

The Mission Shakti test: Why now?

The geostrategic consequences to the Mission could be mixed. We will have to wait and see what the pros and cons are



QUANTUM LEAP

DEVANGSHU DATTA

How can you knockout, or disable, an object hundreds of kilometres above the Earth, moving at more than 3 kms per second? Mission Shakti involved hitting it with a missile. It could also be targeted with laser beams, or an electronic pulse weapon, to fry the object without blowing it up.

Why would you do this? Satellites and ballistic missiles are part and parcel

of modern arsenals. Satellites provide observation and communication services, while ballistic missiles can carry nuclear payloads and hit targets thousands of kilometre away.

The ability to interdict ballistic missiles and scramble satellite-based communication networks could be crucial. Such technology might also be useful to guard against the Earth being hit by a meteorite that causes large-scale destruction, or even a mass extinction, as has occurred in the past. Under President Ronald Reagan (1980-88), the USA stumbled upon a more subtle, economic reason for a ballistic missile defence/anti-satellite defence project. The R&D of the so-called *Star Wars* was expensive. The Soviet Union lacked the financial resources to stay abreast of the Americans, and the arms race triggered an economic crisis that probably hastened the demise of the USSR.

In technical terms, viable ballistic-missile defence systems and anti-satellite weapons require similar capabilities.

There is a need to track a fast-moving object, to predict its path, and to have weapons that can reach it. This has to happen quickly — the system must be able to detect, track, and hit the object inside a few minutes.

India had to develop these capacities to manage its own satellite assets, and its missile system. Such a defence system may itself be deployed in space to give quicker response times, and extend range. ISRO has launched satellites with payloads of 5,000 kg-plus. So the DRDO may even be technically capable of deploying such a system in space.

India had a ballistic missile defence system in place, by 2012. By then, it had carried out at least five successful tests, hitting and blowing up missiles (without warheads) using versions of the Prithvi and the Agni. The chief scientific adviser at the time, V K Saraswat, claimed at the 97th Indian Science Congress that India had "all the building blocks in place for an anti-satellite system".

Blowing up a satellite is easier than

intercepting a ballistic missile, as India has successfully done many times. Most medium and long-range ballistic missiles climb well above 300 kilometres during their flight and they have complicated flight trajectories, while satellites have predictable orbits.

India's earlier reluctance to carry out an anti-satellite test could have been due to the widespread condemnation of China's testing of an anti-satellite system in 2007. China hit one of its own defunct satellites, which weighed about 750 kg, at a height of about 800 km. That created 3,000-plus pieces of debris, each cricket-ball-sized, or larger. Some debris collided with a Russian satellite and other pieces caused risk to the International Space Station.

The European Space Agency estimates that, as of January 2019, there were 1950 functional satellites and 3,000-odd defunct satellites orbiting Earth. Space Surveillance Networks track 22,300 pieces of debris larger than 10 cm. So this is a very serious problem.

In 2012-13, the DRDO was looking to tweak the ballistic missile defence system electronically to carry out anti-sat simulation tests, maybe with a "fly-by" where an anti-satellite missile would

pass very close to a satellite without hitting it. The Mission Shakti test hit a 740 kg satellite in an orbit about 300 km from Earth. While this creates debris, it's close enough to the Earth for the pieces to fall into the atmosphere and burn up quickly, reducing the danger.

Why did India do this now? Well, apart from elections, there is an ongoing 25 nation conference in Geneva where a Group of Government Experts are discussing the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS). In analogy to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, PAROS may ban the development of anti-sat systems, while offering a waiver to nations already possessing these. After Shakti, India may be hoping to present a fait accompli.

India is a signatory to the Outer Space Treaty, which bans weapons of mass destruction being deployed in space. This test doesn't breach those terms. India is also a member of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee and Shakti was calibrated to ensure minimised debris.

The geostrategic consequences to the Mission could be mixed. The systems were indigenously developed and DRDO, ISRO, et al, have been inured to sanctions since 1998. But other programmes may be affected. We'll have to wait and see what the pros and cons are.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Forbidden line



If a topic ignites Twitter, social media teams of various police units in the country barely let it go unutilised. The Kolkata Police (KP) was quick to lap up the hotly debated

'Mankad' controversy from this week's Indian Premier League match between Rajasthan Royals and Kings XI Punjab in Jaipur. Drawing an analogy between Jos Buttler's dismissal in that match — who was controversially run out by the opposition captain Ravichandran Ashwin — and traffic violation, KP put a screenshot of the dismissal on Twitter along with a photo that showed a car crossing the stop line at a traffic signal. The message in Bangla read: "Crease or road, you will regret if you cross the line." This brought back memories of the Jaipur Police using the infamous no-ball that Indian pacer Jasprit Bumrah had bowled in the 2017 Champions Trophy final to give a similar message. Bumrah had not taken it kindly and had expressed his displeasure on Twitter. Wonder if Ashwin, usually an active and chirpy social media user, has taken note of the KP post.

Another scheme

This is the season of giving and it simply doesn't matter if you don't have a real plan. Now the Communist Party of India (Marxist) government in Kerala has said it would offer farmers a minimum support price that is 50 per cent above the cost of production, ₹18,000 in minimum wages, and ₹6,000 as minimum welfare pension. Thomas Isaac, Kerala finance minister, said the package his party was proposing was better than the income support scheme of the Congress because the CPI (M) did have a strategy for resource mobilisation. And that includes raising taxes on the rich and on corporate profits, restoring the wealth tax for the super-rich, the introduction of the inheritance tax and restoring the long-term capital gains tax.

More trouble

The Congress-Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) understanding in Bihar will likely face more trouble in the days ahead. The two parties came to an agreement that Alinagar's Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Abdul Bari Siddiqui would contest the Darbhanga seat, leaving two-term incumbent Kirti Jha Azad fuming. Azad, who won on the BJP ticket in 2014, recently jumped ship and joined the Congress. The Congress brass is looking for a seat to accommodate Azad. He is unlikely to be fielded from nearby Madhubani or Jhanjharpur either, with the RJD firmly dismissing his candidature.

EC stand on WVPAT audit must change

VVPAT slips should be matched with the EVM count in 14 booths per assembly constituency



YOGENDRA YADAV

parties. Three, voters should be allowed to register an objection if the paper slips do not match the party they voted for. Four, the malfunctioning EVMs should be replaced within 30 minutes. And five, VVPAT slips should be matched with the EVM count in 14 booths per assembly constituency.

To my pleasant surprise, I received a response from secretary, Election Commission (EC) that the first three of my suggestions are actually part of the electoral rules and are being followed. There is an established protocol of first-level checking of every EVM in the presence of political party representatives. There is also a set procedure for two-stage randomisation of EVMs, which takes place in the presence of representatives of parties and candidates.

There exists an enabling provision (Rule 49 MA of Conduct of Election Rules, 1961), which I did not know about, that allows a voter to object if he or she suspects a mismatch between the paper slip and the party he or she voted. In that case, the presiding officer of the polling booth can order a special 'test vote' to be cast. If it shows a mismatch, polling stops in that booth. I also received detailed and very helpful feedback from a serving civil servant that clarified many of my doubts.

That leaves us with only one real issue: The number of EVMs to be matched with the VVPAT slips and the process of the VVPAT audit.

"VVPAT audit" needs explanation.

With the introduction of the voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) machines, now there are two independent ways through which votes can be counted for each booth. There is the EVM's display board that shows, at the press of a button, the number of votes secured by each candidate. And now, there are paper slips produced by the VVPAT machine that go inside a sealed box, which can be opened and the slips can be physically counted.

The whole point of introducing VVPAT machines was to generate greater confidence among voters, candidates and political parties. Thus, the EVM could now be subjected to "VVPAT audit": Matching votes secured by each candidate in the EVM display with the physical counting of the paper slips.

However, under the existing provision, this verification is for all practical purposes left to the courts. The EC mandates (Rule 16.6) that at the end of the counting, the VVPAT audit should be done in only one randomly selected booth in each constituency. There is also a rule (16.5) that after the counting, but before the declaration of result, any candidate can request for a VVPAT audit in any or all polling stations. But the decision is left to the discretion of the returning officer. Otherwise, the candidate has to approach the courts. So, the number of booths and the process of VVPAT audit are now the heart of the matter.

To my mind, the current controversy can easily be resolved. The Election Commission's insistence that VVPAT audit in just one polling booth per constituency is sufficient makes the audit look perfunctory and suspicious. The EC seems to be drawing upon an expert



TAKE NOTE The whole point of introducing VVPAT machines was to generate greater confidence among voters, candidates and political parties

report given by a committee of reputed statisticians, which seems to have recommended VVPAT audit in only 479 randomly selected booths throughout the country. The statisticians were not wrong. Such a small random sample is adequate to assess the overall reliability of the EVM count for the country as a whole. But that is not the operative question. The point is to verify the system for each constituency and to do it in a way that not only meets statistical standards of proof but also generates public confidence. The EC's proposal doesn't do either of these.

On the other hand, the opposition's demand for 50 per cent audit is unne-

cessary and very cumbersome. You don't need a sample of 50 per cent for any verification. Statisticians tell us that one need not think of sample in terms of percentage of the total number of booths. What matters is the actual number of sampled booths, not the percentage.

So, let me repeat my earlier suggestion that meets both the requirements. One, VVPAT audit should be done in 14 booths per assembly constituency (or assembly segments within a parliamentary constituency). There is nothing statistical or magical about the figure 14. It so happens that each round of counting is done on 14 tables (for reasons I have never understood) in each assembly segment.

Two, this audit should be done at the beginning of counting, not at the end. One randomly selected EVM and its respective VVPAT should be opened and matched on each of the 14 tables before rest of the EVMs are counted. If these match, the rest of the counting should take place as it does now. If not, then paper slips should be counted for all the booths in the entire constituency.

Three, once the counting is over, each candidate should have a right (not left to the discretion of the returning officer) to demand VVPAT audit in at least one booth of his or her choice. Once again, in case of a mismatch, paper slips should be counted for the entire constituency.

Let us hope the EC or the SC would settle this matter once and for all. I really hope this is my last article on an issue that should have been sorted out long ago.

(By special arrangement with *ThePrint*)
The author is the national president of *Swaraj India*

INSIGHT

Bankers, you can have your Jet and eat it too

Using interim financing under IBC is likely to resolve Jet's woes faster and better



DIVA JAIN

way of assets if the fleet is leased). In the case of Jet, all its value is embedded in its operations and as such it is imperative for its operations to continue to preserve the remaining value for creditors. In this light, the SBI chief is correct in insisting on what is being painted as a bailout package for the airline to keep its operations afloat.

Historically most major airline bankruptcies have resorted to what is called debtor-in-possession (DIP) financing to emerge from financial distress. Debtor in possession financing is a loan extended to a firm which is already in bankruptcy. The loan is used by the firm to restructure its operations and preserve or increase value for creditors. Understandably, such a loan prevails over claims from before the declaration of bankruptcy. Debtor in possession financing has been critical for the emergence of most major airlines from bankruptcy. American Airlines availed of \$1.55 billion in DIP financing while in bankruptcy in 2013 and is now in robust health with creditor recoveries higher than 100 per cent. Similarly, Northwest Airlines used \$1.355 billion in DIP financing before emerging from bankruptcy and then merging with Delta Airlines (which had used \$2.5 billion in DIP financing to emerge from its own bankruptcy).

Similarly, United Airlines had used \$600 million in DIP financing to emerge from bankruptcy. Incidentally even in the capitalist America, the airlines received \$900 million in loan guarantees from the government while it was in bankruptcy in order to restructure its business. So the principle of using financing to restructure operations and preserve value for creditors is economically sound and the bankers are correct in trying to apply it to Jet Airways.

What boggles the mind in case of



SETTLE DOWN By not dragging Jet to the NCLT process, bankers are robbing the company of an opportunity to overhaul its operations drastically and in a time-bound fashion to enhance value

the banker's proposal for Jet is the insistence on not using the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) /and not taking it to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). The key determinant of value and creditor recovery once a firm is economically bankrupt (which means that it can no longer pay what it owes in full) is the speed at which the operations are restructured and the new firm emerges from the ashes. In this context the time-bound NCLT process provides the right impetus both in terms of the time frame of restructuring and the degree of restructuring required to preserve the value of Jet Airways. By not dragging Jet to the NCLT process, the bankers are robbing the company of an opportunity to overhaul its operations drastically and in a time-bound fashion to enhance value. By providing financing without Jet being in NCLT, bankers run the risk that the restructuring will neither be timely nor deep enough and they will end up kicking the can down the road and creating a zombie airline. The case of Air India is a classic example of this half-hearted restruc-

turing on the back of open-ended financial support from the government that is used in dribs and drabs to patch up operational inefficiency but never to eradicate it.

This would still have been understandable had the IBC not allowed for DIP financing thereby necessitating the restructuring of operations outside the ambit of NCLT. But the IBC does allow for interim financing and it has been successfully used to restructure Alok Industries. If the bankers want to provide Jet with time and financing to recover its value, it is going to be more efficient and time-bound under NCLT than outside it. In this light the assertion of bankers that applying IBC on Jet will destroy value has been most puzzling. Earlier airline bankruptcies prove the opposite. Using interim financing under IBC is likely to resolve Jet's woes faster and better. Yes dear banker, you can have your Jet and eat it too but only if you use IBC.

The author is a "probabilist" who researches and writes on behavioral finance and economics

LETTERS

Be careful

This refers to "Airlines in India may skip Jet takeover deal" by Arindam Majumder, Shally Seth Mohile and Nivedita Mookerji (March 28). It is quite clear that selling Jet Airways is not going to be an easy task. The State Bank of India's (SBI) expectations to find a buyer and its assertion that the banks hope to conclude the deal by May is just a pipe dream. The consortium, especially SBI, should be more pragmatic. Having been witness to the Air India sale saga for years, one would've thought, we had learnt some lessons.

The real reasons — as indeed your report points out — are high cost of buy, corporate governance issues and weak financials. These are going to be major road blocks in the sale of this once great airline. The lenders' consortium, who are the new owners, would do well to (a) peg their sights low and be realistic and (b) be prepared to accept whatever a potential buyer, domestic or foreign, perceives as the real value of the airline. They should be willing to sell a clean product without any baggage of old staff and any other ties with the past owners. The buyer — if we are able to find one — would want to earn from his investment and it would be possible only if it is a clean deal without any encumbrances.

Krishan Kalra Gurugram

Unnecessary drama

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's (pictured) unusual address after keeping the entire nation on its edge to announce a successful conduct of an anti-satellite



missile test was not only violation of the model code of conduct, but also betrayed his fears about a possible electoral benefit accruing to the Congress for its minimum income guarantee scheme. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's tasteless comments against the Opposition further confirms the party's nervousness. By no stretch of imagination, the national security imperatives demanded either conducting such a test or a statement from the country's PM at this juncture. It is clear that this has been done with to shift the narrative back to an emotive issue like national security.

Some reports say the country's capability to intercept and destroy adversarial satellites in space had been tested successfully in 2011 itself without making much noise by the Manmohan Singh led UPA-II. On the flip side, Modi's well deserved compliments to the Defence Research and Development Organisation scientists should also be seen as his tacit acknowledgement of successive government's invaluable contribution towards development of space research.

SK Choudhury Bengaluru

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HAMBONE



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Another storm brewing

Indian negotiators at WTO need to push harder

The United States Trade Representative is working closely with the director general of the World Trade Organization, Roberto Azevedo, to tweak the global trade rulebook in order to address some of the concerns of the world's largest economy. If successful, the move can lead to the WTO rescinding certain key flexibilities to some emerging countries, including India. A key element of the changes the US proposes to push relates to the developing countries availing special and differential treatment (S&DT). S&DT gives developing countries special rights and enables them to take commensurate trade commitments based on their economic capacity. It allows developing countries to tweak and, in particular, commit to less than full reciprocity in trade based on their low economic capacity.

S&DT was adopted by the WTO in recognition of the fact that developing countries don't always have the required capacity or resources or indeed the level of market reforms for them to fully compete in all trade arenas. The US argues that many of these countries, such as India, are now members of the G20, and are no longer the weaklings for whom the provision was made. But a reversal of S&DT will not only stall the progress under the WTO but will also actively discourage the participation of developing countries in the multilateral trade framework.

For India, in particular, this development could not have come at a worse time. For a while now India has been at loggerheads with the US on trade issues. Both sides have traded protectionist barbs in the recent past in an attempt to appease their domestic constituencies. For instance, Indian restrictions on US-made medical devices, particularly cardiac stents and knee implants, did not go down well with policymakers in the US. Another flashpoint was when India prevented the import of dairy products from the US for "religious reasons". Things came to a head earlier this month when the US decided to exclude imports from India from its Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) scheme, which allows for certain sets of goods to be imported into the US with zero tariffs. India has been the largest beneficiary of this scheme, with imports worth about \$5.6 billion benefiting from the GSP. This has hurt Indian interests, especially since Indian exports have suffered a long period of middling growth.

Under the circumstances, India is likely to be hurt further if the S&DT aspect is withdrawn from the WTO. For instance, it is feared that in the absence of the S&DT provision, India will not be able to secure the livelihood concerns of its fishermen in the new trade rules for fisheries subsidies. India will also lose its 10 per cent farm subsidy elbow-room, which will be reduced to 5 per cent. When the GSP withdrawal happened, Indian policymakers tried to downplay the adverse impact. That was a mistake. With reference to the S&DT revocation, however, India has made a more forceful attempt to fight it by raising an alarm on how it can cause lasting damage to the multilateral trading system. But Indian negotiators need to push harder, as the time is ticking fast for countries such as India to have a rule-based trading regime with S&DT built-in as an instrument of natural justice.

Crucial for federalism

Finance Commissions are central to the Constitution

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das has expressed concern that the various Finance Commissions' recommendations are too inconsistent with one another. Mr Das was earlier a member of the Fifteenth Finance Commission, and has served as a senior official in the Union finance ministry. He argued that in the past different Finance Commissions had "adopted different approaches on tax devolution" and made grants to states, and that was a problem because more continuity was desired. Presumably in aid of that effort, he made a case for a permanent Finance Commission as opposed to the current system, in which it is reconstituted every five years. This was necessary now that the goods and services tax (GST) had come into operation, and the GST Council could focus on the need for improving tax collections while the Finance Commission could manage other reforms.

Mr Das' suggestions need to be given due consideration, given his background and current post. However, his expectations from Finance Commissions seem misplaced and do not take into account the continuing need for renewal in their recommendations. Finance Commissions survey the fiscal landscape as well as the state of federalism and then make recommendations, which the political class has to take on board. This is substantially different from what Mr Das is suggesting, but it is a requirement that remains important. Mr Das might worry about inconsistency in different Finance Commissions' recommendations, but this ignores the fact that there is a broad trend in recent Commissions to increase devolution towards states. This has been established, and future Commissions will no doubt take it forward.

In fact, the problem is that such recommendations have not been followed up on in the right spirit by successive Union governments. The current government, for example, did not properly act on the Fourteenth Finance Commission's decision to raise the proportion of the shared pool of taxes given to the states from 32 to 42 per cent. Much of that increased allotment was clawed back through various types of cess, as well as a sharp reduction in the Union's outlay on centrally-sponsored schemes. Mr Das was speaking at the launch of a book by one of his predecessors, Y V Reddy, and Mr Reddy pointed out that while different Finance Commissions have made different recommendations, the impact of any one recommendation has never been more than 10 per cent on any particular state. In other words, fears of inconsistency across Commissions are perhaps overblown.

The Finance Commissions are a crucial part of India's constitutional set-up. They allow for constant renewal in how the Union of India approaches federal questions. Creating a permanent Finance Commission with a particular set of rules will hamper this effort and severely undermine the federal structure of India. The states are watching this discussion closely. Already the Union has exerted undue influence on the Fifteenth Finance Commission through a controversial set of additions to the Terms of Reference that some states, particularly in the south, fear will penalise them. The Finance Commissions should be respected, and not viewed as an inconvenience.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



The second-class citizens of cricket

Rules of the game favour the bat over the ball

Why was there a controversy over R Ashwin's Mankading of Jos Buttler in the current edition of the Indian Premier League? Buttler was given out because he was unlawfully outside his crease. In an era when run-outs are determined by millimetres, Buttler's action was tantamount to cheating. Ashwin was not only within the law, he was also right in doing as he did.

Indeed, the law was clarified as recently as 2017 in Ashwin's favour. Under the previous Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) rule, bowlers were permitted to attempt to run out the non-striker only before entering their delivery stride. Now, bowlers at all levels of cricket will be able to run out the non-striker up to the instant at which they "would be expected to deliver the ball".

But it was reported widely that Ashwin was condemned for following the rule. The kindest thing said about him is that he should have offered Buttler a warning (according to Rahul Dravid and Michael Vaughan, both former batsmen) before running him out.

Of course, batters have no obligation to warn or inform bowlers or keepers if they plan to step out of the crease on the next ball to clout it. Why is the bowler obliged to "warn"?

The answer is, of course, that the bowler is a second-class citizen in the Commonwealth of cricket. The rules are written and rewritten to undermine and deter him. We are often told that it's a batsman's game. But the alacrity and enthusiasm with which the International Cricket Council (ICC) is making life difficult for bowlers is disturbing.

The bowler can claim an LBW if the batsman's body comes between the ball and the stumps but the law saves the batsman if the ball pitches outside

leg stump or hits him outside off stump (a rule brought in the 1970s).

The front foot rule for fast bowlers changed in the 1960s, pulling the bowler further back into the crease. The limitation on bouncers is more recent. The bowler is warned after the first one, though dangerous injuries in top flight cricket have been very rare.

All sorts of field restrictions are imposed on bowlers through the 30-yard circle and Power Plays and leg side limits. ODIs have two balls, one at either end, to keep them harder and, therefore, making it easier to hit them farther.

Batsmen are constantly rewarded and bowlers punished through new rules like free-hits, first for front foot no-balls and then, after 2015, all no-balls. The rules punish errors by bowlers immediately — no-ball, wide-ball, etc — but not those of batsmen (running on the pitch) who receive a couple of non-punitive warnings.

Batsmen can get runners, can come back immediately after retiring hurt, but bowlers cannot. Bowlers can only bowl fixed numbers of overs in ODIs and T20s but there's no limit on how many overs a batsman can bat.

There is no letting up on the assault against bowlers. Every new innovation seems to come specifically to undermine them. The Decision Review (DRS) system may be seen as a bowler's friend but it is not. A 2017 study showed that bowlers got a DRS decision in their favour 20 per cent of the time, versus 34 per cent for batters. Even the protocols of the system itself favour the bat over the ball: The batsman has the autonomy to ask for a review, but the bowler must appeal to his captain.

Batting tactics of all sorts — switch hits, reverse



AAKAR PATEL

The great inflation escape

India, an economy infamous for high and persistent inflation, is currently coming to terms with the opposite phenomenon — inflation over the past year has not just fallen, but fallen more than expected. Inflation forecast errors have become one-sided.

Moreover, inflation components continue to confound, with persistent divergence between food and core prices. (Core inflation is defined as headline inflation minus food and fuel.) In the latest reading, food inflation is at -0.1 per cent and core inflation at 6.1 per cent, with a mysterious 6 percentage point gap between them. Headline inflation at 2.6 per cent is well under the 4 per cent target.

The big question doing the rounds is: Will headline move towards core or will core move towards headline? The two possibilities have diametrically opposite implications for monetary policy (rate hikes versus rate cuts).

Inflation in India can be divided into two clear phases. The pre-2013 period was characterised by rising food inflation and loose monetary policy (characterised by negative real rates). Inflation expectations became unanchored. Core inflation was elevated as transitory shocks became generalised more easily. And all of this manifested in core inflation converging rapidly towards headline.

The post-2013 period is characterised by the opposite — falling food prices and tight monetary policy. A combination of low global commodity prices and good harvests pushed food inflation down. As the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) embarked on inflation targeting, it consciously

kept real rates in positive terrain.

As a result, inflation expectations became more firmly anchored. Transitory shocks began to fade more quickly. All of this has resulted in headline converging towards core, a sign that the country was perhaps moving a notch up on the macro stability radar.

But if this is indeed the case, three questions become relevant: Why hasn't headline been converging to core over the last year, as the post-2013 period suggests? Despite inflation expectations being better anchored since 2013, why is core inflation rising? Will headline inflation eventually go up all the way to 6.1 per cent (where core currently stands)?

Here are three probable explanations.

We believe there has been a slew of price shocks over the past year that has distorted relative prices (of both food and core) and hindered convergence.

Food inflation has been falling sharply since early 2018. We believe there are both structural and cyclical factors for this. As demand in rural India gently recovers, partly led by the new direct cash transfer schemes announced by the government, the cyclical pressures could reverse. We forecast food inflation to rise from -0.1 per cent now to 3.5 per cent by March 2020, though still lower than the 6 per cent long-term average.

Core inflation is not in equilibrium. It is in flux, grappling with a multitude of shocks, which we believe could ease off over the next year.

The education and health components of core inflation have spiked since October 2018. We find



PRANJUL BHANDARI

are acceptable and indeed celebrated. Bowling tactics are looked as cheating. Greg Chappell was within the law when instructing his brother to bowl underarm against New Zealand but he was excoriated and vilified.

Where the rules do not damage the bowler, the associations do. Australia banned the doosra in 2009, saying it was a chuck.

