

Winners and losers

What does the withdrawal of USGSP benefits mean for India's exports?



ANWARUL HODA & NEHA GUPTA

On March 5, 2019, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) announced the US government's intention to terminate the benefit of duty-free treatment under the generalised system of preferences (GSP) for products imported from India. How much of a setback does this constitute for India's exports?

Within 60 days of the notification, imports from India of products now included in the USGSP scheme will be required to pay MFN duties. The preliminary assessment in India of the

damage to the country's trade interest has been dismissive.

There are a number of reasons for the apparent lack of concern in India at the USTR decision. From the outset, the USGSP scheme was designed to result in diminished benefits for countries like India, which export labour-intensive products. The US law mandatorily excludes most textile and apparel articles, footwear, handbags, luggage, flat goods, work gloves, and leather apparel from the purview of the scheme. Further, a central feature of the USGSP scheme is the competitive need limitations, which imply that individual beneficiary countries are excluded once imports from any one of them cross the stipulated value limit, or if they exceed a 50 per cent share of imports from all beneficiaries in a particular year. There is provision for the restoration of benefits if in a subsequent year imports from that country fall below the prescribed limits. However, the re-designation of a country as a beneficiary is not automat-

ic. The switch on or switch off of benefits by virtue of the competitive need limitations reduces the value of preferential benefit in promoting industrialisation of developing countries, which was the main aim of the programme.

Another reason for the reduced value of the USGSP is that the US has granted more comprehensive benefits to nations that have entered into FTA agreements with it. NAFTA and KORUS FTA agreement, for instance, give duty free treatment to Mexico and South Korea respectively far greater in scope than is available to GSP beneficiaries. An even more important reason is the erosion of tariff benefits under the GSP due to the reduction of US MFN tariff in successive rounds of multilateral trade negotiations. The USGSP scheme was introduced on January 1, 1976, and since then, the US has reduced the MFN tariffs twice, in the Tokyo Round concluded in 1979 and in the Uruguay Round, which ended in 1994. In 2017, the MFN tariff applied level in the USA

was 3.4 per cent and the trade-weighted average 2.4 per cent.

But averages conceal great divergences and to make a proper assessment of the impact, we need to look at the tariff situation on each product. US MFN tariffs are significant on many products and the effect of GSP withdrawal will depend on the level of MFN duty that will apply once the GSP treatment is withdrawn.

Our assessment is that about US\$3.3 billion worth of Indian exports to the US, on which the MFN duty is more than 2.5 per cent, will be adversely affected. Of this, the export of products amounting to about \$1.4 billion on which the MFN duty is higher than 4 per cent is likely to be particularly affected. The most important group of products that will stand to lose is chemical and allied products, valued at about US\$ 519 million, on which tariffs will apply in the range of 4-6.5 per cent. Iron and steel products, including some categories of hand tools, valued at \$177 million will be hit by duties in the 5-15 per cent range.

Another segment of industry that will suffer from tariff increases in the range of 4-20 per cent is travel goods (mostly non-leather), including suitcases, handbags and sports bags, in which

imports from India are at \$253 million. An equally important section of industry that will be hit with tariffs of 4-20 per cent is handicrafts (lamps, parts, chandeliers etc), in which the current level of US imports is about \$109 million.

On the whole, the negative fallout of the US decision to withdraw GSP benefits from India is assessed at modest but not trivial. But the effect on certain sensitive sections of small and micro industries should be a cause for concern.

Should the government have done something to stave off action by the US government? Even though the GSP benefits are required to be non-reciprocal according to the UNCTAD resolution in which it was agreed and the GATT 1947 decision that incorporated preferential treatment of developing countries in the rules, US laws have provided for seeking reciprocity from beneficiary countries from the beginning and these laws have not been challenged. According to reports, negotiations did take place between the two sides in the two areas of US concern on which it sought concessions, namely, market access in dairy products and regulations governing medical devices, but success proved elusive.

Hoda is professor & Gupta is fellow, ICRIER

CHINESE WHISPERS

More sons & daughters



The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the main rival of the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in Tamil Nadu, has released the list of its candidates for the Lok Sabha

election. Of the 20 names, seven are party veterans and 13 are new faces, including daughters, sons and relatives of DMK leaders. The first family of the DMK was represented by Kanimozhi, daughter of the late M Karunanidhi and sister of DMK President M K Stalin (pictured), and Dayanidhi Maran, a cousin of Stalin. The list also included names like T M Kathir Anandh (for the Vellore seat), son of DMK Treasurer Duraimurugan; former state electricity minister Arcot N Veerasami's son, Kalanidhi Veerasami (Chennai North); and Dhanush M Kumar, son of former AIADMK MLA Dhanuskodi, who joined the DMK (Tenkasi reserved). DMK leader Ko. Si. Mani's very close aide S Ramalingam will contest from Mayiladuthurai. P Velusami, who contests the Dindigul seat, comes from a family deemed close to the DMK.

Theft at Vaghela's residence

Cash and jewellery worth ₹5 lakh were stolen from former Gujarat chief minister Shantersinh Vaghela's house near Ahmedabad, allegedly by a domestic help couple from Nepal, the police said on Monday. The theft at the residence of Vaghela, a former Congress leader who is now in the Nationalist Congress Party, took place in October last year, but a police complaint was lodged only Sunday by Vaghela's employee Suryasinh Chavda, they said. According to Chavda's complaint, the suspicion fell on the husband-wife duo after they did not return from Nepal as promised, the police said. As the media reported the news, the Twitter hashtag "#chowkidar chor hai", an apparent dig at the Bharatiya Janata Party's *Main Bhi Chowkidar* campaign, also started trending.

Dealing with trust deficit

The Congress party in Haryana is at war with itself. Such is the trust deficit in the state leadership that the party's state leaders like former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Kumari Selja, state unit chief Ashok Tanwar, Kuldeep Bishnoi and others do not see eye to eye. On Friday, they forced Ghulam Nabi Azad, who is in charge of the party's Haryana affairs, to withdraw a list of 15-member coordination committee for the Lok Sabha polls. Azad said he was planning to replicate an experiment he successfully conducted in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka when infighting had plagued the party units in these states in the early 2000s. Azad said that in Karnataka in 1999-2000 and undivided Andhra Pradesh in 2003-04, he hired a bus and put all the Congress leaders in it to travel across the states. "They would eat at the same place, address public meetings from the same stage and spend time with each other during travel, which built trust. I need to do something similar in Haryana," Azad said.

A knowledge gap at CCI

The competition regulator is ill-equipped to handle the intricacies of digital markets

SUBHOMOY BHATTACHARJEE

Reuters report a few weeks ago noted that the Competition Commission of India (CCI) is probing whether Google's Android mobile operating system has been used to block its rivals. As the fair market regulator, the CCI should be examining such issues. But it appears to be venturing into areas where it has not shown any strong degree of perspicacity.

Digital markets are new territory for all competition regulators worldwide. At one level, markets are intuitively easy to understand. They are a place (physical, spatial, neural) where goods, services and now data are bought and sold. An enterprise can be seen as anti-competitive if it aims to reduce competition and maintain levels of profit. Yet, unless carefully drawn, identifying the relevant antitrust market could be tricky in the digital space since a non-market could also end up seeming like a market.

Why shouldn't the CCI be able to navigate this terrain? The principal reason is that the regulator has not concentrated on building up its internal capacity since its formation in 2009. It has traditionally packed its bench with retired or about-to-retire bureaucrats who have held numerous impressive posts earlier but have shown no specialised knowledge of the domain of the anti-competitive body. Or they have been lawyers or judges. But CCI, despite its powers to impose penalties, should not be seen as a court. The present composition of three members includes only one economist, selected after a long gap.

There has been nobody from finance or from any technology sector. In the absence of specialists, CCI has examined competition issues on the basis of legalese rather than as economic issues.

One can draw on two examples. In 2018, CCI published a competition assessment toolkit to guide ministries and the world at large on what constitutes fair competition. The slim volume has no mention of digital economy in a world where the top four global brands belong to this category. Instead, it perceives competition as essentially freedom from government policies and laws that circumscribe markets. Competition assessment involves "identification of relevant legislations and regulations; application of checklist to be applied to the selected legislations/regulations to find out provisions having competition concerns; finding alternatives to those provisions in consultation with concerned stakeholders, choosing the

best alternative for modification; and carrying out post modification impact assessment". These are important for an economy like India but fall short of the demands of a digital economy. The second example is the case again involving Google filed jointly by matrimony.com — a network of matchmaking services, whose flagship brand is Bharat Matrimony — and advocacy group CUTS. This was CCI's first intervention in the digital space. In February last year, the Commission by a 4 to 2 verdict held that Google India had run foul of competitive behaviour in what is known as the "intermediary services market"

and fined it ₹136 crore. The problem is in the way the regulator agreed to splitting the online market, as the dissent notes too pointed out. In the digital space, companies such as Google or a taxi service aggregator offer what is called multi-sided business platform. They bunch up those demanding a ride on one side and those offering a ride on to separate platforms. Those platforms create economies of scale but do not create a market by themselves. The market comes into existence only when those demanding a ride and those offering one come together. Entities like Google use their ability to create innovative business models to attract more people from the two sides to board the platforms. Yet, the regulator defined those platforms as markets by them-



and fined it ₹136 crore. The problem is in the way the regulator agreed to splitting the online market, as the dissent notes too pointed out.

In the digital space, companies such as Google or a taxi service aggregator offer what is called multi-sided business platform. They bunch up those demanding a ride on one side and those offering a ride on to separate platforms. Those platforms create economies of scale but do not create a market by themselves. The market comes into existence only when those demanding a ride and those offering one come together. Entities like Google use their ability to create innovative business models to attract more people from the two sides to board the platforms. Yet, the regulator defined those platforms as markets by them-

selves and then went on to determine if the company is a dominant one.

In the matrimony case, the CCI held that Google created a search bias on these platforms. While the Commission did not link its order to adduce any matrimony-related case, it offered the example of what happens when consumers book a flight on the web. Instead of taking consumers directly to portals that offer specialised services for flight bookings, Google prominently places its own flight listing on the search page which "is able to drive traffic to its own (commercial) pages and also generate revenues through advertisements/sponsor results". Since web services depend on user-traffic such an "unfair diversion of traffic by Google may not allow third-party travel verticals to acquire sufficient volume of

business... Thus, the CCI held that Google was leveraging its dominant position in the General Web Search to promote its Commercial Flight Units".

What the CCI failed to see was that the digital markets are a great arena for the spread of what is called network economics. Shorn of jargon, it is the ability of firms in these spaces to connect consumers on platforms. Naturally, for network economics to flourish, it needs depth in the market. Two things become important in this context. Network economics disproportionately encourages companies to expand. But to expand, companies need to innovate, which often comes through price changes. A Flipkart, Snapdeal and Amazon emerge because of this advantage.

Would this impact the Google Android case? Here, too, it is a case of network economics. But as the European Commission has already fined Google €4.34 billion for allegedly using Android mobile devices to strengthen the dominance of its search engine, it remains to be seen if the Indian regulator is able to draw its own conclusion independently. The matrimony case was filed with CCI in 2012 but took about six years to be discharged. Did the regulator wait? Meanwhile the EU, on a similar case related to Google Shopping, issued a statement of complaints in 2016 upholding the charges of discrimination against the internet search company.

CCI needs to create regulatory muscle to wrestle with the arguments either way. This does not mean that the regulator needs to slip back into a larger body as it was till last year. It must instead demonstrate it has the wherewithal to handle such cases without simplifications that often get scuttled at the next appellate stage.

ON THE JOB

Tragedies of the educated unemployed



MAHESH WAS

The unemployment rate among those who had completed graduation or higher education (graduate+) has been rising steadily since mid-2017. During September-December 2018, the unemployment rate among these had reached 13.2 per cent. A year ago, the unemployment rate in this group was 12.1 per cent.

Graduate+ face the highest unemployment rate among groups of individuals organised by the level of education achieved. It is usually twice the average unemployment rate for the entire labour force. It is worse for graduate+ women.

We consider five groups of individuals by the maximum level of education they obtained — those with no education; those with education up to fifth standard; those with education between sixth and ninth standard; those who cleared tenth, eleventh or twelfth standards; and those who completed graduation or any higher level education than graduation.

During September-December 2018, the average unemployment rate was 6.7 per cent. The uneducated did not face much unemployment as the unemployment rate for them was a negligible 0.8 per cent. These are likely to be the poorer people for whom unemployment is not a choice. They have to take up any job, no matter how poorly paid or however risky. The next group, those with education only up to fifth standard, also faced a very

small unemployment rate of only 1.3 per cent. The compulsions to take up a job for this group could be no different from the earlier one.

The unemployment rate rises to 4.6 per cent for those who had completed between sixth and ninth standard. For those with qualifications between tenth and twelfth standard, the unemployment rate was uncomfortably high at 10.6 per cent. Then, it rises even higher to 13.2 per cent for graduate+.

This rise of the unemployment rate with rising education levels indicates that India is unable to produce sufficient decent quality jobs for the better educated. And, the better educated are not willing to take up just any crappy job.

The graduate+ section of society is the one that is the most qualified to be employed. But, the higher unemployment rate of these people shows that India does not produce sufficient decent jobs for its graduates. This is the tragedy of India's employment problem — its higher unemployment for the better educated.

A person with less education has a lesser degree of freedom and so is often compelled to take the available low-paying, low-quality jobs or more often undertake extremely low-quality self-employment. This keeps the unemployment rate in these groups low. But, self-employment is more often a compulsion under distress rather than a choice over a safe job. This is the greater tragedy of India's employment problem.

CMIE's Consumer Pyramids Household Survey shows that graduate+ account for only ten per cent of the working age population of India. This is a rather small proportion.

The stock of graduate+ in India was about 100 million during late 2018. Of this, 53 million were employed. Another 8 million were actively looking for a job but were unable to find one. These are

the ones we call the unemployed. The remaining 39 million were not sufficiently interested in working. These 39 million are not considered as unemployed. They are voluntarily not in the labour force and therefore are not considered as unemployed.

India has a very low labour participation rate of around 43 per cent. Education in general, and college education in particular is good for labour participation. Labour participation rates are below 40 per cent for those with education below tenth standard. It improves to 43 per cent for those with tenth to twelfth standard education. Then, for the graduate+ group it shoots up to 61 per cent.

Labour participation rate of graduate+ has also improved from less than 60 per cent a year ago to 61 per cent.

College education makes a big difference to women. Overall female labour participation was extremely low at 11.1 per cent during September-December 2018. But the participation was more than twice as high at 22.6 per cent for graduate+ females.

Over the past one year, female labour participation rate fell from 12.1 per cent to 11.1 per cent. But, labour participation among graduate+ women increased from 21.6 per cent to 22.6 per cent. It was stable at 9 per cent for females with an education level between tenth and twelfth standard. But, it declined for women with lower levels of education.

Graduate+ women face a punishing 35 per cent unemployment rate. This is a tragedy of discrimination. The unemployment rate for graduate+ men was much lower at 10 per cent. Why should the few well-educated women who seek jobs face a much higher unemployment rate compared to men with similar education levels?

The author is the MD & CEO of CMIE

LETTERS

Beyond capital infusion



This refers to "Large fund infusions in PSBs fail to deliver" (March 18). The government has infused ₹1.9 trillion fresh capital into the public sector banks (PSBs) but it has not really improved the share value of most of these banks. First, the investors realise that a fair amount of the funds will be required for fresh provisioning for the stressed assets which will turn into non-performing assets both at the end of financial year (FY) 2018-19 and going forward in FY 2019-20. Second, the financial situations of many PSBs have been shown to have improved by tinkering with the prompt corrective action framework norms. Then, there is the impact of the impending Supreme Court decision regarding the enforceability of the Reserve Bank of India circular of February 12, 2018 on defaulting power companies. Last, the markets realise merely re-capitalising the weak and poorly performing banks without any reforms of either their governance or operational systems will result in a re-play of situation of the last couple of years, in the next few years.

Kicking the can down the road helps postpone uncomfortable decisions but the markets, investors and discerning sections of the public, for-

tunately factor that in the pricing of the equity of most of the PSBs.

Arun Pasricha New Delhi

A little dirt is good

This refers to "Environment is cleaner, your immune system has never been prepared" (March 17). Experts agree autoimmune disease affects millions of people with a cost of more than \$100 billion. Improvements in hygiene and sanitation though welcome have inadvertently given to an alarming increase to human-made auto-immune diseases. It is suspected that this is partly attributable to our lack of exposure to micro-organisms that we once had. Potentially pathogenic and benign micro-organisms associated with dirt once covered all aspects of our earlier lifestyle and ensured an alert immune system. Our immune system needs a level of stimulation early in life to prevent the current rise in autoimmune disease.

Apparently, a little dirt is good for us and our immune system needs this exposure. Like so much of modern life, there seems to be a tipping point when clean is "too clean". Excessive cleanliness is not good and antibacterial agents such as triclosan have been banned in many daily use products such as soaps and toothpastes as they cause more harm and diminish our immunity. A recent development in medicine is faecal transplant for people

who suffer from excessive bouts of diarrhoea due to difficult to treat clostridial infections. A stool transplant from a healthy donor aims to repopulate the patient's gut with good microbes. Another exciting development in medicine is harnessing the immune system to fight cancer. A long-held medical dream is likely to become a reality.

HN Ramakrishna Bengaluru

Empower the forces

India cannot claim to be a power fit to take up a permanent seat in the UN Security Council unless we succeed in making 95 per cent of our armaments. This argument aside, it is perplexing as to why our political leadership has failed to achieve this prime national goal over the last five decades. The answer squarely lies in the gross management ineptitude of our senior bureaucracy who have been allowing precious time to pass by wastefully. There are powerful vested interests embedded in the governments which want to ensure this stalemate continues.

JK Achuthan Ernakulam

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) 2372 0201. E-mail: letters@bstandard.com. All letters must have a postal address and telephone number.

HAMBONE

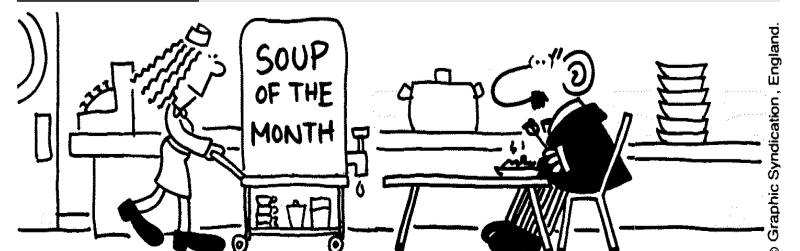


ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY



Slowdown signals

Next govt faces a daunting economic challenge

India's largest carmaker, Maruti Suzuki, has reportedly cut production by 26.8 per cent in March 2018-19 because of a slowing demand in India's passenger vehicle market. The cutback is significant as it comes after at least three years of strong double-digit growth. Maruti Suzuki isn't alone. A combination of factors, including the tightening of credit norms by financiers and declining urban sales and slowing rural offtake, has forced every other automobile company to pare production. The automobiles sector is just one example of the slowdown, which is gripping the economy. Growth in consumer spending, which accounts for nearly 60 per cent of the economy, had slowed to 8.4 per cent in the October-December quarter, compared with a revised 9.9 per cent increase in the previous quarter, leading policy advisors to worry that the slowdown could hurt the manufacturing sector, hitting engineering, textile and some other labour-intensive sectors. And the worst fears are coming true, as the latest trade data shows non-oil, non-gold imports contracted for yet another month — falling 3.7 per cent in February, following on from a 0.8 per cent fall in January. This is a disquieting trend, as it suggests sluggish industrial demand within India. But the worst may not be over. An expected deceleration in economic growth in major economies around the world, including China and the US, is expected to hurt trade growth further.

That's not all. Industrial growth in January slowed to 1.7 per cent compared to the 2.6 per cent growth in December last year, stoking fears that the fourth quarter of this fiscal year may be as sluggish as the previous quarter. The third-quarter GDP numbers, released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), showed what most economists were predicting — that growth was slowing. At 6.6 per cent growth, it was the lowest in five quarters. The CSO also reduced its growth estimates for the full year to 7 per cent from the 7.2 per cent estimated earlier. This also means that the last-quarter GDP growth will be even lower. The crisis may accentuate, with weakening global growth (the World Bank has estimated global economic growth to decelerate till 2020 at least), rising oil prices in recent weeks, slowing growth in government spending on infrastructure, and delays in investment decisions because of uncertainty about who will form the next government.

The data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy showed investments in the December quarter fell to a 14-year low, dashing hopes of a quick economic turnaround. The decline in fresh investments was across the board, with all major sectors witnessing a fall. Adding to the gloom is an RBI study that showed that for the seventh successive year, there had been a contraction in the private sector's capital expenditure plans. Other signs of distress are quite high as well. Small and medium industries continue to suffer; core sector growth is at a 19-month low, and third-quarter profit growth among big corporates was at a much slower pace than earlier. Once the elections are over, the new government and its finance minister will have a big problem on their hands — how to fix an economy facing too many headwinds.

The Parrikar vacuum

He provided Goa a liberal, tolerant administration

With the passing of Manohar Parrikar, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has lost not just a successful chief minister and former defence minister, but also one of its few leaders with the ability and will to bridge the political spectrum and reach out to Goa's minority Catholic and Muslim communities. True, much of this has to do with Parrikar's origins in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious state, where religious polarisation does not win election. Even so, he deserves credit for rising above his Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh origins, obtaining a modern scientific education, working as a technology entrepreneur and, later, providing Goa a relatively liberal, tolerant administration during four tenures as chief minister.

Opinion is divided on his effectiveness as defence minister, but Parrikar quickly understood the need to empower the private sector to drive indigenous defence production. His willingness to throw open the door of his office to private industrialists won him a loyal following in the private sector and provided him a valuable reality check on the advice provided by sometimes hidebound administrators who preferred the status quo. He established a "Saturday Club" where he, or his senior officials, met regularly with executives of the private defence industry, leading to a better understanding within the defence ministry of how the private sector was institutionally discriminated against in defence manufacture. Parrikar did more to "level the playing field" than any other defence minister before or after.

Facing a ministerial culture where decisions were often held up owing to the fear of consequences, Parrikar replaced what he openly criticised as a "culture of suspicion" with his own bold decision-making style that cleaved through the Gordian knot of One Rank, One Pension, and other issues that his predecessors preferred to avoid. The ambitious deadlines he set for himself suggested he would have liked to move faster. The reality, however, is he could not. Throughout his 28 months as defence minister, Parrikar remained acutely aware of the importance of retaining a secure political base. Functioning from New Delhi, he remained the de facto chief minister of Goa, flying down on most weekends to set policy and adjudicate disputes within a fractious coalition. His stature across the political spectrum in Goa was underlined after the 2017 elections, when the Congress emerged the largest party, but the BJP persuaded smaller parties and independents to form a coalition around Parrikar. That took him back to Goa, where, despite falling critically ill, he continued functioning as chief minister till the end.

Political turmoil in Goa following his death vindicates Parrikar's belief that he was all that held the BJP-led coalition together. Without a BJP leader who can match his stature, coalition partners like the Maharashtra Gomantak Party and the Goa Forward Party are reconsidering the cost of their support. Leaders of these politically opposed parties have made it clear that they had come together under Parrikar, not the BJP. In its letter to the governor demanding a smooth transition, the Congress has paid Parrikar a backhanded compliment, writing: "Now, after Parrikar's death, BJP has no allies." The BJP, which has been on the lookout for more talent in the government, will surely feel his absence.

How CM Modi predicted PM Modi

If NDA has been resolutely statist instead of leading a market-friendly economic transformation, that should not surprise anybody

Normally, at this point in a Union government's term — as it approaches the people for another mandate — it would be appropriate to judge it by the numbers. How has it done on growth, given its opportunities? Where would it stand in terms of its various predecessors on this metric? What has been its performance on the deficit, and on focusing on productive spending?

Unfortunately, this is not an option that is easily available in 2019. And the reason is that the numbers that would have to be used for this are, unfortunately, no longer widely trusted. Consider that, according to the GDP numbers — seen together with the back series — India has over the past few years, since demonetisation, equalled or beaten its past economic growth record. This is not generally believed, since the notion that India is growing faster than it ever has is contradicted by most other indicators. Indeed, anyone who lived through the boom of the 2000s will know this is untrue. Last week, over 100 economists from institutions in India and abroad signed a letter complaining about "political interference" in Indian statistics, adding that "any statistics that cast an iota of doubt on the achievement of the government seem to get revised or suppressed on the basis of some questionable methodology".

In some sense, the inability to make comparisons on the basis of state-released data with previous administrations is perhaps the ideal situation for the current government. Few governments in our history were presented with the sort of open goal that the current one was; and there is little doubt that it has, through a combination of poor theory and incompetent man-

agement, managed to kick the ball wide.

Many analysts will say that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's performance has been poorer than expected. If anything, that is a consensus. But, in fact, that conclusion is an error of judgment that simply doubles down on the mistakes made by such analysts prior to 2014. The expectation that Mr Modi would be a major reformer, capable of reinvigorating the Indian economy, were based on a complete misreading of both his actions and his performance as Gujarat chief minister.

In 2013, in these columns, I looked at the performance of the "Gujarat model" and concluded that it was based on hype. For example, between 2004 and 2012, growth in per capita consumption in the state had lagged the national average. Under Mr Modi, growth was not increased in Gujarat in that period as much as in, say, the other rich states of Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu. The state had actually gone down the list of Indian states in terms of most human development indicators (in an early indicator of his tendency towards gaffes, then chief minister Modi said that poor malnutrition results for his state were due to girls dieting). Mr Modi's record as chief minister was sold on hype without much substance; he was elected prime minister as a consequence, and if he is re-elected in similar manner then we should not be surprised.

Nor are Mr Modi's actions as prime minister particularly surprising — with the major exception of demonetisation, of course. It is true that he has largely been statist in orientation, far from being the market-friendly reformist that many economists imagined in 2014. But, in fact, this is exactly what should have been



POLICY RULES

MIHIR SHARMA

SBI makes a smart move

Should banks be linking their lending rates to an external benchmark? The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) seems to be having second thoughts on the subject. That has not stopped State Bank of India (SBI) from making its first move in this respect.

SBI has linked its rate on saving bank deposits and its rates for cash credit (CC) and overdraft (OD) to the repo rate. In both cases, this will be applicable to accounts of over ₹1 lakh. The saving bank deposit rate has been pegged at 2.75 per cent above the repo rate (currently 6.25 per cent), that is, 3.50 per cent. The floor rate for CC and OD will be 2.25 percentage points above the repo rate, that is, 8.50 per cent.

Saving bank deposits account for 40 per cent of SBI's deposits, and 80 per cent of these deposits are valued at over ₹1 lakh. Thus, 32 per cent of SBI's deposits would be market linked. Corporate advances at SBI are 40 per cent of all advances. Even if we assume that 50 per cent of these advances are in the form of CC and OD, the latter would account for just 20 per cent of advances. In a declining interest rate regime, such as the one we are in, SBI's net interest margin would be favourably impacted by the move.

SBI's lending rates for other products (including housing loans) would be affected very modestly. These rates will be impacted through a reduction in the marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR). The SBI move does not impact 68 per cent of all deposits and deposits are not the only sources of funds for banks. A 25 basis points (bp) change in the repo rate may translate into a change in the

MCLR of about five or six bp. Complete transmission of the repo rate is possible only when banks can offer floating rates on term deposits. Indian depositors have shown no appetite for such a product.

Will other banks seek to emulate SBI? Well, some public sector banks (PSBs) may but private banks are unlikely to. For depositors, saving bank accounts at PSBs are about safest. These accounts are intended for transactions and not for returns.

Not so the saving bank accounts at private banks. Unless the returns are attractive (relative to other investment opportunities), depositors would not want to risk their deposits with private banks. Besides, private banks need high deposit growth in order to sustain their higher rate of credit growth relative to PSBs in recent years. They are unlikely to want to drop interest rates on saving bank accounts.

SBI's offerings of CC and OD will now become very competitive. The move is smart because it will boost, not just the net interest margin, but SBI's market share in these products. If you are the market leader, you must act like one. SBI's move is a welcome sign that the consolidated giant is willing to do so.

Large exposure limit for banks

One other development in banking is worthy of note. The RBI is going ahead with its effort to limit concentration risk at banks. Banks and corporates had expressed their reservations after the RBI had made its Large Exposure Framework available for public comments in August 2016.

Effective April 1, 2019, banks' exposure to a single

expected. Mr Modi might have used the "minimum government" buzzword, but that was merely an early sign of his unmatched ability to use tokenism and slogans to appeal to multiple different groups of voters and influencers. In these pages in 2013, I looked through the then chief minister Modi's speeches and stated positions and found little of the reformer in them. Here is a short recapitulation of that. Most of us remember that CM Modi was the main obstacle for years to the passage of the goods and services tax for which PM Modi now claims credit. But there is more. CM Modi had, for example, argued that relaxation of foreign direct investment was meant only to benefit "Italian businessmen", a political — or personal — reference that is easy to categorise. He said that labour laws should be for states to change, not the Centre. He argued strongly against Manmohan Singh's rationalisation of diesel prices, saying that it was dangerous, and would cause India's "ship to sink". Limits on the number of subsidised gas cylinders imposed at the same time consisted of "cheating the people", according to CM Modi. And in case anyone is wondering what CM Modi's preferred approach was, his website said: "On the same day the UPA announced these regressive decisions [i.e., the fiscally responsible decision to decontrol diesel and limit LPG subsidies] Shri Modi announced 100 per cent relief on loans and 50 per cent relief on electricity bills for farmers."

At best, Mr Modi was a competent administrator of an already fast-growing state. He depended on his state's famously efficient bureaucracy and on personal relationships with big business that up his state's numbers through targeted investment. As some warned then, this is not a skill set that transfers easily over to the prime minister's office, where reform of administrative procedures and creation of capacity is a far more important task than micro-management of individual projects.

We should not therefore view this government as a disappointment. The prime minister's track record and statements prior to being elected were a fairly accurate predictor of how in fact the government has performed. It has, largely successfully, focused on infrastructure — for "building infrastructure is the real reform", according to CM Modi prior to 2014. It has largely depended on bureaucrats for policy innovation and implementation; it has avoided privatisation and indeed expanded the scope of the public sector by involving it in such things as supporting start-ups; it has built up liabilities, although much of that is off the balance sheet; it has centralised decision-making; it has reversed 25 years of external liberalisation by turning again to tariffs and industrial policy-style sectoral preferences. As happened in Gujarat, consumption growth — particularly rural consumption — has been below par.

As India enters another general election campaign, there should at least be an acknowledgement of how different expectations will have to be for another term from Mr Modi, which is the likely outcome of the vote. Economic transformation is off the table. It always was.

borrower will be capped at 20 per cent of tier 1 capital (present limit: 20 per cent of total capital). Banks' exposure to a group will be 25 per cent of tier 1 capital (present limit: 40 per cent of total capital).

The RBI's move bodes well for risk management at banks. The single biggest cause of higher non-performing assets at PSBs is neither corruption nor lack of competence in assessing credit risk, as is widely supposed.

Corruption is a constant in the system. It cannot explain the improvement in NPAs in the period 2004-08 or the huge build-up in non-performing assets (NPAs) consequent to 2013-14. As for skills in appraising credit risk, in many of the large NPAs in the system today, PSBs were members of a consortium that included private as well as foreign banks. The latter cannot be said to have shown superior expertise.

No, the fundamental failure of PSBs lay in managing concentration risk. PSBs got exposed to infrastructure and related areas to a greater extent than private banks. Private banks had a larger exposure to retail credit and, to that extent, were protected from the failures in the corporate world. The risk management committees of the boards of PSBs should have ensured that they stayed well within the RBI's exposure limits. They failed to do so.

The RBI has, no doubt, concluded that managing concentration risk is too important to be left entirely to banks. Its initiative could be hugely disruptive in the medium term. Banks will be forced to look for new business. Large corporates will have to source a larger portion of their funds from outside the banking system. Banks and corporates have their work cut out for them, but the RBI's initiative promises to make the banking system safer.

The writer is a professor at IIM Ahmedabad. tt@iima.ac.in

Heroes and their warts



KITABKHANA

T C A SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

Six years ago, I found myself in a Korean yoga ashram deep in some Korean hills. The guru there, a Korean lady, is my wife's friend. We spent three full days there doing nothing much, not

even yoga. Even though it was early April it was still very cold. So I spent virtually all my time in the library which, apart from being well-heated, was also surprisingly well stocked in books in English.

One of those books was the controversial *Intellectuals* by Paul Johnson, a former editor of the *New Statesman*. It was first published in 1988.

I was hooked by the time I had reached the end of the first sentence, which reads as follows:

"This book is an examination of the moral and judgemental credentials of certain leading intellectuals to give advice to humanity on how to conduct its affairs." With that in mind, Mr Johnson lays bare the private lives and characters of guys like Rousseau, Shelley, Marx, Tolstoy, Bertrand Russell, Sartre etc.

What were they really like, he asks. Nasty or kind? Were they the grasping types, rattling their tin cups all the time? How did they treat their wives and children, born within and without wedlock? How did they treat people and friends? And their hygiene? Sexual preferences? Would any port do in a storm?

Mr Johnson says he has only set down established facts. What has resulted is, if I may coin phrase with an all too modest cough, "don't judge an intellectual by his thoughts alone".

Rousseau, Marx and Sartre

The biggest daddies of them all were Rousseau and Marx. Both devised blueprints for society that made kindness the basis of human and social relations. Both were implemented, which is what

makes them great. But in private life these guys were weirdos.

