सुनो।' जन आक्रोश का घर्घर नाद पूरे देश में गूंज रहा था। मोदी ने उस नाद को सुना, समझा और देश की भावनाओं का सम्मान किया। दिनकर के ही शब्दों में 'वीरता नहीं तो सभी विनय क्रंदन है।' मंगलवार की हवाई कार्रवाई में भारत ने इस बात का ध्यान रखा कि पाकिस्तान के किसी सैनिक ठिकाने या आम लोगों को निशाना न बनाया जाए। तीनों जगहों आतंकवादी शिविरों पर ही हमला किया गया। इससे पाकिस्तान के पास दुनिया के सामने रोने का मौका भी नहीं रहा।

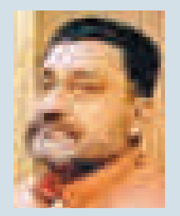
प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने केवल पाकिस्तान को ही नहीं देश में अपने विरोधियों को भी मुश्किल में डाल दिया है। न पाकिस्तान के पास कोई विकल्प है और न ही उनके पास। पुलवामा हमले के बाद कुछ दिन चुप्पी साधने के उपरांत विरोधी दल मोदी के प्रति हमलावर हो गए थे। वायुसेना की कार्रवाई के बाद सब सन्नाटे में हैं। हालांकि उनके खैरख्वाह भूमिका तैयार कर रहे हैं। सोशल मीडिया पर कहा जा रहा है कि मोदी को इसका राजीनितिक फायदा नहीं उठाना चाहिए। यह बात ऐसे लोग कह रहे हैं जो 1971 के बांग्लादेश युद्ध का आज भी राजनीतिक श्रेय लेते हैं। किसी काम का श्रेय किसी को लेने से नहीं मिलता। काम का श्रेय लोग देते हैं। मोदी ने जो किया है उसका श्रेय उन्हें इस देश की जनता देगी। इस कार्रवाई के बाद लोगों को मोदी की इस बात पर यकीन करना आसान होगा कि देश सुरक्षित हाथों में है।

(लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक एवं वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं)

response@jagran.com

अवधेश राजपूत

सैन्य तैयारी की समीक्षा का सही समय



अवधेश कुमार

विंग कमांडर के साथ हुए हादसे में वायुसेना के अरसे से लंबित आधुनिकीकरण की अनदेखी को भी एक वजह माना जा रहा है

पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने भारतीय वायु सेना के विंग कमांडर अभिनंदन वर्तमान को रिहा करने का एलान किया है। बुधवार को पाकिस्तानी वायुसेना के दुस्साहस का जवाब देते हुए अभिनंदन का मिग-21 विमान हादसे का शिकार हो गया था और वह नियंत्रण रेखा के पार पाकिस्तानी कब्जे वाले इलाके में पहुंच गए थे। इसके बाद दोनों देशों के बीच बढ़ा तनाव चरम पर पहुंच गया। अभिनंदन की रिहाई के एवज में पाकिस्तान ने भारत से सौदेबाजी की तमाम कोशिशें तो कीं, लेकिन भारत सख्त रवैये के साथ अपने इस बिगड़ैल पड़ोसी के दबाव में नहीं आया। आखिरकार इमरान खान को पाकिस्तान की संसद में अभिनंदन की रिहाई का एलान करना पड़ा। हालांकि इसे वह शांति की दिशा में कदम बढ़ाने वाली पहल के तौर पर प्रचारित कर रहे हैं, पर इससे इन्कार नहीं किया जा सकता कि भारत के दबाव की इसमें अहम भूमिका रही। अंतरराष्ट्रीय कानूनों के दायरे में भी पाकिस्तान के लिए अभिनंदन को रिहा करना अपरिहार्य तो था ही वहीं भारत के मौजूदा कड़े रुख को देखते ऐसा न करने पर उसको इसकी बड़ी कीमत भी चुकानी पड़ सकती थी।

अभिनंदन की वापसी राष्ट्रीय आकांक्षा बन गई थी और उनके सकुशल स्वदेश लौटने के साथ इस प्रकरण का सुखद पटाक्षेप भी हो जाएगा। मगर इसके साथ ही कुछ प्रश्न हमारे सामने खड़े होते हैं कि अभिनंदन इस हादसे के शिकार क्यों बने? इसके लिए वायुसेना के अरसे से लंबित आधुनिकीकरण की अनदेखी को भी एक बड़ी वजह माना जा रहा है। राजनीतिक हितों के लिए कुछ दल राफेल जैसे विमानों की खरीद में अवरोध पैदा करते हैं। इसकी कीमत अभिनंदन जैसे बहादुर सैनिकों को चुकानी पड़ती है, क्योंकि वह वही मिग-21 विमान उड़ान रहे थे जो उड़ते हुए ताबूतों के रूप में कुख्यात हो गया है। यह तो उनकी काबिले तारीफ क्षमताओं का कमाल था कि उन्होंने उसी विमान से पाकिस्तान के बेहद सक्षम माने जाने वाले एफ-16 विमान को मार गिराया। अभिनंदन की आड़ में पाकिस्तान ने भारत के मनोबल पर प्रहार का प्रयास तो किया, लेकिन इसका उसे कड़ा प्रतिकार भी झेलना पड़ा। ऐसे में हमें यह समझना होगा कि आतंकवाद के खिलाफ निर्णायक लड़ाई लड़नी है तो हमें ऐसी घटनाओं और मानवीय सहित अन्य क्षति को झेलने एवं सहन करने के लिए मानसिक रूप से तैयार होना होगा। इस बीच एक प्रश्न यह भी है कि क्या हम मानते हैं कि आतंकवाद के खिलाफ युद्ध में सफलता हमें बिना कोई कीमत चुकाए मिल जाएगी? भारतीय वायुसेना पाकिस्तान को उसकी सीमा में जाकर सबक सिखा आए और वह चुपचाप बैठा रह जाएगा? पाकिस्तान को अपने अवाम को दिखाने के लिए कुछ कार्रवाई तो करनी ही थी। वह आगे भी ऐसा कर सकता है और जब करेगा तो भारत को भी करारा जवाब देना होगा। उनमें अभिनंदन जैसी दूसरी घटनाएं भी हो सकती हैं।

ऐसे में हमें यह विचार करना होगा कि दृढ़ संकल्प तथा हर संभावित क्षति को सहने एवं डटे रहने की सामूहिक मानसिकता वाला देश ही आतंकवाद को खत्म करने का लक्ष्य पा सकता है। पाकिस्तान में लोकतांत्रिक संस्थाएं अवश्य संकट में हैं, लेकिन वहां की सेना का रुतबा एवं उसकी ताकत बची हुई है। हर मोर्चे पर भारत से कमजोर होने के बावजूद पाकिस्तानी फौज अपनी हरकतों से बाज नहीं आती। जम्मू-कश्मीर में एफ 16 विमानों से सैनिक ठिकानों पर हमले का दुस्साहस भी कुछ ऐसा ही था। यह तो हमारे सुरक्षा बलों की सजगता और बहादुरी थी कि उन्होंने तुरंत उन्हें खदेड़ दिया, लेकिन यदि हमारे पास और उन्नत विमान होते तो दुश्मन को और कड़ा जवाब दिया जा सकता था और हमें क्षति भी नहीं उठानी पड़ती। ऐसे में यह सुरक्षा बलों के आधुनिकीकरण पर चर्चा का भी उपयुक्त समय है। मिग विमानों पर काफी समय से सवाल उठ रहे हैं। हिंदुस्तान एयरोनॉटिक्स लिमिटेड उनके उन्नयन का अपेक्षित काम कर नहीं पा रही है। फिर भी हमारे सैनिक उनसे काम चला रहे हैं। कल्पना कीजिए कि हमारे बेड़े में राफेल जैसे विमान जुड़ जाएं तो दुश्मन की क्या दशा होगी? अभी तक की अपनी कार्रवाई से भारत ने यही संदेश दिया है कि वह सीमापार आतंकवाद पर प्रहार करने में सक्षम है। पाकिस्तान को सुबूत सौंप उसकी कार्रवाई के इंतजार में भारत अब मूकदर्शक नहीं बना रहेगा। भारत की इस स्पष्ट रणनीति से पाकिस्तान को समझ लेना चाहिए कि अगर भविष्य में वह कोई धृष्टता करेगा तो भारत कड़ाई से उसका जवाब देगा। भारत का यह दृष्टिकोण बड़ा बदलाव है। साफ है कि कोई भी परिवर्तन बिना किसी बलिदान के अंतिम लक्ष्य तक नहीं पहुंच सकता। हालांकि पाकिस्तान की कार्रवाई को युद्ध भी माना जा सकता है। भारत ने केवल आतंकवादी ठिकानों को निशाना बनाया और पाकिस्तान के सैन्य ठिकानों या आम नागरिकों को नहीं। इसके उलट पाकिस्तान की कार्रवाई का लक्ष्य भारतीय सैन्य ठिकाने थे। यह बात अलग है कि वे सफल नहीं रहे। कूटनीतिक स्तर पर भी विदेश मंत्रालय ने भारत में पाकिस्तान के कार्यवाहक उच्चायुक्त सैयद हैदर शाह को तलब कर बिना उकसावे के भारतीय वायु सीमा का अतिक्रमण करने पर आपत्ति पत्र सौंप दिया है। इसमें लिखा है कि भारत ऐसे आक्रमण या सीमापार आतंकवाद से अपनी सुरक्षा, संप्रभुता और क्षेत्रीय अखंडता की रक्षा के लिए ठोस कदम उठाने का अधिकार रखता है। विदेश मंत्रालय ने कहा है कि यह दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है कि उसकी धरती से संचालित आतंकवादी शिविरों के खिलाफ कार्रवाई पर पाकिस्तान अंतरराष्ट्रीय दायित्व और द्विपक्षीय प्रतिबद्धता दिखाने के बजाय भारत के खिलाफ आक्रामक तेवर दिखा रहा है।

इस तरह भारत ने मान्य तरीके के अनुरूप पहला कदम उठाया है। इसके बाद पाकिस्तान कोई हरकत करेगा तो फिर सीधे जवाब का विकल्प सुरक्षित है। प्रधानमंत्री ने स्वयं तीनों सेना प्रमुखों के साथ बैठक कर उन्हें खुली छूट की दोबारा घोषणा कर दी है। ऐसे में हमें राजनीतिक नेतृत्व के साहसिक निर्णय और सेना की रणनीति एवं शौर्य पर भरोसा करना चाहिए। फिर भी अगर हम छोटी-मोटी क्षति, किसी कदम के तत्काल प्रतिकूल परिणाम आने, शीघ्र सफलता न मिलने या कुछ समय के लिए प्रतिद्वंद्वी का पलड़ा भारी होने से विचलित होने लगेंगे तो इस लंबी लड़ाई में जीत नहीं पाएंगे। अंतरराष्ट्रीय नियमों और मर्यादाओं का पालन करने वाले देश के नाते भारत की हर कार्रवाई और हर कदम के साथ कुछ सीमाएं रहेंगी, जबकि आतंकवाद पर हमारे आरोप को न स्वीकार करने वाला पाकिस्तान किसी भी सीमा तक जा सकता है। आखिर इमरान ने सेंट्रल कमान की बैठक क्यों बुलाई जिसमें नाभिकीय कमान ढांचा भी शामिल है? यह इमरान के शांति प्रस्ताव के विपरीत है।

(लेखक वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं)

response@jagran.com

ऊर्जा

प्रेम की भाषा

आजकल अभिभावकों की शिकायत है कि उनका बच्चा कहना नहीं मानता और उनसे बहस करता है। ऐसा इसलिए होता है, क्योंकि माता-पिता बच्चे को प्रेम की वह भाषा प्रदान ही नहीं करते, जो वह चाहता है। प्रेम की भाषा में पारंगत न होने के कारण ही वे अपने बच्चे तक अपने प्रेम को पूरी तरह पहुंचाने में असफल रहते हैं। आखिर क्या है प्रेम की भाषा? प्रेम की मुख्य भाषा है सकारात्मक शब्द और इसकी सहयोगी भाषाएं हैं-प्रशंसा, सहयोग और समय। यदि आपको प्रेम की भाषा का विद्वान बनना है तो अभी से अपने जीवन से भयंकर, बेकार, नहीं हो सकता, कभी नहीं जैसे नकारात्मक शब्दों को हमेशा के लिए निकाल दीजिए। जब माता-पिता अपने बच्चों को नकारात्मक भरे शब्द बोलते हैं कि 'तुम कभी नहीं कर पाओगे', 'तुमसे कभी कुछ नहीं होता', 'तुम तो ही ही नालायक' तो ये शब्द बच्चे के मनोमस्तिष्क में जाकर कैद हो जाते हैं और वह चिढ़कर अपने माता-पिता को वही लौटाने की कोशिश करता है। प्रसिद्ध कवि एडविन मार्कहम का कहना है कि हम दूसरों के जीवन में जो भी भेजते हैं, वही हमारे जीवन में लौटकर आता है। इसलिए सदैव सकारात्मक शब्दों का प्रयोग करें। यह प्रेम की भाषा की वर्णमाला है। जब यह वर्णमाला आपको अच्छी तरह आ जाएगी तो फिर प्रशंसा, सहयोग और समय के वाक्य आप बेहतरीन बना पाएंगे और जीवन में मनचाही सफलता को अपने आंगन में पाएंगे।

जहां नकारात्मक शब्द मनुष्य को दुखी करते हैं, वहीं सकारात्मक शब्द व्यक्ति को ऊपर उठाने का प्रयास करते हैं। प्रेम की शब्दावली को मजबूत करने के लिए इसे आगे बढ़ाएं और सहयोग के लिए सदैव आगे आएं। रिश्तों में कटुता इसलिए आती है, क्योंकि लोग एक-दूसरे के साथ वस्तु की तरह व्यवहार करने लगते हैं। लोगों के साथ सदैव गरिमापूर्ण व्यवहार कीजिए। व्यक्तियों को नासमझी भरे व्यवहार पर भी समझदारी भरी प्रतिक्रिया देनी चाहिए। यह प्रेम को बढ़ाने का सर्वोत्तम तरीका है। प्रेम को चरम पर पहुंचाने के लिए समय अत्यंत अनिवार्य है। एक व्यक्ति अथवा संबंधी बेहद परेशानी और पीड़ा में है। ऐसे समय में यदि आप उसका हाथ थाम कर रखते हैं तो यकीन मानिए कि आपके प्रेम की डोर को कोई भी तोड़ नहीं सकता।

रेनू सैनी

एकजुट होने का वक्त

डॉ. गौरीशंकर राजहंस

सरकार को देश की नई पीढ़ी को जलियांवाला बाग नरसंहार के बारे में बताना चाहिए ताकि वह अंग्रेजों के अत्याचार के बारे में जान सके

13 अप्रैल, 1919 को जनरल रेजिनाल्ड एडवर्ड डायर ने ब्रिटिश सेना की एक टुकड़ी के साथ अमृतसर के सैकड़ों निर्दोष लोगों को मौत के घाट उतार दिया था। तब वे लोग अमृतसर के जलियांवाला बाग में राष्ट्रवादियों के भाषण सुन रहे थे। उस दौरान वहां 15 हजार से अधिक लोग मौजूद थे जिनमें पुरुष, महिलाएं और बच्चे भी शामिल थे। उन पर दो हजार राउंड गोलियां चलाई गई थीं। उस बर्बर घटना के बाद जनरल डायर ने कोई अफसोस भी प्रकट नहीं किया और अपनी सेना को यह कहकर लौट जाने के लिए कहा कि चलो अपना काम पूरा हो गया। जनरल डायर ने मासूमों के उस नरसंहार को यह कहकर जायज ठहराया था कि 15 हजार लोग जो जलियांवाला बाग में जमा हुए थे, वे 1857 की तरह ही सैनिक विद्रोह की योजना बना रहे थे। और यदि उन्हें मौत के घाट नहीं उतारा जाता तो वे भारत से ब्रिटिश शासन को समाप्त कर देते, जबकि यह बात पूरी तरह झूठी थी।

तब पूरे देश में जलियांवाला बाग नरसंहार को लेकर रोष था और हर हिंदुस्तानी यही चाहता था कि उस नरसंहार का पूरी तरह बदला लिया जाए। हालांकि अंग्रेजों ने जलियांवाला बाग नरसंहार की घटना को छिपाने का भरसक प्रयास किया। उस समय के लंदन के समाचारपत्र भी उस घटना को बहुत महत्व नहीं दे रहे थे, परंतु भारतीयों का खून खोल रहा था। लिहाजा उधम सिंह ने लंदन जाकर जनरल डायर का काम तमाम कर दिया था। उस घटना का असर भारत के स्वतंत्रता संग्राम पर भी पड़ा। 1942 में जब गांधी जी ने अंग्रेजों से भारत छोड़ो का आह्वान किया तो पूरा देश गांधी जी के साथ खड़ा हो गया। गांधी जी हिंसा के खिलाफ थे। जलियांवाला बाग के नरसंहार की घटना ने उन्हें झकझोर कर रख दिया था।

अंग्रेज अब उस घटना को भुलाना चाहते हैं। वे चाहते हैं कि कुछ ऐसा नहीं किया जाए जिससे पता लगे कि सैकड़ों निर्दोष भारतीयों को अमृतसर में गोलियों से भून दिया गया था, परंतु आज जब संसार के अन्य देशों के शोधकर्ता खासकर अमेरिकी विश्वविद्यालयों के शोधकर्ता उसकी तह में जा रहे हैं, तब भारत सरकार को भी नई पीढ़ी को उस घटना के बारे में विस्तार से बताना चाहिए जिससे नई पीढ़ी के लोग यह जान सकें कि उनके पूर्वजों के साथ अंग्रेजों ने किस-किस तरह के अत्याचार किए थे। नई पीढ़ी के लोगों को यह भी बात समझ में आ जाएगी कि हमारे पूर्वजों ने बड़ी कठिनाई से आजादी हासिल की है। इसलिए आज जब सीमा पार से पाकिस्तान हम पर हर तरह के आतंकवादी हमले कर रहा है और हमारी आजादी को समाप्त करने का प्रयास कर रहा है तो हम आपस में छोटी-छोटी बातों में नहीं उलझें तथा एकजुट होकर पाकिस्तान को मुंहतोड़ जवाब दें।

देश एक नाजुक दौर से गुजर रहा है। ऐसे में सभी देशवासियों और राजनीतिक दलों को एकजुट होकर देश के भीतरी और बाहरी दुश्मनों का मुकाबला करना चाहिए। जलियांवाला बाग हमेशा देशवासियों को स्वतंत्रता संग्राम की जीती जागती कहानी बताता रहेगा।

(लेखक पूर्व सांसद एवं पूर्व राजदूत हैं)

मेलबाक्स

बदलते भारत की तस्वीर

भाजपा के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष अमित शाह ने अपने आलेख 'अब चुप होकर नहीं बैठेगा भारत' में साहस और शौर्य से परिपूर्ण जिस बदलते भारत की तस्वीर पेश की है, वह देश की वर्तमान राजनीतिक इच्छाशक्ति का प्रतिफलन है। यद्यपि इससे पहले भी भारत पाकिस्तान के सामने अपना पराक्रम प्रदर्शित कर चुका है, लेकिन इसके साथ उन कारणों की पड़ताल भी आवश्यक है, जिनकी वजह से पराजित पाकिस्तान पिछले तीन दशकों से आतंकवाद के जरिये भारत को अनवरत रूप से घायल कर रहा है। आखिर वह कौन-सी वजह थी जिसके कारण संसद और मुंबई के पाक पोषित आतंकी हमले के बाद भारत पाकिस्तान को मुंहतोड़ जवाब देने में असमर्थ रहा। ठीक इसके विपरीत जब मोदी सरकार ने उड़ी आतंकी हमले के बाद सेना की सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के जरिये अपने वीर जवानों की शहादत का बदला लिया तो देश-दुनिया ने भारत के इस बदलते रुख पर न केवल आश्चर्य व्यक्त किया, अपितु मोदी सरकार की सराहना भी की, लेकिन पाकिस्तान फिर भी नहीं चेता और भारत को पुलवामा जैसा भीषण आघात देने की गलती कर बैठा। इस आतंकी हमले से पूरे देश में पाकिस्तान के प्रति जो आक्रोश उमड़ा, वह अभूतपूर्व था। अपने देशवासियों के इस पीड़ाजनक आक्रोश को सक्षम मोदी सरकार ने जाया नहीं होने दिया और कुशल सैन्य रणनीति के साथ एयर स्ट्राइक कर पाकिस्तान के तीन आतंकवादी प्रशिक्षण कैंपों को तबाह कर दिया। चूंकि भारत का यह हमला नापाक आतंकवाद पर था, इसलिए इसे उचित ठहराया गया। यह मोदी सरकार की कूटनीतिक सफलता ही है कि पाकिस्तान का सहयोगी रहा अमेरिका भी आज भारत के पक्ष में खड़ा होकर पाकिस्तान को चेतावनी दे रहा है और पाकिस्तान का मित्र देश चीन भी आतंकवाद के विरुद्ध की जाने वाली भारत की इस सैन्य कार्रवाई पर चुप्पी साधे हुए है। बावजूद इसके आतंकवाद पर किए गए इस प्रहार को लेकर भारत के विपक्षी दलों द्वारा जैसी विकृत राजनीति की जा रही है, वह देशहित में नहीं है।

डॉ. वीपी पाण्डेय, अलीगढ़

जड़ से खत्म हो आतंकवाद

अमित शाह ने अपने आलेख 'अब चुप होकर नहीं बैठेगा भारत' के माध्यम से देश के विकास में अड़चन बन रहे आतंकवाद रूपी अराजकता को जड़ से खत्म करने का वादा किया है। 26 फरवरी का दिन सभी देशवासियों के लिए बेहद खास और खुशियों भरा रहा, क्योंकि इस दिन हमारे वायुसेना के जवानों ने पाकिस्तान में घुसकर वहां पनाह ले रहे कई आतंकियों को मौत के घाट उतारकर उसकी ईंट से ईंट बजा दी और इस प्रकार पुलवामा में हुए घातक आतंकी हमले का बदला लेकर हमारे शहीद जवानों को सच्ची श्रद्धांजलि अर्पित की। पाकिस्तान को सबक सिखाना बेहद जरूरी था, क्योंकि उसने पुलवामा में आतंकी हमला करके भारत को क्षति पहुंचाई और अपनी गलती को स्वीकार तक न करने की गुस्ताखी की, जिसके उपरांत प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने सेना को हमला करने की छूट दे दी, जो बहुत ही सराहनीय फैसला था। गौरतलब है कि भारत ने जिस अनोखे अंदाज में पाक पर हमला करके उसे ध्वस्त किया है, उसकी पाकिस्तान ने कभी कल्पना भी नहीं की होगी। यह सर्वविदित है कि पाकिस्तान हमेशा छिपकर और धोखे से हमला करता रहा है, परंतु हमारे भारतीय जांबाजों ने परोक्ष रूप से और पाकिस्तान में घुसकर आतंकियों को तहस-नहस कर दिया, जिससे यह प्रमाणित होता है कि भारत विश्व के ताकतवर देशों में से एक है। हमारी सेना इतनी सशक्त है कि यदि विश्व का कोई भी देश भारत को क्षति पहुंचाने की कोशिश करेगा तो उसे मुंहतोड़ जवाब मिलेगा। पाकिस्तान को अब संभल जाना चाहिए और आतंकवाद को जड़ से खत्म करने की ओर अग्रसर होकर परिपक्वता का प्रमाण देना चाहिए।

सौरभ पाठक, ग्रेटर नोएडा

हिंदू धर्म में सुधार

आर्य समाज के लिए आत्ममंथन का पड़ाव शीर्षक से लिखे अपने आलेख में विनोद बंसल ने आर्य समाज के विस्तार के लिए कुछ उपाय सुझाए हैं। स्वामी दयानंद सरस्वती ने आर्य समाज की स्थापना खासतौर पर हिंदू धर्म में सुधार के लिए भी की थी, पर अफसोस कि हिंदू धर्म में अभी भी जातपात, छुआछूत, अंधविश्वास और कुछ आडंबर व्यापत हैं। हिंदू समाज को मजबूत करने के लिए इसकी सभी जातियों को एकजुट होना पड़ेगा। भारतीय जैसे-जैसे अपनी संस्कृति, रीति-रिवाजों और परंपराओं से दूर होते जा रहे है, वैसे-वैसे देश में अनैतिक काम बढ़ते जा रहे हैं और परिवार टूट रहे हैं।

राजेश कुमार चौहान, जालंधर

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

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

संस्थापक-स्व. पूर्णचन्द्र गुप्त. पूर्व प्रधान संपादक-स्व.नरेन्द्र मोहन. संपादकीय निदेशक-महेन्द्र मोहन गुप्त. प्रधान संपादक-संजय गुप्त, जागरण प्रकाशन लि. के लिए: नीतेन्द्र श्रीवास्तव द्वारा 501, आई.एन.एस. बिल्डिंग,रफी मार्ग, नई दिल्ली से प्रकाशित और उन्हीं के द्वारा डी-210, 211, सेक्टर-63 नोएडा से मुद्रित, संपादक (राष्ट्रीय संस्करण) -विष्णु प्रकाश त्रिपाठी*
दूरभाष : नई दिल्ली कार्यालय : 23359961-62, नोएडा कार्यालय : 0120-3915800, E-mail: delhi@nda.jagran.com, R.N.I. No. DELHIN/2017/74721 न हेतु पी.आर.बी. एक्ट के अंतर्गत उत्तरदायी। समस्त विवाद दिल्ली न्यायालय ा ही होंगे। हवाई शुल्क अतिरिक्त।

जनसत्ता

1 मार्च, 2019

अमन का नकाब

अब पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान भारत को अमन का सबक सिखा रहे हैं। बातचीत की पेशकश कर रहे हैं। जब भारतीय वायुसेना ने पाकिस्तान की जमीन पर चल रहे आतंकी ठिकानों पर बम बरसाए तब भी उन्होंने कहा कि जंग से किसी को कुछ हासिल होने वाला नहीं। फिर जब भारतीय वायुसेना का एक विंग कमांडर पाक सेना की गिरफ्त में आ गया, तब भी उन्होंने वही बातें दोहराईं कि जंग के हालात पैदा न करें, आइए बातचीत के जरिए मसले हल करें। पहले तो उन्होंने शर्त रखी कि जब तक भारत बातचीत की मेज पर नहीं आता, हम उसके विंग कमांडर को वापस नहीं भेजेंगे, पर बाद में उन्होंने अपना मानवीय चेहरा पेश करते हुए उसे रिहा करने का एलान कर दिया। पाकिस्तान का ताजा रुख हैरान करने वाला है। सवाल है कि क्या सचमुच पाकिस्तान ने अपनी रणनीति बदल ली है। क्या वह वास्तव में अमन और अपने मुल्क की तरक्की चाहता है। या इस घटना को भुनाते हुए वह विश्व बिरादरी के सामने खुद को अमनपरस्त और भारत के दावों को खोखला साबित करने का प्रयास कर रहा है।

इमरान खान ने दोहराया है कि वे किसी भी सूरत में अपनी सरजमीं पर दहशतगर्दी को पनपने नहीं देंगे। छिपी बात नहीं है कि दोनों देशों के बीच तनाव का बड़ा कारण पाकिस्तान में चल रहे आतंकी ठिकाने हैं। इस बार भी जंग जैसे हालात इसलिए पैदा हुए कि कश्मीर के पुलवामा में सीआरपीएफ के काफिले पर हमला कर करीब चौवालीस जवानों को मार डाला गया और इस घटना की जिम्मेदारी जैश-ए-मोहम्मद नामक आतंकी संगठन ने ली। पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री इस हकीकत से अनजान नहीं हैं कि जैश का सरगना मसूद अजहर पाकिस्तान में रहता है और वह सरेआम पाकिस्तानी अवाम को भारत के खिलाफ भड़काता रहता है। इससे पहले मुंबई, उड़ी, पठानकोट आदि तमाम हमलों से जुड़े सबूत बयान करते हैं कि उनमें पाकिस्तान समर्थित आतंकी संगठनों का हाथ था। मगर पाकिस्तान उन्हें झुठलाता रहा है। जब भी इन घटनाओं से जुड़े आतंकियों को सौंपने की मांग उठती रही है, वह उसे सिरे से खारिज करता रहा है। जबकि केवल भारत नहीं, दुनिया के अनेक देश इस बात की पुष्टि कर चुके हैं कि पाकिस्तान में आतंकी संगठन पनाह पाए हुए हैं, उसकी सरजमीं पर दहशतगर्दों के प्रशिक्षण शिविर चल रहे हैं। इतना कुछ होने के बावजूद पाकिस्तान ने दहशतगर्दों पर लगाम लगाने की कोई कोशिश नहीं की। फिर उनके इस बयान पर कैसे भरोसा कर लें कि पाकिस्तान आतंकवाद को बर्दाश्त नहीं करेगा।

पाकिस्तान भारत के साथ बातचीत की पेशकश तो कर रहा है, पर यह भी छिपा नहीं है कि वह दिखावे के लिए बातचीत की मेज पर आ तो जाता है, पर अमन के लिए जरूरी कदम उठाने से मुकर जाता या आनाकानी करने लगता है। हर बार उसकी शर्त रही है कि पहले कश्मीर मसले को सुलझाएं, फिर दूसरे मसलों पर बात करेंगे। इस तरह वह आतंकवाद का मसला दरकिनार कर देता रहा है। जबकि छिपी बात नहीं है कि उसकी खुफिया एजेंसी और सेना दहशतगर्दों के जरिए भारत के खिलाफ एक प्रकार का अघोषित युद्ध लड़ते रहते हैं। अभी चूंकि भारत की पहल पर अमेरिका समेत अनेक देशों ने उसे मदद देने से अपने हाथ रोक रखे हैं, वैश्विक मंचों से बार-बार उसे दहशतगर्दी रोकने की नसीहत मिल रही है, इसलिए इस मौके पर उसने अपने चेहरे पर अमन का नकाब चढ़ा लिया है।

संकट में साथ

लोकतंत्र में राजनीतिक दलों का वैचारिक विरोध और कई बार एक-दूसरे के खिलाफ तल्ख हो जाना स्वाभाविक बात है। अगर ये मतभेद और आरोप-प्रत्यारोप जनहित के मुद्दों के आधार पर चलता रहते हैं, तो इससे लोकतंत्र समृद्ध ही होता और आखिरकार देश की बुनियाद मजबूत होती है। मगर कई बार ऐसे हालात भी सामने आ जाते हैं, जब सभी राजनीतिक दलों के लिए हर तरह के मतभेद को किनारे रख देना और समूचे देश की एकता को दर्शाना राष्ट्रीय जिम्मेदारी हो जाती है। इस लिहाज से इन दिनों भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच पैदा हुए हालात में हमारे देश के सभी राजनीतिक दलों ने बेहद परिपक्व रुख का परिचय दिया है। मसलन, भारत-पाक सीमा पर जारी तनाव के बीच कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी ने पाकिस्तान के बालाकोट में आतंकी शिविर पर वायुसेना की कार्रवाई की तारीफ करते हुए साफ शब्दों में कहा कि आतंकवाद के खिलाफ लड़ाई में कांग्रेस समेत तमाम विपक्षी दल सशस्त्र बलों के साथ हैं। राहुल गांधी का बयान दरअसल अकेले कांग्रेस पार्टी की ओर से नहीं आया है, बल्कि बुधवार को आयोजित इक्कीस विपक्षी दलों की बैठक के बाद एक संयुक्त बयान है।

जाहिर है, विपक्ष के इस रुख से अलग-अलग राजनीतिक विचार होने के बावजूद एक देश के रूप में हमारी एकता और मजबूती सामने आई है। इससे पहले पुलवामा में आतंकी हमले के बाद भी सभी राजनीतिक पार्टियों ने एक स्वर में घटना की तीखी आलोचना की थी और इस मसले पर कार्रवाई की स्थिति में सरकार के साथ होने की स्पष्ट घोषणा की थी। यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है कि पाकिस्तान ने पिछले काफी समय से भारत के खिलाफ एक तरह से छद्म युद्ध छेड़ रखा है। लेकिन हाल ही में पुलवामा में हुए आतंकी हमले में सीआरपीएफ के चौवालीस जवानों की जान जाने के बाद जब भारत ने जवाबी कार्रवाई के तौर पर पाकिस्तान की सीमा में जाकर लक्षित हमला किया, उसका देश के सभी विपक्षी दलों ने स्वागत किया था और इस मुद्दे पर सरकार के रुख के साथ होने की बात कही। इसके बाद जब पाकिस्तान ने जिस तरह भारतीय क्षेत्र में हवाई हमला करने का दुस्साहस किया और बाद में हमारे एक पायलट को अपने कब्जे में ले लिया, उस पर भी सभी ने चिंता जताई और पाकिस्तान के रवैये की आलोचना की।

दरअसल, आतंकी संगठनों के पाकिस्तान में स्थित ठिकानों से अपनी गतिविधियां संचालित करने को लेकर भारत कई बार सवाल उठा चुका है। इस मसले पर पाकिस्तान को अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंचों पर भी फजीहत झेलनी पड़ी है। इसके बावजूद पाकिस्तान ने अपने सीमा क्षेत्र में आतंकी गिरोहों के खिलाफ कार्रवाई और उनके ठिकानों को नष्ट करने को लेकर बहुत रुचि नहीं दिखाई। सवाल है कि आखिर किन वजहों से पाकिस्तान आतंकवादी संगठनों को लेकर नरम रवैया बनाए रखता है! आमतौर पर आतंकी समूहों और उन्हें शह देने वालों को यह उम्मीद होती है कि वे भारत में मौजूद भिन्नताओं और मतभेदों का फायदा उठा कर समाज और राजनीतिक दलों को भी बांट देंगे। लेकिन यह ध्यान रखने की जरूरत है कि आजादी के बाद एक लंबा सफर तय करते हुए हमारे देश में लोकतंत्र की जड़ें इतनी गहरी और मजबूत हो गई हैं कि बड़े-बड़े और तीखे मतभेद भी देश की एकता और अखंडता के सवाल पर बिना किसी हिचक के दूर हो जाते हैं। हमारे लोकतंत्र की यही खूबसूरती है और यही हमारी ताकत भी है।

कल्पमेधा

किसी के गुणों की प्रशंसा करने में अपना समय मत नष्ट करो, उसके गुणों को अपनाने का प्रयत्न करो।
-कार्ल मार्क्स

पेड़ बचेंगे तो जीवन बचेगा

योगेश कुमार गोयल

भारतीय वन सर्वेक्षण की एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार देश में सघन वनों का क्षेत्रफल तेजी से घट रहा है। 1999 में सघन वन 11.48 फीसद थे, जो 2015 में घट कर मात्र 2.61 फीसद रह गए। देश के कई राज्यों उत्तराखंड, मिजोरम, तेलंगाना, नगालैंड, अरुणाचल प्रदेश, असम, मेघालय, सिक्किम, त्रिपुरा, हरियाणा, पंजाब, मध्यप्रदेश, छत्तीसगढ़, महाराष्ट्र, बिहार, झारखंड, दादरा नगर हवेली इत्यादि में वन क्षेत्र तेजी से कम हुआ है।

दिल्ली सहित देश के कई बड़े शहर प्रदूषण के चलते बुरी तरह हांफ रहे हैं। पिछले कुछ समय से देश में पर्यावरण का मिजाज लगातार बिगड़ रहा है, जिसका खमियाजा देश ने वर्षभर किसी न किसी बड़ी आपदा के रूप में भुगता भी है। भारत के कई शहर दुनिया के सर्वाधिक प्रदूषित शहरों में शामिल हैं। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन के विश्वव्यापी वायु प्रदूषण डाटाबेस के अनुसार दुनिया के सर्वाधिक प्रदूषित पंद्रह शहरों में से चौदह भारत में हैं, जिनमें वाराणसी, कानपुर, लखनऊ, पटना और गया शामिल हैं। देश की राजधानी दिल्ली तो अक्सर गैस चैंबर में तब्दील हो चुकी है। कार्बन उत्सर्जन मामले में दिल्ली दुनिया के तीस शीर्ष शहरों में शामिल है। पहाड़नुमा कूड़े के ढेरों से निकलती जहरीली गैसें, औद्योगिक इकाइयों से निकलते जहरीले धुएं के अलावा सड़कों पर वाहनों की बढ़ती संख्या कार्बन उत्सर्जन का बड़ा कारण है। कहा जाता रहा है कि अगर दिल्ली और देश के अन्य अत्यधिक प्रदूषित शहरों में वायु प्रदूषण पर नियंत्रण पाना है तो लोगों को निजी वाहनों का प्रयोग कम कर सार्वजनिक परिवहन को अपनाना चाहिए, साथ ही बड़े पैमाने पर वृक्षारोपण को बढ़ावा देकर हरियाली बढ़ानी होगी। लेकिन पर्यावरण संरक्षण के बड़े-बड़े दावों और वादों के बावजूद वृक्षों के विनाश का सिलसिला तेजी से बढ़ रहा है।

एक ओर जहां हरियाली की कमी के चलते पर्यावरण का संतुलन बिगड़ने से प्रकृति का प्रकोप बार-बार सामने आ रहा है। सरकारें ही शहरी विकास और देश के विकास को रफ्तार देने, लंबे-चौड़े एक्सप्रेस-वे बनाने के नाम पर लाखों ऐसे वृक्षों का सर्वनाश करने का फरमान जारी करने में विलंब नहीं करतीं, जिनमें से बहुत से पेड़ तो डेढ़ सौ साल तक पुराने नीम, पीपल और बरगद जैसे विशालकाय होते हैं। पिछले साल दिल्ली में भी साढ़े सोलह हजार पेड़ काटे जाने का फरमान सुनाया गया था, किंतु चिपको आंदोलन की तर्ज पर दिल्लीवासियों ने व्यापक स्तर पर जन अभियान चलाकर दिल्ली सरकार को अपना निर्णय वापस लेने को विवश कर इन वृक्षों को कटने से बचा लिया था। लेकिन देश में हर जगह स्थिति ऐसी नहीं है। हिमालयी क्षेत्र हो या गंगा तथा उसकी सहायक नदियों के जल ग्रहण क्षेत्र, हर कहीं हजारों की संख्या में विशालकाय वृक्ष काटे जा रहे हैं। चार-धाम यात्रा को सुखद बनाने के लिए सड़कों के चौड़ीकरण के लिए करीब नौ सौ किलोमीटर के दायरे में वर्षों पुराने लाखों विशालकाय हरे-भरे वृक्ष काट डाले गए। विकास के नाम पर बेरहमी से वृक्षों के विनाश के चलते जो पर्यावरण संतुलन बिगड़ रहा है उससे मानव सहित समस्त प्राणी जगत का जीवन कैसे सुरक्षित रहेगा, इसका जवाब किसी के पास नहीं है। जीवन ही सुरक्षित नहीं रहेगा तो हरे-भरे विशाल वृक्षों की कीमत पर यह विकास किस काम का?