The other aspect is technology, which is allowed unchecked when it comes to bats and other batting gear. Dennis Lillee was criticised for coming out with an aluminium bat, but the modern bat is a bludgeon very different from the wood used by Bradman, Sobers and even Gavaskar.

Modern pads have an outer shell designed to ping the ball off them to maximise leg byes.

Cricket balls have remained the same for a century. Indeed, bowlers have been begging in recent times to be allowed to play with the Duke's ball in Test cricket, because it is of a higher quality and retains a strong seam even after wear. But India continues to use another manufacturer, whose product, our bowlers say, does not meet the standard they expect.

The changes in bats and rules have punished the bowler in terms of the number of sixes hit in international cricket. The most devastating batsman of the modern era, according to the greats who played him, is Sir Vivian Richards, who over a 15-year career hit 210 sixes. It may surprise and dismay readers to know that he is only ranked 22 in the list of all-time six-hitters. All the 21 batsmen who have hit more sixes than Richards have played after him. In fact, the next most recent batsman on that list retired 15 years after Richards (who left in 1991). The man immediately above Richards, and who is 21st on that list, is Marlon Samuels, hardly a player of the same calibre but helped along by tech and rule tinkering.

All this has produced damage. We must not think it has not. Bowling has been looked down on from the time of Harold Larwood (it was Jardine who devised Bodyline but shamefully it was Larwood who was punished for it) to the Dalit cricketer Balu Palwankar.

In our country, where manual labour is despised, bowlers and bowling have suffered. India has for long led the world in looking down on the bowler and the data here is absolutely clear. Try making an all-time Indian XI. The batting is world class (Gavaskar, Sehwaig, Kohli, Tendulkar, Dravid), and the bowling is pedestrian. Kapil Dev, Kumble, Harbhajan and Ashwin are our highest wicket takers. The first three of them average around 30 runs a wicket, and are not in the same league as the Australians or the West Indians or the Pakistanis. In the list of best all-time Test bowling averages, the highest placed Indian bowler is ranked 33 (Jasprit Bumrah) the next one is ranked 62 (Ravindra Jadeja).

If we have not been world beaters in cricket for the longest time, here is the reason: We look down on our bowlers and deity batsmen.

We have been brought up on the cliché that the benefit of doubt must always go to the batsman. But why?

economic evidence that the education inflation data in India is prone to idiosyncratic shocks which tend to dissipate. On the other hand, shocks in health can be both short-lived and long lasting. If the rise is due to a one-off jump in the index, for instance because responsibility for data collection has shifted from the post office to a new agency (the National Sample Survey Office NSSO), since September 2018, the consequent rise in inflation will show up for a year and fade away thereafter.

Lower oil prices, a more stable rupee and a high base could also help lower core inflation. Finally, if higher GST rates pushed the core index higher, this is likely to show up in the inflation print for a year, and normalise thereafter. All said, we believe core inflation could fall by a full percentage point a year down the line.

Once core inflation stabilises in the 4.5-5 per cent range, and food inflation begins to rise gently from the current very low levels, we expect headline inflation to converge gradually towards core, resting sustainably at the 4 per cent target one year from now. A huge win for a country that was earlier characterised by runaway prices.

Until then, however, headline inflation could remain under 4 per cent. We expect a 25bp repo rate cut in the April meeting, followed by another 25bp rate cut in June, taking the policy repo rate to 5.75 per cent by mid-year. Even with this, real rates will remain positive, in our view, anchoring inflation expectations further and strengthening the process by which headline inflation converges to core.

One word of caution: We would hope that the Reserve Bank preserves these gains, and not cut rates by too much, too soon.

The writer is chief India economist, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India)

West Asia's Cold War



BOOK REVIEW

TALMIZ AHMAD

Dilip Hiro is one of the most prolific commentators on West Asia today. The London-based author of about 40 books over the past 50 years, he wrote his first study on West Asia in 1982 and has since extensively discussed developments in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Central Asia. He has also commented on religious extremism in the region and energy politics.

Again, he has regularly analysed social, economic and political developments in his native India and even the state of India-Pakistan relations. All his works are marked by painstaking research and attention to detail so that they are invaluable references for scholars, journalists and students.

Given the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Yemen and the stand-off between the Islamic giants across the Gulf, Mr Hiro has now provided a timely and substantial account of the recent history of Saudi-Iran relations, their convoluted domestic politics, their competitions on doctrinal and political bases, and their ties with the US which have often further complicated their rivalries.

Mr Hiro traces the histories of the two Islamic neighbours, both of which claim "exceptional" status but for different reasons: Iran remains proud of its pre-Islamic grandeur, its significant cultural achievements, and its unique character as a major Shia state. Saudi Arabia is the guardian of Islam's two holy mosques; it also has the world's largest oil reserves. Uniquely, the country is named after its ruling royal family, which espouses Islam's most rigid Sunni doctrine — Wahhabiyah.

Not surprisingly, since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 the two nations have been fiercely competitive in seeking to spread their influence across the Muslim realm: The kingdom encouraged Iraq's Saddam Hussain to attack Iran in 1980 to overthrow the revolution when it appeared weak

and vulnerable. The war instead strengthened the revolution and imparted to the Iranians a deep sense of grievance against their Arab neighbours and the US as they were targeted by missiles and chemical weapons.

The war also sent Saudi plans awry when, after the conflict, its Iraqi protégé turned on his patrons and occupied Kuwait, bringing in the US as the regional hegemonic power, sealing Saddam's ultimate downfall and the destruction of his nation.

The two countries have also competed for influence in Pakistan and Afghanistan — with disastrous consequences. The kingdom and Pakistan worked with the US to organise the "global jihad" in Afghanistan in the 1980s, while in the 1990s Pakistan, with Saudi knowledge and assistance, promoted the fanatical Taliban in Afghanistan and also used jihad as its instrument of war against India.

These short-sighted and incendiary policies have made Pakistan a haven for state-sponsored extremist groups which, while continuing to attack India, have also become sources of indoctrination and training for "lone-wolf" extremists. They have also promoted trans-national jihad across West Asia that threatens regional order and even the security of ordinary people in far-away Africa, Europe and the United States.

The US has played a central role in fomenting murky politics in the region, particularly with its military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11. While its assault on Afghanistan prepared the ground for Taliban resurgence, its overtly sectarian politics privileging the Shia in Iraq opened the door for the spread of Iran's influence in a major Arab country, creating fears of an emerging "Shia Crescent".

The ongoing Saudi-Iran "Cold War" has emerged from these concerns and has pitted the two rivals in destructive proxy wars in Syria and Yemen. The policies of President Barack Obama rejecting a US role in regime-change in Syria and then working with Iran to finalise the nuclear agreement had alienated both US allies — Israel and Saudi Arabia. But this has been corrected by President Donald Trump who has placed his country firmly on the Saudi-Israeli side. After withdrawing from the nuclear agreement, he has added threat of regime-change in Tehran to his agenda by encouraging domestic unrest among the country's minorities, many of whom are Sunni. Saudi Arabia is also being encouraged to shape a "Sunni NATO" to confront Iran and reduce, if not eliminate, its regional footprint.

Mr Hiro has succinctly examined the domestic scenarios in the two rival nations — both of which

are in parlous shape. Iran is experiencing acute economic distress due to US sanctions on its oil exports and financial transactions. This has led to widespread rioting and has also strengthened hard-line elements in the political order that favour confrontation and even talk of war.

In Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman now enjoys untrammelled political, military and economic power, with aggressive actions against royal, religious and business personalities, suggesting that the hitherto resilient royal order could be threatened by internal dissent.

Mr Hiro concludes his monumental study on a pessimistic note, believing that the hostility between the two Islamic neighbours will not be moderated in the near future. This is a dire warning to countries such as India, which have an abiding interest in regional stability.

The reviewer is a former diplomat

COLD WAR IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD: Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the Struggle for Supremacy

Dilip Hiro
Hurst and Company, Pages 460, ₹699

Opinion

FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 2019

Rational Expectations

SUNIL JAIN

sunil.jain@expressindia.com
@thesuniljain



GST magic dulls, big tax shortfall likely

After ₹1 lakh cr GST shortfall, ₹50,000 cr in direct taxes in FY19 expected; low average tax paid means compliance remains poor

EVEN WHEN THE budget was presented, the much lower projection of a 13.5% growth in FY20 tax collections suggested the government also realised that the expected boom in FY19 collections—taxes were to rise by 17.2%—was a one-time event, driven by more people paying income tax due to the fear of being caught out by the surveillance mechanism in-built into GST or by those who restated their taxes after being caught on the wrong foot by demonetisation. Whatever the reason, though, a near-20% hike in the tax-to-GDP ratio since Narendra Modi became prime minister—from 10.1% in FY14 to a projected 11.9% for FY19—is quite impressive. Indeed, this went well with the other narrative of the sharp hike in the number of taxpayers, especially the e-filers, from 2.97 crore in FY13 to 6.75 crore in FY17.

Despite this, however, it appears all is far from well. As *FE*'s Sumit Jha has pointed out earlier, while the number of e-filers rose 2.3 times, what really mattered is the increase in overall taxpayers, and this rose a smaller 1.4 times, from 5.28 crore to 7.41 crore—this includes those who file their returns, whether electronically or physically, as well as those who pay TDS but don't file returns. More important, despite the 1.5 times hike in nominal GDP between FY13 and FY17, the average tax paid across individuals and companies rose by a mere 7%, from ₹104,704 to ₹112,604.

Indeed, at 140,139 in FY17 for all taxpayer groups—individuals, HUFs, AOPs, companies—and 81,344 for individuals, the number of *crorepatis* is quite small compared to the PRICE estimate of one million *crorepatis* households in the country; PRICE's data is for households, but that translates to around 6.6 lakh individuals with an annual income of more than ₹1 crore a year. This means that just around an eighth of eligible *crorepatis* households are declaring their incomes. The tax data for FY17 shows 1.4 million taxpayers declared an annual income of more than ₹20 lakh; 1.3 million in the case of individual taxpayers. Once again, this compares poorly with PRICE's estimate of 8 million households or 5.3 million individuals with an income of more than ₹20 lakh per annum. In other words, even as the number of taxpayers is rising, there is considerable scope for greater compliance. In FY17, the tax data shows a total of 4.7 crore individuals filed their incomes and declared their incomes to be ₹28.2 lakh crore; the time-series data shows they paid a total tax of ₹3.5 lakh crore at an average rate of 12.4%. In FY14, a total of 3.7 crore individuals paid a tax of ₹2.4 lakh crore on an income of ₹18.4 lakh crore, making the effective tax rate for that year 13.2%.

While the government had already said it was looking at a ₹100,000 crore shortfall in GST collections—in the budget, it pencilled in GST of ₹643,900 crore for FY19 as compared to the earlier projection of ₹743,900 crore—it appears there could be a ₹50,000-60,000 crore shortfall in direct taxes too. Till now, the government narrative has been one of making up part of the GST shortfall via an increase in direct tax collections. Indeed, when the budget was presented on February 1, the government increased the estimates of direct tax collections by ₹50,000 crore, primarily by raising estimates for corporate tax collections.

It turns out, however, that with just a week or so to go for the year to end, a member of the Central Board of Direct Taxes has written to all principal chief commissioners of income tax saying that the government collected just 85.1% of the budget's ₹12,00,000 crore direct tax target by March 23; the letter points to 'regular collections' contracting at an increasing pace and says "this is an alarming situation which needs immediate attention". Given this, and the fact that tax officers have been asked to "take all possible actions urgently, especially with respect to recovery of arrears and current demand", it is possible that firms will be arm-twisted to pay unreasonable taxes and then make a refund after April—the CAG documented such instances when it pointed out that, in March 2016, an extra demand of ₹5,853 crore was levied on SBI by incorrect calculations of its advance tax and the bank was refunded the amount on April 2; several other examples were also given to show this seems to be a routine exercise since, in FY16, such inflated demands amounted to 10% of the Mumbai region's corporate tax collections for the year.

Even if the taxman is able to arm-twist corporates, an analysis of the April to January data that is available on the CGA website suggests that most of the shortage in direct taxes will take place in personal tax collections. If you assume 68% of the year's collections are made in April-January—this is a rough average based on the actuals over the past few years—personal income tax collections for FY19 will be ₹485,000 crore versus the target of ₹529,000 crore and, at ₹669,000 crore, corporate collections will be very close to the upwardly-revised target of ₹671,000 crore.

If there is a ₹150,000 crore shortfall in overall tax collections, this implies an FY19 tax-to-GDP ratio of 11.1% as compared to the target of 11.9% and FY18's 11.2%. At a time when GDP is growing as fast as it is today and after all the efforts made to increase compliance—from demonetisation to GST and with several other measures in between—this is quite disappointing. All eyes will now be on Project Insight, a computerisation of all databases with extensive search and matching facilities; once this is done, and the Aadhaar-linking of PAN numbers takes place, the taxman will have a very good estimate of expenditure and will match this with income statements.

Though GST has inbuilt compliance systems—these have, though, been mostly kept in abeyance so far—and demonetisation meant all cash moved to bank accounts, getting those used to decades of tax non-compliance to fall in line isn't going to be easy.

AI Breakthrough

The newest winners of the Turing award pioneered development of technology that is already so integral to our daily lives

THREE PIONEERS OF artificial intelligence (AI) have won one of the most prestigious awards in computer science, the \$1-million Turing Award. Yoshua Bengio, Geoffrey Hinton and Yann LeCun won the award for work they did on deep neural networks. Their work over the past several years incorporated the usage of algorithms to recognise and institutionalise patterns in data that recognised languages, environments and objects and led to breakthroughs in speech recognition, robotics and machine learning of digital images and videos. Neural networks are a critical component of robotic systems that are automating a wide range of human activity through machine learning and form the conceptual base of AI.

In recent years, deep learning methods have been responsible for astonishing breakthroughs in applications across the breadth of human endeavours. These days, everyone with a phone can see the tangible experiential advances in natural language processing and computer vision that were not possible just 10 years ago. Other application fields that utilise the technology are healthcare, medicine, astronomy, education, urban development, transportation, etc. Indeed, as per NITI Aayog estimates, AI could mean a 15% boost for the GVA for the economy by 2035—the government think tank estimates AI could potentially add \$957 billion to India's \$6,397 billion dollar GVA projected for that year. Worldwide, according to a study by IDC, AI represented \$12 billion in market investment in 2017. By 2021, that figure is expected to rise to \$57.6 billion. It is also predicted that 40% of digital transformation projects will be based on AI technology by 2019 and, in addition, 75% of business tools will use this technology by 2021. If anyone deserved the prestigious Turing award, it is indeed Bengio, Hinton and LeCun.

GROWTH TARGETING

CREATING A NEW PRICE INDEX THAT ALIGNS WITH THE GDP COMPOSITION IS THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE MONETARY POLICY EFFECTIVE AS IT CAN CURB EXCESS DEMAND FORCES ACROSS THE ECONOMY

Should MPC framework be reviewed?

MADAN SABNAVIS

Chief economist, CARE Ratings
Views are personal



I SIT TIME to revisit the mandate of the MPC? The MPC had to target CPI inflation at 4% within a band of 2% on either side. Over the last two years or so, interpretation became hard for the market as different decisions and stances were taken on this number based on the distance from this norm. Further, inflationary expectations, too, kept the market guessing as policy outcomes would be different based on the same conjectures. To top it all off, the MPC also provided a stance which could be viewed as either neutral or one of calibrated tightening. The earlier lament of slow transmission exists even today. And, above all, singular targeting of inflation had, at times, led to growth being given a pass which was a view expressed by industry. It may hence be useful to relook at the principles.

Certain questions need to be posed. Firstly, is the CPI inflation the best inflation index to target or should we look at another indicator? Secondly, how often can the stance of policy change and can it be parameterised? Thirdly, should there be an inflation forecast every two months or should it be not more than twice a year? Fourthly, should growth enter the mandate of the MPC so that it is not just inflation that is being targeted?

Using the CPI for tackling inflation through monetary measures runs the challenge of targeting a number over which monetary policy has little control. The weight of food items in this index is 46%, which is not affected by interest rates as rarely does one borrow to buy food. Other components like clothing, rent, medical, entertainment, education, fuel, etc, also are not driven by credit. Therefore, in a situation of rising inflation, increasing the repo rate with very good transmission is unlikely to bring inflation down.

The anomaly is stark when one looks at the factors that drove core inflation up in recent months. Rent is actually reckoned on the basis of cost of government employees that went up due to the Pay Commission's recommendations. It is notional and is not reflective of inflation *per se*. More recently, the health and education indices increased which also cannot be tackled by monetary policy. These charges get revised periodically where

fees of professional institutes are increased as are medical service charges.

The WPI is always a better inflation target because it is influenced by cost of funds as around 64% of its weight resides in manufactured goods. It, however, excludes services which can add to inflation as has been the case with the rent, health and education indices. Alternatively, it may be useful to create a new price index that reflects all sectors and aligns with the GDP composition (see attached graphic). This is the only way to make monetary policy effective as it can curb excess demand forces across the economy. Presently, most of the inflationary impulses emanate from the supply side where costs increase.

The stance of the policy has come to be interpreted as the possible change of direction in the coming months. Ideally any 'stance' should remain for some time unless there is a shock of an immense nature. The idea of a stance is that it has to be forward-looking and a precursor of future action taken before the change is invoked. Presently, there has been a tendency to make a change in rates accompanied with a change in stance which then makes the concept of stance amorphous. The third part of the policy is the inflation forecast. Can the forecast

change every time the policy is announced? Ideally, such forecasts should be once or twice a year with the second one being a review along the way. The forecasts cannot be changing every two months, especially if there is a range being provided. Constant changes in forecasts cause volatility in the market that then tries guessing future rate actions as these forecasts have had a bearing on policy.

Curiously, ever since the monetary policy framework has been put in place, by a matter of coincidence, inflation has remained low at around 4% which was not the case earlier when CPI witnessed successive increases in the range of above 8% (2009-13). The policy, stance and forecasts have worked well so far as the inflation number has gravitated to 4% with the market guessing whether rate cuts happen when actual inflation comes down or expectations come down. It would be interesting to see how rates react when inflation soars, which is possible if there is a monsoon shock or oil prices start moving up.

The last consideration is whether inflation targeting should be the only variable that is looked at or should growth be as well. It has been seen that the critique of monetary policy has often had political language that borders

| | GDP share | CPI share | WPI share |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Agriculture, forestry, allied activities | 14.3 | 48.2 | 19.3 |
| Mining | 2.9 | | 13.3 |
| Manufacturing | 18.2 | 13.6 | 64.2 |
| Electricity | 2.2 | 6.8 | 3.1 |
| Construction | 8.2 | | |
| Trade, transport, restaurants, hotels | 19.1 | 8.5 | |
| Finance, real estate, professional services | 22.0 | 10.1 | |
| Public administration, defence, others | 13.1 | 12.8 (misc) | |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Cars will be first victims of tech cold war

Smaller US companies that can't afford the rigmarole of export compliance may give up on the Chinese market. China has reason to worry, too: deepening tensions will indicate a breakdown of the world's most consequential bilateral relationship

ANDREW BROWNE

Bloomberg

THESE ARE TESTING times for Detroit's big automakers as they puzzle over where to place their bets. Pickup trucks or driverless cars? Internal combustion engines or electric motors? Hardware or software? Now, an even larger question looms, just as a mobility revolution reshapes the industry: America or China?

Tensions over technology, if not an outright cold war, are threatening to become a permanent feature of the US-China relationship. In an extreme case, as White House hardliners press to limit advanced technology exports to China, some US companies operating on the mainland could be forced to retreat to their home market. Hank Paulson, the former US Treasury Secretary, recently warned of an economic "Iron Curtain" falling between the two countries.

US auto executives have as much reason as any to worry. Indeed, their dilemma illustrates how any serious US effort to block high-tech exports to contain China would be both delusional and self-destructive. While it would almost certainly fail in the long-run, it would cause a good deal of needless disruption along the way. Realistically, US automakers can't afford to detach from China. They have been borne along by the country's extraordinary growth for decades; booming sales there saved General Motors Co. from going belly-up in the 2008 financial crisis. And, while the pace of expansion has slowed lately, sales of new passenger cars in China are still far higher than those in the US, Japan and Germany combined.

No other country offers the same manufacturing scale. Without armies of low-paid Chinese workers, Apple would never have been able to make an affordable iPhone. The same pressures apply to

next-generation cars. The driverless vehicles of tomorrow will essentially be smartphones on wheels, devices for delivering entertainment, shopping and other internet services. Like the iPhone and most of the world's other electronic gadgets, they will be mostly made in China and rolled out globally. US restrictions on tech exports can slow, but not stop, this industrial march.

Indeed, China is well on its way to an all-electric future. In their planned economy, Chinese regulators simply command automakers to produce electric cars and offer sweet deals to consumers—subsidies and hard-to-get licence plates in megacities such as Beijing—to induce them to buy. By 2020, China is targeting annual sales of two million electric cars, 20 times the US number. Rideshare giant Didi Chuxing Inc. currently has 550 million riders, more than five times Uber Technologies Inc.'s worldwide total. What the US should really worry about is falling behind in this technology race. Although more and more urban millennials are opting for rideshares, America as a whole is addicted to owning cars—and will be for the foreseeable future. The gas-guzzling SUV remains a prime symbol of freedom.

China, meanwhile, is installing lightning-fast 5G networks at least a year ahead of their planned rollout in the US, giving it a jump on applications such as roadside sensors and radars that support autonomous driving. Increasingly, China will set industry standards. Much of the developing world will follow its lead. It is a telling fact that today, while all the top-selling internal combustion engine sedans in China are foreign, every popular electric model is local.

We're reaching a critical moment.

Last year, the US Commerce Department proposed export restrictions on a host of technologies, among them artificial intelligence tools such as neural networks, as well as positioning systems used in driverless cars. Officials are now debating how widely the ban will be enforced. Expansive or limited, the effect will likely be the same: China will source more know-how from Europe, Israel and Japan, and double-down on efforts to become self-sufficient in areas where it lags, such as advanced semiconductors.

Smaller US companies that can't afford the rigmarole of export compliance may give up on the Chinese market. Silicon Valley start-ups have already taken a hit as a result of new restrictions on inbound Chinese investment in sensitive technologies that took effect late last year. Howard Chao, the former Asia chairman of O'Melveny & Myers LLP, a law firm, says that in recent months, Chinese-backed venture capital deals have "fallen off a cliff".

China has reason to worry, too. At the very least, deepening tensions will indicate a catastrophic breakdown of the world's most consequential bilateral relationship. It is beyond time for China to address the root causes of US frustration, including closed markets and forced technology transfer. Removing caps on foreign ownership of auto joint ventures was a good first step. Next, China should throw open the doors to US tech giants, such as Google, who are leading the mobility charge but are now largely excluded from the mainland. Unlike the last one, this cold war will have no winners.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

around obsessions with inflation to the neglect of growth. If that is the case, should there be change in the legislative action that also includes growth as a variable to be targeted? It may be recalled that, in the past, monetary policy always spoke of growth and inflation and while there was no overt target for inflation, the general direction of movement of prices provided a clue on what the policy would be like.

The growth versus inflation dilemma has also been witnessed in the US where its president has been vocal in pointing a finger at the Federal Reserve. It is normally believed that interest rates are a panacea for growth. But this did not quite work out post the financial crisis where the Fed had to resort to unconventional measures to stimulate growth through quantitative easing programmes. If it is to enter the frame then, it would be necessary to state specific numbers that have to be targeted, which can be 7.5% or 8%. But then, balancing the two targets will be more complex.

Quite clearly, there is a need to revisit the framework. Firstly, the economic conditions have been quite congenial so far and have not tested stressful positions. Hence, if inflation starts going up due to a bad *toor* crop, and inches towards 6%, should there be a series of increases in rates? Further, if inflation moves towards 10%, then should the repo rate be closer to 8% or 9%? These questions would arise when the situation gets sticky. Secondly, the current battle against inflation is out of sync with the power of monetary policy. Higher rates cannot change prices of food, or medical treatment or education or rent. Therefore, a new index can be considered. Thirdly, continuous revisions in forecasts of inflation can create uncertainty in markets and hence should be limited. Lastly, some growth perspective should also be part of the monetary policy package if the government feels it is important.

The experiment, so far, has worked well under virtually no stress conditions. It may be useful to revisit the framework and make alterations if required to make it more inclusive. This would mean moving away from exclusively being monetarist to the neo-classical.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Low orbit, high aim

Instead of levying focus on the peripheries or the timing of the mission, it is important to appreciate the country's technological advancements and capabilities developed in the segment of space warfare. More important than the granular detail, seemingly and understandably confidential, is the fact that the low-earth orbit where the Indian A-SAT hit its target is essentially in a range where most earth-observation, navigation, weather/path-finder, spy and other military-use satellites operate. A strong political will in conjunction with a successful test on all parameters has allowed the sovereign to join the elite club of space superpowers on account of its capabilities to safeguard its space assets, target satellites in outer space and establish a modern and robust defence mechanism in the digital era. It is prudent to continually improve in the area of space research and invest in large-scale R&D initiatives
— Girish Lalwani, Delhi

Ashwin at the receiving end again

Spin doctor and Kings XI Punjab skipper, Ravichandran Ashwin, found himself at the wrong end of the stick yet again. After the infamous run-out episode in which he 'Mankaded' Buttler, Ashwin's misdemeanour of not keeping the mandatory four fielders in the 30-yard circle cost his team dear. KKR's Andre Russell was yoked by Mohammed Shami when the Jamaican batsman was on three but the lapse resulted in a no-ball. Russell, making full use of the reprieve, plundered a 17-ball 48 to seal the contest in his side's favour
— Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com



ILLUSTRATION: ROHINIT PHORE

EJAZ GHANI

The author is lead economist at the World Bank



CONFLICT & DEVELOPMENT

Estimating the costs of conflict

Armed forces are generally not effective in combating terrorism; regional cooperation initiatives work better. The challenge is to form regional partnership forums, with support of donors and national policymakers, and given the flexibility to work with local communities. Such regional platforms should find the right combination and mix of different approaches towards engaging local communities in countering conflict

CONFLICT HAS INCREASED globally during the last decade. It has affected nearly 2 billion people and resulted in a loss of more than 10% of the global economic activity. While the world has made rapid progress in reducing poverty, regions affected by conflict have been left behind.