Rousseau, says Mr Johnson, "led a life of failure, and of dependence, especially on women" but also on a series of patrons. He seems to have had, according to one of his employers, "a vile disposition" and "unspeakable insolence" apart from a "high opinion" of himself. He also wrote a book that was semi-porn which the Archbishop of Paris denounced for "insinuating the poison of lust". His love life was devoted to it. In short, horrible.

Marx, meanwhile, was "self-obsessed" and autocratic. Friedrich Engels, says Mr Johnson, observed that when Marx ran the periodical which he edited he did it like a dictator.

Above all, Marx had no time for democracy or elections. He "dismissed British general elections as mere drunken orgies." He thought the masses could not be trusted. He was always irritable, often angry, and hugely intolerant. Given to

drinking a lot and eating spicy foods, he developed boils which "varied in numbers, size, and intensity... and appeared on all parts of his body including his bottom... and penis."

1873 he suffered a nervous collapse as a result. He had married a beautiful girl of Scottish descent called Jenny but could not look after her and the four or five children they had. He was always in debt, kept his family in hideous conditions and tended to oppress his daughters.

Fed up, his wife is believed to have said that she wished he would "accumulate capital instead of writing about it."

Russell and Tolstoy

This was the only chapter that made me wish I hadn't read the book. It is never nice to find that your god was a randy goat. This great mathematician, philosopher, pacifist and activist was a serial bedder-of-women. He just went on

and on — and on from one woman to another. Their social status did not matter. I wonder, though, what it says about the women who went along. He seems to have been irresistible.

Then there was Tolstoy, a gambler and also a womaniser par excellence. Unlike Russell, however, he was willing to admit not just that but also to being a frequent victim of venereal diseases from the "customary sources". He told his biographer that he was going at it even at the ripe old age of 81, which was a whisker more than Russell.

I strongly suggest you read this book. It covers Hemingway, Ibsen, Brecht and even Victor Gollancz. And some others. A friend brought me copy from the US recently so that I could finish reading it. You can order it on Amazon, USA. Delivery is expensive but the book itself is now available for under five dollars.

Believe me, every rupee spent on it is well worth it.

Opinion

TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2019



SOON TO BE RESOLVED

Luo Zhaoxui, Chinese ambassador to India

I am quite sure this matter [listing of Azhar by the UN] will be resolved. This is only a technical hold and the matter can be resolved through continued consultation

Boycotting Chinese goods is pie-in-the-sky for now

Till India's conditions for manufacturing are not world-class, there is no alternative to large Chinese imports

EVER SINCE THE Pulwama attack that killed CRPF jawans and the continued Chinese cover for Pakistan—China, once again, thwarted India's efforts to have Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar declared a 'global terrorist'—there have been a series of calls to boycott Chinese goods, to keep Chinese firms out of the Indian market; US president Donald Trump playing hardball with the Chinese on trade and the US government action against Huawei are cited admiringly in this context. A Delhi-based traders association has called for a Holi-ka-dahan-style burning of Chinese goods on Tuesday and various WhatsApp forwards helpfully give details of Indian mobile phones that can be bought here instead of Chinese brands; so they cost a bit more, the underlying argument is, but a true patriot won't mind as this will deal a big blow to China since mobile phone imports are around a fifth of imports from that country.

All of this is pie-in-the-sky. For all the talk by various government ministers, starting with prime minister Narendra Modi, of how the number of mobile phone manufacturing units in India has skyrocketed over the past five years, the fact of the matter is that all of this has only meant more business for China as 85-90% of the components used in even Indian brands are made in China, apart from the fact that the market share of most Indian brands is minuscule. So, as more mobile phone units came into being and started assembling phones here, Counterpoint data shows imports of mobile phones crashed, from \$7.4 billion in 2014 to under \$2 billion in 2018 but, at the same time, imports of components rose from \$1.4 billion to \$11.4 billion. Indeed, this number is likely to be an understatement because India's commerce ministry data puts FY18 imports of 'telecom instruments' from China alone at \$15.6 billion, up from \$5.2 billion in FY10.

While calls to the faithful to boycott Chinese goods to treat China a lesson are quite stirring, at \$2.5 trillion, China is the world's largest exporter—its exports, by the way, are almost as large as India's GDP of \$2.7 trillion—and you don't achieve that unless you are very competitive. In a more or less free-trade situation, if you aren't competitive globally, you can't be competitive locally. So, if India has to be able to stop Chinese imports, it needs to be as competitive in global markets; and given its exports are less than a seventh those of China, it is clear India cannot keep Chinese imports out. At 77th, India's DoingBusiness rank is far behind China's 46th and, at 163rd, India's rank for enforcing contracts is way behind China's 6th rank. But more than this is the fact that India's real interest rates are upwards of 10-11% and make investments that much more unattractive, and its tax rates are amongst the highest in the world. Coupled with rigid labour laws and high-cost infrastructure like land and electricity, it is hardly surprising that both foreign and local investment levels in India are falling as a share of GDP; add to this the government's inability to fix its telecom policy for over a decade or the U-turn in its e-commerce policy or the frequent reversals in its policy towards oil and gas producers. Talk of boycotting Chinese imports is easy, much like the 'taking out' of Masood Azhar with a drone-shot, but it will take a long time, and requires the government to, simultaneously, carry out wide-ranging reforms in areas where most governments have hesitated since even 1991.

Right move on pollution

Data on pollution sources will help take concerted action

THE SUPREME COURT asking the Centre for a comparative study of pollution from firecrackers and that from vehicles is the approach that has been lacking in India's fight against pollution. Governments, both the Centre and the states, as well as the courts have often favoured piecemeal solutions that have popular appeal. But, rarely has such an approach had a meaningful impact. The Delhi government, for instance, lobbied the odd-even initiative on the national capital twice in 2016—and brings it up now and then when there is talk of acting against pollution—but, as a report by the Central Pollution Control Board shows, the move did nothing to improve air quality. That is hardly surprising because, as the 2016 IIT-Kanpur study pointed out, the largest source of PM2.5 and PM10 pollution in the national capital is road dust, while industries are to blame for the lion's share of its NOx pollution; vehicular pollution—within which two-wheelers were worse offenders than cars—contributed just 9%, the report had noted.

The firecrackers in the present instance, was mindful of the impact banning crackers could have on the fireworks industry, especially in terms of rendering thousands unemployed while there isn't much in terms of social security that could see fireworks industry workers through if they were to be reskilled. The court also wondered whether such a ban would stand the test of Article 19 that allows citizens to practice any profession or trade/occupation; given the fireworks industry isn't an illegal one and licences have been granted for these to function, a ban would surely violate the Constitution? This is certainly a welcome change from last year when the apex court ordered that people could burst crackers on festivals and special occasions only between 8 pm and 10 pm and only "green crackers" were to be allowed—and the year before, when it banned crackers altogether in the national capital. Read against the fact that Harvard-Nasa estimated crop-stubble burning in Haryana and Punjab accounts for 50% of the pollution in Delhi between October and November—Diwali, when the maximum cracker-related pollution occurs, is observed on an October/November date—the myopia of banning crackers is revealed. This is not to say that there should be no action on making crackers less polluting—the Centre has told the apex court that expert agencies tasked with coming up with a template for green-cracker production already have a composition formula and are now in the experimentation stage—or that the odd-even de-clogging of Delhi's roads wasn't a welcome relief. But, banning crackers or imposing odd-even as part of the arsenal against pollution have shown limited efficacy, and the courts and the government can't keep falling back to these to assure the masses that action is underway.

The National Green Tribunal, late last year, termed (in an interim order) the decision of the Tamil Nadu government to shut down Sterlite's copper smelting plant in Toothukudi as "unjustified". Even though there were violent protests against the plant for allegedly polluting the air and its effluents poisoning groundwater, the order exposes serious flaws in the approaches to green governance that various authorities have adopted—though it is possible that either the NGT underestimates the impact of Sterlite's emissions and effluents or Tamil Nadu makes too much of it. What is needed instead is thorough research and updated data on pollution. If a comparative analysis of the sources of pollution the apex court has asked is done, concerted green action can be taken, instead of the episodic, knee-jerk moves being made.

Automaton

#MainBhiChowkidar backfires as Modi (automated responder) tags Modi (economic fugitive's parody)

IT IS GOOD to be tech-forward. But, it is even better to avoid embarrassment. Prime minister Narendra Modi's social media team and the BJP's IT cell would have learnt this the hard way these past few days. To return Rahul Gandhi's verbal volley "chowkidar chor hai"—the prime minister has often called himself a "chowkidar at the service of India"—the BJP launched the "#MainBhiChowkidar" online campaign. Only, it backfired. On Twitter, faithfuls and loyalists were surprised to see the prime minister's personal Twitter account not only tag known critics of the NDA-2 government and parody accounts such as @AmbaniKaChela @NehruKiGaltiHai and @niiramodi, but also thank them for joining the "#MainBhiChowkidar" campaign. Given the opposition has been routinely accusing the government of crony capitalism and aiding "loot and scam", this played right into the hands of the critics. So, why would the prime minister sabotage his own campaign? The truth is the prime minister did not. But, tellingly, the social media team running the campaign failed to anticipate the dangers of running the campaign on an auto-responder mode.

Thanks to the absence of human vetting, what could have been a successful social media campaign has become the butt of Twitter jokers. And, given how social media amplifies both glory and gaffes, this isn't going to die down in a hurry. The soft underbelly of an unqualified reliance on technology has been exposed before—when *AltNews*'s Pratik Sinha exposed how easy it was to manipulate the mass-tweeting the BJP's IT cell organises on a daily basis. For better or worse, the BJP and the NDA-2 government have positioned themselves as tech-forward. A Nirav Modi, even if a parody, tweeting #MainBhiChowkidar may not take that sheen off, but the party comes off looking quite silly.

NO PROOF REQUIRED
THE RECENTLY RELEASED ASI DATA FOR 2016-17 SUPPORTS THE CONCLUSION THAT BOTH OUTPUT GROWTH AND INDUSTRIAL JOB GROWTH HAVE SHARPLY ACCELERATED POST-2013

Fact vs fiction—ASI data sheds light

IN SEVERAL ARTICLES over the last few months, I have been documenting the following simple point—it is the age of fake news, and political parties across the world have used it or are using it. In my forthcoming book, *Citizen Raj: Elections 1952-2019*, I have a chapter titled, "The Birth of the Fake and Faulty Twins" in which I stress the simple point that, conceptually, it does not benefit the incumbent (and especially an incumbent with an outright majority) to engage in fake news. It can only backfire—however, it can benefit the challenger who can throw any accusation (as president Trump did in an earlier election) and the incumbent then has to try and prove the impossible.

On March 15, 2018, 108 economists and scientists released a letter titled, *Economic Statistics in Shambles*, published in the prestigious *Economic and Political Weekly*, that accused the Modi government of suppressing data. It is worth quoting a few sentences from the letter.

"For decades, India's statistical machinery has enjoyed a high level of reputation for the integrity of the data it produced on a range of economic and social parameters. It has often been criticised for the quality of its estimates, but never were allegations made of political interference influencing decisions and the estimates themselves. Lately, Indian statistics and the institutions associated with it have, however, come under a cloud for being influenced and, indeed, even controlled by political considerations.

In early 2015, the CSO issued a new gross domestic product (GDP) series (with the revised base year 2011-12) that showed a significantly faster growth rate for 2012-13 and 2013-14 compared to growth under the earlier series." The complaint goes on to add, "In fact, any statistics that

SURJIT S BHALLA
Contributing editor, Indian Express and consultant, Network 18. Views are personal
Surjit tweets @surjitbhalla



cast an iota of doubt on the achievement of the government seem to get revised or suppressed on the basis of some questionable methodology".

The new GDP series, which is a major part of the complaint, replaced the existing industry-level data (as compiled by the CSO as Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) and released with a two-year lag) by the more timely ministry of corporate affairs (MCA) balance sheet data on Indian industry. Unfortunately, these data do not go further back than 2006 and hence the controversy on GDP back-series which has arisen. On March 14, 2019, a day before the news of 'suppression of data' and 'political interference' towards manipulation hit the headlines, the first revised estimates of ASI data for 2016-17 were released on the CSO website.

The preliminary estimates were released on March 6. This rich source of data is examined below to shed some light on concerns raised by the 108+ eminent economists and scientists. In my experience, I have never come across such criticism, let alone accusations, ever before. The list of economists who signed the list are a virtual who's who of the Indian economic establishment (both domestic and NRIs). I know many of them, and I have enormous intellectual respect for several of these eminences. What they say has to be taken seriously by all concerned, especially by the government.

In my next article, I will examine, in detail, the accusations concerning the Periodic Labour Force Survey

(PLFS) for 2017-18 which the government has stubbornly, and inexplicably, refused to release (till date). Regardless of any complaints that the government may have against the 'accuracy' or representativeness of the PLFS data, there is absolutely no basis for not releasing the data. In this regard, I am with anyone who states that the unit-level data (and not just the report on the PLFS data) should be released immediately. The government should realise that when it does not release data as per schedule, the immediate, and not incorrect, assumption is that the government has something to hide.

One of the biggest economic stories of our time (both in India and abroad) has been the decline in inflation rate to very low levels. This process has been going on in the world for 20+ years; its influence was masked in India by the extraordinarily high inflation inflicted on the Indian economy by the UPA governments 1 and 2 (especially 2). Curiously, when it comes to evaluation of GDP growth rates, the 108+ economists are quick to point out (in separate writings over the years) that India has benefitted from the oil price decline in the Modi years post-2014. But they don't point out how GDP growth benefitted from explosive global growth in UPA-1; and how the Indian macroeconomy was severely affected by high inflation post the 2008 financial crisis.

The attached graphic looks at ASI data on three important economic variables—net value added, wages to workers, and the number of workers. In addition, data on two price indices—CPI and WPI—are reported. The latter two are needed to analyse the ASI information in terms of real growth in value added, and real incomes of workers. Worker income is deflated by CPI; industrial value added is deflated by WPI for manufacturing. Data are available for only three of the Modi years, 2014-15 to 2016-17; past ASI data are available since 1981. If three years post- and pre-2014 are taken, then a valid comparison can be made between the UPA-2 years and the NDA-2 Modi years.

Indicator	Nominal		Real	
	2011-13	2014-16	2011-13	2014-16
Inflation data				
CPI	9	5		
WPI	6.8	-0.3		
WPI manufacturing	4.9	0.7		
ASI data				
Net income	7.3	8.6	2.4	7.9
Net value added	8	8.2	3.1	7.5
Wages to workers	13	10.5	4	5.5
Jobs (number of workers)	1.8	3.7	1.8	3.7

Source: CSO

What will the ₹ do now

After every sharp decline, there is a reaction; and, after the reaction runs its course, the rupee continues back down—usually below the previous all-time low but, at the very least, back to that level

JAMAL MECKLAI

CEO of Mecklai Financial



NOW THAT THE rupee has broken smartly above 69 to the \$, the level at which Raghuram Rajan came in as Governor (2013) and which had provided a strong support to the rupee till last August, when it fell sharply (to nearly ₹75 to the \$) during the last rupee 'crisis', where do we go from here?

Will this episode parallel what happened in 2009, when, after hitting a (then) all-time low of ₹51.95 to the \$, the rupee strengthened by nearly 15% over the next 2+ years? Or, will it simply rally for a year as it did in 2012-13, before falling sharply again (to another all-time low)? Or will it hold above the current all-time low (of ₹75 to the \$) but be battered with high volatility for the next 5 years, paralleling its path from 2013 to 2018?

Or, since history only repeats itself approximately, will it trace an entirely different path?

There are no answers but it may be worth looking at several new forces in the game. Perhaps the most significant is the possibility that India's share in the MSCI index may be increased—this would substantially influence debt flows into the Indian market—indeed, on March 14, there were debt inflows

of \$223 million, more than double the average daily debt inflows earlier in March.

Then, there is the \$5 billion debt swap, where RBI will buy dollars and sell rupees to banks. While this is intended to improve rupee liquidity in the market, it has had the immediate effect of depressing the forward premiums, which could be an effective way of forcing medium-term rupee rates down, which again would draw money into the debt market to benefit from falling yields. As far as FX goes, the swap should have the impact of taking dollar supply out of the market—in other words, increasing relative demand for dollars, which is the reverse of what has been happening. Of course, it could be that banks are borrowing dollars overseas to swap them into cheap rupees for domestic operations—this, then, would be neutral for spot USD to the INR. The swap goes to auction on March 26, so we will likely see increased volatility right about then.

And, of course, there is the belief that, since the Pulwama attack, Modi's chances for returning as prime minister have increased, which is drawing foreign investors into Indian equities,

strengthening the rupee. To be sure, since February 22 (the date of the response), equity inflows have strengthened. There is certainly some talk in the international press about this, and, of course, some pretty hysterical rhetoric from the ruling party—and, to be fair, from the Opposition as well. The truth on the ground, however, is much more complex, and, as we know, the 'Great Indian Election' show always surprises. I wouldn't take any bets.

In any case, hedging FX risk should not be about taking bets. After every sharp decline, there is a reaction; and, after the reaction runs its course (over varying periods), the rupee continues back down—usually below the previous all-time low but at very least back to that level. It is hard to see the broad pattern change.

With volatility high, it is dangerous to stay overly exposed. Importers should celebrate the much lower premiums and increase their hedges; exporters should note the still-high volatility and shorten their hedge horizons.

And we all should vote for a brave, new India that builds on the strengths of all our people. *Jai Hind*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A man for the masses

In the demise of Manohar Parrikar, the nation has lost a true patriot and an accomplished administrator. As an epitome of integrity and simplicity, Parrikar had played a pivotal role in making BJP a greater force to reckon with in the political landscape of his home state Goa. Parrikar's stint as defence minister of the country would always be remembered for his empathetic approach towards the grievances of the soldiers. As the chief minister of Goa, he worked hard to put the state firmly on the trajectory of high economic development. With his exemplary commitment to public welfare, Parrikar had cemented his place as a man for the masses
— M Jeyaram, Madurai

Finishing on a high

Table-toppers Bangalore FC came out in glorious colours to bag their maiden Indian Super League title. After the two teams were locked even-steven at the end of regulation time, Rahul Beke emerged the unlikely hero by nodding in the winner in the second half of extra time from a Dimas Delgado corner kick. The loss helped to erase the bitter memories of last year's final when Bangalore FC squandered a lead to go down 2-3 to Chennaiyin FC. Kudos!
— Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

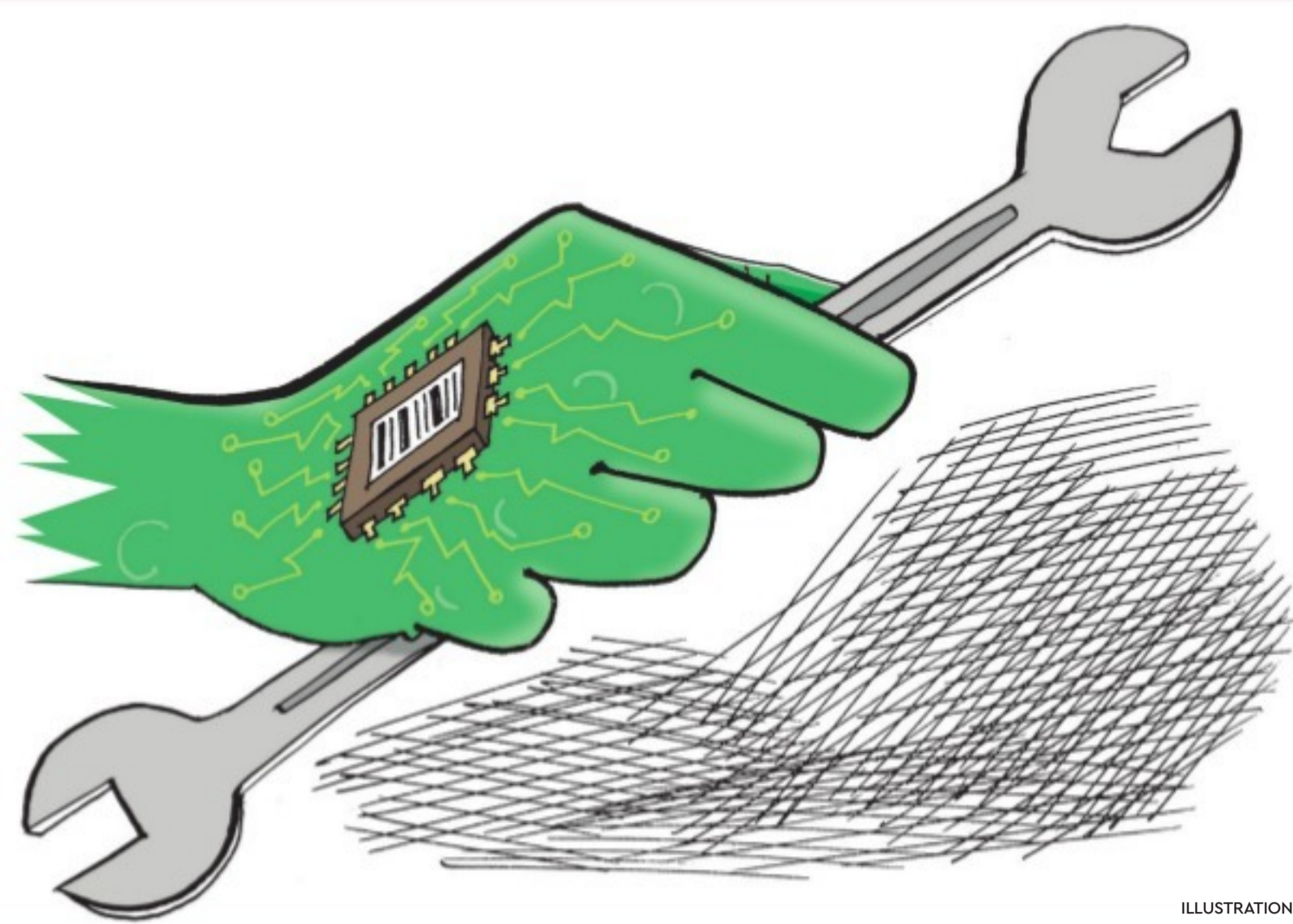


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

**RAJESH SHUKLA,
MEGHA SHREE &
P GEETHA RANI**

Shukla is director & CEO and Shree is research fellow at People Research on India's Consumer Economy (PRICE). Geetha Rani is associate professor, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi

Recollecting skills with ICE

By applying the ISCO-08 concepts to the ICE360° Survey, and classifying skill levels, we can better understand the connection between earnings and quality of labour force. This can provide important insights regarding skill levels, and can be used to equip the workforce with adequate skills

SKILLING HAS EMERGED as a buzzword. The push for a policy-backed skill development initiative is a significant step towards realising the potential of the workforce by enhancing its employability. The initiative seeks to strengthen institutional training, infrastructure, training of trainers, overseas employment, sustainable livelihoods and leveraging of public infrastructure. But there exists a huge gap between the current status and the desired goals in terms of a skilled workforce.

The foremost challenge is the huge proportion of poorly-trained workers in the informal sector—the largest employment generator in India. The large majority of skill training is carried out through self-taught practices, observation or a transfer of skills from a master craftsman to an apprentice. The proportion of formally skilled workers in India is extremely low, at 4.69% of total workforce, compared to 24% in China, 52% in the US, 68% in the UK, 75% in Germany,

80% in Japan and 96% in South Korea. The mismatch between skill, academic training and employment has broadened to an extent where, on one hand, employers are unable to discover suitably trained people, and on the other, the youth is unable to find the kind of jobs they aspire for. According to the latest India Skill Report (2019), only 45.6% of

the youth graduating from educational institutions are employable. To address this mismatch, it is imperative to understand the 'return on skill' (ROS) concept.

Common sense tells us that a skilled person is in a better position to enhance his earnings. But to be able to understand the impact of skills on employment, one needs to take a closer and analytical look at it. The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ILO, ISCO-08) provides a framework to make it possible to compare occupational data internationally. ISCO-08 does not seek to substitute the existing National Classification of Occupations, but enables inter-country comparisons by aligning occupational classifications to ISCO-08 in concept and structure. In the Indian context, many studies estimate return on education at the national level using NSSO data, India Human Development Surveys I and II (IHDS), National Data Survey on Savings Patterns of India, etc. But there are hardly any studies that investigate the labour-market ROS due to the absence of skill-based earning data.

To bridge this gap, the ICE360° (2016) survey of 60,360 households, 2,50,720 individuals covering multidimensional aspects of the economy, society and polity is an important data source. Geographically, the sample has been drawn from across 216 districts, 1,217 villages and 487 towns spread across 25 major states. By applying ISCO-08 concepts to ICE360° survey (2016), we have classified the skill levels, where skill is defined as the ability to carry out tasks and duties of a given job for which the person earns

Skill levels have been classified as four types

Skill level	Definition	Examples
Level 1	Skills involving simple and routine physical or manual tasks	Hawker, street vendor, gardener, cook, household servant, construction worker, mason, etc
Level 2	Skills involving operation of machinery and electronic equipment	Plumber, electrician, artisan, barber, mechanic, tailor, etc
Level 3	Skills involving written records of work, simple calculations, good personal communication skills in specialised fields	Clerical, supervisory level, etc
Level 4	Skills involving decision-making and creativity based on theoretical and factual knowledge	Doctor, lawyer, chartered accountant, engineer, architect, scientist, actor, author, etc

a remuneration. This corresponds to 62.4% of the total population who belong to the working-age group of 15-65 years who are eligible to work, excluding students and those unable to work. The skill levels have thus been classified as four types, from Levels 1-4 (see table).

Little above half (56%) of the labour market is dominated by people who are classified at Level 2 skills, while 30% constitute skill Level 1 type. Nearly 11% of the population can be classified at skill Level 3, while the smallest share is that of skill Level 4. Slightly more than over half of skill Level 1 individuals are in the 15-35 years age group, whereas this group constitutes to about 40% for other skill level types. Over one-third of skill Level 4 individuals belong in the 36-45 years age group, which is higher than that for other skill levels. It is not surprising that higher skill level individuals reside in urban areas—a mere 26% of skill Level 2 individuals reside in urban areas.

There is a high correlation between skill levels and education. One can argue that the higher the education, the higher the skill level. This can be further substantiated with the fact that only 3% of skill Level 1 individuals have high educational qualifications compared to 65% workers of skill Level 4.

Regular salaried income offers a foreseeable income stream and is most likely to be associated with better job security. Only 13% of skill Level 1 workers report that they are paid a regular salary. In contrast, 60% of workers classified as skill Level 4 earn regular salaries. Skill Level 1 workers, on the other hand, receive 75% of their earnings from non-agriculture wage labour as daily wages. It is important to note that skill Level 3 and Level 4 workers are concentrated in regular salaried and self-employed non-agricultural occupations. This wide disparity in skill levels of the labour force is a cause for concern in terms of employability.

More than three-fourths of skill Level 4 workforce resides in pucca houses, while only 35% of skill Level 1 workers do so. Household amenities like tap water, a separate kitchen, an in-house toilet, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) stoves are mostly to be found in the houses of skill Level 4 workers. The home conditions of the workers with skill Level 4 are indeed superior in terms of various household amenities. However, access to electricity connections is a common feature across all skill level type households.

Skills and ICT (information and communications technology) usage share a positive relationship, with the higher the skill levels, the higher is the usage. Our data reveals that ICT users earn more than double non-ICT users. Although this phenomenon is common across all skill levels, skill Level 1 shows exceptionally significant results.

Clearly, this skill level concept can help us better understand the connection between earnings and quality of the labour force. Such analysis is likely to provide important insights regarding the skill levels, which would require re-qualification and re-specialisation of the labour force in order to compete in the fast-changing globalised India. It can further be used to retrain and equip the workforce with adequate skills. In the next part of this series, we will discuss the concept of ROS and the factors that contribute to enhancing ROS.

(The second part of this article will appear tomorrow.)

LACKLUSTRE Indians may be falling out of love with gold

A weak rupee, a high gold price and changing fashions all play a part

PN GADGIL & Sons, a jewellery shop in Thane, a suburb of Mumbai, is gearing up for the wedding season—a busy time for gold sales, even if demand is brisker still during Hindu festivals, when jewellers stay open almost round the clock. Free *samosas* and Pepsi are offered to those queuing outside; inside, the noise and bustle are non-stop.

Indians have long regarded gold as the surest store of wealth. Brides bring it as dowry. Newborns are given bangles and anklets. Astrologers prescribe gold rings for stress. Indian households own 23,000 tonnes, three times more than the bullion held by America's Federal Reserve. In the year to March 2018, gold imports, at \$74.7 billion, ranked after only oil.

The government has tried repeatedly to break Indians' addiction, increasing import duty fivefold since 2013. In 2015, it began a scheme allowing investors to exchange gold for interest-bearing bonds and get it back when the bonds mature. Television commercials nudge viewers to invest in mutual funds instead.

Such efforts long seemed unavailing, but something seems to have shifted. Demand has fallen by a fifth since 2010.

Consumer preferences are one reason: many prefer lighter jewellery for daily wear. Millennials, a third of the population, spend more than older generations on mobile phones and other electronic goods. The international price of gold has gone up; last month, it was near a five-year high, measured in dollars. The weak rupee, close to a record low at 70 to the dollar, makes the domestic price dearer still. A goods-and-services tax introduced in 2017, one-third higher than the levy it replaced, has also hit sales. And with inflation down to just 2.6%, gold's utility as a hedge has lessened, says Ajit Ranade, an economist.

Jewellers' margins are already slim, gripes Rajendra Jain, who owns another shop in Thane. Online firms selling small amounts for as little as one (American) cent are adding to the pain. Since 2016, over 30 million customers have traded three tonnes via Paytm, an e-commerce giant. The average transaction is Rs 50-100. It's like "buying shampoo in small sachets instead of the whole bottle," says Gaurav Mathur of SafeGold, a rival.

Jewellers, who account for 70% of sales, are also still recovering from the government's messy recall, in 2016, of high-value banknotes, which squeezed cash purchases. The end of India's love affair with gold may be overdue. But it is bad luck for the shopkeepers of Thane.

The demand for gold has fallen by a fifth since 2010, and consumer preferences are one reason: many prefer lighter jewellery for daily wear. Millennials, a third of the population, spend more than older generations on mobile phones and other electronic goods

THE ECONOMIST



MANOHAR PARRIKAR (1955-2019)

Undying spirit, unparalleled simplicity

ANIL AGARWAL

The author is executive chairman, Vedanta Resources

THE UNTIMELY PASSING away of Manohar Parrikar has left an enormous void in the lives of the people he served selflessly. A true leader, his humility and dedication to the state and the country has made an indelible impression on the minds of the people, across India. Privi-

leged to have met him personally, his down-to-earth personality, simple lifestyle and humble nature was truly inspiring. Considering that he has served important positions for the government, including holding the office of the defence minister and serving as the chief minister of Goa, he exuded great modesty while interacting with the people.

Given our presence across multiple sectors in Goa, from iron-ore mining to football academy and numerous CSR activities including our flagship Nand Ghar, I had the opportunity to interact

with him on numerous occasions. On every single instance, I found a leader who was an attentive listener, had an eye for detail, and interest of the state and its people as his priority. He was crystal clear in his thought process and decision-making, and firmly believed that the government was meant to serve the people.

The original 'aam aadmi' or the 'common man', as he was often referred to, Parrikar dedicated his whole life to fighting for and defending the rights of the people who were not so privileged. As we all attempt to come out of a state of dis-

belief after hearing the news of his early demise, we should commit ourselves in imbibing the values that he represented and pass on these principles, morals and ethics to future generations. An epitome of simplicity, Parrikar has left behind a legacy that is irreplaceable. He was working till his final hours, and that speaks volumes about his undying spirit and unparalleled simplicity. While he may not be with us in person, he will continue to live amongst us in spirit; his impeccable service to the people of the nation will be remembered for generations to come.

AS 2018 DREW to a close, the year-end vacations had begun as also customary celebrations, but a last-mile twist was in store (no pun intended). Against the backdrop of litigation, enquiries by the Enforcement Directorate and impending general elections, the government issued Press Note 2 (December 26, 2018) to provide more clarity on the foreign investment policy in e-commerce. While the Press Note provided more clarity, it also shook up the status quo in a number of ways. After the customary furore, the government issued a clarification in January to reiterate that the Press Note was necessary given the instances of policy violation and circumvention—clearly, the concerns were grave. For the market, the Press Note introduced new variables in a number of ongoing deals and called for significant restructuring efforts.

While players in the e-commerce sector operate using complex structures, they are all household names thanks to the huge investment in this category and the high number of touchpoints (via customers, merchants, ads, jobs). While some e-commerce companies revisited existing structures, others didn't need to change a thing. Either way, the government set a deadline of February 1, 2019, for compliance, meaning decisions had to be made quickly. So, the obvious questions arose:

E-com FDI policy: In letter or spirit?

Are new solutions enough for continued commitment of large capital flows by foreign investors?

**VIVEK GUPTA,
RAJENDRA NALAM &
AMISHA SINGAL**

Gupta is partner & national head, M&A Tax, and Nalam and Singal are partner and director, respectively, Deal Advisory, KPMG in India



Would sophisticated investors and the largest companies in the world commit billions in investment with scant regard for the law of this land? Were the legacy structures and arrangements employed by e-commerce companies fundamentally inimical to the interests of the Indian market (notwithstanding consumers' affection for discounts and freebies)?