वृक्ष न केवल हमें भावनात्मक तथा आध्यात्मिक शांति प्रदान करते हैं, बल्कि मिट्टी को रोके रख कर हमें बाढ़ के खतरे से बचाते हैं, कार्बन डाईऑक्साइड को अवशोषित कर आसपास के वायुमंडल को स्वच्छ रखते हैं, पर्याप्त वर्षा कराने में महत्त्वपूर्ण योगदान देते हैं, विषैले पदार्थों को अवशोषित करते हुए पोषक तत्त्वों का नवीनीकरण करते हैं, खाद्य सामग्री तथा औषधियां उपलब्ध कराते हैं, उत्तम स्वास्थ्य प्रदान करते हैं तथा वन्य जीवों को आश्रय प्रदान करते हैं। इसलिए विकास के नाम पर एक भी वृक्ष को काटने से पहले हजार बार यह सोचा जाना चाहिए कि क्या इस वृक्ष को किसी भी प्रकार बचाया जा सकता है।

वृक्ष हमारे लिए कितने महत्त्वपूर्ण हैं, इसे समझने के लिए न्यूयार्क के पर्यावरण संरक्षण विभाग द्वारा जारी तथ्यों पर गौर करना बेहद जरूरी है। इसमें बताया गया है कि सौ विशाल वृक्ष प्रतिवर्ष तिरपन टन कार्बन डाईऑक्साइड और दो सौ किलोग्राम अन्य वायु प्रदूषकों को दूर करते हैं और पांच लाख तीस हजार लीटर वर्षा जल को थामने में भी मददगार साबित होते हैं। घर में सुनियोजित ढंग से लगाए जाने वाले वृक्ष न केवल गर्मियों में एसी की बिजली खपत में छप्पन फीसद की कमी लाते हैं, बल्कि सर्दियों में ठंडी हवाओं को भी रोकते हैं। किसी भी वृक्ष के वजन में एक ग्राम की वृद्धि से ही उससे 2.66 ग्राम अतिरिक्त ऑक्सीजन मिलती है और किसी विशाल वृक्ष से प्राप्त होने वाली ऑक्सीजन, फल, लकड़ी,

बायोमास इत्यादि की कीमत के आधार पर पचास साल की अवधि में ऐसे वृक्ष की आर्थिक कीमत करीब दो लाख डॉलर होती है।

भारतीय वन सर्वेक्षण की एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार देश में सघन वनों का क्षेत्रफल तेजी से घट रहा है। 1999 में सघन वन 11.48 फीसद थे, जो 2015 में घट कर मात्र 2.61 फीसद रह गए। देश के कई राज्यों उत्तराखंड, मिजोरम, तेलंगाना, नगालैंड, अरुणाचल प्रदेश, असम, मेघालय, सिक्किम, त्रिपुरा, हरियाणा, पंजाब, मध्यप्रदेश, छत्तीसगढ़, महाराष्ट्र, बिहार, झारखंड, दादरा नगर हवेली इत्यादि में वन क्षेत्र तेजी से कम हुआ है। सघन वनों का दायरा सिमटते जाने के चलते ही वन्यजीव शहरों-कस्बों का रुख करने को विवश होने लगे हैं। इसी के चलते जंगली जानवरों की इंसानों के साथ मुठभेड़ों की घटनाएं बढ़ रही हैं। हालांकि 'नेचर' पत्रिका की एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत में इस समय करीब पैंतीस अरब वृक्ष हैं और इस लिहाज से प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के हिस्से में करीब अट्ठाईस वृक्ष आते हैं। यह आंकड़ा पढ़ने और सुनने में जितना सुखद प्रतीत होता है, उतना है नहीं, क्योंकि इनमें से अधिकांश सघन वनों में हैं, न कि देश के विभिन्न शहरों या कस्बों में।

वृक्षों की अंधाधुध कटाई के चलते सघन वनों का क्षेत्रफल भी तेजी से घट रहा है। भारत में स्थिति बदतर इसलिए है कि यहां एक तरफ जहां वृक्षों की अवैध कटाई का सिलसिला बड़े पैमाने पर चलता रहा है, वहीं वृक्षारोपण के मामले में उदासीनता और लापरवाही बरती जाती रही है। किसी भी विकास योजना के नाम पर पेड़ काटे जाते समय विरोध होने पर सरकारी एजेंसियों द्वारा तर्क दिए जाते हैं कि जितने पेड़ काटे जाएंगे, उसके बदले दस गुना वृक्ष लगाए जाएंगे, किंतु वृक्षारोपण के मामले में सरकारी निष्क्रियता जगजाहिर रही है। कैग की एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार 2015-17 के बीच दिल्ली में 13018 वृक्ष काटे गए थे, जिसके बदले में 65090 पौधे लगाए जाने थे, लेकिन मात्र 21048 पौधे ही लगाए गए और इनमें भी बहुत सारे सजावटी पौधे लगा कर खानापूर्ति कर दी गई। वैसे भी पेड़ों को काटने के बदले जो पौधे लगाए जाते हैं, उनमें से महज दस फीसद बचे रह पाते हैं।

कैग की एक रिपोर्ट बताती है कि दिल्ली पहले से ही करीब नौ लाख पेड़ों की कमी से जूझ रही है। पिछले पांच वर्षों में हरियाली घटने से दिल्ली में वायु प्रदूषण करीब चार सौ फीसद बढ़ा है। देश में मौसम चक्र जिस तेजी से बदल रहा है, जलवायु संकट गहरा रहा है, ऐसी पर्यावरणीय समस्याओं से निपटने का एक ही उपाय है वृक्षों की सघनता। वायु प्रदूषण हो या जल प्रदूषण अथवा भू-क्षरण, इन समस्याओं से केवल ज्यादा से ज्यादा वृक्ष लगा कर ही निपटा जा सकता है। हम प्रकृति से अपने हिस्से की ऑक्सीजन तो ले लेते हैं, किंतु प्रकृति को उसके बदले में लौटाते कुछ भी नहीं। दरअसल, एक सामान्य वृक्ष सालभर में लगभग सौ किलो ऑक्सीजन देता है, जबकि एक व्यक्ति को वर्षभर में साढ़े सात सौ किलो ऑक्सीजन की जरूरत होती है। नीम, बरगद, पीपल जैसे बड़े छायादार वृक्ष, जो पचास साल या उससे ज्यादा पुराने हों, उनसे तो प्रतिदिन एक सौ चालीस किलो तक ऑक्सीजन मिलती है। ऐसे में हमें यह बात भली-भांति समझ लेनी चाहिए कि यदि वृक्ष बचे रहेंगे, तभी पृथ्वी पर जीवन बचेगा।

वक्त नहीं है

अंशुमाली रस्तोगी

दुनिया मेरे आगे

नहीं जानता कि लोग कैसे 'वक्त नहीं है' की शिकायत किया करते हैं। कभी फोन किया जाए तो कहते हैं- 'बिजी हूं अभी'। घर मिलने जाएं तो ठीक से मिलते नहीं। वक्त न होने का उलाहना यों देते हैं मानो चौबीस घंटे भी उन्हें कम पड़ते हों! पिछले कुछ समय से देख रहा हूं कि हममें से बहुत सारे लोग अब हर बात का ठीकरा वक्त के सिर पर फोड़ने लगे हैं। अपने हर झूठ की बंदूक वक्त के कंधे पर रख कर चला रहे हैं। केवल घर या दफ्तर में नहीं, 'वक्त की कमी के मारे' ऐसे लोग गाड़ी चलाते हुए भी खूब दिख जाते हैं, जिन्हें हर किसी से आगे निकल जाने की हड़बड़ी शायद इसलिए रहती है कि वे अपने वक्त को मात दे सकें। मगर वक्त को कभी कोई मात दे सका है भला!

कम से कम मुझे 'वक्त नहीं है' की दलील सच कम और बनावटीपन ज्यादा लगती है। वक्त का वास्ता देकर दरअसल हम टालने की कोशिश करते रहते हैं। ऐसा करके हम सामने वाले को जताते हैं कि वक्त की उसके पास इस कदर कमी है कि वह न तो खुद पर, न खुद से जुड़े किसी व्यक्ति या संबंध पर ध्यान दे पा रहा है। क्या वाकई ऐसा है? क्या वक्त ने हमको अपना इस हद तक गुलाम बना लिया है कि वह हमें मुक्त करना ही नहीं चाहता?

मेरा मानना है कि ऐसा नहीं है। वक्त ने हमेशा इंसान को स्वतंत्र छोड़ा है। वह जैसा चाहता है, उसके साथ वैसा करता है। इंसान ही वक्त को अपने तरीके से निरंतर बदल रहा है और वक्त भी हर बदलाव में सुखी है, क्योंकि ठहर जाना न कभी वक्त की नियति रही, न इंसान की। इसके बावजूद वक्त की कमी का बहाना बनाना, ऐसा लगता है कि हमारा घोषित स्वभाव बन चुका है।

हमारे-आपके पास एक दिन के चौबीस घंटे हैं। इन्हीं घंटों में जो भी हम चाहते हैं, करना होता है। मगर इसका यह मतलब नहीं कि आगे के घंटे हमें मिलेंगे ही नहीं। वक्त का हर हिसाब, हर पल हमारे अधिकार में है। लेकिन कुछ लोगों को आदत होती है हर समय 'वक्त की कमी' की दुहाई देते रहने की। मैंने अक्सर देखा है कि जो लोग हमेशा वक्त न मिलने का बहाना बनाते रहते हैं, वे बड़े निराशावादी और यथास्थितिवादी होते हैं। उन्हें कभी वक्त से तो कभी जिंदगी से हमेशा इतनी तरह की शिकायतें रहती हैं कि कभी-कभी लगता है कि ऐसे लोगों की तकलीफों का कोई हल नहीं!

शायद इस बात का अहसास केवल मुझे नहीं, हममें से हर किसी को होगा कि हम अपना कितना वक्त यों ही बर्बाद कर देते हैं। अपने वक्त को बर्बाद करने के हमारे पास एक नहीं, सैकड़ों जरिए हैं। कुछ खाली बैठे रह कर तो कुछ बेमानी बातों में खुद को लगा कर अपने वक्त को जाया करते रहते हैं। वक्त की कीमत उनके लिए कोई मायने नहीं रखती। हां, समय न मिल पाने का रोना रोते रहना उनके लिए मायने रखता है। ऐसा मैंने खुद महसूस किया है। अगर मैं किसी को कह देता हूं कि 'मैं फ्री हूं, मेरे पास वक्त है' तो सामने वाला समझता है कि यार, यह कितना खाली बंदा है। इसके पास वक्त है... कभी यह नहीं कहता कि मैं व्यस्त हूं... मेरे पास समय नहीं है। समस्या दोनों तरफ से है। आपके पास वक्त नहीं तो भी सामने वाला परेशान है। आपके पास वक्त है तो भी सामने वाला परेशान। कभी-कभी तो लगता है कि हम वक्त न मिलने को लेकर तो परेशान रहते ही हैं, पर उससे ज्यादा परेशान इस बात को लेकर रहते हैं कि वक्त इतना कम क्यों मिलता है!

बड़ी-बड़ी किताबों और महान लोगों ने हमें वक्त के पाबंद रहने को लेकर क्या-क्या नहीं कहा-सिखाया, लेकिन वर्तमान परिवेश को देखते हुए आज सबसे बड़ा बेवकूफ वही माना जाता है जो वक्त का पाबंद है! कभी किसी आयोजन में दिए हुए वक्त पर पहुंच जाइए, तो लोग ऐसे देखते हैं, मानो उसने तय वक्त पर आकर कितना बड़ा गुनाह कर दिया! एकाध तो पूछ भी बैठते हैं, इतनी जल्दी क्यों आ गए भाई! हर कहीं देर से पहुंचने को लोग अपनी शान समझने लगे हैं अब। लेकिन उन्हें इस देरी के लिए टोकना उनकी नजरों में सबसे बड़ा गुनाह है।

जो समाज या व्यक्ति अपने वक्त की कीमत नहीं समझता, फिर उससे क्या उम्मीद की जा सकती है। वक्त गुजर जाने के बाद अगर समझा तो क्या समझा! गया वक्त कभी लौट कर नहीं आता। मगर जिनकी आदत में ही शामिल हो चुका है 'वक्त नहीं है' का बहाना बना कर अपने वक्त को और खुद को धोखा देना, उनकी परवाह वक्त नहीं करता कभी!

मौत का कारोबार

असम में जहरीली शराब पीने से मरने वालों की संख्या डेढ़ सौ से पार हो गई है। ऐसी खबरें देश में अब आम हो चली हैं। हाल ही में उत्तराखंड और उत्तर प्रदेश में जहरीली शराब पीने से लगभग सौ लोगों ने अपनी जान गंवा दी थी। महाराष्ट्र, कर्नाटक, तमिलनाडु, ओडिशा आदि सभी राज्यों में लोग जहरीली शराब के कारण अपनी जान गंवा चुके हैं। शराबबंदी वाले राज्यों में भी स्थिति ज्यादा अच्छी नहीं है, वहां से भी जहरीली शराब पीने से लोगों के मरने की खबर आती रहती हैं। शराबबंदी के बाद बिहार के गोपालगंज, रोहतास, मधुबनी और बेगूसराय में लोगों ने शराब में मिलावट के चलते अपनी जान गंवाई है। गुजरात के अमदाबाद में 2009 में एक सौ तीस लोग जहरीली शराब के दंश का शिकार हो चुके हैं। स्थिति इतनी बदतर हो चुकी है कि शराबबंदी वाले राज्यों में भी पुलिस-प्रशासन की मिलीभगत के चलते मिलावटी शराब की चौतरफा उपलब्धता बनी हुई है और सरकारें इस भयानक समस्या पर मौन साधे हैं।

जहरीली और मिलावटी शराब से लगातार हो रही मौतों का मुद्दा कभी मीडिया ने प्रमुखता से नहीं उठाया। हर साल हजारों लोग मिलावटी शराब पीने से मर जाते हैं पर न तो नेता और न प्रबुद्ध वर्ग सरकार से इस पर सवाल करता है। शायद इसका कारण है कि इस मुद्दे से इस विशेष वर्ग का कोई लेना-देना नहीं है और न ही ये इससे प्रभावित हैं। जहरीली शराब पीने से केवल गरीब लोग मरते हैं जिनके मरने से किसी को कोई असर नहीं पड़ता! जरा सोचिए, इसी तरह की किसी दुर्घटना में अगर पांच अमीर लोगों की जान चली जाती तो मीडिया का क्या यही रवैया होता? सरकार और प्रशासन क्या इसी तरह चुप्पी साधे रहते? सरकार भी मरने वालों को मुआवजा देकर अपने कर्तव्य की इतिश्री समझ लेती है। ऐसा नहीं कि भारत में मिलावट के खिलाफ कोई कठोर कानून नहीं है पर गरीबों की मौत पर कोई कानून हरकत में नहीं आता। जहरीली शराब का जानलेवा कारोबार बिना पुलिस-प्रशासन की मिलीभगत के मुमकिन नहीं है। जान बचाने वाले ही अगर मौत के इस कारोबार का हिस्सा बन जाएंगे तो गरीब आदमी की जान की चिंता कौन करेगा?

इतनी भयानक समस्या पर मीडिया, सियासतदान और प्रबुद्ध वर्ग की चुप्पी यही दर्शाती है कि गरीब और अमीर की जान में बहुत बड़ा अंतर है तभी सैकड़ों लोगों के मरने पर न तो कोई आवाज उठती है न ही कोई ठोस कार्रवाई होती है। बस एक के बाद लोगों के मरने की खबरें आतीं हैं और सब पढ़ कर भूल जाते हैं। हमारी सरकार और प्रशासन को बड़ी गंभीरता से सोचने की जरूरत है कि चंद पैसों की खातिर जानबूझ कर जहरीली व रासायनिक वस्तुएं खिला-पिला कर तमाम निर्दोष लोगों की जान के साथ खिलवाड़ का हक किसी को नहीं है। मिलावटखोरों और उनका साथ देने वालों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई और सजा सुनिश्चित किए जाने की जरूरत है। इसके लिए सरकार को तुरंत कड़े नियम बनाने चाहिए और उनका सख्ती से क्रियान्वयन करना चाहिए।

● *अश्वनी राघव 'रामेंदू', दिल्ली*

चौपाल

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-8, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

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

शठे शाठ्यं समाचरेत

युद्ध के पुरजोर समर्थक अपने कुछ बड़बोले लोगों के साथ सबसे बड़ी दिक्कत यह है कि उनकी इच्छा रहती है कि युद्ध तो हो लेकिन हमारा कोई जान-माल का नुकसान न हो। उनकी यह इच्छा उनके दिमागी दिवालिएपन की प्रतीक है। दुश्मन देश कितना भी कमजोर क्यों न हो, नुकसान तो शक्तिशाली को भी बर्दाश्त करना पड़ता है। अमेरिका इसका एक जीता-जागता उदाहरण है।

जहां भी अमेरिका ने युद्ध का रास्ता चुना, उसे भी नुकसान बर्दाश्त करना पड़ा। बहरहाल, अगर दुश्मन हमें निरंतर नुकसान पहुंचा रहा है तो हमारे सामने युद्ध के अलावा कोई दूसरा विकल्प नहीं बचता क्योंकि 'कृते प्रतिकृतिं कुर्याद्धिंसिते प्रतिहिंसितम। तत्र दोषं न पश्यामि शठे शाठ्यं समाचरेत।' अर्थात- जो जैसा करे उसके साथ वैसा ही बर्ताव करो। जो तुम्हारी हिंसा करता है, तुम भी उसके प्रतिकार में उसकी हिंसा करो!

● *सुभाष चंद्र लखेड़ा, द्वारका, नई दिल्ली*

युद्ध

युद्ध न हो, तब भी युद्ध के हालात को रह-रह कर कोसने वाले युद्ध की संभावनाओं को ही जीवित रखना चाहते हैं! बेशक, युद्ध कभी मानवता के हितैषी नहीं होते। और कभी-कभी युद्ध मानवता की राह में रक्षक बन कर भी आकार लेते हैं!

तब भी, किसी देश के नागरिकों का देश के हालात व कदमों के साथ किंतु-परंतु की शर्त के साथ खड़े दिखाई देना, उन्हें राष्ट्र-विरोधी साबित करता है। वैसे युद्ध कभी-कभी अपने-पराए की पाक शिनाख्तगी के लिए भी याद किए जाते हैं!

स्मरण रहे, युद्ध कभी किसी देश का हवस-भरा शगल नहीं होते बल्कि वे नियति से उपजी मजबूरी के विध्वंसकारी तांडव होते हैं!

● *राजेश सेन, अंबिकापुरी एक्सटेंशन, इंदौर*

उड़ते ताबूत

लड़ाकू विमान किसी भी देश की वायु सेना की जान होते हैं। ये अगर अत्याधुनिक तकनीक और उच्च गुणवत्ता वाले हों तो दुश्मन के होश उड़ा देते हैं। लेकिन अगर लड़ाकू विमान पुराने हो जाएं और उनकी गुणवत्ता में अत्यधिक कमी आ जाए तो वे पुराने जमाने की सेना के बिगड़ैल हाथी की तरह अपने ही जवानों की जान लेने लगते हैं। इसी तरह की कहानी है मिग- 21 की। ये विमान 1963 में भारत ने रूस से खरीदे थे। खरीदे गए कुल 872 मिग विमानों में से 483 अब तक दुर्घटनाग्रस्त हो चुके हैं। इनके हादसों में 200 से अधिक वीर जवान अपनी जान गंवा चुके हैं। यही कारण है कि भारत में मिग-21 को 'उड़ता ताबूत' कहा जाने लगा है। इन सभी दुर्घटनाओं को अनदेखा कर ये विमान आज भी वायु सेना में जवानों की जान ले रहे हैं। आज केंद्र में मजबूत सरकार है। उसे पूर्व की सरकारों की गलतियों से सबक लेते हुए मिग-21 विमानों के प्रयोग पर प्रतिबंध लगाना चाहिए और संदेश देना चाहिए कि देश की रक्षा करने वाले सैनिकों की सुरक्षा के लिए सरकार पूरी तरह सजग है।

● *सुनील कुमार सिंह, मेरठ, उत्तर प्रदेश*

आत्मघाती पाकिस्तान

भारत और अन्य पड़ोसी देशों को अस्थिर करने का उद्देश्य पाकिस्तान की रक्षा और विदेश नीति का आधारभूत पहलू है. बीते सात दशकों में वहां शासन पर पाकिस्तानी सेना का प्रत्यक्ष या अप्रत्यक्ष नियंत्रण रहा है. सेना ने कुख्यात खुफिया एजेंसी आइएसआइ द्वारा समूचे दक्षिणी एशिया में आतंकियों, अलगाववादियों, तस्करों और अपराधियों का बड़ा संजाल बनाया है. भारत और अफगानिस्तान ने लगातार इसकी शिकायत की है. इस नेटवर्क का विस्तार इन दो देशों के अलावा नेपाल और बांग्लादेश में भी है. यहां तक कि यूरोप और अमेरिका में हुई अनेक घटनाओं में पाकिस्तान-समर्थित आतंकी और चरमपंथी गिरोहों का हाथ होने के मामले सामने आये हैं. पाकिस्तान के भीतर भी अपने वर्चस्व को बनाने-बचाने के लिए आइएसआइ ने विभिन्न हिस्सों में आतंकी समूहों को पाला-पोसा है. पिछले साल संयुक्त राष्ट्र द्वारा जारी ऐसे समूहों की सूची में पाकिस्तान में सक्रिय 139 संगठनों का नाम है. इनमें अल-कायदा के सरगना अल-जवाहिरी से लेकर तहरीके-तालिबान, लश्करे-तैयबा, जैशे-मोहम्मद, हक्कानी नेटवर्क से लेकर दाऊद इब्राहिम तक शामिल हैं. इन गिरोहों में से कुछ कश्मीर में और कुछ अफगानिस्तान में वारदातों को अंजाम देते हैं तथा अन्य समूह पाकिस्तान के भीतर अल्पसंख्यकों, उदारवादी नेताओं, सामाजिक कार्यकर्ताओं तथा आम नागरिकों को निशाना बनाते रहते हैं. आतंकवाद को राजनीतिक और कूटनीतिक हथियार के रूप में इस्तेमाल करने की पाकिस्तानी राजकीय नीति का खामियाजा जनता को भुगतना पड़ा है. आज पाकिस्तान सामाजिक रूप से टूटा हुआ और आर्थिक तौर पर कंगाल देश है. साउथ एशिया टेररिज्म पोर्टल के मुताबिक, साल 2000 से अब तक आतंकी घटनाओं में वहां 63,724 मौतें हो चुकी हैं. इस्लामाबाद, रावलपिंडी, लाहौर, कराची, क्वेटा, पेशावर जैसे बड़े शहरों से लेकर छोटे कस्बों तक ये गिरोह सक्रिय हैं. अंतराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष के आंकड़ों के अनुसार, 2010 तक पाकिस्तान की प्रति व्यक्ति आय भारत से अधिक थी. विभिन्न देशों से मिली वित्तीय मदद और व्यापक आर्थिक विषमता जैसे कारकों का संज्ञान लेते हुए भी कहा जा सकता है कि उसके पास आर्थिकी को पटरी पर रखने के मौके थे. परंतु, पाकिस्तानी सत्ताधीश तो धार्मिक चरमपंथियों को बढ़ावा देने तथा पड़ोसियों के विरुद्ध छद्म युद्ध करने में लगे हुए थे. अनेक आधिकारिक अध्ययनों ने इंगित किया है कि अस्सी के दशक के बाद से आतंकवाद ने अर्थव्यवस्था को सर्वाधिक नुकसान पहुंचाया है. खुद पाकिस्तानी आर्थिक समीक्षा में कहा गया है कि 2001 के बाद से आतंक से लड़ने में 123 बिलियन डॉलर की चपत लगी है. बीते चार दशकों में निवेश और सहायता में भी लगातार गिरावट दर्ज की गयी है. इन तथ्यों के बावजूद सरकारों ने आतंक को प्रश्रय देने की नीति पर पुनर्विचार नहीं की है. यह रवैया एक राष्ट्र-राज्य के रूप में उसके अस्तित्व के लिए ही आत्मघाती हो गया है.

पाक सरकारों ने आतंक को प्रश्रय देने की नीति पर पुनर्विचार करने की कोशिश नहीं की है. यह रवैया एक राष्ट्र-राज्य के रूप में उसके अस्तित्व के लिए ही आत्मघाती हो गया है.

भारत अब बर्दाश्त नहीं करेगा

मे. ज. जीडी बख्शी
सेवानिवृत्त सेना अधिकारी
delhi@prabhatkhabar.in

पिछले तीस साल से पाकिस्तान ने हमारे खिलाफ जंग छेड़ रखी है. इसमें अस्सी हजार के करीब भारतीय नागरिकों और सैनिकों ने अपनी जान गंवायी है. उसकी हर कायरतापूर्ण गतिविधियों पर हमें जवाबी कार्रवाई नहीं करने दी गयी और हमें बरगलाया गया कि पाकिस्तान के पास परमाणु हथियार हैं और अगर हमने उसके खिलाफ कार्रवाई की तो वह हम पर बम छोड़ देगा. यह सब अमेरिकी दबाव के कारण होता रहा है और हम पाकिस्तान की दहशतगर्दी को तीन दशक से झेलते रहे हैं. उस वक्त अमेरिका का बहुत चहेता देश पाकिस्तान ही था और तब वह अफगानिस्तान में पाकिस्तान से मदद चाहता था. और हमारी सरकारें अमेरिकी आदेशों पर चलती रहीं. हमारे विदेश मंत्रालय और शांति का राग अलापनेवालों ने यह फैसला कर लिया था कि भारत को बरबाद हो जाने देंगे, लेकिन जंग नहीं होने देंगे. हम तो अहिंसावादी हैं, गांधीवादी हैं. लेकिन, अब भारत के लोग कुर्बानियां दे-देकर तंग आ चुके हैं. अब हमें गांधीवाद महंगा पड़ रहा है. अब हम उनके गांधीवाद के लिए और जान नहीं देंगे, अब वक्त आ गया है कि भारत अपनी पूरी तैयारी के साथ पाकिस्तान को करारा से करारा जवाब दे. सब्र का बांध टूट चुका है.

अब हमारे देश में आगामी समय में कोई भी सरकार हो, जो वोट हासिल करके बनती है, उसे अब अपनी सख्त प्रतिक्रिया देनी होगी और पाकिस्तान की हर छोटी कार्रवाई का बड़े हमले से जवाब देना होगा. हम अब डरनेवाले नहीं हैं. पिछले दिनों भारत ने एयर स्ट्राइक करके दिखा दिया है और वह दिन भारतीय सेना के लिए गर्व का दिन था, तो देश के लिए सिर ऊंचा करनेवाला दिन था. हमारा मिराज जहाज पाकिस्तान की सीमा में घुसकर आतंकियों के ठिकानों पर गोले दागकर लौट आया और पाकिस्तान कुछ नहीं कर पाया. वह बहुत ही प्रोफेशनल एयर स्ट्राइक थी. हमने तो सिर्फ आतंकियों के ठिकाने पर हमला किया था, लेकिन पाकिस्तान ने उसका जवाब देकर पूरी दुनिया को बता दिया है कि जैशे-मुहम्मद उसकी सेना का हिस्सा है. पाकिस्तान ने हमारी सेना पर हमला किया है और हमारे जहाज को मार गिराया है. हालांकि, इसमें उसका भी एक जहाज मार गिराया गया है. पाकिस्तान ने यह साबित कर दिया है कि भारत अगर पाकिस्तान के आतंकी संगठनों पर हमला करेगा, तो वह भारतीय सेना पर हमला करेगा. इससे बड़ा युद्ध का ऐलान नहीं हो सकता, जो पाकिस्तान ने किया है.

हमने पुलवामा का बदला ले लिया है, लेकिन हम शांत नहीं बैठेंगे. हमें मालूम है कि पाकिस्तान नहीं मानेगा, वह फिर कोई न कोई हरकत करेगा. इसलिए मैं कहता हूं कि दो-दो हाथ करके अब इस मसले का हल हो ही जाना चाहिए और यह निश्चित कर लेना चाहिए कि अब किसी भी हाल में हम हमले के लिए तैयार रहेंगे. लेकिन, पाकिस्तान के छद्मयुद्ध को अब बरदाश्त नहीं किया जायेगा. इसके लिए हमें सेना को फ्रीहैंड देना होगा और शांति का राग अलापनेवालों का सुर बिगाड़ देना होगा. यह बहुत बड़ी विडंबना और दुख की बात है कि तीस साल तक हमने कुछ नहीं किया. इसलिए अब हमें इस मसले को हल करके ही दम लेना चाहिए. पाकिस्तान से बातचीत करने को कोई फायदा नहीं है. क्योंकि आज वह बातचीत को तैयार है, कुछ दिन बाद फिर वहां से कोई आतंकी हमला हो जायेगा और हमारे जवान मारे जायेंगे. पाकिस्तान यही तो करता आ रहा है सत्तर साल से.

अब देश को यह फैसला करना पड़ेगा कि हमारा लक्ष्य क्या है. क्या हमें सिर्फ पुलवामा का बदला लेना है या बीते तीस वर्षों में जान गंवाये सारे लोगों का बदला लेना है? तय करना होगा कि यह बदला किस पैमाने पर लिया जायेगा?

पाकिस्तान ने हमारे एक पायलट को पकड़ लिया था. मैंने कहा था कि पाकिस्तान को उसे छोड़ना ही होगा. प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने पाक संसद में ऐलान किया कि वह हमारे पायलट को रिहा करेंगे. जाहिर है, यह तो होना ही था. यह हमारी बड़ी जीत है.