Conflict is not just one-off events, but cycles of repeated violence. It comes in multiple forms. International ideological movements can merge with local grievances, and different forms of violence can get linked to each other. Local grievances can escalate into acute demands for change, when economic change falls behind the expectations of local community.

No country can afford to ignore areas where repeated cycles of conflict flourish. Unemployment, corruption and social exclusion increase the risks of vio-

lence. Governance that gives everyone a stake in national prosperity is the immune system that protects everybody from repeated cycles of conflict.

What is conflict?

Conflict could be external or internal to the country. Internal conflicts can be further classified into two different categories (see Ejaz Ghani and Lakshmi Iyer, Conflict and Development: Lessons from South Asia, World Bank; <https://goo.gl/N1zrzj>). The first category of internal conflict is a conflict against the state. Examples of this are separatist movements, and suicide bombings. Suicide bombings are an extreme manifestation of conflict, carried out by a relatively organised group of non-state actors, and their goal is the destabilisation of the state. These incidents are referred to as terrorism. The second category of internal conflict is

people-to-people conflict between different ethnic, religious and social groups. This could include religious riots, homicides, domestic violence, common violence, and other crimes. Ethnic and religious violence stand out in people-to-people conflict.

Internal conflict has replaced external conflict. While people-to-people internal conflict has declined, internal conflict against the state has increased. The adverse economic and social impact of internal conflict against the state is much greater compared to people-to-people conflict.

Conflict and poverty

Internal conflicts are related to economic dynamics. Youth unemployment is consistently cited in citizen perception surveys as a motive for joining both rebel movements and urban gangs. Feeling more secure and powerful is also cited as an important motivator. Political exclusion and inequality affecting different ethnic groups have also been associated with higher risks of civil war.

Global evidence supports a strong inverse relationship between conflict and per-capita income level. Why would conflict coexist with poverty? It is easier for terrorists and rebels to recruit people to their cause in poorer areas because their opportunity cost is low. This opportunity cost could be low for ethnically-based or separatist conflict, because recruitment can be made on the basis of ethnicity or regional affiliation. Poorer regions also have poorer state capacity, and hence the government is not able to deal with the rebels effectively. Geographic conditions, such as the presence of forest cover, can also be associated with the incidence of conflict. States in India that have a higher forest cover have experienced higher conflict intensity. This is consistent with numerous accounts of Naxalites using forest cover to hide effectively from law enforcement forces. Conflict can also increase due to adverse economic shocks, such as famines and rural distress.

In addition, there is a strong spatial dimension to conflict. It is concentrated in areas that have higher poverty rates, weak institutions and are poorly integrated. The lagging regions have experienced more than three times the number of terrorist incidents per capita, compared with the leading regions, and almost twice as many deaths per capita in such incidents. The combination of poverty and conflict can slow down the pace of poverty reduction and achieve-

ment of multilateral development goals.

What can be done?

Reducing conflict through collaboration has been at the heart of development efforts from the ancient times, with the formation of village communities to improve collaboration. In modern times, policymakers have tried various approaches to reduce conflict. The most common approach is to use police forces to establish law and order in the affected areas. In areas where police forces are insufficient, the armed forces are called in to deal with the insurgency. In most cases, this has not been a successful strategy. Even when successful in defeating the insurgents, the human costs associated with military operations are very high.

A different approach to dealing with conflict is to conduct negotiations and sign peace agreements with the insurgents. To be effective, this approach needs two requirements: the government must conduct coordinated negotiations, and the insurgent group must be genuinely interested in joining the political mainstream. This approach has been tried in India. For instance, the Indian government has signed peace deals with several separatist groups in the north-eastern states. Similarly, negotiations with some Tamil groups in Sri Lanka have resulted in their integration into mainstream politics. Complementary to the security-based solution is an economic solution, whereby the government expands social and welfare programmes, and reduces poverty in the conflict-affected areas to undercut the support for the insurgency.

Policy choices are critical for reducing repeated conflicts. Economic policies should be geared not just to maximise growth, which could take time, but on proactively engaging the local communities, and addressing the distributional or political factors that led to the conflict. Policy choices must be structured to reduce both real and perceived inequities, and focus should be on short-term economic and social goals first, and addressing medium and longer-term efficiency considerations later. This approach calls for humanitarian and community-based treatment for conflict-affected people, closure of refugee camps, and reintegration of refugees within the society.

Policy choices are critical for reducing repeated conflicts. Economic policies should be geared not just to maximise growth, but on engaging local communities, and addressing factors that led to the conflict

Increased cross-border regional cooperation between countries should also be an integral part of any strategy to reduce conflict. Many internal conflicts in South Asia have cross-border dimensions. The Taliban in Afghanistan has significant support in Pakistan's border areas. The Maoists in Nepal formed close links with the Maoist movements in India. Many separatist groups in India's north-eastern states had training camps and cells in neighbouring countries. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and other Tamil separatist groups in Sri Lanka have traditionally enjoyed support from the Tamil diaspora. In such a context, a regional cross-border cooperation is an essential part of any counterinsurgency strategy. Regional cross-border platform remains an under-utilised strategy in combating terrorism.

A key lesson on reducing conflict is that armed forces are generally not effective in combating terrorism. Regional cooperation initiatives are much more effective in countering terrorism. The challenge is to form Regional Partnership Forums, with support of donors and national policymakers, and given the flexibility to work with the local communities. Such regional platforms should find the right combination and mix of different approaches towards engaging local communities in countering conflict, as well as implementing economic policies adapted for post-conflict development, and reducing poverty.

The sky's no limit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes his re-election campaign into outer space; orders the test of an anti-satellite missile

AT NOON ON MARCH 27, Narendra Modi, India's Prime Minister, appeared on television to deliver a triumphal message to the nation. An Indian missile had hurtled 300km into space and blown up a satellite, putting India in the small club of countries that had developed and tested anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons. "India stands tall as a space power!" he exulted.

Mr Modi's address was unusual. Voting in a seven-stage national election begins on April 11. Prime ministerial broadcasts during election season—when a "model code of conduct" applies, barring the ruling party from abusing its position—have occurred only twice before: after the assassination of the Prime Minister in 1984 and of the leader of the Opposition in 1991. Mamata Banerjee, the leader of a regional opposition party, demanded that the Election Commission investigate Mr Modi's speech for breaching its code.

An ASAT test would hardly qualify as a national-security emergency. Indeed, India might have carried it out at any time in the past eight years. In 2012, VK Saraswat, then the head of the Defence Research and Development Organisation, the government agency that develops new military gear, noted that the "building blocks" of an ASAT capability were in place and required only electronic fine-tuning. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Mr Modi's space spectacular was timed for the polls. It comes a month after India sent warplanes to bomb Pakistan for the first time since 1971—another move seen by many as grandstanding for the voters.

Electioneering aside, the test had two aims. One was to lay down a marker at a time of growing military competition in space. China, India's regional rival, operates around 30 satellites, many of which would be used by its armed forces in any conflict. It has also developed an array of ASAT weapons, including missiles and lasers, of its own.

India is keen to show it can hit back. But in flaunting its ability to shoot small, fast-moving objects at enormous heights, India was also signalling its interest in swatting other, harder-to-hit things—Pakistani nuclear missiles, say—out of the sky.

Yet that muscle-flexing may come at some diplomatic cost. It is the first avowed ASAT test since China blew up one of its own satellites in 2007, provoking international condemnation. The debris from that explosion generated a quarter of all catalogued objects in low-earth orbit a few years later, putting other countries' satellites at risk. In 2012, Mr Saraswat had promised that India would not follow suit for just that reason.

Indian officials point out that this week's test took place far lower in orbit, so debris is more likely to fall towards Earth and burn up harmlessly. Brian Weeden of the Secure World Foundation, an NGO, agrees. But he warns that some pieces may be thrown into higher orbit, as occurred after America destroyed a wayward satellite at about the same altitude in 2008. Mr Modi will at least be glad that, unlike after his air strikes against Pakistan, no one is questioning whether he hit the target.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that PM Modi's space spectacular was timed for the polls. It comes a month after India sent warplanes to bomb Pakistan—a move seen by many as grandstanding for the voters

THE ECONOMIST



DELAYED BREXIT

ALMOST THREE YEARS AGO, the UK became the first member nation to vote to leave the EU. Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon—a formal process to leave the EU—was invoked in 2017, giving the UK two years to agree on a withdrawal agreement with the EU. Yet the original departure date of March 29, 2019, has been delayed and the government is searching for a way ahead. The withdrawal deal, negotiated by Prime Minister Theresa May and her government, was rejected twice by the UK Parliament, in January and March 2019, by a large majority. Lately, there have been a lot of voices in the UK asking for a new referendum or stopping Brexit. There seems to be a shift in sentiments from exit to wanting to remain in the EU.

There are several likely outcomes of Brexit and no possibility can be ruled out yet. However, the most likely scenario could be the UK seeking a longer extension on the Brexit deadline from the EU, which, if granted, would mean a temporary reprieve but continued medium-term uncertainty.

The EU comprises of 28 countries that share a common customs union and is a single market. The withdrawal deal is an agreement on how to implement Britain's exit from the EU. The deal that PM May agreed with EU leaders envisaged a gradual process that would have minimised disruption of economic ties, a further two-year timeline to hammer out a trade agreement between the UK and the EU, and a

The UK still on a cliff's edge?

The most likely scenario could be the UK seeking a longer extension on the Brexit deadline from the EU

RUTUJA MORANKAR

The author is a corporate economist based in Mumbai



clause to avoid creating a hard border between Northern Ireland (part of the UK) and Ireland (part of the EU). While the Brexit withdrawal deal was defeated twice by the UK Parliament, it also voted against leaving the EU without a deal in place.

This week, the UK Parliament conducted indicative votes on alternative Brexit options (going against the government's wishes). None of the options, however, got a majority. The stalemate, thus, continues. So, what was pinching the UK to leave the EU?

Rising influx of immigrants: Foreign-born residents in the UK have been on the rise and increased to 15% of the total UK population, from 9% in 2004.

High membership fee: While the figure is not very significant, the UK is one of

the highest contributors to the EU budget. In 2017, the UK paid £13 billion to the EU, while the EU spent £4 billion for the UK.

EU's common laws: Common laws related to finance and banking, trade and tariffs, environment and labour for all economies within the EU made the UK feel stifled.

There are some likely scenarios in decreasing order of likelihood:

Scenario 1: Longer extension for Brexit: The EU has been largely supportive of the UK's decision to leave the EU amicably and has been vocal about wanting an orderly Brexit. With the consent of all the EU leaders, a longer extension on Brexit is the most probable outcome.

Scenario 2: Another referendum: The UK could conduct another referendum following mass protests by thousands of people as well as online petitions to stop Brexit; the petition has crossed 5 million signatories.

Scenario 3: Hard Brexit: If the UK Parliament does not support the deal or agrees on other alternatives with the EU by April 12, the UK will have to leave the EU



without deal. This is seen as potentially damaging to both the economies.

Scenario 4: Stay in the EU: The UK can unilaterally revoke Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon and continue to stay in the EU. This can be done without the consent of the other 27 member states.

Scenario 5: Orderly Brexit: If the third vote on the Brexit deal is accepted, the UK would leave the EU in an orderly manner on May 22. Post this, there will be a transition period of two years to work out a trade deal with the EU. In this period, free movement of goods and people will continue.

The implications of Brexit

Any orderly Brexit scenario will, in all likelihood, be followed by a free trade agreement between the UK and the EU,

though the UK will choose to have certain economic legislations that are different from the EU and will put some limits on migration from Europe. The UK will also negotiate new trade agreements with the rest of the world. In the case of a hard Brexit, there would be sudden disruptions in trade flows, too.

On global economy: The UK has a fairly small share in the world GDP (2.3%). However, London is the largest centre of finance in Europe. If Brexit happens, many large corporations could shift their base to other European countries such as Germany. The markets have had limited reaction to the Brexit events, so far. Short-term negative impact on global financial markets is possible in case of a hard Brexit.

On Europe: The UK and the EU are highly dependent on each other for trade. Seven of the top-10 export markets for Britain are EU countries. In a no-deal scenario, Ireland will be significantly impacted due to a high exposure to trade with the UK, followed by Belgium and the Netherlands. The EU saw the maximum growth downgrade in the IMF's recent growth estimates for 2019 due to recession in Italy and growth slowdown in Germany.

Brexit could give rise to more euro scepticism. Far-right parties in economies like Sweden and Italy have started talking about going for similar exits. There is already a high economic disparity amongst member countries, which can lead to more friction.



WE HAVE TO GET OUR DEMOCRACY BACK. WE CANNOT LEAVE IT TO FACEBOOK, SNAPCHAT OR ANYONE ELSE. — MARGRETHE VESTAGER

The Indian EXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Our silence on poverty

The silver lining is that we are debating cash transfers. But so skewed is the power balance that we can't even talk about raising taxes



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

PANJIM SPECTACLE

The numbers game doesn't stop in Goa. Political parties must share the blame

THE NUMBERS GAME in Goa turned farcical yet again with two MLAs of the Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) merging their outfit with the ruling BJP and the new chief minister, Pramod Sawant, dropping MGP leader, Sudin Dhavalikar, from his Cabinet, a mere five days after he was appointed deputy CM. With the MGP "merger", the BJP now has 14 MLAs in the 40-member assembly. But given the way things have been going, this may be no guarantee for political stability in the state. The results of the upcoming byelections could inject more uncertainty in the government and trigger even more hard bargaining among parties and MLAs.

Goa's polity has not settled down since the 2017 assembly elections threw up a hung assembly. The BJP was voted out but the Congress fell short of a majority by four seats. The MGP and Goa Forward Party, which fought both the BJP and the Congress, ended up with three MLAs each and, along with independents, turned king-makers as the two national parties bid for allies. A favourably inclined governor meant that the BJP got to form a coalition government with Manohar Parrikar arriving from the Centre to run it. Parrikar's persona lent the coalition a sheen of acceptability, but the manner in which it was formed remained controversial. Even though seriously unwell, Parrikar stayed in office, perhaps to keep ambitious allies in check. Leaders of the MGP and GFP demanded the CM's post after Parrikar's death, and on Wednesday, Dhavalikar described his ouster from the Cabinet and loss of MLAs as a "midnight dacoity by chowkidars" and "a national party wiping out a regional party". But the fact is, the leadership of the MGP, once the predominant party in Goa, was complicit in playing fast and loose with the rules of the game.

Political instability has been a feature of Goa: just two chief ministers have managed to complete a full term in over 50 years. Politicians frequently crossing sides and constantly changing chief ministers have pointed fingers at the size of the state. This is not an entirely convincing argument. Other small states like Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Puduchery or Delhi have had relatively stable governments. Nor can Goa's chronic instability be blamed on regional outfits, which were once influential in the state. The onus is on the two national parties, the Congress and the BJP, which now dominate the state's political space, to raise the bar, to ensure that fringe players do not get to hijack government formation or governance.

CONTAINING HATE

After Christchurch, Facebook bans euphemisms for white supremacy. But the devil remains in the details

THE TERM "WHITE nationalism" is often a euphemism for white supremacist politics that dates back to the civil rights movement, when even white Americans turned in repugnance against violently extremist white people. And yet, even after 2017, when a racist bigot killed a woman at a rally against white supremacists in Charlottesville, Facebook's training manuals drew a vague line between supremacism and its gentrified fictions. White is a hue, not a national identifier, and the idea of a white nation is illogical, but Facebook identified white nationalism with permissible ethnic pride. Following the mosque killings in New Zealand, however, Facebook has erased the distinction and will scrub its platforms of related hate speech next week.

But this can only be regarded as a letter of intent, because the social media giant has not yet issued fresh guidelines for screening content. That will be a difficult project, since social media are in a double bind. They have scarcely been committed foes of bigotry, or India would not have seen lynchings emboldened by WhatsApp or threats of physical harm on Twitter that are not taken down. At the same time, when platforms do take down content, they can be accused of censorship by interest groups. Complete transparency in the framing of guidelines and their enforcement would reduce this problem. Platforms need to take users on board, and not only experts on hate speech, such as the ones Facebook is currently consulting.

Besides, race can only be one facet of a general policy on hate, because context matters. In Europe, immigrants are perceived to be the problem. But the bigoted in Britain are worried about "Pakis", a catchall term for South Asians which is agnostic to religion. In France, the concern is about clothing identified as Muslim. In the US, colour is the principal issue, even after half a century of state-mandated integration. And there are complications, as in New Zealand, where the Christchurch killings were inspired by US white supremacist traditions, but Muslim immigrants from Asia were targeted. Such improbable situations cannot be anticipated by a central censor based in Palo Alto. Technology leaders like Facebook could respond with technical solutions, using analytics and artificial intelligence to narrow the field. But strategies which do not involve the public, and do not respond immediately to local complaints, cannot contain the menace of hate speech online.

THE MUELLER ENDING

It carries an important lesson for Donald Trump's critics

ON MARCH 24, about the same time that US president Donald Trump wined up his weekend at the Mar-a-Lago resort, Florida, Attorney General William Barr submitted a four-page letter to the US Congress: A summary of the findings of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, and obstruction of justice by Trump or his administration in the matter. This followed months of official probe and media scrutiny of the Trump presidency. Those four pages, and their political reception, have given the Democrats a reason to introspect.

As Barr informed Congress, the special counsel did not establish any criminal collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia. It is clear that Trump's opposition, at least in this matter, may have been counting more on his lack of likeability than evidence, to make its case. Ever since he started running for office, Trump has invited a barrage of criticism for reasons ranging from his exceptionally problematic views on women to his harsh immigration policies and disdain for immigrants. However, in their earnest quest for nailing down POTUS, Trump's critics may have been careless. The attempt to punish individuals in positions of authority who are abusing their power is always welcome. But merely adding to a stream of allegations — some made very publicly, often amplified by the media — may not be the smartest plan of action. It certainly can't be the only plan. The Democrats must recognise that the Mueller anti-climax will inevitably be played up as a political victory for Trump now.

For the Democrats in the US, and for political adversaries of Trump-like strongmen, this episode is a lesson. Sometimes it helps to buckle down and doggedly pursue leads. Once allegations are substantiated, there will be time enough for strong, public take-downs. It doesn't work the other way around.

ANY PROPOSAL TO directly alleviate poverty in India brings out the inner lawyer in many of us. There are two characteristic tactics. One is to attack such measures by rhetorical re-description. Words like "dole" and "dependence" are bandied about as if money in the hands of the poor will somehow corrupt their moral and productive fibre. There is a second set of tactics that is more appropriate: Ask questions about practical considerations. How do we ensure such schemes are affordable? How do we make them compatible with macro-economic stability? How do we ensure they reach the intended beneficiaries? But often such well-meaning questions are wielded as weapons to avoid the core issue, pretexts to avoid questions of justice. The Congress party's Minimum Guarantee proposal has many practical challenges. But what it reveals about us is more interesting.

Let us start with some truisms. There is no excuse, practical or moral, that should stand in the way of India delivering on one basic element of a decent social contract. What is the minimum income and set of basic public goods India should be able to unconditionally provide all of its citizens at its level of development? Income and public goods should not just be substitutes; they are, in fact, complementary. The net worth of income depends, in large part, on the quality of public goods available in a society. But just as the public good component is important, so is the income component.

Guaranteeing a minimum sense of economic agency is not a dole. Politically, it is the very basis of the legitimacy of any society. Socially, it is an important element of a story about the conditions of self-respect. The attraction of at least some degree of cash transfers is that it recognises one central aspect of empowerment: The ability to act as an agent who can make at least some choices. This sense of agency is fundamental to human dignity.

It is, indeed, correct that society will be well served if we produced better paying and fulfilling jobs for everyone. That should be an overarching goal. But we often simply use that as an excuse for sacrificing the well-being of the poor against the promise of an in-

definite future that may or may not arrive. It is true that there is a tinge of pessimism about the future in the very need for income transfers. But that is a healthy pessimism for it directs our attention to the fact that possible futures cannot be an alibi for not attending to suffering and questions of the dignity in the present. The poor should live in an imaginary future, while the privileged can enjoy the plenitude of the present.

So if some minimum income guarantee is central to a half-decent social contract, what will it take to get there? And here, we come to another paradox. The thing that is hard to state politically is the idea that India needs to raise taxes. Tax rates need to be sensible.

There is no getting around that fundamental fact. But it tells you something about the deep asymmetry of power in our society that this truism cannot even be articulated. Apparently, a marginal infusion of cash in the hands of the poor will destroy them. But the slightest tinkering with taxes in contexts where it is hard to even imagine what the marginal value of income is, will apparently cause economic catastrophe. The bad faith of our discussions on poverty is really reflected most strongly in the bad faith of discussions we have over taxation. The burden of the social contract, as always, has to fall on the poor.

These truisms need to be remembered as we debate the need for cash transfers. It is perhaps a silver lining that the debate has at least moved in that direction. This is true across all parties. In fact, on the ground experiments in states like Odisha offer instructive lessons in how to implement these schemes; in particular, how to identify beneficiaries.

The Congress's minimum guarantee scheme is a contribution to the debate. While its normative motivations are laudable, it has somewhat unnecessarily botched up the political framing. For starters, the fact that so many of its spokespersons were confused about whether it is a top-off scheme (a terrible idea) or a lump sum is terrible optics. The party has clarified this issue. But the rhetorical edge of the announcement got muted. Second, the Congress could have capitalised on its own innovation: MGNREGA.

The MGNREGA's greatest virtue was tak-

ing the targeting problem seriously. The general presumption that welfare schemes must be universal or self-targeting or should use a self-evident criteria for targeting is a good one. Not having to deal with targeting issues is one of the attractions of Universal Basic Income. This scheme has opened up the Pandora's box of targeting once again, without inspiring confidence.

Politics is about projecting credibility, not about a future indefinite wonkiness, that there will be committee to look into targeting and so on. It is true that the Modi government's promises are often given a free pass, but that does not do away with the need for projecting credibility. Given that all parties are kind of converging on cash transfers, surely the distinguishing feature must rest on a new story about effectiveness. Claims about credibility and effectiveness are also important because they are a key element in mobilising support for taxation. So, building on stories of state credibility is important for signalling the good faith of a proposal. Third, the proposal raises a very interesting question. The Congress' promise is not very radical. But if you promise something to 20 per cent of the voters, how do the rest react, especially those who just come above the threshold and miss out on these payments? Is the political communication around such a scheme thought through?

The Indian development model is up for deep and radical political contestation. There are lots of schemes and proposals, but the intellectual challenge is to think of the overall framework within which these schemes make sense. A good manifesto should be judged not just by individual schemes, but the intellectual and empirical coherence of the different interlocking parts.

What is the constituent relationship between redistribution, macro economic stability, employment and productivity? How do we think of this relationship? While it is a good sign that Indian politics responds to the claims of the poor, we are still far away from having confidence in the credibility of the response.

The writer is vice-chancellor, Ashoka University. Views are personal

THEIR RIGHT TO THE CITY

Recent Delhi High Court verdict enshrines the rights of slum-dwellers



EKLAVYA VASUDEV

ON MARCH 18, the Delhi High Court held that slum dwellers are not secondary citizens but citizens with equal rights. Authorities can evict slum dwellers only when their occupation of the land is illegal. Any unannounced eviction without a resettlement and rehabilitation plan is also not permitted. The judgment by a division bench comprising of Justices S Muralidhar and Vibhu Bakru stated that, when approached by persons complaining of forced eviction, courts would now be required to view them not as "encroachers" but as citizens whose rights to rehabilitation have to be determined in terms of law.

Slum dwellers have often been characterised as encroachers by government agencies, mainstream media, and even courts. In popular understanding too, urban slums and their residents have been seen as the antithesis to what is planned and what is legal — a blot on a city's beauty. Against this popular view, a number of scholars and activists have argued that slum dwellers are not encroachers but citizens with equal rights who should, at the very least, have access to the same rights guaranteed to the rest of us. Political support for the rights of slum dwellers to receive adequate notice before eviction has been infrequent as it has been for their adequate rehabilitation.

The occasional political claim, despite having a sociological basis, has not had sound legal grounding in spite of some well-intentioned decisions by the higher judiciary

where the Court has not gone far enough to protect substantive rights of slum dwellers. For instance, in *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation*, the Supreme Court held that the right to life includes the right to livelihood but did not indicate specific reliefs. In *Sudama Singh v. Gov. of Delhi*, the Delhi High Court laid down safeguards and procedures to be followed by government agencies before proceeding to remove *jhuggis*/slums, but confusion remained as to whether central agencies would be bound to follow the same procedures or not.