To understand more, one should see that the policy on foreign investment in e-commerce has three broad pillars: (1) policy on e-commerce, (2) policy on B2B wholesale trading, and (3) policy on what counts as foreign investment and what doesn't. While it is perfectly okay for for-

eign investors to own 100% of e-commerce 'marketplaces', there is a specific bar on owning inventory, B2C sales and influencing product prices directly or indirectly (for example, deep discounting). It is probably a safe bet to say that no company worth its salt will engage in business practices that blatantly flout these guidelines. However, the debate was that e-commerce players comply with the letter of the law, but not necessarily with its spirit. So, what has the Press Note done to cause concern? Here is a quick summary:

(a) It introduced a new restriction on vendors (no vendor can purchase more than 25% of its stocks from marketplace

or its group companies) and deleted the old one (no vendor group can comprise more than 25% of sales on marketplace);

(b) It introduced a new ownership condition, i.e. no vendor can have equity participation by marketplace or its group companies;

(c) It introduced a test of fair, non-discriminatory and arms-length principles into arrangements between the vendors and the marketplace/its group companies, apart from a ban on exclusive sales arrangements;

(d) To build checks & balances, it requires a certificate/report from the statutory auditor confirming that the

company complies with the regulations.

So, does the Press Note answer all the questions and provide the clarity needed for companies to comply with both letter and spirit of law? Perhaps not. For example, an e-commerce entity is defined as one that is owned and controlled by foreign companies. Does this mean a company with 49% foreign investment and board representation doesn't need to comply with any of the new guidelines? The Press Note uses terms such as 'equity participation', 'group companies', 'direct or indirect equity participation', 'common control', etc, some of which are defined terms, while others are not. Who decides whether a certain practice is par for the course or discriminatory, and what stops a disgruntled vendor or competitor from alleging malpractices? How would a partner of an audit firm certify compliance of every business practice? There are many questions.

A related question concerns grandfathering of existing players—there is a thought process that the policy should only operate prospectively with respect to fresh FDI inflows and, therefore, existing structures do not require change.

While this is a welcome view for companies that have made significant commitments based on regulations prevailing at the time of investment, it is subject to two obvious challenges. One, the Press Note is ostensibly clarificatory in nature

and, therefore, there is no new rule per se that requires prospective compliance. Two, the need for a compliance certificate every year is an absolute condition for all players without exceptions.

So, who gets to decide whether compliance with the law is truly delivered in both letter and spirit; more importantly, where does this debate lead to?

On one hand, the modification of existing legal structures requires multiple considerations/costs, without explicit assurance on whether the revisions comply with the law or not. On the other hand, we need to consider the philosophical issue of integrity and consistency of Indian policymaking, which is essential to attract capital to create infrastructure, benefits for consumers and job opportunities.

To conclude, one would argue that there are several solutions to comply even with the new guidelines, some of which are already visible. The question, however, is whether the new solutions are adequate for the continued commitment of large capital flows by foreign investors? In order to build confidence and certainty, it would be helpful if all the concerned players are involved in a consultative process to evolve a clear policy framework with a comprehensive set of FAQs. Meanwhile, fresh investments might just adopt a wait-and-watch approach even as restructuring kicks off in top gear.



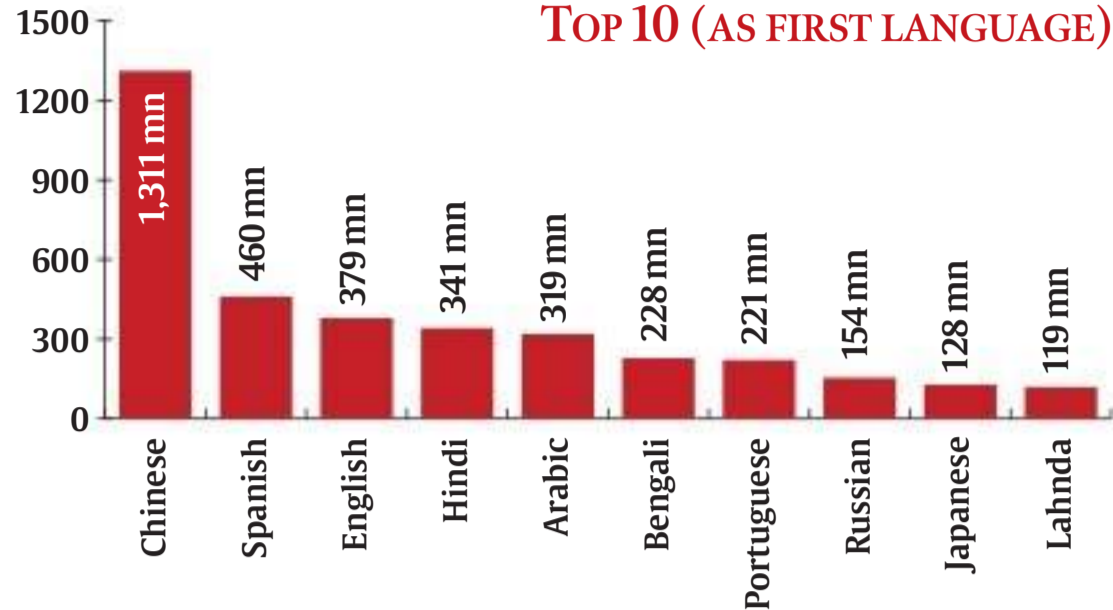
@ieExplained
#ExpressExplained

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

TELLING NUMBERS

Chinese most widely spoken, 2 Indian languages in top 10

TOP 10 (AS FIRST LANGUAGE)



A REPORT in *The Indian Express* Monday described how Zhou Xin of Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) uses the film *7aum Arivu* (2011) and works of literature to teach her students Tamil. BFSU also has courses in Hindi and Bengali. The latter two Indian languages happen to be among the 10 most widely spoken in the world, while Tamil too features in the top 25. The list is headed by Chinese, a broad category that includes a number of dialects and variants.

Ethnologue, a database whose website describes it as "the world's most authoritative resource on world languages, trusted by academics and Fortune 500 companies alike", provides details on all 7,111 known living languages. Against the broad head for Chinese (macrolanguage), which includes individual languages such as Mandarin and Yue (Cantonese), Ethnologue gives a worldwide total of

ALSO IN TOP 25

Rank	Language	Speakers (mn)
11	Marathi	83.1
12	Telugu	82.0
19	Tamil	75.0
20	Urdu	68.6
24	Gujarati	56.4
25	Bhojpuri	52.2

Source: Ethnologue: Languages of the World, 2019

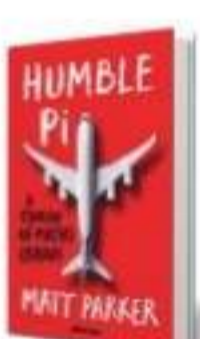
1,311 million speakers, as first language. This is 17 times the 75 million people who speak Tamil, which is the 19th most widely spoken worldwide. Hindi with 341 million speakers is at number four — behind Spanish and English — and Bengali with 228 million is sixth, behind Arabic with all its variants.

TIP FOR READING LIST

WHEN MATHEMATICS GOES WRONG

BEHIND ALMOST everything we do, a lot of mathematics is at work. Computer programmes, finance and engineering revolve around mathematics, which goes largely unnoticed because it works quietly in the background. But what if the maths does not work? Matt Parker of Queen Mary University of London explores the dangers of mathematical mistakes in his new book.

Humble Pi: A Comedy of Maths Errors presents a series of examples of real-life glitches, near-misses and mishaps involving the Internet, big data, elections, street signs, lotteries, the Roman empire and a hapless Olympic shooting team. One of the most engaging examples is about the group Snap's 1990 hit *I've Got The Power*. On the 12th floor of a 39-storey building in South Korea, a gym class was working out to that song, with their tempo matching the resonant



frequency of the building, causing it to vibrate. The entire building had to be evacuated.

In another example, both engines on a passenger jet failed midflight because the fuel had been weighed in pounds rather than kilograms. The pilot eventually managed to land safely.

Parker stresses the importance of learning from such mistakes. He presents this serious message with humour, and by engaging the reader throughout. The book contains puzzles, jokes and deliberate mistakes. "...Parker is consistently very funny. His chapter on geometrical errors reports with pride that he started a petition for the UK government to replace all football signs — which show an impossible football made entirely out of hexagons — with the mathematically correct figure, comprising 20 hexagons and 12 pentagons," *The Guardian* writes in its review.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How Lokpal will take shape

Chairman of national anti-corruption ombudsman selected, other members next. A look at the road ahead

SHYAMLAL YADAV
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

ON SUNDAY, a selection panel finalised the name of former Supreme Court judge Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose as the first head of the Lokpal, a national anti-corruption ombudsman. This comes five years after the President had given assent to the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. A look at how the rest of the Lokpal will be selected, and how it will function:

Who all remain to be selected?

Justice Ghose was selected by committee headed by the Prime Minister. The same selection committee will choose the Lokpal's other members. Under the 2013 Act, the Lokpal should consist of a chairperson and such number of members, not exceeding eight, of whom 50% should be judicial members. The selection procedure for these posts is the same as that for the chairperson. A search committee will prepare a panel of candidates, a selection committee will recommend names from among this panel, and the President will appoint these as members.

The Act states that not less than 50% of the members of the Lokpal should be from among persons belonging to the SCs, the STs, OBCs, minorities and women. The same rules apply members of the search committee.

Salaries, allowances and service conditions of the Lokpal chairperson will be the same as those for the Chief Justice of India; those for other members will be the same as those for a judge of the Supreme Court.

What happens after these selections?

The Lokpal will set about creating its various wings. It will have an "Inquiry Wing, headed by the Director of Inquiry, for the purpose of conducting preliminary inquiry into any offence alleged to have been committed by a public servant punishable under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988". It will also have a "Prosecution Wing, headed by the Director of Prosecution, for the purpose



Anna Hazare celebrates in Ralegan Siddhi after Lok Sabha passed the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill in 2013. Sandeep Daundkar

of prosecution of public servants in relation to any complaint by the Lokpal under this Act". Once the other members of the Lokpal are appointed, the process for more appointments will start: Secretary, Director of Inquiry and Director of Prosecution and other officers and staff of the Lokpal.

What kind of public servants will come under the purview of these wings?

For a wide range of public servants — from the Prime Minister, ministers and MPs, to groups A, B, C and D employees of the central government — various rules are in place. If a complaint is filed against the Prime Minister, the Act says, "Lokpal shall inquire or cause an inquiry to be conducted into any matter involved in, or arising from, or connected with, any allegation of corruption made in a complaint". However, certain conditions will apply. The Act does not allow a Lokpal inquiry if the allegation against the Prime Minister relates to international relations, external and internal security, public order, atomic energy

and space. Also, complaints against the Prime Minister are not to be probed unless the full Lokpal bench considers the initiation of an inquiry and at least two-thirds of the members approve it. Such an inquiry against the Prime Minister (if conducted) is to be held in camera and if the Lokpal comes to the conclusion that the complaint deserves to be dismissed, the records of the inquiry are not to be published or made available to anyone.

The Act also includes the Lokpal's own members under the definition of "public servant". "The Chairperson, Members, officers and other employees of the Lokpal shall be deemed, when acting or purporting to act in pursuance of any of the provisions of this Act, to be public servants... It shall apply to public servants in and outside India," it states. It clarifies that "a complaint under this Act shall only relate to a period during which the public servant was holding or serving in that capacity."

How is an inquiry to proceed?

The Lokpal may, after receiving a complaint

against any public servant, order a preliminary inquiry (to be completed within 90 days) or investigation by any agency. After receiving the report of the preliminary inquiry, the Lokpal may order an investigation by any agency or departmental proceedings or any other appropriate action against the concerned public servants by the competent authority, or it can order closure of the proceedings.

What are the Lokayuktas mentioned in the Act?

These are the state equivalents of the central Lokpal. "Every State shall establish a body to be known as the Lokayukta for the State, if not so established, constituted or appointed, by a law made by the State Legislature, to deal with complaints relating to corruption against certain public functionaries, within a period of one year from the date of commencement of this Act," states Section 63 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act. This means establishment of the institution of the Lokayukta including any appointment therein falls within the domain of the states.

When are the states expected to set up their respective Lokayuktas?

In some states, Lokayuktas were already functioning when the 2013 Act was passed. Most states, however, are without a Lokayukta. Last year, the Supreme Court observed, "It appears that... Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh have not appointed any Lokpal, Lokayukta or Up-Lokayukta." It asked the chief secretaries of these states "whether steps have been taken for appointment of Lokayukta/ Up-Lokayukta and if so the stage thereof... The reasons for non-appointment of Lokayukta/ Up-Lokayukta... be also laid before the court."

The Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram Assemblies had passed Lokayukta Bills in 2014. Following the SC order, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry Assemblies passed their respective Bills in July last year.

THIS WORD MEANS | J&K'S SPOs

Under-trained, poorly paid militant targets

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, MARCH 18

SUSPECTED MILITANTS killed a woman Special Police Officer (SPO) in South Kashmir's Shopian Saturday. How are the SPOs of J&K recruited, and what are they expected to do?

The recruits

The state's 30,000 SPOs work alongside 90,000 regular police personnel, and are in many ways the unacknowledged backbone of the force. Under the Jammu and Kashmir Police Act, an SPO may be appointed "when it shall appear that any unlawful assembly or riot or disturbance of peace has taken place or may be reasonably apprehended and that the police force ordinarily employed... is not sufficient for its preservation and protection of the inhabitants and the security of property...". SPOs were first appointed to deal with militancy in 1996 when Farooq Abdullah's National Conference government was in power.

Recruitment

Initially, SPs appointed SPOs directly,

based on need. There was no screening, and appointments were often made on "compassionate grounds". The power to appoint SPOs later went to the Deputy Commissioners. After the July 2016 killing of Hizbul Mujahideen's Burhan Wani triggered massive protests, the Home Ministry announced that 10,000 SPOs would be recruited. District Level Screening Committees were constituted under Deputy Commissioners, which recruited SPOs through a proper process. Men and women between the ages of 18 and 28 who have cleared Class 10 are eligible. Candidates must meet physical eligibility requirements, which includes the ability to run, for men, 1,600 m in 6 minutes and 15 seconds and, for women, 1,000 m in the same time.

Their salary

At the time SPOs were first appointed, their monthly salary was a paltry Rs 3,000, with the promise of absorption in the regular force after three years of "excellent performance" in counter-insurgency operations. After a revision in September 2018, SPOs with up to 5 years' experience get Rs 6,000, those with 5-15 years' experience get Rs 9,000, and veterans with over

15 years get Rs 12,000. By contrast, a regular policeman starts at more than Rs 25,000. SPO salaries are part of the Union Home Ministry's Security Related Expenditure, and the state government has no say in what they get.

Job profile

SPOs maintain law and order, gather intelligence, and fight against militants. Women SPOs are exempt from anti-militancy operations. Their only training is a week-long course at which they don't learn much more than how to wear uniforms and salute officers. SPOs engaged in anti-militancy operations get a short course in handling weapons, but senior police officers say there is a gulf between this training and what regular police personnel get.

SPOs are contractual employees who must have an "excellent" counter-insurgency record to qualify for a regular job. To be promoted as a constable, the SPO must also be less than 37 years old, and meet physical requirements. Failure to qualify on account of age, education or physical measurements could still earn the SPO promotion as a 'follower', and appointment as a barber, cook, etc. in the police.

It is, however, an open secret that the pro-

motion of an SPO is dependent on his "proximity to a police officer". On several occasions, SPOs posted as cooks or auxiliary staff at officers' homes have allegedly been falsely shown to have participated in gunfights with militants, then promoted to constable or follower.

In 2018, a screening of SPOs appointed over the past six years was ordered to "weed out undeserving" appointees. It was felt that a number were recruited on the direction of politicians; also, the exercise was expected to be a check for links, if any, with militants. Over the last two years, several SPOs have decamped with weapons and joined militant ranks.

Soft targets

Since 1996, police records show, 504 SPOs have been killed in militant attacks. Militants believe police use SPOs to collect intelligence. Police officers claim to have intercepted militant communication from across the border last year asking for SPOs absorbed into the force and promoted as constables to be targeted. The SPOs are often unpopular with the people during anti-government protests, they are taunted with calls of "panda shath ti bati (Rs 1,500 and food)".

EC to meet social media firms today: What's on the discussion table?

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

THREE WEEKS ahead of India's most digitally-influenced Lok Sabha election so far, the Election Commission will meet with representatives of Internet companies Tuesday to discuss unresolved issues related to social media content at a time when the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is in force.

How did we get here?

In January this year, a 14-member EC committee chaired by Deputy Election Commissioner Umesh Sinha suggested changes to Section 126 of The Representation of the People (RP) Act, which prohibits campaigning in the last two days before voting. The panel studied the impact of social and new media during this "silence period" and recommended appropriate changes to the MCC. New media and social media are currently not covered under Section 126.

Two weeks ago, the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) — which is representing Facebook, Twitter, Google, WhatsApp and ShareChat in working with the poll panel to draw up a 'Code of Ethics' — agreed to "priority channels for the EC within their grievance redressal mechanisms" and other election-related educational programmes on these platforms.

On March 9, the EC said parties and can-

didates can't use photos of defence personnel and defence functions for election purposes. Subsequently, Facebook was asked to remove political posters bearing Wg Cdr Abhinandan's pictures, shared by BJP leaders.

On Friday, the EC wrote to Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Google, ShareChat, and TikTok calling them for a meeting on Tuesday to discuss channels of grievance redressal, evolve a mechanism to prevent abuse on social media and a "notification mechanism" for the EC to flag violations, and work out awareness programs particularly during the silence period and a "general Code of Ethics by Social Media intermediaries".

What is likely to be discussed?

Based on the Sinha recommendations and IAMAI's response, the following unresolved issues are likely to be put on the table:

■ **Process of pre-certification for political advertisements online:** The EC has said that all political advertisements on social media will require pre-certification from its Media Certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMCs). The IAMAI disagrees: "The onus of pre-certification is on advertisers and not on intermediaries." The industry body has quoted a 2004 Supreme Court ruling that said parties and candidates must apply to the EC before issuing TV ads. "Pre-monitoring", the intermediaries say, would require them to forego legal safe-harbour provisions, which exempt them from liability for



The misuse of social media in democratic processes has been a cause for concern in multiple countries. In this file photo from 2018, Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg testifies before Senate committees in Washington on, among other things, Facebook's failure to stop Russian election interference. The New York Times

content on their platforms before it is brought to their attention.

■ **Time for companies to remove content in the silence period:** In its report, the Commission said that companies must remove content in the 48-hour silence period within three hours of notice. IAMAI did not explicitly respond to this stipulation. IAMAI president Subho Ray said it could either agree to abide by the request "as soon as possible" or explain in a "time-bound manner" why the content could not be taken down.

■ **Who is a political advertiser?** A third unresolved issue mentioned in IAMAI's response to the EC is whether an expression "political advertiser" also includes those who pay platforms to "boost" or "promote" a post created by somebody else. "...There is... concern regarding individual posts of endorsement that may not qualify as 'paid

political advertisement' in the most commonly understood form of the term. The EC [has]... referred to issuing an FAQ on the norms for 'paid political advertisement'. The platforms request the EC to expedite this FAQ," IAMAI said in its response.

India-based social media platform ShareChat sought further clarification from the EC over "what constitutes a political advertisement...; which entities are bound by the obligations to ensure pre-certification, and time frame from when such obligations apply on candidates, parties, and (if relevant) third parties."

■ **Citing specific legal provisions:** After EC's first takedown notice to Facebook last week, the company informally pointed out to the EC that it had not cited the specific legal provision that the content had violated. IAMAI's Ray told *The Indian Express*: "We want a legal order that cites a legal provision. One, it will help us establish the legality of the notice. And two, in case we challenge it, we will have to explain to the court that this notice does not pass the muster of the cited act or law."

In its response to the EC's proposed guidelines, IAMAI said: "The platforms would also like to engage with the office of the EC to train the designated officer on how to reach out to the platforms, and also conduct mock 'fire drills' to fine tune the process."

Why does social media matter so much

in this election?

The Election Commission began conversations about social media in 2013, but the scale and reach of public engagement on Internet-based platforms has increased enormously since then. According to IAMAI, the Internet base has more than doubled to almost half a billion users since the time of the last elections.

Political parties have made a significant advertisement push online. According to Facebook's advertisement portal, Indians spent almost Rs 10 crore between February 24 and March 9 this year on political ads on the platform. Both the BJP and Congress have expanded their social media volunteers and office-bearer groups massively. Digital marketers, such as the Congress's Silverpush, have entered the picture.

Most significantly, Facebook's Cambridge Analytica controversy made election integrity and social media a topic of discussion in India. Cambridge Analytica's Indian partner Oveleno Business Intelligence (OBI) named the BJP, Congress, and JD(U) as clients on its website, but all the parties denied working with the data firm.

Since then, social media executives have been called into European and American government hearings, and Indian government institutions too, have joined in the questioning of these companies. Twitter came under fire earlier this year for alleged anti-right-wing bias.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

National insecurity

An institutional mechanism needs to be urgently created to depoliticise defence procurement



JANMEJAYA SINHA

QUALITY OF GIVING

Azim Premji, India's top individual philanthropist, sets an example. Unfortunately, not many follow it

LAST WEEK'S ANNOUNCEMENT by Wipro's founder, Azim Premji, that all earnings from 34 per cent of his share in one of India's leading software services firm worth \$7.3 billion or Rs 52,753 crore would be transferred to an endowment that supports his philanthropic foundation, is enormously welcome. It sends out the signal of a corporate conscious — a larger social responsibility in a country not known for corporates that acknowledge such a duty. India is home now to the third largest number of billionaires in the world (after the US and China). The numbers being added to the list of Forbes billionaires from the country has swelled considerably in the last couple of decades and will only continue to do so, as more and more entrepreneurs reap the benefits of liberalisation in diverse sectors. But there is also a parallel — and sobering — story of rising income inequality flagged by many, including Thomas Piketty.

The French economist and author of the bestselling "Capital in the Twenty-First Century" has estimated that the top one per cent in India account for almost one-fourth of the share of its national income. True, India has not so far seen any demonstrable backlash against this trend, unlike in the western world where it could even be said that socialism, or a version of it, is making a comeback in mainstream political discourse. But welfareism and entitlement programmes are something that both the Congress and the BJP, not to speak of many regional parties, are increasingly projecting and promoting. Of course, inequality of income and wealth cannot per se be considered bad. It is unlikely many would grudge anybody making it big through enterprise and hard work. Many of the Indians in the Forbes list are actually first-generation entrepreneurs. But the problem lies, more, with inherited wealth and lack of churn at the top. When the people see the same set of businessmen and their progeny becoming bigger and more dominant players across sectors, a degree of revulsion and alienation sets in.

Premji is, by a fair stretch, India's top individual philanthropist, having pledged to commit \$21 billion or 50 per cent of his wealth to philanthropic causes — specially in the field of education to improve the quality of teaching — besides others such as Nandan and Rohini Nilekani who, too, have pledged to give away 50 per cent of their wealth, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw who has committed 75 per cent, and N R Narayana Murthy and his wife Sudha Murthy, besides P N C Menon of Sobha Developers. India needs many more of them.

A MODEL PROBLEM

Fall in emigration, and reverse migration from the Gulf, challenge Kerala's welfare model. The state must find a way

MIGRATION TRENDS INDICATE that the Gulf, which had long funded the Kerala development story, may soon turn out to be a headache if not a nightmare. Economic slowdown in the Gulf countries, state policies favouring replacement of migrants with local labour, influx of workers from Africa and countries such as the Philippines, are forcing a reverse migration that has serious repercussions for Kerala's economy and society. Fortunately, the rising dollar-rupee exchange rate has prevented a fall in foreign remittances to Kerala, but the return of a large number of migrants, many of them blue collar workers, could squeeze employment and impact consumption and retail trade.

According to the Kerala Migration Survey, 2018, by the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, overall migration from the state has been showing a negative trend in the last five years. In fact, over the past decade, the number of people migrating to the Gulf has fallen (it stands at 1.89 million in 2018, down from 1.94 million in 2008 after peaking at 20.7 million in 2013) whereas the number of reverse migrants has gone up in the same period. The prolonged slowdown in the Gulf economies since 2008 and visions of a post-oil economy influenced many of these countries to embark on policies such as Nitaqat in Saudi Arabia, which encouraged employment of local labour over migrants. The welfare society built by the Kerala model of development and higher wages, both partly facilitated by remittances, has also worked against migration: Higher wages have turned Kerala labour non-competitive in the Gulf countries and demographic changes, especially population reduction in the migration prone age-group, militate against migration. The state government realises the implications of this trend and has been introducing policies to cushion the impact of the reverse migration. The state budget in February has proposed new pension, savings and loan schemes for expatriates. Loans, technical advice to start businesses, have been offered to integrate the returning migrants in the local economy. It is too early to say if these steps are sufficient to address the looming crisis. For instance, nearly a quarter of the households in Kerala have a migrant — and 90 per cent of migrants from the state are in Gulf countries — who sends money home. Any large-scale change in the numbers are sure to influence spending patterns at home, and thereby, Kerala's service economy.

Kerala's outward migration has co-existed with inward migration of labour from northern and eastern India. Studies indicate that nearly 2.5 million migrants, mainly from West Bengal, Odisha, UP, Bihar, are a part of the workforce in Kerala, mostly doing relatively low-paying jobs. Kerala's way out of the reverse migration crisis may hinge on the economy expanding to absorb the returnees in the workforce and for the low-skilled among them to compete with the non-Malayali internal migrants.

ON THEIR WATCH

BJP's use of chowkidar as a Twitter prefix may turn the spotlight on the watchman. Or it may not

A SLEW OF BJP personalities have prefixed "chowkidar" to their Twitter identities. This move follows the launch of a social media campaign by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "Main bhi chowkidar (I, too, am a watchman)". This, in turn, appears to be a response to Congress president Rahul Gandhi's anti-corruption campaign in which, referring to the PM, he said, "Chowkidar chor hai (the watchman is a thief)".

Chowkidars are the modern-era guardians of our individual galaxies, tirelessly and invisibly ensuring our well-being, always in the background. But while trying to appropriate any identity you tend to not remain in character sometimes. A bit like trying to imitate Charlie Chaplin when you have forgotten to shave off the Salvador Dali-moustache from last summer. So, if one suddenly assumes the identity of chowkidar, it might leave scope for questions — such as when former J&K Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti said in a tweet: "Vijay Mallya, Mehul Choski, Nirav Modi all fled under this chowkidar's watch".

All this political jousting is bound to perpetuate negative stereotypes of a group already enduring hard livelihoods. The actual chowkidars, mostly migrants, don't have it easy. A recent report on blue collar jobs for 2019 revealed that there are 2.5 lakh security guards in Bengaluru: 60 per cent are from Odisha, 30 per cent from Tripura and Bengal, and the rest from Jharkhand and other regions — essentially, a community of displaced people trying to eke out a livelihood with little stability. The same report says that jobs such as those of security guards see high attrition rates ranging between 40 and 300 per cent, with people switching for a few hundred rupees. Those in power can afford to use-abuse the chowkidar metaphor. But the social media game of one-upmanship may or may not shine the light on those stuck with the chowkidar tag as a lived reality.

THE STAIN OF the Bofors scandal that was unearthed in 1987 has diseased India's defence procurement ever since. Be it the purchase of howitzers or AgustaWestland choppers or indeed the Rafale aircraft, every Indian defence procurement initiative invites severe political challenge. Given that the Bofors scandal brought down the Rajiv Gandhi government, every Opposition party sees the purchase of any defence equipment from abroad as a political opportunity to attack the government of corruption. This has reached such a stage that defence procurement in India has become well-nigh impossible and as a country we are imperiling our security at a time when the world is geopolitically unstable. As Thucydides remarked in 457 BC, "It was the rise of Athens and the fear that this instilled in Sparta that made war inevitable". Read China for Athens and the US for Sparta. The stresses are apparent even if the shape of this war may not be conventional but rather economic, cyber or in artificial intelligence.

It is also a time when over a 5, 10 or 25 year period, India's GDP has grown at 7 per cent per annum making India the second fastest growing large economy over the last two decades. This year it has even surpassed China's GDP growth rate. But it is a fact that between 2000 and 2015, China went from a \$1.2 trillion dollar economy to an over \$11 trillion economy while India went from a \$0.48 trillion economy to a \$2.2 trillion dollar economy, making India only one-fifth the size of the Chinese economy. But what should concern us much more is that if we were to do this comparison in respect of defence equipment and overall military might, we would likely be more like one-fifteenth the size of China. Even if we shift this discussion to Pakistan, the difference in our economic might does not reflect in our comparative military advantage against Pakistan. We are today seven times the size of

Pakistan's GDP but the armies and military equipment are much more comparable. This is not okay in today's world as even Japan and Germany are discovering with the arrival of Donald Trump in the US and his taking away the US protective umbrella for them.

The fact that the Air Force pilot who was shot down by Pakistan recently was flying a MiG-21, termed by many as a flying coffin, is shameful. We have no right to talk of ourselves as a global force with such an ancient and depleted level of military equipment. We don't spend enough, either, on intelligence or defence armaments. We have faced at least six major attacks since Kargil — Kashmir assembly, Parliament and the year of standoff thereafter, Mumbai, Pathankot, Uri, and Pulwama now. Imagine how Israel might have responded to similar provocations. The key question is: Can we?

Given that our polity is unlikely to change, what institutional mechanism can we create to depoliticise and facilitate defence procurement? Today kickbacks from defence procurement cannot be a large part of election funding because our elections cost a lot and our defence procurement is meagre. Yet for 10 years Defence Minister A K Antony made sure that no defence equipment was purchased under his watch, as it might stain his clean reputation. Many of my friends in the IAS tell me that a sure way to get hauled into a CBI inquiry is to put one's signature on a defence procurement file.

What we need, therefore, are some rules to ensure that we do not weaken ourselves so much that we endanger the nation. We need to ensure equipment gets purchased in a time-bound manner and a certain amount of the annual budget is allocated to defence equipment and that an interparty group approves the final purchases. What I suggest hereafter is a decision starter that needs careful but expeditious consideration

to ensure our safety as a nation is not compromised any further.

First, we should agree to a certain minimum defence equipment purchase budget as a percentage of our annual budget. The Parliament should be informed each year whether the allocated amount was spent on defence equipment. Second, we need to create a new institutional mechanism for defence purchase. This mechanism needs to both de-risk the officials involved in defence procurement, provide robust oversight and yet be conducted in a time-bound manner. I can imagine three parts to it, including a technical committee comprising defence officials, a separate commercial negotiations team from the finance and defence ministries, including possibly officials from the CAG, and a PM-led approval team that includes the leader of Opposition, CAG, defence minister and possibly the chief vigilance commissioner. Each part would need to complete its job within a pre-set time limit that should also be reported to the Parliament.

Thereafter, these discussions should be kept outside the purview of the media. A record of the comments of the approval committee should be viewed by a select joint party committee after a pre-determined time period as a check. Any complaints on the process followed can only be made to the Supreme Court, which would hear the complaint and pronounce judgement in secrecy to depoliticise procurement and not allow it to become an election issue. Allowing for this challenge, though, would ensure probity.

It is important to create a national consensus on this vital issue to guard our national sovereignty. The time to act is right after the upcoming election.

The writer is chairman, BCG India. Views are personal



KALPANA SHARMA

GOODBYE, DARRYL

A passionate journalist who lived by his convictions, left a lasting legacy

I NEVER thought I would be writing an obituary about a friend and a colleague. Darryl D'Monte — journalist, author, environmentalist, human rights activist, and, above all, a good human being has passed. He died on March 16 in a hospital in Mumbai, a city he lived in, loved and fought to save from environmental destruction.

I knew Darryl for decades, as a fellow journalist with whom I worked for a short period in a newspaper, but more than that as a person with whom I shared many common concerns. Apart from his stints as an editor in *Indian Express* and *Times of India*, it is Darryl's pioneering work as an environmental journalist that will be long remembered.

When he wrote about the Silent Valley controversy in the 1970s, where a dam would have destroyed precious biodiversity including the habitat of one of the world's rarest and threatened primates, the Lion Tailed Macaque, the concept of "environmental" journalism was unknown. Yet, it is the controversy surrounding the dam in Kerala, and the prospect of habitat destruction, that yanked the issue away from conservation to questioning developmental policy. Eventually, the campaign to save the area led to the creation of a national park that would be excluded from the project area of the dam. In his book *Temples or Tombs: Industry vs Environment* (1985), Darryl recorded this early environmental battle between the interests of saving the natural environment and the demands of development.

Although Darryl worked for much of his life in mainstream media, he never gave up his convictions on environment, human

rights, civic and urban issues and on the rights of the most marginalised. Indeed, being a "committed" journalist was a label Darryl wore unapologetically. Through his reporting, he established that even if we, as journalists, have strong convictions, we can report with rigour and professionalism. His environmental reports stood out for the absence of polemics and for the thorough research that they contained. This kind of reporting set a gold standard for generations of journalists that have followed in his footsteps.

Darryl consciously mentored others. In the cut-throat competitive world in which journalists operate, this stood out then, and stands out even more now, as an unusual trait. But he was more concerned that the issues — whether to do with loss of biodiversity, destructive developmental policies, or climate change — were addressed by many more journalists than just those of his generation. By setting up the Forum for Environmental Journalists (FEJ), Darryl extended support and opened up opportunities for scores of journalists, many from outside the big metros who are not plugged into professional networks, to be trained in environmental reporting.