विदेश मंत्रालय की वजह से ही पिछले तीस साल से सेना के हाथ बंधे हुए हैं. सेना जब भी कोई एक्शन लेना चाहती है, तब विदेश मंत्रालय बातचीत करके मामले को शांत कर देता है और पाकिस्तान अपनी मनमानी करने में व्यस्त हो जाता है. सेना को अपना काम करने ही नहीं देते ये लोग. आज हमारे रक्षा मंत्रालय का यह हाल है कि सेना की तरफ से कोई बयान भी नहीं दे सकते. जब देखो तब विदेश मंत्रालय के प्रवक्ता ही सेना की तरफ से बोलने चले आते हैं. हमें सेना के अधिकार के साथ इस तरह से नहीं करना चाहिए. जबकि पाकिस्तान की सेना के अधिकारी और उसके विदेश मंत्रालय दोनों बयान दिये जा रहे हैं.

अब देश को यह फैसला करना पड़ेगा कि हमारा लक्ष्य क्या है. क्या हमें सिर्फ पुलवामा का बदला लेना है या बीते तीस वर्षों में जान गंवाये सारे लोगों का बदला लेना है? यह बदला किस पैमाने पर लिया जायेगा? क्या हमारा एकमात्र लक्ष्य यह नहीं होना चाहिए कि पाकिस्तान समर्थित आतंकवाद के दौर को पूरी तरह से नष्ट कर दिया जाये? क्या हमारा लक्ष्य यह नहीं होना चाहिए कि भारत-पाक के बीच चल रहे एक अघोषित युद्ध को एक निर्णायक लड़ाई लड़कर खत्म कर दिया जाये? इन सब सवालों के जवाब हैं हमारे पास, लेकिन ये सिर्फ टोकनिज्म से हल नहीं होंगे, बल्कि निर्णायक युद्ध के फैसले से हल होंगे. नहीं तो फिर वही होगा कि एक सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के बाद पुलवामा होगा, तो दूसरे सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के बाद कोई और हमला. भारत को उतना जोर लगाना पड़ेगा, जितने से पाकिस्तान को यह समझ आ जाये कि यह रास्ता बहुत खतरे और जोखिम से भरा है और उसे छद्मयुद्ध को अब त्याग देना चाहिए. यह काम बातों से नहीं होगा, क्योंकि लातों का भूत पाकिस्तान बातों से नहीं मान सकता. पाकिस्तान को अगर युद्ध का इतना ही शौक है, तो मैं आज यह बयान देता हूं कि दो-दो हाथ के बाद पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था ध्वस्त हो जायेगी और सोवियत संघ की तरह पाकिस्तान भी इतिहास के कमोड में फ्लश हो जायेगा, वह बरबाद हो जायेगा.

आज कटोरा लेकर पाकिस्तान दुनियाभर से भीख मांग रहा है, उसकी इतनी औकात नहीं होनी चाहिए कि वह भारत पर हमले करे. पाकिस्तान ने यह बिल्कुल ही उपयुक्त समय चुना है भारत को छेड़ने का. वह सिर पर चढ़ गया है और अब उसे उतारने का समय आ गया है. बीते तीस साल से भारत की यह गलती रही है कि पाकिस्तान जैसे दो टके के देश को हमने सिर पर चढ़ा रखा है. लेकिन, अब पानी सिर से ऊपर जा रहा है. अब देश के नेतृत्व को डीमोनेटाइजेशन जैसी इच्छाशक्ति का प्रदर्शन करने की जरूरत है, ताकि पाकिस्तान आतंकवाद को बंद करने पर मजबूर हो जाये. उसके बाद फिर चाहे दुनिया चें-चें करे तो करे, हमें कोई परवाह नहीं.

बोधि वृक्ष

मानवीय आधार

हम देखते हैं कि मानवीय आधार तथा उन्नत चेतन-वस्तु समूह में जड़-संघात और भाव-संघात दोनों ही हैं. दोनों के फल से वे क्रमशः प्रगति के पथ पर चलते रहते हैं. मनुष्य के दैनंदिन जीवन में हम लोग दोनों संघात देखते रहते हैं. दोनों हमें आगे बढ़ने में सहायता करते हैं, किंतु ऐसा होने पर भी मनुष्य जाति को हम साधारणतः दो भागों में विभक्त देखते हैं. एक प्रकार के मनुष्य हैं जो केवल भाव-संघात का ही आह्वान करते हैं और द्वितीय श्रेणी के मनुष्य हैं, जो केवल जड़-संघात में ही लिप्त होना चाहते हैं. प्रथम श्रेणी को कह सकते हैं भाववादी, द्वितीय श्रेणी को भोगवादी. भाववादी और भोगवादी- दोनों ही साधक हैं, अंतर केवल लक्ष्य का है. जगत् में इनके दोनों पक्ष ही मानव-समाज की क्षति करते रहते हैं. मनुष्य को दोनों के बीच से आगे बढ़ना होगा, एक सामंजस्य रखकर, भाव को लक्ष्य बना जड़ के संघर्ष के मध्य होकर. भाव संघात में मनुष्य संपूर्णरूप से मानसिक तृप्ति (देह संपर्कित नहीं) के लिए कार्य करता है. वह मानसिक वस्तु चाहता है- यश पाने की आशा में वह कार्य करता है. इसलिए शुद्ध भाव-संघात संभवतः जड़-संघात से सूक्ष्म चीज है, किंतु इससे भी मनुष्य जाति का कितना कल्याण हो सकता है? शिक्षित तथा बुद्धिमान लोगों को भी देखते रहते हैं कि रुपये का लोभ नहीं रहने पर भी नाम-यश के लोभ से अन्य के प्रति कीचड़ उछालते रहते हैं. इस प्रकार का भाव-संघात क्या मनुष्य के मन को सूक्ष्मत्व की ओर ले जा सकता है? हम लोग देखते रहते हैं कि जड़ाश्रयी इज्मवाद के समर्थक दूसरे की युक्तिपूर्ण बात को भी ग्रहण करने में असमर्थ हो जाते हैं और अपने युक्तिहीन आचार अनुष्ठान को आंख-कान बंद करके पकड़े रखना चाहते हैं. इस प्रकार के मनुष्य को जड़ की भावना बार-बार जड़ देह धारण करने के लिए बाध्य करती है. जहां ध्येय परमात्मा है, वहीं जीव की निरंकुश प्रगति होती रहती है. विषय सूक्ष्म और व्यापक होने के कारण मन भी सूक्ष्म और व्यापक होता है और इस व्यापकता के कारण मनुष्य अपने लक्ष्य तक पहुंच सकता है.

श्रीश्री आनंदमूर्ति

जनतंत्र और जन-घोषणापत्र

मनींद्र नाथ ठाकुर
एसोसिएट प्रोफेसर, जेएनयू
manindrat@gmail.com

चुनाव का माहौल बनता जा रहा है. व्यवस्था के तौर पर जनतंत्र की जटिलता भी बढ़ती जा रही है. निश्चित रूप से जनतंत्र में बहुमत की सरकार बनती है. लेकिन, किस मुद्दे पर किस पार्टी का क्या विचार है और उनसे कितने लोग सहमत हैं, इसे जान पाना आसान नहीं है. जनतंत्र में जब राजनीतिक दलों का आविर्भाव हुआ, तो इन्होंने अलग-अलग मुद्दों पर अपने विचारों को लिपिबद्ध किया, ताकि मतदाता उन विचारों को देखकर सहमति और असहमति का निर्णय ले सकें. दलों ने अपनी नीतियों-कार्यक्रमों से बहुमत को रिझाने का प्रयास किया. लेकिन, सूचना तकनीकी में भारी विस्तार के बाद क्या इसका कोई महत्व है या यह सिर्फ औपचारिकता मात्र ही है? क्या पार्टियां इसे लेकर गंभीर हैं? क्या जनता घोषणापत्र को गंभीरता से लेती है? क्या चुनाव पर इसका कोई प्रभाव पड़ता भी है?

आम तौर पर किसी पार्टी के घोषणापत्र को ठीक से पढ़ा जाये, तो हमें उसका जनाधार, उसकी विचारधारा और उसके कार्यक्रमों के बारे में पूरी जानकारी मिल सकती है. जैसा हम जानते हैं 'कम्युनिस्ट मेनिफेस्टो' मार्क्स एवं एंगेल्स ने आंदोलन को दिशा देने के लिए लिखा था, एक बेहतरीन उदाहरण है घोषणापत्र का. उसे पढ़कर आप अंदाजा लगा सकते हैं कि कम्युनिस्ट आंदोलन समाज को कैसे समझता है और परिवर्तन के लिए किस तरह की योजना उसके विचारों में सही है. बाबा साहेब आंबेडकर का प्रसिद्ध लेख या गांधी का हिंद स्वराज औपचारिक तौर पर घोषणापत्र तो नहीं है, लेकिन आज भी जनांदोलनों को प्रभावित करता है. एक तरह से ये तीनों घोषणापत्र हैं, जो लोगों के स्वतंत्र और स्वाभाविक जीवन जीने में आनेवाली बाधाओं से मुक्ति के लिए आंदोलन की रूपरेखा देते है. इनमें दर्शन भी है, समस्याओं का विश्लेषण भी है और उनसे निकालने के लिए संघर्ष का आह्वाहन भी. राजनीतिक दलों का घोषणापत्र इतना गंभीर तो नहीं होता है और उनमें दर्शन से ज्यादा कार्यक्रम होता है, लेकिन यदि सही विश्लेषण करें, तो पार्टियों के स्वभाव के बारे में बहुत कुछ समझ में आ जाता है.

भारतीय राजनीति में घोषणापत्र को बहुत गंभीरता से नहीं लिया जाता है. हर पार्टी के पास इसे लिखनेवालों की एक टीम तो जरूर रहती है, लेकिन है यह औपचारिकता मात्र ही. बहुत सी पार्टियां तो घोषणापत्र जारी ही नहीं करती हैं. उन्हें शायद यह लगता है कि इसका कोई मतलब इसलिए नहीं है कि मतदाता कभी उसे पढ़कर मत नहीं देता है. नतीजा है कि चुनाव में वादों की बरसात होती है. इन मौखिक वादों का कोई लेखा-जोखा चुनाव के बाद तो होता ही नहीं है. यदि जनता किसी नेता से कहती है कि आपने चुनाव के समय ऐसा कुछ कहा था, तो एक ही जवाब मिलता है कि यह तो कहने की बात है इसे लागू करना संभव नहीं है. वैसे भी आजकल पार्टियों द्वारा उनके घोषणापत्र में किये गये वादे ठीक उसी तरह हैं, जैसे साल के अंत में हिसाब-किताब देने कि लिए एक खास तरह का लेखा-जोखा तैयार किया जाता है.

यदि जन-घोषणापत्र हमारे पास हो, तो हम गांधी के स्वराज की कल्पना कर सकते हैं. इसे बनाये जाने की प्रकिया जितनी मुक्तिदायिनी होगी, उतनी ही मुक्तिदायिनी इसे लागू करवाने की प्रक्रिया भी होगी.

अब समय आ गया है कि चुनाव के समय जारी किये गये घोषणापत्रों को गंभीरता से लिया जाये. जनता को यह वैधानिक अधिकार दिया जाये कि इन घोषणाओं की जांच कर सके और इन्हें लागू करवाने के लिए उन्हें न्यायालय तक जाने की छूट मिले. इसे एक तरह से जनता और राजनीतिक दलों के बीच का कांट्रैक्ट समझा जाये और वादाखिलाफी को अपराध की श्रेणी में रखा जाये. कुछ समय पहले एक अच्छा प्रयोग देखने को मिला था, दो चुनावों के बीच 'वादा न तोड़' कार्यक्रम होता था, जिसमें स्थानीय जनप्रतिनिधियों से वादा निभाने को कहा जाता था. बिहार के औरंगाबाद जिले के मुख्यालय में 'लोक संसद' के सामाजिक कार्यकर्ताओं ने कुछ वादों को बड़े-बड़े होर्डिंग पर लिखकर चौराहों पर लगा दिया और रोज सुबह वहां जमा होकर उस पर चर्चा करने लगे. जनप्रतिनिधियों पर इसका बहुत असर पड़ा. सोशल मीडिया और अन्य संचार माध्यमों के जरिये भी समय-समय पर इन घोषणापत्रों के मूल्याकन का कार्यक्रम चलना चाहिए.

जनतंत्र के सफल होने की आवश्यक शर्त है कि जनता स्वयं भी अपना घोषणापत्र बनाये. हर चुनाव क्षेत्र में 'लोक संसद' हो, जो जन-संपर्क के माध्यम से लोगों की सार्वजनिक समस्याओं को लिपिबद्ध करे और उसे एक मांगपत्र का रूप दे. हमारे जनतंत्र की असली समस्या यह है कि चुनाव आते ही नये मुद्दे कृत्रिम तरीके से उछाले जाते हैं. इसलिए सरकारों और दलों का प्रचार बजट बढ़ता जा रहा है. ऐसे में जनता को अपनी समस्याओं को मजबूती से दलों के सामने रखने के लिए संघर्ष करना पड़ेगा और यह संघर्ष वैचारिक ज्यादा होगा. प्रचार कंपनियां लोगों की वैचारिक क्षमता को ही कुंद कर देती हैं. चुनाव बाद जब हमें समझ में आता है, तब तक देर हो चुकी होती है. यदि हम अपनी समस्याओं की सूची बनायेंगे, तो हमें बहकाना संभव नहीं होगा.

यदि ऐसा कोई घोषणापत्र हमारे पास हो, तो हम गांधी के स्वराज की कल्पना कर सकते हैं. इसे बनाये जाने की प्रकिया जितनी मुक्तिदायिनी होगी, उतनी ही मुक्तिदायिनी इसे लागू करवाने की प्रक्रिया भी होगी. फिर चुनाव का एजेंडा भी हमारा होगा और राजनीति भी हमारी होगी. पार्टियों और नेताओं का मुख्य काम हमारा प्रतिनिधित्व करना होगा, न कि हम पर राज करना. भारतीय जनतंत्र को बचाने के लिए जन-घोषणापत्र को जनजागरण के आंदोलनों में बदलने की जरूरत है.

आपके पत्र

अभिनंदन का अभिनंदन

आखिरकार पाकिस्तान की सरकार को मजबूरी में विंग कमांडर अभिनंदन को रिहा करने का फैसला करना पड़ा. वहां के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान का कहना है कि उन्होंने शांति के लिए बातचीत के दरवाजे को खोलने के उद्देश्य से यह कदम उठाया है. मगर सच तो यह है कि भारत की संभावित आक्रामक प्रतिक्रिया का भय ने पाकिस्तान को घुटनों के बल गिरने को मजबूर कर दिया है. बहरहाल, यह भारत के लिए बड़ी कूटनीतिक विजय है. हमें याद है कि किस प्रकार कारगिल युद्ध के दौरान शत्रु देश द्वारा बंदी बनाये गये फ्लाइट लेफ्टिनेंट के नचिकेता को भारत सरकार ने सफलतापूर्वक छुड़ाया था. वैसे, पाकिस्तानी सेना द्वारा मीडिया में पायलट की तस्वीर रिलीज करना और उनके हाथ बंधे वीडियो जारी करना 1949 के जिनेवा समझौते का उल्लंघन है. विंग कमांडर अभिनंदन ने जिस दिलेरी से पाकिस्तानी सेना के सवालों का जवाब दिया उससे हम देशवासियों को उन पर गर्व है.

चंदन कुमार, देवघर

युद्ध की निरर्थकता पर बहस हो

युद्ध की कीमत दोनों गरीब जनता झेलती है. नेता तो केवल अपनी सत्ता के लिए पासे के रूप में युद्ध को एक तुरुप चाल के रूप में चलता है. इसमें यह मायने नहीं रखता कि कौन सत्ता में है या था. चुनाव के मद्देनजर इस तरह के छद्म युद्ध का वातावरण तैयार किया जाता है जिससे कि सत्ता पक्ष अपनी कमियों को छुपा सके. यह खेल कांग्रेसियों के जमाने में भी खेला गया. वही मोदीजी भी खेल रहे हैं. वही नवाज शरीफ ने भी खेला. वही मियां इमरान भी खेल रहे हैं. सबसे दुखद बात यह है कि इसमें मरते आम आदमी हैं, चाहे भारत हो या पाकिस्तान. हथियार बनानेवाले देशों रूस, फ्रांस, चीन, अमेरिका, इजरायल आदि के खरबों रुपयों के युद्ध शस्त्र बिकते हैं और हम मूर्ख पड़ोसी यह नहीं समझते. युद्ध की निरर्थकता पर सभी देशों में तार्किक और सार्थक बहसें होनी चाहिए.

निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद

झूठ बोलने में पाकिस्तान आगे

भारतीय वायुसेना ने जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के ठिकानों पर बमबारी की, तो पाकिस्तान ने कोई नुकसान न होने का बहाना बनाया. लेकिन बुधवार की सुबह पाकिस्तानी विमानों ने भारतीय सीमा में घुसने का दुस्साहस किया तो भारतीय एयर फोर्स ने उसके एक फाइटर विमान को मार गिराया. भारत की इस कार्रवाई पर पाकिस्तान ने फिर वही पुराना राग अलापा, और कहा कि उसका कोई विमान नहीं गिरा है. उसने झूठा दावा किया कि भारत के दो पायलट उसकी हिरासत में है. दरअसल उसमें एक घायल पायलट उसका ही था. मजबूरन अपने बयान के कुछ ही घंटे बाद पाकिस्तान को सफाई देनी पड़ी कि भारत का सिर्फ एक ही कमांडर उसके हिरासत में है. भारत के दो विमानों को मार गिराने का दावा भी पाकिस्तान का दूसरा झूठ साबित हुआ. उसकी सेना के प्रवक्ता ने बयान बदलकर भारत के दावों पर मुहर लगाने का काम जरूर किया है.

राजन कुमार, कांके, रांची

कुछ अलग

आप और बाजार दोनों खुश!

मुकेश कुमार
युवा रचनाकार
harpalmukesh@gmail.com

हमारे देश में हाट-बाजार की बात ही निराली होती है. अपनी जरूरत के सामान को देखना-परखना फिर मोलभाव और तब खरीदारी. आज बाजार की स्थिति बदलती जा रही है. हालांकि, बाजार का परंपरागत ढांचा अब भी बरकरार है. लेकिन बदलते वक्त ने इंसान के साथ कारोबार का भी स्वरूप बदला है. बाजार में बढ़ते मॉल का दिव्य मायाजाल, डिस्काउंट सेल, ऑनलाइन शॉपिंग ने ऐसे लोगों को अपनी गिरफ्त में ले लिया है. एंड्रॉयड मोबाइल और कंप्यूटर से वास्ता रखनेवालों को अब बाजार जाने की जरूरत नहीं है, बल्कि बाजार खुद उनकी स्क्रीन में सिमटकर हाजिर हो गया है. आप कॉफी पीते रजाई में दुबककर भी अपनी शॉपिंग कर सकते हैं. किसी ने कहां सोचा था कि हर चीज ऑनलाइन हमारे घर पर मिलने लगेगी. आप खाने के शौकीन हों या पहनने के या फिर पढ़ने के, यहां सब कुछ उपलब्ध है. यह सुविधा भी है कि पसंद न आने पर वापस कर सकते हैं.

अगर देखा जाये, तो जो मजा हमारे परंपरागत बाजार में ही है, हालांकि अब उसकी कमी खलती है. वहां हम हाथ में झोला और पॉकेट में लिस्ट लेकर जाते हैं, जबकि यहां ऑफर के लालच में अनावश्यक खरीदारी हो जाती है, जो तत्काल तो जरूरत की लगती है, पर बाद में बेकार हो जाती है. जिसके बगैर हमारा काम चल ही रहा था, वह एक क्लिक पर ऑर्डर होकर घर पहुंच जाता है. जोश में कुछ दिन उपयोग होता है, फिर बाद में वह चीज केवल शोपीस बनकर रह जाता है.

अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से बाजार आपसे आपका यह हक छीनता जा रहा है कि आपको क्या खरीदना है, बल्कि अपनी मार्केटिंग रणनीति में यह बात प्रमुखता से रखता है कि कौन सा उत्पाद किस तरह बाजार में बेचना है? धांसू विज्ञापन से किस तरह ग्राहक का मन मोहना है. यानी इस नये बाजार में आप अपनी जरूरत का सामान नहीं खरीदते, बल्कि बाजार अपने लक्ष्य के हिसाब से आपको अपना सामान बड़ी चालाकी से बेचता है. अब आपको सचेत रहना होगा कि आप जरूरत के हिसाब से सामान खरीदें, न कि आकर्षक सामान देखकर जरूरत पैदा कर लें. आज हमारे घर डाकिया आये या न आये, पर कोरियर वाला जरूर आ जाता है.

ऑनलाइन शॉपिंग करनेवालों की लत आज इतनी बुरी हो गयी है कि पंद्रह दिन भी नहीं हुए, पर उन्हें लगता है कि बहुत दिन हो गये कुछ शॉपिंग करनी चाहिए. यानी अपना मूड ठीक करने के लिए भी शॉपिंग होने लगी है. आखिर उनके शॉपिंग एप्स की भरी हुई विशलिस्ट किस दिन काम आयेंगी. आये दिन किसी न किसी 'डे' के बहाने बाजार उत्सव में बदल रहा है और जिसकी पॉकेट गर्म है, वे अपने पैसे लुटाकर रोज दीवाली और होली मना रहे हैं. कुल मिलाकर आज के बाजार में आपके चौकन्ना रहने की जरूरत है. खरीदारी में समझदारी का भी ध्यान रखना होगा. ऐसा है कि अब जेब सीधे नहीं काटा जाता, बल्कि आपको कोई प्रोडक्ट थमा दिया गया और कट गयी आपकी जेब. आप भी खुश और बाजार भी खुश!

देश दुनिया से

युद्ध से तबाह हो जायेगी भारत-पाक अर्थव्यवस्था

भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच चार बार 1947, 1965, 1971 और 1999 में युद्ध हो चुका है. लेकिन आज अगर युद्ध होता है, तो यह दोनों के लिए विनाशकारी साबित होगा. भारत की आबादी का पांचवां हिस्सा और पाकिस्तान की आबादी का एक तिहाई हिस्सा बेहद गरीबी में जीवन यापन कर रहे हैं. युद्ध से न सिर्फ देश की अर्थव्यवस्था तबाह होगी, बल्कि नागरिकों के जान-माल को भी क्षति पहुंचेगी. साथ ही अन्य वैश्विक शक्तियों के युद्ध में

INDEPENDENT

शामिल होने से यह कलह गहरा भी सकता है. यह दोनों देशों पर निर्भर है कि वे इस तनाव को कम करने के लिए संवेदनशीलता दिखायें. पाकिस्तानी सेना पहले से ही अखनूर, नौशेरा और पुंछ सेक्टरों में गोलीबारी करके संघर्ष विराम का उल्लंघन कर चुकी है. जहां तक भारत की बात है, तो उसने भी सीमा पर सैनिकों की आवाजाही बढ़ा दी है. भारत के खिलाफ युद्ध के लिए इस्लामाबाद को चीन की सहायता लेनी होगी, क्योंकि वह कर्ज में डूबा हुआ है. युद्ध में चीन के शामिल होने से भारत की मुश्किल बढ़ जायेगी और इसके परिणाम बेहद गंभीर हो सकते हैं. ऐसे में किसी समझौते पर पहुंचने के लिए बयानबाजी को कम करना ही आगे बढ़ने का एकमात्र तरीका है.

सारोश बाना

कार्टून कोना

साभार : कार्टूनमूवमेंटडॉटकॉम

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

Coming home

The release of the IAF pilot gives India and Pakistan the chance to de-escalate tensions

With Pakistan's decision to release Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, tensions between India and Pakistan may finally wind down. The gesture, which Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan called an offer of peace and goodwill, must be appreciated, although there is evidence to suggest that there was pressure from other countries on Islamabad to make such an announcement to prevent further escalation from India. If Wing Commander Abhinandan's return provides the space for diplomacy to take over, it is because it gives both countries the opportunity to signal a victory of sorts. Islamabad will project itself as having done the decent thing, and New Delhi is likely to claim that its tough stance compelled his return. There have been a number of incidents that took the subcontinent to the brink of a conflict that could have quite easily spiralled out of control – from the Pulwama attack to the Indian air strikes on Balakot, to attempted attacks by Pakistani military aircraft in Jammu and Kashmir, and the IAF pilot's capture. The sense of uncertainty was only made worse by the utterances of public figures and the media on both sides, who tried to score points domestically. In India, within a few weeks the image of a nation in grief determined to fight terrorism appeared to have given way to triumphalism over the Balakot strikes. Pakistan went the same way after it foiled an attack across the Line of Control that saw both sides take down each other's aircraft. Videos of Wing Commander Abhinandan being manhandled by a mob before Pakistani soldiers moved in to protect him did not help. As a result, the focus changed within a few days from India's outrage over the terror strike to two nuclear neighbours poised for conflict.

It is time for New Delhi and Islamabad to use the pause afforded by the relief over the release to decide on the rules of engagement. Pakistan must realise that the time for denial and obfuscation is over. Unless it begins to act on India's and the world community's concerns about Pakistan-based terror safe havens in a time-bound manner, the two nations could be back on the brink of war if there is another trigger. If it does act, it could herald a paradigm shift in India-Pakistan engagement and help fix its own fragile economy. This has a precedent: the period that followed then-Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's 2003 announcement on shutting down terror groups, when Pakistan's military actually showed some results in the matter, was the most productive phase of engagement between the two countries in recent decades. Significantly, it was a time of economic growth and stability too for Pakistan. New Delhi must be ready to show both flexibility and a determined focus on Pakistan's action against terror groups, including the Jaish-e-Mohammad. This is the best way to build constructively on the international consensus built post-Pulwama in India's favour.

The deal-maker

The drama over Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif's moves reflects an ideological tussle

A day after posting his resignation on Instagram, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was compelled to resume duties when President Hassan Rouhani rejected it. This sudden move by Mr. Zarif, who is widely credited with playing a key role in forging the nuclear deal in 2015, reflects the tensions within the Iranian political establishment. The U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal after Donald Trump became President, and the reintroduction of American sanctions on Iran, have sharpened contradictions between the hardliners and the moderates within the Islamic Republic, an ideological tussle that has endured for a long time. Hardliners opposed to any thaw in relations with the West, and who were always sceptical of the nuclear deal, have found in the current circumstances an opportunity to question and critique the architects of the deal. Mr. Zarif's public resignation was also a kind of a power play. He was missing in the parleys between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his hosts in Tehran recently. Mr Assad, who is a key West Asian ally for Iran and has received military help from Tehran during the civil war, had also met Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Through his resignation and the public outcry that followed, Mr. Zarif sent a signal to his government that he was no lightweight diplomat and had a significant public standing among Iranians favourably disposed towards the regime.

The re-imposition of sanctions has been a major economic setback for Iran. The country did get some respite after the U.S. granted a temporary waiver for eight countries, including India, which are key trading partners. But with the sanctions, it is reeling under a weakening currency and galloping inflation. The major countries in the European Union – Germany, France and the U.K. – have reiterated that Iran has complied with the regulations of the nuclear deal and have created a new financial "special purpose vehicle" to facilitate trade with Iran despite the U.S. sanctions. The operationalisation of this entity is dependent on Iran abiding by rules framed by the international Financial Action Task Force. Bills that will bring Iranian laws in line with FATF rules are pending in Iran's Expediency Council and Parliament due to a protracted debate between the moderates and the hardliners. Had Mr. Zarif, the main architect and advocate of the deal, exited the government, it would have complicated Iran's continued adherence to the agreement. The conservatives' critique of Mr. Zarif must be seen in this light. President Rouhani's rejection of his resignation also indicates that he can ill-afford to lose an ally at this crucial juncture for Iran and its engagement with the West.

Living on the edge

India and Pakistan need to find a way to keep de-escalating tensions without either losing face

HAPPYMON JACOB

The possibility of the ongoing India-Pakistan military stand-off spiralling out of control cannot be overstated, given the high stakes involved with regard to national reputations, military redlines and, most undeniably, domestic political considerations. The limited air war over the Line of Control (LoC), shooting down of each other's aircraft and, equally importantly, the capture of an Indian fighter pilot by Pakistan have further complicated what was initially believed to be a crisis that might not go beyond round one (the terror attack in Pulwama and the Indian air strikes on Balakot). With Wednesday's limited air war, the two sides completed round two, and it's been anyone's guess what round three may entail. Thursday's late evening joint press briefing by the three services gave no definite indication of de-escalation even though the tone of the conference did not suggest escalation.

Mapping the escalation

In days ahead, if there is no clear de-escalation, we are likely to witness more fire assaults on the LoC with high calibre weapons and stand-off strikes without crossing the border using short-range air-to-surface or surface-to-surface missiles against each other. In so far as this does not involve more pilot captures, deep strikes in each other's territories and extending to the International Boundary sector, it could still potentially remain contained. But, as they say, miscalculations and mistakes can easily take place in the fog of war whereby the stand-off could move up the next rung of escalation.

Let's take a step back and recapture how we got to two rungs up the escalatory ladder. To begin with, by carrying out a daring air strike deep inside the Pakistani mainland, India crossed the redline, from the Pakistani point of view. It meant clear and present reputational damage for the Imran Khan government as well as the Pakistan military. Their retaliatory strike against India was something they felt compelled to undertake. On the Indian side, coming in the run-up to the general election, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government couldn't have but responded to a terror attack that took the lives of 40 of its men in uniform. A military response was expected, but choosing to strike inside mainland Pakistan was perhaps not wise.

But then, New Delhi's war planners were also trying to stretch the success of the surgical strikes of 2016 (since Pakistan didn't respond to them) by extending its scope beyond Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), a strategy that may not have panned out as planned.

From a more conceptual point of view, by carrying out a strike against Pakistan in its Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, India wanted to create a new military normal between the two sides, i.e. counter-terror air strikes inside Pakistan would now be a regular feature, something, one could argue, straight out of the American and Israeli counter-terror playbooks. If Pakistan had faked ignorance of an attack in Balakot, which it initially did, or decided not to respond to it, India would have set the new military normal in stone. Moreover, yet another denial from Rawalpindi would have run the risk of Pakistan's military threats being rendered hollow and the associated conventional and nuclear bluffs being called, in full public view. Knowing fully well the implications of a non-response, Pakistan therefore opted for, I would say, a minimal air strike across the LoC.

REUTERS

What further complicated matters for the Pakistani war planners was India's use of the phrase 'non-military pre-emptive strike'. While the term 'non-military' was meant to signal to Pakistan that the attack was against the terror camp and not against its military, the 'pre-emptive' part was unacceptable to the Pakistani side, I would imagine. A successful, and un-responded to, Indian pre-emptive strike, once again from the American playbook, would have meant that India could now keep the option of striking anywhere inside Pakistan to take out terror camps which it believes poses a threat to India. Recall that the 2016 surgical strikes were projected as a 'retaliatory strike' than a 'pre-emptive one', unlike the attack on Balakot. That again, would have been a major problem for Pakistan.

In that sense, this week's escalation is the fallout of a misplaced Indian belief that it could change the military normal between the two sides, and the Pakistani refusal to let that happen. To that extent, if the crisis doesn't escalate any further, Pakistan would have successfully dissuaded India from altering the status quo.

Signalling restraint?

Given the fact that round two of the military engagement so far has been confined to the LoC skies, it is possible to argue that the two countries want to keep the engagement limited with the possibility of some air skirmishes and then perhaps call it quits. If the limited spatial scope of the strikes is indeed intentional, and not just a result of Pakistan limiting its attacks above the LoC, we could potentially look forward to more signalling for de-escalation, in addition to Pakistan's announcement that the captured IAF pilot, Abhinandan Varthaman, would be released "as a gesture of peace".

And yet, there are several challenges to this assessment. For one, India did not gain any military advantage over Pakistan in round two, which makes it difficult for New Delhi to claim victory. More so, Pakistan's custody of an Indian pilot has made New Delhi look weak, and the BJP-led government certainly would not want to look weak in the run-up to the general election. Given that the first conventional shot was fired by India (even as the trigger was the terror attack in Pulwama), would it be possible for India to get off the escalation ladder with Pakistan taking the high moral ground with Wing Commander Varthaman's release?

Equally important is the issue of how either side can convey to the other a desire for de-escalation without being seen as blinking first, if indeed there is a desire for de-escalation. At the end of the day, the BJP needs a victory over Pakistan, which the latter will not give without a war of attrition and the attendant dangers of escalation. India may not want to go down that long-drawn-out path of uncertain outcomes, certain damage and difficulties of spinning narratives of victory and loss in the age of social media and instant communication, and with the Opposition ready to pounce on it.

On a de-escalation plan

For arch-rivals such as India and Pakistan, public commitment on de-escalation is not a charming option given the potential future narratives about humiliation. Third party mediation also looks easier said than practised – Islamabad might not trust Washington as a neutral mediator, Moscow might not have enough interest, and Beijing's good offices will not find any takers in New Delhi. Unless there is some creative way the U.S. can discreetly mediate between the two countries, third party mediation is looking difficult.

The other easier option is to open back-channel negotiations between the two sides. This has precedent in the India-Pakistan context. As a matter of fact, there were quiet back channel negotiations between Islamabad and New Delhi at the height of the Kargil conflict, even as the U.S. was trying to defuse tensions. If indeed the two countries are keen on taking this road, they would need to immediately send their respective back-channel emissaries, preferably to a third country, to hold discreet talks on how to de-escalate. They would need to work out a solution which will be seen as a win-win deal even if in reality it might not be exactly so.

Happymon Jacob teaches at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, and is the author of 'Line on Fire: Ceasefire Violations and India-Pakistan Escalation Dynamics'

Nigeria's difficult democratic journey

Abrupt postponement, chaos at polling stations and violence, all contributed to the lowest ever general election turnout

S.Y. QURAISHI

Nigeria has just had its general election, its sixth since its return to democracy. Incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) defeated his closest rival, Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), by about four million votes. Despite pre-election promises of accepting the result, Mr. Abubakar has rejected the results, calling the election a "sham" and "militarised" and deciding to question it in court. There were 73 registered candidates in the fray. There are 91 registered political parties.

Election data

With a population of nearly 200 million, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, accounting for 47% of west Africa's population. It comprises more than 300 ethnic groups. The numbers of Muslims and Christians are almost equal though the first seem to be politically dominant. Although 82.3 million voters were registered and their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) made, 11.2 million were not collected, denying over 13% of all registered voters an opportunity to vote. Though the observer missions found the register of voters to be generally robust, I feel the figure of 41% registered voters to be disproportionate to the total population. In India, nearly 62% of the population is registered as voters.