However, the judgment in this case, achieves two things. First, it mandates equal rights — and access to the principles of natural justice — for slum dwellers who face illegal eviction. The verdict identifies them as citizens — not encroachers — whose rights (to rehabilitation or to prior notice) have to be determined as per the law of the land. Second, it grounds these claims not just in reason but in sound legal doctrine. The court discusses international law that India is bound by and backs it up with domestic legislation on the subject. The judgment also discusses principles of natural justice and constitutional provisions that make it obligatory for government agencies to ensure that there are no arbitrary and illegal evictions. And in case slum dwellers are found to be occupying land not owned by them, any forced unannounced eviction of slum dwellers is not permitted.

About a third of Delhi's population lives in

slums. This vast community now has been assured access to courts in case of arbitrary evictions. They are also entitled to be identified as citizens who have an equal right to the city. The Court articulated their right to housing as a "bundle of rights not limited to a bare shelter over one's head. It includes the right to livelihood, right to health, right to education and right to food, including the right to clean drinking water, sewerage and transport facilities."

Government agencies and courts can no longer give precedence to one kind of public interest (that of middle and upper classes) over another kind of public interest (that of the slum residents). For the remaining residents of Delhi, as the Court points out, it is important to recognise that the Constitution does not discriminate between citizens — and slum dwellers are not to be treated as "secondary citizens". The Constitution envisages cities as a "commons good" to which everyone has a right. This view acknowledges that those living in slums contribute to a city's social and economic life. As the judgment notes, in the context of Delhi, such people would include sanitation workers, garbage collectors, domestic help and others who provide a wide range of indispensable services to healthy urban life. Prioritising the housing needs of this section of the public is not only a moral imperative but now also a legal one.

The writer is a lawyer and senior associate-lawyer, Indian Institute for Human Settlements

MARCH 29, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY
THE DEFENCE MINISTRY is negotiating the import of the latest technology to build modern battle tanks and submarines in the country. The modernisation plan for the defence forces was announced by the Deputy Prime Minister (Defence) Jagjivan Ram in the Lok Sabha. These plans, he said, had been drawn up taking into account arms supplies to India's neighbours — Pakistan and China — and developments in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iran, which had "an intimate bearing on India's security". For the present, the defence minister seems to have ruled out any substantial increase in the numerical strength of the forces, saying "our effort is to increase

the firepower of the forces".
JP UNCHANGED
THE GENERAL CONDITION OF Jayaprakash Narayan continued to remain unchanged. This was reiterated in all health bulletins issued by the Jaslok Hospital authorities. He is still being fed through a tube in the stomach.

OUST RAJ NARAIN PUSH
RAJ NARAIN'S DETRACTORS in the Janata Parliamentary Party are collecting signatures on a memorandum which calls for the expulsion of the former health minister from the JPP for his alleged "anti-party activities". More than 150 Janata MPs have signed the

memorandum which recounts some of his actions in the internal power struggle in UP. Not all the signatories belong to the former Jana Sangh.

OIL PRICE HIKE
INDIA WILL BE hit hard by the 9 per cent rise in crude prices announced by the 13-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries. The decision will not only add substantially to the import bill in foreign exchange, but will affect the public sector chain of oil refineries. The price effective will be up by 14.5 per cent to 14.5 dollars per barrel over the level of 12.70 dollars per barrel in December 1978.





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TELLING NUMBERS

Target 33%, women in state police forces add up to 7%

WOMEN IN STATE POLICE

TOP 5

| | |
|-------------|--------|
| Tamil Nadu | 15.97% |
| Himachal | 12.25% |
| Maharashtra | 11.62% |
| Goa | 10.80% |
| Haryana | 9.12% |

BOTTOM 5

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| Telangana | 2.47% |
| J&K | 3.05% |
| UP | 3.81% |
| Andhra | 4.17% |
| Meghalaya | 4.34% |

Source: Bureau of Police Research and Development

WOMEN COMPRISE only 7.28% of India's police force, according to government data flagged by a report unveiled Thursday. The Model Policy on Women in Police in India, prepared by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), lays down a framework to guide government efforts at providing agency and power for women in India police.

The Home Ministry said in Parliament last year that in 2009, 2013 and 2014, it had issued advisories to all state governments to increase representation of women in police to 33%. For the Union Territories, the Cabinet had in 2015 approved 33% reservation for women in non-gazetted posts from constable to sub-inspector, the ministry said.

The CHRI report says that apart from the UTs, Bihar has adopted 38% reservation while nine states have adopted 33% (Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana). Ten states have set smaller targets while nine have not set a target at all. Targets remain very much on paper, the CHRI report says, citing data from the Bureau of Police Research and Development. These data show the total strength of

RESERVATION TARGETS

| Women quota | States |
|-------------|--------|
| 38% | 1 |
| 33% | 9 |
| 30% | 5 |
| <30% | 5 |
| No target | 9 |

Source: CHRI

women police at 1,40,814, as of January 1, 2017. Among the states, Tamil Nadu (15.97%) has the highest representation of women police while Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Goa are the only others with over 10%. Among the Union Territories, Chandigarh police have 18% women while Delhi police have 8.64%.

NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, who launched the report, cited more figures. "Less than 1% of policewomen in India occupy senior ranks. Over 90% of them remain constables — the lowest possible rank — which is the position they enter the force and eventually retire from," CHRI quoted Kant as saying. CHRI International Director Sanjoy Hazarika called for empowerment for women in "what has fundamentally been a male bastion".

TIP FOR READING LIST

THE MAKING OF A MAN-EATER

BETWEEN 1900 and 1907, a man-eating tigress killed an estimated 436 people in Nepal and northern India. By the time she was shot down by legendary hunter Jim Corbett, the Man-eater of Champawat had become the single deadliest animal in recorded history, and remains so. While Corbett details the hunt in his 1944 compilation *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, a new book explores the circumstances that created such a prolific killer. US-born author Dane Huckelbridge, who retraced Corbett's footsteps on the ground, places the tigress's history in the context of colonial politics in *No Beast So Fierce: The Terrifying True Story of the Champawat Tiger, the Deadliest Animal in History*.

The tigress is believed to have been shot in the mouth by a poacher, leading to the loss of two canine teeth. This coincided with British colonisation causing destruction of prime tiger territory to

make way for people and agriculture. Because of the loss of habitat, combined with her injuries, the Champawat tigress turned to easier prey — humans. "What becomes clear upon closer historical examination is that the Champawat was not an incident of nature gone awry, it was in fact a man-made disaster," Huckelbridge writes.

Corbett was then little known, a railroad employee who had grown up hunting game in Kumaon. The British enlisted his help, setting him on the path to his evolution as a legendary hunter, and then to a conservationist dedicated to saving the tiger and its habitat. In its review, *Science News* magazine says: "Corbett's hunt is given sufficient room in the tale to satisfy readers who want details of the bloody kill. But it is somewhat anticlimactic, a sad end for a sad creature that had to be killed not because it was evil but because it was hungry."

PVAIDYANATHAN IYER
NEW DELHI, MARCH 28

What are the signs that suggest that the Indian economy is slowing down?

The economy is indeed slowing down. Many economic indicators point to that. In fact, some analysts started picking up the first signals of a powering down six to eight months back. Anecdotal evidence collected by analysts then is showing up in micro and macro numbers now. For instance, after posting double-digit growth rates of about 14 per cent in passenger vehicle sales during April-June 2018, Maruti Suzuki, the largest carmaker, witnessed declining sales for most months except October 2018 and January 2019, when it posted less than 2 per cent growth. Tractor sales for Mahindra, which has a 40 per cent plus market share, declined in December 2018, were flat in January this year and dropped in February too. Two-wheeler sales started crawling since December. In February, the two biggest two-wheeler producers, Hero MotoCorp and Honda Motorcycle, which account for three-fourths of industry volumes, reported lower sales. Earlier this month, Maruti Suzuki cut car production for March by over 25 per cent. Maruti's announcement sounded the alarm bell.

What is worrying economists and analysts now is signs of a consumption slowdown spreading to non-discretionary items such as food items. Thus far, it was feared to have impacted only discretionary expenditure — in products such as cars and consumer durables. At the end of the day, India continues to be a consumption-led economy. Consumption expenditure contributes almost 56 per cent of the country's GDP.

Macro indicators too aren't presenting any encouraging signs either. First, eight core segments — steel, cement, fertilisers, coal, electricity, crude oil, natural gas and refinery products, which together make up about 40 per cent of industrial production — grew at 1.8 per cent in January this year, compared with 2.8 per cent in the previous month. The growth in industrial output itself dropped to 1.7 per cent in January 2019 against a growth of 2.6 per cent in December 2018. In the corresponding month i.e. January 2018, it had grown 7.5 per cent.

Zooming out further, the GDP growth rate in the first three quarters (April-June 2018, July-September 2018 and October-December 2018) of the current financial year ending March 2019, the Central Statistics Office estimates, was 8 per cent, 7 per cent and 6.6 per cent, respectively. This clearly shows a trend of sequential slowing down and these numbers corroborate the signals

that have been visible on the ground.

Why is it slowing down? Both are complex questions. For instance, the demand for passenger vehicles slowed down during the second half (beginning September 2018) of this financial year because of many reasons — high interest rates, higher fuel prices and lack of credit. Many in the industry say consumers have only postponed the decision to purchase vehicles, suggesting that there is no permanent destruction of this demand.

At a very broad level, demonetisation — a radical policy decision — and introduction of Goods and Services Tax — a structural reform — naturally had an adverse impact on the economy. India has largely been a cash economy, and informal sectors were dealt a harsh blow. Cash was squeezed out of the system, and many small businesses continue to find it difficult to cope with the GST regime. The currency in circulation post demonetisation dropped by about one percentage point, but gross bank credit continued to be in single digits until about March 2018. This was probably one of its objectives. But over the last two years, bank credit slowed down dramatically because banks had to make higher provisions for bad loans. With six public sector banks under the central bank's prompt corrective action frame-

work, and some others voluntarily having pressed the pause button on lending, retail and businesses found it quite difficult to access credit. Non-banking finance companies compensated for this till the middle of 2018, when a default by IL&FS plunged the NBFC segment into a liquidity crisis. All this while, interest rates continued to remain high. Poor bank credit, liquidity crisis and high interest rates all created a huge drag on the economy. It has been like running a hurdle race set along a steep path with 50 kg on your back, says the CEO of a large mutual fund. Bank credit numbers now suggest that things are looking up, but this is largely because of a low statistical base.

How worried should we be about the slowdown? A slowing economy always hurts. Put simply, it affects income of people, and does not create jobs. In January this year, the government revised the growth forecast for 2017-18 to 7.2 per cent from the earlier estimate of 6.7 per cent. It also revised the actual growth rate in 2016-17 (the year of demonetisation) to 8.2 per cent from 7.1 per cent estimated earlier. These sharp revisions were heavily contested by economists. In 2014-15 and 2015-16, the first two years of the current government, the economy grew at 7.1 per cent and 8.2 per cent, respectively.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Is economy slowing down?

Economists are looking at signals such as drop in vehicle sales and production cut, drop in consumption of food items, slower growth in core industry segments. A look at the possible reasons, and the concerns



Traffic in Chandigarh. Various vehicle manufacturers have reported a drop in respective sales in recent months. Archive

work, and some others voluntarily having pressed the pause button on lending, retail and businesses found it quite difficult to access credit. Non-banking finance companies compensated for this till the middle of 2018, when a default by IL&FS plunged the NBFC segment into a liquidity crisis. All this while, interest rates continued to remain high. Poor bank credit, liquidity crisis and high interest rates all created a huge drag on the economy. It has been like running a hurdle race set along a steep path with 50 kg on your back, says the CEO of a large mutual fund. Bank credit numbers now suggest that things are looking up, but this is largely because of a low statistical base.

THIS WORD MEANS: TURING AWARD

and artificial intelligence. Turing never received full recognition for his efforts because he was a homosexual, which was then a crime in the UK. Prosecuted in 1952, he committed suicide in 1954. His work and life are the theme of the film *The Imitation Game* (2014), in which Benedict Cumberbatch plays Turing.

The award The award is named after British mathematician and computer scientist Alan Mathison Turing (1912-54), whose work in codebreaking is credited with having played a decisive role in World War II. He led a British team that worked out a way to decrypt intercepted messages, which had been encrypted on Enigma machines developed by the Germans. Apart from the award, the Turing machine, used in computing, is named after the pioneer who is considered the father of theoretical computer science

Top prize in computing, named after codebreaker



Alan Turing at age 16

ON WEDNESDAY, three pioneers in artificial intelligence — a senior Google executive, Facebook's chief AI scientist, and an academic — were announced as the winners for this year's A M Turing Award (*The Indian Express*, March 28). It is often described as the "Nobel Prize for computing".

Why Turing

The award is named after British mathematician and computer scientist Alan Mathison Turing (1912-54), whose work in codebreaking is credited with having played a decisive role in World War II. He led a British team that worked out a way to decrypt intercepted messages, which had been encrypted on Enigma machines developed by the Germans. Apart from the award, the Turing machine, used in computing, is named after the pioneer who is considered the father of theoretical computer science

and artificial intelligence. Turing never received full recognition for his efforts because he was a homosexual, which was then a crime in the UK. Prosecuted in 1952, he committed suicide in 1954. His work and life are the theme of the film *The Imitation Game* (2014), in which Benedict Cumberbatch plays Turing.

The award Given by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), the A M Turing Award carries \$1 million as prize money. As described on the ACM website, it is "for major contributions of lasting importance to computing". First awarded in 1966, it has been awarded annually for 53 years so far to 70 recipients. These include 3 women, the first of these having won in 2006.

This year's winners are Google vice president and senior fellow Geoffrey E Hinton,

Facebook's chief AI scientist Yann LeCun, and University of Montreal professor Yoshua Bengio, who is also scientific director at the Artificial Intelligence Institute in Quebec. The ACM website describes their award-winning work as "conceptual and engineering breakthroughs that have made deep neural networks a critical component of computing".

The three worked on neural networks, a component of robotic systems that are automating a wide range of human activity, such as driving. These deep neural networks are good at speech and image recognition. It was because of the growing power of deep learning that Hinton and LeCun were recruited by Google and Facebook, *MIT Technology Review* reported. LeCun has led an effort within Facebook to develop not just powerful image and video recognition capabilities but also more capable personal assistants, it said.

Case of the 'imported' embryo: the how, the why, and what the law says

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA
MUMBAI, MARCH 28

EARLIER THIS month, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) arrested a Malaysian national who was allegedly attempting to import a nitrogen canister containing a frozen human embryo. The arrest, first of its kind in India, led to a search at a fertility clinic in Mumbai.

Why store embryos

In medical terms, the unborn offspring is an embryo from the day of fertilisation until the eighth week of pregnancy; after that, it is a foetus. Following in vitro fertilisation (outside the body), some couples choose to freeze embryos that are left over. This would allow patients to conceive at a later time. Embryos

are frozen from the second day of fertilisation, using techniques to halt physiological or biological development. The embryo is stored in liquid nitrogen or nitrogen vapour at a temperature below -190°C. In 2017, a 24-year-old frozen embryo made headlines after it was used to give birth in the US.

Until five years ago, facilities for embryo freezing were limited in India. Several couples stored embryos abroad and imported them when they wanted to conceive. Today, India has many embryo freezing banks at par with those in the West, said Dr Narendra Malhotra, former president of Indian Society for Assisted Reproduction (ISAR).

Why import them

One possible reason for importing embryos could be to meet demands from Indian couples for a baby with "non-Indian looks".

Dr Malhotra said he often gets requests for European gametes from couples.

In the latest case, experts suspect it is also possible that a Malaysian couple had commissioned illegal surrogacy in India. Malaysia does not allow surrogacy. In India, the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016, passed by Lok Sabha in 2018, bans commercial surrogacy but permits altruistic surrogacy. India offers cheaper IVF procedures, at costs one-half to one-third of those in the US.

In 2017, a Thai national was arrested for smuggling six tubes of semen stored in liquid nitrogen to Laos for surrogacy. Embryos or gametes were getting routed to surrogacy clinics, ART clinics and IVF clinics.

The latest case

DRI officials alleged that the arrested Malaysian national, Partheban Durai, had

smuggled embryos at least eight times to Mumbai, after declaring these as stem cells. This time, he carried the nitrogen canisters as large as a mini gas cylinder — in his hand luggage and did not put it for X-ray screening, officials said. It was allegedly meant for delivery at Indo-Nippon IVF Fertility Centre.

The DRI said its team conducted a mock delivery through Durai, and that the director of the clinic received the canister. The director, Dr Goral Gandhi, refused to comment. Her lawyer Sujay Kantawala said, "These are false allegations, no delivery was staged." While Gandhi has moved a petition challenging the DRI action, Durai is out on bail and in custody of Malaysian consulate.

Indian laws

In October 2015, the Director General of Foreign Trade moved the import of human

embryos from the 'restricted' to the 'prohibited' category, except for research purposes. The next month, the Ministry of Home Affairs banned commercial surrogacy for foreign nationals in India. Since then, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has stopped giving no-objection-certificates for import of embryos or gametes. Export is allowed on a case basis for couples who froze their embryos or gametes in India before the surrogacy ban was enforced, and wish to continue IVF in another country.

IVF experts have urged for regulation rather than prohibition. "There are lots of Indian couples who froze their eggs or embryos abroad while living there. Now that they have migrated to India, they wish to continue IVF here," said Dr Jaideep Malhotra, current ISAR president. Alternatively, those with terminal illness

may travel abroad for treatment and preserve their healthy gametes before initiating radiation or chemotherapy. Once treatment is over, they may wish to bring it back to India. "These are genuine problems that Indians face and the government must allow import in such cases," said IVF expert Dr Duru Shah.

In a draft regulation submitted to Director General of Foreign Trade and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the ICMR has suggested ways to regulate import of embryos and gametes — matching of DNA of embryo with that of importing couple, justifiable reasons for import, a mandatory check on exporting and importing clinic. "This is to ensure foreign couples do not send their embryo for surrogacy," said Dr R S Sharma, senior director at ICMR, who was involved in drafting the guidelines.



Power in space

Mission Shakti might have had one message for India, and another for the world

India has entered an elite space club with the Defence Research and Development Organisation blowing up a satellite in a Low Earth Orbit into smithereens. Such Indian capability to take out moving objects has never really been in doubt: the DRDO announced it as early as in 2011. Indeed, India has been in the business of testing long-range missiles for years, although public attention on the space programme has been mostly on its civilian and scientific aspects. The military dimension, though always latent, had not seen a verifiable demonstration as in the case of Mission Shakti, the Anti-Satellite (ASAT) missile test. The display of technological prowess through the test accentuates the military dimension and brings into play an overwhelming assurance of what the Ministry of External Affairs describes as a 'credible deterrence' against attacks on India's growing number of space assets. Although only three other countries, the U.S., Russia, and China, have previously demonstrated this capability, it is possible to surmise that countries with long-range missiles could do the same with equal effectiveness. But India, surely, is staking a forward claim as a space weapons power.

While the country celebrates the test as a scientific achievement, it must also dwell on the possibility that this might goad its none-too-friendly neighbour Pakistan into a competitive frenzy. Also, in the absence of a credible threat to India's space assets from China or any other country with Anti-Satellite missile capabilities, whether the 'deterrence' sought to be achieved by this test would lead to a more stable strategic security environment is not certain. There are other questions, too. Will the test spur space weaponisation? Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while announcing the success of the test, was clear that India wanted to maintain peace rather than indulge in warmongering. And, by targeting a low-orbit satellite, the missile test did the utmost possible to minimise space debris, which is an issue of international concern. But, within India, the timing of the test, when the country is already in election mode, does raise concerns whether this was aimed at the domestic constituency. The Election Commission is now seized of the question whether the Prime Minister might have violated the Model Code of Conduct. If it does find the timing amiss, the Modi government could be in for some serious embarrassment. Ideally, the test should not have been a matter for a partisan political debate, but given the hypernationalist political plank of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Mission Shakti might have more reverberations on the ground than it has had in space.

Dangerous precedent

The U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights is in bad faith

U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognise Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights hardly came as a surprise given his administration's blatant pro-Israel stance. It may sound ironic that a President who promised to facilitate a deal between Israelis and Palestinians has turned out to be the most pro-Israel President in U.S. history. Mr. Trump has already recognised as Israel's capital Jerusalem, a city captured in parts in the 1948 and 1967 wars and which is claimed by both Israelis and Palestinians. Before he announced his intention to recognise Israeli sovereignty over Golan, a State Department report had dropped the word 'occupied' in references to Golan Heights and the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank, hinting at where the administration stood on the issue. Israel captured Golan, a strategically important plateau beside the Sea of Galilee, from Syria in the 1967 war. Among the territories it captured in the war, Israel has returned only the Sinai Peninsula, to Egypt. It annexed East Jerusalem and Golan Heights and continues to occupy the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In 1981, as it passed the Golan annexation legislation, the Security Council passed a resolution that said, "the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without international legal effect".

Unlike Egypt in the 1970s, Syria has had neither the military ability nor the international clout to launch a campaign to get its territory back. President Bashar al-Assad tried to kick-start a U.S.-mediated peace process with Israel during the Obama presidency, but it failed to take off. And now, the Syrian government, after fighting eight years of a civil war, is debilitated and isolated, and the U.S. move is unlikely to trigger any strong response, even from the Arab world. But that is the least of the problems. Mr. Trump's decision flouts international norms and consensus, and sets a dangerous precedent for nations involved in conflicts. The modern international system is built on sovereignty, and every nation-state is supposed to be an equal player before international laws irrespective of its military or economic might. The U.S., by recognising the sovereignty of Israel over a piece of land that the latter captured from Syria 52 years ago, is challenging this and normalising occupation. The decision also overlooks the wishes of the inhabitants of the territory. Most of the Druze population that has been living in Golan for generations has resisted Israel's offer of citizenship and remained loyal to Syria. This they did even amidst Israel's settlement activities. This is a conflict that needs to be settled between Israel and Syria at some point of time under international mediation. Mr. Trump is making the possibility of any future peaceful settlement difficult by recognising Israel's sovereignty, just as he made any future Israeli-Palestinian settlement complicated with his decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

An Opposition narrative for 2019

Its challenge is to foreground economic and social issues without getting diverted into national security concerns



ZOAYA HASAN

Ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha election, several political parties opposed to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have rallied around the idea of forming State-level coalitions to block the party's reelection. The first phase of polling for the 2019 election is barely three weeks away, some of the alliances, especially in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) camp, have been sealed, while alliances in the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and Opposition camp are still taking shape. The Congress has sealed alliances in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Bihar, and Maharashtra but failed to do so in the crucial States of Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The Congress not joining Opposition alliances in these two States and Delhi gives an advantage to the BJP, which is striving to polarise voters by playing its nationalism card after the Balakot air strikes.

Ground reality

Opposition parties have allowed short-term considerations to come in the way of alliances which can make a serious dent in the BJP's seat tally. Opposition unity is necessary because in 'India's first-past-the-post electoral system, aggregation of votes at the constituency level is vital for winning seats. The majority of the BJP's Lok Sabha seats are very disproportionately based on an unprecedented sweep in the Hindi speaking northern States, two western States and Union Territories in 2014. Replicating such a strike rate in the 2019 elections would be highly improbable'.

Given this improbability and given that the BJP's popularity is diminishing, the odds of the BJP beating the Opposition at the national level seems no better than even. Hence, the unease in the BJP camp is apparent. It is not surprising that both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP national president Amit Shah have derided Opposition unity and the efforts to form what Mr. Modi called a "mila-vati sarkar" (adulterated government). Coalitions or "khichdi sarkar" will not deliver goes the common refrain. But there is no evidence that coalition governments are bad for the country; in fact decisive shifts have occurred under coalition governments and not one-party domination. The 1991 reforms and the UPA-I's landmark rights legislations were pushed through by minority and coalition governments respectively. At the State level, coalition governments have dominated Kerala and Tamil Nadu and several other States which are among the better governed and more developed States, whereas despite winning a massive majority in the 2017 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, the BJP's single party government has not been able to ensure development or governance or social peace.

For a decentered polity

These last five years raise important questions about the effectiveness of governments where power is concentrated in the hands of a centralised leader with a single party majority, particularly when it comes to their ability to represent India's diverse regional interests or to deliver development benefits for everyone. Coalitions, on the other hand, represent a more decentered polity and the ability of India's political institutions to reinvent and embrace the diversity of regional and social identities in the country and the different



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

needs and interests of various sections, often suppressed under a centralised system.

But even as the limitations of strong leadership and single-party dominance are becoming evident, alliances and coalitions can only be a viable proposition if they offer an alternative politics. Exposing the government's failings which is the job of the Opposition (and the media) makes good political sense but it is not enough. Also, elections are not merely about arithmetic. The last five years lay bare the incompatibility between hate politics and economic growth. Going from State to State, it is clear that people are concerned primarily about livelihood issues that cut across all barriers, and not emotive issues. Even so, there are concerted efforts to deflect this concern through jingoistic nationalism by politicisation of the fight against terror, by sharpening communal polarisation, and by creating conflict situations over emotive issues.

Jobs are the really big issue for people and there is evidence of considerable discontent and restiveness over it. The problem is that the Opposition has not paid enough attention to it. The government is on the back foot which is obvious from the suppression of official jobs data (the Periodic Labour Force Survey of the NSSO) cleared by the National Statistical

Commission. The government claims have been exposed and hence the refusal to release official data.