It is the city of Mumbai, with which Darryl was closely engaged, where he is most remembered and cherished. In Bandra, where his family has lived for generations, he was a known person, actively engaged in civic and cultural affairs — always ready to battle against insensitive and environmentally destructive developmental plans initiated by the municipality or the state government.

His book *Ripping the Fabric: The Decline of*

Mumbai and its Mills (2002) is especially important from the perspective of the city's maldevelopment: Darryl captured the indifference of the government to the rights of workers and its willingness to accede to the millowners and land sharks who only saw Girangaon (the area in central Mumbai once known for its flourishing textile mills) as prime real estate. In hindsight, what began then in terms of myopic city development has now cascaded into a situation where Mumbai has become a city in perennial crisis.

Till the end, Darryl never tired of raising the red flag on this. His most recent intervention was questioning the wisdom of building a coastal road to accommodate the needs of a small, well-heeled population owning private vehicles at the cost of the livelihoods of Mumbai's fisherfolk, its coastal environment and the needs of the majority who have to contend daily with crumbling infrastructure. Unfortunately, the state government is determined to push ahead with the plan and the courts, so far, have not been sympathetic to the pleas of the fisherfolk.

There is never a good time for anyone to go, but this was not a good time for Darryl to go. His sane voice is needed today more than ever before. As this country hurtles towards becoming a violent and fractious society, where the voice of people at the margins is drowned, and where saving the environment is just empty words as policy forges ahead to destroy it, the passion of journalists like Darryl D'Monte is irreplaceable. One hopes the legion of younger journalists he mentored will carry forward his legacy.

The writer is a Mumbai-based journalist



MARCH 19, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

NO SAUDI SUPPORT
THE US PRESIDENTIAL envoy, Brzezinski, after apparently failing to seek Saudi Arabian backing to the Egyptian-Israeli peace pact, arrived here in Amman today to persuade King Hussein to support the West Asia peace moves. Brzezinski, heading a delegation that includes Chip Carter, son of the American President, flew here from Riyadh, where he had conferred with King Khaled and his foreign minister, Prince Saud Al Faisal. A statement by Prince Saud, broadcast by Riyadh Radio just as Brzezinski was arriving here, strongly indicated that the American envoy had failed to swing the Saudis behind the treaty.

INDIA'S NO TO NUCLEAR
PRIME MINISTER MORARJI Desai reiterated that India would not manufacture nuclear weapons. "We shall not use nuclear weapons and we will not make them," Desai told a seminar on "Gandhi and the contemporary world", at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. How can we tell others not to manufacture nuclear weapons if we ourselves have them?" Desai asked. He said Gandhi's relevance lay in the fact that he had, long ago, foreseen that mankind was heading towards doom by harnessing science and technology for destructive purposes. He wanted science to be used for the good of the world so that man became happier, not fearful.

FUNDING THE FUTURE
PRIME MINISTER MORARJI Desai has appealed to the business and industrial houses and the people in general, to contribute generously to the National Children's Fund, and thus, "for the welfare of the future of mankind." In a nationwide appeal, he stated that it was the responsibility of the community to see that their children, received full facilities required for their growth and development. The Prime Minister stressed the role of voluntary organisations in the development of children "who require to be brought up with care and affection which only dedicated individuals in voluntary organisations can provide."

13 THE IDEAS PAGE

The Chief Minister next door

Never before has a leader from a state as small as Goa enjoyed such a pan India acceptance and popularity



NITIN GADKARI

MY LAST MEETING with my friend Manohar Parrikar was on January 27. He stunned everyone when he travelled from the makeshift medical facility at his residence to join me for the inauguration of the third bridge on the Mandovi river in Goa. Manohar told me that he could not miss the historic event, and thanked me for helping Goa achieve speedy and all-round development. As I sat next to him, I couldn't but feel emotionally choked. His voice was extremely feeble and he had a feeder tube inserted in one of his nostrils. Yet, his discomfort was not visible. What was visible was the indomitable "josh" to serve the people of Goa till his last breath, as he put it. Three days later, on January 30, Manohar presented the budget in the Goa Assembly in the same condition, addressing the House for nearly two hours. On February 4, he tweeted a brave message to the world: "Human mind can overcome any disease."

As I think of all the moments I have spent with Manohar, I can only say that apart from his impeccable integrity, dedication and hard work, he has also emerged as an iconic inspiration for cancer patients. He has shown the world that a terminal illness cannot drain your commitment to the country.

Manohar was my contemporary in public life. My association with him dates back to about 35 years ago. Both of us were inspired by the ideology of the RSS, its discipline and the sense of commitment it invoked in us towards nation-building.

A brilliant student who did B.Tech from IIT Bombay, he entered Goan politics at the instance of the RSS to stall the growing influence of the regional parties in the state. He made his debut in the state assembly in 1994 from the Panaji constituency on the BJP ticket and went on to leave an indelible mark, not only on state politics but also at the Centre as the country's defence minister.

Parrikar's tenure as defence minister was historic in many ways. The One Rank One Pension scheme was implemented, the Rafale deal was finalised and India carried out successful surgical strikes in PoK in response to the Uri attack. However, in his personal life, Manohar remained an epitome of simplicity and frugal living. Till a few years ago, he would sometimes drive a scooter to office even after becoming CM. As the defence minister, he often travelled in the economy class of low cost airlines. His needs were minimal. His focus was always on the larger picture.

Manohar believed in pro-active but clean politics. He was among the most selfless politicians I have known, always ready to do what the party asked him. He truly epitomised our party's spirit of Nation First, Party Second, Self last. In October 2000, Manohar staged an internal coup against a coalition government led by the Congress in Goa without indulging in any kind of horse trading.

Having been the CM of Goa four times, Parrikar has made a pivotal contribution in expediting infrastructure projects and minimising corruption. When I was the BJP president, I would constantly look up to him for new ideas and initiatives to spruce up our good governance agenda.

Manohar quit as defence minister and returned to Goa as CM in March 2017, when we managed to woo parties such as the Goa Forward Party and MGP to support him to form the government. Since I was the overseeing the elections for my party, I have interesting memories of our working together to outsmart the Congress.

However, since February 2018, Manohar had been fighting an arduous battle with cancer. Pancreatic cancer has a low survival rate but looking at Manohar's zest and energy through this battle, we were hopeful that he will pull off the biggest coup of his life.

But God had other plans. As I recall my association with Manohar, let me make another important point — in my knowledge never before has a leader from a state as small as Goa enjoyed a pan India acceptance and popularity. The reason is simple: Manohar was your next door CM, the kind of relative or uncle you could identify with or relate to, whether you met him at a government office or the vegetable market.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has aptly described Manohar as the builder of modern Goa. Manohar's death is a loss for every Goan and every Indian. For me, the loss is deeply personal.

The writer is the Union minister for road transport and highways, shipping and water resources, river development and Ganarejuvenation



C R Sasikumar

Politics in Goa revolved around Manohar Parrikar, irrespective of whether he held office or not



RAM MADHAV

SOMETIME IN THE early 2000s, I visited Goa in connection with some RSS work. A meeting with the state's chief minister was arranged at his residence in the morning before he began his official work. I was at the CM's residence by about 8.30 am. After a few minutes, I found Parrikar, the then CM of Goa, driving in in his personal car, a Maruti Zen, if I remember correctly. A bit surprised, I asked him if there was no driver available that morning. The CM replied in a very matter-of-fact way that he uses his personal car every morning to drop his children to school. He used the services of the government driver only for going to the Secretariat later in the morning.

What is integrity after all? It is about "choosing courage of conviction over comfort, choosing what is right over what is fun, fast or easy and, most importantly, choosing to practise values rather than simply professing them". Parrikar lived a life of integrity. He never spoke about it or showed off.

He was not a great communicator. The longest speeches he delivered would have been about 20-30 minutes long. But his popularity had no limits. He was the glue that kept the BJP and the government in Goa going. Everyone surrendered before his exemplary personality.

A swayamsevak of the RSS since childhood, Parrikar personified quintessential RSS-ness: He was disciplined, unassuming, transparent and courageous. Those who have seen him from the days when he was the sanghachalak, local head of the Goa RSS, vouch for the fact that he remained unchanged through his political journey. Power and position didn't change him. He was dedicated to his job, but detached from its aura. Parrikar, who graduated from IIT Bombay in 1978, could have opted for a well-paying career abroad. Instead, he returned to his native town of Mapusa in Goa and got into a small manufacturing business. He became the sanghachalak of the Goa unit of the RSS at the relatively young age of 26. It was during the Ram Janmabhoomi movement that I had first heard of this well-educated young leader of the RSS.

When the BJP decided to expand its influence in the erstwhile Portuguese colony, in whose struggle for liberation many RSS volunteers had actively participated in, the party commissioned several functionaries of the RSS, including Parrikar, to work for it. Thus started Parrikar's political innings.

In his political career of 25 years, Parrikar held several important and prestigious posts. He became the chief minister of the state three times — first in year 2000, then in 2012 and finally in 2017. He had made a special place for himself in Goa politics, which had

seen many ups and downs since the BJP started challenging the hegemony of the Congress. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in the last two decades, politics in Goa revolved around Parrikar. Whether in power or out of it, whether he was in Goa or in Delhi, Parrikar would control the state's politics. "You may take me out of Goa but you cannot take Goa out of me," he used to say.

After the BJP's victory in the 2014 parliamentary elections, some of us who had known Parrikar well felt he should now move to Delhi and play a bigger role at the Centre. Incidentally, the BJP had announced the candidature of Narendra Modi for prime ministership at its conclave in Goa in 2013 and Parrikar, who was the state's chief minister at that time, played an important role in the making of that decision. Naturally, Prime Minister Modi liked our idea and sent word to Parrikar in November 2014 to join his cabinet.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Brexit is not a single moment, but a process. Neither 2016 nor 2019 is the last word." — THE GUARDIAN

Foreign hand returns

With cyber domain emerging as a new theatre of global political rivalry, parties should pay attention to cyber security of their campaigns



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

IT IS widely accepted that the current general elections would be India's first polls to be shaped by the social media. As rival parties weaponise new digital tools in a rather charged political moment, the question of preserving the integrity of India's elections has come right to the top.

Foreign manipulation of elections is a major problem around the world. In the last few years there have been charges of external intervention in elections in countries as different as the US, Cambodia, Madagascar and Taiwan. Consider, for example, Indonesia, one of the world's largest democracies. About 190 million people are set to elect the president, national parliament, provincial assemblies and local councils — all at one go — on April 17.

Last week, Arief Budiman, the chairman of Indonesia's general election commission, told the press that hackers from Russia and China were trying to attack the voter data base and that these attacks were taking place not just every day, "but by the hour". It was unclear whether the motive was to disrupt the elections or to help one of the candidates win, Budiman said.

"Voter behaviour can be changed by delegitimising the election commission," Budiman pointed out. He was careful to not attribute the attacks to state authorities in Russia and China. But political campaigners in the closely fought presidential race between incumbent Joko Widodo and his only opponent, Prabowo Subianto, have not been that careful. Last month, Widodo reacted strongly against charges that he was a "foreign stooge". He hit back by accusing his rival of resorting to "Russian propaganda" of "defamation, lies and hoaxes". A picture of Prabowo shaking hands with a Russian Embassy official went viral along with allegations that he had hired a Russian consultant. Moscow was of course quick to deny intervention in the Indonesian elections.

There was a time when the Indian political classes routinely accused the "foreign hand" for many unexpected developments, electoral or otherwise. Most of the time, the "foreign hand" was a code for the US and its Central Intelligence Agency. As the Congress, under Indira Gandhi, drifted close to the Soviet Union after 1969, the non-left opposition parties would often charge the KGB of meddling in the elections in favour of the Congress.

To be sure, interfering in the internal politics of other societies — through overt and covert means — is as old as statecraft. Before the age of mass politics, it was about influencing royal succession, ensuring friendly sovereigns in one's neighbourhood, suborning key members of a foreign court, including ministers and military leaders. As mass politics began to change governance in the 20th century, the Cold War dramatically elevated the great power stakes in the outcomes from domestic political contestation in other countries. According to one study, America and Russia intervened in at least one in nine elections around the world between 1946 and 2000.

As the global war for political influence raged during the Cold War, the CIA was accused of helping the Congress Party to push back against the Communists in Kerala and West Bengal. Russia and China, in turn, have been charged with supporting the Indian communists.

As India steadily became less vulnerable to outside political interferences, the tendency to blame the "foreign hand" began to recede. The fragmentation of Indian politics and the rise of regional formations since the end of the 1980s made it hard for any outsider to understand, let alone shape, electoral results. The end of the Cold War and the relative harmony among major powers meant there was less pressure on the great powers to intervene in India.

Over the last decade or so, things have begun to change. The contestation between great powers has returned, slowly but certainly. As the cyber domain emerged as a new theatre for political rivalry, charges have flown thick and fast about foreign intervention in the domestic politics of other countries. The US remains the most important case.

Donald Trump's surprising victory in the 2016 presidential elections has been followed by allegations of Russian intervention to manipulate the social media during the campaign. While official US investigations into the Russian role continue, there is no doubt that someone had hacked into the Democratic Party headquarters and leaked the emails of the party into the public domain. Nor is there any question that platforms like Facebook were deliberately used to spread disinformation during the elections.

This is not a problem that is limited to one country. The unprecedented speed of online communication, the relative ease of spreading misinformation, the growing sophistication of fake news, the extraterritoriality of the web, the increasing impact of the digital influence operations by individuals, professional cyber consultants, criminal mafias, and above all governments, has helped constitute a new global cyber landscape that few could have imagined a decade ago.

Even as the older and technologically advanced democracies struggle to cope with the challenge of foreign manipulation of electoral processes, the Indian political class has not devoted enough attention to the issues involved. The problem needs to be addressed at least at three levels.

One is for parties and political leaders to pay greater attention to cyber security of their campaigns and social media accounts. Hacking and leaking of personal and sensitive information could have an explosive effect on the 2019 elections. Two, the BJP and the Congress need a small, quiet and credible mechanism for mutual communication to contain the damage from hostile attempts to undermine Indian elections. This will not be easy amidst the current political bitterness. But the two parties must find the will to protect the legitimacy of the 2019 elections.

Finally, the national security establishment must extend full support to the Election Commission in fending off many likely threats to the integrity of the elections and help raise the awareness of the political class on the new dangers of the digital age.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GREEN ACTION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A greener way' (IE, March 18). The paradox with ecology is there is no dearth of quality research that establishes the link between ecological destruction and people's livelihoods, but there is very little action. It's rightly said that the science of climate change is awakened but not politics. Treaties, seminars and reports are unlikely to make much headway. Only a sustained public movement can address the current ecological crisis.

Suchak Patel, Ahmedabad

MORE PARITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'In equal measure' (IE, March 18). The higher allocation of tickets to women by the BJD and TMC should be welcomed. It could push other parties to field more women candidates. However, political parties often use the winnability factor as an excuse for not fielding women candidates. But this argument is not backed by studies. Reservation is a more effective way of ensuring more representation.

H Upadhyay via e-mail

NEW LEADER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Decoding the Priyanka gamble' (IE, March 18). With issues like Rafale and unemploy-

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

ment failing to attract the voters, the Congress has gambled on Priyanka Gandhi. PM Narendra Modi's popularity after the Balakot strikes has neutralised the gains Congress made in three assembly elections. But it would be wrong to see Priyanka's entry as admission of defeat. A month is a long time in politics.

Anirudh Parashar, Solan

The writer is general secretary, BJP and director, India Foundation



Lokpal, at last

The establishment of the anti-graft body is a welcome development

The selection of Justice P.C. Ghose as the first Lokpal has come after an unjustified delay of five years. Nevertheless, it ought to be welcomed as a milestone in the cause of fighting corruption in high places. The concept of an institutional mechanism, or an anti-corruption ombudsman, has been around for over 50 years. It was finally enacted as a law in 2013, and came into effect on January 16, 2014. Some of the credit for driving this legislation must be given to Anna Hazare's movement against what many saw as unreasonable levels of corruption under the previous UPA regime. However, since then, barring a report by the Standing Committee of Parliament and a couple of amendments passed in 2016 on the declaration of assets by public servants, there has been very little progress. At one point, the government's lack of political will to establish a Lokpal became obvious, leading to the Supreme Court repeatedly asking it to show progress in its efforts. Ultimately, it was the court's stern ultimatum to appoint a Lokpal within a timeframe that worked. The appointment system is quite long, a two-stage process. A search committee has to be formed. It recommends a panel of names to the high-power selection committee, which comprises the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Justice of India (or his nominee) and an eminent jurist. The selection panel has to choose from a short-list consisting of names for the posts of Lokpal chairperson, and judicial and non-judicial members.

The government had initially taken the position that it was awaiting the passage of amendments based on the parliamentary committee report. One amendment pertained to including the leader of the largest party in the Opposition in the selection committee, in the absence of a recognised Leader of the Opposition. In a verdict in April 2017, the Supreme Court rejected the excuse and said there was no legal bar on the selection committee moving ahead even if there was a vacancy. It is not clear why this simple amendment, carried out in respect of selection committees for the posts of CBI Director and Chief Information Commissioner, was not made in the Lokpal Act. The Congress leader in the Lok Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, did not want to attend selection committee meetings as a 'special invitee' and wanted full membership. Now that the Lokpal has been chosen, victims of corruption have a viable avenue of redress. The Lokpal will take over the work of sanctioning prosecution, besides exercising its power to order preliminary inquiries and full-fledged investigations by any agency, including the CBI. It may be unrealistic to expect any dramatic impact on the lives of the common people, but the Lokpal and other members have a historic responsibility to live up to popular expectations.

Papering over

The BJP's alliances in the Northeast are underpinned by political contradictions

The BJP is acutely aware that its presence has been patchy across regions and social groups, historically. Its storied victory in 2014, with 282 seats in the Lok Sabha, came primarily from the States in the north and the west. Barring Karnataka, the BJP has yet to have any notable presence in the southern States. However, in 2014 the BJP did make inroads into Assam by winning seven of its 14 seats, and it sensed an opportunity to expand its foothold in the State and further into the Northeast. The party has been roping in regional partners and expanding its individual strength in the region with remarkable aggression since then. It led an alliance to victory in 2016 in Assam, and in 2018 in Tripura it defeated the Left Front, which had been in power for five terms. As of today, four of the eight Chief Ministers in the region are from the BJP and it is a partner in ruling coalitions in three. The BJP has labelled its partnerships in the Northeast as a distinct entity, the North East Democratic Alliance, under the NDA umbrella.

Last week, the BJP managed to woo back the Asom Gana Parishad that had quit the alliance in January over differences on the Citizenship Amendment Bill. Besides reviving ties with the AGP, the BJP sealed agreements for the Lok Sabha elections with the Bodoland People's Front, Indigenous People's Front of Tripura, National People's Party, Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party and Sikkim Krantikari Morcha. These cover Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim, respectively. The BJP says it aims to win 22 of the 25 Lok Sabha seats in the region. The Hindutva party's foray into the Northeast in the past often involved legal sophistry and manoeuvring. With its strength saturated in its strongholds, the BJP has compulsions to look for fresh terrains to grow but its efforts in the Northeast are significant for more long-term reasons. The region has remained on the periphery of India's geographical and cultural imagination. The BJP is considered, for good reason, a party of Hindu-Hindi nationalism with scant regard for the aspirations of people and issues of the region. In its efforts to woo the Northeast, here the party has soft-pedalled its strident cow protection agenda that has a sharp anti-minority edge. On amending the law to make the route to Indian citizenship easier for non-Muslims from neighbouring countries – a deeply divisive issue in the Northeast – the party has agreed to not talk about it during the election campaign. That does not mean the BJP is softening its stand on the issue. The fundamental contradiction between the ethnicity-oriented politics of the region and the BJP's religion-inspired politics is visible in the debate on the Bill. But these alliances can also be the vehicle for negotiation and accommodation. Either way, it will be a tough balancing act.

A prayer for our times

Unsound judgments and faulty moral reasoning are not the lot of leaders alone — but also of those who support them



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

As all of us ordinary citizens recovered from the carnage in Pulwama, and wondered how the government would respond to this latest instance of cross-border terrorism, one television channel showed us poignant images of grieving relatives of the fallen soldiers. While a few, driven by moral hatred for the perpetrators, were understandably crying for revenge, others, even at this moment of utmost suffering, spoke of the futility of retaliation. "It would only bring similar suffering to fellow humans," said one widow from the rural hinterland. Hers was a cry for peace, not for vengeful violence. "War can only be the last resort, after everything else has failed," she wisely counselled.

War and patriotism

Yes, war is sometimes necessary, especially in self-defence. But one doesn't have to be an unconditional pacifist to acknowledge the misfortunes it begets or to decry war mongering. Nor is readiness to go to war the only indicator of patriotism. True, patriots must be prepared to die in defence of their 'patria', their mother or fatherland. But one is not any less a patriot if one strives for everyone in his country living peacefully, happily, flourishing, leading life to its fullness. Fighting the daily challenges faced by their countrymen, seek-

ing to improve their lot, always loving them and their habitat, and expressing this love in word or deed as the occasion demands is the everyday vocation of a patriot.

A country at war is different. War is disruptive, and because it is lethal and involves human sacrifice, a patriot must eschew any bravado about it. This is particularly expected from contemporary leaders, patriots who never themselves go to war; quite unlike the past where the ruler who declared war was expected to always lead from the front on the battlefield. After all, it is our Army officers and jawans who die, not the ones who call for and support war. Our rulers move about with elaborate security to protect their own lives. If they don't allow others to play with their lives, they must ensure that no one plays with the life of their countrymen, most of all our soldiers. Decisions on war must then be taken responsibly, without haste, not for spectacular effect or as tactical ploys in a game.

The inner workings of the human mind are mysterious, however. For it is not these thoughts that crossed my mind when I saw those moving images on television. This reasoning is retrospective; thoughts that have occurred to me now, post-facto. At that time, a strange melange of emotions – feelings of grief, despair, shame, nostalgia – curdled up and then suddenly, from nowhere, the lyrics of an immortal song by Sahir Ludhianvi, set to tune by Jaidev and sung melodiously by Lata Mangeshkar in the 1961 Dev Anand classic *Hum Dono*, came unbidden to mind: "*Maangon ka sindoor na chhutey, ma behenon ki aas naa tootey* (may no one be widowed;



may no mother or sister lose hope of their loved one returning)."

Prayer for peace and wisdom

In the film, these lines are part of a prayer for peace led by the wife and mother of a Major of the Indian Army missing in action – a prayer not only that their own loved one returns home safe but that no wife, mother or sister may lose loved ones in war. Death in war is an interruption, an anomaly. It takes away from us young, active, lively persons who have not yet lived their full life. When a soldier dies in the prime of life, he leaves many tasks unfinished, many relationships incomplete, millions of desires unfulfilled. And according to popular belief, when a person at the height of his powers meets a bloody, violent, untimely end, his *prana* or *atman* remains in limbo, trapped in no man's land; it leaves the body without reaching wherever it is meant to go and keeps hovering around us. May this never happen to anyone, says the poet. "*Deh bina bhatke na praan* (may the spirit not abruptly detach from the body and wander restlessly)."

But this mellifluous song is more than a comforting prayer for peace. It subtly points fingers at those who injudiciously push us into war, at the economically strong and politically powerful who bring war upon us for their own benefit, to serve their own nefarious purpose. "*O saare jag ke rakhawaale, nirbal ko bal dene waale, balwaanon ko de de gyaan (jnana)* (you, who watch over the entire universe, you who empower the weak, may you also grant wisdom to the mighty)."

Jnana here refers not simply to knowledge, but to wisdom, moral insight, indeed to conscience. May the rulers rule with a conscience! May they be able to distinguish right conduct from wrong. Really, only such people should guide us when we are faced with the dilemma of whether or not to undertake morally retributive action.

And this is not all. The prayer then becomes a plea that we all be endowed with *sanmati* – to put our intelligence to good use, to have sound judgments, that all have a conscience. Why? Because unsound judgments, faulty moral reasoning and suspension of good sense are not the lot of leaders alone but also of those who support them and legitimise their actions. It is after all we, ordinary folks, who are swayed by war hysteria. Those without good sense get the leaders they deserve. May the gift of *sanmati* be bestowed on us. For only people with *sanmati* can rein in leaders who have lost all sense of good and bad, right and wrong.

A civilisational anchor

But who is this prayer addressed to? "*Allah tero naam, Ishwar tero*

naam (You, whose name is both Allah and Ishwar). In this, his masterstroke, Sahir invokes not only Gandhi, but an entire, centuries-old religio-philosophical legacy of the subcontinent in which all traditions are believed to share the same semantic universe that enables the god of one religion to be translated into the god of another. This is inclusive monotheism at its best, where god is one but referred to in different traditions by different names. And so, the prayer is addressed to Allah, Ishwar, and implicitly to the god of every religion.

With men spewing venom, not satisfied with fighting a war with their own fellow countrymen, itching to go to war with others, nothing (empathy, reason, dialogue) seems to work. Helpless spectators, no longer in control of their collective life, in sight of a looming disaster on the horizon, often break into a prayer. What else can those stripped of agency do but hope that somehow good sense may prevail, that all of us be delivered from the collective insanity that shows no sign of loosening its grip? Thus, those who believe in one god, invoke him; those who believe in gods and goddesses, invoke them; and those who believe in neither, hope for some good fortune to fall in their lap! This is why this is a prayer for our times: we offer this prayer to you, Allah to some, Ishwar to others, that you miraculously bring an end to needless killings, wisdom and conscience to the rich and powerful, and peace and good sense to everyone.

Rajeev Bhargava is Professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi

A fatal margin of error

The inconsistent and arbitrary application of the death penalty remains a matter of great concern



RAHIL CHATTERJEE

On March 5, 2019, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court headed by Justice A.K. Sikri (now retired) found Khushwinder Singh guilty and sentencing him to death. In 2013, the Fatehgarh Sahib sessions court had convicted and sentenced him to death for killing six relatives of his wife with the motive of committing theft. The last time the death penalty was upheld by the Supreme Court was in July 2018 in the Delhi gang rape case. Since then, the court has acquitted 10 death row prisoners and reduced the sentence to life imprisonment of 23 others. As Singh's case moves closer to the gallows, the judgment highlights the processes that cause cases to slip through the cracks of the 'rarest of the rare' doctrine, which mandates a consideration of both the crime and the criminal. The judgment exemplifies the varied standards of legal representation that impacts the imposition of the death penalty.

A contrast

Singh's death sentence stands in contrast to nine cases decided by three-judge benches headed by

Justice Sikri since November 2018 which resulted in six commutations to life imprisonment and eight acquittals. In these judgments, the duty of the court to conduct an effective sentencing hearing was emphasised and factors such as good conduct in custody, education, age, social, emotional and mental condition of the offender, and the possibility of reform were highlighted as relevant considerations in the sentencing scheme. However, none of these factors appear to have been considered for Singh. The judgment declares at the outset that Singh's lawyer "is not in a position to point out any mitigating circumstance". Without commenting on the effect of that deficiency on the quality of the sentencing exercise being carried out by the court, it erroneously relies only on the pre-planned nature of the crime, its brutality and the number of victims to impose the death sentence. Grounds relating to the criminal such as his conduct in prison, his socio-economic and educational backgrounds, or the probability of reformation receive no comment from the court.

In late 2018, another three-judge bench of the Supreme Court reversed its own finding in *M.A. Antony v. State of Kerala*, involving the murder of six relatives of the accused. The court chose to commute the death penalty factoring the 'lack of evidence' to show that the convict was a hardened criminal or that he was beyond reform. The similarities in the nature of



the crime between the cases of Singh and Antony are unfortunate and uncannily similar. In both cases, six family members lost their lives, including two children. The motive in both, according to the prosecution, was money and the victims were close relatives. Both convicts were middle-aged men with families of their own. While in Antony's case, his socio-economic conditions and lack of criminal antecedents were considered by the court in deciding that there was a probability of his reformation, in Singh's judgment, there is a complete silence on this aspect, providing yet another instance of the arbitrary imposition of the death penalty.

Eliciting information

The irreversibility of the death penalty has fundamentally affected the jurisprudence around it. It is commonly accepted that a judge in adversarial proceedings cannot go on a 'truth searching exploration' beyond what is presented. Yet, death penalty jurisprudence is rife with examples where duty has been placed upon the courts to elicit information relating to question of sentence, even if none

is adduced before it. Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan's judgment in *Ajay Pandit v. State of Maharashtra* (2012), held that the court has a 'duty and obligation' to elicit relevant facts even if the accused was totally silent in such situations. In *Santosh Kumar Satishbhushan Bariyar v. State of Maharashtra* (2009), while discussing the responsibility of courts with respect to the sentencing scheme laid out in *Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab*, Justice Sinha opined that *Bachan Singh* makes no distinction on the roles and responsibility of appellate courts and therefore it was incumbent upon all courts to ensure the ratio laid down in *Bachan Singh* was 'scrupulously' followed, adding, "if anything, inverse pyramid of responsibility is applicable in death penalty cases".

Unlike Khushwinder Singh's case, in the past few months the Supreme Court has rightly considered evidence about the criminal by calling for medical records, reports of prison conduct, including poetry written by a convict post-incarceration to ascertain the appropriate sentence. This was not attempted in Singh's case. At the core of the arbitrariness in death penalty sentencing is the inconsistent approach to mitigating factors. The Supreme Court has, unfortunately, not developed any requirements that guide the collection, presentation and consideration of mitigating factors. Very often, barely any mitigating factors are presented on behalf of death row prisoners; if they are,

they are of poor quality. Judges are often left only with information concerning the crime to determine the punishment. And, undoubtedly, Singh is a victim of this. He ended up being defined only by his crime with no other information about his life coming up before the judges. The quality of legal representation continues to affect the administration of the death penalty, even when cases are decided by pro-active and sensitive judges.

The inconsistent and arbitrary application of the death penalty remains a matter of great concern to the judiciary. Justice Kurian Joseph's parting words in *Chhannu Lal Verma v. State of Chhattisgarh*, calling for the gradual abolition of the death penalty, require serious introspection from the court and the body politic, and for us to recognise that the efforts to make the administration of the death penalty fairer are like chasing the wind. Our institutions may persist with attempts to 'tinker with the machinery of death' until there is a collective realisation that the death penalty is untenable in a fair criminal justice system. Till such time, the setting of established benchmarks for practice, and a system of oversight are necessary to ensure that the quality of legal representation does not become the difference between a sentence of life and death.

Rahil Chatterjee is an associate at Project 39A at the National Law University, Delhi. The views expressed are personal

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.

Manohar Parrikar

In the passing of Manohar Parrikar, the nation has lost a fine politician, an excellent Chief Minister and one of its best Defence Ministers (Page 1, "Manohar Parrikar bids adieu" and "He was the original Aam Aadmi", both March 18). He was also a politician noted for his integrity, dedication and commitment to work. Known for his simplicity and geniality, he adhered to the principle of service before self. Even when his health deteriorated, he was committed to his work.

M. PRADYU,
Thalikkavu, Kannur, Kerala

India has lost one of its most honest politicians. When the Indian Army wanted to close certain roads in the Secunderabad cantonment area, it was Mr. Parrikar who saw the point behind the agitation against the move and asked the

Army to keep them open throughout the day.

NAGARAJAMANI M.V.,
Hyderabad

The titan from tiny Goa leaves behind a void. He quietly led the State to progress, and with integrity. Despite his failing health, he devoted his whole-hearted attention to State administration. He combined intellect and integrity, a rare combination in politics.

S.V. VENKATKRISHNAN,
Bengaluru

Think and vote

India's future will be impacted by this year's election in a significant way (Editorial page, "An election that is not about one", March 18). As circumstances have changed after the Pulwama attack, political winds have shifted. This calls for immediate action by the Opposition parties; a united stand is the only way they

can face the present situation. However, as we can see, they seem to have become more divided than ever. An India that is a clone of an autocracy would be most unfortunate. One only hopes that voters exercise their franchise in a way that ensures the protection of the rights of citizens, the Constitution and, most importantly, India's identity as a democracy.

MELANIE MARIAM KURIEN,
Kochi, Kerala

Twitter tag

Why are our political parties insulting the poor clan of 'chowkidars' to settle their silly political scores? In fact it is an insult to the real chowkidars, a majority of whom live in our cities and who are not paid even the prescribed minimum wages for their tough, seven-day week and no-break jobs. Let any of these newly turned 'chowkidars' work for a

pittance, of ₹200 a day, and see what being a 'chowkidar' actually means in India ("Modi adds 'Chowkidar' to his Twitter handle name", March 18).

BALVINDER,
Chandigarh

The core issues of politics should be growth and development, jobs, corruption, health and hygiene, infrastructure, utilities, price rise, law and order, social harmony and poverty alleviation. The middle class can be a strong force in pressuring political parties to address the issues at hand. It would be unfortunate to have this segment leave the field open for political entities to have a free run.

A. BHUVAN
Nagaon, Assam

Here too, a rich history

History in the small towns of India is often glossed over.

Here is an example (Coimbatore, "Continue with new names of two roads", March 16). As one who has a long association with Erode, I find it dismaying that the popular "Brough road" (in Erode) is to be renamed after Meenakshi Sundaranar. Anthony Watson Brough was a nominated member of the then Erode Municipality in 1904 and was instrumental in spearheading the overall development of Erode, which included his interventions in the field of education, health and local governance. Though a missionary, his vision for

Erode was commendable. He can be likened to Lord Ripon and John Pennycuik who evinced genuine interest in the welfare of Indians. The move to rename the road will amount to ignoring a vital piece of history. Instead of renaming Brough road, a road like Mettur or Chennimalai could be named after Meenakshi Sundaranar who, like E.V.R. Periyar, was a great friend and admirer of Watson Brough's service to the people of Erode.