Unlike India, counting is done in the polling stations but the results are collated and declared at collation centres. It took seven days to announce the results of the presidential election while the collation of National Assembly elections is still going on.

A federal republic with a presidential form of government, Nigeria has a bicameral National Assembly comprising the 109-member Senate and 360-member House of Representatives, both elected for four years. The country has 36 states (besides the Federal Capital Territory), each with an elected governor and a legislative assembly.

It is Africa's biggest oil exporter and has the largest natural gas reserves in the continent. Yet it ranks near the bottom of UNDP's Human Development Report, 2017, ranking 157 in 189 countries.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has enormous power and independence and is considered to be neutral and credible. Each state has a resident electoral commissioner, all appointed through a process of parliamentary ratification. When asked what his most important concerns were, INEC Chairman Mahmood Yakubu had mentioned security, fake news and hate speech, followed by 640 pending court cases and expenditure control.

REUTERS

Gaps in this poll

Despite the experience of two good elections of 2011 and 2015 and assurances given by the INEC, the management of elections was fraught with all kinds of flaws. First, there was the last-minute postponement of the poll by a week, just six hours before its commencement, because of the collapse of logistics. This created extreme anger across the nation apart from causing enormous economic loss (estimated at $10-25 billion). Then, despite the week's deferment, there were delays not only in the distribution of materials but also late arrival of polling staff, causing a late opening of polling stations. This in turn led to many procedures not being adhered to. Voting booths were often located too close to polling officials, polling agents and voters waiting to vote, potentially compromising the secrecy of the ballot.

The elections were also marred by sporadic incidents of violence before and on election day, besides destruction of voting materials, ballot-box snatching and bribing of voters. At least 39 people were killed in election-related violence. However, the death toll this time has been lower than in previous national elections.

Abrupt postponement, delays and chaos at polling stations and the violence, all contributed to the lowest ever turnout – 35.6%, down from 44% in 2015. In Lagos, there were only 1.1 million valid votes (just above 5% voted. Further, polling officials, security staff and other essential services personnel were unable to vote and were, therefore, deprived of their vote. There was also widespread failure of smart card readers as polling officials awaited technical assistance or replacements, compounding the problems.

Despite the complaints of 'militarisation', police presence was generally discreet and helpful to the electoral process. A coalition of more than 70 civic organisations monitored the elections, which enhanced the credibility of the elections.

Connecting with India

Nigeria is of great interest to India, being its biggest trading partner. Over 135 Indian companies have a footprint in Nigeria, including the State Bank of India, New India Assurance and Mecon in the public sector and Bharti Airtel, Tata, Bajaj, Birla, Kirloskar and Mahindra in the private sector. The number of Indians is relatively small – about 50,000. Though we have substantial economic interests, there are no political favourites. But as the world's largest democracy, India has great interest in the success of the largest democracy of Africa. While the election commissions of the two countries have regular interactions and many officials have visited the flagship institution, the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management, there is need for enhanced engagement.

S.Y. Quraishi is a former Chief Election Commissioner of India and the editor of 'The Great March of Democracy: Seven Decades of India's Elections'. He was a member of the Commonwealth Observer Group

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.

The confrontation

The initial euphoria created over the Balakot airstrikes evaporated in no time with the capture of an Indian pilot by Pakistan (Page 1, "IAF plane shot down, pilot taken captive by Pak. army", February 28). Though emotions are running high, there will not be any winners if the situation escalates into full-fledged war. Having made its intentions clear with its airstrikes, India should now attempt to make clear to the international community the pressing need for consensus on combating terrorism. So far it appears that world opinion is inclined favourably towards India, which should be capitalised. Despite its bravado, Pakistan may be eager to engage in talks with India. Reviving talks through backdoor channels could help ease the situation. A growing economy like India's should not put the clock back. Restraint and diplomacy should be the focus.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

Civilisational values

I hope opinion writers understand that it is because India is civilised that Pakistan exists (Editorial page, "Think like a civilisation", February 28). But given Pakistan's record of perfidy and being a terror agent, there is virtually no chance of it becoming a civilised nation. It appears to be in the hands of terror agents. Let us not prevent the Indian government from acting against Pakistan so as to save India from the dangerous consequences of Pakistan becoming a permanent hub of terror. Pakistan is not a danger for India alone but it also endangers the entire civilised world. India needs to act with the support of all like-minded nations.

M.V. GOPALAKRISHNAN,
Chennai

■ I think the writer has forgotten history. India has always been restrained in its responses and in adopting tactics that are moderate, but it is Pakistan that does not understand that war and violence will not solve any issue. There is no guarantee that even after Pulwama Pakistan will change. One can expect it to adopt the same old tactics: of asking for evidence and denying its involvement following terror. There are times when firm action is needed to correct others.

ARVIND KUMAR CHOUDHARY,
New Delhi

■ Pacifists would be well-advised to read world history, starting from the 20th century. Pakistan is waging a war of a "thousand cuts" against us, but do we still turn the other cheek, in the name of peace? The writer talks of civilisational values. But an examination of civilisations will show a history of wars, punctuated by spells of peace. George Washington's quote, "To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace", is worth remembering. No nation wants a war, least of all its soldiers. However, if a nation's territorial integrity or its citizens lives are under threat, retaliation in a manner deemed fit is an option.

RAVINDRA RAMARAO,
Bengaluru

■ Every sentence is sensible. Taking recourse to jingoism and drum beating will lead us nowhere. India is peace loving and should explore all avenues that will defuse the situation and result in a peaceful dialogue.

MOHAMMED IKRAMULLA,
Hyderabad

Dogs under check

It is heartening that the Chennai Corporation is getting serious about the stray dog situation (Chennai, February 27). My father had a narrow escape while walking home with a bag of food which a pack of starving, vicious stray dogs were after, and continued to go for him even after he threw it at them. He was saved by a bunch of college boys. He was almost 90 at the time, with neither the strength nor energy to run away or defend himself, and it could well have been fatal. In Navi Mumbai, I met a woman whose child had been killed by stray dogs in similar circumstances. I have watched a sea turtle die a slow, painful death, attacked by dogs. Those of us who were involved in the Ridley turtle nest collection project know how many nests are decimated by dogs on the beach. Smaller animals like blackbuck, and the young of many species, are also targets for stray dogs. Let's face it, it can't be much fun being a street dog, often starving and injured, and being chased away wherever you go. So more power to the Chennai Corporation. Let's do it for the wildlife, children, seniors, and the destitute who sleep on the streets and are often victims of attacks. And for the dogs themselves.

ZAI WHITAKER,
Vadanamelli, ECR, Tamil Nadu

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:
www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

A Sports page brief – "Man City retains League Cup" (Feb. 26, 2019) – erroneously described Kepa Arrizabalaga as the world's most expensive *player*. He is actually the most expensive *goalkeeper*.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail:readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

YES, NO, IT'S COMPLICATED

Will Priyanka Gandhi change the fortunes of the Congress?

YES

MANISHA PRIYAM
is an Associate Professor of educational policy at the National University of Educational Planning and Administration

Her connect with women and her experience in campaign management will help the party

I believe that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will make a positive difference to the fortunes of the Congress, albeit for reasons different from what the proponents of dynasty politics would like us to believe. Calculations of realpolitik are responsible for her having come to the forefront of the electoral arena. Until now, her role in politics was limited – at best a "fieldwork in-charge" of Rae Bareli and Amethi in Uttar Pradesh.

No pan-Indian parties/ leaders

For one, the Congress understands that the route to power is by taking Assembly elections seriously – there are no 'pan-Indian' national parties, nor are there leaders with such an appeal. The image of a pan-Indian party or leader is manufactured by political advertising done most effectively by active participation in election campaigns. And if victory comes by, then spending State budgets on advertising the leaders – especially their work in development and welfare. It is State politics that has been producing company-style CEOs in a democracy – Chandrababu Naidu was the first amongst Chief Ministers to have been anointed in this way. Nitish Kumar, Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Raman Singh have all successfully cultivated this image of *vikaswaadi* (pro-development) Chief Ministers.

Eastern U.P. is a cauldron of poverty and underdevelopment, awaiting its turn for roads, hospitals, electricity and other public services. Besides, women have emerged as an important demand group for developmental deliveries. It is in this context that Ms. Vadra's soft approach, connect with women, and prior experience of campaign management in this region will come to her aid. She can at least connect with poor voters, especially women, and build a constituency that demands delivery of public services. In the process, a Congress revival at the grassroots level can be a possibility somewhere in the future, if not in this round.

Politics over the years

However, this argument is open to the criticism whether the Congress elevated her for doing noble political deeds without expecting political fruits. Far from it – the Congress understands that its last round of State politics was played in the 1970s with Brahmin Chief Ministers like Kamalapati Tripathi, Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna, and Narayan Dutt Tiwari, and then in the 1980s with a combination of Rajput and Brahmin Chief Ministers such as Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Narayan Dutt Tiwari and Sripati Mishra. Thereafter, it has been the Mandal versus Kamandal theme, where power has circulated mainly between Yadavs and Dalits. With Yogi Adityanath becoming Chief Minister (he is known to have a Rajput lineage), it is a revival of the politics of the upper castes in U.P., this time in combination with dominant leaders from amongst the Backward Classes or in alliance with splinter formations of the Extremely Backward Classes. In an overt sort of way, it is this BJP move that gives Ms. Vadra the opportunity to begin discussions with important caste groups such as the Brahmins, and initiate issue-based discussions on reservations for the economically poor amongst the upper castes.

At the macro level, Ms. Vadra will be an equal to Congress president Rahul Gandhi in national campaigns. She will also help modify the 'Rahul versus Modi' pitch. Besides enthusing workers, she will lend an ear to workers and local politicians who have complaints against Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati – not all the anti-incumbency votes will go to the BJP. Meanwhile, her effort will be to bring a crop of *karyakartas* of the Congress on the streets, irrespective of who wins the battle in U.P. Times have changed since the 1970s, and the Congress has realised that the new script of post-Mandal politics holds opportunities in U.P. that Ms. Vadra could very well nurture.

NO

RAJAN PANDEY
is a freelance journalist and co-author of 'Battleground U.P.: Politics in the Land of Ram'

Her charisma is not enough. The party needs a strong organisational structure and cadre

It seems unlikely that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's 'formal' entry into politics would drastically improve the party's electoral fortunes in U.P. in the general election. In electoral politics, a combination of organisation, ground-level equations, caste/community dynamics, and charisma is needed for success, and the Congress seems to be lacking in all of these in U.P. except the last.

The 2014 election results

In the 2014 elections, out of the 80 Lok Sabha seats in U.P., the BJP won 71; its ally, the Apna Dal, won two; the SP won five; the Congress won two; and the BSP and RLD did not win any. However, the SP and BSP were in the second position in 65 seats, while their ally in the Mahagathbandhan, the RLD, was the runner-up in one seat. Thus, if we go by the past Lok Sabha results, the BJP-Apna Dal alliance will be the primary contestant in the whole of U.P. and will face the SP-BSP-RLD alliance as primary opponents in at least 71 seats. Other than winning two seats, the Congress was a runner-up in only six seats. This means it would be the primary opponent in only eight seats. In vote percentage terms, the BJP-Apna Dal got around 43% of the votes in 2014, the SP-BSP-RLD got 42.98%, while the Congress could get only 7.53%. In this scenario, while it's likely that the BJP-Apna Dal alliance and the SP-BSP-RLD alliance will be in a neck and neck contest, expecting the Congress to reach even the two-digit mark in the State would be overambitious.

Still, the Congress's electoral fortunes would have turned around for good had it made substantial progress on the organisation front and mobilised the support of new communities behind it. The party seems to be lacking on both counts. Its organisation has been in poor shape since the early 1990s and continues to have problems such as groupism and a lack of cadres. In contrast, the BJP, SP and BSP, and even the RLD in western U.P., can boast of a robust organisation and cadre. In terms of support of communities, the BJP alliance is influential among the upper castes and some sections of non-Yadav OBCs and non-Jatav Dalits, while the SP-BSP-RLD alliance has substantial support from the Yadavs, Jatavs, a section of the Jats, as well as Muslims.

Limited capability

Where does the Congress stand in this highly polarised scenario, and which are the communities that will be voting for it this time, just because of Ms. Vadra? In the absence of an organisational structure, cadre, programmes, and newer social sections rooting for it, the capability of the Congress to efficiently contest and micromanage these elections is extremely limited. That doesn't mean that the Congress's numbers would remain static; it may win three-four more seats. But that will depend more on local factors than the entry of Ms. Vadra. Hence, if the Congress wins in Kushinagar or Barabanki or Saharanpur, credit for it would go to former MP R.P.N. Singh or P.L. Punia or Imran Masood, who have considerable influence and committed supporters in their regions. The local electoral equation is also favourable to them.

In politics, charisma does work, but not without proper organisation and social engineering. Ms. Vadra may be able to revive the U.P. Congress in the long run, if she continues dedicatedly in politics, but that is surely going to take some time. It is not going to happen now.

IT'S COMPLICATED

AJAY GUDAVARTHY
teaches at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

She cannot bank on her family name and star status; she needs a narrative

Politics is a complex matrix of multiple variables and it is always difficult to predict which of them will make the final splash. Among them, one that stands out is the ability of a leader to gain the trust of the electorate, which in turn depends on what he or she stands for at a given point of time. Prime Minister Narendra Modi gained the trust of voters by articulating the political moment of his time by combining aggressive Hindutva with development that was along the line of the 'Gujarat model'. To this he added the image of being bold, having the ability to take risks, being honest, and having good intent. Today, Mr. Modi is being tested on the same lines. His vote bank perhaps still trusts his intent, but has started to doubt his abilities to manage the economy, create jobs and abate the agrarian crisis, among others. Voters are in a contemplative mood as to what to do with a person who is honest but incompetent.

Voters' memories

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has entered the fray a bit late, but the moot question is, what does she stand for? What is the narrative and can she correctly identify the moment and articulate it? In the facelessness of the neo-liberal reforms and their consequences, having a face to identify with is something that can be an entry point to gain the trust of the electorate, but it needs to speak to what the people want to listen to. Merely claiming 'Indira is back' is symptomatic of lazy thinking. Mrs. Gandhi is still remembered in the hinterlands and especially among the Dalits for the welfare policies she implemented. In a survey in which I was involved, some time back in Punjab, it was quite a surprise that in Ambedkar colonies, elderly Dalits spoke of Mrs. Gandhi with affection. They narrated stories of being given ration cards, housing and electricity. Ms. Vadra will be tested against such a memory, which could be a boon, but also a bane if she fails to articulate a welfare and pro-poor sensibility in her electoral agenda.

The need for a narrative

Ms. Vadra's entry has sent a panic wave in the BJP because of her appeal amongst the youth and first-time voters, as well as Brahmins, Muslims, and women. Mr. Modi captured the imagination of the aspirational youth in 2014. Ms. Vadra can upset this equation in a major way provided she has a narrative. With a persistent agrarian crisis and jobless growth, what substantial difference can she bring?

Criticism of the BJP

Mr. Modi filled the gap with jumlas and slogans. Perhaps, she cannot resort to any of these, but in that case, what meaningful agenda can she bring to the persistent structural crisis of the Indian economy? Rahul Gandhi entered politics at the bleakest moment for the Congress, and struggled to find a narrative. Mr. Gandhi today seems to have found not only a narrative but a new purpose in his virulent political criticism of the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. He is, perhaps, the only politician in India today who is creating a fresh narrative against what the RSS stands for. It is this new-found confidence that has made the BJP stand up and take notice.

Ms. Vadra today needs a script in order to make a significant difference. To assume that her family name and star status will see her through would be taking the electorate for granted.

SINGLE FILE

Small fish in a big pond

Small parties remain outsiders in their own State, but can be coalition partners at the Centre

ANDREW WYATT & C. MANIKANDAN

BIJOY GHOSH

Political parties in India operate in a federal system. They seek power at the local, State and national levels. Holding office at the State level is the primary goal of most parties. Yet, a succession of hung parliaments from 1989 to 2014 created the expectation that small parties, maybe with a single MP, might be vital for the governing coalition. Cabinet posts and/or other inducements encouraged political entrepreneurs to form parties, most of which remain small and did not grow into regional parties large enough to govern their own States. We define a small party as capable of winning a few seats in a State Assembly and occasionally in Parliament. Small parties do not have the heft to lead a State-level government and may lack opportunities to get a place in a State-level coalition government. Ironically, fragmented national legislatures give small parties more opportunities to participate in coalitions in Delhi. This national toehold helps many of them survive while they have little success in their own States. For example, the Lok Janshakti Party found national opportunities relatively easily but got a place in the Bihar Cabinet only recently.

In Tamil Nadu, the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) responded to federal opportunities, while being excluded from government in its home State. Outside of the State government, the PMK finds it difficult to establish distinctive positions, apart from its identity politics. On the other hand, it tried to leverage national opportunities for its benefit at the State level. Projects were funded in favoured constituencies and MPs lobbied in Delhi for benefits at the State level. Anbumani Ramadoss used his ministerial experience to enhance his image at the State level, making it the centrepiece of his 2016 Assembly election campaign. A place in Parliament confers prestige on small parties and a national stage on which to perform. Patronage resources can be extracted from the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme and coalition allies. The PMK enters the NDA in 2019 with a promise from the Centre of a new rail connection between Morappur and Dharmapuri.

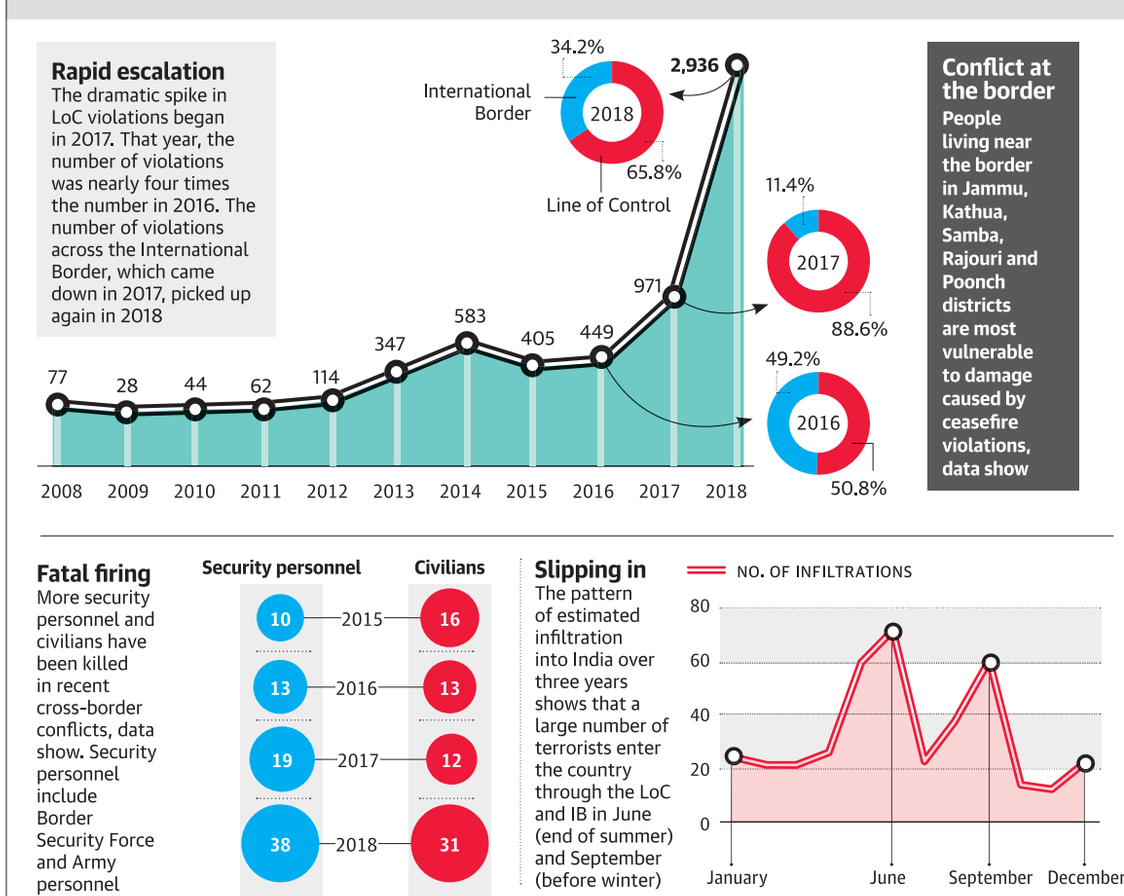
Maurice Duverger famously argued that small parties, without geographically concentrated support, cannot win in a plurality voting system such as India's. Voters will turn away from small parties that lose. For their part, small parties are likely to die out or seek mergers with larger parties. The working of India's federal political system gives small parties opportunities to join alliances. Small parties might 'lose' by failing to join governments in their home State, but they can claim to 'win' when they join a national coalition government. Thus, they remain outsiders in their own State, but can be a coalition partner at the Centre. With the national outcome uncertain in May 2019, small parties have been able to bargain for seats in Lok Sabha with renewed vigour. Soon, we shall see if they hold the balance of power.

Andrew Wyatt teaches politics at the University of Bristol, and C. Manikandan is an independent scholar

DATA POINT

Crossing the line

The number of ceasefire violations by Pakistan across the Line of Control in 2018 was six times higher than what it was in 2015. In 2018, there were nearly 3,000 violations. The number of security personnel and civilians killed as a result also escalated.
By **Varun B. Krishnan**



Source: Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha Q&A, SATP

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 1, 1969

Deficit finance of Rs. 250 crores

The Union Budget for 1969-70, presented to the Lok Sabha today [February 28, New Delhi] by Mr. Morarji Desai, envisages a deficit of the order of Rs. 250 crores. Mr. Desai said the revenue receipts for the current year (1968-69) were Rs. 2,749 crores, Rs. 11 crores less than the estimated Rs. 2,760 crores. Expenditure was also higher by Rs. 116 crores, at Rs. 2,629 crores. For the Budget year 1969-70, Mr. Desai estimated the revenues at current rates of taxation at Rs. 2,900 crores. Mr. Desai said the total gross revenue of the Centre including additional taxation in 1969-70 would be Rs. 3,519 crores of which Rs. 519 crores would accrue to the States. He assumed credit for a higher level of internal borrowing - Rs. 106 crores in 1969-70 against Rs. 81 crores in 1968-69 - and external borrowings Rs. 691 crores against Rs. 685 crores in 1968-69. Of the fresh tax yield the Centre's share would be Rs 100 crores - Rs 80 crores from excise, Rs. 11 crores from direct taxes and Rs. 9 crores from customs. The States would get Rs. 27 crores as their share. The deficit for the current year is Rs. 30 crores less than the original estimate of Rs. 290 crores. The revenue estimates for 1969-70, Mr. Desai said, showed an increase of Rs. 151 crores, at the existing taxation level.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 1, 1919.

Murder of Police Officer.

Further details are to hand of the outrage on the lives of a Reserve Police Searching Party at Mavoothanpatti, near Ammayanayakanur Railway Station in the District of Madura, the news of which I telegraphed to you this morning [February 28]. For over a year and a half, I am told there have been reported a series of cases of thefts of bags of rice, chillies or other food-stuffs from running goods trains during nights between stations Kodaikanal Road and Ambaturai: and the attempts made on the part of the Railway Police on various occasions to apprehend the criminals and to recover the property lost had been fruitless. Even quite recently a few days ago a similar theft of four or five gunny bags of chillies had occurred and the Railway Police have been taken to task for their want of sufficient vigilance.

CONCEPTUAL

Differential reproduction

BIOLOGY

This refers to the difference in the reproductive success rate of various individual members or groups within a species. Differential reproduction could be due to a number of reasons including the specific genetic make-up of individuals or groups which might make some of them better suited for the purpose of reproduction when compared to others. Characteristics like height, intelligence, disease resistance, etc. are some examples of factors that could explain the differential reproductive success of different members within a species. Reproductive success is considered an important determinant of groups that are favoured by the process of natural selection.

MORE ON THE WEB

Watch: How the famous 'kadalai urundai' is made at Kariyapatti near Madurai

http://bit.ly/kadalaiurundai

The Tribune
ESTABLISHED IN 1881

Striking a discordant note

Stop politics over issues of national security

THE 'ceasefire' between the NDA government and the opposition parties in the wake of the Pulwama attack has proved to be short-lived. Both camps are well and truly back in the election mode, taking swipes at each other and resorting to political grandstanding. On Wednesday, 21 parties — including the Congress, Trinamool Congress, TDP, BSP and Left outfits — expressed resentment over the 'blatant politicisation' of the sacrifices of the armed forces. They stopped short of naming the ruling party (BJP), but complained that the Prime Minister had not yet convened an all-party meeting to discuss the prevailing security situation.

A day later, PM Narendra Modi hit back at his detractors during a nationwide interaction with BJP workers via videoconferencing. He alleged that some selfish people disliked a strong government, while yet again dismissing the proposed 'mahagathbandhan' of opposition parties as 'mahamilavat'. Earlier in the week, Modi had targeted the Gandhi family during the inauguration of the National War Memorial, accusing previous Congress governments of forsaking national interests and giving priority to the family instead of the country.

The PM's assertion soon after the Balakot airstrike that the country was in safe hands and he would never let it down was perceived as an attempt to personalise a military success. It's regrettable that both the NDA and the Opposition are goading each other into making political, over-the-top statements. The worst instance is BS Yeddyurappa's statement on the BJP's electoral advantage due to the airstrike. Even though the General Election is fast approaching, this is not the right topic for our leaders to indulge in a slugfest. Such discord will give the neighbour an opportunity to question the BJP-led government's intentions and play the 'victim' card to the hilt. The edge gained by India courtesy the airstrike and the diplomatic onslaught should not be frittered away. The defence forces, which are in a state of high alert, can certainly do without the distraction caused by political bravado. Unity in adversity is the need of the hour. At stake right now is the nation's security, which must not be compromised at any cost. The electoral battle can be fought another day.

Haryana chokes itself

Land amendment Bill will hit its green cover hard

HARYANA has played out the old, old dodge. With a contemptuous disregard for civil society's apprehensions and serious reservations from the Opposition benches, the Haryana Assembly has given the nod to the Punjab Land Preservation (Haryana Amendment) Bill, 2019. It has been introduced retrospectively from November 1, 1966, when the state came into being. Whatever may be thought of the soundness or otherwise of the move, it is perfectly certain which section will gain optimally from it: the builders' lobby. The next segment that will feel compelled to extract its pound of flesh is the political class. Elections and funds are compulsive bedfellows.

The decision, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar expressly asserted, was necessitated by the state's will to strike a balance between 'development' and 'environment', as farm land and development plans were under the PLPA. About 1,500 building licences had been granted and if the Supreme Court were to take action, the ramifications would be markedly huge. Hence the rush, a concerned CM inferred. And so, it has been decided — arbitrarily — to open several areas covered by the Aravallis in Gurugram and Faridabad to real estate. About 60,000 acre of forests will be up for grabs. Civil society need not be alarmed, for the state Forest Minister has reassured that it is in 'public interest', only the public doesn't know. Chiefly whose interest will be served is anybody's guess.

Haryana has an abysmal forest cover of 3.59 per cent, the lowest in the country. It can't sacrifice any more of its forests at the altar of development. There will be grave consequences for unleashing concretisation on the state, which is an irreversible process. The plunder of its ecology will be irredeemable. Already, air pollution has come up as a major challenge in New Delhi and the NCR. There is not the smallest hesitation in saying who will bear the brunt of this recklessness and be subjected to the repercussions: the people of the state. What the short-sighted state has wished upon itself is self-combustion.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Older men declare war. But it is the youth that must fight and die. — **Herbert Hoover**

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 1919

The Late Amir and Cow-Killing.

IN our obituary notice of the late Amir we referred to the fact that the Amir had, during his visit to India 12 years ago, appealed to his co-religionists in India to abstain from cow killing in connection with the celebration of *Bakrid*. It is interesting to recall the words of his late Majesty:—"If God be willing we hope to be at Delhi on *Id-i qurban* this year. It is our religious duty to perform sacrifice on that day. Though cows in common with other animals are sacrificed, our religion does not make it obligatory upon us to sacrifice cows. On the contrary we may sacrifice camels, goats, etc, instead. We intend not to sacrifice cows on this occasion in consideration of the feelings of the Hindus of India in general and of Delhi in particular. Our visit to India should be an occasion of joy to Hindus and Mussalmans alike." On another occasion he was told that the Mussalmans of a certain city intended to sacrifice a hundred cows on the occasion of *Id* in honour of his visit. He replied that they should not sacrifice one single cow. Here is an instance of respect for the religious feelings of one's fellowmen which ought to be an example not merely to the Amir's co-religionists.

India Railway Rates.

MR. S.C. Ghose, Special Officer with the Railway Board, has prepared a useful monograph on Indian railway rates issued by the Government in a bulky volume of nearly 600 pages with an exhaustive index and appendices. Mr. Ghose states that the idea of the monograph originated with the Hon'ble Sir Robert Gullan, late President of the railway Board, and it was taken up in July 1917. It is a statement of facts relating to the history, policy and the making of railway rates, a study of which enables one to suggest in what way improvements may be made.

The chance India took

Surgical strikes, by air or land, are designed to convey a message of intent

LT GEN SYED ATA HASNAIN (RETD)
FORMER GOC, 15 CORPS, KASHMIR

HIGH COSTS: Escalation is a big challenge and must remain under control.

> The moment the Indian operation was completed, a Pakistani response of some kind was inevitable.

IN assessing an ongoing military situation, things can change in a matter of minutes. That is why it is good to limit assessment to only trends and actions already taken. India has already responded to the Pulwama outrage by selecting one option from the large spectrum before it. Each such option had its pros and cons. The option at the high end was a full-scale mobilisation of all its military resources and readiness to go to war without restraint, just as it had done in 2001 in the wake of the Jaish attack on Parliament. Other options included surface-based surgical strike along the LoC, a repetition of the 2016 operation. However, the element of surprise would not have been afforded due to high predictability of a repeat.

Considering proportionality as an essential element of the concept of response, a potential offensive operation across the LoC to capture a couple of Pakistani posts may have hit a higher than desired level of escalation, right at the outset. All this is being explained to highlight the dilemma existing before the highest leadership in India. It is not a simple decision of only activating the military domain. The diplomatic aspects and the overall state of relations with the international community, and in particular key players, is always an essential aspect. The risk to the nation involved in carrying out a military response has to be thoroughly analysed and the flanks and rear secured as part of the planning. Many times, the diplomatic and military domains complement each other, one or the other taking a higher level of priority at any point of time.

The final choice of launching the IAF in a surgical strike against the JeM facilities at Balakot was the most apt. The quantum of aircraft employed, along with the munitions, were the right package for such an operation. There are many reasons for this belief. First, it was sufficiently lethal and in enough depth to convey India's intent of searching for and striking terrorist leaders anywhere in Pakistan. The lethality aspect also carried an inbuilt assurance of accuracy as the munitions were all state of the art. The aspect of proportionality conveyed that India was calibrating and not escalating a war-like situation, by targeting only terrorist-related infrastructure. Since India had already succeeded in achieving certain traction with the international community, any overkill in choice of objective or method of operation could prove counterproductive. That was adequately built into the selected option. There was the option of targeting the more visible high-profile JeM facility at Bahawalpur, just 8 km from Pakistan army's 31 Corps. However, it may have been assessed to have a more effective air defence cover due to the proximity to the corps HQ and was probably discarded as a potential objective.

Potentially losing an aircraft in the strike was definitely a risk and would convey a very negative message about IAF capability. The IAF overcame that problem quite professionally through some deception and suitable selection of launching airfields and routing. One aspect that the public by and large has not understood is that such a strike, as also the surgical strike of 2016, was never intended to be actions to cause deterrence. In hybrid war conditions, achieving deterrence is extremely difficult as there is a range of domains which can be employed for response even if the classic military domain is closed. These surgical strikes, by air or on surface, are essentially designed to convey a message of intent and political will to calibrate higher than usual. A Pakistani response to the Indian surgical air strike could not be deterred and India was aware of it. The moment the Indian operation was completed, a Pakistani response of some kind was inevitable. Pakistan, too, had its options and would have done a risk analysis, especially in view of its precarious economic condition, which in no way gives it the option of an all-out war. It found solace in doing a demonstration of an intrusion into the Indian air space near the LoC and was promptly engaged by a combat air patrol (CAP) comprising two Indian MiG-21 aircraft. Pakistan lost one aircraft (reported as an F-16) while an Indian MiG-21 was shot down and its pilot captured by Pakistan.

Is this enough provocation to initiate higher escalation? India again has many options, but will probably prefer to bide its time and await more conciliatory gestures by the Pakistan leadership. PM Imran Khan addressed the nation and a change of attitude appeared evident. He is aware that his nation has lost international support for the sake of a few terrorists, his military counts as strategic assets. The immediate release of the pilot in Pakistani custody may help mollify Indian opinion but meaningless gestures will not cut ice.

Most analysts agree that it is international pressure on Pakistan which will work the fastest and most effectively. Given that, India may not wish to escalate the situation and continue to provide the international community sufficient traction to pressure Pakistan. However, also given the history of sponsored terrorist acts, this may just about be the last time that India may follow such a course of action. Hereafter, options much higher in escalation dynamics would become the order of the day.

The political connect is something on which little is being written today because it's the professional military and diplomatic sphere which is in focus. However, there is no taking away credit from the decision-making process adopted by the political leadership in India. Besides all other risks, it was also a political risk. A setback to the IAF in the conduct of aerial strike could have been disastrous for the ruling dispensation. However, further risk will continue as the crisis is still on. Escalation remains the major challenge. It must remain firmly under control while considering all risk.

When radio was window to world

H KISHIE SINGH

WORLD Radio Day recently reminded me of my first addiction in life. It is still with me and the easy access to music, news and stories gives me my daily fix.

I was very young when the first radio came into our home. It was a large wooden box, highly polished; the left half housed the speaker, the right half had a semi-circular glass panel with numbers written on it and knobs below which worked the radio. The top right hand corner had an electric eye which turned green when the radio was ready to receive. On the top left was a picture of a hand cranked gramophone with a large megaphone. A dog sat in front of the megaphone listening to the music. This was the logo of His Masters Voice, HMV.

My father used to listen to the morning news. The war was still on in Europe and he wanted the latest updates. He would switch on the radio before 8 am for the radio to warm up.

As the green light came on, the radio squeaked, squelched and shrieked fuelling my excitement. The news was in English, I understood only a smidgen! I sat there just staring at this magical contraption.

It was in those days, my formative years, that the radio entered my subconscious. It has been a permanent resident since.