The failure of the Opposition parties to weave all this into a cohesive narrative is certainly a matter of concern, but in all fairness it is not easy for State-based Opposition parties to offer a unified and consistent narrative. Still, the overarching narrative is clear. Pushing this narrative are two larger concerns. The first is the politics of hate and unprecedented ascendancy of right-wing communal discourse which appears grounded in division and negativity legitimised by the top leadership of the country. However, this volatile rhetoric cannot trump disappointment over the lack of jobs and rural distress. The latter narrative has been built up over the last few months and has gained traction. But after the Balakot air strikes the BJP managed to disrupt it. Foregrounding, once again rural distress, unemployment, the demonetisation fiasco, the goods and services tax impact, allegations of corruption and cronyism, and the subversion of state institutions, is thus crucial.

What the metanarrative is

Underpinning these issues is the metanarrative of an inclusive democracy based on communal amity, social justice and economic equity. However, such a perception of social justice cannot serve as the basis for any long-term vision unless it focusses squarely on distribution and common citizenship by instituting a set of fundamental socio-economic rights.

This can be done. One month after Balakot, the political build-up over air strikes might not be working on expected lines; hypernationalism may not sway voters except those in the BJP's bastions. The Opposition's challenge is to foreground economic and social issues without getting diverted into

national security concerns even while the BJP's redoubtable propaganda machinery will play up the last in a bid to quell the first.

The Opposition parties have to respond to the palpable public disquiet. Congress President Rahul Gandhi has finally done so with the promise of a guaranteed minimum income for the poorest quintile of the population, a move that has rattled the BJP. The big question, of course, is whether the Congress government, if it comes to power, will substitute Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY) for existing social welfare programmes, which it musn't, in order to pay for it. So far there is silence on this. The workability and affordability of NYAY have to be debated, but, as an idea, it signals justice for the poor; it is at least an acknowledgement that the poor and not just the corporate sector need stimulus. The BJP knows the scheme has poll potential, it can develop into an effective counter-narrative which will take the spotlight away from the national security focus that the BJP is trying to push. Moreover, it could help the Congress to build its 2019 campaign around this issue, somewhat like the right to employment in the run-up to the 2004 parliamentary elections.

It would be surprising, if despite its poor track record, the present government is voted back to power on the basis of exaggerated national security concerns, air strikes and testing new space missiles. To avert this possibility, it is important to remember that howsoever necessary it is for parties to revive and rebuild and defend their social base from encroachment by like-minded parties, it is even more important for them to defend India's secular and democratic republic.

Zoaya Hasan is Professor Emerita, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

The shape of an urban employment guarantee

Such a programme will not only improve worker incomes but also have multiplier effects on the economy

MATHEW IDICULLA, AMIT BASOLE & RAJENDRAN NARAYANAN

India is in the midst of a massive jobs crisis. The unemployment rate has reached a 45-year high (6.1%) in 2017-18 as per leaked data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). According to the PLFS report, the unemployment problem is especially aggravated in India's cities and towns. Aside from unemployment, low wages and precarity continue to be widespread. In urban India the majority of the population continues to work in the informal sector. Hence, India cannot ignore the crisis of urban employment.

Reviving India's towns

Both State and Central governments tend to treat towns as "engines of growth" for the economy rather than spaces where thousands toil to make a living. Programmes such as the Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (1997) that included an urban wage employment component have made way for those focussed on skilling and entrepreneurship.

India's small and medium towns are particularly ignored in the State's urban imagination. As per Census 2011, India has 4,041 cities and towns with an urban local body (ULB) in the form of a Municipal Corporation, Municipal Council or Nagar Panchayat. However, national-level urban programmes such as the Smart Cities

Mission and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) only benefit a fraction of them. Most ULBs are struggling to carry out basic functions because of a lack of financial and human capacity. Further, with untrammelled urbanisation, they are facing more challenges due to the degradation of urban ecological commons.

Hence, we need new ways to promote the sustainable development of India's small and medium towns. In the context of the present employment crises, it is worthwhile considering to introduce an employment guarantee programme in urban areas. Along with addressing the concerns of underemployment and unemployment, such a programme can bring in much-needed public investment in towns to improve the quality of urban infrastructure and services, restoring urban commons, skilling urban youth and increasing the capacity of ULBs.

The idea of an urban employment programme is gaining traction in political and policy debates. According to multiple reports, it could be a key agenda of a possible Common Minimum Programme of the Opposition parties for the 2019 general election. In Madhya Pradesh, the new State government has launched the "Yuva Swabhiman Yojana" which provides employment for both skilled and unskilled workers among urban youth.

What shape an urban employment guarantee programme



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should take can be widely debated. We have offered one proposition in the policy brief "Strengthening Towns through Sustainable Employment" (<https://bit.ly/2utJLL0>), which was published recently by the Centre for Sustainable Employment, Azim Premji University. Such a programme would give urban residents a statutory right to work and thereby ensure the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. To make it truly demand-driven, we have proposed that the ULB receives funds from the Centre and the State at the beginning of each financial year so that funds are available locally. Wages would be disbursed in a decentralised manner at the local ULB.

Given the State's relative neglect of small and medium towns and to avoid migration to big cities, such a programme can cover all ULBs with a population less than 1 million. Since it is an urban programme, it should have a wider scope than the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA); this

would provide employment for a variety of works for people with a range of skills and education levels. We emphasise that it would not come at the expense of MGNREGA but rather the two would go hand-in-hand.

Urban informal workers with limited formal education would benefit from this programme. They can undertake standard public works such as building and maintenance of roads, footpaths and bridges for a guaranteed 100 days in a year, at ₹500 a day. We have also proposed a new set of "green jobs" which include the creation, restoration/rejuvenation, and maintenance of urban commons such as green spaces and parks, forested or woody areas, degraded or waste land, and water bodies. Further, a set of jobs that will cater to the "care deficit" in towns by providing child-care as well as care for the elderly and the disabled to the urban working class have been included.

Skilling and apprenticeship

Another novel aspect is the creation of a skilling and apprenticeship programme for unemployed youth with higher education who can sign up for a contiguous period of 150 days (five months), at ₹13,000 a month for five months to assist with administrative functions in municipal offices, government schools, or public health centres, and for the monitoring, measurement, or evaluation of environmental parameters.

While the first category of work

is aimed at providing additional employment opportunities and raising incomes for those in low-wage informal work, the second category is to provide educated youth experience and skills that they can build-on further. We estimate that such a programme will cost between 1.7-2.7% of GDP per year depending on design, and can provide work opportunities to around 30-50 million workers. In light of the 74th Amendment, this programme should be administered by the ULB in a participatory manner by involving ward committees.

Our proposal provides strong transparency and accountability structures – proactive disclosure of information based on Section 4 of the RTI Act, proactive measures through mandatory periodic social audits, public hearing and reactive measures through a "Right to Timely Grievance Redressal" for workers.

An urban employment guarantee programme not only improves incomes of workers but also has multiplier effects on the economy. It will boost local demand in small towns, improve public infrastructure and services, spur entrepreneurship, build skills of workers and create a shared sense of public goods. Hence, the time is ripe for an employment guarantee programme in urban India.

Mathew Idiculla, Amit Basole and Rajendran Narayanan work with the Centre for Sustainable Employment, Azim Premji University, Bangalore

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.

Space power

While it is praiseworthy that India has acquired new technological capabilities, equally disquieting is its politicisation by the ruling dispensation to make capital out of it, perhaps with a view to reaping electoral dividends (Page 1, "Successful anti-satellite missile test puts India in elite club", March 28). The government appears to be checking all the boxes of "nationalism" in the run-up to the general election in the belief that this is a trump card which can cover its failures since 2014.

DEEPAK SINGHAL
Noida

While reaping the benefits of research and technology,

our present day politicians conveniently forget the efforts of stalwarts who began such work. But for their efforts, the present achievement would not have been possible. Considering the time of the test, and the announcement of the mission on national media there is a strong perception that there was a political angle to this.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

The unusual address after keeping the nation on edge ("India on the edge before PM's address", March 28) was not only a violation of the election code of conduct but also betrayed the ruling party's fears as far as what the electoral verdict can turn

out to be. By no stretch of imagination did national security concerns demand either conducting such a test or a statement from the Prime Minister at the present juncture. It is clear that this was done with the aim of influencing voters by shifting the narrative back to an emotive issue such as national security.

Incidentally, the country's capability to intercept and destroy adversarial satellites in space took shape in the early 2010s and without noise by the then government. On the flip side, the compliments being paid to the DRDO scientists should also be seen as tacit acknowledgement of the contributions of the much derided Jawaharlal Nehru

and successive Prime Ministers towards the development of space research.

S.K. CHOUDHURY,
Bengaluru

Job requirements

The recent study by the International Labour Organisation in collaboration with the International Organisation of Employers is startling ("66% employers looking for different skills than three years ago", March 28).

With the demands of industry and the service sectors changing at such a rapid pace, students need to be sharp and choose a career by being able to visualise what the future would look like by the time they

complete graduation; students should not go with the wave. Finally, the education system in India needs to be overhauled. But is the political class even aware of such a need?

VYSHALI KARTHIKEYAN,
Bengaluru

Private airline's woes

The Jet Airways saga (Editorial, "Saving Jet", March 28), only brings to mind the plight of the national carrier, Air India, which has been blamed for

deep losses and recommended for privatisation on the ground that as an inefficient public sector undertaking, it needs a smart private management model. But the crisis in Jet Airways and, preceding this, Kingfisher Airlines, stand as classical examples that nullify the argument recommending privatisation as the panacea for PSU woes.

A.G. RAJMOHAN,
Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:
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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the interview titled "We have capacity to implement NYAY scheme" (some editions, March 28, 2019), the second deck erroneously referred to Praveen Chakravarty as the 'Chair of Congress' IT wing. He is the chairperson of the Data Analytics department of the Congress.

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

Is Modi the best communicator of them all?

PARLEY

A comparison of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strategy with some of his predecessors

Whether it is his monthly radio broadcast programme, *Mann Ki Baat*, or his tweets, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's outreach is unlike anything seen before. Sudheendra Kulkarni and Pankaj Pachauri analyse Mr. Modi's speeches and compare his communication strategy with those of previous Prime Ministers in a conversation moderated by Anuradha Raman. Excerpts:

Has Mr. Modi's strategy of reaching out directly to people been effective?

Sudheendra Kulkarni: Mr. Modi is an amazingly effective communicator. I do not agree with his politics, but it must be said that he is a tireless communicator. Perhaps he has communicated more to the people of India than any Prime Minister did in the past. He's been using every available channel of communication, whether radio, Twitter, or public speeches. He's been firing on all cylinders, so much so that he is also using the Prime Minister's Office's Twitter account, and not his personal account. Using the PMO account for political propaganda is not right at all. But having said that, his communication strategy has been extremely useful to him and to the BJP in setting the agenda in the past five years in a way that no previous Prime Minister was able to do.

Pankaj Pachauri: Mr. Modi's communication strategy is a total flop because if you look at the indicators of this country's development – its economy and its relationship with its neighbours and the world – everything is a flop. The Prime Minister's communication strategy, as I found while working with former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, if the idea is to do good, is to reach out to people and take them along to evolve a consensus. What we are seeing is an advertising strategy. This has been a flop because the exalted PMO has been reduced to scoffing at Opposition leaders and calling them names. The country has paid taxes which have gone into the making of the Prime Minister's communication paraphernalia. So, it's a propaganda strategy. It's propaganda driven by government ma-

chinery, which includes Doordarshan and all the departments which come under Mr. Modi's control. Communication is a two-way process. You tell a narrative and the people respond. In this strategy, the response of the people has not been taken into account.

But there was a lot of criticism of Dr. Singh for being silent.

PP: The Prime Minister is chosen by a country not to regale or lampoon them. The people of India choose their Prime Minister to deliver on the promises made in the manifestos. Dr. Singh remained quiet and told me clearly, 'Let my work speak for itself'. His work is speaking now. If you look at the indicators then, in terms of trade or even in terms of the money spent on the defence force, all of them were better than the current government's. He told me when I joined him, 'I do not want to say too much than required'. And when he spoke, he measured his words. I remember on January 3, 2014, we held a press conference which had more than 200 journalists. It was a no-holds-barred question-answer session. He took 62 questions in more than 97 minutes and answered everything. None of the questions were planted. In that press conference, someone asked him about the candidature of Mr. Modi for prime ministership and Dr. Singh used the word 'disaster'. Five years later, Dr. Singh said he had uttered harsh words. Mr. Modi's communication strategy could win elections by propaganda, but cannot win people. We have seen in the recent Assembly Elections how effective this has been.

Sudheendra, you said that Mr. Modi's communication strategy is very effective. Having worked with former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and having been a part of L.K. Advani's team, how concerned are you by the fact that Mr. Modi has never held a proper interaction with journalists?

SK: This is certainly a blot on Mr. Modi's record – that in the last five years, he has not addressed a single



press conference. Why is the press conference important? Because it gives an opportunity for members of the press. India can take pride in the fact that we have an independent, free press which can ask tough questions, inconvenient questions, which the Prime Minister has avoided all these years, though he has a lot to answer for. It not only shows that he doesn't want to take tough questions, but also shows a certain lack of respect for the media.

At the same time, let me go back to this point about the effectiveness of his communication. There is a lot in his communication that is propaganda; I agree with Pankaj. Yet, is it effective? If we're objective commentators of this phenomenon, we will see that Mr. Modi has achieved something that is remarkable. There have been very few politicians who have had a pan-India visibility and appeal. In the past, it was members of the Nehru-Gandhi family. Subsequently, Vajpayee achieved that feat. But what is remarkable about Mr. Modi is that just in five years, he has achieved that kind of visibility and appeal because of his communication strategy. He's a tireless communicator and here I am referring to the quantitative aspect of his communication, not so much the qualitative aspect. There is a lot to be said about the qualitative aspect. Much of *Mann Ki Baat* is informative, not inspiring.

I would like to contrast his communication with that of Jawaharlal Nehru. That was in an era when even television wasn't there. But

Mr. Modi is a good communicator. But people want to see him speak on the issues that concern them. They want to hear how he addresses the issue of joblessness, the benefits of demonetisation, why we are unable to live in peace with our neighbours.

look at the visionary communicator that Nehru was. Every fortnight he used to write letters to Chief Ministers, and there are 400 such letters compiled in five big volumes. Through Chief Ministers, he communicated to the people of India. Mr. Modi has never addressed Chief Ministers even though he said, soon after becoming Prime Minister, that he believes that India is equal to the Prime Minister plus Chief Ministers. But he has not shown this faith in the federal structure. Nehru, on the other hand, used to take all the Chief Ministers into confidence and through letters, he used to convey his policies, his vision, and everything from foreign policy to domestic policy, secularism, communal harmony, cleanliness and sanitation.

Pankaj, would you agree that Mr. Modi is ahead of his predecessors?

PP: I remember launching the social media outreach of the PMO when there was nothing. Now India is the second-largest subscriber base for all the social media plat-

forms in the world. You talk about this quantity because the platforms of communications have increased immensely. We didn't have that many TV channels in every language back then. The Prime Minister is basically an RSS pracharak. He is an expert pracharak and a good communicator. But people want to see him speak on the issues that concern them. People want to hear how he addresses the issue of joblessness, the benefits of demonetisation, why we are unable to live in peace with our neighbours. Mr. Modi may have had 82 outreach meetings abroad, but with each country he has visited, our trade is falling. What is the result of these meetings? Communication should be accompanied with accountability. Look at *achhe din*. It was a good idea that was communicated to the people. But to what end?

Sudheendra, how concerned are you that the role of the media has been diminished?

SK: I think the kind of democracy which Mr. Modi envisages is one where he wants to convert our system into a kind of a presidential system where it is him versus all others. Here it is not talking to the Chief Ministers or to the Opposition leaders. Even after the recent crisis between India and Pakistan, he did not address the Opposition parties, which has been the tradition all along, because he considers himself above everyone else.

Having said that, I have great regard for Dr. Singh. He was and he is one of our most erudite leaders. But he proved himself to be the least communicative Prime Minister.

PP: The trouble in today's world is that communication has come to be identified with sensation. Dr. Singh was never a sensational person. He just released a six-part compendium of books of what all he said during those 10 years. It is an academic exercise. There were 1,000 speeches in 10 years. Dr. Singh will never say anything which is not substantiated in his speeches in Parliament. He was very rigorous – data were rigorously examined before he spoke. Mr. Modi is a public communicator. The difference is that Dr. Singh is an academic and Mr. Modi is a political pracharak. Mr. Modi has been communicating what he's learned from

life. The nature of communication has changed, the person who is heading our country has no respect for anyone. In 2019, it can win him elections, but not the people.

SK: Pankaj proves my point that Mr. Modi's communication has been effective in mobilising support of a section of society which may give him another mandate in the coming elections. But winning elections is not the only achievement that a great leader should aspire to. Again, I go back to a comparison between Mr. Modi's communication and Vajpayee's and Nehru's. One thing you will notice in Mr. Modi's communication is that he does not like criticism, nor does he address criticism. There was a time when Jayaprakash Narayan criticised Nehru for being less of a socialist. Around the same time, C. Rajgopalachari criticised Nehru for being too much of a socialist. So what did Nehru do? He wrote elaborate letters, which are in the public domain. Has Mr. Modi done anything comparable? Has he engaged his critics? Has he engaged in a democratic dialogue?

Coming to Vajpayee, who did not make full use of all the communication channels which were then available, his forte was his public oratory. That won over even his political adversaries. He spoke about his *dil ki baat*, not just *mann ki baat*. So, when Vajpayee was asked by a reporter how he proposed to solve the Kashmir issue within the framework of the Constitution, his instant response was, 'Within the framework of humanism'. It won the hearts of all sections of Kashmiri people. He may have lost the 2004 elections and Mr. Modi may win in 2019, but a crucial point remains: In a nation so diverse and quintessentially democratic, the Prime Minister must act as the leader of the nation and not the leader of the party.

PP: I recall talking to Mr. Modi. We were discussing the Delhi-Lahore bus in 2000 and he was not very happy with what Vajpayee was saying. Mr. Modi said, '*PM toh bolte rahte hain* (The PM keeps talking)'. Now I can say with conviction, '*Mr. Modi toh bolte rahte hain*'. Lalu Prasad Yadav was an effective communicator too and won elections. But he will be remembered for his social engineering, for the social revolution for lower classes.



Sudheendra Kulkarni is a socio-political activist and journalist who helped write former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's speeches



Pankaj Pachauri is a journalist and was Communications Advisor in the PMO under former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (2012-2014)



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

SINGLE FILE

What the world thinks

A brief analysis of the Pew Research Center's study and findings on India

DHRUVA JAISHANKAR



There are many ways to assess a country's role in the world. Outcomes are one of them, including economic exchanges, political decisions, and military cooperation. Resources – whether economic, military, diplomatic, or cultural – are another. But public perceptions should not be discounted.

While the attention devoted by other countries' leaderships and the growth of the Indian economy since 1991 suggest that India's standing in international affairs has improved, what do the public think?

On March 25, the Pew Research Center released a study of India, based on surveys conducted over the past year. Among the findings were 27 countries' public views on India's rise. The U.S. (40%), the U.K. (46%), France (49%), Japan (48%) and Australia (40%) thought that India played a more important role in the world compared to 10 years ago, and only a minority (4 to 17%) felt it was less important. Similar patterns were discernible in Canada, Germany, South Korea, Sweden, and the Netherlands. The perception of India as a rising power in North America, Europe, Northeast Asia, and Australia should be little surprise, given that these are the places with the most active Indian businesses, diasporas, and government-to-government relations.

On the flip side, very small numbers in Southern and Eastern Europe and Latin America perceived India playing a more important role, with respondents more likely to see India's position declining. Only 17% in Poland, 21% in Brazil, and 14% in Mexico saw India's role as having enhanced over the past decade. This too is not surprising. India's presence is less likely to be felt in Latin America. Southern and Central Europe is also a more crowded space, with the U.S., the EU, Russia, and (increasingly) China jostling for influence.

Somewhere in the middle of the pack are Russia (where 22% saw India playing a more important role, and 21% less) and Africa, where the numbers are mixed in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. This should be expected, given their priorities and the vector of relations with India, particularly relative to other powers.

From an Indian perspective, there are two points of concern. One is Israel, where only 27% saw India playing a more important role and 31% less. This is surprising only because that relationship has appeared to be on a positive trajectory over the past decade. Defence ties, technological relations, and political links have been consolidated. Recent years saw the first presidential and among the first prime ministerial visits by Indian and Israeli leaders to each other's countries. India also remains a popular destination for Israeli tourists.

The other, more minor, surprise concerns South-East Asia, particularly Indonesia. That only 21% of Indonesians and 15% of Filipinos perceived India as a rising power means that India's Act East policy remains a work in progress.

The writer is a Foreign Policy Fellow at the Brookings Institution's India Center



NOTEBOOK

When cacophony sounded like music

Recalling the days when the election season had a festive air

B. KOLAPPAN

Elections in India are political festivals. However, the Election Commission's restrictions during campaign season, though needed, seem to have robbed elections of their charm.

In the 1980s in Tamil Nadu, what was dismissed by many as cacophony used to be music to the ears of children. Voices of popular leaders would blare through the streets, film songs loaded with political messages would play, and professional speakers would visit every nook and corner of towns and villages in megaphone-fixed vehicles. They would address the voters with the familiar phrase, '*Periyorkalae, Thaimarkale* (Elders and Mothers)'. We would run after the vehicles, sometimes hanging on their tailgate. All we wanted was a jolly, free ride, and to collect as many as pamphlets printed in colour paper. Some boys

loved chewing the pink-coloured papers that would make their lips pink, like lipstick does.

Walls were a priced possession during elections. There used to be stiff competition among partymen to book them in advance. The political affiliation of the owner of the wall decided who got to use it. Besides serious messages, nasty comments and unparliamentary words adorned the walls. At night, rival camps would deface them by throwing handfuls of cow dung. Sometimes the messages would result in retaliations and altercations.

In the evenings, we would march on the streets holding the flags of the parties we were affiliated to. Children would be treated to *sukku* coffee (dry ginger coffee) and *paruppu vada* (dhal vada) as a reward for their participation. Tea and coffee were considered as great treats because white sugar was scarce and fami-

lies used only *karuppkattai* (palm jaggery) to make coffee. These rewards regularly resulted in defection among children from one party to another. Defectors earned the title '*Pachonthi* (chameleon)'. At night, All India Radio would broadcast the speeches of local and national leaders. The DMK would get excited when M. Karunanidhi would start his speeches with the words, '*Singa Tamil Nadaiyum, Singara Thendra Nadaiyum thannakathy konda pooman Arignar Anna*. (Anna, the scholar, your Tamil is as majestic as a lion and flows like a breeze)'. AIADMK leader M.G. Ramachandran did not campaign in the 1984 election as he had gone to the U.S. for medical treatment. The AIADMK election camps would play all day the MGR film song, '*Andavanu un pathangalaina kanneeril neeratinen* (Oh god, I washed your feet with my tears)'. The Oppo-

sition sought to capitalise on MGR's absence, but R.M. Veerappan, a member of MGR's Cabinet, took the wind out of their sails by releasing a poster in which MGR was seen without his trademark cap, reading a newspaper while lying on the hospital bed. The poster proved a game-changer for the AIADMK.

What remained enjoyable during childhood proved irritating when I became a journalist and was assigned to cover the public rallies of political leaders during elections. PMK leader S. Ramadoss and MDMK general secretary Vaiko would start their speeches invariably after midnight and wind up only early in the morning. When he became Chief Election Commissioner, T.N. Seshan ensured that meetings ended by 12 midnight. Subsequently the deadline was further moved forward to 10 p.m. And the two leaders changed their campaign styles subsequently.

FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 29, 1969

HAL turns out 1000th aircraft

The Bangalore division of the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, the kingpin of the H.A.L. complex in the country, celebrated here [Bangalore] to-day [March 28] the production of its 1,000th aircraft. The achievement was hailed by the Defence Minister, Sardar Swaran Singh, who flew in here from Delhi to take part in the celebration. The 1,000th aircraft was the supersonic jet fighter HF-24 which is being produced in numbers for the country's air arm. The H.A.L. is now engaged in a new major project, namely, the designing of a military ground attacker. Paying a tribute to the progress made by the Bangalore division of the H.A.L. in the manufacture of sophisticated aircraft, the Defence Minister, Mr. Swaran Singh, said the manufacture of the 1,000th aircraft was a great achievement.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 28, 1919.

Village Officers' Memorial, Salem.

The Village officers and menials of the villages of Salem District have submitted to the Board of Revenue, Madras, through the usual channels a Memorial detailing the multifarious and responsible duties which their official position demands they should do to the satisfaction of the Government and the public and explaining other disabilities. After referring to certain documentary evidence in support of their claims humbly and most respectfully pray that the Hon'ble Members may be graciously pleased to view with a very sympathetic consideration the straitened circumstances and the pitiable plight to which the low paid village servants are subject to in these very hard days and to kindly accord sanction for their following prayers. (1) To raise the scales of pay of the village officers and servants. (2) To grant them allowances whatever and whenever they are granted to clerks and servants of the Taluk Offices. (3) To kindly declare the posts of the village offices, and servants as hereditary. (4) To remove the restrictions imposed upon them from enjoying or holding lands upon darkest.