C. AROCKIASAMY,
Erode, Tamil Nadu

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

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

A sentence in the penultimate paragraph of the front-page story, "AIADMK, DMK to face off in eight seats" (March 18, 2019) erroneously said the DMK would face the TMC in Vellore. Actually, it will face the TMC in Thanjavur and the New Justice Party in Vellore.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturba Buildings, 855 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

INTERVIEW | YOGI ADITYANATH

'U.P.'s law and order has become a model for the country'

The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister on encounter killings, cow protection, renaming places, and the Lok Sabha polls

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

Yogi Adityanath built himself the image of a firebrand Hindu leader long before he became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. In this interview, conducted in Hindi, Mr. Adityanath talks about how 'development for all' is a corollary of his religious inspiration, and the many controversies of his tenure. Excerpts:

You have completed two years as Chief Minister. What is your scorecard?

The last two years have seen transformation and the well-being of the people of U.P. In the previous 15-20 years, U.P. became associated with certain traits that ruined the reputation of the State. We have changed that bad reputation. The State has made great strides in development and governance, in gaining trust and honour, in the last two years. We have been able to do this thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance and the hard work of our officials.

You say you are for 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'. In your earlier campaigns, your image was of a Hindu leader. As Chief Minister, are you the leader of only Hindus or the leader of all people?

I am a Hindu, and I have pride in that. A Hindu is interested in the welfare of all, not merely humans but all living beings. *Sarve bhavantu sukhina, sarve santu niramaya*. Sanatan Hindu dharma has given this message to the world. The well-being of everyone... that is Hindu philosophy. Everyone must follow this philosophy. As Chief Minister, I am happy that every class, caste, religion and citizen is benefiting from our programmes. We have implemented 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' with full commitment in U.P.

What is your biggest achievement?

U.P.'s law and order has be-

come a model for the country. This used to be a State where every second day you had a riot, the mafia raj was widespread, gangs were being sheltered by the administration. We have been successful in changing that perception. Because of that change in perception, besides implementing Modi's flagship schemes in various sectors, U.P. is doing much more. The U.P. Investors Summit was a great success. We hosted the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, and the Kumbh in Prayagraj for 25 crore people. It was the most successful ever, and with a message of cleanliness and security.

So, are you transforming yourself from a Hindu hriday samrat (emperor of Hindu hearts) to a vikas purush (man of development)?

Listen, this is no transformation. The real Hindu vision is that nobody will be discriminated against or favoured. Everyone is equal. Development is for all. We are implementing that vision in U.P. We are today the first in the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. We are number one in the Swachh Bharat Mission, in tourism. India is the best destination for FDI, and U.P. is the best in India. Our procurement policy is farmer friendly. We ensure that the minimum support price is given to farmers, and the money reaches their bank accounts in 48 hours. No middlemen. We have added more land to the irrigation network in the last two years than in the 20 years prior to that.



RAJEEV BHATT

So, the biggest change is in law and order. There has been a dramatic rise in the number of encounters by the police ever since you became Chief Minister. About 80 people have been killed by the police. Is this the only way to enforce law and order?

See, not a single one of the encounters was fake. If the criminal opens fire, the police will not keep their hands tied. Earlier, the police used to run and criminals used to chase them. Because criminals were being shielded by the administration, the Bahujan Samaj Party's or the Samajwadi Party's. Today, that is not the case. Today, there is the rule of law in U.P. Those who break the law will be confronted by the law. If someone fires at the police, or at innocent people, it is only natural they will be responded to in a language that they understand, by the police. Our officers have been killed, injured badly in the process, but the security of 23 crore people is my responsibility. It is also my responsibility to provide security to all those who visit U.P.

How are you so sure that no

encounter was fake?

The Supreme Court and the Human Rights Commission have laid down norms to be followed, and those have been adhered to in each case.

But the application of law appears selective in U.P. For instance, in the use of the National Security Act (NSA). The police charged Dalit leader Chandrashekhar Azad under the NSA, but did not use it in Bulandshahr (when a Hindutva mob protesting against suspected cow slaughter killed a police officer).

No, that is not the case, we have applied the NSA in many cases. In Saharanpur, whether it was Chandrashekhar or the other side. Three from one side and three from the other were charged under the NSA, and the law was not specific to any group. Wherever we have used the NSA, it has been used in a non-discriminatory manner. In Bulandshahr also, strict action has been taken against the culprits. We have sent a strong message. There have been no riots in the State in the last two years. Look at

Mughals are not part of our heritage. Foreign aggressors cannot be part of our heritage. If someone says they are, I will say that is slave mentality.

the peaceful and calm manner in which the Kumbh was completed. I am pleased that we could do it.

Cow protection has been a big priority for you. How do you analyse the impact of your measures, given that farmers, many of whom are your supporters, are now complaining that stray cattle are ruining their farms?

See, what you are describing was the situation two months earlier. Things have significantly improved since then. This has been a legacy issue. Yes, we have shut down all the illegal slaughter houses. The National Green Tribunal and court orders on this predate our government. When illegal slaughter houses were closed, a large number of cattle were let loose. We have to protect them, and we also have to protect the farms. Originally

our plan was to encourage the community to take care of these cattle. My idea was that cow protection will be done by the community, and we would support their efforts. But it did not succeed in many places. Low milk-yielding breeds are not viable for farmers. We are working on that. Secondly, we wanted to spread sex selection methods to have more female progeny - bulls are needed less as farming gets mechanised. Thirdly, we wanted to develop technology that could refill cooking gas cylinders with gas from dung so that cattle remain productive. But the farmers began saying we should take care of these stray cattle first. As of now, we have four lakh cattle being taken care of in shelters. We needed money for this. We used the MGNREGA for construction in some places. We introduced a cess on foreign liquor in some places. We also generated some money from mandis - this is related to the welfare of farmers, after all. Our measures for cow protection will continue.

You have been renaming places. What is the thought behind this?

If Bombay can become Mumbai, Bangalore can become Bengaluru, Madras can become Chennai, and Calcutta can become Kolkata, there is no reason why Allahabad should not become Prayagraj and Faizabad should not become Ayodhya. To re-establish our original identity, we have renamed these places. I am happy that people have welcomed this.

But there are no religious undertones in the case of the other cities you mentioned.

That is not the case. Mumbai is from Mumba Devi Mandir. You are from Kerala. How did Trivandrum become Thi-

ruvananthapuram? It is after Bhagwan Vishnu. We are only restoring our heritage.

But aren't Mughals also part of our heritage?

No. Foreign aggressors cannot be part of our heritage. Those who are our citizens today are our citizens. Their security and welfare are our responsibility. But if someone says that foreign aggressors are part of our inheritance, I will say that is slave mentality.

What are you going to fight this Lok Sabha election on?

Development, good governance and nationalism. In the last five years under Modi, the BJP-led alliance has, through numerous welfare schemes, touched the lives of all people without any discrimination. There has been unprecedented progress in infrastructure, and external and internal security. All this is being achieved through nationalism. When Modi came to power, dozens of districts were affected by Naxalism. Today, it is confined to five-six districts. The Northeast had several separatist incidents - all the extremists were neutralised through one surgical strike. Kashmir used to witness massive incidents of stone pelting. Today, it is under control. The surgical strike broke the backbone of terrorism and the recent air strikes in Pakistan-controlled territories... All this is unprecedented. People want India to be prosperous and resolute. Modi is able to do all this because this is a stable government. He is a strong leader. The Opposition has no leader, and it does not have the right intentions.

You mentioned security. On this question, several BJP leaders, including Mr. Modi, have spoken about threats

coming from those who 'live in India but who speak the language of Pakistan'. What does this mean?

Direct or indirect support to terrorism, or to show softness towards terrorists, is unfortunate. For the Congress to promise that it will dilute sedition laws is an act of encouraging anti-national forces. To use 'ji' while referring to terrorists... I am surprised by the level of [Congress President] Rahul Gandhi's understanding. He uses foul language for Modi. Our Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, is being attacked in vicious language.

And when will you become Prime Minister?

I am not in that race. I am happy in the service of U.P.

Are you planning to campaign outside U.P. too?

U.P. will be my focus, but I will campaign wherever the party asks me to.

You have apparently postponed the plan for the temple in Ayodhya. Meanwhile, you have announced a Ram statue in Ayodhya.

We are making progress. We won't backtrack. Whatever we have announced, we shall do.

The temple or the statue?

Everything will be completed during our tenure.

SINGLE FILE

Future-proofing cities

It is important to build infrastructure that is resilient to shocks brought about by a changing climate

MAMI MIZUTORI



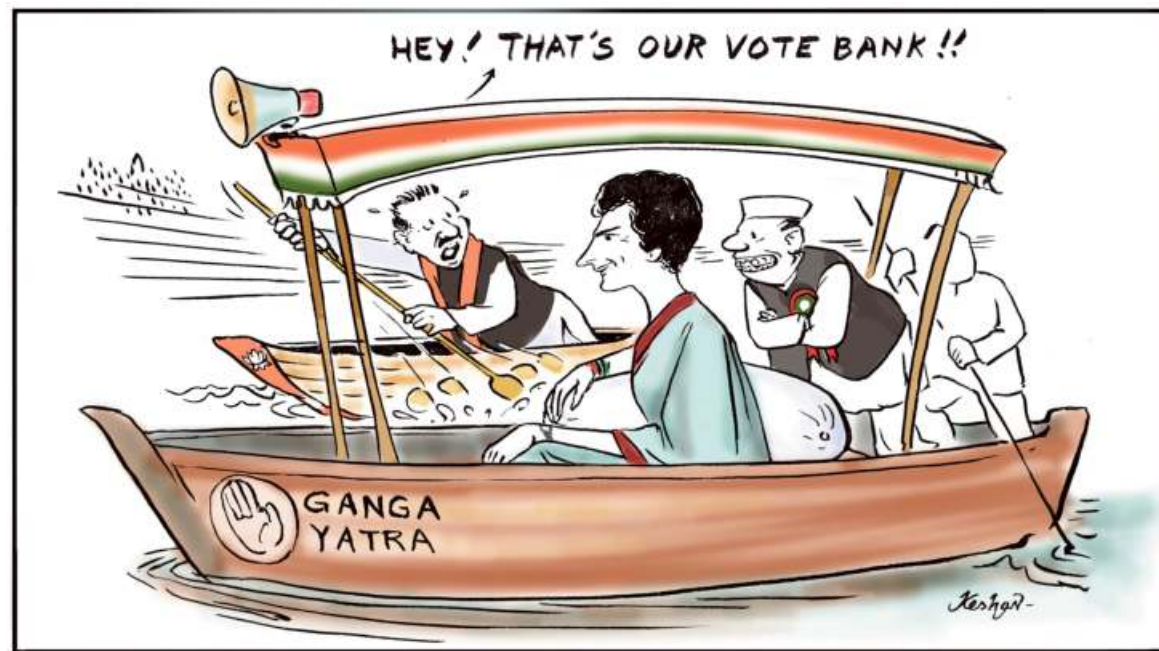
The stark statistics jump out at anyone trying to understand why resilient infrastructure is so important in a world that is urbanising at an unprecedented pace, not least here in India. Already around 34% of India's population lives in cities and this demographic cohort is expected to grow in the years ahead. This growing rate of urbanisation and the subsequent increase in population density is bringing massive new investments in infrastructure. Bridges, roads, dams, power stations and electrical grids are just some of the services and facilities that need to be built to serve burgeoning urban populations. Half of the infrastructure needed in Asia by 2050 is yet to be built. It is estimated that, globally, \$6 trillion needs to be invested in infrastructure every year until 2030 to meet current demands.

This level of investment provides a window of opportunity to ensure that all new infrastructure is made resilient to withstand future shocks, including those brought by a changing climate. Disasters in heavily populated urban areas can lead to high numbers of human casualties. It is sobering to note that unsafe infrastructure which collapses in an earthquake or tsunami kills more people than any other type of natural hazard, such as a tornado or a storm. Economic losses from disasters that damage infrastructure can reach huge proportions. The World Bank estimates that annual disaster losses are already close to \$520 billion and that disasters push up to 24 million people a year into poverty.

Ensuring that all new investments in infrastructure are made in a risk-sensitive way can play a significant role in reducing economic losses from disasters. There is no excuse for infrastructure to continue to be damaged or destroyed by recurrent hazards when we know that a small investment - often just a small percentage of the total cost of investment - can make the infrastructure resistant to many shocks. The dividend is that money saved from relief and rebuilding costs can be invested in development objectives, such as education, health care or improved transportation, helping countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

One of the objectives of the Second International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, being hosted on March 19-20 under the initiative of the Indian government and with support from the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, is to pursue the creation of a global coalition for resilient infrastructure. The coalition will also ensure that new risks are not created, as enshrined in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the global plan for reducing disaster losses. Such international cooperation and shared commitment are needed to "future-proof" our cities and lock-in resilience for generations to come.

The writer is the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction



DATA POINT

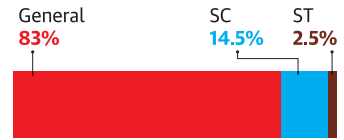
Limited representation

Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe candidates are rarely fielded in non-reserved Lok Sabha seats. An analysis of the last three Lok Sabha polls reveals this trend. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

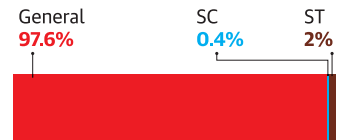
A small share

Of the 17,811 candidates fielded in non-reserved LS seats, 17% were from the SC/ST communities but the bulk of them were independents. Of the 1,247 who won from such seats, only 2.4% were from the SC/ST communities

Candidates in non-reserved seats



Winners in non-reserved seats



SAD: Shiromani Akali Dal; PDP: People's Democratic Party; AITC: Trinamool Congress; JMM: Jharkhand Vikas Morcha; RSP: Revolutionary Socialist Party; NLP: National Loktantrik Party; IUML: Indian Union Muslim League; SJP(R): Samajwadi Janata Party (Rashtriya); AIFB: All India Forward Bloc; AD: Apna Dal; AGP: Asom Gana Parishad

State-wise analysis

Apart from the predominantly tribal States, only in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu did the share of SC/ST candidates of the total in non-reserved seats cross 20%. Goa and Manipur did not field a single SC/ST candidate in a non-reserved seat

Arunachal Pradesh 100%	Chhatisgarh 29.3%	Punjab 26.1%	M.P. 24.3%	W.B. 22.8%	Rajasthan 22.1%
Meghalaya 100%	Maharashtra 21.8%	Karnataka 15%	U.P. 14.9%	Himachal 14.7%	J&K 14.5%
Nagaland 100%	Tamil Nadu 20.2%	Assam 14.5%	Odisha 12.3%	Kerala 10.6%	Tripura 10.3%
	Gujarat 16.5%	A.P. 14.1%	Uttarakhand 12.9%	Haryana 12.9%	Bihar 12.9%
	Jharkhand 15.4%	Delhi 12.9%			Sikkim

Party-wise analysis

All the Naga People's Front's candidates who competed in the non-reserved seats in the last three elections were from the SC/ST communities. Many parties such as the AIADMK, DMK, BJD, TDP and RJD did not field even one such candidate. Only those parties which won at least one seat in the last three elections were considered

Naga People's Front 100%	Bahujan Samaj Party 27%	SAD 9.5%	NLP 8.7%	AGP 7.7%	LJNSP 7.4%
Jharkhand Mukti Morcha 26.1%	PDP 7.1%	JD(U) 6.9%	AIFB 6.6%	AD 6.5%	
Independents 22.2%	AITC 5.7%	TRS 5.1%	RLD 4.9%	JD(S) 4.6%	
Lok Janshakti Party 29.5%	CPI 5.4%	CPM 4.4%	SHS 3.9%	SP 2.4%	
	JVM 5.3%	IUML 3.9%	INC 3.9%	BJP 3.9%	NCP
	RSP 5.3%	SJP(R) 3.9%			

Source: Trivedi Centre for Political Data

FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 19, 1969

Opposition to India's space research plan

India's proposal for a more active role by the United Nations in the field of applications of space technology to developing countries met with opposition yesterday [March 18, United Nations] from the two space powers. India has submitted the proposal to the scientific and technical sub-committee of the Outer Space Committee and it was further explained yesterday [March 18] by Dr. Vikram Sarabhai who presented the proposal. The United States and Soviet Union delegates joined in opposing the Indian proposal arguing mainly that there was no need for any U.N. effort in this field and that specialised agencies were already dealing with it. Dr. Sarabhai, however, maintained his ground and emphasised that many applications of space technology transcended the field of any one specialised agency and the U.N. could serve as a bridge.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 19, 1919.

Indian Soldiers' Board.

A Press communique [issued in Delhi on March 18] says: The Indian Soldiers' Board have taken up at the request of the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab on the question of assisting the helpless widows and dependants of Indian soldiers in that province. The high prices prevailing and the unfavourable agricultural conditions of the present year had rendered their position of acute distress. Immediate relief was considered to be necessary and the Indian Soldiers' Board have obtained the agreement of the committee of the Imperial Indian Relief Fund to place the sum of Rs. 2,00,000 at the disposal of the Punjab Government for the relief of necessitous cases of this nature.

CONCEPTUAL Absolute majority and simple majority

Absolute majority refers to a majority of more than 50% of the total membership of the legislature. For instance, the total strength of the Lok Sabha is 545. An absolute majority means 50% of 545 plus one, which is 273. An absolute majority is used in the case of government formation at the Central and State level.

A simple majority refers to more than 50% of the members in the House present and voting. If, say, 500 members are present in the House, and 100 abstain from voting, then the simple majority that is needed to pass the Bill is 50% of 400 plus one, which is 201. Ordinary Bills in Parliament need to be passed with a simple majority in both Houses before they are sent to the President for his assent.

MORE ON THE WEB

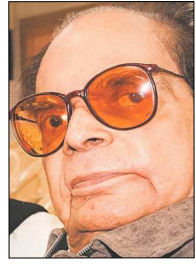
Video: Ice branding: how Indian bars are welcoming this new trend

http://bit.ly/IceBrandingIndia



आज होरी, घीसू, माधव अपनी कहानी खुद लिख रहे हैं

मुझे मित्रों के साथ बैठना बहुत अच्छा लगता है। उनसे बातें करना और तरह-तरह की बातें करना। इसमें मैं कोई उम्र, पोजीशन आदि का भेद नहीं करता। इसलिए सब लोग मुझसे बहुत खुलकर बात करते हैं। जिन्हें हम लोग शुद्ध, सात्विक, पवित्र, आध्यात्मिक किस्म के विचार करते हैं, उन्हें मैं अपने पास फटकने नहीं देता, क्योंकि वे आदमी को बूढ़ा बनाते हैं। शायद यही मेरी ऊर्जा का राज है। मित्रों की वजह से और तथाकथित आपत्तिजनक बातें सोचने-लिखने से। हमारे दौर की कहानी मध्यवर्ग की कहानी थी। उसमें लेखक भी मध्यवर्ग के थे। उनके पात्र और उनका जो कथा संसार था, वह भी मध्यवर्ग का था, पढ़ने वाले भी मध्य वर्ग के थे। नई कहानी आंदोलन की जो



बहुत बड़ी सफलता थी, उसके पीछे कारण यही था कि एक चक्र पूरा होता था। पढ़ने वाले से लेकर लिखने वाले और विषय वस्तु, पात्र तक लगभग उसी मध्यवर्ग से थे। हमने दृष्टिकोण में सामाजिकता लाने की कोशिश की। नई कहानी पूरी तरह मध्यवर्ग की कहानी है। मध्यवर्ग में भी स्त्री-पुरुष के बनते-बिगड़ते पारिवारिक संबंधों की कहानी है।

अस्सी के बाद पूरा परिदृश्य बदल गया। मध्यवर्ग हाशिये पर फेंक दिया गया और फिर जनवादी कहानी आई। हालांकि वहां भी लिखने वाले उसी वर्ग के थे, पर जिस वर्ग के बारे में लिखते थे, वह उनके अनुभव का संसार नहीं था, वह उसके सिर्फ दर्शक हो सकते थे। लेकिन 80-90 के बाद वे लोग लिखने लगे, जिनके बारे में हम लिखते थे। जैसे कहे कि होरी, घीसू, माधव अपने बारे में खुद ही लिखने लगे, जिन्हें हम दलित कहानियाँ कहते हैं। हमने जो उपन्यास लिखे थे, तरह-तरह के कैरेक्टर्स बनाए थे, बड़ी क्रांतिकारी किस्म की बातें करने वाली स्त्रियों का जिक्र किया था। वे सब महिलाएँ अब खुद लिखने लगीं, तो हमारा लिखना फ्रीका हो गया।

-हिंदी के दिग्गज कथका

देर से ही सही, लोकपाल के अस्तित्व में आने से उच्च स्तर पर भ्रष्टाचार पर अंकुश लगाने और जवाबदेही सुनिश्चित करने में मदद मिलेगी, इसे भारतीय लोकतंत्र के सफर का एक मील का पत्थर कहा जा सकता है।

पहला लोकपाल

इसने दिखाया कि भ्रष्टाचार सिर्फ एक राजनीतिक मुद्दा नहीं है, बल्कि आम लोग इससे बुरी तरह से प्रभावित होते हैं। उनल पर भ्रष्टाचार पर अंकुश लगाने के लिए जो भी संस्थाएँ हैं, उस पर परोक्ष रूप से सरकारों का नियंत्रण रहा है, जिससे उनकी निष्पक्षता पर सवाल उठते रहे हैं। दरअसल राजनीतिक संरक्षण में होने वाले भ्रष्टाचार पर अंकुश लगाना एक बड़ी चुनौती है। कर्नाटक के पूर्व लोकपाल जस्टिस संतोष हेगड़े ने कुछ महीने पहले चिंता जताई थी कि भ्रष्टाचार निरोधक अधिनियम के तहत पूरे देश में 20 फीसदी मामलों में ही सजा हो पाती है। इसकी छाया लोकसभा और विधानसभाओं में भी नजर आती है, जहाँ ऐसे नेता भी पहुंच जाते हैं, जिनके खिलाफ आपराधिक मामले होते हैं। यह विडंबना ही है कि लोकपाल विधेयक चाहे, भारी देबाव में ही सही 2013 में

पारित हो गया था, लेकिन लोकपाल के चयन में चयन समिति को पांच साल से अधिक का बकाया लगा गया। हकीकत यह है कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट की कड़ाई के बाद ही लोकपाल का गठन हो पा रहा है। यह उदासीनता राज्यों में भी नजर आती है, जिसके कारण ओडिशा, मिजोरम जैसे अनेक राज्यों में हाल ही में पहली बार लोकपाल की स्थापना हुई है। इसके बावजूद लोकपाल की भारतीय लोकतंत्र के सफर में एक मील के पत्थर की तरह देखा जाना चाहिए, क्योंकि मंत्रियों और उच्च अधिकारियों के साथ ही वर्तमान और पूर्व प्रधानमंत्रियों तक इसके दायरे में होंगे। उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि जस्टिस घोष की अगुआई में लोकपाल ऐसी संस्था के रूप में काम करेगा, जिससे उच्च स्तर पर पारदर्शिता और जवाबदेही मजबूत होगी।

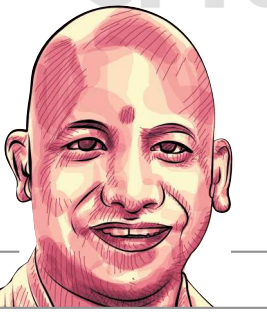
हमने धारणाओं को बदला

फ

रवरी 2017 के विधानसभा चुनाव में भाजपा अपना संकल्प पत्र लेकर जनता के बीच गई थी। यह संकल्प पत्र हमारी सोच ही नहीं बन प्रदेश के विकास की आत्मा भी है। मुझे यह बताते हुए बेहद प्रसन्नता हो रही है कि चुनाव के दौरान भाजपा ने जो वायदे किए थे, उनमें से अधिकांश पूरे हो गए हैं। पिछले 24 महीने में उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार ने विकास और सुशासन की जो सुदृढ़ नींव रखी है, उससे प्रदेश के बारे में देश, दुनिया के लोगों की धारणा बदली है। 19 मार्च 2017 को जब भाजपा के नेतृत्व में सरकार बनी, तब प्रदेश में अराजकता व असुरक्षा का वातावरण था। लूट-खसोट मची हुई थी। देशों में देश में उत्तर प्रदेश पहले स्थान पर था। 2012 से 2017 के बीच 1,025 से ज्यादा दंगे हुए। अब हालात बदल गए हैं। दो साल से प्रदेश में कोई दंगा नहीं हुआ। संगठित अपराध पर पूरी तरह रोक लगी है। कानून का राज है। पहले नौकरियों जाति बेधका और रिश्त लोकर दी जा रही थीं, अब योग्यता के आधार पर मिल रही हैं। पहले ट्रांसफर-पोस्टिंग रिश्तखोरी का उद्योग बना हुआ था। माफिया को सत्ता के संरक्षण के चलते पुलिस का मनोबल गिरा हुआ था। सत्ता में आने के बाद हमने पुलिस का मनोबल बढ़ाया। अपराधी या तो प्रदेश छोड़कर भाग गए या जेल पहुंच गए हैं। प्रदेश की भाजपा सरकार ने अपराध और अपराधियों के प्रति जीरो टॉलरेंस की नीति अपनाई। पुलिस के कामकाज में राजनीतिक हस्तक्षेप बंद किया। अपराधियों के खिलाफ कठोर कार्रवाई के निर्देशों के चलते अपहरण और एफिड अटैक की घटनाएँ रूकीं। अपराधियों को संरक्षण देने के कारण कैदना व कांथला जैसे कस्बों से पलायन हो रहा था। अब पलायन करने वाले अपने घरों को वापस लौटने



पिछले दो साल में उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार ने सुशासन की जो सुदृढ़ नींव रखी है, उससे प्रदेश के बारे में लोगों की धारणा बदली है। आज संगठित अपराध पर पूरी तरह रोक लगी है और कानून का राज है।



योगी आदित्यनाथ, मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

लगे। एंटी रोमियो स्वर्चॉयड से महिलाओं एवं बालिकाओं के विरुद्ध अपराधों पर सख्ती से अंकुश लगा। महिला सशक्तीकरण के लिए हमारी सरकार ने बेहतरीन कार्य किया है। उत्तर प्रदेश में 1.12 करोड़ निःशुल्क गैस कनेक्शन दिए गए। सभी 75 जिलों में वन स्टॉप सेंटर खोलने का अनुमति दी गई। 40 जिलों में शबरी योजना प्रारंभ की। 181 महिला हेल्थलाइन व रेस्क्यू वैन सेवा का विस्तार किया।

ढांचागत विकास में सरकार ने पिछली सरकारों के मुकाबले काफी अच्छा और तेज काम किया है। प्रदेश में 341 किलोमीटर लंबे पूर्वांचल एक्सप्रेस-वे का काम शुरू हो चुका है। इसके लिए शत-प्रतिशत भूमि का अधिग्रहण किया गया है। बुंदेलखंड एक्सप्रेस-वे के लिए डीपीआर अंतिम चरण में है। पश्चिमी यूपी को पूर्वी उत्तर प्रदेश से जोड़ने के लिए 600 किलोमीटर लंबे गंगा एक्सप्रेस-वे के लिए सर्वे कराया जा रहा है। 380

किलोमीटर लंबे झांसी-चित्रकूट-प्रयागराज राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग को चार लेन किए जाने को स्वीकृति दी जा चुकी है। राज्य में 1,16,392 किलोमीटर सड़कों को गड्डामुक्त किया गया। सरकार ने स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं को बेहतर बनाया है। प्रदेश में 13 मेडिकल कॉलेजों का निर्माण चल रहा है। आयुष्मान भारत योजना के तहत छह करोड़ लोगों को प्रतिवर्ष पांच लाख रुपये तक की निःशुल्क चिकित्सा बीमा की सुविधा दी जा रही है। प्रदेश में 2,329 उपकेंद्रों का हेल्थ एवं वेलनेस सेंटर के रूप में सुदृढ़ीकरण किया गया है। राष्ट्रीय आयुष मिशन के तहत 10 जिलों में 50 बेंड के अस्पताल खोलने का काम चल रहा है। प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना में ऐतिहासिक उपलब्धि हासिल की गई है। पिछली सरकार ने दो साल में पीएम आवास योजना (शहरी) में केवल 20 हजार आवास स्वीकृत किए थे। भाजपा सरकार ने 24 महीने में इस योजना में 11 लाख से अधिक आवास स्वीकृत किए हैं। पीएम आवास योजना (ग्रामीण) में पिछली सरकार दो सालों में 63 हजार आवास नहीं दे पाई, हमारी सरकार ने दो साल में 12 लाख 82 हजार आवास गरीबों को स्वीकृत किए।

पिछली सरकार ने दो साल में केवल 43 लाख शौचालय बनाए, हमारी सरकार ने 24 महीने में 2.49 करोड़ शौचालयों का निर्माण कर बेस लाइन सर्वे के अनुसार प्रदेश को खुले में शौच मुक्त कर दिया। हर घर को रोशनी देने के संकल्प पर भी हमारी सरकार खरी उतरी है। सोभाग्य योजना में 75 लाख से अधिक गरीबों को निःशुल्क बिजली कनेक्शन दिए गए हैं। बिना भेदभाव के जिला मुख्यालयों को 24 घंटे, तहसील मुख्यालयों को 20 घंटे और ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में 18 घंटे बिजली दी जा रही है।

किसानों की आमदनी दोगुनी करने के प्रधानमंत्री

नरेंद्र मोदी के लक्ष्य को पूरा करने के लिए सरकार ने सत्ता संभालने के बाद 36 लाख करोड़ रुपये के प्रावधान से लाखों लघु एवं सीमांत किसानों के एक लाख रुपये तक के कर्ज माफ किए। हमारी सरकार ने चार करोड़ से अधिक किसानों को मुदा स्वास्थ्य कार्ड उपलब्ध कराए। प्रधानमंत्री फसल बीमा योजना के तहत वर्ष 2017-18 में खरीफ एवं रबी की फसलों के लिए 53.73 लाख किसानों की फसल का बीमा किया गया। वर्ष 2011-12 से 2017-18 तक के बकाया गन्ना मूल्य का 57 हजार 578 करोड़ रुपये भुगतान डेढ़ साल में करके दिखाया है। पिछली सरकार पांच साल में भी इतना गन्ना मूल्य भुगतान नहीं करा पाई। प्रधानमंत्री सम्मान निधि योजना के तहत 1.03 करोड़ किसानों को दो-दो हजार रुपये की पहली किस्त दी जा चुकी है। इस योजना से प्रदेश के 2.14 करोड़ किसान लाभान्वित होंगे। प्रदेश सरकार ने गेहूँ एवं धान की रिकॉर्ड खरीद की। हमारी सरकार ने 633 रोजगार मेलों के माध्यम से 1,21,194 से अधिक युवाओं को रोजगार मुहैया कराया। ढाई लाख से अधिक सरकारी नौकरियाँ दीं। उनमें भ्रष्टाचार पर रोक लगाई। दो साल में प्रदेश में डेढ़ लाख करोड़ रुपये का औद्योगिक निवेश हुआ है। इससे 15 लाख रोजगार के अवसर सृजित हुए हैं।

हमारी सरकार में यूपी इन्वेस्टर्स समिट का सफल आयोजन किया गया। प्रत्येक जिले के विशिष्ट उत्पादों को बढ़ावा देने के लिए एक जनपद-एक उत्पाद योजना संचालित की जा रही है। प्रदेश सरकार ने पारंपरिक कारीगरों के हस्तशिल्पियों के लिए विश्वकर्मा सम्मान योजना प्रारंभ की। काशी में प्रवासी भारतीय दिवस का आयोजन किया गया। दिव्य एवं भव्य कुंभ का आयोजन किया गया। इन सारे आयोजनों ने प्रदेश के बारे में बनी पुरानी धारणा को बदल दिया है।

मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> बिनोद दुलू बोरा

सांप को बचाने में पीठ पर पत्थर खाए

मैं असम में नगांव जिले के चापानाला गांव का रहने वाला हूँ, जो कर्बी पहाड़ी के बिल्कुल पास में है। बचपन से ही मैं आसपास की प्रकृति और वन्यजीवों से बेहद जुल-मिल गया था। मुझे उन जंगलों और बाहर से आए शिकारियों से बेहद घृणा होती थी। जो पास के जंगल में शिकार करने आते थे। मैं हमेशा इसका विरोध करता था, लेकिन उम्र में छोटा होने के कारण तब मेरी बातों को बहुत महत्व नहीं दिया जाता था। लेकिन एक घटना ने गांव में मेरी छवि बदल दी। एक रात की बात है। मैं सोने जा ही रहा था कि मुझे हाथी के चिंघाड़ने की आवाज सुनाई पड़ी। हमारे गांव में हाथी आते ही रहते हैं। लेकिन उसकी आवाज स्वाभाविक नहीं थी। ऐसा लग रहा था कि वह किसी मुसीबत में है। मैं समझ गया कि हाथी या उसका बच्चा पड़ोस के कच्चे कुएं में गिर गया होगा। मैंने घर और पड़ोस में यह बात बताई। लेकिन किसी ने मेरी बात नहीं मानी। सुबह देखा, तो हाथी का एक बच्चा कुएं में गिर गया था, और आसपास हाथियों की भीड़ थी। मेरी पहल से कुछ युवाओं ने उसे कुएं से निकाला।