Later, I polished my English listening to the English news by Melville D'Mello and Roshan Menon. *Desh Ki Aawaaz,* Devkinandan Pandey taught me Hindi. 'A Date with You' with Primila Premchand and her signature tune — Glen Miller's 'In the Mood' — was my introduction to jazz. That addiction, or is it a love affair, is still very much with me.

Ameen Sayani's *Binaca Geet Mala* still resonates in my head, as does *Binaca Hit Parade* from Radio Ceylon.

Then came the great leap forward, the transistor. My first transistor radio was the size of a pocketbook. I loved it! On my first posting abroad, I took it with me to Bangkok, only to find that the second Japanese invasion was a fait accompli! Sony, Akai, Panasonic reigned supreme.

I had to buy a radio with an FM station. Bangkok was the first city on the Asian mainland to have television. American movies had a Thai soundtrack which the expats did not understand. No problem, the original soundtrack was on an FM station!

Years later in Montreal, I enrolled for a mass communication course in a local college. We had a course in Radio Communications. The college had a community radio broadcasting studio. Students were allowed to set up their own radio stations, their own call signs.

I set up a radio station called 'AIR'. My call sign — '*This is AIR, All India Railway Station! Aap Samachar me English suno ge, Hindi, French, Bangla, Punjabi, Aarbi...!*'

And the music in the background? 'In the Mood' by Glen Miller!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hot rhetoric won't help

Refer to the editorial 'Time for diplomacy' (Feb 28); let the political class in India and Pakistan be sensible enough to deal with the present delicate situation with maturity by talking with each other. The hot rhetoric from either side will only lead to a disastrous point of no return. One should not try to drink the glass of nuclear arrogance that will eliminate life. Shamefully, our leaders are trying to gain favour of the masses by politicising the martyrdom of our soldiers for votes.

RK KAPOOR, CHANDIGARH

War not an option

Apropos the editorial 'Exercise restraint' (Feb 28), peace, if not ruthlessly chased, will reduce humans to pieces. The US and North Korea, two nuclear States, ultimately realised, after exchange of threats and bravado postures, what John F Kennedy said, 'We have the power to make this the best generation of mankind in the history of the world—or to make it the last.' In this conciliatory approach, much of the credit goes to Trump, being the head of the mightiest nation. We should take a lesson from this. A similar situation exists between India and Pakistan. We need to understand the consequences of war.

BM SINGH, AMRITSAR

Not their personal war

Apropos 'Exercise restraint' (Feb 28), the Indian pilot in Pakistan's custody must be treated humanely and returned to India. The Pakistan army has already violated International Humanitarian Law and Geneva Convention after displaying disturbing photographs of the injured pilot on social media. Such an atrocious conduct should be condemned. One must remember that soldiers engaged in retaliation or a war do not fight a personal war.

TUSHAR ANAND, PATNA

Walk the middle path

Our scriptures counsel us neither to be vociferously overjoyed during opulence nor too morose in adversity ('Perfect preemptive strike', Feb 27). Moderation in actions and feelings is essential. Our government should avoid complacency and triumphalism and should instead devote itself earnestly to contain Pakistan's adventurism. Foul utterances only reflect unhealthy demeanour on the part of a loose talker.

KL NOATAY, BY MAIL

Don't keep us guessing

On day one, in a surprise air attack, IAF jets crushed the JeM training camp in Pakistan. The operation lasted 21 minutes. On day two, air strikes by the IAF continued and around noon, the Pakistan media announced the shooting down of an Indian aircraft. Pakistan claimed that it had captured a Wing Commander and a second pilot, who was injured, had been hospitalised. Surprisingly, the Indian Government kept silent on the information and it was only in the evening that it admitted that one MiG-21 pilot was missing in action. The family of the pilot and the public was kept in the dark for about six hours. People were scanning media channels to ascertain facts. Men in uniform are prepared to lay down their lives for protecting the motherland. But it is imperative on the government to spell out the truth immediately, removing the suspense over any such news.

WG CDR J S BHALLA (RETD), BY MAIL

Why India is different!

The early dawn cross-border attack, characterised as 'preemptive, non-military action' against terror, by the IAF was planned so meticulously that during execution no casualty of any civilian or that of Pakistan's military occurred. But the destruction of the targeted terrorist camps was ensured. Sadly, this is unlike Pakistan's politically-backed, Army's planned attacks executed by their terrorists against us that cause casualties to our armed forces and civilians alike. This difference makes our country 'mahaan'. A befitting reply to the enemy, and a salute to our martyrs.

KK SOOD, NANGAL

Railway food fare

The website for passenger information regarding train spot, seat availability, confirmation by entering PNR, schedule and fare is quite helpful, as brought out in the editorial 'Food in trains' (Feb 27). However, one can book only a single-journey ticket on IRCTC site. A multi-train journey can have combined ticket and offer the benefit of the total kilometre fare. In most trains, the food served is unhygienic. 'Travelkhana' has started service in running trains and are looting passengers by charging Rs 200 per thali as against Rs 130 by the IRCTC. This needs to be discouraged.

OP GARG, PATIALA

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

https://t.me/SSC4Exam

PoWs must be treated with respect, dignity

MAJOR RK BALI (RETD)
VETERAN OF 1962, 1965 AND 1971 WARS

The way a country's armed forces treat enemy soldiers speaks volumes about the ethos and traditions upheld by them. It is the responsibility of every soldier to honour and respect the men in uniform irrespective of the army and the country they belong to.

VIDEOS of an IAF pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, being roughed up and questioned in Pakistan have turned the spotlight on the treatment of soldiers captured in the enemy territory during a military confrontation. In a time when social media moulds public sentiment, it is easy for people to witness the events live, whether it is a terrorist attack or the way a soldier is being treated behind enemy lines.

It is heart-rending and regretful to see a valiant soldier not being accorded respect and dignity. The way a country's armed forces treat enemy soldiers speaks volumes about the ethos and traditions upheld by them. Varthaman's videos and TV coverage took me about 54 years back to another conflict and a prisoner of war (PoW), who surely has a different story to tell than the IAF pilot.

It was 1965, and the place was Rann of Kutch, the scene of the India-Pakistan war. I was a 27-year-old Major from 2nd Battalion of the Sikh Light Infantry in charge of the Vigokot and Sardar Post on the India-Pakistan border. With the confrontation between the two neighbours escalating into a full-fledged war, I and my men had the responsibility of taking on the enemy soldiers head on. While there were several direct encounters, too, which we repulsed effectively, the enemy would try to enter our territory stealthily. We had a minefield around our post to sabotage any such intrusion.

On the night of June 16, a Pakistani patrol led by Major Khurch Khan Afridi got trapped in our minefield, which had deadly bouncing mines. He and his two soldiers were seriously wounded. But as they were armed, we couldn't risk approaching them directly. So, as a few of my soldiers diverted their attention, I manoeuvred through the minefield to reach the trio. I was followed by my *sahayak*-cum-runner, Kashmira Singh, and wireless operator Amrik Singh. Both followed my marked footsteps to avoid stepping on a landmine, as we neither had any map of the minefield nor any mine lane. We surprised Major Afridi from the rear flank, and disarmed him of the loaded light machine gun (LMG), which he had been aiming at my troops. We disarmed him of his weapons, including a pistol and some grenades. I still remember the interesting conversation with him in the minefield.

Me: Who the hell are you?
Afridi: I am Major Khurch Khan Afridi.
Me: What are you doing here?
Afridi: I came to provoke you.
Me: I am afraid it did not happen.

Given that all three Pakistanis were disarmed and wounded, it was my duty to show compassion towards the PoWs. I left my water bottle with them and returned through the live minefield once again to get medical help for them. The medical officer bravely volunteered to accompany us. We again reached the wounded enemy soldiers. The medical officer examined them and administered first aid. He recommended immediate evacuation for all three as the condition of two of them was serious and warranted immediate medical treatment.

We first picked up Major Afridi and brought him to the MI (medical inspection) room. After leaving the officer with the doctor, I and my *sahayak* went through the minefield for the third time to pick up the remaining two wounded PoWs. By that time, one of the soldiers had succumbed to his injuries. We picked up the Naik, but he didn't make it to the MI room and died on the way. All three of us had tears in our eyes on failing to save the man. Considering the risk we took to save them, we lamented that he did not live to enjoy his freedom.

According to the doctor's advice, Major Afridi had to be evacuated to a hospital to be treated by a specialist. A helicopter was required. My position was at a lower level and was within the range of Pakistani machine guns. Therefore, I requested the enemy commander to not fire on the chopper that was going to evacuate their fellow officer. He assured me that they would honour my request. The Pakistani Major was evacuated by helicopter and sent to Pune Command Hospital. When the Southern Army Commander, Lt Gen Moti Sagar, visited him in the hospital, Major Afridi requested him to convey his thanks to me for saving his life at great personal risk.

After the ceasefire, when we were busy clearing the mines at my post, Lt Gen Moti Sagar paid a surprise visit. He greeted me with a smile and hugged me, and conveyed Major Afridi's message. Having tea in a field cup with the General that day was an honour equivalent to a gallantry medal for me as it showed that I had upheld the glorious tradition of our Army of giving full honour to a PoW. I hope that our vengeful neighbour will treat our air warrior with respect and ensure that he returns safely as it is the responsibility of every soldier to honour and respect the uniform and the men in uniform irrespective of the army and the country they belong to.

EXPECTATION: Hopefully, Pakistan will walk the talk on the release and safe return of Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman.

All is not well on the economic front

JAYSHREE SENGUPTA
SENIOR FELLOW, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

The moderation in economic activity in India has manifested itself in lower air passenger traffic, low vehicle sales, reduced production of capital goods and deceleration of industrial growth. Foreign investors will wait for the outcome of the General Election before making fresh commitments.

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi declared recently in South Korea that the fundamentals of India's economy were sound. That's true, but ignoring certain troubling signs for the economy may not be the right path for the government at this juncture. Globally, there are a number of stressed economies today; India, too, seems to be caught in a bind over some important issues. India may be seen as chugging along at a relatively high rate of growth of around 7 per cent, but looking at some core economic fundamentals, there is a need for immediate attention. With the elections approaching, the NDA government will, of course, claim credit for the sustained high economic growth over the past five years, but it needs to take action to avert the impending problems.

Globally, the US economy is slowing down. Most importantly, China is showing signs of an intractable slowdown which will affect all, including India, because of its size and importance in the global economy. Germany, Italy and Britain are also showing signs of slower GDP growth.

In India, agriculture remains stressed as food inflation stays low; as a result, the earnings of farmers are smaller than before. The promised doubling of farm income is a distant dream. Farmers generate demand for industrial goods. Their requirement for two-wheelers, mobile phones, agricultural machinery, consumer goods and gold is important for resuscitating industrial growth.

Low demand has remained a problem for the economy and the government has rightly reduced interest rates by 0.25 per cent to 6.25 per cent on the grounds that the rate of inflation has remained low over an extended period. It will act as a stimulus that the economy needs, especially in boosting private investment. A low level of private investment is responsible for the slowdown in industrial growth.

The government has offered an income of Rs 6,000 per year to farmers in the interim Budget. However small it may be, people in the villages would welcome it because farmers suffer from the 'money illusion'. Cash in hand makes them feel richer and buy more goods.

Apart from agriculture, India Inc is not doing well. *Business Standard* reported that the declared corporate results had been unusually poor. The third quarter (Q3) profit results for the current financial year show a pattern of slowdown being experienced by other countries, marked by falling margins. In India, the moderation in economic activity manifested itself in lower air passenger traffic, low vehicle sales, smaller capital goods' production and, in general, deceleration of industrial growth. IIP (Index of Industrial Production) growth and export growth have both been lower than before recently. Export growth is likely to face hurdles because according to a recent report by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), international trade has been shrinking mainly due to the trade disputes between the US and China. India is also likely to face problems in its pharmaceutical exports to the US as the latter is preparing to impose various barriers on its trade with India.

In the corporate sector, the combined net profit of 2,338 companies was down by 28 per cent year-on-year compared to Q3 in FY2018. The combined net profits of 2,005 companies (excluding gas and non-banking finance companies) were down by 39.7 per cent to Rs 47,500 crore, which is the worst performance in the past three years. Many famous names such as Tata Motors, Vodafone Idea, Punj Lloyd and Adani Power suffered losses because of slow growth of revenue compared to expenditure.

Fortunately, the service sector has remained buoyant and the IT industry clocked reasonable net profits of 6.7 per cent. Globally, India is competing with IT companies from other countries in markets abroad. The depreciation of the rupee has cut into their margins.

The banking and finance sector remained under duress, though there has been recovery; profits of banks in the last quarter were Rs 900 crore. But many public sector banks posted net losses. Since China's slowdown, there has been a downswing in commodity prices as its demand for metals and other raw material has fallen. Hence, our metal and mining industries may not do well in future. Rise in crude oil prices is also an imminent threat to India's current account deficit, which may widen if imports of oil become costlier.

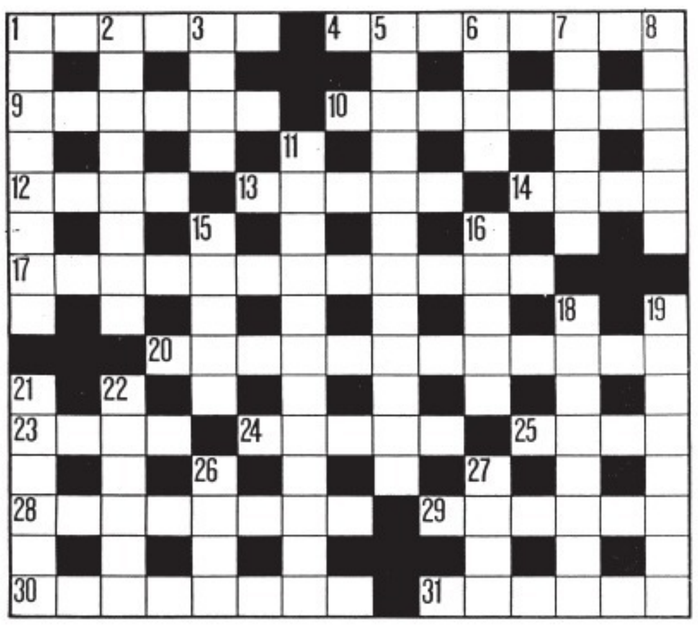
On the fiscal front, the offer by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to the government of its surplus funds of Rs 28,000 crore has been a welcome boost to bringing about macroeconomic stability in the economy as the money will help in bridging the gap in the fiscal deficit target of 3.4 per cent of the GDP, which the government could not have met otherwise, especially with bleak prospects of a big GST revenue collection. Meeting the fiscal deficit target will help India retain a good rating by the international credit rating agencies. It will help India raise capital in the international capital markets to bridge the infrastructural gap vis-a-vis China. Poor infrastructure makes us a third-world country.

Foreign investors will wait and watch for the election outcome before making fresh commitments. The FDI (foreign direct investment) flows have already decreased as some FDI has been put on hold. A stable government after the Lok Sabha elections is important for the economy. An assurance of reformist policies by the new government will help investors make up their minds.

Rising government expenditure has played a key role in recent times to keep the economy rolling. The elections will witness a substantial rise in government expenditure, which may further boost demand.

CHALLENGE: Meeting the fiscal deficit target will help India retain a good ranking by the international credit rating agencies.

QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Largest Mediterranean island (6)
4 Violet-blue gemstone (8)
9 Elaborately decorated (6)
10 A prehistoric period (5,3)
12 A cooking fat (4)
13 Hushed (5)
14 Depressed (4)
17 Retract what was said (3,4,5)
20 Contentment (12)
23 Prevalent (4)
24 Light meal (5)
25 Doglike predatory animal (4)
28 Abusive harangue (8)
29 Fondle (6)
30 Put at risk (8)
31 Ghost (6)

DOWN
1 Take responsibility for (8)
2 Deeply sorry (8)
3 Much (4)
5 Unimaginative (6-2-4)
6 Melody (4)
7 Annual (6)
8 Wobble (6)
11 Open to suspicion (12)
15 Constantly available (2,3)
16 Decree (5)
18 Breach of the peace (8)
19 Really (2,6)
21 A card game (6)
22 Frightened (6)
26 Southwest Asian country (4)
27 Dull heavy blow (4)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Clasp, 4 Politic, 8 Owl, 9 Orang-utan, 10 Digress, 11 Tabby, 13 Return, 15 Engulf, 18 Egret, 19 Empower, 21 Bald eagle, 23 Age, 24 Wrestle, 25 Elect.
Down: 1 Chowder, 2 Alligator, 3 Prone, 4 Praise, 5 Lighten, 6 Tot, 7 Canny, 12 Blue whale, 14 Retreat, 16 Ferment, 17 Meagre, 18 Elbow, 20 Piece, 22 Lee.

SU DO KU

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

EASY

CALENDAR

MARCH 1, 2019 FRIDAY

- Vikrami Samvat 2075
- Shaka Samvat 1940
- Phalgun Shaka 10
- Phalgun Parvishte 17
- Hijari 1440
- Krishan Paksh Tithi 10, up to 8.40 am
- Sidhi Yoga up to 10:42 am
- Purvashadha Nakshatra up to 5:55 am
- Moon in Sagittarius sign

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

FORECAST

SUNSET: FRIDAY 18:20 HRS
SUNRISE: SATURDAY 06:49 HRS

Sunny | Partly Cloudy | Cloudy | Rainy | Foggy

CITY	MAX	MIN
Chandigarh	23	06
New Delhi	23	07
PUNJAB		
Amritsar	21	08
Bathinda	23	06
Jalandhar	21	07
Ludhiana	22	07
HARYANA		
Bhiwani	23	09
Hisar	23	07
Sirsa	23	07
HIMACHAL PRADESH		
Dharamsala	15	03
Manali	10	–01
Shimla	14	02
JAMMU & KASHMIR		
Jammu	21	11
Leh	01	–10
Srinagar	10	01
UTTARAKHAND		
Dehradun	22	06
Mussoorie	08	–02

TEMPERATURE IN °C

https://t.me/SSC4Exam

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

MAN IS THE ONLY ANIMAL THAT LAUGHS AND HAS A STATE LEGISLATURE.

— SAMUEL BUTLER

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

GOOD NEWS BUT

With relief, a nation waits for Wing Commander Abhinandan. But Pakistan will need to do a lot more

PRIME MINISTER IMRAN Khan's announcement in Parliament, that Pakistan had decided to release Wing Commander Abhinandan, captured when he landed in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir after ejecting from his MiG-21 Bison that had taken a hit from Pakistan Air Force planes, has lifted a cloud of anxiety. Pakistan has acted in accordance with the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, to which it is a signatory. India and Pakistan have an informal understanding for returning security personnel who have crossed over into each other's territory. In this instance, however, given the context of the heightened tensions and war-like atmosphere in which it is taking place, the IAF pilot's release is even more welcome.

Khan said the decision was made as a "peace gesture" toward India. Certainly, it should mark the beginning of the de-escalation process between the two neighbours, after India's paradigm-changing aerial strike in Balakot, and the demonstration by Pakistan the very next day that it would not hesitate to rush to the brink. As nuclear powers, both countries know well the risks inherent in escalation — the language used by both sides has mirrored that in varying degree. India called its strike a "pre-emptive", "non-military" operation aimed at a terror training camp. Pakistan could have chosen not to retaliate, but when it did, it said it targeted "non-military" targets to demonstrate its "right, will and capability for self defence". Now, Pakistan's decision to release the IAF pilot is a timely opportunity to turn the page on the last two days and begin the process of finding a way forward. US President Donald Trump's statement earlier that "decent news" would come in from India and Pakistan shows what happens in the region doesn't stay in the region — it is a worry for the world.

The storm has, hopefully, passed. But the issues that brought the two countries to this edge remain. Unless these are addressed, it will be difficult to strike normalcy. Pakistan has contested India's assertion that its jets hit a Jaish-e-Mohammad training camp in Balakot. But it cannot deny that the JeM and its leadership are present in Pakistan, and that the organisation runs seminaries and training camps that churn out jihadi cadres, with the stated goal of carrying out terrorist attacks in Kashmir and in India. So does the Lashkar-e-Taiba. If Imran Khan genuinely believes that terrorism has hurt Pakistan, he should pay attention to this "infrastructure of terrorism", as the world now describes it. His reiteration of the offer to talk with PM Narendra Modi would be seen to be meaningful if he and the Pakistan Army show that they can switch off support to these terrorist groups. Until then, building trust between the two countries will remain a tough task that can be derailed by the next provocation.

FOREST RIGHTS, WRONGS

SC does well to stay its order evicting forest-dwellers. States must ensure due process is followed in implementing FRA

ON THURSDAY, THE Supreme Court put on hold its recent order asking states to evict forest-dwellers whose claims on land had been rejected under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. The court's decision to review its verdict of February 13, which would have displaced more than a million people from their homes in the forests, is welcome. The stay order comes in response to a review petition filed by the Centre and the Gujarat government. Showing a welcome inclination to address the concerns of activists, wildlife scientists and representatives of political parties, the SC acknowledged the need to ask whether due processes were followed by gram sabhas and state authorities before the claims for forest rights were rejected. It will now take up the matter on July 10.

In several instances in the past three years — including the triple talaq and privacy cases — the apex court has interpreted the law creatively to meet the objectives of social justice and uphold constitutional rights. The FRA, too, calls out for similar jurisprudence. The Act recognises that tribal and other traditional forest-dwelling communities would be hard put to provide documentary evidence for their claims. Rule 13 of the Act, therefore, stipulates that the gram sabhas should "consider more than one evidence in determining forest rights". The rule sanctions a wide range of evidence, including "statements by village elders", "community rights" and "physical attributes such as houses, huts and permanent improvements made to land such as levelling, bunds and check dams". A Gujarat High Court verdict of 2013 confirmed the FRA's inclusive principle. "The primary duty of the Court, while interpreting the provisions of the Act, is to adopt a constructive approach... One should not overlook or ignore the hard fact that the claim petitions are filed by persons who. would hardly possess any convincing and cogent evidence to the satisfaction of the authorities," the court pointed out.

A 2014 report of a high-level committee on socio-economic, health and educational status of tribal communities in India — the Virginius Xaxa Committee, constituted by the UPA government — noted that gram sabhas were "rejecting claims of forest-dwellers without assigning reasons". "The rejections are not being communicated to the claimants, and their right to appeal is not being explained to them nor its exercise facilitated," the report pointed out. Such criticisms of the FRA's implementation do not seem to have informed the SC's February 13 verdict. Its latest ruling, however, is a welcome corrective. State governments must now take the cue and ensure that due processes are followed in deciding — or rejecting — FRA claims.

SERIOUSLY, MR PRESIDENT

A comedian is the surprise frontrunner in elections in Ukraine. He is not the only joker to get a shot at office

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKIY IS running for the presidency of Ukraine, the very office which he held in *Servant of the People*, a popular TV serial in his country. His party is also named Servant of the People, and he has pulled ahead of both the incumbent and the leader of the Opposition. On TV, he plays an accidental prime minister, a teacher who is catapulted to office after a video of him letting rip against the establishment goes viral. In real life, he has purposively positioned himself as a new face, exactly what his constituency, fed up with traditional politicians, is looking for.

But Zelenskiy is a pioneer only in the sense that he is a comedian who made his name playing a president, and is now within reach of the very same presidency. Many other funnymen (and women) have made serious bids for public office. In 2007 Hideo Higashikokubaru, the man behind the comedy game show *Takeshi's Castle*, ran for governor of Miyazaki prefecture, and won. In the US Will Rogers, the Cherokee cowboy who became a film star and the nation's most popular comedian, was named honorary mayor of Beverly Hills (without an election) in the 1920s, and was later nominated for Oklahoma governor. And in Iceland, Jón Gnarr ran a hilarious campaign for mayor of Reykjavik, and won office.

Laughter in the corridors of power, which have traditionally echoed only with the footfalls of serious men and women, is not at all out of place. Most of what passes for politics these days is black humour and, in a state like Ukraine, it's particularly dark. The war on the eastern border isn't a done thing, and recently, the Russians sealed off Crimea with a 60 km fence. A president who makes people laugh could raise the national happiness index.

An opening in Qatar

OIC invitation to India is an opportunity to expand relationships in the Muslim world

C RAJA MOHAN

ON THE FACE of it, India getting an invite to address the gathering of the foreign ministers from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation may not look like a big deal. Sceptics have long argued that the OIC has the distinction of competing with the Non Aligned Movement and the League of Arab Nations for the unflattering tag of the world's most ineffective international organisation. Yet, there is no question that External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's participation at the meeting in Abu Dhabi is a significant discontinuity in India's engagement with the Muslim world. It also caps one of the least understood but most successful endeavours of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy — its recasting India's relations with the Middle East.

To be sure, analysts around the world have noted Modi's felicity to be befriend apparent adversaries — Saudi Arabia and Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, Egypt and Turkey as well as Israel and Palestine. Observers are also impressed by Modi's success in bringing the special relationship with Israel out of the closet. But the real breakthrough under Modi is the transformation of India's engagement with the conservative Arab monarchies, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia. These two Muslim states have long been Pakistan's closest international partners. Islamabad has flaunted ties to the UAE and Saudi Arabia as reflecting its special religious connect to the Middle East.

Although India's expanding political ties with the UAE and the House of Saud go back a number of years, they have acquired a special strategic character under Modi. The increasingly productive nature of this engagement comes from an unprecedented level of personal political comfort between Modi and the key leaders of the Arab world. It is also rooted in the shared interest between India and the Arab conservatives in blunting the edge of religious extremism and terrorism.

In the past, the conservative Arab monarchies were happy to turn a blind eye to the dangers of encouraging political Islam and condoning the Pakistan army's support for terror and religious extremism in South Asia. Today, no governments are more threatened by forces of religious destabilisation than the Arab monarchies like Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Sharing that threat with them are traditional republics like Egypt. This has created a new framework for India's engagement with the Muslim world and the Middle East. Equally important has been the region's growing economic and energy interdependence with India, which is emerging as the world's third-largest economy and one of the biggest hydrocarbon importers and labour exporters. As the region's geopolitics enters a turbulent period, the potential for India as a military partner is also coming into view. That India has one of the world's largest Muslim populations, of course, is the immediate explanation of the surprising invite for Swaraj to address the OIC.

> The invitation to Swaraj, coming 50 years after Pakistan compelled the OIC to disinvite India from the founding session, marks the emerging possibilities for India to break out this unfortunate legacy. A non-ideological and interest-based relationship suits both India and the conservative Islamic states in the Middle East. Moving towards this new framework has allowed both sides to stop being defensive about engaging with each other.

But one swallow does not a summer make. The invitation from the UAE is a specific one — to address the OIC foreign ministers conclave that it is hosting. India's observer status at the OIC does not appear to be round the corner. Swaraj's participation in the Abu Dhabi ministerial, therefore, must be viewed as a diplomatic opening for a sustained and long-term political engagement of the Islamic world as a collective.

Delhi has no reason to believe that Pakistan will stop shooting at India from the shoulders of the OIC. Having blocked India at the OIC for so long, the Pakistani establishment must be expected to redouble the effort to poison India's ties with the OIC. It will not miss any opportunity to use the OIC to criticise India's Kashmir policy.

Delhi should, however, should avoid taking these statements literally. Like in the NAM, all delegations come with paragraphs of their own to be inserted into the final statement of the OIC gatherings. As the laundry list gets compiled, criticisms against non-members get easily passed.

Few member states have the time and energy to argue with Islamabad over the merits of the formulations on India that it brings to the OIC table. Media reports in the last few days suggest that things are beginning to change. Some of Delhi's friends are trying to block some of Pakistan's anti-India excesses at the OIC. Like NAM again, the OIC is a toothless tiger when it comes to dealing with squabbles among member states. Since everyone has a veto on what is said, nothing serious can be said, let alone done, about the many serious disputes between the member states that are now shaping the Middle East.

If Third Worldism in the case of NAM and pan-Arabism in the case of the League did not bind them into a cohesive force, Islamic identity was never going to be too strong a glue for the OIC. Like the NAM and the Arab League, OIC has always struggled to overcome the multiple political contradictions within it. While the OIC raises concerns about Muslim minorities in non-member states, it could never take up the problems that Shia or Sunni minorities face in countries across the Middle East.

Why then has Delhi been so jumpy about Pakistan's long-standing play at the OIC? The story goes back nearly two-and-a-half centuries. As Britain consolidated its territorial control over the Subcontinent, London's European rivals were repeatedly tempted by the idea of fomenting revolt by the dispossessed Muslim rulers and masses against the East India Company and later the Raj. As France, Russia (both Czarist and Leninist) and Germany tried this out, Calcutta and Delhi were on permanent guard against the potential threat from outsiders meddling in the Subcontinent's Muslim question. The problem endured after Partition and Independence, as Pakistan claimed the right to speak for Indian Muslims and sought to severely constrain India's engagement with the Islamic world.

The invitation to Swaraj, coming 50 years after Pakistan compelled the OIC to disinvite India from the founding session, marks the emerging possibilities for India to break out this unfortunate legacy. A non-ideological and interest-based relationship suits both India and the conservative Islamic states in the Middle East. Moving towards this new framework has allowed both sides to stop being defensive about engaging with each other.

India has good reason to be pleased that Pakistan can no longer veto India's engagement with critical states of the Middle East. For the emerging forces of political moderation and social modernisation in the Middle East, India is a more attractive partner than Pakistan. But here is a paradox: In embracing OIC, an overtly religion-based organisation, Delhi reduces the salience of faith in India's strategy towards the Islamic world.

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

A LAW FOR THE CBI

It must have statutory powers over central employees to avoid hurdles, controversy

S M KHAN

THE CENTRAL BUREAU of Investigation (CBI) is often in the news for its own doings, or due to the doings of others and sometimes because of the intent of the accused to evade the law. The CBI, legally known as Delhi Special Police Establishment, cannot function in a state unless the matter is referred to it by a high court or the Supreme Court or by the consent of the state government concerned. Even the central government employees posted in states are not within its jurisdiction as per anti-corruption and other laws.

There was always a demand for an all-India legislation to give the CBI statutory powers over central government employees posted anywhere in the country. But no such legislation has been passed. State governments have resisted such a law on the plea that a central agency would take away the powers of policing vested in them. The ruling party in a state, sometimes genuinely and many times on flimsy grounds, has denied permission to the CBI to investigate matters. Recently, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, and earlier Karnataka, Nagaland and Sikkim had withdrawn consent to the CBI to operate.

While witnessing the recent turmoil in Kolkata, when the CBI team tried to enter the residence of the Kolkata police commissioner, either to interrogate him or to intimidate him, I recall a similar incident which happened at a much higher level in Patna. A CBI team had tried to enter the residence of the then chief minister, Lalu Prasad, following a non-bailable warrant issued by a Patna court. I was privy to the drama that night between Patna and the Delhi CBI headquarters.

> There was always a demand for an all-India legislation to give the CBI statutory powers over central government employees posted anywhere in the country. State governments have resisted such a law on the plea that a central agency would take away their powers of policing.

The then joint director, U N Biswas, wanted to arrest Lalu Prasad and produce him in court the next day. However, the CBI director was of the view that the arrest should be averted as the CM had offered to surrender before the CBI special court the next morning. But Biswas wanted to arrest him and he had the backing of the judges of Patna High Court as investigations of fodder scam cases were monitored by the high court and the judges had allowed him to report directly to the court without reporting to the director of the CBI. Despite the denial of permission by the director, the CBI team went to arrest Lalu Prasad at his residence where the latter had already posted about 2,000 policemen to prevent the CBI from arresting him. The CBI team was not allowed to enter the premises by the Bihar police. Biswas, who later became a minister in the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal, was not in a mood to relent. For the first time in independent India, a CBI official went to the then corps commander, Patna and asked for an army unit to arrest a CM. Luckily, the corps commander did not oblige and contacted the army chief in Delhi, who in turn contacted the then CBI Director R C Sharma. The army chief directed the corps commander not to give any army support to the CBI and a constitutional crisis was averted. Lalu Prasad resigned the next day and surrendered before the court.

There have been other instances when the CBI faced off with other law enforcement agencies like the Intelligence Bureau (IB), Income Tax Authorities (ITA), Directorate of Enforcement and police forces of different states. These were also due to the CBI lacking legal powers to operate on an all-India basis. Such instances do not sit well with a system where rule of law is paramount. There is an urgent need to giving statutory backing to the CBI on an all India basis with a constitutional amendment, with the consent of at least half of the state legislatures. Otherwise, such conflict will recur and eventually give rise to unnecessary controversies.

The writer is former CBI spokesperson and former press secretary to the President of India and is presently the dean/director of Hamdard Institute of Legal Studies and Research, New Delhi

MARCH 1, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIAN EXPRESS

Petrol, cooking gas, kerosene to cost more

Excise duty on cigarettes, soaps, toothpastes increased

Income-tax surcharge raised

China realising mistakes on Kashmir: Desai

Budget proposals at a glance

Budget turns its back on urban society

Big battle around Lang Sen

'An act of fiscal irresponsibility'

Immediate action by UN unlikely

CHINA RELENTS

CHINA HAS "BEGUN to realise" its mistakes on the Kashmir issue, Prime Minister Morarji Desai stated in the Lok Sabha today. "But it will take time" (for the Chinese to change their stand), Desai added when replying to the debate on the President's address. He spoke in the Lok Sabha as well as the Rajya Sabha where motions of thanks in the President's address were adopted without any amendments. Defending the visit of the external affairs minister to China, Desai said it was made clear to China that the problem of "land taken from us" had to be solved "to our satisfaction." There could be no compromise on it.

TAXES IN BUDGET

THE DEPUTY PRIME minister and finance minister, Charan Singh today announced stiff duties and imposts on a wide range of consumer goods. A host of items from the lowly *bidi* and household washing soap to cosmetics, cars and luxury hotels came in for new taxes as the first "kisan" finance minister gave shape to his professed objective of "ruthlessly curbing luxury expenditure and adoption of a more austere life style". Presenting his first budget to a packed Lok Sabha today, Singh started outlining his tax proposals by announcing a five per cent increase in the surcharge on all categories of personal income-tax. "This is a small sacrifice I am asking," he said, and went on to detail a long list of sacrifices, the total burden of which would cripple the middle class and cause a general spurt in prices.

REACTIONS TO BUDGET

THE VARIED REACTION of the MPs to the budget covered a wide spectrum — from "a bold effort" to "a pickpocket budget" and "a 100 per cent anti-people budget". C M Stephen, leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, described it as an "inflationary budget". He said that to have a deficit of Rs 1,400 crore after collecting Rs 600 crore as tax revenue was "an act of absolute fiscal irresponsibility".