POLL CALL

Election deposit

A deposit is the sum of money that a candidate for an elected office, such as a seat in a legislature, is required to pay to an electoral authority before she is permitted to stand for election. If the candidate is not elected, and the valid votes polled by her do not exceed one-sixth of the total number of valid votes polled by all the candidates, the deposit is forfeited. In India, candidates who stand for parliamentary elections have to pay a deposit of ₹25,000. If the candidate is a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe, the amount is ₹12,500. For Assembly elections, the amount is ₹10,000; for SC and ST candidates, it is ₹5,000.

MORE ON THE WEB

Inside Chennai's Senate House

<http://bit.ly/ChennaiSenateHouse>



मां हमें यह महसूस कराती रहती थीं कि हम खास हैं

जब नियति आदमी के भाग्य के साथ खिलवाड़ करती है, तो उसके ध्यान में न तो दया होती है और न ही न्याय। मां के साथ भी नियति ने ऐसे ही खेल दिखाए। उसे उसकी आवाज फिर कभी वापिस नहीं मिली। जब पतलझ के बाद सर्दियां आईं, तो हमारी हालत बद से बदतर हो गई। हालांकि मां बहुत सावधान थी और उसने थोड़े-बहुत पैसे बचाकर रखे थे, लेकिन कुछ ही दिन में यह पूंजी भी खत्म हो गई। धीरे-धीरे उसके गहने और छोटी-मोटी चीजें बाहर का रास्ता देखने लगीं। ये चीजें घर चलाने के लिए गिरवी रखी जा रही थीं। वह उम्मीद करती रही कि उसकी आवाज वापिस लौट आएगी। इस बीच हम तो आरामदायक कमरों के मकान से दो कमरों के मकान में और फिर एक कमरे के मकान में शिफ्ट हो चुके थे। हमारा सामान कम होता चला जा रहा था और हर बार हम जिस तरह के पड़ोस में रहने के लिए जाते, उसका स्तर नीचे आता जा रहा था।

हम समाज के जिस निम्नतर स्तर के जीवन में रहने को मजबूर थे, वहां यह सहज स्वाभाविक था कि हम अपनी भाषा-शैली के स्तर के प्रति लापरवाह होते चले जाते, लेकिन मां हमेशा अपने परिवेश से बाहर ही रही। हमें समझातीं और हमारे बात करने के ढंग, उच्चारण पर ध्यान देती रहतीं, हमारा व्याकरण सुधारती रहतीं और हमें यह महसूस कराती रहतीं कि हम खास हैं। मैं अपनी अज्ञानता के चलते और बचपन में मां से कहता कि वह फिर से स्टेज पर जाना शुरू क्यों नहीं कर देतीं। मां मुस्कुरातीं और कहतीं कि वहां का जीवन नकली और झूठा है और कि इस तरह के जीवन में रहने से हम जल्दी ही ईश्वर को भूल जाते हैं। इसके बावजूद वह जब भी थियेटर की बात करतीं तो अपने आपको भूल जातीं और उत्साह से भर उठतीं।

महेश्वर हास्य अभिनेता

महेश्वर हास्य अभिनेता

हरियाली और रास्ता

कुबेर, धीरज और नौकरी

कुबेर की कहानी, जिसे अंत में अपने दोस्त धीरज की सज्जनता के आगे झुकना पड़ा।



धीरज और कुबेर, दोनों दोस्त थे। धीरज को सोच सुलझी हुई थी। वहीं कुबेर शककी मिजाज का था। स्कूली शिक्षा के बाद धीरज ने अपना काम शुरू कर दिया और कुबेर वहीं नौकरी करने लगा। धीरज कुबेर को हमेशा कहता था कि मेरे साथ साझा में काम कर लो। पर कुबेर को लगता कि धीरज उसकी नौकरी से जलता है। धीरज का काम बढ़ता गया। कुबेर भी अपनी नौकरी में जी-जान लगाता था और कंपनी का प्यारा कर्मचारी था। काम बढ़ने पर धीरज को जब एक भरोसेमंद साथी की जरूरत महसूस हुई, तो उसने फिर कुबेर के सामने साथ काम करने का प्रस्ताव रखा। लेकिन कुबेर को धीरज पर विश्वास ही नहीं हो पाता था। पर थोड़े दिनों बाद कुबेर की कंपनी को नुकसान होने लगा। कंपनी घाटे में चली गई, तो मालिक नुकसान का सारा इल्जाम कुबेर पर लगाते लगे। फिर कुबेर को एक दिन कंपनी से निकाल दिया गया। धीरज यह जानकर दुखी हुआ और उसने फिर कुबेर के सामने अपना प्रस्ताव रखा। लेकिन नौकरी चलने जाने के बावजूद कुबेर का अहंकार नहीं गया था। उसने धीरज को जवाब दिया, मैं अभी इतना भी गया-गुजरा नहीं हुआ कि मुझे किसी से एहसान लेने की जरूरत पड़े। इस बीच कुछ महीने गुजर गए, लेकिन कुबेर को नौकरी नहीं मिली। इसी दौरान कुबेर की मां की तबीयत अचानक खराब हो गई। कुबेर के पास पैसे खत्म होने लगे। वह एकदम टूट गया। एक दिन वह बुझे मन से अस्पताल के बिल का भुगतान करने गया, तो पता चला कि उसकी मां के इलाज का सारा भुगतान पहले ही धीरज नाम के किसी व्यक्ति ने कर दिया है। तब उसे एहसास हुआ कि वह अपने दोस्त के बारे में कितना गलत सोचता था। उसने उसी दिन धीरज से माफ़ी मांगकर उसके साथ काम शुरू कर दिया।

हमें किसी की सज्जनता की अनदेखी नहीं करनी चाहिए।

राजनीतिक दल अपने आर्थिक ढांचे में पारदर्शिता लाने से कतराते हैं, तो इसकी बड़ी वजह यही है कि उन्हें मिलने वाले चंदे का बड़ा हिस्सा अज्ञात स्रोतों से आता है, ऐसे में इलेक्टोरल बांड को लेकर चुनाव आयोग की चिंता को समझा जा सकता है।

चुनावी बांड पर सवाल

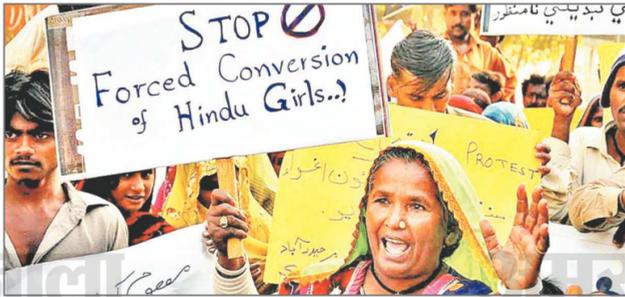
राजनीतिक

दलों को मिलने वाले चंदे पर हमेशा सवाल उठते रहे हैं, तो इसकी एक बड़ी वजह यही है कि कोई भी राजनीतिक दल दावे चाहे लाख करे, अपने वित्तीय ढांचे को लेकर पारदर्शिता बरतने से बचता है। ऐसे में चुनाव आयोग का सुप्रीम कोर्ट में इलेक्टोरल बांड और कॉर्पोरेट चंदे पर एतराज करना हरान नहीं करता। उसने अपने हलफनामे में आगाह किया है कि राजनीतिक दलों को चंदे के लिए शुरू किए गए इलेक्टोरल बांड का राजनीतिक फंडिंग की पारदर्शिता पर बुरा असर पड़ेगा और यह चुनाव सुधार को पीछे ले जाने वाला कदम साबित होगा। राजनीतिक दल अपने आर्थिक ढांचे में पारदर्शिता लाने से कतराते

हैं, तो इसकी बड़ी वजह यही है कि उन्हें मिलने वाले चंदे का बड़ा हिस्सा अज्ञात स्रोतों से आता है। इस मामले में एक याचिकाकर्ता एडीआर (एसोसिएशन फॉर डेमोक्रेटिक रिफॉर्मर्स) ने पड़ताल कर बताया है कि 2004-05 से 2014-15 के दौरान राजनीतिक दलों की कुल आय में से 69 फीसदी धन अज्ञात स्रोतों से आया था! वास्तव में चुनाव आयोग लंबे समय से चुनावी चंदे में पारदर्शिता लाने के प्रयास कर रहा है, लेकिन इसके लिए उसे राजनीतिक वर्ग से पर्याप्त सहयोग नहीं मिलता। एनडीए सरकार ने 2017 के बजट में जब इलेक्टोरल बांड लाने की घोषणा की थी, तो दावा किया था कि इससे काले धन पर रोक लगेगी और राजनीतिक चंदे में पारदर्शिता आएगी, लेकिन इसमें किए गए प्रावधान ही इसे सवालों के घेरे में लाते हैं। प्रावधान के मुताबिक भारतीय स्टेट बैंक कुछ

निश्चित तिथियों में एक हजार, दस हजार, एक लाख, दस लाख और एक करोड़ रुपये तक के बांड बेचेगा, और इसे खरीदने वाले दानदाताओं और जिन दलों के लिए ये खरीदे जाएंगे उनके नाम गोपनीय रखे जाएंगे। ऐसे में पता कैसे चलेगा कि कोई खास कंपनी किसी खास दल पर मेहरबान क्यों है? इससे भी गंभीर बात यह है कि सरकारी और विदेशी कंपनियों तक ऐसे बांड किसी दल के पक्ष में खरीद सकते हैं, जो कि जनप्रतिनिधित्व अधिनियम के खंड 29बी का उल्लंघन है, जिसमें राजनीतिक दलों पर ऐसे स्रोतों से चंदा लेने पर रोक लगाई गई है। चुनाव का बढ़ता खर्च वाकई चिंता की बात है और फिर जब यह कयास लगाए जा रहे हों कि आगामी चुनाव खर्च के लिहाज से दुनिया का सबसे महंगा चुनाव साबित हो सकता है, तो इसकी गंभीरता का अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है।

धर्मांतरण के खिलाफ उठती आवाजें



कई मामलों में मैंने देखा कि स्थानीय पीरों का इनमें हाथ होता था, जिनके अनुयायियों की संख्या काफी ज्यादा है। इस क्षेत्र में सभी धर्मों में व्याप्त भयानक गरीबी के कारण ये पीर बहुत प्रभावी होते हैं। अब पूरे पाकिस्तान में यह आवाज उठ रही है कि जबर्न धर्मांतरण इस्लाम में अवैध है और इनमें शामिल पीरों और अन्य लोगों को कठोर दंड मिलना चाहिए। चूंकि समृद्ध हिंदू महिलाओं या पुरुषों के इस्लाम में धर्मांतरण के मामले दुर्लभ हैं, इसलिए अब यह प्रमाणित हो गया है कि ज्यादातर धर्मांतरण अत्यधिक गरीबी में जी रहे लोगों का होता है।

मरिआना बाबर, पाकिस्तानी पत्रकार

उठाई और इन हिंदू लड़कियों के धर्मांतरण के खिलाफ सोशल मीडिया पर जबर्दस्त अभियान छेड़ा गया, जिसने सरकार को हरकत में आने पर मजबूर किया है। वे लड़कियां तब तक सरकार के संरक्षण में रहेंगी, जब तक अदालत उनके मामले का फैसला नहीं करेगा। उनके मामले की सुनवाई न तो पंजाब में होगी, जहां से उन्हें बरामद किया गया और न ही सिंध में, जो उनका पैतृक प्रांत है, बल्कि सरकार ने



महसूस किया कि इस्लामाबाद हाई कोर्ट में सुनवाई होने से न केवल वे सुरक्षित रहेंगी, बल्कि उनके मामले की निष्पक्ष सुनवाई भी होगी। कई वर्ष पहले मैंने सिंध में इस तरह के अपहरण और जबर्न धर्मांतरण पर शोध के लिए कुछ हफ्ते बिताए थे, जहां ऐसे मामले होते रहते हैं। मैंने पीड़ित लड़कियों, उनके परिजनों और उन मुसलमानों से बातें की थीं, जिनके ऊपर ऐसे धर्मांतरण का आरोप लगा था। इनमें से ज्यादातर

आरोपी निरक्षर और गरीब थे। कई मामलों में मैंने देखा कि स्थानीय पीरों का इनमें हाथ होता था, जिनके अनुयायियों की संख्या काफी ज्यादा है। इस क्षेत्र में सभी धर्मों में व्याप्त भयानक गरीबी के कारण ये पीर बहुत प्रभावी होते हैं। अब पूरे पाकिस्तान में यह आवाज उठ रही है कि जबर्न धर्मांतरण इस्लाम में अवैध है और इनमें शामिल पीरों और अन्य लोगों को कठोर दंड मिलना चाहिए। चूंकि समृद्ध हिंदू महिलाओं या पुरुषों के इस्लाम में धर्मांतरण के मामले दुर्लभ हैं, इसलिए अब यह प्रमाणित हो गया है कि ज्यादातर धर्मांतरण अत्यधिक गरीबी में जी रहे लोगों का होता है।

कुछ युवा लड़कियों ने यह भी बताया कि ये शायदियां उनकी मर्जी से हुई हैं, क्योंकि दोनों के अभिभावक एक-दूसरे को पसंद करते थे और चूंकि मुस्लिम लड़कों को हिंदू समुदाय में स्वीकार नहीं किया जाता, तो नए जीवन की शुरुआत के लिए इस्लाम में धर्मांतरण उन्हें आसान लगा। हालांकि जबर्न धर्मांतरण की घटनाओं को अब प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान द्वारा गंभीरता से लिया जा रहा है, जिन्होंने सरकार गठन के बाद से ही पाकिस्तान में अल्पसंख्यक समुदायों के हित में कदम उठाए हैं। वह व्यक्तिगत रूप से करतारपुर गलियारे के निर्माण में दिलचस्पी ले रहे हैं और यह सुनिश्चित कर रहे हैं कि इस साल नवंबर तक यह काम पूरा हो जाए।

पाकिस्तान के मीडिया में भी जबर्न धर्मांतरण का मुद्दा सुर्खियों में है। उदाहरण के लिए, अंग्रेजी दैनिक द डॉन ने इस तरह की घटनाओं के पीछे सत्ता की साठगांठ-राजनीतिक रूप से प्रभावशाली परिवारों, मौलवियों और मद्रसों की भूमिका को रेखांकित किया है, जो सर्वज्ञात है, जबकि पाकिस्तान के धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यकों ने बार-बार पुलिस और न्यायिक अधिकारियों को उदासीनता

को रेखांकित किया है। हालांकि इन दो हिंदू लड़कियों का मामला अभी गर्म है, लेकिन नेशनल एसंबली में एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम उठाया गया है। पाकिस्तान तहरीक-ए-इंसाफ ने दो विधेयक पेश किए हैं, जिनमें ऐसे अपराधों में शामिल लोगों के लिए सजा बढ़ाने और बाल विवाह को संज्ञेय अपराध बनाने की मांग की गई है। इन दोनों विधेयकों-बाल विवाह निरोधक अधिनियम (संशोधन) विधेयक, 2019 और अपराधिक कानून (अल्पसंख्यकों का संरक्षण) अधिनियम, 2019 के अलावा तहरीक-ए-इंसाफ के सांसद डॉ. रमेश कुमार वंकाणी ने सभी प्रमुख राजनीतिक दलों के अल्पसंख्यक सांसदों के समर्थन से ऐसी घटनाओं की निंदा करते हुए एक प्रस्ताव भी पेश किया। पांच सूत्रीय प्रस्ताव में जबर्न धर्मांतरण के खिलाफ बिल को तत्काल पारित करने का आह्वान किया गया, जिसे 2016 में सिंध एसंबली द्वारा सर्वकमिती से पारित किया गया था और बाद में कट्टरपंथियों के दबाव के बाद सभी विधानसभाओं से वापस ले लिया गया था।

इन विधेयकों में से एक में जबर्न धर्मांतरण करवाने वाले व्यक्ति को पांच साल से लेकर अजीवन कारावास के प्रावधान का प्रस्ताव है। प्रस्ताव में मियां मिदूतुल्लाह और पीर अयूब जन सरहिदी के नाम का उल्लेख है, जो जबर्न धर्मांतरण के लिए कुख्यात हैं। प्रस्ताव में मांग की गई है कि धर्म की आड़ में नफरत फैलाने वालों के खिलाफ प्रतिबंधित संगठनों की तरह पेश आया जाए। सिंध प्रांत की इन दोनों हिंदू लड़कियों से संबंधित मामले की सच्चाई तो जांच के बाद सामने आएगी, लेकिन इमरान खान का यह बयान भारसा दिलाता है कि उनकी सरकार उन व्यवस्थागत खामियों को दूर करेगी, जिनके कारण धार्मिक उत्पीड़न के ऐसे मामले पनपते हैं।

महिलाएं किस मुद्दे पर वोट करें

संसद और विधानमंडलों में महिला आरक्षण की बात हो या बेटियों को पढ़ाने की, दोनों मुख्य पार्टियों का रवैया निराशाजनक रहा है। जबकि केरल की वामपंथी सरकार ने महिला कर्मचारियों के बैठने और शौच की अनिवार्य व्यवस्था का कानून बनाया है।



सुभाषिणी सहल अली

उपलब्ध सिलेंडर तभी मिलेगा, जब वह एक साल के अंदर महंगी दर पर मिलने वाले 10 सिलेंडर खरीदेंगी। ऐसे में, महिलाओं ने अपनी पुरानी फुंकनी और धूप वाले चूल्हों का इस्तेमाल फिर शुरू कर दिया है। टूटे बचनों और टूटे सपनों की कहानी खत्म होती नहीं दिखती।

केरल सरकार ने हाल में राज्य की दुकानों और वाणिज्यिक संस्थाओं में काम करने वाली महिलाओं के लिए एक कानून पारित किया है, जिसका अनुकरण अन्य सरकारों को भी करना चाहिए। केरल में पहले कांग्रेस के नेतृत्व की सरकार थी। 2014 में उस सरकार के चलते, प्रदेश के मानवाधिकार आयोग ने दुकानों में काम करने वाली लाखों

माकपा पोलित ब्यूरो की सदस्य

मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> अनिल

कभी पढ़ाई के पैसे नहीं थे आज स्कूल गोद ले रहा हूँ

मैं कर्नाटक में उडुपी जिले के शंकरनारायण गांव में पैदा हुआ। मेरे गांव के ज्यादातर लोग बेहद गरीब थे और सवर्ण हमारा शोषण करते थे। खुद मेरा घर जंगल के बीच में टूटी-फूटी हालत में था और पिता की आमदनी इतनी नहीं थी कि परिवार का खर्च पूरा हो सके। लेकिन बचपन से ही मुझमें पढ़ाई की भूख थी। मैं कन्नड माध्यम के एक सरकारी स्कूल में पढ़ता था। स्कूल की छुट्टी के बाद मैं अक्सर इधर-उधर के काम करता और देर रात तक लालटेन जलाकर पढ़ाई करता था। बारहवीं की परीक्षा में जब मुझे 95 प्रतिशत अंक मिले, तब माता-पिता के साथ-साथ गांव के लोग भी बहुत खुश हुए। शानदार रिजल्ट के कारण बंगलूरु स्थित एमएस रमय्या इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ टेक्नोलॉजी में मेरा एडमिशन हो जाना था। लेकिन एडमिशन की फीस 15,500 रुपये थी, जो मेरे पिता के बूते से बाहर की बात थी, क्योंकि वह खेती की खातिर लिए गए कर्ज चुका रहे थे। ऐसे में, उन्होंने फिर कर्ज लेने की कोशिश की, पर सफल नहीं हुए। तब चाचा ने मेरी मदद की थी। वर्ष 2005 में जब मैं पढ़ाई के लिए बंगलूरु आया, तब मेरे पास महज सत्तर रुपये थे। चूंकि इतने थोड़े पैसे में बंगलूरु में मेरा गुजारा नहीं चल सकता था, इसलिए पढ़ाई के बाद मैं मिठाई की एक दुकान में काम करने लगा था। पढ़ाई पूरी करने के बाद मैं नौकरी के बजाय अपनी मर्जी का काम करना चाहता था। कुछ समय तक मैंने शेयर बाजार में काम किया। उसके बाद मुंबई में अपने एक साथी के साथ मैंने प्लाई विड वीआईपी नाम की कंपनी बनाई, जो मनोरंजन उद्योग, क्रिकेट और बड़े कॉर्पोरेट घरानों के साथ काम करती है। आज मैं न सिर्फ एक सफल उद्यमी हूँ, बल्कि कई क्षेत्रों में मैंने सफलताएं हासिल की हैं। मैं एक स्वतंत्र इन्वेस्टमेंट बैंकर हूँ और उन स्टार्ट-अप कंपनियों की मदद करता हूँ, जिन्हें पूंजी की जरूरत पड़ती है। मैंने दो किताबें लिखी हैं। इसके अलावा प्रेरित करने वाले वक्ता (मोटिवेशनल स्पीकर) के रूप में भी मेरी पहचान है, और इस काम के तहत मैं दुनिया के कई देशों में जा चुका हूँ। पिछले दिनों संयुक्त राष्ट्र की तरफ से आयोजित इंटरनेशनल विजिटर्स लीडरशिप प्रोग्राम में, जिसमें बाईस देशों के प्रतिनिधि शामिल हुए थे, मैंने भारत का प्रतिनिधित्व किया था। मैंने अपने छोटे-से जीवन में बहुत सारी उपलब्धियां हासिल की हैं। लेकिन आज भी मैं अपनी जड़ों को पहचानता हूँ। मेरा मानना है कि राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर सरकारी स्कूलों में पढ़ाई के स्तर में अगर सुधार किया जाए, तो उसका बहुत शानदार नतीजा देखने को मिल सकता है। मैंने खुद सरकारी स्कूल में पढ़ाई की है। अपने गांव में कई बार मैं लोगों को बता चुका हूँ कि बच्चों को पढ़ने के लिए बेहतर माहौल दिया जाए, तो उसका नतीजा अच्छा होगा। मैंने खुद अपने राज्य में 'सेव गवर्नमेंट स्कूल्स' नाम से एक आंदोलन शुरू किया है। इसके तहत सरकार से मांग की गई है कि वह राज्य के सभी स्कूलों में लड़कों को बारहवीं तक और लड़कियों को स्नातक स्तर तक मुफ्त और गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा मुहैया कराए। इस आंदोलन के जरिये हम आईआईटी और आईआईएम की तरह इंडियन स्कूल ऑफ एजुकेशन जैसी एक संस्था के गठन की मांग भी कर रहे हैं। अपने अभियान के तहत अब तक हमने राज्य में पंद्रह सरकारी स्कूलों को गोद लिया है। हमारे इस अभियान का नतीजा है कि कर्नाटक में गुणवत्तापूर्ण पढ़ाई और सरकारी स्कूलों का स्तर सुधारने पर सार्थक बहस हो रही है।

विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

लोकसभा चुनाव की तैयारियां चल रही हैं। महिला मतदाताओं को कैसे लुभाया जाए, इस महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न का जवाब तमाम दलों के नेता ढूंढ रहे हैं। उनके लिए यह काफी कठिन सवाल है, क्योंकि केंद्र और राज्य में उन्होंने अपनी सरकारों के कार्यकाल के दौरान महिलाओं के लिए घोषणाएं तो बहुत कीं, पर काम बहुत कम किया है। केंद्र की सत्ता संभालने वाले दो बड़े दलों ने लगातार इस बात का वादा किया कि वे लोकसभा और विधानसभाओं में 33 फीसदी आरक्षण लागू करेंगे, पर तमाम ऊलजुलूल बहानों का सहारा लेकर उन्होंने ऐसा करने से इनकार किया है।

मौजूदा सरकार ने बेटियों को पढ़ाने का वादा किया, लेकिन राजस्थान और मध्य प्रदेश में उसके दल ने कुल मिलाकर दो लाख सरकारी स्कूलों को बंद करने का फैसला लिया था। उसे हटाकर जिस दल ने सरकार बनाई है, उसने अभी इस फैसले को रद्द करने की घोषणा नहीं की है। तमाम राज्यों से खबर आ रही है कि देश को स्वच्छ और महिलाओं को सुरक्षित और स्वस्थ बनाने वाली मौजूदा सरकार द्वारा बनाए गए शौचालयों में पानी के अभाव में या फिर सीवर लाइन के बिना शौच के अलावा हर तरह के काम हो रहे हैं, जैसे अनाज का रखा जाना, पशुओं का बांधा जाना, खटिया डालकर सोना इत्यादि। हर गरीब महिला को मुफ्त में गैस सिलेंडर और गैस का चूल्हा दिए जाने का प्रमाण हर पेट्रोल पंप पर लगी फोटो के माध्यम से दिया जा रहा है, लेकिन इस बात को गुप्त रखा जा रहा है कि इन महिलाओं को पहले सिलेंडर के बाद कम पैसे में

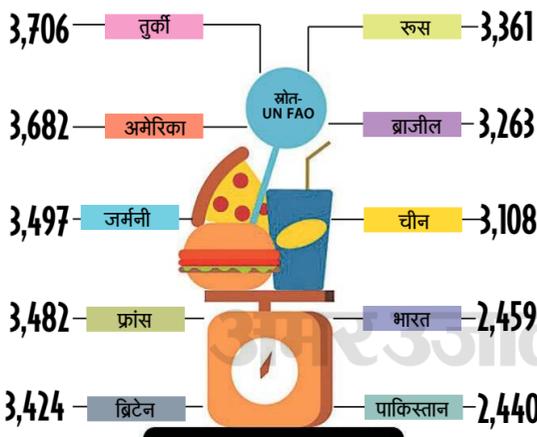
उपलब्ध सिलेंडर तभी मिलेगा, जब वह एक साल के अंदर महंगी दर पर मिलने वाले 10 सिलेंडर खरीदेंगी। ऐसे में, महिलाओं ने अपनी पुरानी फुंकनी और धूप वाले चूल्हों का इस्तेमाल फिर शुरू कर दिया है। टूटे बचनों और टूटे सपनों की कहानी खत्म होती नहीं दिखती।