मैं हाट में पक्षियों, कछुओं और दूसरे वन्यजीवों को बिकते हुए देखता, तो मुझे बहुत दुख होता। लोग इनका मांस खाते थे। मैंने एक तरकीब निकाली। मैं हर हाट में कुछ पक्षियों खरीदता, फिर उन्हें उड़ा देता। मेरे इस काम से ज्यादातर लोग दुखी होते थे। कुछ लोगों ने तो यहां तक कहा कि चूँकि मैं कमाता नहीं, इसलिए पैसे का मोल नहीं समझता और पिता तथा बड़े भाइयों की मेहनत की गाढ़ी कमाई यों ही लुटा रहा हूँ। लेकिन मेरे घर के लोगों ने इस पर बहुत ध्यान नहीं दिया।

कुछ साल बाद मैं ग्रीन गार्ड नेचर ऑर्गेनाइजेशन (जीजीएनओ) से जुड़ गया। नगांव की यह संस्था वन्यजीव संरक्षण के क्षेत्र में काम करती थी। और इस तरह वन्यजीव संरक्षण के क्षेत्र में मेरा कामकाज शुरू हुआ। पहलें मैं शौकिया यह काम करता था, लेकिन

अब मैं एक संस्था से जुड़कर यह काम कर रहा हूँ। पिछले तीस साल में मैंने ढाई हजार से अधिक वन्यजीवों को बचाया है, जिनमें हाथी के बच्चे, तेंदुए के बच्चे, भालू के बच्चे, चीनी पैंगोलिन, हिरण, सैकड़ों कछुए और सैकड़ों पक्षियाँ हैं। मैंने छह सौ से अधिक साँपों को मारे जाने से बचाया है, जिनमें चौदह किंग कोबरा भी थे। जो वन्यजीव बचाए जाने के क्रम में घायल हो जाते हैं, मेरे घर के पीछे उनका इलाज किया जाता है। वहाँ हमारे एनजीओ ने एक अस्थायी बचाव केंद्र बना रखा है।

अपने इस काम की कीमत भी मुझे कई बार चुकानी पड़ी है। एक बार मैंने रास्ते में कुछ लोगों को एक किंग कोबरा पर पत्थर बरसाते हुए देखा, तो उसे बचाने के लिए मैं उसके पास चला गया। इस दौरान कई पत्थर मेरी पीठ पर लगे। उधर वह गुस्सेल कोबरा भी मुझ पर झपटना चाहता था। यह देख लोगों ने पत्थर मारना छोड़ दिया और वह साँप जंगल में चला गया। मेरे कामकाज में पौधे लगाना भी शामिल है। हमारी संस्था की ओर से अलग-अलग इलाकों में पौधे लगाए जाते हैं। वन्यजीव संरक्षण के क्षेत्र में इतने दिनों से काम करने कारण मेरे मददगारों की संख्या अब सैकड़ों में है, जो मुझे सूचना देते रहते हैं कि कहां कौन-सा वन्यजीव संकट में है। मेरी पत्नी मेघना भी वन्यजीव संरक्षण का काम करती है। मुझे इस बात का संतोष है कि हमारी संस्था के प्रयासों से नई पीढ़ी अब वन्यजीवों के संरक्षण के प्रति जागरूक हो रही है।

-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

म नोहर परिकर के निधन की खबर बहुत ही दुखदायी है, हालांकि मुझे इसकी आशंका जरूर थी। वह पिछले कुछ महीनों से बीमार थे, लेकिन अपने इस कष्टपूर्ण समय में भी वह गरिमाय एवं साहसी बने रहे। कुछ सप्ताह पहले ही, पिछले महीने फरवरी में मैं मनोहर परिकर से अंतिम बार मिला था। उनसे उस आखिरी मुलाकात की याद मेरे जेहन में ताज़म रहेगी। आईआईटी से इंजीनियर परिकर भाजपा के उन चुनिंदा नेताओं में से थे, जिन्होंने प्रधानमंत्री पद के लिए नरेंद्र मोदी के नाम की अनुशंसा की थी। मैं उनसे पहली बार दिल्ली में मिला और मुझे याद है कि उनसे मेरी वह मुलाकात मेरे मस्तिष्क पटल पर बहुत बड़ा प्रभाव छोड़ गई। वह एक ऐसे राजनेता थे, जिनमें किसी भी प्रकार का दंभ नहीं था। वह हमेशा ही साधारण, लेकिन स्पष्ट वक्ता रहे। जब मनोहर परिकर रक्षा मंत्री बने, तब वह रक्षा मंत्रालय के लिए एक नई उम्मीद बनकर आए थे। वह सेना में कार्यरत हमारे सैनिकों एवं उनके परिवार के कल्याण के लिए बहुत चिंतित थे। मुझे इतना अवश्य पता था कि मुझे इन कामों के लिए उन्हें कुछ जमाने की आवश्यकता नहीं है। वह संवेदनहीन एवं उदासीन नौकरशाही को सही करने के तरीके ढूंढ रहे थे, जिसने यूपीए सरकार के दौरान अपनी विस्तृत जड़ें फैला ली थीं। उन्होंने बिना किसी झिझक एवं नौकरशाहों के सहयोग के बगैर सीधे ही वृद्ध सैनिकों एवं उनके परिवारों से मुलाकात की, एवं उनकी समस्याएं और सुझाव सुने। वृद्ध एवं विकलांग सैनिकों को जिन समस्याओं का सामना करना पड़ता है, उनके समाधान के लिए उन्होंने विशेषज्ञों द्वारा सुझाव देने हेतु एक

रक्षा मंत्री बनने पर मनोहर परिकर मंत्रालय के लिए नई उम्मीद बनकर आए थे। वह सैनिकों एवं उनके परिवारों के कल्याण के लिए चिंतित थे, तो संवेदनहीन नौकरशाही को बदलने की कोशिश में भी लगे रहे। उन्हें याद कर रहे हैं भाजपा सांसद राजीव चंद्रशेखर-



मनोहर परिकर (1955-2019)

विशेषज्ञ समिति का गठन किया। वयोवृद्ध सैनिकों एवं सेना के लोगों के लिए 'वन रैंक-वन पेंशन' बहुत दिनों से अटका हुआ मुद्दा था। वर्ष 2006 में सांसद बनने के बाद मैंने तुरंत ही इस मुद्दे पर काम करना शुरू कर दिया था। उन लोगों के लिए यह बहुत संवेदनशील मुद्दा था, जिन्होंने सशस्त्र सेना में काम किया था। मनोहर परिकर ने घंटों-घंटे समय बिताकर अकेले अपने बूते पर इस समस्या की विस्तृत जानकारी एवं आंकड़े लेकर इसे आगे बढ़ाया। इससे यह सुनिश्चित हुआ कि प्रधानमंत्री के त्वरित एवं दृढ़ सहयोग से सरकार को करीब 40,000 करोड़ रुपये का खर्च आएगा। दूसरी बार मुझे तब आश्चर्य हुआ, जब मैंने प्राइवेट

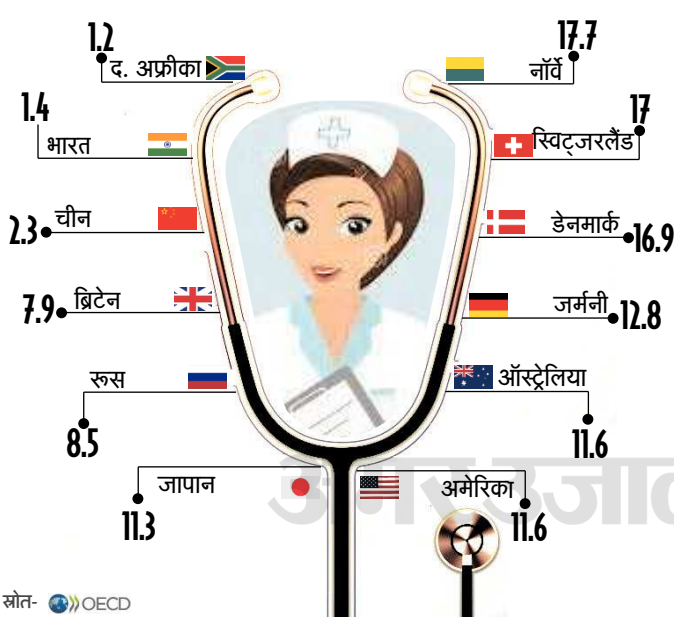
मेंबर्स बिल के रूप में नेशनल आर्म्ड फोर्स कोवॉरंट बिल संसद में पेश किया। यह वह बिल था, जो सुनिश्चित करता था कि युद्ध के दौरान मारे गए सैनिकों के परिवारों एवं वयोवृद्ध सैनिकों की देखभाल का दायित्व सरकार पर होगा। संसद में कनिष्ठ मंत्री के दिखाने पर प्राइवेट मेंबर्स बिल पर चर्चा होती है। लेकिन तीनों मौकों पर मेरे इस बिल पर परिकर जी ने स्वयं अपना सहयोग दिया, क्योंकि वह इस बिल से पूरी तरह सहमत थे।

मैं बीमारी के समय उनके हालचाल पूछता रहा और प्रार्थना भी करता रहा। विगत फरवरी में मैं उनसे मिल आया, जो मेरी उनसे आखिरी मुलाकात साबित हुई। मैं उनसे बहुत सारी बातें कहना चाहता था, जो उन्होंने रक्षा मंत्री बनने के बाद शुरू की थीं और जो आज संभव हो पाई हैं। जैसे कि मैं उन्हें बताना चाहता था कि वृद्ध एवं विकलांग सैनिकों के मुद्दों का समाधान करने के लिए उन्होंने जो काम किया है, उसकी सिफारिश लागू हो गई है। इस देश ने 70 साल से जिस राष्ट्रीय युद्ध स्मारक का इंतजाम किया था, और उन्होंने एवं प्रधानमंत्री ने जिस स्मारक की कल्पना की थी, अंततः उसका उद्घाटन होने वाला था। मैंने यह सब उनसे कहा। इसके जवाब में उन्होंने अपना सिर हिलाया। बीमारी से जूझते हुए मैं उनके धैर्य, साहस एवं दृढ़ संकल्प से कार्यरत होने के अद्भुत गुण की सराहना करता हूँ।

खुली खिड़की

प्रति हजार आबादी पर नर्स

किसी भी देश की स्वास्थ्य सेवा पैरा-मेडिकल स्टाफ पर निर्भर करती है। यदि प्रति हजार आबादी पर नर्सों की संख्या की बात करें, तो इस मामले में जॉर्जिया सबसे आगे है, जहाँ यह आंकड़ा 17.7 है, जबकि हमारे देश में यह आंकड़ा 1.4 है।



ब्राह्मणी के पांच रत्न

महर्षि कपिल रोज सुबह अपने आश्रम से पैदल ही गंगा स्नान के लिए जाया करते थे। रास्ते में एक छोटा-सा गांव पड़ता था, जहाँ कई किसान परिवार रहा करते थे। वहीं एक ब्राह्मणी की कुटिया भी थी। महर्षि जब भी उस रास्ते से निकलते, तो ब्राह्मणी उन्हें धान कुटते हुए या दूसरा कोई काम करते मिल जाती। एक दिन महर्षि ने ब्राह्मणी से हमेशा काम करते रहने का कारण पूछा, तो पता चला कि पति की मृत्यु के बाद ब्राह्मणी पर परिवार के पालन-पोषण की जिम्मेदारी आ गई है। महर्षि को उस पर दया आ गई।

एक दिन उन्होंने ब्राह्मणी से कहा, भद्र, मैं पास ही के आश्रम का कृतपति कपिल हूँ। मेरे कई शिष्य राजपरिवारों से हैं। अगर तुम चाहो, तो मैं तुम्हारी आजीविका की स्थायी व्यवस्था कर सकता हूँ। ब्राह्मणी ने हाथ जोड़कर महर्षि का आभार व्यक्त किया और कहा, मुनिवर, इस दयालुता के लिए मैं आपकी आभारी हूँ। पर न मैं निर्धन हूँ, न ही असहाय। मेरे पास पांच रत्न हैं। महर्षि ने उन रत्नों को देखने की जिज्ञासा प्रकट की। तो उन्होंने आसन्न विद्याकर उन्हें बैठने के लिए कहा। इतने में ब्राह्मणी के पांचों पुत्र पढ़कर विद्यालय से लौटे। महर्षि ने थोड़ी देर उन बच्चों से बातचीत के बाद ब्राह्मणी को प्रणाम किया और विदा होते हुए बोले, जिसके पास ऐसे पांच रत्न हों, उसे सचमुच चिंतित होने की जरूरत नहीं है।

हरियाली और रास्ता

रीमा, राहुल और मदद

रीमा की कहानी, जिसकी सोच एक अनजान युवक ने बदल दी और उसने भी एक जरूरतमंद की मदद की।



रात का समय था और सड़क सुनसान। डर के मारे रीमा की हालत खराब थी। गाड़ी का टायर पंचर हो गया था। वह गाड़ी से निकल कर बाहर खड़ी हो गई। दूर से उसे एक मोटरसाइकिल आती दिखाई। वह तय नहीं कर पा रही थी कि उसे रोके या नहीं। मोटरसाइकिल वाला रीमा को देखकर समझ गया कि वह बेहद डरी हुई है। उसने रीमा से कहा, मेरा नाम राहुल शर्मा है। आप चिंता न कीजिए, गाड़ी में बैठिए। मैं टायर बदल देता हूँ। कुछ ही देर में उसने टायर लगा दिया। रीमा बोली, मैं आपको कितने पैसे दे दूँ। राहुल ने कहा, मैंने यह काम पैसों के लिए नहीं, आपकी मदद करने के लिए किया है। जब मैं कभी मुसीबत में था, तब मेरी भी किसी ने मदद की थी। आप भी किसी जरूरतमंद को देखें, तो उसकी मदद जरूर कीजिएगा। यह कहकर राहुल चला गया। रीमा भी आगे बढ़ गई। थोड़ी दूर पर एक पेट्रोल पंप के किनारे रीमा को एक चाय की दुकान दिखाई। जब वह वहाँ चाय पीने उतरी, तो देखा कि कम उम्र की एक महिला दुकान संभाल रही है। उसे देखकर लग रहा था कि उसकी माली हालत ठीक नहीं। चाय पीते हुए रीमा ने जब उससे बात की, तो उसका शक यकीन में बदल गया। रीमा ने उसे सौ रुपये का नोट दिया, और जब तक वह उसके छुट्टे वापस लाती, रीमा वहाँ से चली गई। उस लड़की की समझ में कुछ नहीं आया। लड़की ने देखा, कागज के एक टुकड़े पर रीमा कुछ लिखकर पांच सौ रुपये के चार और नोट वहाँ छोड़ गई थी। उस पर लिखा था, जब मैं मुसीबत में थी, तो मेरी भी किसी व्यक्ति ने मदद की थी। यह मेरी तरफ से मदद समझना। वह जब दुकान से घर लौटी, तो देखा कि उसका पति सो रहा था। उसने उसके कानों में धीरे से कहा, आज मेरा दिन बहुत अच्छा बीता।

हम जैसा बर्ताव दूसरों के साथ करेंगे, वैसा ही बर्ताव हमारे साथ भी होगा।

-संकलित

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 27

मंदी के संकेत

देश की सबसे बड़ी कार निर्माता कंपनी मारुति सुजुकी ने यात्री कार बाजार में मांग में कमी के चलते वर्ष 2018-19 के मार्च महीने में अपने उत्पादन में 26.8 फीसदी की कमी करने की घोषणा की है। तीन वर्षों तक लगातार दो अंकों की मजबूत वृद्धि के बाद यह कटौती काफी महत्वपूर्ण है। मारुति सुजुकी ऐसा करने वाली अकेली कंपनी

नहीं है। ऋण मानकों में सख्ती, शहरी इलाकों में कमजोर बिक्री और ग्रामीण बाजार में धीमेपन जैसे कई कारकों ने अन्य वाहन निर्माता कंपनियों को भी उत्पादन कम करने पर मजबूर किया है। वाहन क्षेत्र अर्थव्यवस्था में आ रही मंदी का एक उदाहरण भर है। अर्थव्यवस्था के करीब 60 फीसदी के लिए उत्तरदायी

उपभोक्ता व्यय में भी अक्टूबर-दिसंबर तिमाही के दौरान 8.4 फीसदी की गिरावट आई है। इससे पिछली तिमाही में इसमें 9.9 फीसदी की बढ़ोतरी देखने को मिली थी। ऐसे में नीति निर्माताओं में यह चिंता उत्पन्न हो गई है कि यह मंदी अभियांत्रिकी, वस्त्र आदि श्रम आधारित क्षेत्रों एवं समूचे विनिर्माण क्षेत्र को नुकसान पहुंचा सकती है। यह एक दुःस्वप्न की तरह है जो सही साबित हो रहा है।

व्यापार क्षेत्र के ताजा आंकड़े बताते हैं कि गैर तेल, गैर स्वर्ण क्षेत्र का आयात एक बार फिर घटा है। जनवरी में 0.8 फीसदी की गिरावट के बाद फरवरी में यह 3.7 फीसदी कम हुआ है। यह रुख परेशान करने वाला है क्योंकि इससे देश में कमजोर पड़ती

औद्योगिक मांग की तस्वीर सामने आ रही है। परंतु शायद अभी और बुरा देखना बाकी है। उम्मीद के अनुसार ही दुनिया भर में आर्थिक वृद्धि में गिरावट का सिलसिला चल रहा है। इसमें चीन और अमेरिका जैसे देश भी शामिल हैं। यह बात भविष्य में व्यापार को और अधिक प्रभावित कर सकती है। इतना ही नहीं, जनवरी में औद्योगिक वृद्धि 1.7 फीसदी रह गई जबकि गत वर्ष दिसंबर में यह 2.6 फीसदी थी। इससे यह आशंका उत्पन्न हो गई है कि चौथी तिमाही में मंदी का प्रकोप और अधिक बढ़ सकता है। तीसरी तिमाही के जीडीपी के आंकड़े वही दर्शा रहे हैं जिसकी आशंका तमाम अर्थशास्त्री प्रकट कर रहे थे। इस तिमाही में वृद्धि दर में कमी आई है। 6.6 फीसदी

की वृद्धि दर पिछली पांच तिमाहियों में न्यूनतम है। केंद्रीय सांख्यिकी कार्यालय ने पहले ही पूरे वर्ष के वृद्धि अनुमान को भी 7.2 फीसदी से कम करके 7 फीसदी कर दिया है। इसका अर्थ यह भी है कि अंतिम तिमाही की जीडीपी वृद्धि दर और कम होगी। कमजोर वैश्विक वृद्धि के चलते भविष्य में संकट और बढ़ सकता है। विश्व बैंक का अनुमान है कि वैश्विक वृद्धि 2020 तक गिरेगी। हाल के दिनों में तेल कीमतों में इजाफा हुआ है, बुनियादी क्षेत्र में सरकारी व्यय में कमी आई है और अगली सरकार को लेकर अनिश्चितता के चलते निवेश के निर्णय टले हैं। सेंटर फॉर मॉनिटरिंग इंडियन इकॉनॉमी

के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि दिसंबर तिमाही में निवेश 14 वर्ष के न्यूनतम स्तर तक गिर गया। इसके साथ ही जल्द सुधार की उम्मीदें भी धराशायी हो गईं। नए निवेश में गिरावट चोतरफा रही। सभी प्रमुख क्षेत्रों में गिरावट है। अरबीआई का अध्ययन दर्शाता है कि लगातार सातवें वर्ष निजी क्षेत्र की पूंजीगत व्यय योजना में कमी आई है। अन्य संकेतक भी निराश करते हैं। छोटे और मझोले उद्योगों की दिक्कतें जारी हैं। प्रमुख क्षेत्रों की वृद्धि 19 महीनों के न्यूनतम स्तर पर है और तीसरी तिमाही में बड़े कारोबारी घरानों के मुनाफे में कमी आई है। चुनाव समाप्त होने के बाद नई सरकार और उसके वित्त मंत्री के सामने सबसे बड़ी समस्या अर्थव्यवस्था को पटरी पर लाने की होगी।



अजय मोहनती

निजी बैंक के सीईओ का कैसे हो संरक्षण

मौजूदा सीईओ के वेतन के संरक्षण के लिए बैंकों को वेतन भत्तों के तयशुदा हिस्से में इजाफा करना होगा जबकि यह नियामक के उद्देश्य को ही खारिज कर देता है। विस्तार से बता रहे हैं तमाल बंधोपाध्याय

दुनिया की सबसे तेज विकसित होती अर्थव्यवस्था में निजी और विदेशी बैंकों के सीईओ इन दिनों उदास हैं क्योंकि देश का बैंकिंग नियामक उनके वेतन भत्तों में कटौती की योजना बना रहा है। जिन लोगों को लगता है कि वे बैंकर ज्यादा कमाते हैं, या जिन्हें लगता है कि वे अपने सरकारी बैंकों के समकक्षों की तुलना में ज्यादा कमाते हैं (इनमें से कुछ बी बैंक शीट भी बहुत बड़ी है) वे यह सब देखकर उल्लासित हैं। देश के बैंकिंग अधिनियम के अनुसार निजी और विदेशी बैंकों को अपने पूर्णकालिक निदेशकों और सीईओ के वेतन भत्तों के निर्धारण के लिए नियामकीय मंजूरी की आवश्यकता होती है। इस मामले में रिजर्व बैंक बहुत अधिक उदार नहीं है। इसके बावजूद उनकी शेर्य विकल्प के माध्यम से ठीकठाक वेतन भत्ते मिलते हैं। ये उसके वेतन पैकेज से इतर होता है।

अब रिजर्व बैंक चाहता है कि शेर्य विकल्प को उनके चर वेतन में शामिल किया जाए। इसके लिए उनके तय वेतन से 200 फीसदी तक की सीमा तय की जाएगी। इसके लिए 50 फीसदी का आधार तय किया जाएगा। इतना ही नहीं उनके चर वेतन का कम से कम आधा हिस्सा गैर नकदी का होगा। फिलहाल बैंक सीईओ के चर वेतन

को 70 फीसदी पर सीमित किया गया है और इसके लिए कोई आधार तय नहीं है। नई योजना के मुताबिक अगर कोई बैंक सीईओ एक करोड़ रुपये सालाना का तय वेतन पाता है तो उसका चर हिस्सा 50 लाख रुपये से 2 करोड़ रुपये के बीच होगा। इसमें शेर्य विकल्प शामिल होगा जो इसका आधा होगा। इस प्रस्ताव के हिसाब से देखें तो कुल चर वेतन का कम से कम 60 फीसदी हिस्सा न्यूनतम तीन वर्ष के लिए लिंबित रखना होगा। इसके अलावा एक ऐसा समझौता भी होगा जिसके तहत सीईओ कुछ खास परिस्थितियों में पहले ही चुकाया जा चुका वेतन-भत्ता लौटाना होगा। यह भी कि अगर बैंक फंसी हुई परिसंपत्ति का खुलासा नहीं करेगा तो और उसके लिए धनराशि अलग नहीं कर रहा हो तो उसका विलंबित भुगतान रोका जा सकता है।

अरबीआई यह भी चाहता है कि बैंक अपने वरिष्ठ कर्मचारियों में से तथाकथित जोखिम उठाने वालों को चिह्नित करें, जिनके कदम बैंक के प्रदर्शन पर असर डालते हैं। कोई भी व्यक्ति नियामक की हालिया पहल में खामी नहीं खोज सकता है जबकि इन दिनों दुनिया भर में बैंकरो के वेतन भत्तों का मसला नियामकीय सुधार के केंद्र में है। अरबीआई इस मामले में कुछ पहले दृष्टि

डाल सकता था क्योंकि कुछ निजी भारतीय बैंकों में कॉर्पोरेट संचालन की स्थिति बहुत सम्मानजनक नहीं है। अगर बैंक सीईओ के जोखिम भरे कदमों के कारण बैंक को सहेत गड़बड़ होती है या फंसे हुए कर्ज को छिपाया जाता है तो उसको पूर्ण वेतन भत्ते न देने की योजना स्वागतयोग्य है। इसी प्रकार ब्रिटेन के नियामक फाइनैशियल सर्विसेज अथॉरिटी के तर्ज पर ऐसे अधिकारियों की पहचान के दौरान ऐसे व्यक्तियों पर ध्यान दिया जाता है जो प्रभावशाली हों, यह भी स्वागतयोग्य है। अगर नियामक सीईओ के वेतन का जिम्मा संभालेगा तो बैंक बोर्ड की इससे संबंधित समिति क्या करेगी?

बैंक कैसी प्रतिक्रिया देंगे? संभव है वे वेतन का तयशुदा हिस्सा बढ़ा दें। मेरी समझ कहती है कि मौजूदा वेतन-भत्तों को बचाने के लिए कुछ निजी बैंक सीईओ के तयशुदा वेतन में 50 फीसदी तक का इजाफा करेंगे। यूरोपियन बैंक में ऐसा ही हुआ है। इससे नियामक का कदम बेमानी हो जाएगा। इससे एक किस्म की आश्वस्त आ सकती है और किफायत खत्म हो सकती है। शीर्ष पद के लिए उत्साह में कमी आ सकती है। शेर्य विकल्प का मूल्यांकन किस प्रकार किया जाएगा? अगर किसी सीईओ को

वनिला शेर्य (ऐसे शेर्य जिन्हें तय समय सीमा में पूर्व निर्धारित कीमत पर बेचा जा सकता है) दिए जाते हैं तो उनका मूल्यांकन आसान होता है और संबंधित अधिकारी को इसका पूर्ण आर्थिक लाभ मिलता है। जबकि इम्प्लायो स्टॉक ऑप्शन प्लान (ईसॉप) में कर्मचारी के पास विकल्प होता है कि वह किसी कंपनी के शेर्य भविष्य की तिथि में पूर्व निर्धारित दर पर खरीदे। अगर शेर्य का बाजार मूल्य खरीद से अधिक हो तो कर्मचारी उसे बेचकर लाभ कमा सकता है लेकिन अगर वह तय मूल्य से नीचे हो तो कर्मचारी उसे नहीं बेचेगा।

निश्चित तौर पर विकल्प का विशुद्ध मूल्य आंकने का एक फॉर्मूला है लेकिन देश के निजी बैंकों का बाजार प्रदर्शन एकीकृत नहीं है। उदाहरण के लिए एचडीएफसी बैंक के कर्मचारियों के पास हमेशा पैसा रहा है क्योंकि कंपनी के शेर्यों की कीमत हमेशा ऊंची बनी रही जबकि आईसीआईसीआई बैंक के कर्मचारियों को बीते वर्षों में शायद ही फायदा हुआ हो। येस बैंक के शेर्य तो बीते सात महीने में 40 फीसदी तक गिरे हैं। अगर किसी कंपनी के शेर्य अच्छा प्रदर्शन कर रहे हैं तो क्या उसके सीईओ को उसके अच्छे काम का लाभ नहीं मिलना चाहिए?

नवंबर 2018 में देश की दूसरी सबसे बड़ी टायर निर्माता कंपनी अपोलो टायर्स के प्रवर्तक ऑंकार कंवर और उनके बेटे नीरज को वेतन भत्तों में 30 फीसदी कटौती स्वीकार करनी पड़ी क्योंकि अल्ट्राश हिस्सेदारों ने सालाना आम बैठक में कंपनी के प्रबंध निदेशक के रूप में नीरज की पुनर्नियुक्ति को खारिज कर दिया था। ऐसा भारी वेतन भत्तों की मांग और कमजोर वित्तीय प्रदर्शन के कारण किया गया।

सीईओ के वेतन पर निर्णय बोर्ड और निवेशकों को लेना चाहिए। जब बोर्ड नाकाम हो तब रिजर्व बैंक को दखल देना चाहिए। केवल बैंलेंस शीट का आकार ही इसके निर्धारण की एकमात्र वजह नहीं होना चाहिए। इस काम की जटिलता और चुनौतियों का भी ध्यान रखा जाना चाहिए।

स्टॉक की पेशकश ने देश में कई पेशेवरों को उद्यमी में तब्दील किया है, बढ़िया बैंक तैयार किए हैं और बिखरते कारोबारों को बचाया है। अत्यधिक जोखिम उठाने वालों को हतोत्साहित किया जाना चाहिए और सुरासन में यकीन न करने वालों को दंडित किया जाना चाहिए लेकिन नियामक को यह सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए कि अच्छा प्रदर्शन करने वालों को दिक्कत न हो। अगर ऐसा नहीं हुआ तो हमारे सर्वश्रेष्ठ बैंकर गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनियों, बीमा कंपनियों, एफएमसीजी और इन्फोटेक क्षेत्र का रुख कर सकते हैं।

अगर हमें अच्छे प्रदर्शन का ध्यान रखना है तो देश में सरकारी बैंकों के सीईओ के वेतन-भत्तों को बिना देरी किए नए सिरे से तय करने की आवश्यकता है। इसे अफसरशाहों के वेतन से अलग करना होगा। कम से कम दो बैंकों में ईसॉप का प्रस्ताव वित्त मंत्रालय के पास वर्षों से लिंबित है। क्या किसी ने इसके बारे में सुना है।

(लेखक बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड के सलाहकार संपादक, लेखक और जन स्मॉल फाइन्स बैंक लिमिटेड के वरिष्ठ सलाहकार हैं।)

मोदी की संभावनाओं पर बेअसर दिख रहा उदारवादियों का विरोध

इस लेख में वही मुद्दा उठाया गया है जिसका उल्लेख पहले भी कई बार में कर चुका हूँ। नरेंद्र मोदी की तुलना पहले के कई सरकार प्रमुखों से की गई है लेकिन अमेरिका के 37वें राष्ट्रपति रिचर्ड निक्सन से उनकी तुलना अब तक नहीं हुई है।



सम सामयिक

टीसीए श्रीनिवास-राघवन

निक्सन को अमेरिका के पूर्वी इलाके से संबंधित उदारवादियों के अथक प्रयासों के चलते अपना पद छोड़ना पड़ा था। निक्सन अमेरिका के पश्चिमी इलाके से ताल्लुक रखते थे। आज के समय में उन्हें 20वीं सदी के सबसे सफल अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपतियों में से एक माना जाता है। निक्सन को कुछ अमेरिकी कानूनों का उल्लंघन करने की वजह से इस्तीफा देना पड़ा था। लेकिन वह उल्लंघन तो 'उदारवादियों' के लिए निक्सन-विरोधी अपने अभियान को धार देने का बहाना भर था। निक्सन के पद संभालने के साथ ही उनका विरोध शुरू हो गया था। अमेरिका के उदारवादियों ने बहुत पहले ही यह मान लिया था कि निक्सन उनका विरोध शुरू करेगा। निक्सन के पद संभालने के साथ ही उनका विरोध शुरू हो गया था। अमेरिका के उदारवादियों ने बहुत पहले ही यह मान लिया था कि निक्सन उनका विरोध शुरू करेगा। निक्सन के पद संभालने के साथ ही उनका विरोध शुरू हो गया था। अमेरिका के उदारवादियों ने बहुत पहले ही यह मान लिया था कि निक्सन उनका विरोध शुरू करेगा।

अभी तक हर कोई यह जान चुका है कि मोदी को सार्वजनिक मंचों पर बड़-चढ़कर बोलना पसंद है। हालांकि निजी बातचीत में वह एकदम अलग मिजाज के शख्स नजर आते हैं। उनके दूसरे कार्यकाल की संभावना बढ़ने के बाद मोदी को खुद से यह सवाल प्योना चाहिए कि 'असली मोदी' को देश के सामने लाने के लिए वह क्या कर सकते हैं? रूजवेल्ट की तरह लोगों से 'मन की बात' करने का तरीका तो यह काम नहीं कर पाया है।

अगर और कुछ नहीं तो निक्सन प्रकरण ने एक बात तो साबित कर ही दी कि किसी भेड़िये का शिकार करने में किसी उदारवादी से अधिक खतरनाक कोई नहीं है। इससे यह भी पता चला कि उदारवादियों का अनुदार रवैया इस समय के सबसे बड़े विरोधाभासों में से एक है। इस विरोध को दबा दिया गया है लेकिन गहराई तक समाहित कलुषता किसी भी व्याख्या को नकारती है।

निक्सन प्रकरण की ही तरह भारत में भी शहरी उदारवादियों ने बहुत पहले ही यह तय कर लिया था कि मोदी भारत पर शासन करने के लिए उपयुक्त नहीं हैं। मई 2014 के बाद से ही यह तबका एकदम इसी सोच से उनके पीछे पड़ा हुआ है। उन्हें मोदी इस कदर नापसंद हैं

कम 15 फीसदी टिकट मुसलमानों को दें। ऐसा होते ही उदारवादियों की शंका का कुछ हद तक समाधान हो जाएगा। अगर ये मुस्लिम उम्मीदवार हार भी जाते हैं तो उसके लिए मोदी को कैसे जिम्मेदार ठहराया जा सकता है?