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

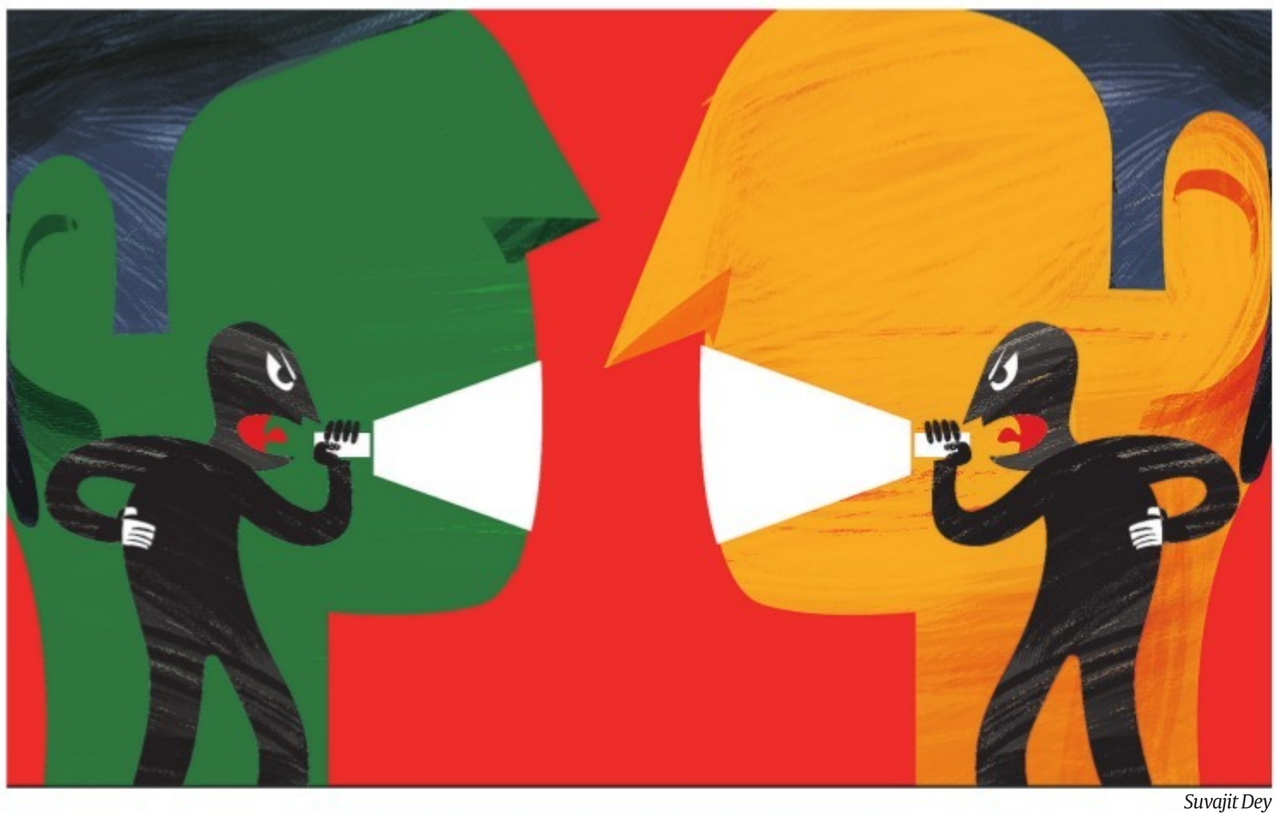
"The scope for an accidental proxy war (between India and Pakistan) breaking out is apparent. But the stakes being so high, there is probably more chance that the superpowers will restrain rather than egg on their regional clients."

—THE INDEPENDENT

Good, Bad, Ugly

Moments like Pulwama hold up a mirror to the government, media and nation

SUHAS PALSHIKAR



Suvajit Dey

DIPLOMATS HAVE TO be wordsmiths. So, when the foreign secretary of India used the phrases "non-military" "preemptive strikes", they were, though clever, hardly surprising. Yet, there was something good about it.

Besides the clever phraseology, the air strikes and official statement by the government implied a twin assertion. First, that India would want to be seen as strongly responding to Pulwama going beyond the traditional restraint for which the Indian establishment is known. In terms of domestic politics, the dividend derived from such an assertion is quite obvious. At the same time, and beyond domestic politics, this assertion also sought to intimate to the international community a possible shift if Pakistan cannot be reined in by diplomatic measures.

But the official statement also sought to define the expected boundaries of this shift — that India does not want the situation to escalate into a military confrontation which, in any case, was a pre-destined miscalculation known to the MEA establishment. Any episode such as Pulwama could never turn into anything except tragic and hurtful. Whether to turn this also into a journey through a dark tunnel was the only moot question. With Balakot, India chose to opt for that journey. Immediately after the air strike, it appeared that in spite of the darkness the journey may involve, the flickering light of diplomacy (towards the world outside) and statesmanship (towards attempts to convert the moment into uncontrollable jingoism) may save the day.

The immediate aftermath of Pulwama and the airstrikes had yet another silver lining. In spite of the innuendoes from official circles about "security failures" by previous governments, the Opposition chose to respond much more responsibly than was expected, given its bitter relationship with the government. So much so, that serious questions about Pulwama, too, were brushed under the carpet.

Opposition parties correctly assessed that instead of creating a nationalist backlash, such issues may be deferred for purposes of both national interest and political prudence. Similarly, the official position and Opposition response right after the airstrikes were subdued. It could be said that both responses were mainly dictated by compulsions of the circumstances. The government's response was circumscribed by the possible international fallout while the response by the Opposition was subdued by fear of political calculations. It looked like the journey through the dark tunnel could be quickly over. So far so good.

But the restraint shown by most Opposition parties was not reflected — even less reciprocated — in the reactions from circles "close to the establishment". While the GoI response for international consumption had all the trappings of cunning and self-restraint, the ruling party and its friends were unable to resist the temptation to use the dark tunnel to their partisan and ideological advantage.

The prime minister, who has often failed to distinguish between the responsibilities of statecraft and the compulsions of political partisanship, kept using the context of Pulwama to suggest how his party and government (alone) were saviours of the pride of the country. His speech at the launch of the sainik smarak left a bad taste in the mouth. No wonder, the chief of the mother-organisation of his party was crass enough to say that the air strikes signified a fitting "shraddh" for the martyred soldiers of Pulwama (IE, February 27). He forgot that the art of leadership is in bringing out the best in your followers rather than expressing the worst of their prejudices.

If this wasn't bad enough, the credit for representing the ugliest in this uncertain journey would surely go to the media. Ever since the Mumbai terror attacks, the overdrive of the media has been a topic of concern and discussion. In the latest episode, the media not only went overboard in its competition for eyeballs, it also engaged in a fierce competition over nationalist claims.

It is one thing for a government to choose to retaliate but quite another when the media hypnotises itself into the role of cheerleader for war games. Pulwama and the subsequent air strike by India were bound to generate considerable popular excitement and aggressive nationalism. But that inevitable outcome has been capitalised upon by the media and in the process, social media represented the most irritable and excitable sections eager to go to war with Pakistan. While the electronic media was raging, what with imagined picturisations of the air strike, the print media did not want to be left behind and in many cases, headlines declared a blow to Pakistan and worse.

Predictably, within a short time from this unfolding of the good, bad and ugly, real complications have begun to present themselves. A nation drowned in the din of self-declared victory would be unable to sanely grapple with those complications. While the degeneration of the media into a tool to whip up sentiment and shape public anxiety is bad in itself, within hours of the Balakot air strike, the abdication of responsibility by the media has aggravated this challenge.

> The credit for representing the ugliest in this uncertain journey would surely go to the media. Ever since the Mumbai terror attacks, the overdrive of the media has been a topic of concern and discussion. In the latest episode, the media not only went overboard in its competition for eyeballs, it also engaged in a fierce competition over nationalist claims.

On the morning after Balakot, we got into eulogising the sophistication behind the words "non-military preemptive" action. That was fine as a statement, but not enough either to influence the global community or to deter Pakistan from further action. In fact, India might have given Pakistan's military establishment a perfect excuse. Since India claimed that it had attacked, it left the adversary with no option but to be seen as doing something in "defence" — so the irresponsible character of the state of Pakistan gets shrouded in its victimhood and its action masquerades as self-defence. Once that has happened, the 24 hour glory of India's retaliation pales in the backdrop of clouds of a war.

Moments like Pulwama are indeed a test of tenacity — of governments and of the nation. It is not easy for any government not to retaliate instantly, because public opinion requires it and such action is needed also to earn the attention of the world. However, the complex question is how to act and the more complex issue is how to present that act. To warn the terrorist groups and their patrons, an action has to be lethal. But at the same time, such action needs to be kept low-key so that only the sufferer realises its effects. So, the question is not whether a government should have taken this or that action. The question is whether the brave soldier deserves to suffer for the publicity that the government may seek out of such action.

Unfortunately, Pulwama happened at a time when we have a government that lives off publicity and it happened at a time when the government was running short of publicity. Unfortunately, it also happened at a time when as a nation, we are more eager for exemplary rather than efficient retaliation. When tokenism rules, substantive policy, whether in the realm of security or elsewhere, is bound to be elusive.

The write taught political science and is based at Pune

Wider and deeper

India's strategic calculus to eliminate Pakistan-sponsored terror must be multi-dimensional

TEJINDER S SAHRAWAT

THE DEVASTATING ATTACK on the CRPF convoy on February 14 at Pulwama has caused outrage in the country. The Jaish-e-Mohammad, Masood Azhar's terrorist outfit located in Pakistan, has owned up to the attack. Our diplomatic endeavours have ensured that the attack has been condemned in capitals across the world, including in Riyadh and Ankara, which routinely support Pakistan in its rants on Kashmir at the conferences of the Organisation of Islamic Countries. US National Security Adviser John Bolton stated that the US supports India's right to self defence. India undertook an anti-terrorist air operation, destroying terrorist bases in Pakistan. This will have some salutary effect on Pakistan, but will it eliminate the terrorism emanating from the country?

In the strategic calculus of the Pakistan army, maintaining a controlled degree of hostility vis-a-vis India is essential. A hostile relationship with India enables the Pakistan army to maintain its primacy in that country. In addition, there is the desire for vengeance against India, which Pakistan blames for its dismemberment in 1971. The army has created an ecosystem in which terrorist groups can exist safely. These groups provide a cheaper option to an economically-weak Pakistan to bleed India. With the likely withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, the Pakistan deep state considers itself well poised to divert the products of its terrorist factories to India. Without a well-thought out strategy, we will be reacting to one terrorist attack after another. Such a strategy will need to be multi-dimensional.

The first element of our strategy must be to demonstrate to the Pakistan army that India can cause it excruciating pain if the ISI continues to sponsor terrorism against India. This requires creating a military capability which can cause significant damage at short notice. We do have conventional military superiority over Pakistan. However, the lack of political resolve and our inability to fight a two-front war has emboldened Pakistan. It is essential that our defence budget be enhanced over the next few years to build up a sufficient capability to act as a devastating deterrent. Alongside, we need to reorganise our military to be able to operate at short notice. Essential reforms are needed in the higher defence organisational structure to ensure efficiency and professionalism. These reforms must not be marred by political short-sightedness and bureaucratic self-interest.

The second element of the policy is coercive diplomacy, which has been steered well by our political leadership and foreign office. We have been able to successfully project Pakistan as the epicentre of terrorism. This lowers Pakistan's image in the comity of nations, minimising foreign investment and economically weakening the country. Some deft diplomacy has also ensured that Pakistani workers find it difficult in foreign lands, including in Gulf countries, which adversely affects remittances. The cacophony demanding the total isolation of a country of the size and population of Pakistan is not a realistic expectation.

The third and the most important element must be our acceptance of the fact that a sizeable population in the Kashmir Valley has been alienated. This sustains militancy in Kashmir and allows Pakistan to fish in troubled waters. This alienation needs to be addressed through a political process. A perception of broken promises to Kashmir, of intolerance, persecution and victimisation of a religious minority in other parts of the country, causes distrust between the population of the Valley and the government. To maintain their indispensability, political parties in J&K are ever ready to exploit such sentiments.

One lesson from the elimination of militancy from Punjab is that as long as dissonance over perceived or real grievances continued between Delhi and Punjab, Pakistan managed to keep the militancy alive in the state. For militancy to flourish, local support is the oxygen which provides logistics and intelligence to militants. Once the dissonance between Punjab and Delhi was eliminated by positive political action, the militancy dried up. Similarly to eliminate militancy from Kashmir, it is most essential to eliminate dissonance between Delhi and the Valley. All options should be open to find a political solution within the territorial and constitutional framework of the Indian Union.

After every major terrorist attack, it is freely opined by prime-time TV warriors and anchors that Pakistan has declared war against India. There is a clamour for an immediate military response .We need to realise that the cross-border deployment of armed forces must be taken after a lot of deliberation and thought. It is not possible to employ the military might of a country in cross-border operations every time there is a terrorist incident lest one gets into a shooting war. There are other instruments available to a state which can be applied effectively and economically to achieve the desired results while fighting terrorism emanating from a rogue state. Carrying out co-coordinated covert operations to fight a Pakistan-sponsored proxy war should be an important facet of our security policy. In democracies, covert trans-border operations are primarily in the domain of the civil external intelligence agency, which besides collection of foreign intelligence are also mandated to carry out subversion and sabotage in target areas.

Lastly, we need the political resolve, as has been shown by the Narendra Modi government, for making the tough choice of military action against Pakistan when necessary. TV media needs to realise that in a military operation, there will be reverses or perceived reverses for short periods. This can not be a ground for wailing and weakening national resolve.

The writer is a retired Lieutenant General of the Indian army and former director general, Defence Intelligence Agency

The best way to vote

On EVMs, we may be asking the wrong questions

SUBHASHIS BANERJEE AND SUBODH SHARMA

WHETHER OR NOT to use EVMs (electronic voting machines) for elections in India has been a raging debate of late. There have been claims of hacking of EVMs and counter-claims of impossibility, steadfast assurances about their safety from election commissioners and technocrats, open challenges through ECI (Election Commission of India)-sponsored "hackathons", and even live television shows by masked hackers alleging conspiracies.

Public arguments on computer security in India have often been outrageous. On the one hand there have been fatalistic claims that all computer systems can be hacked and that it is just a matter of time before they will be. There indeed are computer systems that are provably secure, but sometimes such guarantees are difficult even for many well-designed ones. The question of whether they can be hacked or not is often "undecidable", even in a technical sense, and has not yet been hacked has sometimes been used as proof of infallibility. That a system has not been hacked provides no guarantee that it cannot be. Ultimately, the onus of establishing trust, either formally through verifiable proofs, or even informally using best practices and due diligence, must always lie with the designers. It is difficult to appreciate this difficulty, the EVM design problem is till one considers the generic requirements outlined below.

Correctness demands that all votes are accurately counted and there are no false or duplicate votes. Secrecy demands that it should be impossible to determine who an individual voted for, provided the voting is not completely lopsided for any candidate or any social or political groups. Anonymity — indistinguishability from a specified number of other voters — follows from secrecy. Secrecy and anonymity are necessary conditions for coercion-free voting, though the converse is not true. Sufficient conditions for coercion-free voting will require methods and processes beyond an EVM.

Verifiability demands that it should be possible to prove to every voter individually that their vote has been accounted for correctly in the aggregate without revealing, or even determining, the vote. Verifiability also implies non-repudiability — that is, if a voter falsely claims to have voted differently from what she actually did, it should be possible to prove that the claim is false without determining who she voted for. Note that verifiability requires that the EVM must record proof. Every voter (without violation of the identity of the voter, secrecy requires that the EVM should not allow the inference of the mapping between the two.

Identity verification must be certified by the polling officer and can either be offline or online, and must have its own guarantees. Reliability demands that the EVM should be tamper-proof, through any direct or even side-channel attacks. Fault tolerance demands that the system should be resilient to network and component failures. In particular, there should never be any data loss. Consistency demands that the design and implementation of all EVMs must be identical, and provably so at all stages of the election.

Finally, auditability and self-certifiability demand that it should be possible to verify the above invariant conditions at all stages of voting, including before the start, at any time during voting, and after the voting ends. The EVM should be able to self-certify and provide proofs of all the above invariants at any stage.

Some of these may appear to be dependent or even contradictory at the first glance, but careful reflection should convince the reader that they are, in fact, not. Designing a provably-correct EVM satisfying all the above properties is as yet an unsolved problem of computer science. Rebecca Mercuri, a computer scientist and the original proponent of a VVPAT based design, claimed that the verification of a design for an EVM such as above will be an intractable problem. It may well be so, though that does not suggest that rigorous verification of suitable design abstractions cannot be worked out.

The crucial question, then, is to precisely evaluate to what extent does the ECI's EVM satisfy the above properties and how does it compare with manual paper based ballot? For example, merely tallying the EVM count with the manual VVPAT count, without guaranteeing that there is no spurious voting, does not establish correctness, even with statistical sampling. VVPATs, or even secure strongrooms, do not guarantee against pre-designed adversarial, side-channel or Trojan attacks.

This is not to say that the ECI's EVM is necessarily a worse option than manual ballot which does not even guarantee correctness and, at best, only approximately satisfies secrecy, anonymity and fault-tolerance. Manual ballot, however, has the advantage of not taking away agency from the poll officials, whose understanding of the poll process enables them to improvise on the spot to try and ensure correctness. In contrast, the obscurity of an EVM makes its correctness analysis absolutely crucial.

Public posturing by the ECI, based on pronouncements by a hand-picked set of experts, does not engender confidence. For informed risk assessment it is imperative that the complete design, analysis and the hardware synthesis specifications be made public at the earliest so that the EVM may be subjected to rigorous scrutiny by the general public, institutions, political party representatives and experts. Security by obfuscation belongs to the time of Julius Caesar and is unacceptable in the modern age.

The writers are faculty at the School of Computer Science and Engineering IIT Delhi and are also associated with its School of Public Policy

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ABOUT THE FARMER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Little, late' (IE, February 28). If the Centre was serious about the welfare of farmers, it should have come out with the PM-Kisan scheme much earlier. By announcing this scheme at a time when the Lok Sabha elections are due, the government is hoping to reap political mileage from the plight of farmers. The lack of time will be hurdle in its implementation.

Anish Esteves, *Mumbai*

WAR AND PEACE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The day after' (IE, February 28). The editorial is right in stating that our "TV warriors" should exercise some restraint. It is very easy to shout and raise slogans in TV studios. It is shocking that war strategies are being discussed on television. Let army generals take decisions about the prevailing situation. One cannot be a patriotic by mere lip service.

Hitesh Parmar, *Rajkot*

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The day after' (IE, February 28). The government has thus far made it clear that it does not view talks with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan as an option. But with an IAF pilot in Pakistan's captivity, the Hobson's choice for India is to engage with the Pakistan PM. The strategy should be rational and in the national interest. It should not be calibrated with the elections in mind. It is in the interests of both countries that the tension is nipped in the bud before it gets out of hand.

Deepak Singhal, *Noida*

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

FLAWED DEMOCRACY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Slipping on democracy'(IE, February 26). There is lack of substantive democracy in India as there is a decline in civil liberties. Though the conduct of elections reflects the strength of democratic institutions, the undermining of autonomous institution like the CBI, RBI and the NSSO, besides vigilantism, reflects poorly on India's democracy. Moreover, the first past the post system needs to be reviewed. Substantive democracy could be brought with greater participation, restoring autonomy of institutions and accepting dissent and criticism.

H Upadhyay *via e-mail*

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

TELLING NUMBERS

Computer Science, Chemistry power India in QS Rankings

IN THE latest World QS rankings, Indian universities have excelled in Computer Science, followed by Chemistry and Physics & Astronomy. The Computer Science departments of 17 Indian institutes have been ranked among the world top 200 in 2019, with those of IIT Bombay and IIT Delhi featuring in the top 100. Chemistry too has 17 Indian entries, with IISc Bangalore and IIT Bombay's departments in the 101-150 rank bracket. Physics & Astronomy departments are ranked 16 times, with IIT Bombay's department once again ranking among 101-150.

With 89 Indian departments ranking among the global top 200 for their subject, it is 22 more than in 2018. Three Indian universities have at least one department among the top 50 in the world for their subject. These three are the University of Delhi (37th for Development Studies), IIT Bombay (38th for Mineral and Mining Engineering) and IIT Kharagpur (47th for Mineral and Mining Engineering). Ten Indian universities are ranked for Mathematics. Of the 17 Indian universities ranked for Computer Science & Information Systems, 9 have improved their rank, 3 remain stable, and 5 are new entries. No university has experienced a drop in rank. India's eight IITs and IIScs are ranked 104 times, with 33 improvements in rank and only 7 drops in rank.

INDIA IN QS WORLD RANKINGS 2019, BY SUBJECT

Subject	Ranked universities	Leaders (global rank)
Computer Science	17	IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi (51-100)
Chemistry	17	IISc Bangalore, IIT Bombay (101-150)
Physics & Astronomy	16	IIT Bombay (101-150)
Business & Management Studies	14	IIM Bangalore (51-100)
Engineering (Electrical & Electronic)	14	IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi, IIT Madras (51-100)
Engineering (Mechanical)	13	IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi, IIT Madras (51-100)
Economics & Econometrics	11	University of Delhi (101-150)
Biological Sciences	11	Indian Institute of Science Bangalore (201-250)
Engineering (Chemical)	10	IISc Bangalore & IIT Bombay (51-100)
Mathematics	10	IIT Bombay & IIT Delhi (101-150)

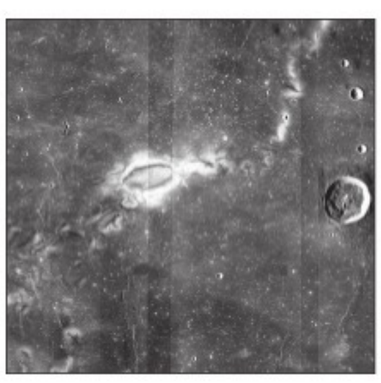
FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

HOW THE MOON GOT 'SUNBURNS': A RESULT OF SHEER MAGNETISM

THE MOON has visible 'sunburns', or distinctive patterns of swirls on its surface. NASA has now analysed data to show that these are a result of interactions between the Sun's damaging radiation with pockets of lunar magnetic field.

Every object, planet or person travelling through space has to contend with the Sun's damaging radiation. Research using data from NASA's ARTEMIS mission suggests how the solar wind and the Moon's crustal magnetic fields work together to give the Moon a distinctive pattern of darker and lighter swirls.

The Sun releases a continuous outflow of particles and radiation called the solar wind. Because the solar wind is magnetised, Earth's natural magnetic field deflects the solar wind particles so that only a small fraction of them reach the planet's atmosphere. But the Moon has no global magnetic field; magnetised rocks near the lunar surface do create small, localised spots of magnetic field. "The magnetic fields in some regions are locally acting as this magnetic sunscreen," NASA quoted researcher Andrew Poppe (University of California, Berkeley) as saying. Under these miniature magnetic umbrellas, the material that makes up the Moon's surface, called regolith, is shielded from the Sun's particles. As those particles flow toward the Moon, they are deflected to the areas just around the magnetic bubbles, where chemical reactions with the regolith darken the surface. This creates the distinctive swirls of darker and lighter material.



The Reiner Gamma lunar swirl, imaged by NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter. *NASA*

Source: NASA

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SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Global diplomacy in India-Pak

Trump claims US helped ease tensions. How have US, others intervened from behind the scenes in the past?

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 28

Was there behind-the-scenes diplomacy to de-escalate matters between India and Pakistan?

US President Donald Trump has claimed such involvement. He announced Thursday that the US was engaged in trying to help reduce tensions between India and Pakistan. "We have been involved in trying to help them (India and Pakistan) stop and we have some reasonably decent news," Trump told reporters during a media briefing after his second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in Vietnam. He gave no details of precisely what role the US played. And Indian officials dismissed that the Trump administration was playing any role behind the scenes.

On the same evening that Trump made his prediction, after two days of strikes and counter-strikes, came Pakistan's decision to release Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, captured in PoK, opening a path to de-escalation.

The details of the behind-the-scenes diplomacy will become clearer only in the coming days, but there has been a long history of US engagement to defuse crises between the two neighbours, especially in the years after both countries went nuclear in 1998.

How does this square with the Indian position that it will solve all its problems with Pakistan bilaterally?

India has always insisted there is no room for a third party in its bilateral "issues" with Pakistan. It has resisted Pakistan's attempts at internationalising the Kashmir problem, and mostly succeeded in making it clear to the world that it will not brook mediation over this.

But after 9/11, which ushered in a UNSC-backed international architecture against terrorism, India has looked increasingly to the global community for help with Pakistan on one issue: an end to the terrorist groups that flourish on Pakistani territory, to put pressure on the Pakistan Army and political leadership to desist from permitting anti-India terrorist activity on its territory, and to censure it when such attacks take place. In this, India has counted on its own growing economic and strategic clout.

The nuclearisation of India and Pakistan, and the 17-year-long US involvement against AfPak-based terrorism, has also drawn different US administrations, and other western countries, into the ever dysfunctional India-Pakistan relationship, but from the point of view of their own interests in the region.

PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee with Army personnel during the Kargil conflict. *Express Archive*

China's growing interest in South Asia, its "deeper than the sea, higher than the mountains" relationship with Pakistan, and Delhi's influence with the OIC powers such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, have added new dimensions to India-Pakistan crises and diplomatic efforts to resolve them.

In what ways has the US intervened in previous India-Pakistan crises?

Most notably, it was US intervention that brought the 1999 Kargil crisis to an end. The Vajpayee government had been in touch with the Clinton administration to get the Sharif government to call off the intrusion in Kargil even as it fought Pakistani forces. Security expert Bruce Reidel has written about how Nawaz Sharif arrived on July 3 in Washington seeking Bill Clinton's help for a face-saving ceasefire with India that would include a settlement on Kashmir. Others have written that it was then Pakistan Army chief General Pervez Musharraf who prodded Sharif to ask the US for help to end his misadventure. Ultimately, Sharif had no choice but to agree to an unconditional withdrawal of Pakistani forces from Kargil back to the Line of Control. Clinton reaffirmed the US commitment to the bilateral Lahore Declaration signed earlier that year as the best way forward for India and Pakistan to resolve Kashmir and other issues.

In 2002, the US dissuaded Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee from military retaliation against Pakistan after the December 2001 Jaish-e-Mohammed attack on Parliament. India had already mobilised over 500,000 troops to the border, and deployed missiles and other weaponry. Pakistan too had mobilised its army. Apprehensive that a confrontation would take Pakistan's attention off Afghanistan and trigger a nuclear war, and distract from the fight against Taliban and al-Qaeda, the Bush administration rushed in to counsel restraint. Secretary of State Colin Powell, US Ambassador to India Robert Blackwill, and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage engaged in frantic diplomacy with the Vajpayee government.

Under US pressure, Musharraf, who had by then taken power in a coup, made a national address on January 12, 2002, in which he described the attack on Indian Parliament as a "terrorist" attack, equated it with 9/11, and announced a ban on Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish. Five months later, in May 2002, when terrorists killed 35 people in the Kaluchak Army camp in Jammu, India once again readied to strike. On Armitage's word that Musharraf was sincere about reining in jihadi groups, Vajpayee was eventually persuaded to call off a military response.

What was the role of the US after the 26/11 Mumbai attack?

Amid international shock, as India considered its options, the US worked the phones again to both countries, and asked the Manmohan Singh government to exercise restraint. In one episode, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had to travel to Delhi and Islamabad to counsel calm after a hoax caller pretending to be India's then External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee called Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari and threatened to attack Pakistan. The hoax call was later found to have been made by Omar Shaikh, the mastermind of the Daniel Pearl killing, from prison in Karachi.

Pakistani politician Khurshid Mohammed Kasuri, who was not in government at the time, has written about how Senator John McCain, who visited Pakistan on his way back from India, met him in Lahore and indicated to him that India was considering an airstrike against the Muridke headquarters of Lashkar. Pakistan had by then already started moving troops to its eastern order, once again making the US nervous about the Pakistan Army's continuing focus on US enemies within Pakistan's borders and in Afghanistan. But the US also worked to get Lashkar and its leader Hafiz Saeed designated under UNSC 1267, sending out tough messages.

If, as Trump says, the US is involved in back-channel diplomacy in the present crisis, how can it unfold from here?

At this time, the US is negotiating an exit from Afghanistan through a peace deal with the Taliban. Pakistan is heavily involved in this — the Taliban are an ISI proxy, though in recent years there has been some factionalism. The last thing the Trump administration wants is an India-Pakistan conflagration. The latest escalation also comes at a time when there are few experienced South Asia veterans in the Trump administration. Reflecting that, there seemed to be hardly any interest in Washington in how the situation was unfolding in India and Pakistan post Pulwama, which is why this time there was no consistent diplomatic effort to prevent escalation, after the call between the Indian and US National Security Advisers. Only South Asia experts in Washington's many think-tanks appeared concerned and they said as much. The alarm bells started to ring only after India struck terror camps inside Pakistan Tuesday. How engaged the US has been in trying to defuse this crisis will become known only gradually.

There are other actors too. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has increased China's stakes in peace in the region. India and Pakistan have both taken their respective cases to the world in the last two days, including to China and OIC, another influential player. It is quite possible that both have engaged in back-channel diplomacy to defuse the situation.

El Niño rising: will it affect Indian monsoon?

AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, FEBRUARY 28

THE NATIONAL Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the United States recently announced the development of a weak El Niño in the equatorial Pacific Ocean that was expected to continue for a few months at least. The status of El Niño at this time of the year is usually the first indication of the kind of rainfall that is to be expected during the monsoon season later in the year.

El Niño is a phenomenon in which surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean see an unusual rise. Over the years, it has been found to have a strong bearing on monsoon rainfall in India. While warmer temperatures are known to suppress monsoon rainfall, the opposite phenomenon of La Niña has been found to be helpful in bringing good rainfall.

The outlook

In its announcement on February 14, NOAA said weak El Niño conditions had already built up in January and were likely to continue (with 55% probability) until the spring season in the northern hemisphere (mid-March to mid-June). It said that the probability of El Niño persisting into the summer was "50 per cent or less". The Australian Bureau of Meteorology, meanwhile, said in a February 19 bulletin that the development of El Niño could continue until at least July.

More relevant to the Indian monsoon, the warming in the Niño 3.4 region of the Pacific Ocean, the region whose sea surface temperature is seen as be the best marker for the impact on India's rainfall, has been forecast to remain in excess of 0.5°C above normal.

The likely impact

Dr Arindam Chakraborty of the Centre for Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences at IISc Bangalore said data for the last 100 years showed that if the SST in Niño 3.4 was over 0.5°C above normal in the four-month monsoon season, rainfall over India gets affected.

"If El Niño 3.4 is greater than 0.5, it is likely to decrease rainfall. But we need to wait for a better prediction at this point because prediction through the northern spring season has higher degree of uncertainty," he said. He also pointed to other evidence to suggest that the impact on the Indian monsoon might not be very large. "Even if we get El Niño in the monsoon months, its impact, statistically speaking, is not as high as when it is preceded by a La Niña in the winter. In this winter, sea surface temperatures were above normal, almost close to El Niño," he said.

However, Raghu Murtugudde of University of Maryland, College Park, said there was a possibility that the El Niño could strengthen beyond spring. "I have myself announced on some groups that I expect the El Niño to grow into the summer which could mean that we may have a drought (in India). Some weather events like winds over the western tropical Pacific can finally determine whether El Niño will grow beyond spring," he said.

More frequent

El Niño events repeat themselves in a two- to seven-year cycle, with a strong El Niño expected every 10-15 years. However, since 2000, five El Niño events have already happened, and this year could witness a sixth one.

New scientific research is pointing to increased frequency of extreme El Niños due to climate change. A paper published in *Nature Climate Change* in July 2017 had suggested that such extreme events could happen twice as often as today if the average annual global temperatures reached 1.5°C above pre-industrial times.

Murtuggude, however, said that the increasing frequency could be because of other reasons as well.

"This cannot yet be claimed to be in response to global warming with great confidence. It is related with the fact that trade winds got stronger and the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean has remained colder since 1998. That makes El Niño more active. The stronger trade winds are not easily explained by global warming. So the story is much more complicated," he said.

A new zone for Andhra Pradesh: what could change for the Railways, state

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 28

RAILWAY MINISTER Piyush Goyal on Wednesday announced a new Railway zone based in Visakhapatnam, fulfilling a demand from Andhra Pradesh politicians pending since the creation of Telangana nearly five years ago.

Was a new Railway zone promised to Andhra at the time of bifurcation?

The TDP (and of late, even the BJP's Andhra Pradesh unit) has been demanding this ever since Hyderabad and Secunderabad — headquarters of South Central Railway — went to Telangana. It has been argued that getting a zonal Railway headquarters is important for people in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, had "promised" this.

The Thirteenth Schedule of the Act says under the head 'Infrastructure' that the Indian Railways shall, within six months from the appointed day, examine establishing a new railway zone in the successor State of Andhra Pradesh and take an expeditious decision thereon".

Does the Indian Railways have a state-specific character?

The Indian Railways was envisaged as a modern organisation with a pan-India presence and character. Currently, the Railways have 17 zonal headquarters in 14 cities: Kolkata, Patna, Gorakhpur, Allahabad, Delhi, Secunderabad, Chennai, Hubballi, Mumbai, Jaipur, Bilaspur, Jabalpur, Guwahati, and Bhubaneswar. They are not necessarily in state capitals, nor is every state "represented" on the list. Two zones — Central and Western — are headquartered in Mumbai; Kolkata has Eastern and South Eastern, apart from the Kolkata Metro. In its replies to Parliament, the Railway Ministry in most cases presents facts, figures and policy statements rather than state-specific arguments.

How did the zones of the Indian Railways come into existence?

Following independence, India worked to consolidate 42 big and small railways owned by the princely states and other entities into a single network. In 1947, the country's total rail network was 54,380 km, and included networks as small as Sangli (8 km) or as big as Nizam State Railway (2,125 km).

In 1951-52, six zonal railways were created to "amalgamate the smaller independent lines into contiguous areas of self-sufficient zones having economic unity and natural flow of traffic", said an internal report of the Railways that examined whether a new zone for Andhra Pradesh was feasible. The intention was to bring down overheads, eliminate duplication of work, "unnecessary correspondences", and inter-railway adjustments, and ensure more expeditious disposal of business. The internal assessment report was submitted to the Ministry last year.