केरल सरकार ने हाल में राज्य की दुकानों और वाणिज्यिक संस्थाओं में काम करने वाली महिलाओं के लिए एक कानून पारित किया है, जिसका अनुकरण अन्य सरकारों को भी करना चाहिए। केरल में पहले कांग्रेस के नेतृत्व की सरकार थी। 2014 में उस सरकार के चलते, प्रदेश के मानवाधिकार आयोग ने दुकानों में काम करने वाली लाखों

खुली खिड़की

प्रति व्यक्ति रोजाना कैलोरी सेवन

प्रति व्यक्ति प्रतिदिन औसत कैलोरी सेवन के मामले में तुर्की अग्रवर्ती है, जबकि महाशक्ति देश अमेरिका का स्थान उसके बाद ही आता है। भारत में प्रति व्यक्ति रोजाना औसत कैलोरी सेवन जहां 2,459 है, वहीं पाकिस्तान में यह आंकड़ा इससे थोड़ा कम है।



दुख जगाए रखता है

सूफ़ी फकीर शेख फरीद अपनी प्रार्थना में कहते रहते थे, ईश्वर, मुझे हमेशा दुख देते रहना। उनके शिष्य यह सुनकर हैरान हो जाते थे कि यह दुख ही क्यों मांगते रहते हैं। एक बार उनके एक शिष्य ने हिम्मत करके उनसे पूछ ही लिया, आप ईश्वर से हमेशा दुख ही क्यों मांगते हैं? तो ईश्वर से सुख मांगता हूँ। दूसरे लोगों को भी ईश्वर से प्रार्थना करते हुए मैंने हमेशा सुख मांगते हुए ही देखा है। फिर आप ऐसा क्यों कहते हैं कि मुझे रोज थोड़ा-थोड़ा दुख देते रहना? यह भी कोई प्रार्थना है? शेख फरीद ने उनकी बात ध्यान से सुनी, फिर जवाब देते हुए कहा, हां, मैं ईश्वर से दुख मांगता हूँ। मैं यह भी मानता हूँ कि मेरी प्रार्थना दूसरों से अलग है। तुम नहीं जानते कि मैं ऐसा क्यों करता हूँ? दरअसल सुख में मैं सो जाता हूँ। जबकि दुख मुझे जगाए रखता है। सुख में मैं परमात्मा को भूल जाता हूँ। जबकि दुख मुझे उनकी याद दिलाता है। दुख मुझे उनके करीब लाता है। इसलिए मैं प्रार्थना करता हूँ कि हे प्रभु, इतने कुपातु मत हो जाना कि मुझे सुख ही सुख दे दो। मुझे अपने पर भरोसा नहीं है। शिष्य को समझाते हुए उन्होंने कहा, जिसने कुछ खोया नहीं, उसे पाने का आनंद नहीं मिलता। दुख चुनौती है, विकास का अवसर है। दुख के बिना तुम जागोगे नहीं। शिष्य की समस्या का समाधान हो गया।

-संकलित

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 35

शीर्ष समूह में भारत

भारत दुनिया के उन चुनिंदा देशों में शुमार हो गया है जो सफलतापूर्वक एंटी सैटेलाइट (उपग्रह रोधी) तकनीक का सफल प्रदर्शन करने में कामयाब रहे हैं। बुधवार को रक्षा अनुसंधान एवं विकास संगठन (डीआरडीओ) की एंटी सैटेलाइट मिसाइल (ए सैट) ने निचली कक्षा में भ्रमण कर रहे एक सैटेलाइट को सफलतापूर्वक नष्ट कर दिया। डीआरडीओ की

इस तकनीकी विशेषज्ञता के लिए बधाई दी जानी चाहिए। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने इसे 'मिशन शक्ति' का नाम दिया और सरकार की भी सराहना की जानी चाहिए कि उसने इस परीक्षण की मंजूरी देने का साहसी कदम उठाया। एंटी सैटेलाइट और एंटी मिसाइल परियोजनाओं पर शोध कार्य 2010 से चल रहा था। सन 2012 में डीआरडीओ ने दावा किया वह एंटी

मिसाइल तकनीक का पांच बार सफल प्रयोग करते हुए मिसाइलों को हवा में अवरुद्ध करने और नष्ट करने में कामयाब रहा है। उस वक्त देश के मुख्य वैज्ञानिक सलाहकार रहे वी के सारस्वत ने दावा किया कि भारत के पास सन 2010 में ही एंटी सैटेलाइट तकनीक थी।

भारत ने यह एंटी सैटेलाइट तकनीक स्वदेश में विकसित की है। इससे भारत की विश्वसनीयता और मजबूत होती है क्योंकि दशकों तक भारत को अहम तकनीक से वंचित रखा गया और मजबूरन उसने स्वदेशी अंतरिक्ष और नाभिकीय क्षमताएं विकसित कीं। भारत ने इस परीक्षण के जरिये जो नवीनतम क्षमता हासिल की है, वह लंबी दूरी की मिसाइलों से देश की अंतरिक्ष में स्थित परिसंपत्तियों को हो सकने वाले संभावित नुकसान से भी उचित

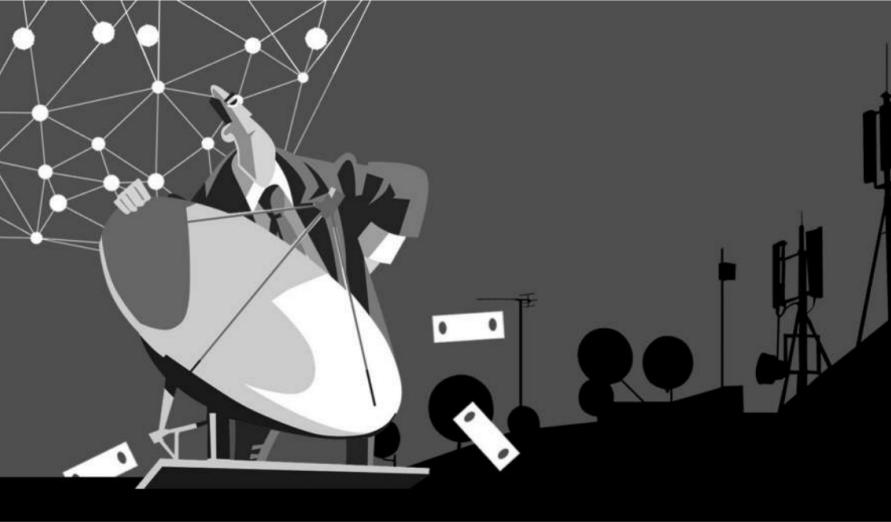
प्रतिकार मुहैया कराती है।

भारत के पास लंबे समय से यह क्षमता थी लेकिन उसका प्रदर्शन अब जाकर किया गया है। देखना यह है कि अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय इसे किस तरह लेता है। भारत उन चुनिंदा देशों में शामिल है जिन्होंने द आउटर स्पेस ट्रीटी पर हस्ताक्षर किए हैं। इसका लक्ष्य है अंतरिक्ष को हथियारों से मुक्त रखना। हालांकि यह तकनीकी तौर पर संधि का उल्लंघन नहीं है क्योंकि अंतरिक्ष से व्यापक विनाश के हथियारों के इस्तेमाल पर रोक लगाती है लेकिन इस परीक्षण को समझौते की उस मूल भावना के विपरीत माना जा सकता है जिसके तहत अंतरिक्ष को हथियार मुक्त रखना था। इस संदर्भ में यह बात आश्चर्य करने वाली है कि प्रधानमंत्री ने यह उल्लेख किया कि मिशन का उद्देश्य भारतीय

अंतरिक्ष की रक्षा करना है, न कि हथियारों को होड़ उत्पन्न करना।

व्यावहारिक तौर पर देखें तो यह परीक्षण देश की अंतरिक्ष संबंधी क्षमताओं के बारे में नया कुछ नहीं बताता। भारत के पास उपग्रहों का पता लगाने की क्षमता पहले से है। हमारे पास बैलिस्टिक मिसाइल भी हैं और हवा में हथियार तैनाती की क्षमता भी। डीआरडीओ के वैज्ञानिकों का एक धड़ा अतीत में कहता रहा है कि वे एंटी सैटेलाइट क्षमता का प्रदर्शन ऐसे करना पसंद करेंगे जहां सैटेलाइट को निशाना बनाया जाएगा और एंटी सैटेलाइट मिसाइल को लक्ष्य से टकराए बिना बहुत करीब से गुजारा जाएगा। ऐसा इसलिए क्योंकि सैटेलाइट को उड़ाने से कचरा उत्पन्न होता है जो अंतरिक्ष में अन्य उपग्रहों के लिए खतरा

बन सकता है। 2007 में जब चीन ने एक निष्क्रिय उपग्रह को नष्ट करके यह परीक्षण किया था तब उसके मलबे से एक रूसी उपग्रह प्रभावित हुआ था और वह अंतरराष्ट्रीय अंतरिक्ष केंद्र से टकराते-टकराते बचा था। हालांकि भारत के मामले में रक्षा मंत्रालय ने तत्काल स्पष्ट किया कि यह परीक्षण निचली कक्षा में किया गया था ताकि कोई मलबा एकत्र न हो। इस अभियान का मलबा वायुमंडल में जल जाएगा और बचावखुचा धरती पर आ गिरेगा। भविष्य में किसी युद्ध की स्थिति में शत्रु के सैटेलाइट गिराने और निगरानी और संचार व्यवस्था ठप करने की क्षमता के साथ-साथ हमारी दिशा में आ रही मिसाइल को नष्ट करने की क्षमता महत्वपूर्ण साबित होगी।



विनय सिन्हा

व्यवस्थित नियमन से बढ़ेगी उत्पादकता

समुचित सार्वजनिक संसाधनों के साथ बुनियादी सुविधाएं प्रदान करने वाले नियमन के इस्तेमाल से उत्पादकता में इजाफा होना सुनिश्चित है।

इस बारे में विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं **श्याम पोनप्पा**

तीसरी तिमाही में वृद्धि दर निराश करने वाली रही लेकिन इसमें चक्र्रीय सुधार की गुंजाइश है क्योंकि विनिर्माण का परचेजिंग मैनेजर्स इंडेक्स 14 महीने के उच्चतम स्तर पर है। वृद्धि में सुधार लाने के लिए हमारे नीति निर्माताओं को कम ब्याज दरों के अलावा भी थोड़ा रचनात्मक होना होगा। इस दिशा में हम क्या कर सकते हैं, इस सिलसिले में कुछ सुझाव इस प्रकार हैं:

इस हकीकत को स्वीकार करना होगा कि देश में निवेश योग्य फंड हमारी जरूरतों से कम हैं। इसमें हमारे शेरार, पूंजी की आवक तथा निवेश पर मिलने वाला लाभ सभी शामिल हैं। हम अपनी उत्पादक क्षमता बढ़ाने का प्रयास कर सकते हैं या फिर यथास्थिति चलते रहने दे सकते हैं। ऐसा क्यों? इसलिए क्योंकि हमारी गतिविधियां इतना मुनाफा नहीं दे रहीं कि हम सतत निवेश बरकरार रख सकें। हमें बुनियादी ढांचे मसलन परिवहन और मालबहन, बिजली, पानी और सीवरेज तथा संचार जैसे मूल बुनियादी क्षेत्र तथा सुरक्षा और कानून-व्यवस्था, स्वास्थ्य सेवा, शिक्षा और प्रशिक्षण, बैंकिंग, वित्त और बीमा आदि द्वितीयक बुनियादी क्षेत्रों में भी निवेश की आवश्यकता है। बाजार और बाजार गतिविधियों के पुनर्गठन की आवश्यकता है। कृषि, बुनियादी ढांचा और सरकारी खरीद आदि क्षेत्रों में

ऐसा किया जा सकता है। इसमें दो राय नहीं कि डिजिटल संचार इन सभी क्षेत्रों में बहुत मायने रखता है। सवाल यह है कि इन क्षेत्रों में वांछित परिणाम कैसे हासिल किया जाए। दूरसंचार सेवा प्रदाताओं के मुनाफे में कमी आई है। उनका नेटवर्क कवरेज अपर्याप्त है और वे कर्ज में डूबे हैं। ऐसे में अगर सबकुछ पहले की तरह चलता रहा तो उनकी पहुंच और उत्पादकता पर असर पड़ना लाजिमी है। ग्रामीण इलाकों में दिक्कत और अधिक है। वहां संचार की लागत अधिक है क्योंकि उपभोक्ता काफी बंटे हुए हैं जबकि राजस्व की संभावनाएं बहुत सीमित।

इस बीच हमारे रुख में कई कमियां भी हैं। नेशनल ऑप्टिकल फाइबर नेटवर्क (भारत ब्रॉडबैंड नेटवर्क लिमिटेड या भारतनेट) को दोड़ब्यापी फाइबर नेटवर्क की रीढ़ माना जा रहा था। योजना यह थी कि देश की 2.50 लाख ग्राम पंचायत तक ऑप्टिकल फाइबर बिछाई जाए और देश के करीब 6 लाख गांवों का दलबंदल फाइबर का कोई बड़ा अनुमान यह था कि निजी परिचालक गांवों के लिए नेटवर्क तैयार करेंगे। यह अनुमान हकीकत से दूर था। पहली बात तो यह कि बड़े भूभाग में फैले लेकिन कम राजस्व वाले उपभोक्ताओं के लिए ऐसी कोई कवायद करना व्यवहार्य नहीं था। दूसरा, बेतार तकनीक के लिए सहायक नियमन भी मौजूद नहीं थे, न हैं। उदाहरण के लिए 5 गीगाहर्ट्ज की स्थापित

वाईफाई रेंज जो दुनिया भर में वाईफाई हॉटस्पॉट के लिए इस्तेमाल होती है उसे भी भारत के शहरी या ग्रामीण प्रतिष्ठानों में प्रभावी ढंग से नहीं प्रयोग किया जा सकता था क्योंकि नीतियां अनुकूल नहीं थी। अब 5 गीगाहर्ट्ज के लिए नए नियमन से हालात बदले हैं लेकिन यह कदम हाल ही में उठाया गया है। बीच के इस्तेमाल और अंतिम सिरे तक लिंक के लिए अन्य बेतार तकनीक अब भी बंद हैं, इन्हें शुरू करने के लिए नियमन की आवश्यकता है।

700 मेगाहर्ट्ज बैंड: इसकी उच्च कीमतों के चलते किसी सेवा प्रदाता ने इसके लिए बोली नहीं लगाई, हालांकि यह 5 से 10 किमी की दूरी के लिए काफी उपयोगी है और दिवारों आदि को भी भेदने में सक्षम है। 500 और 600 मेगाहर्ट्ज बैंड के साथ इसका इस्तेमाल ग्राम पंचायतों को करीबी गांवों से जोड़ने में किया जा सकता है। 14 राज्यों के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि अधिकांश गांव इसके दायरे में आ जायेंगे।

■ 500 और 600 मेगाहर्ट्ज बैंड का आवंटन टेलीविजन के लिए किया गया है। देश में इसका बहुत कम हिस्सा प्रसारण में इस्तेमाल किया जाता है क्योंकि प्री टु एयर टेलीविजन सीमित है और बेहतर विकल्प उपलब्ध हैं। चूंकि ये प्रसारण के लिए हैं इसलिए इनका इस्तेमाल दूरसंचार के काम में नहीं होता।

■ 70 से 80 गीगाहर्ट्ज यानी ई बैंड 3-4 किमी की छोटी दूरी के लिंक कवरेज के लिए प्रभावी है, परंतु भारत में इसकी इजाजत नहीं है, हालांकि कई देशों में इसका लाइसेंस अत्यंत कम है। अमेरिका, ब्रिटेन, रूस और ऑस्ट्रेलिया इसका उदाहरण हैं। आदर्श स्थिति में देखा जाए तो नियमन को वैश्विक मानकों के अनुकूल होना चाहिए लेकिन सेवा प्रदाताओं पर भारी भरकम शुल्क लगाता है, स्पेक्ट्रम नीलामी का कर्ज, निवेश की आवश्यकता और कम राजस्व की भी दिक्कत बनी हुई है। सेवाप्रदाताओं को बिना लाइसेंस पहुंच के ई-बैंड का इस्तेमाल करने देने की दलील बढ़ रही है। अतिरिक्त ट्रैफिक से राजस्व बढ़ेगा जिससे सरकार के संग्रह में भी इजाफा होगा।

■ 60 गीगाहर्ट्ज (1.6 किमी तक की दूरी के लिए वी बैंड) के लिए भारतीय सेल्युलर ऑपरेटर्स एसोसिएशन ऑफ इंडिया (सीओएआई) इसे अधिकांश देशों की तरह लाइसेंस मुक्त बनाने का विरोध करता है और चाहता है कि इसे सेवाप्रदाताओं को दिया जाए। ई-बैंड की ही तरह सेवा प्रदाताओं को इसके बिना लाइसेंस के प्रयोग की इजाजत दी जा सकती है। कुछ वर्ष परचात समीक्षा की जा सकती है।

बाजार ढांचा और संगठन

एक बड़ी समस्या यह है कि विरासती ढांचागत और संगठनात्मक समस्याओं से निपटने के लिए समुचित नीतिगत पहल की आवश्यकता होगी। शायद अबाध संचार के लिए यह भी एक बड़ी आवश्यकता है।

एक के बाद एक सरकारों ने बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल के सुधार के लिए योजनाएं प्रस्तुत कीं। इन दोनों कंपनियों की तुलना विमानन क्षेत्र में एयर इंडिया और इंडियन एयरलाइंस से की जा सकती है। सरकार ने संचार के महती लक्ष्यों को समुचित समर्थन नहीं दिया है। कई बार तेजी से बदले, तकनीकी रूप से जटिल उद्यमों को लेकर समझ की कमी रहती है। इन्हें प्रायः समय पर पूंजी और कौशल संवर्द्धन आदि की आवश्यकता होती है। बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल का पराभव हो रहा है। इसकी अवसर लागत नागरिकों को चुकानी पड़ती है। बहरहाल, माना जा सकता है कि समुचित नेतृत्व और संगठनात्मक क्षमता निर्माण के साथ ये उपक्रम अबाध संचार मुहैया करा सकते हैं। ऐसा तभी संभव है जब निजी क्षेत्र नेतृत्व, संगठन और पूंजी मुहैया कराए जबकि सरकार जनहित का बचाव करने का काम करे।

भारती एयरटेल के चेयरमैन सुनील मि्तल ने सुझाव दिया है कि ऑप्टिकल फाइबर नेटवर्क के लिए वोडाफोन के साथ पहले ही इंडस टावर्स के नाम से संयुक्त दल निजी क्षेत्र नेतृत्व, संगठन और पूंजी सुविधा देता है। इन बातों को ध्यान में रखें तो नियमन की समूची मांग को सेवा आपूर्ति, पूंजी जुटाने, उपकरण और मानव संसाधन की ओर केंद्रित किया जा सकता है। नियामकीय रुख ऐसा होना चाहिए कि नागरिकों के लिए जरूरी सार्वजनिक संसाधनों तक समतापूर्ण पहुंच सुनिश्चित हो सके, न कि बाधाएं खड़ी की जाएं।

बोइंग 737 मैक्स विमान संकट से खुल सकती है नई राह

बोइंग 737 मैक्स सीरीज के विमानों को उड़ान भरने से मना कर दिए जाने की घटना विमानन इतिहासकारों को डि हैविलैंड कॉमिट में आने के बाद का है। कॉमिट दुनिया का पहला वाणिज्यिक जेट विमान था। द्वितीय विश्व युद्ध के दौरान चर्चित रहे मॉस्को विमान को डिजाइन करने वाले सर ज्योफ्री डि हेविलैंड ने कॉमिट विमान भी डिजाइन किया था। वर्ष 1952 में सेवा में आने के बाद कॉमिट विमान कई बार हादसे का शिकार हुए। सबसे बुरा हादसा कोलकाता के दमदम एयरपोर्ट पर 1953 में हुआ था। उड़ान भरते समय विमान के डैने ही अलग हो गए और देखते-ही-देखते वह आग के गोले में तब्दील हो गया था। उस हादसे में सभी 43 लोगों की मौत हो गई थी।



तकनीकी तंत्र

देवांगशु दत्ता

कॉमिट विमान को उड़ान भरने से रोके जाने के बाद उसके डिजाइन में कई खामियों के बारे में पता चला। विमान के रनवे से ऊपर उठने के बाद उसके डैनों पर दबाव पड़ता था। इसके अलावा ईंधन टैंक के पास पड़ने वाला दबाव विमान को गहरे खतरे में डाल सकता था। बहरहाल उन कमियों से सबक लेते हुए बाद के विमान निर्माताओं ने बेहतर डिजाइन तैयार किए। कॉमिट को ही नए सिरे से डिजाइन कर सैन्य संस्करण निमरॉड तैयार किया गया जो रॉयल एयरफोर्स में 21वीं सदी आने तक तैनात रहा।

बोइंग ने दावा किया था कि मैक्स विमानों में लगे नए लीप-1बी इंजन से ईंधन की खपत में 737 विमानों की तुलना में 14 फीसदी तक की कमी आई है। एयरबस के नियो विमानों की तुलना में भी 4 फीसदी कम ईंधन खपत होने की बात कही गई थी। मैक्स विमानों में नए इंजन थोड़ा आगे लगे हुए हैं और डैनों पर भी उनकी स्थिति थोड़ी ऊंचाई पर है। ऐसा होने से मैक्स विमानों की उड़ान भरने से जुड़ी क्षमता प्रभावित होती है। असल में, उड़ान के दौरान इन विमानों का नोज वाला हिस्सा थोड़ा ऊपर उठा जाता है, खासकर रफ्तार कम होने पर। जबकि उड़ान भरते समय विमान के डैनों के भीतर का वायु-प्रवाह ही विमान को उठान देता है।

उमानों के डैने हमेशा ही उस दिशा में थोड़ा झुके होते हैं जिधर विमान जा रहा होता है। इसे वैमानिकी में 'एंगल ऑफ अटैक' (एओए) कहते हैं और विमान को मिलने वाली उठान इसी पर निर्भर होती है। विमान को सबसे ज्यादा उठान 'क्रिटिकल एओए' पर मिलती है। अगर एओए क्रिटिकल एंगल से ऊंचा है तो उठान कम होने लगती है और विमान अटकने की स्थिति पैदा हो जाती है। विमान का नोज उठते

हो एओए भी बढ़ने लगता है। मैक्स विमानों में तो नोज ऊपर उठने की प्रवृत्ति पहले से ही रही है। क्रिटिकल एओए बढ़ने की सूरत में नोज को तब तक नीचे लाना है जब तक एओए सुरक्षित दायरे में न आ जाए। एमसीएएस एक सेंसर-आधारित सॉफ्टवेयर प्रणाली है जो यह काम स्वचालित तरीके से करती है। यह हवा की गति और एओए की गणना करने के बाद नोज को नीचे लाने की प्रक्रिया शुरू करता है। दुर्भाग्य से एमसीएएस प्रणाली में कुछ समस्याएं नजर आती हैं। लॉयन एयर विमान के हादसे के समय भी उसके सेंसर ठीक से काम नहीं कर रहे थे। एमसीएएस ने बार-बार विमान का नोज नीचे लाने के निर्देश दिए जबकि उसका एओए एकदम सही स्थिति में था। पायलट इसमें कुछ नहीं कर सकते थे और शायद उन्हें पता भी नहीं चला होगा कि सेंसर में कोई समस्या है। अगर पायलट को पता चल जाए कि कुछ समस्या है तो वे एमसीएएस तो डिसकनेक्ट कर सकते हैं लेकिन हादसे का शिकार हुए दोनों विमानों में दो वैकल्पिक सुरक्षा उपाय नदारद थे। पहला, सेंसर की रीडिंग दिखाए वाला एओए सूचक अगर दूसरा, सेंसर की रीडिंग में असमानता होने पर जल जाने वाली लाइट। असहमति जताने वाली इस लाइट की कीमत 80,000 डॉलर है लेकिन एक विमान की 12 करोड़ डॉलर की कीमत को देखते हुए यह महंगा नहीं है।

पायलटों का यह भी कहना है कि उड़ान के अंतिम संबंधी मानकों में बदलाव आ चुके विमान को उड़ाने का अधिक अनुभव नहीं मिला है। अमेरिकन एयरलाइंस के पायलट और जॉर्जिया के पायलट्स एसोसिएशन के प्रवक्ता केन डेनिस टेजर कहते हैं कि पायलटों को 737एनएन से 737 मैक्स विमान की तरफ भेजने के पहले केवल आईपैड पर 56 मिनट का ही प्रशिक्षण दिया गया था।

बोइंग के पुराने ऑर्डर निरस्त हो रहे हैं और उसे कई कानूनी वादों का भी सामना करना पड़ रहा है। इन हादसों के बाद विमान उद्योग उड़ान संबंधी नियम और सुरक्षा मानदंडों में बदलाव कर सकता है। अगर ऐसा होता है तो इन लोगों की मौत व्यर्थ नहीं जाएगी।