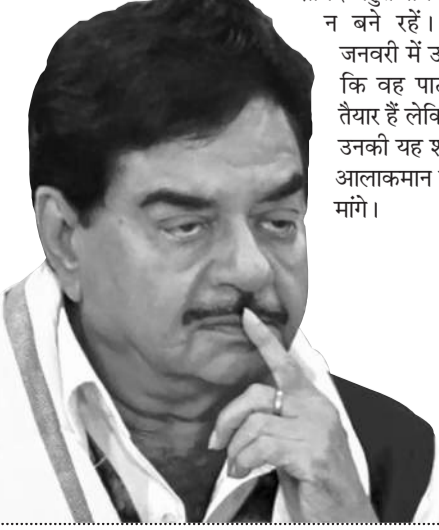
इसके अलावा मोदी उदारवादियों को पुरस्कृत करने का भी सिलसिला शुरू कर सकते हैं। दरअसल उनमें से काफी लोग पदचान पाने के लिए बेचैन हैं। हालांकि उनमें से कुछ लोग मोदी की तरफ से रखी गई पेशकश ठुकरा सकते हैं लेकिन मैं यह दांव लगाने को तैयार हूँ कि बहुतेरे उदारवादी मोदी के साथ सहयोग करने के लिए तैयार हो जाएंगे। अगर मोदी उन्हें कोई आधिकारिक पद नहीं देना चाहते हैं तो वह उन्हें महीने में एक बार रविवार को चाय पीने के लिए ही बुला लें। इस तरह वह और कुछ नहीं तो उनका सप्ताहांत खराब करने का मजा तो ले ही सकते हैं। उनका आनंद उस समय दोगुना ही हो जाएगा अगर उनके मेहमान यह सोचते हुए बाहर निकलें कि 'यह आदमी उतना बुरा भी नहीं है'।

सबसे बढ़कर, मोदी को यह दिखाना होगा कि वह बड़े गठबंधन में रहते हुए भी असरदार तरीके से सरकार चला सकते हैं। ऐसे गठबंधन में उन्हें भारत को लेकर अलग-अलग राय रखने वाला नेताओं को भी अपने मंत्रिमंडल में जगह देनी पड़ती है। निश्चित रूप से, मोदी के लिए यह चुनाव कई मायनों में उनके लिए सबसे बड़ी चुनौती होने जा रहा है। गुजरात का मुख्यमंत्री बनने के बाद अभी तक उन्हीं कभी भी ऐसी चुनौती का सामना नहीं करना पड़ा है। कुल मिलाकर, मोदी को उनके दूसरे कार्यकाल में तीन परीक्षाओं पर परखूंगा। वह अपनी राय से अलग रहने की सोच के प्रति कैसा रवैया रखते हैं, वह चुनावों में मुसलमानों को कितने टिकट देते हैं और अपने दल के सहयोगियों और राष्ट्रीय जनतांत्रिक गठबंधन (राजग) के दूसरे दलों के बीच मंत्रिमंडल का बंटवारा किस तरह करते हैं? इसका एक सही शुरुआती बिंदु यही होगा कि वह अपनी पार्टी के किसी सांसद को मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्री न बनाएं।

कानाफूसी

एक अनार, सौ दावेदार

अचानक ही उत्तराखंड की पौड़ी गढ़वाल लोकसभा सीट सबके आकर्षण का केंद्र हो गई है। माना जा रहा है कि कांग्रेस यहां से मनीष खंडूजी को प्रत्याशी बना सकती है। मनीष यहां के मौजूदा सांसद और प्रदेश के पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री सेवानिवृत्त मेजर जनरल धुवन चंद्र खंडूजी के पुत्र हैं और हाल में ही कांग्रेस में शामिल हुए हैं। भारतीय जनता पार्टी की ओर से यहां कम से कम तीन दावेदार नजर आ रहे हैं। राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा सलाहकार अजित डोभाल के पुत्र शौर्य डोभाल बीते एक वर्ष से यहां सक्रिय हैं। सेवानिवृत्त कर्नल अजय कोठियाल भी भाजपा से टिकट चाहते हैं। वहीं सेवानिवृत्त रियर एडमिरल ओम प्रकाश सिंह राणा भी भाजपा के संभावित प्रत्याशियों की सूची में शामिल हैं। गौरतलब है कि स्वास्थ्यगत कारणों से खंडूजी दोबारा चुनाव लड़ने से इनकार कर चुके हैं।



क्या करूं क्या न करूं...

क्या आखिरकार पटना साहिब से भाजपा के सांसद शत्रुघ्न सिन्हा पार्टी छोड़ने को तैयार हो गए हैं? पार्टी के शीर्ष नेतृत्व के साथ उनके खराब रिश्ते जगजाहिर हैं। पिछले दिनों उन्होंने मौजूदा सरकार पर जमकर हमला बोला और कहा कि उसने अपने चुनावी वादे पूरे करने पर कतई ध्यान नहीं दिया है। एक पोस्ट में उन्होंने लिखा कि हो सकता है आपके ढेर सारे प्रशंसक हों लेकिन मैं उनमें से नहीं हूँ। एक अन्य पोस्ट में उन्होंने चेतावनी दी कि वह शायद बहुत समय तक पार्टी में न बने रहें। इससे पहले जनवरी में उन्होंने कहा था कि वह पार्टी छोड़ने को तैयार हैं लेकिन इसके लिए उनकी यह शर्त है कि पार्टी आलाकमान उनसे इस्तीफा मांगे।

आपका पक्ष

ढाई हजार दलों में दो का ही वर्चस्व

देश में करीब ढाई हजार छोटे-बड़े राजनीतिक दल हैं लेकिन राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर कुछ गिने चुने दलों का ही नाम आता है। चुनाव आयोग में राजनीतिक दलों के नवीनतम आंकड़ों के अनुसार देश में कुल 2,293 राजनीतिक दल पंजीकृत हैं। चुनाव आयोग में पंजीकृत इन दलों में से 7 मान्यताप्राप्त राष्ट्रीय दल और 59 मान्यताप्राप्त राज्य स्तर की पार्टियां हैं। लोकसभा चुनाव की घोषणा हो चुकी है और कुल सात चरणों में 11 अप्रैल से 19 मई तक चुनाव होने हैं तथा मतगणना 23 मई को होगी। इस समय पूरे देश में भाजपा तथा इसकी सहयोगी पार्टियां, कांग्रेस तथा इसकी सहयोगी पार्टियां और महागठबंधन में कुछ राजनीतिक दलों की ही चर्चा हो रही है। कुल मिलाकर देखा जाए तो तकरीबन 50 पार्टियों के अलावा कभी अन्य दलों का नाम सामने नहीं आया है। चुनाव आयोग के



आंकड़ों के मुताबिक फरवरी और मार्च के बीच करीब 149 राजनीतिक दलों ने पंजीकरण कराया है। वहीं पिछले साल नवंबर-दिसंबर के बीच मध्य प्रदेश, राजस्थान, तेलंगाना, मिजोरम और छत्तीसगढ़ में विधानसभा चुनावों से पूर्व 58 दलों ने पंजीकरण कराया था। देश में इतनी संख्या में राजनीतिक

दलों का होना कोई आश्चर्य की बात नहीं है। छोटे जगहों में स्थानीय दल होते हैं जो चुनाव लड़ते हैं। लेकिन बड़ी पार्टियों के सामने टिक नहीं पाते। वहीं

कुछ मुछौटा दल भी होते हैं जो सिर्फ प्रतिद्वंद्वी पार्टी का वोट काटने का काम करती हैं। ऐसी पार्टियों को बड़ी पार्टी पोषण करती है और चुनाव के वक्त सक्रिय करती है। इन्हीं छोटे दलों के नेता वक्त पड़ने पर बड़े दलों में शामिल हो जाते हैं। अंत में कुछ गिने चुने दल ही सत्ता पाने में कामयाब होते हैं। अमेरिका में सिर्फ दो ही दल रिपब्लिकन तथा डेमोक्रेट का चरचर हैं। इन्हीं दो पार्टियों के बीच मुकाबला होता है। भारत में भी चुनावी मुकाबला सिर्फ दो दलों के बीच रह गया है। मोहित कुमार, नई दिल्ली

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

विचार



दैनिक जागरण

शिक्षा की जड़ें कड़वी लेकिन फल मीठे होते हैं

कांग्रेस का आत्मविश्वास

अपने नेतृत्व में एक मजबूत महागठबंधन का निर्माण करने की कांग्रेस की कोशिश जिस तरह पर्वान चढ़ती नहीं दिख रही है उससे ज्यादा हैरानी नहीं। हैरानी इस पर अधिक है कि वह एक तरह से जबरन महागठबंधन का निर्माण करने की कोशिश करती दिख रही है। बीते दिनों उसने उत्तर प्रदेश में सपा-बसपा गठबंधन के लिए अपनी ओर से जिस तरह सात सौटें छोड़ने का एलान किया उससे तो यही पता चला कि वह इन दोनों दलों से गठजोड़ करने के लिए बेचैन है। उसकी एकतरफा पेशकश का बसपा प्रमुख मायावती ने जैसा जवाब दिया उससे कांग्रेस को कुल मिलाकर शर्मिंदगी ही उठानी पड़ी है। मायावती ने यह कहकर कांग्रेस को एक तरह से फटकारा ही है कि वह जबरदस्ती उत्तर प्रदेश में गठबंधन हेतु सात सौटें छोड़ने की भ्रंति न फेंलाए। उन्होंने यहाँ तक कह दिया कि कांग्रेस उत्तर प्रदेश में सभी सौटों पर अपने उम्मीदवार उतारने के लिए स्वतंत्र है। समझना कठिन है कि जब मायावती यह साफ कर चुकी थीं कि बसपा कांग्रेस से कहीं पर भी समझौता नहीं करेगी तब फिर कांग्रेसी नेताओं ने सपा-बसपा गठबंधन से जबरन जुड़ने की कोशिश क्यों की?

कांग्रेस ने सपा-बसपा गठजोड़ में शामिल होने की जो कोशिश की उससे यही स्पष्ट होता है कि उसके इस दावे में कोई दम नहीं है कि वह उत्तर प्रदेश में पूरे दम-खम के साथ चुनाव लड़ेगी। क्या वह उत्तर प्रदेश में अपने बलबूते चुनाव लड़ने से हिचक गई? सच जो भी हो, इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि कांग्रेस ने ऐसे ही कमजोर आत्मविश्वास का प्रदर्शन उत्तर प्रदेश विधानसभा चुनाव के समय भी किया था। तब गृहल गांधी ने शीला दीक्षित को मुख्यमंत्री पद के लिए कांग्रेस का उम्मीदवार घोषित करने के बाद वकायफ सपा के साथ मिलकर चुनाव लड़ने का फैसला कर लिया था। कांग्रेस ने उत्तर प्रदेश में खुद को उसी हालत में ला खड़ा किया है जिस स्थिति में दिल्ली में आम आदमी पार्टी दिख रही है। कांग्रेस उससे सम्झौता करने की तैयार नहीं, लेकिन वह उससे हर हाल में समझौता करने को बेकरार है। पता नहीं दिल्ली में आगे क्या होगा, लेकिन अगर आम आदमी पार्टी और कांग्रेस में समझौता हो जाता है तो देश की सबसे पुरानी पार्टी अपने एक और गढ़ में अपनी जमीन तो छोड़ेगी ही, शीला दीक्षित को फिर से असहज भी करेगी। व्यक्तियों की तरह से संपत्तकों को भी उतार-चढ़ाव देखने पड़ते हैं, लेकिन जो संपटन खुद पर भरोसा नहीं करते वे डूबते ही हैं। यदि कांग्रेस को अपनी खोई हुई जमीन वापस पानी है तो उसे अपने पुराने गढ़ों में मजबूती से केवल लड़ना ही नहीं होगा, बल्कि अपने आत्मविश्वास का प्रदर्शन भी करना होगा। यदि वह महागठबंधन बनाने की कोशिश में एक के बाद एक राज्यों में दूसरे दलों की दया-कृपा पर निर्भर रहेगी तो फिर एक मजबूत राष्ट्रीय दल के रूप में कब उभरेगी? एक राष्ट्रीय दल के रूप में कांग्रेस का फिर से उभार इसलिए आवश्यक है, क्योंकि अन्य कोई विपक्षी दल इस स्थिति में नहीं कि भाजपा को चुनौती दे सके। यह काम कांग्रेस ही कर सकती है, लेकिन तभी जब खुद पर भरोसा करना सीखेगी।

टूट गया गठबंधन

उत्तर प्रदेश के बाद अब पश्चिम बंगाल में भी कांग्रेस का गठबंधन किसी अन्य दल से नहीं होने जा रहा है। कांग्रेस वाममोर्चा के साथ गठबंधन करने से पीछे हटी है तो इसका ठोस राजनीतिक कारण है। वाममोर्चा के लगभग एक दर्जन घटक दलों को लेकर देखा जाए तो माकपा का कुनबा बड़ा है। इसके बावजूद माकपा या वाममोर्चा के अन्य घटक दल सामंतिनिक रूप से राज्य में कांग्रेस से कमजोर हैं। 2016 के विधानसभा चुनाव में 44 विधायकों की जीत के साथ कांग्रेस राज्य की मुख्य विपक्षी पार्टी बनी। वाममोर्चा 33 सौटों पर सिमट कर रह गया। लोकसभा में भी कांग्रेस के चार सांसद हैं। माकपा के मात्र दो सांसद हैं। मौजूदा स्थिति में कांग्रेस जब वाममोर्चा से मजबूत है तो नियम के तहत कांग्रेस को ही गठबंधन की अगुआई करनी चाहिए, लेकिन गठबंधन या तालमेल करने की अगुआई माकपा कर रही थी और शर्त भी वही रख रही थी। हालाँकि शुरुआत में कांग्रेस ने गठबंधन के लिए शर्त रखने की कोशिश की, लेकिन माकपा ने उसे खारिज कर दिया। माकपा ने जब देखा कि कांग्रेस अपनी शर्त पर अडिग है तो उसने रयगंज और मुर्शिदाबाद सीट से अपना उम्मीदवार घोषित कर दिया। माकपा यहाँ तक ही नहीं रुकी। सौटों के तालमेल पर सहमति नहीं बनने के बावजूद वाममोर्चा ने शुक्रवार को ही 25 उम्मीदवारों की सूची जारी कर दी। वाममोर्चा के साथ गठबंधन की उम्मीद में कांग्रेस पहले ही रयगंज और मुर्शिदाबाद सीट पर लड़ने से पीछे हट गई थी। उसके बाद सौटों पर तालमेल को लेकर दोनों दलों के नेताओं के बीच औपचारिक रूप से बातचीत भी शुरू हुई थी। कांग्रेस ने जब पुरुरिया और बशीरहट सीट पर लड़ने की इच्छा जाईताई तो माकपा उस पर भी तैयार नहीं हुई। ऐसी स्थिति में कांग्रेस को अपने सम्मान को गिरवी रख कर वाममोर्चा के साथ गठबंधन करना उचित नहीं लगा। गृहल गांधी ने प्रदेश कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष सोमेन मित्रा को स्थिति के अनुसार स्वतंत्र निर्णय लेने के लिए हरी झंडी दिखा थी। स्थिति की नजाकत को देखते हुए सोमेन मित्रा ने बंगाल में अकेले लड़ने की घोषणा कर दी। ऐसी स्थिति में गठबंधन टूटना ही था।



योगी आदित्यनाथ

उत्तर प्रदेश में भाजपा सरकार ने दो साल के अपने कार्यकाल में तमाम क्षेत्रों में वह कर दिखाया है जो एक मिसाल है

फरवरी 2017 के विधानसभा चुनाव में भाजपा जिस संकल्प पत्र को लेकर उत्तर प्रदेश की जनता के बीच गई थी। वह संकल्प पत्र हमारी सोच ही नहीं अपितु प्रदेश के विकास की आत्मा भी है। मुझे प्रसन्नता होती है कि हमारी पार्टी ने चुनाव के दौरान जितने भी वायदे किए थे, सिर्फ 24 महीने में उनमें से अधिकांश पूरे हो चुके हैं। किसानों की कर्ज माफी, पिछला गन्ना मूल्य भुगतान, न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य सीधे किसानों के खाते में, बेहतर स्वास्थ्य सुविधा, गुंडागज और भ्रष्टाचार की समाप्ति, शिक्षा में गुणात्मक सुधार, हर गरीब को आवास, स्वच्छ भारत मिशन में हर परिवार को शौचालय, प्रमुख सांस्कृतिक नगरों को पर्यटन के मुख्य केंद्र के तौर पर विकसित करने जैसे कई संकल्प हमारी सरकार पूरे कर चुकी है। 19 मार्च 2017 को भाजपा के नेतृत्व वाली सरकार के सत्ता में आने के पहले तक प्रदेश में अज्ञानता, असुरक्षा एवं किस्म-किस्म के घोटालों और नियुक्तियों में धांधली का बोलबाला था। ट्रांसफर-पोस्टिंग के नाम पर रिश्ततखोरी एक काल की प्रथा बन चुकी थी। शिक्षा माफिया हबोी थे। माफिया को सत्ता का संरक्षण प्राप्त था, जिसकी शक्ति हमारी सरकार में यह अधिशेष बढ़कर 3.2 प्रतिशत हो गया है। 341 किमी. लंबे कांछला जैसे कस्बों से सैकड़ों परिवार पलायन कर रहे हैं।

हमारी सरकार द्वारा अपराध और अपराधियों के प्रति ज़ोरों टॉलरंस की नीति अपनाई गई और पुलिस की कार्यप्रणाली में रजनीतिक हस्तक्षेप

क्षेत्रीय दलों की उपयोगिता

17वीं लोकसभा के लिए आम चुनाव की तिथियों की घोषणा के साथ ही विश्व के सबसे जटिल लोकतंत्र के महापर्व की शुरुआत हो गई है। जटिल इस रूप में कि भारत जाति एवं उपजाति, मजहब और संप्रदाय, भौगोलिक क्षेत्र, भाषा, आर्थिक तथा सामाजिक रूप से विविध एवं बहुंगी, बल्कि परस्पर अंतरविरोधी तत्त्वों वाला देश है। संसार में शायद ही कोई ऐसा दूसरा राष्ट्र होगा जहाँ इतनी विविधताएँ होंगी, लेकिन हमारी खासियत रही है कि इन विविधताओं एवं अंतरविरोधों के बावजूद भारतवर्ष ने सामान्यता अपना राष्ट्रीय भाव बनाए रखा है। लोकसभा चुनावों में भी एकाध अपवादों को छोड़ दे तो इस देश की जनता ने अपने इस राष्ट्रीय विवेक का परिचय हमेशा दिया है। पुलवामा में हालिया आतंकी हमला, चीन द्वारा पाकिस्तान का समर्थन, फिर चीन की भारत के प्रति आक्रामक नीति और उससे हमारा सीमा विवाद, राष्ट्रीय और अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर विभिन्न सामाजिक-आर्थिक समस्याएँ एवं चुनौतियाँ, रोजगार एवं भ्रष्टाचार, विदेश नीति के प्रश्न इत्यादि आगामी लोकसभा चुनावों के लिए महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दे होंगे। फिर एक राष्ट्रीय परिप्रेक्ष्य में भारतीय मतदाताओं का क्या रख होना चाहिए जब कुछ राष्ट्रीय पार्टियों के साथ-साथ क्षेत्रीय दल भी ताल टेंक रहे हैं? इस संदर्भ में इन राजनीतिक दलों का चरित्र, चाल और चेहरा जानना प्रासंगिक होगा।

आगामी आम चुनाव में एक तरफ भाजपा है जिसने कई क्षेत्रीय दलों से सहयोग करके चुनाव में उतरने का फैसला किया है। दूसरी तरफ कांग्रेस पार्टी के साथ-साथ बहुजन समाज पार्टी, समाजवादी पार्टी, ममता बनर्जी की तृणमूल कांग्रेस, चंद्रबाबू नायडू की तेलुगु देसम पार्टी, तेलंगाना में तेलंगाना राष्ट्र समिति, अरविंद केजरीवाल की आम आदमी पार्टी, नवीन पटनायक की बीजू जनता दल और विभिन्न कम्युनिस्ट पार्टियाँ प्रमुख रूप से खम टेंक रही हैं। उपरोक्त पार्टियों की नीति, दृष्टिकोण और आधार आदि की पड़ताल करें तो इनमें भाजपा और कांग्रेस ही सच्चे राष्ट्रीय दलों के रूप में सामने आते हैं। हालाँकि तकनीकी रूप से चुनाव आयोग के नियमों के अनुसार तृणमूल कांग्रेस, बहुजन समाज पार्टी, राष्ट्रवादी कांग्रेस पार्टी, माकपा, भाकपा आदि भी कहने को राष्ट्रीय पार्टियाँ हैं, लेकिन इनमें से अधिकतर दलों का मूलभूत चरित्र, चाल और चेहरा क्षेत्रीय पार्टियों वाला है।

अपने अस्ताचल की ओर प्रस्थान कर रहीं माकपा और भाकपा पहले से ही पश्चिम बंगाल, त्रिपुरा और केरल तक सिमटकर रह गई थीं, पिछले कुछ वर्षों में ये और भी ज्यादा सिकुड़ चुकी हैं। अपने सबसे बड़े गढ़ पश्चिम बंगाल में ही



बनाने के कार्य की स्वीकृति के साथ साथ राज्य में 1,16,392 किमी सड़कों को गड़बड़मुक्त किया गया है। 3700 किमी लंबे मार्ग का नवीनीकरण हो या फिर ग्रामीण इलाके में 4577 किमी सड़क निर्माण, सरकार ने दो साल में यह करके दिखाया। वायु परिवहन को भी बेहतर किया है।

प्रदेश में आयुधमान भारत के तहत 6 करोड़ लोगों को प्रतिवर्ष 5 लाख रुपये की निशुल्क चिकित्सा बीमा सुविधा दी जा रही है। गैर बीपीएल आबादी के 55 लाख लोगों को मुख्यमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना में शामिल किया गया है। 2329 उपकेंद्रों को हेल्थ एंड वेलनेस सेंटर के रूप में अपग्रेड किया गया है। राष्ट्रीय आयुष मिशन के तहत प्रदेश के 10 जिलों में 50 बेड के एकीकृत अस्पताल खोलने का काम शुरू हुआ है। महिला सशक्तीकरण के तहत उज्ज्वला योजना में महिलाओं को 1 करोड़ 12 लाख निशुल्क गैस कनेक्शन दिए गए हैं। सरकार 24 महीने में पीएम आवास योजना (शहरी) में 11 लाख से अधिक आवास स्वीकृत कर चुकी है। पीएम आवास योजना (ग्रामीण) में भी 12 लाख 82 हजार आवास गरीबों के लिए मंजूर किए गए हैं। 124 महीने में 2.49 करोड़ शौचालय बनाकर बेस लाइन सर्वे के अनुसार उग्र को खुले में शौच से मुक्त कर दिया गया है।

पिछली सरकार द्वारा मात्र पांच वीआईपी

के लिए भी बहुत अहम है। ध्यान रहे कि मोदी सरकार के साथ-साथ मनमोहन सरकार भी इस समझौते की पक्षधर थी। यही राष्ट्रीय राजनीतिक दलों के अखिल भारतीय या राष्ट्रीय हित की दृष्टि बनाम क्षेत्रीय दल के संकीर्ण स्वार्थ का अंतर स्पष्ट हो जाता है। एक अन्य उदाहरण तमिलनाडु की पार्टियों का ले सकते हैं, जिनके रवैये के कारण एक समय भारत और श्रीलंका के रिश्ते में खटास पैदा हो रही थी, क्योंकि केंद्र सरकारें तमिलनाडु के दलों से अलग विचार रखती थीं। कहने का तात्पर्य है कि क्षेत्रीय दल सीमित दृष्टि की वजह से संकुचित नीतिगत फैसले लेते हैं जो कई बार व्यापक राष्ट्रहित में नहीं होता।

दूसरे, अधिकांश क्षेत्रीय राजनीतिक दल न केवल किसी राज्य विशेष तक सिमटे हैं, बल्कि आमतौर पर किसी खास जातिगत आधार तक भी सीमित हैं। मिसाल के लिए लालू प्रसाद यादव की राजद मुख्य रूप से यादवों की पार्टी है तो बसपा दलितों और उनमें भी जाटवों की पार्टी है। लोकदल जाटों की पार्टी है तो सपा भी मुख्य रूप से यादवों की पार्टी है। इसी तरह से कर्नाटक की जेडी(एस) वोक्कालिंगाओं, टीडीपी कम्मा जाति वालों, अपना दल पटेल कुर्मियों, लोक जनशक्ति पासुका समुदाय की पार्टियाँ हैं। जाहिर है कि जाति आधारित ये राजनीतिक दल आमजन के हित और राष्ट्रहित से अधिक अपनी-अपनी जातियों के हित की बात ज्यादा सोचेंगे। लोकतंत्र के उत्सव में भागीदारी के वक्त क्या हम इसकी अनदेखी कर सकते हैं कि क्षेत्रीय राजनीतिक दलों में से कई परिवार विशेष के कब्जे वाली पार्टियाँ हैं? राजद, सपा, लोकदल, जेडी(एस), डीएफके, टीआरएस, अकाली दल, इनसे लो, लोक जनशक्ति पार्टी, झामुमो जैसी कई पार्टियाँ हैं, जो इस देश और समाज से ज्यादा अपने परिवार के हित की चिंता करती हैं।

यह भी रेखांकित करना जरूरी है कि इनमें से अधिकांश दल 'अपनी डकली-अपना राग' अलापते हुए किसी क्षेत्र-न्यूनतम साझा कार्यक्रम या एक साझी राष्ट्रीय नीति अपनाते के बजाय अलग-थलग चुनावी मैदान में खड़े होते रहते हैं। जाहिर है कि यह सवाल जनता के सामने नहीं उठा, परिवार ही कि क्या राष्ट्रीयता और राष्ट्रवाद से परे जाति, भावना आधारित क्षेत्रीय राजनीतिक दलों पर हम अपना दांव लगा सकते हैं? कुछ क्षेत्रीय राजनीतिक दलों ने भाजपा और कांग्रेस से गठबंधन जरूर किया है और इससे उनके संकुचित दृष्टिकोण पर कुछ लगाम लगगी, लेकिन इसके लिए भाजपा और कांग्रेस को मजबूती से उभरना होगा।

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

विपक्ष की जवाब

राजनीति के स्तर में गिरावट का सिलसिला शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में जगमोहन सिंह राजपूत ने मोदी सरकार के राज में पाकिस्तान और आतंकवादियों को सबक सिखाने के लिए उदाएँ सख्त कदमों की विरोधी पार्टियों द्वारा तारीफ नहीं करने और इस पर बेवजह के सवाल उठाने को राजनीति के गिरते स्तर का कारण माना है। इसमें कोई दोराय नहीं कि कांग्रेस और अन्य दलों को पाकिस्तान के बालाकोट में भारतीय वायुसेना द्वारा की गई एयर स्ट्राइक पर ही मोदी सरकार को घेरना शायद महंगा पड़ सकता है, क्योंकि इस मुद्दे पर मोदी सरकार पर शक करना, सेना पर शक करना है। एयर स्ट्राइक करके भारतीय वायु सेना ने अपने दुश्मनों को अपनी ताकत का अहसास करा दिया है। देखा जाए तो मोदी सरकार द्वारा आतंकवादियों पर कड़ी कार्रवाई करना बहुत जरूरी हो गया था, क्योंकि भाजपा ने लोकसभा चुनाव में पाकिस्तान को कराग्रा जबाव देने और कश्मीर से धारा-370 हटाने के जो वादे किए थे, वे पुलवामा में बड़े आतंकी हमले होने के बाद से झूठे साबित हो रहे थे और विश्वास उसे घेर रहा था। अब एयर स्ट्राइक ने उन सबकी जुबान बंद कर दी है। मोदी सरकार को आम चुनावों में इसका फायदा जरूर मिलेगा।

राजेश कुमार चौहान, जालंधर

दर्द देने वाला वयान

देश के कुछ नेता एवं कुछ बुद्धिजीवी जानबूझकर कुछ ऐसा बयान दे जाते हैं, जिससे अधिकांश लोगों की भावना आहत होती है। लेकिन बोलने वाले के लिए ये बातें मायने नहीं रखती। उनको सिर्फ और सिर्फ चर्चा में बने रहने से मुक्तव होता है। इस मामले में राजनेताओं का योदान तो कुछ ज्यादा ही

गया है। सरकार रवी विपणन वर्ष 2019-20 हेतु मूल्य समर्थन योजना के तहत 55 लाख मी. टन गेहूँ खरीदेगी। सरकार ने 2011-12 से लेकर 2017-18 तक के गन्ना मूल्य वकया 57 हजार 578 करोड़ रुपये का भुगतान डेढ़ साल में कर दिखाया है। पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि योजना की शुरुआत के साथ ही प्रदेश के एक करोड़ 3 लाख किसानों को पहली किस्त दी जा चुकी है।

बीते दो साल में स्टार्टअप, स्टैड अप इंडिया योजना, मुख्यमंत्री युवा स्वरोजगार योजना ए प्रधानमंत्री रोजगार सृजन कार्यक्रम में 18490 रोजगार का सृजन किया गया। 633 रोजगार मेले आयोजित कर 1,21,194 से अधिक युवाओं को सेवा से जोड़ा है। सरकार ने पारदर्शी भर्ती प्रक्रिया अपनाते हुए प्रदेश के 2 लाख से अधिक नौजवानों को नौकरियाँ दी हैं। दो वर्ष में उत्तर प्रदेश में डेढ़ लाख करोड़ का औद्योगिक निवेश हुआ है। इससे कम से कम 5 लाख रोजगार के अवसर सृजित हुए हैं। आज प्रदेश में उद्योग के लिए बेहतर माहौल है, जिससे लाखों युवाओं को रोजगार मिल रहा है। सरकार ने 2018 में उग्र इन्वेस्टर्स समिट का सफल आयोजन कराया जिसमें 1045 एमओयू हस्ताक्षरित हुए। 4.68 लाख करोड़ रुपये से अधिक पूंजी निवेश हो चुका है। सरकार ने पारंपरिक कारीगरों एवं हस्तशिल्पियों के कोशल को निखार कर उनके रोजगार हेतु विश्वकाम श्रम योजना प्रारंभ की है। 6 लाख व्यक्तियों को प्रशिक्षण एवं मानदेय देकर लाभाभिव्त करने का लक्ष्य रखा गया है।

हाल में विश्व के महानतम सांस्कृतिक समामन कुंभ में देश-दुनिया के 14 करोड़ से अधिक श्रद्धालुओं-पर्यटकों ने कुंभ दर्शन किया। यह आयोजन स्वच्छता एवं सुरक्षा के सभी मानकों पर खरा उतरा। कुल मिलाकर अब नए भारत के नए उत्तर प्रदेश पर हर कोई गौरव की अनुभूति कर सकता है।

(लेखक उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री हैं)
response@jagran.com



उर्जा

गतिमान जीवन

चलते-चलते अचानक तक जाने का कोई कारण तो होता है। फिर रुककर बैठ हुआ आदमी पुनः क्यों चल पड़ता है? जवाब में यह कहा जा सकता है इस कार्य में कोई स्वाभाविकता है। किसी-न-किसी चीज का अहसास है। वह अहसास मन को होता है या तन को? प्रवाह तो कभी अहसास से नहीं रुकता। वह बहता ही रहता है। पानी बहता ही रहता है। जीवन प्रवाह भी बहता रहता है। इसमें एक विशिष्ट प्रकार की अविरलता और निरंतरता का भाव विद्यमान होता है जो पूर्णता का अहसास कराता है।

जिस तरह से अंधश्रद्धा-अनुकूल पानी न मिलने से खेत सूख सकता है, पौधा का विकास रुक सकता है, उसी तरह से अनुकूल जीवन प्रवाह के न होने से दर्द का अहसास हो सकता है। सुख और शांति छिन सकती है, पर दर्द का अहसास कोई बुरी बात तो नहीं है। अगर बुरा होता तो मीरा ने जहर न पिया होता, जीसस सूली पर न लटके होते। श्रीकृष्ण ने भील से बाण खाकर जीवना न गंवाया होता और राम चौदह साल के लिए वनवास पर नहीं जाते। महावीर पर ढेले-कंकड़ नहीं फेंके जाते। गौतम बुद्ध को राज छोड़कर भटकना नहीं पड़ता और दर्द के अहसास के भय से दुनिया की हर औरत मां बनने को तैयार नहीं होती।

स्पष्ट है हर दर्द के पीछे कोई रहस्य है, लेकिन दुनिया के लोग दर्द एवं दुख की कल्पना से डरते हैं, भागते हैं और इनसे मुक्ति पाने के लिए संघर्ष करते हैं। भिन्न-भिन्न तरह के उपाय करते हैं। चर्च-मॉटर-मस्तिद जाकर पूजा-प्रार्थना करते हैं। तंत्र-मंत्र एवं जादू-टोने का सहयोग लेते हैं। डॉक्टर और वैज्ञानिक का सहयोग लेते हैं, पर क्या आज तक कभी इंसान को दर्द से छुटकारा मिले है? जानें-अनजाने में आदमी उसी रास्ते पर चलता है, क्योंकि जन्म का योग मृत्यु से है। प्रेम का योग घृणा से है। सुख का योग दुख से है। आनंद का योग दर्द से है। मिलन का योग विलो से है और संयोग का वियोग से है। एक तरह बच्चा जन्म लेता है तो दर्द होता है, पर भीतर ही भीतर औरत को मां बनने का सुख का जो अहसास होता है, उसे वह महसूस करती है। उसे दर्द की अनुभूति से कई गुना ज्यादा सुख का, आनंद का अनुभव होता है। दरअसल व्यक्ति को जीवन के भौतिक सुखों का अहसास है। इसलिए इसे छोड़ने में वह दुखी होता है, क्योंकि वह अपने अपना समझता है।