How is the Indian Railways network administered?

Each zonal railway is a self-governed unit with a jurisdiction and boundary. A train passes through multiple zones (and divisions) on its journey, crossing from one administrative entity to another at 'interchange' points where it is "handed over" to the next zone. Each zone is responsible for the smooth operation and punctuality of a train while it is in its jurisdiction.

Boundaries that do not add to the efficiency of the Railways are avoidable, officials say. The final product offered by the Indian Railways is, after all, a train that cuts across regional and geographical boundaries on its journey, says the internal assessment report. An increase in the number of jurisdictions without a clear need is akin to erecting more checkposts or barriers on a road when the smooth flow of traffic is the key requirement, officials say. "A new barrier will slow down train operations to a considerable extent..., affect the mobility, commercial viability, and result in wastage of precious capacity, rolling stock and manpower," the assessment says.

What specific challenges could the creation of the new zone pose?

Waltair (Visakhapatnam) division, which loads around 60 million tonnes of freight every year (which is quite high for a division), will become a zonal headquarters. A part of Waltair division will be merged with the adjacent Vijayawada division, and another part will become the new Rayagada division. This break-up of East Coast Railway (which has Waltair division) will create operational bottlenecks, reduce flexibility in the loading and unloading of freight, and could hit the revenue generation capability of the zone, critics of the move argue.

South Central Railway, which will be reorganised for the new zone, will be disrupted as well. "Due to its critical size, ports, industries and mineral hubs are well served by its internal cycles. Any realignment of the present zonal system will have a detrimental effect," says the assessment.

Rayagada in Odisha, where the only significant railway installation currently is a yard, will have to be turned into a divisional headquarters of the new zone, as per the government's decision. This will mean both capital expenditure and recurring expenditure. Creating a zonal headquarters in Waltair, too, will involve costs.

But will the move help Andhra?

In general, a new Railway zone does little for a state or its people. Groups C and D vacancies are filled through Railway Recruitment Board exams; there are already 21 such boards for 17 zonal Railways, and the exams are open to any qualifying Indian citizen. Each zonal headquarters has a Railway Recruitment Cell to fill Group D jobs, but the same rules apply there, too. Amaravati, the new capital of Andhra Pradesh, is in the Vijayawada-Guntur division, and is already well connected to the rest of India by five lines. Projects for rail-connectivity infrastructure in the area have already been sanctioned, and a new zone does not help much.

Floodgates could now be opened for more state-specific zones and divisions. Demands for at least 52 new divisions and 26 new zones have already been made. Odisha MPs have in the past objected to the realignment of Bhubaneswar-based East Coast Railway, of which Waltair is the premium division. Some Odisha leaders have told the Railways that if Visakhapatnam is taken away from ECoR, the state should be compensated with new divisions like Rourkela, Jharsuguda, and Jajpur-Keonjhar.

Opinion

FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 2019

ENSURING A SAFER FUTURE

Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Laureate

"I reiterate that terrorism in any part of the world is a threat for all of humanity. Our children have the right to grow up in peace. I urge PM Modi and PM Khan to create an atmosphere of trust and transparency, and work together to uproot terrorism in all earnestness"

RationalExpectations

SUNIL JAIN

sunil.jain@expressindia.com
@thesuniljain

Modi's tactics work, now to get Azhar!

The Opposition ridiculed Modi for politicising soldiers' sacrifices, but he oversaw a perfect air strike & is now getting his pilot back

KARNATAKA BJP CHIEF BS Yeddyurappa clearly goofed when he said that, after the Pakistan strike, prime minister Narendra Modi's popularity was so high, the party would win at least 22 of the state's 28 Lok Sabha seats, and it didn't help that the pictures of CRPF jawans—killed in the Pulwama attack by the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)—formed the backdrop to Modi's address at Churu after the successful air-strike at JeM training camps in the heart of Pakistan. Even so, the Congress party's condemnation of Modi—along with 20 other Opposition parties—for "blatant politicisation of the sacrifices made by our armed forces" always looked churlish; coinciding with this Opposition onslaught, various WhatsApp videos surfaced of servicemen's wives asking Modi to, yes, not politicise the sacrifices of soldiers!

Apart from condemning the prime minister during a major crisis being in bad taste, the Opposition parties praising the Air Force for responding so well to the JeM attack, but criticising Modi, never made sense. How did they think the Air Force retaliated without Modi giving them the go-ahead, a go-ahead they never got after heinous Pakistani terror attacks during the UPA rule? The Opposition, however, got some traction since, after Pakistan retaliated, and captured Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, many started wondering about where this would end; more so, after Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's statement about the possibility of the script spiralling out of control, and in a situation where both countries had nuclear weapons.

The Congress taunting Modi by asking him where Abhinandan was—and when he would come home—has been blunted by the Pakistanis announcing that they would be releasing him, but the more serious question the Opposition needs to answer is what did they want Modi to do since it is clear the old policy of 'strategic restraint' wasn't working. As many as 1,467 people were killed in terrorist violence across the country in 2014-17, and 2,703 in the four years before that; and keep in mind that the latest attacks include something as brazen as infiltrating into army and paramilitary camps such as in Handwara, Nagrota and Sunjuwan. So, if 'strategic restraint' didn't work, what was Modi to do?

> **Hardline tactics like the air-strike that was followed by a diplomatic offensive made Pakistan blink. The real challenge now is to dismantle the JeM-ISI terror network. Once the war-threat is over, pressuring Pakistan won't be as easy**

In the event, Modi's instinctive reaction was to shake things up, but with meticulous planning. The operation to strike major JeM training camps with 250-300 terrorists in Balakot involved the use of aircraft from multiple bases, including a mid-flight refuelling aircraft and a surveillance drone, apart from 12 Mirage 2000s; as an added gift, an outdated MiG flown by Abhinandan also downed a more modern Pakistani F-16. By upping the ante so much—finance minister Arun Jaitley even spoke of India having the ability to carry out an Osama-type operation deep in the heart of Pakistan like the US did—Modi made it clear the costs for Pakistan would no longer be as minimal as in the past.

And, if the operation itself was executed so well, the diplomatic offensive prior to the strike, and after it, has been equally impressive. While China, which has traditionally backed Pakistan on JeM chief Masood Azhar, was forced to sign off on a UN Security Council (UNSC) statement condemning the attack, and the US/UK/France have made yet another attempt to get the UNSC to label Azhar a 'global terrorist'; while China may, once again, scuttle the move, it says a lot that the pressure is being maintained by the global community; it is unlikely Abhinandan would have been released so soon without this global pressure.

US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo urged both countries to de-escalate but while underscoring the "urgency of Pakistan taking meaningful action against terrorist groups operating on its soil". And, after his summit with North Korea ended, president Trump reiterated the US position when, instead of condemning India, he said "We have reasonably attractive news from Pakistan and India" and that he hoped the hostilities would end soon; a few days before the strike, he had said India was planning "something very strong", once again indicating it had US support. And while the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) condemned India's strike, it has not withdrawn its invitation to foreign minister Sushma Swaraj at its next session, so much so that Pakistan—a founding member of the OIC—may boycott the meeting.

An Opposition so blinded by hatred for Modi, however, saw none of this, took no pride in what the country had achieved. While the Opposition's sniping, and, indeed, its attempt to scuttle the Rafale purchase despite the huge delays in procurement—even as the Air Force's fleet kept dwindling—suggest that it, and not Modi, is guilty of playing politics, India's real challenge begins now.

Getting Abhinandan back is undoubtedly a victory, but not one India had thought would be necessary since it may not have envisaged its pilot getting shot down in enemy territory. The real goal was to deal a crippling blow to Pakistan's terror infrastructure, if not eliminate it altogether. The fact that Pakistan is returning Abhinandan—as a "gesture of peace"—shows Modi's tactics have worked, and that Pakistan may take longer than it has in the past to return to waging its proxy war through terrorists. But the terror network is far from being dismantled, and it is not clear that, with Pakistan looking as if it is trying to dampen hostilities, the global community will allow India to continue to target JeM or other terrorist facilities. To that extent, returning Wing Commander Abhinandan is a masterstroke by the Pakistani military establishment, and Modi's challenge is to ensure he is able to sustain the momentum he has managed to achieve so far.

It is, of course, unfortunate that the Opposition is not with him in this endeavour, though that may change once the elections are over—right now, no one wants to concede anything since, at least till the Pakistani misadventure, most predicted the elections would be a lot closer than imagined in May 2014.

***Postscript:** Since WhatsApp forwards dominate the discourse nowadays, it is fitting to quote from one of them to end this column: "India: We've isolated Pakistan internationally. Pakistan: We've isolated Modi domestically with the help of 21 political parties".*

FuellingPollution

Stricter emission norms key to reducing the health burden of vehicular pollution, as is incentivising disposal of old vehicles

THE FATAL EFFECTS of vehicular emissions were always known, but a first-of-its-kind worldwide assessment of health impacts of transport emissions, conducted by US-based universities and entities should make the picture clearer. Air pollution is a leading health risk factor, and global transportation emissions in 2010 and 2015 contributed 361,000 and 385,000 PM2.5 and ozone-attributable premature deaths respectively, with 70% of these deaths occurring in the four largest vehicle markets—China, India, the EU, and the US.

There is, however, variation in trends amongst the four largest markets: From 2010 to 2015, transportation-related deaths declined by 14% and 16% in the EU and US due to improvement in emissions standards and fuel quality. But, they increased by 26% in China and India. Although stricter emission standards in countries like India have been instituted—India's Supreme Court refused to grant any relief to vehicle-makers in conforming with the BS-VI emission norms from April 1, 2020—the effects of these changes will likely take time to manifest. The new standards promise to bring PM levels emitted by diesel cars down by 80% as also reduce nitrogen oxides by 70%. Improvements in similar emission standard regulation has led to the global health risk from the transportation sector stabilising between 2010 and 2015 (11.7% of global PM2.5 and ozone mortality in 2010 and 11.4% in 2015), but further action needs to be undertaken, like improving access to public transportation, in order for emission-related transport deaths to reduce in the future.

DRIVING JOBS GROWTH

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES DRAMATICALLY ALTER THE COST-PRICE EQUATION OF SERVICES, LEADING TO THE CREATION OF A VIRTUOUS CYCLE OF GROWTH, COMPETITION, INVESTMENTS AND NEW JOBS

Digitally-enabled mass services to be game changer

ARINDAM BHATTACHARYA

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

IN THE LAST 150 years, the world has seen three industrial revolutions starting with the steam engine in the 19th century, mass manufacturing in the mid-20th one and the internet in late 20th century. Each of these technological innovations transformed productivity and redefined the paradigms of economic growth and jobs led by countries which spearheaded these technology revolutions—UK with steam engine, US with mass manufacturing, and China with internet enabled low-cost manufacturing. Now we are embarking on the fourth industrial revolution led by digital technologies which will once again reshape the paradigm for economic growth and jobs as I argued in part 1 of my two-part series where I suggested three shifts that should shape this new paradigm. In this follow-up article, I develop one of these ideas—the concept of mass services—which I believe has the potential to become the engine of economic and jobs growth for India in the 21st century.

What are mass services? To explain this concept, let us first understand the analogous concept of mass manufacturing which started at Ford Motor Company when they launched Model T in the year 1908. Before this model was launched, cars were seen as a luxury product and within 8 years of its launch, Model T was being sold for $260, less than half the average annual wages in the US. In 1914, Ford's 13,000 employees produced ~ 300,000 cars while 299 other companies employing ~66,000 employees produced only ~280.000 vehicles. As the price came down, the industry volume tripled in just 6 years. From Ford, this new technology spread to other automotive companies and then across to other industry sectors. The cost of manufactured goods fell between 3-10 times, dramatically increasing mass consumption of products, raising competition multi-fold and driving new investments. This virtuous economic cycle was progressively supported by a facilitative regulatory regime to make the markets more efficient. Mass manufacturing as an economic growth paradigm was born and created hundreds of millions of new jobs.

Digital technologies have the same potential to transform the paradigm of economic growth and jobs through mass services, and India is well positioned to lead this paradigm shift as England, the US and China had done earlier. Like mass manufacturing technologies, digital technologies dramatically alter the cost-price equation of services which can lead to the creation of a virtuous cycle of growth, competition, investments and new jobs, as we saw in the manufacturing sector. Digital technology does this in four different ways. First, it drives productivity. For example, large asset managers, by leveraging the digital technology stack, have reduced customer acquisition and operations costs by 10-100 times. Secondly, it has the unique characteristic of allowing 'fractionalisation' or in consumer vocabulary, 'sachetisation', i.e, breaking down the service into small consumption offers. The third is its unique characteristic to allow integration of physical and digital assets and processes to drive down price, induce consumption and grow the market, e.g, taxi aggregators or e-commerce. Finally, the digital and digitally-enabled businesses also spur innovation by entrepreneurs to find new value creation opportunities through the exploitation of the power of data and analytics across the value chains.

> **A case can be made for creating societal digital platforms for free for the development of business solutions by entrepreneurs**

Three pieces of the jigsaw puzzle have to come together to make this happen. The first is the huge unmet demand for services and a decent starting position in service sectors. India has both, with services being the largest part of its economy, unlike other developing countries, but still with huge unmet demand existing across sectors, especially health, education, financial services, logistics and transportation, government and municipal services, tourism, and agricultural services. The second piece of the puzzle is the need for a world-class public digital infrastructure as the backbone of mass service sectors, as high quality public physical infrastructure like roads, ports, and airports was the backbone of the mass manufacturing industry. India has a world-leading starting position on this front with its digital stack consisting of Jan Dhan (banking for all), Aadhaar (digital identifier for all), and mobile connectivity, and public applications like e-KYC (for e-authentication), digi-locker (for digital storage), e-signature (digital signature recognition), BHIM (a national payments gateway). Together, they constitute a comprehensive digital architecture which offers open APIs as public infrastructure which private and public enterprises can integrate into their digital platforms to transform the cost-price equations of a wide range of services. The final one, and this is perhaps the most challenging part of the puzzle, is a facilitating regulatory regime that liberalises the services sector, encourages competition, and allows more efficient markets to develop.

In addition to these, we need policy interventions in several key areas. The first is setting standards for data flows which are the backbone of any service offering—in terms of both interoperability and privacy. Secondly, a regulator is required which has the technical skills and understanding to develop and regulate the revenue sharing arrangements between partners in the digital ecosystem to create an efficient market. Finally, a public policy case can be made for creating societal digital platforms for all public goods like education and health and which are offered for free for the development of business solutions by entrepreneurs. GSTN can be one such powerful public digital platform which, of course with necessary privacy protections in place, can help entrepreneurs develop truly innovative financial products which can, for example, solve the huge challenge of funding faced by small enterprises.

Mass services is not an untested hypothesis. We have already experienced it in India to drive growth and create new jobs in the telecom sector after it was liberalised in the mid-1990s. At that time, the price of a phone call was over ₹16 per minute and the total subscriber base was just above 1 million. As the cost per minute fell below ₹1 (currently it is ₹0.19), the number of subscribers expanded exponentially (today we have over 1.13 billion today) showing the scale of unmet need in the market. As demand grew, huge investments were made, competition became intense, prices and products were innovated and millions of direct and indirect jobs were created. (Of course the story has since then taken a twist which illustrates the power of regulations to both make and break the market!)

The twenty-first century will see the emergence of mass services as the driver of economic and jobs growth, much as mass manufacturing did in the twentieth. India has a great starting point to be an early leader in this fourth industrial era. Whether we grasp this opportunity or lose the plot, as we did with the third industrial transformation (internet-driven low-cost manufacturing), only time will tell.

Give Trump's trade deal a chance

If president Trump wants to put his name on a big, splashy agreement that ultimately just returns things to the status quo, let him have it. It is certainly better than tilting at windmills around Beijing's industrial policy

DAVID FICKLING

Bloomberg

YOU KNOW THAT trade breakthrough we were all talking about a few days ago? It is not looking so close. Just three days after president Donald Trump reported "substantial progress" in talks with China, the man doing most of the talking was out pouring cold water. "Much still needs to be done", US trade negotiator Robert Lighthizer told Congress Wednesday, and it is still in doubt whether the two sides can come to terms. Lighthizer's refusal to bend in pursuit of a deal is admirable in its way. As we argued earlier this week, the US companies that have suffered weaker demand and higher costs from the past year's trade war are unlikely to welcome a final agreement based on no more than commitments to buy more farm produce and hydrocarbons.

At the same time, perhaps he has something to learn from the Trump administration's approach to North Korea. Negotiators from Washington are no longer demanding Pyongyang make a full accounting of its nuclear programs, NBC News reported Thursday citing current and former senior US officials. That flexibility looks alarming in a nuclear-proliferation context. On trade, however, a Trumpian deal may be just what the world needs. Consider the previous trade pacts agreed by this administration, with Mexico, Canada and South Korea. In contrast to the ambition of the North American Free Trade Agreement or Trans-Pacific Partnership, each is essentially a modest adjustment to existing policies. China is a whole different ball game, as Lighthizer told the House of Representatives:

What the president wants is an agreement that, number one, is enforceable—but that changes the pattern of practice of forced technology transfer, intellectual property protection, large industrial policy subsidies; and then a whole variety of specific impediments to trade, and unfair practices in the area of agriculture, in the area of services. What we want is fair trade. That requires structural change, and it has to be enforceable".

Removal of forced technology transfers in manufacturing is a possibility that Premier Li Keqiang has raised and intellectual property reform is a pet project of president Xi Jinping, so movement on those areas ought to be quite achievable with the right combination of carrots and sticks. Even agriculture has potential, given China's need to feed its growing population as cheaply as possible. The problems come with the other asks: industrial policy, services and enforceability.

There is no sign that China is rushing to reform the state's role in the economy—quite the opposite. Bailouts of distressed debt seem overwhelmingly directed at state companies in strategic sectors, with local governments taking up the lion's share of the dwindling supply of cash.

Removing impediments to services investment, meanwhile, opens an immense can of worms. Some areas, such as retail and hotels, are already reasonably accessible to foreign companies, while finance is being gradually liberalised. Perhaps there is a chance to crack the door ajar on aviation and logistics too, although it is hard to see much of an opportunity for American businesses there.

Beyond that, though, it is all but impossible to imagine the current Chinese government loosening foreign investment rules in closed sectors such as government services, healthcare and education—not to mention the media, information and technology industries where Beijing sees control as an existential issue. The same goes for enforceability. A deal that compels performance is essentially one where punitive tariffs aren't removed until there is proof that China is upholding its side of the agreement, or at the very least, are kept suspended and ready to be reimposed at any moment. That is hardly going to inspire confidence that the current trade tensions are buried.

Lighthizer's list of asks is a worthwhile one, and a China that reformed in the way he is pushing would probably be better both for its people and for the global economy. But if Beijing is set on resisting those changes, the trade negotiator is banging his head against a wall, and in the meantime, the tensions risk sucking about 0.4 percentage points from long-term global GDP, according to the IMF. If president Trump wants to put his name on a big, splashy agreement that ultimately just returns things to the status quo, let him have it. It is certainly better than tilting at windmills around Beijing's industrial policy, or hoping to get a black-letter agreement to end industrial espionage that China doesn't even admit is happening.

To quote Trump: The Art of the Deal, "I also protect myself by being flexible. I never get too attached to one deal or one approach". Lighthizer could do worse than follow one of his boss's oldest pieces of advice.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IAF pilot's release

The promise of Pakistani PM Imran Khan in the Pakistani Parliament that IAF pilot Abhinandan Varthaman, taken captive by the Pakistani army, would be released on Friday without insisting on using him as a bargaining chip came as happy news. By this single act of statesmanship and magnanimity, it has come to be applauded as an act of strength and not weakness. It will go a long way towards repairing the damage done to the India-Pakistan relations since the Pulwama attack. It will open up the possibilities of talks being held for the normalisation of relations. The safe release of the pilot that is to take place in the next 24 hours is good for the cause of peace. It must be followed up with more similar measures to build trust and good neighbourliness

— G David Milton, Maruthancode

Tightening its hold

Unlike Reliance, well into the process of maximising the benefits of a technology breakthrough, sectoral laggards have resorted to defensive measures in order to preserve ARPU and are seemingly compelled to form a strategic collaboration in order to establish a high-speed fibre-optic network. The company is backed by sound financials and promises a soaring future growth, on account of improving margins in refinery, a widening user-base in the telecom space and increased proliferation of petro-products. Cost efficiency, coupled with a high risk-appetite, has allowed the enterprise to set higher benchmarks and create potential entry barriers for competitors. Further, a good mix of concentration and penetration strategies, besides regular initiatives to diversify, works well for Reliance

— G David Milton, Maruthancode

●Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

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Illustration: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

RANVEER NAGAICH

The author is Young Professional to Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog. Views are personal
@RanveerNagaich

The jobless growth narrative is a myth

According to our analysis, about 24 million non-agriculture jobs have been created in the three years between 2016-17 and 2018-19—an average of 8 million per year. The construction sector has benefited from the government's push towards infrastructure creation. The services sector added 12 million jobs in these three years. This indicates enough jobs are being created for new entrants to the labour market

THE EXTENT OF job creation in India has always been subject to debate. At present, the narrative being touted by some is that India's growth, over past 4-5 years, has been of 'jobless growth'. The assertion here is that no new jobs have been created in India over the past five years. The piecemeal leak of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report has added fuel to this fire. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), through its surveys, has been painting a picture of rising unemployment as well.

The assertion and arguments for jobless growth defy common sense, with the economy growing at 7%-plus. We also know that the investment activity has been subdued, with the investment-to-GDP ratio (at current prices) staying flat at 28.7% in 2015-16 to 28.6% in 2017-18. Moreover, the growth of non-food bank credit offtake has also plummeted in the recent years. Therefore, an argument for jobless growth would imply that entirety of India's growth is driven by a rise in total factor productivity, for which no empirical evidence has been provided by any of the claimants.

One also needs to understand the different types of unemployment that exist. Structural unemployment occurs when traditional industries decline due to the advent of new technology. Cyclical unemployment occurs with downturn or disruption in markets. Frictional unemployment occurs when a job-seeker is between jobs. Furthermore, we also need to be aware of the concept of the natural rate of unemployment. Even if the economy is at a steady state equilibrium, a certain level of unemployment will always exist, which is usually frictional or structural in nature.

With that in mind, there is, however, a method through which we can empirically estimate the extent of job creation in India. This can be achieved through calculating employment elasticities.

Elasticities measure the response of one economic variable in response to changes in another. Formally, employment elasticity is the percentage change in employment divided by the percentage change in GDP growth.

The estimation of employment elasticities in India has been problematic due to the lack of a continuous time series on employment. Earlier studies have estimated employment elasticities with respect to total output. These studies show that the overall elasticity of employment with respect to output has been falling since the 1990s. Whilst this may be true, it masks important sectoral differences. With the labour force exiting agriculture, the shift of labour from low-paying jobs with low productivity to relatively better paid and more productive jobs will be masked. Hence, the number of non-agriculture jobs being created serves as an important barometer of employment generation in India. The need is to generate sector-wise estimates of labour elasticity to understand the true extent of job creation in India.

As part of the world KLEMS (Capital, Labour, Energy, Materials and Services) project, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been maintaining the India KLEMS database, which provides us a time series on employment from 1980-81 to 2015-16. The gross value added (GVA) by industry is also available in this database.

This allows us to estimate sector-wise employment elasticities. Regressing the growth rate of employment over sector, GVA provides us with the estimates of employment elasticities. This, in turn, allows us to determine the extent of job creation, by sector, given the sectoral growth rate. Our sample runs from 1993-94 to 2015-16. Labour force data has been taken from the International Labour Organisation (ILO). A review of literature reveals that the estimated elasticities are similar to those estimated by other studies, using the same dataset. The estimates are also close to the elasticities provided in the 12th Five Year Plan, despite using a different dataset. Therefore, we can be reasonably assured of the robustness of these estimates.

With the KLEMS database providing data until 2015-16, it is possible to project employment generated using the estimated elasticities and the sectoral growth rates, as provided by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). Therefore, implied employment growth has been calculated for the years 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19. To get a sense of labour exit from agriculture, it has been assumed that agricultural labour decreased by 2% per annum, the same rate of decline witnessed between the two thick National Sample Survey (NSS) rounds on employment in 2004-05 and 2011-12.

According to our analysis, approximately 24 million non-agriculture jobs have been created in the three years between 2016-17 and 2018-19. This is an average of 8 million per year. Clearly, the jobless growth narrative is, indeed, a myth. The construction sector, with the highest elasticity, has benefited from the current government's push towards infrastructure creation. The services sector has added about 12 million jobs in these three years as well. This indicates that enough jobs are being created for new entrants to the labour market.

However, this is not to say that India's job is done. In fact, 43% of our population is still employed in the agriculture sector. We need to further accelerate growth so that the labour force flowing out from agriculture finds formal, well-paying jobs. This is perhaps our biggest challenge. Blue-collar jobs, in and around agriculture—food processing, transport, aggregation, mechanisation—are potential areas that can absorb the labour force exiting agriculture. Apprenticeships need to be expanded as well. Reforms in labour laws are still needed. NITI Aayog's *Strategy for New India @ 75* contains several recommendations in this regard. Codification of labour laws needs to be completed at the earliest. The National Policy on Domestic Workers needs to be operationalised. Common facilities for MSMEs in labour-intensive sectors should be pursued as well. India also needs to prepare its labour force in new and emerging technologies, colloquially known as Industry 4.0. These reforms, amongst the others suggested in *Strategy for New India @ 75*, should ensure that India creates an adequate number of jobs, both for labour exiting agriculture and new entrants to the labour force.

Sector-wise job creation (million)

Sector	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Mining & quarrying	0.06	0.03	0.04
Manufacturing	0.77	0.58	0.77
Electricity, gas & water	0.02	0.02	0.02
Construction	3.5	3.4	2.76
Trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting	1.79	2.08	1.75
Financial, real estate & professional services	1.71	1.27	1.01
Public administration, defence & other services	0.75	0.99	0.73
Additional non-agriculture jobs created	8.6	8.37	7.06

TOKENISATION

A safer way to transact online

KALPESH J MEHTA

The author is partner, Deloitte India

It is a process in which sensitive card information is replaced with a randomly generated unique token or symbol

THE INDIAN ECONOMY has traditionally been dominated by cash. However, the increased adoption of smartphones together with a favourable regulatory environment are pushing the economy to a less cash-dependent state, and promoting the usage of digital payments. There has been a rapid growth trajectory as India moves to a less cash-dependent state. The value, and volume, of online transactions more than doubled in the last year alone.

Increased adoption of the new mode of online payments increases the need to seek measures to mitigate cyber risk. Globally as well, cybersecurity is a top focus. Keeping this in mind, regulators have increased their focus to ensure a safe and secure environment to promote a cashless economy and further the vision of digitalisation for all. In this scenario, the recent announcement on extending permissions for tokenisation of debit, credit and prepaid card transactions to multiple use-cases/channels enhances the safety of the digital payments ecosystem, and is a welcome move that will be highly beneficial to address the safety concerns of payment channels. The in-app payment landscape would be the greatest beneficiary of this move, as a majority of the mobile app providers stored card details to facilitate e-commerce, and were susceptible to hacks and data loss.

Tokenisation is a highly-secure method of protecting card credentials. It is a process in which sensitive card information is replaced with a randomly generated unique token or symbol. These tokens would ensure that sensitive card data is not transmitted or stored in an unsecure format. The data-centric security approach focuses on substituting the sensitive data with a non-sensitive equivalent that is meaningless or has no value to those who are trying to source the data. The primary advantage of tokenisation is security, and over time it can be integrated with other technologies. Once the transaction goes through, the payment processor sends a confirmation back to the merchant with the randomly generated token identity, which is stored in place of the card data in their system. At no point does card data ever get stored within the retailer's environment. Further, tokenisation can be the answer to securing not just payments, but other aspects of commerce as well, including the transmission and storage of electronic health records and age verification identity checks, among others.

> The data-centric security approach focuses on substituting the sensitive data with a non-sensitive equivalent that is meaningless or has no value to those who are trying to source the data

IT has evolved to become integral with business needs. In order to make sure that the technology is impactful, the platform needs to imbibe a forward-looking enterprise-level architecture, and inventory of technologies against changing cyber threats. There is a need to develop a common vision and an agreement of strategy for focusing efforts since these elements cannot be adopted in a silo. Instead, they have to be deliberately ingrained deeply into the core enterprise architectural fabric, which, in turn, must be driven by a lean, agile and dynamic operating model. Also, interoperability (i.e. transactions between different service providers), similar to that available with digital wallets, needs to be worked on for tokenisation as well, to make it equally attractive and convenient—so that the technology is established and is accepted at all points of sale terminals.

In a majority of the cases, new-age channels and offerings have been layered onto an ageing core infrastructure, which has severely limited their ability to integrate seamlessly and respond to the changing business demands. The most effective way to do this is through understanding operational processes, needs and goals of the business. The tokenisation methodology is modular in nature, and depending on the nature of the risks and risk appetite, applicable requirements and regulations, budget, and timelines, one can prioritise specific phases and activities to meet the data security needs. This ensures that while offering convenience and various payment avenues, the information is safe and not compromised.

Falling FLFPR is not new, but is critical

Fewer women working is a big problem but if DeMo is cited as the reason for this, how do you explain an equally sharp fall in FLFPR over long periods in the past?

LEKHA CHAKRABORTY & NAMITA JAIN

Chakraborty is associate professor, NIPFP, and visiting professor at American University. Jain is a management professional

THE MEDIA ATTENTION has been focused, over the last few weeks, on the sharp decline in the female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) in India—from 31.2% in 2011-12 to 23.3% in 2017-18—and the fall has been used to explain the contraction in the country's workforce. Although the FLFPR numbers thrown up by the private sector CMIE's household survey are much lower at 11.7% for 2017-18, its MD and CEO Mahesh Vyas explains the fall in overall labour force participation rates (LFPR) as a result of demonetisation when economic activity across the country collapsed.

The reason for a falling FLFPR is not demonetisation alone. FLFPR fell from 42.7% in 2004-05 to 31.2% in 2011-12, a fall that is almost as sharp as the fall from 2011-12 to 2017-18. If demonetisation caused the second fall, a list of other significant determinants of the monotonic and persistent fall in FLFPR need an urgent attention of policymakers.

Rethinking fiscal policy as "employer of last resort," India designed a rights-based job guarantee programme for 100 days—Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Why ensuring job cards to women have not effectively translated into rise in employment? Are there any complimentary fiscal services needed other than just employment policies to get women in workforce? What constraints women from entering the labour force even when 100 days of jobs are guaranteed by the government? A study by NIPFP (Chakraborty and Singh, 2018; *https://goo.gl/nRhaRG*) revealed a new empirical perspective to the existing literature on FLFPR that the "care economy" burden of women (spending time on fetching of clean water, fuel collection, domestic chores) is one of the important determinants of FLFPR; and their "time poverty" can affect "income poverty" as the time burden of women in domestic chores hinder them from entering the workforce. The NIPFP study also found that joblessness among the poor who do not have MGNREGA job cards was severe than those having job cards. Another recent study by Ashwini Deshpande and Naila Kabeer of the London School of Economics, presented at the UN University (UNU-WIDER, Helsinki) on February 20, 2019, in the context of West Bengal, also argued for a shift in focus of analysis of low FLFPR in India from "religious conservatism" to labour demand constraints (lack of jobs in India), as well as specific labour supply constraints such as the burden of housework or domestic chores. This has significant policy implications, to design comprehensive "care economy" infrastructure policies in India.

Indeed, the decline in FLFPR is despite strong initiatives for "specifically targeted programmes" for women's socio-economic empowerment taken by successive governments, as provided in the "Gender Budgeting" Statements in Expenditure Budget (Volume 1) every year, including the Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) set up in 1986 and the "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" scheme launched in 2015. The insufficiency of budgetary allocations for such crucial schemes is a concern. Fiscal marksmanship of gender budgeting (the deviation between what is budgeted for these programmes and the real spending) is yet another issue when we talk about these programmes on women's socio-economic empowerment.

Indeed, the National Skill Development Council was set up in 2009 with the mandate of training 15 crore youth for jobs by 2022. The National Skills Mission launched in 2015 has had 1 crore youth join the Skill Mission each year (according to the Skill Mission website). However, the NSSO data shows LFPR for youth (15-29 years) saw a decline from 56.4% in 2004-05 to 38.2% in 2017-18, which is a drop of 18.2 percentage points. FLFPR in this age group dropped from 37.1% in 2004-05 to 16.4% in 2017-18, which is a 55.79% drop. The quantum is similar to the drop in the overall FLFPR (15-plus years), a decline of 45.4%. And while there has been a fall in LFPR for men, it is half that for women—that for men fell from 84% to 75.8%, versus 42.7% to 23.3% for women, over 2004-05 to 2017-18. Interestingly, while India's FLFPR was falling, that for Bangladesh has been rising steadily, from 23.9% in 1990 to 36% in 2010. India's FLFPR is the lowest among the emerging economies.

Also, from an economic growth perspective, a more logical answer for the fall is what is called the "Feminisation U" (Fem-U). An ILO paper by Sher Verick (*https://goo.gl/wiL8AU*) studied 2018 data for 172 countries to study the Fem-U and found evidence of a U-shaped relationship between FLFPR and GDP per capita. The hypothesis that growth lowers female participation rates in the early stages of development and increases it at later stages may actually apply in a broad sense to India, though it has far lower participation rates at the same income level compared to most countries on the curve. However, Fem-U is an empirical question, which needs further research in India.

That India will benefit from moving up the second leg of the Fem-U is obvious given what it does to income levels across the country. According to the ILO, global LFPR for women was close to 49% in 2018 as compared to 75% for men. Reducing the gender gap in South Asia alone by 2025, the ILO estimates, can lead to a 7.2% increase in GDP for the region.

If the fastest and smartest way to increase economic growth is to increase FLFPR, investing in comprehensive "care economy" public infrastructure in India is crucial. It is high time the macroeconomic policymakers realise the significance of integrating "gender lens" in job creation, with explicit "care economy" public infrastructure policies—both physical and social infrastructure—to make the high growth sustainable in the long run.

The mysterious ways of geomagnetism

The geomagnetic field is weakening and often flips orientation. It's unknown what causes flips and how long flips take

QUANTUM LEAP

DEVANGSHU DATTA

One fallout from the United States (US) government shutdown was a delay in updating global navigation systems. Many navigational systems, starting with the humble compass, are anchored to the Magnetic North Pole (MNP).

The MNP shifts and it's necessary to reorient the position of the MNP, every five years or so. The next update was due in 2020. But MNP has shifted so much in the last four years, an emergency update was in progress when the US government shut down.

The Earth is a roughly spherical body, spinning west to east. The geographic North Pole is the northernmost point of the axis on which it spins and the geographic South Pole, the southern-most. Maps use a grid marked with lines circles of longitude and latitude. There are 360 circles of longitude, each joining the geographic North and South Poles, with Greenwich Observatory, the UK as the zero-point. There are 90 circles of latitude running east-west, with the equator as zero-point. Each circle is further sub-divided into minutes and seconds (navigation systems use decimals). Every spot on the Earth's surface has coordinate references. Military applications like the GPS are accurate to a few metres.

There is no easy way to locate the geographic poles. But the Earth has a strong magnetic field. The northern point at which the magnetic field "dips" into the Earth is the MNP (ditto for the Magnetic South Pole or MSP). Compasses (or loose iron filings in school experiments) point along the axis of the line joining the MNP and MSP. A magnetic needle points towards the MNP, except when it's actually at the MNP, when it will point straight down into the Earth.

The MNP (actually a large area, not a point reference) is therefore, used as an anchor for mapping. If we know where the MNP is, in relation to the geographic north pole, navigational accuracy is possible, using even a simple compass. A compass points to the MNP and, if we know the degree of difference between MNP and North Pole (the "magnetic declination"), we can calculate the location.

The magnetic field is believed to be caused by flows of molten iron, and other metals with magnetic properties, deep inside the Earth. Those flows generate electric currents, which cause the Earth's geomagnetism. But as liquid metal flows, it causes the magnetic poles to wander around.

The MNP's shifts require regular position updates and the shifts have, for unknown reasons, been accelerating. The MNP is moving at about 55 km per year. It is currently about 10 degrees south of the geographic North Pole, somewhere in the Arctic Ocean. It was in Northern Canada when it was first mapped in the 1830s, and it is now headed towards Siberia, moving north-by north west. It crossed the international dateline in 2017.

The World Magnetic Model (WMM) as it's called, was scheduled for an update on January 15. That update was finally released on February 4, after delays caused by the shutdown. The WMM is maintained by the United States' National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and the United Kingdom's Defence Geographic Centre.

The WMM is a predictive model. It estimates likely MNP movement across the next five years. It was developed jointly by the US National Geophysical Data Center and the British Geological Survey. The WMM is used by defence forces, and for commercial sea and air navigation, surveying and mapping systems, satellite tracking, commercial GPS services and to help telecom networks derive location data for users. Airport runways, for example, carry a numeric coordinate reference from the WMM.

GPS bounces signals from three or four satellites off a given spot and exactly locates it by calculating the delays in each signal. So GPS itself doesn't need magnetic data. But it can't tell the direction in which a car, ship, or drone, is heading. That's why WMM references are useful for navigation.

The WMM crunches magnetic observations by mariners, by specialised magnetic-field tracking satellites and by 120 magnetic observatories around the world. A historic record of MNP and MSP movements are maintained in the International Geomagnetic Reference Field. The geomagnetic field is weakening. Ever so often, it flips orientation. Molten metallic rock aligns along the field. A study of geological records suggest many flips have occurred and the last flip was around 780,000-800,000 years ago.

It's unknown what causes flips and how long flips take. The effect on the environment and animals is also unknown. Many animals and birds use geomagnetism to orient themselves. Migratory birds, bats, butterflies use the geomagnetic field and so do dolphins and whales. Going beyond the utility of geolocation and navigation, there are mysteries worth researching here.

CHINESE WHISPERS

History visits Supreme Court

PIC: TWITTER

After the visit of a 'Mughal prince' two days ago, it was the turn of another historical figure to visit the Supreme Court premises on Thursday. A man dressed as Mahatma Gandhi visited the court premises and was seen entering one of the court rooms. While it was unclear which case that gentleman was planning to attend, his presence did turn quite a few heads, thanks to his attire and gait. On Tuesday, a man who claimed to be the sixth generation descendant of the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, had visited the court during the hearing of Ram Janambhoomi land title dispute case.

Upset commission

Fourteen months after it was formed, the Justice (retired) A Arumughaswamy Commission, which has been probing the death of former Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalithaa, is nowhere near completing its task. The reason? No one seems to heed its summons. Former chief minister O Panneerselvam, who demanded a probe into the circumstances leading to Jayalalithaa's death, is finding it difficult to attend its sessions. He missed the Commission's summons for the seventh time on Thursday as he was visiting Delhi in connection with a case related to his party's (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) symbol. He missed an earlier summons because he was busy forging alliances for the coming Lok Sabha election. Earlier, Apollo Hospitals, where the late chief minister was admitted till her death, had also urged the Commission to defer the appearance of its doctors stating that a related matter was pending with the High Court.

An anthem and a challenge

Here is a challenge for next generation entrepreneurs and innovators. On Thursday, Union Minister Harsh Vardhan said it was up to them to completely abolish the use of single-use plastics by 2022. He said that while launching an anthem as a part of a campaign to make India plastic-free by that year. Prepared and produced by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Smriti Manch, a non-profit organisation that works on various social and environmental issues, the anthem was launched in seven languages — Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada. While launching the anthem, the minister also stressed on the need for plastic waste management and recycling.

Nexus between governance & share value

The day is not far when the announcement of governance scores and movements on ESG indices trigger buy-sell decisions of investors

CYRIL SHROFF &

AMITA GUPTA KATRAGADDA

CEOs are under constant pressure from internal and external stakeholders to improve share price performance. Typically this expectation translates into the management focusing on top-line growth, bottom-line accretion and other financial metrics such as return on capital and dividend distribution. A close look at the winds of change in investor priorities, however, shows that there is a growing nexus between corporate governance and share value. We believe CEOs and boards can, and must, strategically unlock this "governance premium" as an avenue to drive stock performance.

This assertion is backed by OECD's observation that investors do pay a higher premium for good corporate governance. The premium is justified by the perception that a well-functioning governance framework drives better present value through: (a) attracting and retaining better talent; (b) receiving better quality capital for growth; (c) reducing the cost of debt; (d) ensuring better risk management and lower volatility; (e) improving the stability, operational efficiencies and longer-term sustainability of businesses; and (f) yielding reputational value, which will, in turn, translate into better top-line and bottom-line metrics.

The presence of this governance premium is also backed by empirical data. A quantitative analysis of price to book ratios and corporate governance scores by Roberto Newell and Gregory Wilson concluded, "even after allowing for the effect of characteristics such as financial performance (measured by returns on equity) and size on valuations, we found that companies with better corporate governance did have higher price-to-book ratios, indicating that investors will pay a premium for shares in a well-governed company".

In fact, the most recent 2018 study by IFC, Institutional Investor Advisory Services and BSE Ltd, shows that the BSE Sensex companies that were scored in 2016 and 2017 in the "Good" and "Leadership" categories based on their scorecard have shown a stronger price performance than those in the "Fair" and "Basic" categories over a two-year period, and one-year period, respectively. We anticipate that as more data becomes available over the next few years, there will be a more robust endorsement of this trend. Conversely, companies with seemingly bad corporate governance standards have seen a slow decline or on occurrence of specific "governance issue" lost value immediately.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

Driven by these compelling rationales and market evidence, it is hardly a surprise that investors are closely monitoring governance scores. Internationally, companies are being evaluated and rated on their environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance by various third party providers of reports and ratings for instance Bloomberg ESG Data Service; Corporate Knights Global 100; Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI); Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS); and MSCI ESG Research.

Of the $88 trillion assets under management globally, more than one quarter is now invested bearing in mind ESG principles — a trend that is, and will continue to be, on the rise. Various jurisdictions including the United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia and Netherlands have mandated investment entities such as pension funds, insurance companies and asset managers to consider ESG factors and also report on the manner in which they are taking ESG factors into account. Leading asset managers such as BlackRock, State Street and Vanguard have also taken a strong and open position on the role of ESG factors in their investment decisions. There are more than 2,000 asset managers globally that are currently signatories to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment.

There is also the shift in the changing demography of the "investor". E&Y, in its report Sustainable investing: *The Millennial Investor* has noted that there is a greater demand for sustainable investments, with such demand being driven by millennials who, when compared to non-millennials, are more likely to invest in companies that use high ESG practices and have specific social or environmental outcomes.

In this changing investment environment, a focused and concerted effort to adopt and engage with better governance practices that speaks to the "Sustainable Investor" could go far in improving share value by meeting the needs of this fast growing market segment. In addition to ensuring compliance with mandatory regulatory norms, the board and management would do well to strategically consider the voluntary adoption of best practices. In the spirit of "we get what we measure", we would recommend close review of measurable improvements in the areas of wholesome composition of the board, the quality of disclosure, stakeholder engagement, conflict of interest and related party transactions, sustainability (both environmental and social) and business responsibility initiatives, strategy, integrated reporting, risk management, succession planning, transparency in executive compensation and employee welfare.

While currently it is the quarterly financial results that are closely monitored for CEO performance, with the changing investor priorities, we anticipate that the day is not far when the announcement of governance scores and movements on ESG indices trigger buy-sell decisions of investors. This may even be accelerated by the increasing institutional holding in the markets and decreasing holding of traditional Indian promoters. It is time for India Inc to prepare for this game changer.

Shroff is managing partner, Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas; Katragadda is a partner in the firm's disputes, governance and policy practice

INSIGHT

The liberal's dilemma

YOGENDRA YADAV

The Pulwama terror attack and subsequent developments have exposed a gaping hole in our liberal conscience: The lack of a cogent view on national security.

The result is for everyone to see. Any such incident catches us liberals on the wrong foot. We readily condemn any such attack. We ritually, and these days hastily, pay homage to those who are 'martyrs'. And after that, we don't quite know what to say.

We know what is not to be done. Warmongering is obviously no solution. We point out, rightly so, that any knee-jerk reaction would be counterproductive. No doubt, an armed offensive by itself is not an enduring solution. We are quick to point out that the problem is not just external. Outsiders would not be able to do very much if there was no domestic support for the cause that the terrorists espouse. Clearly, it is not just a law and order problem. And, needless to say, targeting of our own citizens, mostly minorities, would only compound the problem.

This is all fine. The question is: What, then, is to be done?

Our answer is usually placed in a time horizon called "the last instance". We say, again rightly so, that in the last instance, Kashmir is a political problem that can only have a political solution. In the last instance, you have to address the deep alienation affecting the population in the Valley. And this is not possible without demilitarisation of Jammu and Kashmir and beginning of a genuine democratic process. We have all the good answers, in the last instance.

But, what about this instance? What about all the instances before the last one? The trouble is that most of us live most of our lives in those in-between instances. And this liberal response does not equip us to deal with real life questions that we face.

Let me clarify. By "liberals", I do not mean only those who believe in a doctrine called Liberalism, as opposed to Socialism or Communitarianism. I use it in a more generic sense to mean all those, the present author included, who share the vision of a constitutional order that guarantees basic liberties, human rights, rule of law, institutional autonomy and procedural norms. Those who share this belief may hold left or right economic visions. They may have different political preferences. But they are united by their opposition to creeping authoritarianism, a majoritarian culture that sanctions lynching and a growing xenophobia and by their desire for a more plural and tolerant India.

At a moment like Pulwama, the liberals are on the defensive. In the wild world of political rhetoric, it opens them to false but powerful allegations of being unpatriotic

We liberals, honourable exceptions apart, do not think through our position on national security. Take the Pulwama attack, for instance. A terror group operating from across the border owned up the act. The Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) has a free run in Pakistan and is known to play to the tune of Pakistan's "deep state", the army's GHQ and the ISI.

How should we respond to it, here and now? To this, we have no cogent answer. Not to put too fine a point on it: When it comes to national security, we live in denial.

This denial comes from two sources.

One, our post-Independence liberal elite feels awkward about nationalism.

Like the European elite, we have started associating nationalism with negativity, jingoism and ethnic supremacists. In doing so, we have cut ourselves off from the rich and inclusivist legacy of Indian nationalism. We want to live in a modern nation-state without caring for our nationhood.

Two, we all partake in civilised hypocrisy: In liberal circles, it is not politically correct to discuss unpleasant matters like defence. At the butcher's shop, we politely look away after ordering minced meat. We all wish to be protected. We want better policing, better law and order, and more secure borders. But we don't want to discuss security.

This denial results in political schizophrenia or a perverse division of political labour: The Bharatiya Janata Party-led (BJP) government is in charge of the security of our borders, while we take charge of human rights. The flip side of this division of labour is that right-wing hawks, if not amateurish TV studio gladiators, have captured popular imagination on national security. Over the years, the BJP has captured this issue despite its poor record during Kandahar or the worsening of national security situation during the Narendra Modi regime.

No wonder, at a moment like Pulwama, the liberals are on the defensive. Their condemnation of terror attack and condolences to the victims appear suspect. Their suggestions seem woolly or beside the point. In the wild world of political rhetoric, it opens them to false but powerful allegations of being unpatriotic.

This can be the starting point of making amends for this deep rooted error. There is no shortage of sensible and knowledgeable defence experts in the country, including those who have served in the armed forces and those with liberal disposition. Some of the sanest advice and analysis over the last fortnight has come from those who have themselves donned the uniform. But their view does not become our common sense, as it is not integrated into a liberal vision.

Let our response to Pulwama be the starting point of a fuller and serious engagement with a national security doctrine. While everyone talks about Pakistan, we need to think hard about the more serious long-term security challenges — especially from China. The size and resources of our armed forces need to be aligned with the requirement of India's security challenges in the 21st century. And we need to refurbish the entire security apparatus to respond to the internal security challenges in a professional and humane manner. That can provide us with the space not just to respond to terror attacks like Pulwama but also to resolve the Kashmir issue and Maoist insurgency within a democratic frame.

By special arrangement with ThePrint

The author is the National President of Swaraj India

LETTERS

Optimise returns

This refers to the editorial "Beyond PCA" (February 28). The phased infusion of fresh capital during 2017-18 and 2018-19 by the central government enabled six public sector banks to come out of the prompt corrective action (PCA) framework of the Reserve Bank of India. Notwithstanding the lifting of restrictions on lending activities of those banks, they need to be selective while deploying funds to curtail various risks, ensure quality of assets and optimise returns.

Owing to capital infusion, the banks will resort to increased provisioning and accordingly, the level of net non-performing assets will go down. As a result, the lending capacity will decline. To restore and augment the capacity to lend, these banks will need to focus on the resolution and recovery of bad assets, besides the return on assets. Maintaining the quality of assets until repayment to prevent any addition to the bad loans is crucial to improve returns and curtail the cost of credit.

With growing competition in resource mobilisation, the interest rates on deposits are becoming more competitive and costly, resulting in a rise in the cost of funds. The lenders that came out of the PCA must concentrate on mobilising current and savings deposits to supplement the margins. Cutting operational costs, preventing loss on frauds, and plugging the leakage of revenue must become a serious concern to the entire human capital of the banks. The business like attitude and approach by the board of the banks will pave the way for bringing in professionalism and better governance. Instead of relying on the central government for additional capital, lenders must raise capital from the market.

VSK Pillai Kottayam

Shift focus

Pakistan must focus on investing in quality education for all, production of goods, innovative and profitable agriculture, industries, renewable clean fuel (solar and hydrogen energy), and on stopping plastic usage. Above all, it should nullify terrorist activities and the arms buying race urgently.

Elsewhere, people are uniting and working on the development of their countries peacefully. Koreans are sending united teams to international competitions. Take China's Belt and Road Initiative across land and maritime route, think of the two Germanys uniting to break the wall.

In every country the common man wants to simply go about his business. While this presumably is the case in Pakistan also, it does not prevent the country from indulging in destructive activities. But all that is a waste of money and results in the loss of precious lives of soldiers, innocent citizens and even assets on both sides of the border.

Who can solve problems between two nations arising from man-made issues?

PVM Rao Secunderabad

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

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Lower than expected

Disappointing GDP print buries some good news as well

The Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Thursday released the Second Advance Estimates of gross domestic product (GDP) for the ongoing fiscal year of 2018-19, which incorporate the quarterly estimates for the third quarter of the financial year, namely the quarter between October and December 2018. These figures came as a negative surprise, and the estimate for GDP growth in 2018-19 had to be decreased from the previous 7.2 per cent to 7 per cent for the full year. GDP growth was clearly decelerating over the course of the financial year. The third quarter saw growth of only 6.6 per cent. To be sure, India still grew faster than China in the third quarter (that country grew by 6.4 per cent in the December quarter), but that is a small consolation.

The second quarter, between July and September 2018, had seen growth at 7 per cent, and the first quarter of the year, between April and June, had clocked in 8 per cent GDP growth. This is, as is evident, quite a sharp deceleration. What should be particularly worrying is that agriculture after solid growth of 5 per cent in 2017-18 might grow at only 2.7 per cent — in terms of gross value added in basic prices — over the ongoing fiscal year. This, together with the wholesale price deflator of -0.8 per cent for food items, is a clear reflection of possible agricultural distress that requires focused attention from the government.

It appears likely that one of the main reasons for the slower growth might well be a reduction in the pace of government expenditure over the year. A key indicator, namely Union government revenue expenditure (net of interest payments and subsidies) grew by 9.2 per cent over the period between April and December 2018, as compared to a growth of 16.7 per cent in the equivalent period one year previously. Gross value added at basic prices for the government sector is estimated to grow at 8.5 per cent over the current financial year as opposed to almost 12 per cent growth in the previous financial year. This suggests that much of the previous growth was pushed up by high government expenditure and now the fiscal mathematics makes this growth model unsustainable.

However, there is also some good news suggesting that a more normal and sustainable private investment-led growth path might be returning. Gross Fixed Capital Formation, or GFCF, at current and constant prices are estimated to be 28.9 per cent and 32.3 per cent of GDP, respectively, during the current financial year. This is up from the corresponding rates in the previous year, 2017-18, of 28.6 per cent and 31.4 per cent. The rates of GFCF are also up in the third quarter of 2018-19 as compared to the previous quarter of the year. It is also worth noting that the manufacturing sector is due to grow — measured in terms of gross value added at basic prices — at over 8 per cent over 2018-19, as compared to under 6 per cent in the previous year. If accurate, this should eventually be reflected in healthy earnings for the private corporate sector, which comprises more than three-fourths of manufacturing output.

Needless controversy

India has not attempted to violate the Indus Water Treaty

Water resources minister Nitin Gadkari's statement on stopping India's share of water from going to Pakistan has got blown out of proportion to create a pointless controversy over the Indus Water Treaty (IWT). Though the minister's remarks are unambiguous, it has been clarified through the subsequent official statements that the reference was to the unutilised water of the rivers Satluj, Beas and Ravi that belongs to India and is flowing to Pakistan. This water is now proposed to be gainfully used within the country. Any misinterpretation to project it as a threat of punitive action against Pakistan in the wake of the recent dastardly terror attack on the Indian armed forces' convoy in Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir is wholly uncalled for. In fact, an indication of this move had come soon after the Uri attack in 2016 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said, "Blood and water cannot flow together".

What needs to be realised is that the IWT, brokered by the World Bank and signed in 1960, is one of the world's most successful international water accords that has withstood the test of time and even three full-fledged wars between the two neighbours. India, behaving as a responsible upper riparian, has seldom threatened to abrogate the treaty or curtail Pakistan's share of the water. This is despite the fact that the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly passed unanimous resolutions twice, in 2003 and 2016, seeking revocation or revision of the IWT to safeguard the state's interests.

Indeed, the noteworthy point is that the IWT is principally flawed as it divides the rivers between the two countries rather than apportioning their water to them. The three east-flowing rivers — Beas, Ravi and Satluj — having a mean water flow of 33 million acre-feet (MAF) have been allotted to India while the remaining three west-flowing rivers — Indus, Chenab and Jhelum — with a much larger water flow of 80 MAF have been given to Pakistan. India has, no doubt, been allowed a limited use of the western rivers, but this is mostly for non-consumptive purposes. To make it worse, such use has been subjected to strict regulations, thus, providing Pakistan enough leverage to impede implementation of water projects by raising objections and calling for adjudication. It has made full use of it to inordinately delay projects such as Tulbul, Baglihar, Ratle, Kishanganga and others, most of which involved only the non-consumptive use of the waters of western rivers.

Unfortunately, India has also failed to create adequate infrastructure to fully tap the water of the rivers over which it has been granted unrestricted control. Consequently, nearly 5 per cent of India's water, including about 2 MAF of water from the Ravi, continues to drift across the border. It is only now that India has launched three projects — the Shahpurkandi dam on the Ravi, the second Ravi-Beas link in Punjab, and the Ujh dam on the river Ujh in Jammu and Kashmir — to harness this water. Apart from generating power and additional irrigation potential, these projects will augment water availability in several states, including Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi. Considering the potential gains from this move, the work on these projects needs to be speeded up. Equally important is to amicably resolve some of the lingering inter-state water-sharing disputes that are hindering progress on this front.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

Pakistan's dangerous blind spot

Its tolerance and encouragement of jihad have harmed it more than a thousand Indian raids could ever have

On December 11, 2008, two weeks after the attacks in Mumbai, Pakistan's *Dawn* newspaper (founded by Jinnah) reported this: "During the course of *Dawn*'s own investigations last week our reporters were able to locate a family who claimed to be the kin of the arrested young man in Mumbai. The sole survivor among the 10 attackers was named as Ajmal Kasab and... a man who said he was Amir Kasab confirmed to *Dawn* that the young man whose face had been beamed over the media was his son."

"I was in denial for the first couple of days, saying to myself it could not have been my son," he told *Dawn* in the courtyard of his house in Faridkot, a village of about 2,500 people just a few kilometres from Deepalpur on the way to Kasur. "Now I have accepted it. This is the truth. I have seen the picture in the newspaper. This is my son Ajmal."

AAKAR PATEL

The thing to notice here is the dates. The report was published 15 days after the attack and at least one week after the newspaper itself had verified the identity (December 11 was a Thursday). Why was the information held back? The answer to that has two elements.

The Indian media is thought to march in lockstep with its government when it comes to national security and particularly when it comes to Pakistan and China. To a large extent this is true. Also true is the fact that Pakistan's media, which is often braver and more honest than ours, is compromised on the matter of jihadi groups. This is out of fear of their country's military. Even reporters we would consider to be right wing, like Hamid Mir of Geo TV, have been shot for their work (Mir survived the attempt). Others, like Syed Saleem Shahzad, who reported on details of the Mumbai attackers' training, have been tortured and killed.

So fear is one reason why such things are not reported or, as in the case of *Dawn*, reported late and after much hesitation. There is another reason why the Pakistani media has not done as much work as it should have on the jihadi groups inside the country. And that has to do with its denial of the damage that the jihad project has done internally to Pakistan.

An Al Jazeera report (filed by a brave Pakistani reporter) confirms that the structure attacked in Balakot was linked to Jaish-e-Mohammed. The board outside the place carries the names of Jaish chief Masood Azhar and his brother Yousuf. The report suggests that while access to the structure is restricted by Pakistan's military, it appears that the damage done was peripheral. However, what has enraged Pakistan is not the fact that India's raid killed several Pakistanis, but the fact that the intrusion by our military represented a loss of their sovereignty. There are two aspects of this loss to sovereignty. The first is the one that the Pakistani state and most of its media are focused on. That is the loss of sovereignty to an external, whether the US Navy Seals in the case of the raid in Abbottabad or the Indian Air Force's jets. In a warrior society, this physical intrusion into your space results in a loss of honour and must be corrected.

The events of Wednesday in and around Jammu and Kashmir, which one must accept were not expected in any way by either the Indian government or the media, were precipitated by this desire to avenge the loss of sovereignty. Pakistan felt compelled to act even though India had specified it sought no escalation and even though it was obvious that Pakistan's actions would lead to escalation.

The second loss of sovereignty is the more serious one and that is the loss of internal sovereignty. Pakistan's acceptance of covert jihad as a weapon first against the Russians in Afghanistan and then in Kashmir has brutalised their own country internally.

Indians may not know that jihad emanating from Pakistan has killed more people in Pakistan than it has in India. Violence peaked in Kashmir in 2002 when 4,507 people died (violence has fallen 90 per cent since then). But in Pakistan as recently as 2014, terrorism claimed 5,519 lives.

Jihad has damaged Pakistan so much that it will soon fall behind even Bangladesh, which was once seen as a "basket case".

The hard Islamising of Sunni groups like the Jaish and its predecessor the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen has produced an army of volunteers for anti-Shia activity inside Pakistan itself. Ordinary clerics can not only capture land in Islamabad but defend it militarily against the Pakistan army (as happened in the case of the Lal Masjid episode) when they try to clear it.

So entrenched is jihad in Pakistan that the leader who tries to reverse course is himself attacked. Jaish-e-Mohammed organised two suicide bombings against president Pervez Musharraf, when he tried to ban the group.

Lashkar-e-Taiba is so widespread and powerful today that moderate Pakistanis fear it can no longer be touched, even though its damage to Pakistani interests outweighs any leverage it can give to the military.

Pakistan has suffered four intrusions into its territory— two by the American and coalition forces from the West, and now two from India. It has responded to the last one, and we do not know for now what the long term implications of our raid will be.

However, the pain that Pakistan has inflicted upon itself through the state's tolerance and encouragement of jihad and the media's ignoring of it has harmed it more than a thousand Indian raids could ever have done.

Imperfect ruling on constitutionality of IBC

On January 25, 2019, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (Code henceforth), in its entirety. The scheme of the Code, as a whole, was challenged on the ground that it violated Article 14 of the Constitution. The main argument was that the Code unfairly discriminated between operational and financial creditors. While the court's judgment brings respite to the financial sector, we argue that the judgment is partly inconsistent with the legislative intent underlying the Code, and may end up diluting the Code's effectiveness.

First, the judgment repeatedly emphasises that the objective of the law is reorganisation of the debtor, and that liquidation is a "last resort". For instance, relying on the preamble of the Code and its own judgment in the case of ArcelorMittal, the Court observed that the "primary focus of the legislation is to ensure revival and continuation of the corporate debtor by protecting the corporate debtor from its own management and from a corporate death by liquidation".

VARUN MARWAH & BHARGAVI ZAVERI

A plain reading of the preamble suggests that the preamble and the law are agnostic to the outcome of any given case. The Code does not prioritise resolution over liquidation. On the contrary, the law provides for automatic liquidation if no resolution is agreed upon, at the first instance, by the committee of creditors. The report of the Bankruptcy Law Reforms Committee (BLRC), which serves as the foundation for the rationale and design of the Code, is similarly outcome agnostic.

The repeated insistence on liquidation as a "last resort" reinforces the notion that liquidation is a bad outcome. This is inconsistent with the fundamental economic theory that capitalism requires easy exit, and that unsustainable firms must be allowed to die so that resources can be reallocated to more productive activity in the economy. A philosophy that liquidation must be avoided regresses the Indian legal framework to the days when sick firms were sought to be mandatorily rehabilitated.

A conscious endeavour to avoid liquidation at all costs, has practical implications. It encourages the judiciary to defer an outcome until a resolution is achieved. Active judicial intervention to revive a firm which is commercially resolved to be liquidated will adversely affect the timeliness of an insolvency process. Symptoms of this are evident. Most of the 12 large cases that were referred by the Reserve Bank of India in 2017 for resolution have been under the insolvency resolution process for more than 500 days. Even the smaller ones are taking an average time of more than 350 days to reach an outcome.

Second, for an Article 14 challenge to survive, it must be shown that the law unintelligibly discriminates between equals, and that such discrimination has no relation to the objectives sought to be achieved by the law. The main ground of challenge to the Code was that there was no intelligible difference between operational and financial creditors. This is a relevant distinction as operational creditors do not have a vote on the choice between reorganisation and liquidation of the debtor.

The court identified four main differences between operational and financial creditors. First, while financial creditors are secured, operational creditors are unsecured. This is largely true of the Indian debt market, as it currently stands. However, conceptually and in developed debt markets, financial creditors can be equally unsecured. For example, bond holders are often unsecured. In fact, the avowed purpose of the Code is to encourage lending to entrepreneurs who may not have assets to secure the borrowing. If the Code has its desired effects, we should see an increase in unsecured lending to firms. Over time, therefore, this distinction will be redundant.

Second, the court upheld the distinction on the basis that financial creditors are likely to be fewer by volume and value, compared to operational creditors. This is also not true, especially in the case of small and medium enterprises, whose largest creditor may be a supplier or vendor. Similarly, operational creditors may, as a group, be the largest creditors in value of a firm.

Finally, the court reasoned that financial creditors are more sophisticated, relative to operational creditors, and are involved in assessing the viability of the firm from the very beginning. The court then sought to draw a nexus between this distinction and the object sought to be achieved by the Code, as under:

"...preserving the corporate debtor as a going concern, while ensuring maximum recovery for all creditors being the objective of the Code, financial creditors are clearly different from operational creditors and therefore, there is obviously an intelligible differentia between the two..."

It is unclear why financial creditors are perceived to be more likely to "preserve the corporate debtor as a going concern, while ensuring maximum recovery for all creditors". Intuitively, employees and vendors are more adversely affected by the firm's liquidation as they lose a source of employment and an operational revenue source. For this reason, such operational creditors are more incentivised to keep the firm as a going concern, relative to financial creditors for whom the debtor's liquidation is a one-time write-off in their lending portfolio.

The reasoning of the court on the distinction between operational and financial creditors is weak and the judgment warranted a closer and more substantive nexus between the classification scheme of operational and financial creditors and the objective of the Code.

Third, the court took cognisance of the argument that the functioning of the NCLT with the administrative support of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and not the Ministry of Law and Justice (MLJ), would be inconsistent with its own earlier judgments. This is underpinned by the rationale that statutory tribunals, which perform quasi-judicial functions, must be independent of the executive wing in charge of implementing the law. This rationale is directly applicable to revenue tribunals as in such tribunals the litigant is contesting the claims of the revenue department. Arguably, it is less of a concern for tribunals that merely adjudicate disputes between private parties.

The reality is that several statutory tribunals continue to function with the administrative support of their respective nodal ministries. For example, the TDSAT continues to function with the administrative support of the Department of Telecommunications, and the labour courts with that of the Ministry of Labour and Employment. If the MLJ is now to administratively support these tribunals, capacity-building at the MLJ will be imperative.

To conclude, while the judgment offers greater stability to India's legal insolvency regime, it is an unsettling precedent both in terms of ideological outlook and implementation of the law.

The writers are researchers at the Finance Research Group, IGIDR

The road to world power

BOOK REVIEW

SHYAM SARAN

Bruno Macaes is a former Portuguese Minister for Europe and has authored a well-received book, *The Dawn of Eurasia*, which explored the re-emergence of Eurasia as the likely centre of gravity of a new international order. It focused on China as the key factor in this transition and its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as an instrumentality in reshaping the emerging order. Mr Macaes' latest book, *Belt and Road*, takes the story forward. It narrates in sharp relief the breath-taking ambition of the BRI, its domestic and external dimensions, the manner in which China has integrated political, economic, financial and technological assets in driving a project of unprecedented scale and complexity.

The first two chapters, *What is the Belt and Road* and *Nuts and Bolts*, respectively, offer a comprehensive picture of how the worldwide project is unfolding. The next two chapters, which relate the project to the world economy and to current international relations, set the stage for the final chapter on *The World After the Belt and Road*. There are a number of valuable insights in these chapters.

One, BRI represents Chinese conviction that sustaining its march towards centrality in the global system and advanced economy status requires that it should become a rule-maker and standard-setter for the global economy. The current controversy over whether Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant, should be the supplier of choice for the 5-G network across the world is a case in point. The internationalisation of the Chinese yuan and the creation of a China-based petro-yuan market, leveraging China's dominance of the global and oil trade respectively, point in the same direction. China is using the BRI to impose its own standards and benchmarks in participating countries.

Two, recognising that the global economy is currently structured around global value chains, which are dominated by Western commercial entities, China seeks to use the BRI to create value chains that are led by its own state-owned enterprises or private companies. The importance of this is highlighted by the fact that the US-China trade war is already leading Western companies to relocate key parts of the China-centred value chains to other countries. This exposes China's vulnerability. Through BRI, China is attempting to create, through the more than 120 participating countries, value chains stretching through them but directed from Beijing.

Three, these value chains will be underpinned by the modern physical and digital infrastructure that is being put in place, as trans-national highways, high-speed railways, fibre optic and under-sea cables, oil and gas pipelines and modern ports. This is the visible and often awe-inspiring component of BRI. These transport corridors are the base for broader economic corridors leveraging local resources, manpower and even cultural resources. This is the vision that underlies the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Central Asia and Eastern and Southern Europe are being reshaped most dramatically by BRI and this is the reason the author believes that Eurasia will emerge as the geopolitical cockpit of the future global order eroding the centrality of the Western-dominated trans-Atlantic.

Four, the BRI manifests and incorporates the power of ideas. Its very scale of ambition has captured the imagination of a global audience and it has also become the vehicle for spreading a Chinese value system and ideology across the world. This explains why at the 19th Party Congress, Xi Jinping held up China's growth model as an example for developing countries. The BRI was put forward as an expression of China's belief in a future "community of shared destiny", a world of interdependence and collaboration, leading to the catch-phrase, "win-win outcomes". This harks back to the old Chinese notion of "Tianxia" or "All Under Heaven", linked together in collective harmony. Left unsaid is the underlying belief that harmony is inseparable from notions of hierarchy, of there being a leader who is able to impose order by rewarding those who conform and punishing those who don't.

Based on these insights, Mr Macaes then analyses four scenarios for the world order in the making, but in effect there are only two: That China becomes a central player but accepts the existing liberal world order as the template through which it seeks enhanced global influence and power; or that it remakes the global order in its own image, altering the very structure and values of the world system. The nature and scope of BRI leaves us in no doubt that China is committed to the latter vision.

Mr Macaes has a Preface in the Indian edition looking at India's options vis-à-vis BRI. He finds India's response to BRI critical but also apprehensive that its success may push India to the margins of the emerging world order. This is true, but BRI is a long-term project and not assured of success. The US-China trade war has exposed the several serious vulnerabilities in China's economy. Its grand economic vision is contradicted by its political brittleness and the deep insecurity of its leadership. There are countervailing forces that contest whatever plans China may have for re-ordering the world system. There is no need for India to throw in the towel just yet.

The reviewer is a former Foreign Secretary and is currently Senior Fellow, CPR

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