महयोगी पायलट वावा

में रेलवे को केवल थोड़े प्रयत्न की जरूरत है। इससे रेलवे के यात्रियों की सुविधा में कई गुना बढ़ोतरी हो जाएगी।

निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद

चीन की विस्तारवादी नीति

चीन ने मसूद अजहर के मामले में एक बार फिर पाक के समर्थन में वोटो अधिकार का प्रयोग किया है। पाकिस्तान को भी समझना चाहिए कि चीन कोई काम निरुद्देश्य नहीं करता है। वह पाक को अपने कब्जे में रखना चाहता है। वह उसकी शुरुआत है। चीन के उस पर इतने एहसास हो जाएंगे कि उससे निकलने की पाकिस्तान कभी सोच भी नहीं पाएगा।

शैलेंद्र सक्सेना, नई दिल्ली

अब जनता की वारी

सत्ता की प्राप्ति के लिए सभी राजनीतिक दल अपने-अपने तौर चला रहे हैं, किंतु इन वारों में भ्रष्टाचार, भुखमरी, बेरोजगारी आदि के लिए कोई इशारा नहीं है। जनता के लिए यही अच्छा अवसर है, जब अपने सवालों का जवाब मांग सकती है।

bora9956@gmail.com

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, गोरखा ई-मेल : mailbox@jagran.com

^[1] संस्थापक-स्व. पूर्णचंद्र गुप्त, पूर्व प्रधान संपादक-स्व.नेरेंद्र मोहन, संपादकीय निदेशक-महेन्द्र मोहन गुप्त, प्रधान संपादक-संजय गुप्त, जागरण प्रकाशन लि, के लिए- नीतेन्द्र श्रीवास्तव द्वारा 501, आई.एन.एस, ब्रिडजिंग,रफी मार्ग, नई दिल्ली से प्रकाशित और उन्ही के द्वारा डी-210, 211, सेक्टर-63 गोरखा से मुद्रित, संपादक (राष्ट्रीय संस्करण) -विष्णु प्रकाश त्रिपाठी *

^[2] दूरभाष : नई दिल्ली कार्यालय : 23359961-62, नोएडा कार्यालय : 0120-3915800, E-mail: delhi@nda.jagran.com, R.N.I. No. DELHIN/2017/74721 *

^[3] ई-अंक में प्रकाशित समस्त समाचारों के चयन एवं संपादन हेतु पी.आर.बी. एक्ट के अंतर्गत उत्तरदायी। समस्त विवाद दिल्ली न्यायालय के अधीन ही होंगे। हवाई शुल्क अतिरिक्त।

कम होती बचत

आर्थिक स्थिति को पटरी पर बनाये रखने के लिए आमदनी, खर्च और बचत के सही संतुलन का होना जरूरी है। इसी हिसाब से भविष्य के लिए निवेश के लिए भी गुंजाइश बनती है। यह बात किसी परिवार, संस्था और देश पर समान रूप से लागू होती है। हालांकि हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था की वृद्धि दर संतोषजनक है और उसके सुनिश्चिता आधार मजबूत हैं, लेकिन कुल घरेलू उत्पादन (जीडीपी) के अनुपात में घरेलू बचत और परिवारिक बचत की घटती दरें चिंताजनक हैं। वित्त वर्ष 2012 में घरेलू बचत की दर 34.6 फीसदी थी, जो 2018 में घटकर 30.5 फीसदी हो गयी। इसकी तुलना में परिवारिक बचत दर अधिक तेजी से कम हुई है, जहां यह 2012 में 23.6 फीसदी थी, वहीं 2018 में 17.2 फीसदी रह गयी है। इसके वरक्स परिवारिक उपभोग दर में बढ़ोतरी हुई है। पिछले वर्ष में तीन फीसदी की बढ़त के साथ यह आंकड़ा 59 फीसदी रहा था, जिसके चालू वित्त वर्ष में 59.5 फीसदी होने का अनुमान है। इस अनुमान और बीते सालों के आंकड़ों के आधार पर कहा जा सकता है कि इस साल भी बचत दरें नीचे आयेगी।

बचत की कमी से जरूरी मदों में निवेश के लिए पूंजी में कमी आयेगी, जबकि इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर परियोजनाओं, उद्यमों के लिए कर्ज और कार्यक्रमों के लिए धन की बढ़ी जरूरत है।

कम की कमी का एक नतीजा यह है कि जरूरी मदों में निवेश के लिए पूंजी में कमी आयेगी, जबकि इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर परियोजनाओं, उद्यमों के लिए कर्ज और कार्यक्रमों के लिए धन की बढ़ी जरूरत है। जानकारों की राय है कि इस स्थिति के तीन मुख्य कारण हो सकते हैं- परिवारों में बढ़ता उपभोग, रोजगार के अवसरों की कमी और वित्तीय जवाबदेही में बढ़त। उपभोग का बढ़ना एक तरह से उत्पादन और मांग के लिए सकारात्मक है, पर जरूरी खर्च के बाद थोड़ा-बहुत बचत न कर पाना घटती क्रय शक्ति को भी डिंगित करता है। इस संदर्भ में परिवारिक कर्ज का बढ़ना भी एक बड़ा कारण हो सकता है। जीडीपी के अनुपात में यह 2012 में 3.3 फीसदी था, जो 2018 में 4.3 फीसदी हो गया है। मतलब यह कि उपभोग के लिए लोगों ने धन उधार लिया है, जिसकी देने की जिम्मेदारी के चलते उनकी बचत कम हो पा रही है। इस स्थिति को बेहतर करने के लिए ज्यादा रोजगार मुहैया कराने की दरकार है। इसमें यह भी ध्यान रखा जाना चाहिए कि कुशल कामगारों की संख्या बढ़ाकर ही मांग को बढ़ाया जा सकता है, ताकि खर्च और बचत का खाता बढ़े। रोजगार और बचत का सीधा संबंध है। अन्य उभरती अर्थव्यवस्थाओं के अध्ययन भी इसे रेखांकित करते हैं। घरेलू और अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार की हलचलों तथा नीतियों और रूझानों की अनिश्चितता को देखते हुए संबद्ध कारकों पर ध्यान देकर गिरती बचत दरों को ऊपर ले जाना होगा। यदि ऐसा नहीं हुआ, तो विदेशी कर्ज पर हमारी निर्भरता बढ़ेगी, ताकि निवेश का स्तर घरेलू बचत दर से अधिक बना रहे। निश्चित ही हमारी आर्थिकी के लिए वह एक आदर्श स्थिति नहीं होगी। इसलिए कोशल से संपन्न श्रमशक्ति तैयार करना तथा शिक्षा में निवेश बढ़ाने की दिशा में ठोस पहलकदमी होनी चाहिए। आर्थिक प्रबंधन और सुधार प्रक्रिया को प्राथमिकता देने की बड़ी आवश्यकता भी है।



बोधि वृक्ष

प्रेम-रंग

जगत में आज प्रेम का अभाव सबसे बड़ी गरीबी है। प्रेम तथा करुणा हमारी सबसे बड़ी दौलत हैं, जीवन के अनमोल खजाने हैं। परंतु हम इन्हें खोते जा रहे हैं। मानवता के लिए, अपनी वर्तमान स्थिति से बाहर आने का एकमात्र रास्ता है कि प्रेम तथा करुणा के अश्रुओं को लौटा लीजिए। आज जगत में सब कुछ, जैसा होना चाहिए उसके विपरीत है। विश्व में जो भी सौंदर्य दिखता है, वह ऊपरी है। हम फैशनबल हैं। हमारी मशीनें, मानो अचूक हैं। परंतु हमारी संस्कृति तथा आदर्शों का क्या? आज विश्व की स्थिति कुछ ऐसी है- मानो चॉकलेट से आच्छादित, बहुत आकर्षक कैंडी जिसके अंदर छोट-छोटे कीड़े कुलबुला रहे हों, हम किसी के साथ कुछ नहीं बांटना चाहते- भोजन, पानी, जमीन, यहां तक कि परमात्मा को भी नहीं। हमारा एकमात्र लक्ष्य है- प्रत्येक वस्तु को अपने अधीन कर, अपने ही लिए रख लेना। हम में से बहुत से लोग बड़े उत्साहपूर्वक विदेशी भाषाएं सीखते हैं। भाषा विचारों के आदान-प्रदान हेतु होती है। फिर भी, हम एक भाषा भूल गये हैं, जो सचमुच एक-दूसरे को समझने में सहायक होती है। वह है प्रेम की भाषा। मनुष्य को यदि एक-दूसरे को समझना हो, तो प्रेम आवश्यक है। जब नकारात्मक विचारों से मुक्ति होगी, तब हमारे भीतर प्रेम का झरना फूट पड़ेगा। मध्य-बिंदु के बिना हम एक पूर्ण वृत्त नहीं खींच सकते। उसी प्रकार, प्रेम रूपी मध्य-बिंदु के अभाव में हमारा जीवन कभी पूर्ण नहीं होगा। एक वृक्ष की जड़ें ही उसे पृथ्वी से दृढ़तापूर्वक बांधे रखती हैं। इसी प्रकार, मन की गहराई में पड़ी प्रेम की शक्तिशाली जड़ें ही, संस्कृतकाल में हमारे व्यक्तिगत तथा सामाजिक जीवन को सुदृढ़ बनाये रखेंगी- हिलने-डुलने या जड़ से उखड़ने नहीं देंगी। आज हमारे मस्तिष्क गरम और हृदय ठंडे हैं। मस्तिष्क को अहंकार ने गरम बना दिया है और स्वार्थ ने हृदय को ठंडा। जबकि हमारा हृदय प्रेम तथा करुणा की गर्मी से परिपूर्ण होना चाहिए, जबकि मस्तिष्क सच्चे ज्ञान तथा उसके परिणामस्वरूप उपजी उदारता से शीतल होने चाहिए।

श्रीमता अमृता-नंदमयी देवी

कुछ अलग

मिथिला की 'लिखिया कला'

पिछले दिनों राष्ट्रपति रामनाथ कोविंद ने मिथिला कला को वयोवृद्ध एवं सिद्धहस्त कलाकार गोदावरी दत्त को पद्मश्री से सम्मानित किया। राष्ट्रपति के दिव्यट हैंडल से राष्ट्रपति भवन ने गोदावरी दत्त की तस्वीर शेरार करने के साथ ही लिखा कि 'पारंपरिक कला को बढ़ावा देने, उभरते कलाकारों को प्रशिक्षित करने और मार्गदर्शन के लिए' उन्हें यह सम्मान दिया गया।

मधुबनी जिले के रांठी गांव में रहनेवाली, शिल्प गुरु, गोदावरी दत्त की कला की विशेषता रेखाओं की स्पष्टता में है। उनके यहां रांगों का प्रयोग कम-से-कम होता है। साथ ही उनके बनाये चित्रों के विषय पारंपरिक आख्यानों से जुड़े हैं। रामायण, महाभारत के अनेक प्रसंगों को उन्होंने अपनी कला का आधार बनाया है। भले ही उनके विषय पारंपरिक हों, पर उनके चित्र आधुनिक भाव-बोध के करीब हैं। वे खुद कहती हैं कि 'मेरी मां या पद्मश्री से सम्मानित जितवारपुर की जादंबा देवी की पेंटिंग 'फोक टच' को लिए होता था। आधुनिक शिक्षा के आने से विषय-वस्तु और शैली दोनों में बदलाव आया है।'

कोहबर, सीता-राम, अर्धनारीशर जैसे पारंपरिक विषयों के अलावे मिथिला कला में शृंग हत्या, आतंकवाद, खेतों जैसे विषय भी पिछले दो दशकों में चित्रित किये गये हैं। यह सैकड़ों साल पुरानी इस कला के विकासशील होने का प्रमाण है।

पिछली सदी में जब प्रसिद्ध मिथिला कलाकार गंगा देवी ने अमेरिकी प्रवास को अपनी पेंटिंग में चित्रित किया,

शुक्रवार (15 मार्च, 2019) को रेडियो पर समाचार सुनते हुए मुझे न्यूजीलैंड में हुए नरसंहार के बारे में पता चला। संवाददाता स्थानीय मुस्लिमों से उनकी प्रतिक्रिया ले रहे थे और साफ तौर पर वे आवाजें दक्षिण एशियाई थीं। शनिवार सुबह एक समाचारपत्र की रिपोर्ट में बताया गया था कि हमले के बाद लापता हुए लोगों में अहमदाबाद और हैदराबाद के नौ भारतीय शामिल हैं।

गोलीबारी की रिपोर्ट के बाद की कमेंट्री (जो बीबीसी के रेडियो-4 की थी, जिसे मैं हर सुबह सुनता हूँ) एक दूसरी कहानी में बदल गयी। विश्व का पहला पिछाने आस्ट्रेलिया में मिला था और उसे मरम्मत के लिए इंग्लैंड भेजा गया था। यहां प्रश्न है कि इंग्लैंड ही क्यों? क्योंकि वहीं इसे बनाया गया था। वर्ष 1788 की जनवरी में 11 जहाजों के साथ यह आस्ट्रेलिया आया, जिसे पहले बेड़े के रूप में जाना जाता है। ये सभी इंग्लैंड के पोर्ट्समाउथ के मूल जहाज थे, जो अपने उपनिवेश की शुरुआत करते हुए एक हजार से अधिक यूरोपीय लोगों को आस्ट्रेलिया ले आये थे। यह बहुत पहले की बात नहीं है, मराठों और अफगानों के बीच पानीपत की अंतिम लड़ाई के बाद की बात है, मुगल शासन के पतन के काफी बाद की। ब्रिटिश पहली बार 1608 में सूत आये थे और इसलिए आस्ट्रेलिया और न्यूजीलैंड औपनिवेशिक प्रक्रिया में नये हैं।

न्यूजीलैंड में आप्रवासन और विदेशियों को लेकर हमलावार के जो विचार हैं, वे गौतलब हैं। नरसंहार से पहले लिखे नोट में वह कहता है कि लोगों की हत्या करने के पीछे उसका मकसद, 'यूरोप की भूमि से आप्रवासन की दर को प्रत्यक्ष तौर पर कम करना है'। वह न्यूजीलैंड और आस्ट्रेलिया (जहां उसका जन्म हुआ था) को यूरोप मानता है, जबकि यूरोप के लोग यहां खुद ही आप्रवासी हैं। आस्ट्रेलिया और न्यूजीलैंड के औपनिवेशवाद ने यहां

के मूल निवासियों, जिन्हें आदिवासी कहा जाता है (आमतौर पर भारतीयों और उनका जीन एक जैसा है), पर काफी अत्याचार किये हैं। आदिवासी होने का मतलब है, जो काफी पहले से रह रहे हैं, जैसे हम भारत के सबसे प्राचीन निवासियों को आदिवासी कहते हैं।

यूरोपीय औपनिवेशकों ने आदिवासी आबादी को बर्बाद कर दिया था। इन लोगों ने आदिवासियों की जमीन पर कब्जा करने के लिए कूरता का सहारा लिया था और अपने साथ यहां बीमारी लेकर भी आये थीं। कब्जे के बाद जगहों के रूप में जाना जाता है। ये सभी इंग्लैंड के पोर्ट्समाउथ के मूल जहाज थे, जो अपने उपनिवेश की शुरुआत करते हुए एक हजार से अधिक यूरोपीय लोगों को आस्ट्रेलिया ले आये थे। यह बहुत पहले की बात नहीं है, मराठों और अफगानों के बीच पानीपत की अंतिम लड़ाई के बाद की बात है, मुगल शासन के पतन के काफी बाद की। ब्रिटिश पहली बार 1608 में सूत आये थे और इसलिए आस्ट्रेलिया और न्यूजीलैंड औपनिवेशिक प्रक्रिया में नये हैं।

न्यूजीलैंड को ब्रिटिशर्स ने स्थानीय माओरी आबादी से हड़प लिया था। जमीन हड़पने के बाद भी यूरोपीय लोगों ने आदिवासियों पर बहुत अत्याचार किये। अपने संसद के अधिनियम के तहत उन्होंने आदिवासियों के बच्चों को उनके माता-पिता से अलग करना शुरू किया। आज इन्हें स्टोलन जेनेरेशन के नाम से जाना जाता है। यह नीति 1960 के दशक तक जारी रही। यहां तक कि आज भी यहां आदिवासियों को



आकार पटेल

कार्यकारी निदेशक, एमहरेस्टी इंटरनेशनल इंडिया aakar.patel@gmail.com

कठुरता की मौजूदा संस्कृति विभाजन की राजनीति से निर्मित हुई है और दुर्भाग्यवश भारत सहित दुनियाभर में गैर-जिम्मेदार मीडिया द्वारा फैलायी गयी है।

भेदभाव का सामना करना पड़ता है, जिसमें आपराधिक न्यायिक प्रणाली भी शामिल है। यह सब कथित तौर पर आस्ट्रेलियाई भावना दर्शानेवाले उनके हेसमुख और उत्साही आचरण के नीचे छुप जाता है (बेशक, इन दिनों हम आस्ट्रेलियाई भावना को उनके छल के माध्यम से भी जानने लगे हैं)।

ऊपर जो कुछ मैंने लिखा है, वह सामान्य जानकारी है और हर आस्ट्रेलियन और न्यूजीलैंड को यह सब मालूम है। यूरोपीय औपनिवेशवाद ने दुनिया के दूसरे हिस्सों को भी बर्बाद किया है। अगर आज हम कनाडा, वर्जीनिया, जॉर्जिया, वाशिंगटन, अमेरिका, बोलिविया और अर्जेंटीना जैसे नामों से परिचित हैं, तो इसलिए क्योंकि विदेशियों ने इन जगहों पर कब्जा किया और उन पर ये नाम थोपे। यूरोपीय उपनिवेश ही है, जिसने दुनियाभर में बंदूक कानून बनाया, जिसने लोगों, मतलब गैर औपनिवेशकों को प्रत्यक्ष तौर पर अपनी रक्षा के लिए बंदूक रखने की अनुमति दी।

हमले के बाद न्यूजीलैंड की आदिवासियों के बच्चों को उनके माता-पिता से अलग देगा। बेशक यह भविष्य में होनेवाली हिंसा पर रोक लायेगा। यह आश्चर्यजनक है कि राष्ट्र अपने नागरिकों को उच्च क्षमता वाले उन राष्ट्रों को खरीदने और

रखने की अनुमति दे देते हैं, जिनका एकमात्र उद्देश्य युद्ध करना है। बंदूक नियंत्रण पर अमेरिका के विरोध ने उनके अपने बच्चों सहित सच्ची आबादी पर सर्वाधिक नरसंहारों को थोपा है।

यह सब इसलिए इतना उल्लेखनीय है, क्योंकि हमलावर ब्रेंटन टेंट्ट को महसूस करना चाहिए कि वे दूसरे लोग हैं, जो आप्रवासी हैं और अपनी संस्कृति थोप रहे हैं। पाठकों को यह जानने में रूचि हो सकती है कि ब्रिटिश मूल के शब्द 'टेंट्ट' व 'ट्रेसपासर' का मूल एक ही है। यह शब्द उस व्यक्ति के लिए प्रयोग किया जाता है, जो बिना अनुमति कहीं प्रवेश करते हैं, हिंदी में जिसे 'घुसपैठिया' कहा जाता है।

टेंट्ट कहते हैं कि जो लोग अपने देश में रहते हैं, वे उनसे घृणा नहीं करते, लेकिन उन्हें 'उन आक्रमणकारियों से समस्या है, जो दूसरों की जमीन पर कब्जा करते हैं'। हालांकि, वे यह भी लिखते हैं कि 'मेरी भाषा की उत्पत्ति यूरोपीय है, मेरी संस्कृति यूरोपीय है, मेरी राजनीतिक-दार्शनिक मान्यताएं यूरोपीय हैं, मेरी पहचान यूरोपीय है और सबसे महत्वपूर्ण, मेरा खून यूरोपीय है'। अगर हमलावर पहचान के संकेत को इतनी दृढ़ता से महसूस कर रहा था, तो निर्दोष लोगों को मारने की जगह उसे यूरोप चले जाना चाहिए था।

लेकिन, हमें यह सवाल खुद से पूछना चाहिए कि आखिर क्यों हिंसक विजेताओं और औपनिवेशकों के वंशज आज भी खुद के पीड़ित होने का दावा करते हैं। यह स्वाभाविक नहीं है। सच बात तो यह है कि आप्रवासियों एवं खासकर मुसलमानों के खिलाफ इस तरह की भावना घृणा और कठुरता की संस्कृति से उत्पन्न होती है, जिसे हम अपने चारों ओर देख रहे हैं। कठुरता की यह संस्कृति विभाजन की राजनीति से निर्मित हुई है और दुर्भाग्यवश भारत सहित दुनियाभर में गैर-जिम्मेदार मीडिया द्वारा फैलायी गयी है।



आपके पत्र

कई चरणों में चुनाव करना वाजिब

17वीं लोकसभा के चुनाव के लिए रिकॉर्ड 92 करोड़ से अधिक मतदाता अपने मतधिकार का प्रयोग करेंगे। जाहिर है, अगर इतनी बड़ी संख्या में मतदाता होंगे, तो इसे समुचित व व्यवस्थित प्रकार से संचालित करने में अधिक कर्मचारियों की आवश्यकता होगी और समय भी अधिक ही लगेगा। इस लंबी चुनाव प्रक्रिया से आम जन को अनेक कठिनाइयों ने इन जगहों पर चुनाव करना पड़ेगा। लेकिन, इनके बावजूद सुरक्षित व साफ-पुष्टा चुनाव करना भी तो प्राथमिकता में आता है। याद कीजिए, दो दशक या इससे पहले जब एक ही चरण में मतदान होता था, तब कितने बृथ कैचरिंग की घटनाएं होती थीं? अनेक मतदान केंद्रों को मतदाताओं को दशत के दम पर इतरफरफ मतदान करने के लिए बाध्य किया जाता था। अनेक चरणों में चुनाव करने का सबसे बड़ा लाभ उन संवेदनशील प्रदेशों और इलाकों को हुआ है, जहां लोगों में मतदान करने की हिम्मत तक नहीं होती थी। विभिन्न चरणों में मतदान करने से अवश्य ही चुनाव प्रक्रिया लंबी हुई है, लेकिन यह आज की परम आवश्यकता है।

सत्यकाश सनोठिया, राँची-दिल्ली

साइबर अपराध रोकना होगा

झारखंड के संताल परगना में साइबर अपराध की घटनाएं विगत कुछ सालों से काफी बढ़ गयीं हैं। साइबर अपराधियों की तलाश में प्रत्येक दिन किसी-न-किसी राज्य की पुलिस यहां आती रहती है। ऐसे जो अपराधी अनेक बंधू पकड़े गये हैं, उनमें से कुछ की उम्र बीस से तीस वर्ष के बीच है। साइबर अपराध के शिकार पड़े-लिखे लोग भी हो रहे हैं। जिन तकनीकों के जरिये लोगों को सुविधाएं दी जाती हैं, उन्हीं तकनीकों का इस्तेमाल कर ये लोगों को चूना लगा रहे हैं। ऐसा घटनाओं को रोकने के लिए कानूनी और तकनीकी तौर पर पुलिस और जांच एजेंसियों को तो समृद्ध होना ही होगा, लोगों के भी जागरूक होना होगा। बैंकिंग सेक्टर और टेलीकॉम कंपनियों को भी ईमानदारी से नियमों का पालन करना होगा, तभी साइबर अपराध की घटनाओं पर अंकुश लग सकेगा।

शुभम झा, करणबीम, देवघर

सही प्रत्याशी को पहचानें

लोकसभा चुनाव की तारीखों का प्लान किया जा चुका है। सभी राजनीतिक पार्टियां अपने प्रत्याशियों के चयन में व्यस्त हैं। हर राजनीतिक दल अपने दल के वैसे नेता को चुनाव में प्रत्याशी बनाने की कोशिश करती है, जिसके चुनाव जीतने की संभावना हो। प्रत्याशी चयन में पार्टियों के अपने मापदंड होते हैं। उसी तरह वोटों को भी किसी प्रत्याशी को वोट देने के पूर्व उसके चयन और परख का मापदंड निर्धारित कर लेना चाहिए। वोट देते समय शिक्षित, ईमानदार, जुझारू तथा क्षेत्र की समस्याओं को जानने वाले प्रत्याशी को ही प्राथमिकता देनी चाहिए, ताकि वह चुने जाने के बाद अपने क्षेत्र की समस्याओं को संसद में रख सके और समाधान के प्रयास कर सके। साथ ही देश के विकास एवं एकता बनाये रखने में भी सहयोग प्रदान करे, निर्वाचन क्षेत्र के समस्याओं के संबंध में कोई जानकारी न हो।

विशद कुमार हँरम, राँची

हर राज्य में हों कैंसर अस्पताल

बीने रविवार की शाम गोवा के मुख्यमंत्री मनोहर पर्रिकर का निधन हो गया। पर्रिकर पैंक्रियाटिक कैंसर से पीड़ित थे।

पैंक्रियाटिक कैंसर यानी अग्नाशय का कैंसर एक बहुत ही गंभीर रोग है। इसके वेहद गंभीर होने का अंदाजा इस बात से लगाया जा सकता है कि पैंक्रियाटिक कैंसर के लक्षण आसानी से समझ में नहीं आते। और इसीलिए इसे मूक कैंसर भी कहा जाता है। हालांकि, कैंसर के लिए ऐसी किसी शब्दावली की जरूरत नहीं है, हर कैंसर अपने आप में एक भयानक बीमारी है। सिर्फ कैंसर ही क्यों, अगर सही समय पर किसी छोटी बीमारी का इलाज न किया जाये, तो वह भी किसी बड़ी बीमारी का रूप ग्रहण कर सकती है। इसलिए हमारे देश में स्वास्थ्य चेतना का विस्तार होना बहुत जरूरी हो गया है।

कैंसर से आज भारत ही नहीं, पूरी दुनिया के लोग परेशान हैं। क्या डॉक्टर, क्या मरीज और क्या परिवार के लोग, हर कोई इस बीमारी की दहशत से डरता है। डरना भी चाहिए, यह स्वाभाविक भी है। लेकिन ऐसा नहीं है कि इससे बचा नहीं जा सकता। कैंसर जैसी असाध्य बीमारी से बचने के लिए और इसके समुचित समाधान के लिए कई स्तरों पर काम करना होगा। सबसे पहले तो इसे लेकर जागरूकता बहुत जरूरी है। एक बात तो हम सबको गांठ बांध लेनी चाहिए कि बीमारी जितनी ही बड़ी और गंभीर होती है, उसके लिए जागरूकता अभियान भी उतना ही बड़ा और व्यापक होना चाहिए। विडंबना है कि हमारे देश में आज भी स्वास्थ्य को लेकर जैसी चेतना होनी चाहिए, वैसी चेतना है ही नहीं और न ही लोग भी अपनी चेतना बढ़ाने को उत्सुक हैं।

दुनियाभर में लोग कैंसर से अपनी जान गंवा रहे हैं। दुनियाभर में इसके उपाय भी तलाशे जा रहे हैं और निरंतर शोध भी हो रहे हैं, फिर भी अभी तक हम उस ठोस नतीजे पर नहीं पहुंच पाये हैं, जिससे कि किसी व्यक्ति को कैंसर हो जाये, तो हम उसे पूरी तरह से ठीक कर सकें। दुनिया के बाकी देशों का तो नहीं मालूम, लेकिन भारत में अक्सर यह बात देखी गयी है कि हम लोग किसी बीमारी के हो जाने पर उसे डॉक्टर या वैद्य को दिखाने के बजाय छुपाते फिरते हैं। अक्सर महिलाओं में स्नन कैंसर की खबरें आती हैं। यहां सवाल यह है कि क्या यह कैंसर अचानक हो गया? बिल्कुल नहीं। वह धीरे-धीरे ही बढ़ा होगा, लेकिन जब पकड़ा गया, तब उसे खत्म करने के उपाय तलाशे जाने लगे। दरअसल, यह जागरूकता की कमी है। ब्रेस्ट कैंसर की शुरुआत एक छोटी सी गांठ से होती है। डॉक्टरों और शोध करनेवालों ने यह बात सामने लायी है कि महिलाएं नहाने के वक्त जब अपने स्तनों में ऐसे किसी गांठ को महसूस करती हैं, तो ज्यादातर महिलाएं उसकी

अनदेखी करती हैं। जाहिर है, इस अनदेखी का कारण शर्म और झिझक ही है। इसका नतीजा यह होता है कि वह छोटी सी गांठ आगे चलकर ब्रेस्ट कैंसर का रूप ले लेती है। ऐसे में अगर जागरूकता बढ़े, तो बड़ी से बड़ी और दबे-छुपे अंगों में पनप रहे इसके लक्षणों को पहचान कर जल्द-से-जल्द उसका इलाज हो सकता है।

दूसरी बात है सरकारी स्तर पर एक बड़ी पहल की जरूरत। कैंसर के इलाज को सस्ता बनाने के लिए देशभर की सरकारों को एक बड़ा कदम उठाना चाहिए। कहने का अर्थ यह है कि देशभर के कुछ ही कैंसर अस्पताल नहीं होने चाहिए, बल्कि देश के हर राज्य में कैंसर अस्पतालों को खोलना होगा। और यह काम सरकार के स्तर पर ही संभव है, निजी अस्पतालों से इलाज की उम्मीद न रखी जाये। आज देशभर से लोग दिल्ली के धर्मशिला या राजीव गांधी कैंसर अस्पताल और मुंबई के टाटा कैंसर इंस्टीट्यूट जैसे कुछ कैंसर अस्पतालों में इलाज के लिए जाते हैं। कैंसर तो अपने आप में एक दहशत का नाम है ही, वहीं देश के सट्टे हिस्से से इलाज के लिए दिल्ली-मुंबई की यात्रा भी कम पीड़ादायी नहीं होती है। अमीर लोग तो कहीं न कहीं इलाज की व्यवस्था कर भी लेते हैं, लेकिन वहीं गरीब लोग तो अपनी हिम्मत ही हार जाते हैं। इसलिए देश के हर राज्य में और हर बड़े शहर में कैंसर अस्पतालों की स्थापना करके लोगों को एकदम सस्ता इलाज मुहैया कराना सरकारों का दायित्व होना चाहिए। इस पहल के साथ ही कैंसर के बड़े-बड़े खतरों को कम किया जा सकता है। और यह बात सिर्फ कैंसर बीमारी पर ही लागू नहीं होती, बल्कि हर उस असाध्य बीमारी पर लागू होती है, जिसके इलाज के अभाव में लोग प्रभावित होते हैं।

किसी भी बीमारी के बढ़ने का अर्थ है कि एक तो उसे लेकर समाज में कोई जागरूकता नहीं है और दूसरे उसका इलाज महंगा है। ज्यादा अस्पताल होंगे, तो ज्यादा से ज्यादा डॉक्टरों की भर्ती की जरूरत भी होगी। अस्पतालों के लिए इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर तैयार किया जायेगा और कर्मचारी भी बढ़ेंगे, जिससे रोजगार में इजाफा होगा। हर राज्य में अस्पताल होने से लोगों की पहुंच आसान होगी, तो मरीजों में हिम्मत भी आयेगी बीमारी से लड़ने की। कैंसर के इलाज से संबंधित जितनी भी जरूरी चीजें हैं, सबका विस्तार होना चाहिए और सब चीजों के प्रति समाज में जागरूकता होनी चाहिए। मसलन, लोग यह जानें कि कैंसर के लक्षण क्या होते हैं, देश में कहा-कहां इसका इलाज संभव है, किन-किन चरणों से होकर गुजरना होता है, आदि बहुत सी जरूरी चीजें हैं, जो जागरूकता और इलाज का आगम्य हैं। देश का हर नागरिक जब स्वस्थ होता है, तभी देश स्वस्थ होता है।

देश दुनिया से

हंगरी-चेक संधि और हेग में मामला

लगभग पच्चीस वर्ष पहले हेग स्थित अंतरराष्ट्रीय न्यायालय में मुझे हंगरी की ओर से पक्ष रखने का मौका मिला था। मामला था चेकोस्लोवाकिया के साथ 1977 में हस्ताक्षर किये गये एक संधि को खत्म करने का हंगरी का निर्णय। असल में, 1977 में हंगरी और चेकोस्लोवाकिया ने डेन्यूब नदी पर दो बैराज बनाने के लिए एक संधि पर हस्ताक्षर किया था जिसमें एक गैबिनकोवो के पास और दूसरा नायमारोस के पास बनाया था। इस संधि का उद्देश्य सौवियत संघ के इन देशों के बीच

बिजली उत्पादन और संबंधों को मजबूत करना था। इस समझौते के एक दशक या इससे अधिक समय के बाद हंगरी ने इस संधि से हटने का निर्णय लिया। जब 1993 में यह मामला अंतरराष्ट्रीय अदालत में आया, तब तक दुनिया पूरी तरह बदल चुकी थी। बर्लिन की दीवार गिर चुकी थी, हंगरी नाटो में शामिल होने जा रहा था, चेकोस्लोवाकिया दो देशों में बंट चुका था और सौवियत संघ बिखर चुका था। 25 सितंबर, 1997 को इस मामले का निर्णय आया जिसमें अदालत ने हंगरी के तमाम तर्कों को निर्णायक रूप से खारिज कर दिया। ठीक ऐसा ही फैसला 13 नवंबर, 2018 को शिटेन के झू से बाहर आने के एकतरफा निर्णय को लेकर अटॉर्नी जनरल ने दिया था।

फिलिप रैड्स

कार्टून कोना



साम्भार : कार्टूनमूवमेंट डॉट कॉम

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