देश की अर्थव्यवस्था और जीडीपी

देश में इस बात की चर्चा या आलोचना क्यों नहीं होती है कि हम 1970 के दशक में चीन के बराबर थे, लेकिन आज हमें चीन के साथ कदम से कदम मिलाकर चलने के लिए अपनी जीडीपी को 40 प्रतिशत की दर से बढ़ाने की जरूरत है। वर्तमान सरकार दुनिया की सबसे तेज गति से बढ़ती अर्थव्यवस्था का लगातार डिब्बोरा पीट कर जनता को लुभा रही है। सरकार अर्थव्यवस्था को 10 प्रतिशत तक पहुंचाने के लिए किए जाने वाले मशक्कत को अपने संघर्ष के रूप में दिखाना चाहती है। अमेरिका की जनसंख्या करीब 32 करोड़ है और वह दुनिया में सबसे अधिक जीडीपी वाला देश है। इसके बावजूद अमेरिका अपनी अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए डरा रहता है। पिछले साल भारत ने जीडीपी के

कानाफूसी

अमीर राजनेता

कुछ राजनेताओं की संपत्ति में तेजी से इजाफा हो रहा है। तेलंगाना और आंध्र प्रदेश समृद्ध नेताओं की सूची वाले शीर्षस्थ राज्यों के रूप में उभरे हैं। अरबपति राजनेताओं की सूची में तमिलनाडु शीर्ष पर है। तेलंगाना में कांग्रेस के कोंडा विश्वेश्वर रेड्डी इन तीनों राज्यों में सबसे अमीर नेता हैं। उनकी पारिवारिक संपत्ति 895 करोड़ रुपये है। आंध्र प्रदेश के कैबिनेट मंत्री पी नारायण (नारायण ग्रुप ऑफ इंडस्ट्रीज) की पारिवारिक संपत्ति 667 करोड़ रुपये है। आंध्र प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री चंद्रबाबू नायडू की पारिवारिक संपत्ति 574 करोड़ रुपये है। वाईएसआर कांग्रेस के नेता वाई एस जगनमोहन रेड्डी की पारिवारिक संपत्ति 510 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक है। वर्ष 2011 में यह संपत्ति 311 करोड़ रुपये थी। कन्याकुमारी से कांग्रेस प्रत्याशी वसंत कुमार 417.49 करोड़ की संपत्ति के साथ शीर्ष पर हैं। मक्कल निधि मैयम के कोयंबतूर के प्रत्याशी आर महेंद्रन की कुल संपत्ति 133.30 करोड़ रुपये है।

चौकीदार को सौंपा इस्तीफा

उत्तर प्रदेश की हरदोई लोकसभा सीट से मौजूदा सांसद अंशुल वर्मा का टिकट भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) ने काट दिया। इस बात से नाराज वर्मा बुधवार को समाजवादी पार्टी (सपा) में शामिल हो गए। चुनावी मौसम में नेताओं का दलबदल शांति का कोई बड़ा बात नहीं है। हर चुनाव में ऐसा बड़े पैमाने पर देखने को मिलता ही है लेकिन एक बात ने वर्मा को सुर्खियों में ला दिया। हुआ यूंकि वर्मा ने पार्टी से अपना त्यागपत्र, पार्टी कार्यालय के एक चौकीदार को सौंपा। इसे भाजपा के 'मैं भी चौकीदार' अभियान से जोड़कर देखा गया और लोग इस पर चुटकियां लेने लगे। हालांकि वर्मा ने स्पष्ट किया कि पार्टी के किसी भी जिम्मेदार नेता ने उनकी बात सुनने में रुचि नहीं दिखाई। ऐसे में उनके पास और विकल्प ही क्या था।



आपका पक्ष

भारत का अंतरिक्ष में भी परचम

भारत अब अंतरिक्ष की निचली कक्षा में किसी उपग्रह को मार गिराने की क्षमता वाला देश बन गया है। यह घोषणा प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने बुधवार को राष्ट्र के नाम संबोधन में की। इसके साथ ही भारत पूरी दुनिया में ऐसी क्षमता रखने वाला चौथा देश बन गया है। इससे पहले यह क्षमता अमेरिका, रूस तथा चीन के पास थी। मिशन शक्ति नामक यह अभियान केवल तीन मिनट में पूरा किया गया। भारत अब एंटी सैटेलाइट मिसाइल भी बना चुका है जिसका निर्माण डीआरडीओ ने किया है। भारत ने मिशन शक्ति के जरिये दुनिया को बता दिया है कि अंतरिक्ष से नुकसान पहुंचाना भी अब महंगा पड़ेगा। अंतरिक्ष में कई उपग्रह चक्कर काटते रहते हैं। किसी दुश्मन देश का उपग्रह अगर भारतीय क्षेत्र में निगरानी करेगा तो भारत उसके उपग्रह को मारने में सक्षम हो गया है। यह पूरे देश के लिए गर्व की बात है। इससे देश की सुरक्षा व्यवस्था और सुदृढ़ हो



बुधवार को भारत ने अंतरिक्ष में उपग्रह को मार गिराने का सफल परीक्षण किया

उपयोग कर रहा है तथा अन्य विकसित देशों के मुकाबले खुद को साबित कर रहा है जो देश के लिए गर्व की बात है।

मोहित कुमार, नई दिल्ली

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

मॉनसून से उम्मीदें

कृषि हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था का महत्वपूर्ण आधार है और इसका उत्पादन मॉनसून पर निर्भर करता है। मॉनसून में थोड़ा विचलन न केवल खेती, बल्कि समूचे आर्थिक तंत्र पर नकारात्मक प्रभाव डाल सकता है। वर्ष 2014 और 2015 के निरंतर सूखे ने बड़ी संख्या में किसानों को दरिद्रता और कर्ज के भंवर में फंसा दिया था। इस अवधि में किसानों की आत्महत्या में 42 फीसदी की बढ़ोतरी हुई थी। उस भयावह सूखे की बड़ी वजह मजबूत अलनीनो था। परंतु वर्ष 2017 और 2018 में औसत वर्षा 95 से 91 प्रतिशत रही, जो दीर्घावधि औसत में सामान्य रही। भारतीय मौसम विज्ञान संस्थान ने मौजूदा वर्ष में मॉनसून के स्वस्थ रहने का अनुमान लगाया है और उम्मीद जतायी है कि इस वर्ष अलनीनो का असर बहुत नहीं होगा। प्रशांत महासागर की सतह के गर्म होने की प्रक्रिया से उत्पन्न होनेवाला अलनीनो भारत समेत समूचे दक्षिण एशिया के साथ ऑस्ट्रेलिया को भी भयंकर सूखे की चपेट में ले लेता है। अप्रैल के मध्य में इस वर्ष के मॉनसूनी बारिश पर पहला आधिकारिक अनुमान जारी होगा। तब तस्वीर अधिक स्पष्ट हो पायेगी। गर्मी के महीनों में देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों में जल संकट गहरा जाता है। झारखंड, दक्षिणी आंध्र प्रदेश, गुजरात और तमिलनाडु के उत्तरी हिस्से में जल संकट उभरने के लक्षण दिखने लगे हैं। जिस तेजी से भूजल स्तर में गिरावट आ रही है, इसका प्रभाव कृषि पर भी पड़ेगा। चीक देश की आधी आबादी खेती-किसानी पर निर्भर है, तो उसकी चिंताएं और समस्याएं बढ़ेंगी। सिंचाई की संतोषजनक व्यवस्था नहीं होने के कारण बड़ी

सिंचाई की संतोषजनक व्यवस्था नहीं होने के कारण बड़ी संख्या में किसानों के पास मॉनसून निहारते रहने के अलावा कोई अन्य विकल्प नहीं है।

संख्या में किसानों के पास मॉनसून निहारते रहने के अलावा कोई अन्य विकल्प नहीं है। यही वजह है कि चावल, गन्ना, कपास, सोयाबीन और मक्का किसानों के लिए मॉनसून की पहली बारिश पानी से अधिक राहत बरसाती है। मॉनसून पर टिकी कृषि के लिए अब जलवायु-संवेदनशील बजटिय प्रावधान हो तथा नहरों की अत्याधुनिक संरचना और प्रबंधन के प्रयास हों। जलवायु-स्मार्ट कृषि प्रणाली के विकास और स्थानीय स्तर पर किसानों के लिए मौसम की स्थिति की अग्रिम चेतावनी एवं जानकारी देने की व्यवस्था पर ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए। सूखा प्रभावित या कम जल उपलब्धता वाले क्षेत्रों में दलहन व तिलहन फसलों की खेती को बढ़ावा देना भी एक उपाय हो सकता है। नदियों के प्रदूषण और उनमें पानी कम होने की समस्या भी गंभीर है। सिंचाई, पेयजल, भूजल और पारिस्थितिकी की जरूरतों को पूरा करने के लिए नदियों और जलशयों के संबंध में एक दीर्घकालिक रणनीति पर विचार होना चाहिए। मॉनसून से जुड़ी हुई एक मुश्किल जलवायु परिवर्तन भी है, जिसके कारण प्राकृतिक आपदाएं बढ़ती जा रही हैं। देशव्यापी मॉनसून का औसत सामान्य या बेहतर रहने की स्थिति में भी कहीं बाढ़ और कहीं सूखे का सामना करना पड़ता है। ऐसे में संतुलित तात्कालिक और सुदीर्घ प्रयासों की बड़ी आवश्यकता है।



हृदय के भीतर

एक महान सूफी थे इब्राहिम, जो किसी समय राजा हुआ करते थे। एक बार इब्राहिम मक्का की यात्रा कर रहे थे, उनके पास ऊंटों का बड़ा काफिला था और नौकर-चाकरों का बड़ा दल था। उनके वजूत बहुत ही आलीशान थे, जिसके खूटे भी सोने के थे। उनके कपड़े भी सबसे ज्यादा महंगे, शानदार थे। एक दरवेश उधर से गुजरे और इतने भव्य, विलासी जीवन को देखकर सोचने लगे कि इब्राहिम आध्यात्मिक व्यक्ति नहीं हो सकते। जब उन्हें इब्राहिम से मिलने का मौका मिला तो डंटेते हुए बोले- आप कैसे सूफी हैं, आप सांसारिक संपत्ति को पकड़े हुए हैं? इब्राहिम ने कहा कि आप थोड़ा आराम कीजिये। रात में वे दोनों जगह फिर मिले तो इब्राहिम बोले कि कल सुबह हम मक्का की ओर पैदल जायेंगे। दरवेश ने कहा, ठीक है, मैं भी वहीं जा रहा हूँ। वे सुबह जल्दी उठे और साथ चल पड़े। कुछ घंटे चलने के बाद दरवेश को याद आया कि वे अपना भीख का कटोरा वहां भूल आये थे। उन्होंने इब्राहिम से कहा, मैं अपना कटोरा ले आता हूँ। वे पीछे लौटने लगे। तब इब्राहिम ने उनकी ओर देखा और बोले- मैंने अपनी सारी भौतिक संपत्ति पीछे छोड़ दी है, ऊंट, सोने के खूटे और भी सब कुछ। और आप भीख के कटोरे के लिए पीछे जाना चाहते हैं। सोने के खूटे सिर्फ रेत में गड़े हुए हैं, मेरे हृदय में नहीं। चाहे लोहा हो या सोना, मुझे कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता। पर आप अपना भीख का कटोरा भी छोड़ कर चलना नहीं चाहते? आप मक्का की ओर जा रहे हैं, जो पवित्र जगहों में भी सबसे ज्यादा पवित्र है, पर आप एक भीख के कटोरे के लिए वापस जा रहे हैं। मेरे पास तो कटोरा भी नहीं है। यह कहकर इब्राहिम चल पड़े। आप के पास क्या है और क्या नहीं है, आप क्या खाते हैं, क्या पहनते हैं या कैसे रहते हैं, इन सबसे यह निश्चित नहीं होना चाहिए कि आप अपने अंदर से कैसे हैं? बाहर से आप जैसे चाहे रह सकते हैं, लेकिन महत्वपूर्ण यह है कि आप खुद को अंदर से कैसे रखते हैं, वरना आप सब कुछ झकड़वा कर सकते हैं, फिर भी आप के पास कुछ भी नहीं होगा।

सद्गुरु जगगी वासुदेव

कुछ अलग

सूरमा भोपाली का अलमस्त अंदाज

संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका के संस्थापकों में एक बेंजामिन फ्रैंकलिन एक लेखक, व्यंग्यकार, राजनेता, वैज्ञानिक, और दार्शनिक भी थे। बेंजामिन फ्रैंकलिन कहते हैं- 'मुसीबत ने दरवाजा खटखटाया, लेकिन हंसी सुनकर वह वापस चली गयी।' हमारे जीवन में हंसी की भूमिका कितनी महत्वपूर्ण है, फ्रैंकलिन की इस बात से समझा जा सकता है। मनोवैज्ञानिक भी बताते हैं कि हंसने के बेशुमार फायदे हैं, जैसे तनाव कम होना, बीपी पर नियंत्रण, सिर दर्द से छुटकारा आदि। लेकिन, भाग-दौड़ भरी जिंदगी में हम तो जैसे हंसना ही भूल गये हैं। यही वजह है कि अवसाद के शिकार लोगों की संख्या में तेजी से इजाफा होता जा रहा है। कुछ डॉक्टर भी अपने मरीजों को कॉमेडी फिल्मों देखने की सलाह देते हैं, जिसमें कॉमेडियन अपने हास्य-अभिनय से स्वस्थ मनोरंजन करते हैं। उन्हीं कॉमेडियन में एक हैं- सैयद इश्तेयाक अहमद जाफरी, जिन्हें हिंदी सिनेमा में 'जगदीप' के नाम से जाना जाता है। जगदीप को 'कॉमेडी का सरदार' का लकब हासिल है। सैयद इश्तेयाक अहमद जाफरी का जन्म 29 मार्च, 1939 को मध्य प्रदेश के दतिया में हुआ था। भारत के विभाजन के वक्त अपनी छोटी सी उम्र में ही वे मुंबई चले गये थे। बचपन में ही पिता का हाथ छूट गया। उनकी मां ने उनकी परवरिश की, जो यतीमखाने में खाना पकती थीं, लेकिन इन्हें स्कूल जरूर भेजती थीं। लेकिन, मजबूरी के चलते उन्होंने पढ़ाई छोड़कर कुछ काम करने का फैसला किया। मां के मना करने पर भी वे

शफक महजबीन

टिप्पणीकार
mahjabeenshafaq@gmail.com

नहीं माने और पतंग बनाने एवं साबुन बेचने लगे। जहां वे काम करते थे, वहां एक अजनबी आदमी ने उनसे फिल्म में काम करने की बात कही और तीन रुपये मिलने की बात पर वे तैयार हो गये। जब मां के साथ वे स्टूडियो पहुंचे, तो वहां बच्चे नाटक कर रहे थे। एक उर्दू डॉयलाग को कोई बच्चा नहीं बोल पा रहा था। उर्दू जाफरी की मादरी जबान थी। एक बच्चे ने बताया कि वह डायलॉग बोलने का छह रुपये मिलेंगे, तब इन्होंने वह डायलॉग बोलकर दिखा दिया। यहीं से बतौर चाइल्ड आर्टिस्ट उनके फिल्मी करियर की शुरुआत हुई। साल 1953 में फिल्म 'दो बीघा जमीन' में वे कॉमिक भूमिका में नजर आये। इसके बाद तो एक से बढ़कर एक फिल्मों में बेहतरीन काम किया। इन्होंने बतौर हीरो भी कई फिल्मों में काम किया, जिसमें एक फिल्म 'भाभी' काफी चर्चित रही। फिल्म 'शोले' में उनके निभाये किरदार 'सूरमा भोपाली' के बाद तो लोग उन्हें सूरमा भोपाली ही कहकर पुकारने लगे। जगदीप ने उस दौर में कॉमेडी को अपना करियर बनाया, जब जमींदार, महमूद, केप्टो मुखर्जी और असरानी जैसे दिग्गज हास्य कलाकार हिंदी सिनेमा के सिरमौर बने हुए थे। लेकिन, इन्होंने अपने अलमस्त अंदाज से कॉमेडी किंग बनकर लोगों के दिलों पर राज किया। आज के दौर की कॉमेडी तो सिर्फ अश्लीलता से भरी हुई है। कॉमेडियन की जगह अतिशय ही अश्लील कॉमेडी कर रहे हैं। आज स्वस्थ कॉमेडी का अभाव है। ऐसे में हमें जगदीप का योगदान बहुत याद आता है।



तरुण विजय

वरिष्ठ नेता, भाजपा
tarunvijay5555@gmail.com

हिंदू जब जीतकर सता में आते हैं, तो इतना भयंकर अहंकार दिखाते हैं कि वे सामने वाले के नमस्ते का जवाब तक नहीं देते। नेताओं के पास जितना धन-पद का प्रभाव होता है, उतना ही बड़ा उनका अहंकार होता है।

देश दुनिया से

यूरोपियन यूनियन और चीन के बीच बैठक

फ्रांस के राष्ट्रपति एमैनुएल मैक्रों, जर्मन चांसलर एंजेला मैकैल और यूरोपीय आयोग के अध्यक्ष जीन-क्लाउड जुनेकर के बीच 26 मार्च को पेरिस में चीनी राष्ट्रपति शी जिनपिंग के साथ संयुक्त बैठक हुई। इस बैठक में व्यापार को लेकर उत्पन्न हुई समस्या को बातचीत के जरिये सुलझाने पर विचार रखे गये। यूरोपीय संघ कई मोर्चों पर चीन के साथ सहयोग करने के लिए तैयार है, खासकर बहुपक्षवाद को बढ़ावा देने को लेकर। विदित हो कि बहुपक्षवाद को अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप के व्यापार संरक्षणवाद और अनिश्चित कूटनीति द्वारा चुनौती दी जा रही है। इस बैठक में यूरोपीय नेताओं ने यह भी उल्लेख किया कि बाजार को गैर-प्रतिस्पर्धी बनानेवाले कदम उठाये जाने के कारण, यूरोपीय ब्लॉक और चीन के बीच रणनीतिक सहयोग असंतुलित था और इसे पुनः व्यवस्थित करने की आवश्यकता थी। यूरोपीय संघ, चीन के साथ अपने व्यापार और निवेश में अधिक पारस्परिक सहयोग चाहता है। यूरोपीय संघ का यह विचार 22 मार्च को यूरोपीय परिषद की हुई बैठक का निष्कर्ष माना जा रहा है। इस बैठक में बीजिंग के प्रति यूरोपीय ब्लॉक की रणनीति को संशोधित करने के तरीकों के साथ ही यूरोपीय संघ आयोग द्वारा जारी मुद्दों पर चर्चा की गयी थी।

इमैनुएल रिमिया

हिंदू का शत्रु हिंदू ही क्यों?

राजधानी दिल्ली से प्रकाशित एक प्रसिद्ध अंग्रेजी दैनिक के संपादकीय पृष्ठ पर मेरा लेख (22 मार्च, 2003) छपा था, जिसका शीर्षक था- हिंदू ही हिंदू के प्रथम शत्रु। इसमें सदियों के अत्याचारों और जुलम के बाद उदित हो रहे हिंदू अभिमान और गौरव का जिक्र करते हुए गजनी, गरीबी तथा अन्य इस्लामी आक्रमणकारियों के समय स्थानीय राजाओं की पारस्परिक फूट के कारण हुए सोमनाथ विध्वंस जैसे घटनाक्रम का वर्णन था। जिस दिन यह लेख छपा, उसी सुबह मुझे एक शख्स का फोन आया। उन्होंने दरें शुकभामनाएँ दीं तथा कहा- तरुणजी, मैं आपके लेखों का प्रशंसक हूँ और आपने अपने लेख में बिल्कुल सत्य कहा है। उस लेख को पढ़ने साल हो गये और आज मैं आसेतु हिमाचल एक अद्भुत और असाधारण हिंदू उभार एवं आग्रही हिंदू अभिमान का उदय देख रहा हूँ। सदियों का दर्द है, कुछ समय तो लगेगा ही। यह उभार अब थमनेवाला नहीं। दुर्भाग्य से जिन्होंने मुझे 'हिंदू ही हिंदू का शत्रु' लेख लिखने पर बधाई दी थी, वे आज किस पक्ष का दामन थामे हैं, यह देखकर आश्चर्य नहीं होता कि सत्तर साल की आजादी के बाद भी भारत अपने चीने जैसे पड़ोसी देश से पिछड़ा रहा। सब कुछ मिलने के बाद भी अगर मनमाफिक न मिले, तो हिंदू भी हिंदू का शत्रु हो जाता है।

क्या देश हमारी विचारधारा, दल या चुनावी लाभालाभ से बड़ा हो सकता है? किसी न किसी को किसी न किसी के प्रति ईर्ष्या, विद्वेष होगा ही। सब के प्रति समान सम्मान का व्यवहार या तो संघ के प्रचारक कर सकते हैं या दुर्लभ आध्यात्मिक संत। राजनीति में तो व्यवहार का आधार ही जाति, धन और व्यक्तिगत पसंद-नापसंद के आधार पर तीव्र घृणा या अतिशय स्नेह में तब्दील हो जाता है। महाभारत से लेकर आज तक कोई भी इससे अछूता नहीं रहा। कृष्ण और कर्ण। अभिमन्यु और जरासंध। जो भा गया उसे दर्जनों जिम्मेदारियाँ मिलती हैं और जो नहीं भाया उसे पोर्ट ब्लेयर में संत-समागम में भेज दिया जाता है। पत्रकारिता में मेरे पूर्वज केअर मलकानी, जिन्हें अपमानित करके हटाया गया, फिर राज्यपाल बनाया गया, कहते थे- जीवन में अपनी लोक कभी बदलनी नहीं, चाहे अपनापन हो या सम्मान हो। जो मेरा घर है, वह किराये का नहीं, बल्कि मेरे विचारों का जन्मदाता घर है, जिसे मैं जीवनभर नहीं छोड़ूंगा। मेरी विचारधारा मेरी मां जैसी होती है। जैसी मेरी जन्मी जन्मभूमि। कितना ही ऐश्वर्य और बेहतर सम्मान परधर्म में मिले, फिर भी वह त्याज्य ही है। बलराज साहनी ने अपनी आत्मकथा में अपने पुत्र परीक्षित के बारे में लिखा है कि परीक्षित पढ़ने के लिए विदेश जाना चाहते थे, क्योंकि वहां बेहतर करियर की आशाएँ थीं। बलराज साहनी ने भावुक होकर



योगेंद्र यादव

अध्यक्ष, स्वराज इंडिया
yyopinion@gmail.com

गरीबों को छह हजार देने की राहुल गांधी की घोषणा से गरीबी पर सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक हो न हो, चुनाव की चर्चा ठीक दिशा में मुड़ गयी है। सत्ता के खेल और टीवी चैनलों की टीआरपी की दौड़ के बीच अचानक एक फटेहाल गरीब खड़ा हो गया है।

क्या? फिर वे कहते हैं कि यह योजना तो गरीबों को भीख देनेवाली है, उन्हें कामचोर बनायेगी। अगर ऐसा है, तो भाजपा ने हर किसान परिवार को सालाना 6,000 रुपये देने की योजना की घोषणा क्यों की थी? फिर वे कहते हैं

अलग-अलग राशि की भरपाई नहीं होगी, बस सबसे गरीब पांच करोड़ परिवारों को सीधे हर महीने 6,000 दिया जायेगा। पहले कांग्रेस के प्रवक्ता ने इशारा किया कि इस योजना को लागू करने के लिए गरीबी उन्मूलन की कुछ योजनाओं में कटौती की जा सकती है। अगले दिन कांग्रेस ने स्पष्ट किया कि गरीबों के कल्याण के लिए चल रही योजनाओं जैसे सस्ता राशन, मनरेगा, आंगनवाड़ी और प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना में कोई कटौती नहीं की जायेगी। कांग्रेस यह भी नहीं बता पायी है कि इस योजना के लिए पैसा कहाँ से आयेगा। जाहिर है, इतने बड़े खर्च के अभाव में कहीं ना कहीं टैक्स बढ़ाना पड़ेगा, लेकिन कांग्रेस इस सवाल से मुंह चुरा रही है। यूं भी 'गरीबी हटाओ' के नारे की हकीकत सारा देखा जाता है। भाजपा की स्थिति सांप-छुड़दर जैसी हो गयी है। ना मिलते बन रहा ना उगलते बन रहा। एक तरफ भाजपा के प्रवक्ता कहते हैं कि यह योजना तो हमारे समय में अरविंद सुब्रमण्यन ने सुझायी थी, कांग्रेस चोरी कर रही है। अगर यह सच है, तो सवाल उठता है कि भाजपा ने इसे लागू क्यों नहीं किया? फिर वे कहते हैं कि यह योजना तो गरीबों को भीख देनेवाली है, उन्हें कामचोर बनायेगी। अगर ऐसा है, तो भाजपा ने हर किसान परिवार को सालाना 6,000 रुपये देने की योजना की घोषणा क्यों की थी? फिर वे कहते हैं

कि ऐसी योजना में गरीबों की पहचान कैसे होगी? यह आपत्ति दर्ज करते समय भाजपा प्रवक्ता भूल जाते हैं कि उनकी सरकार ने ही आयुष्मान भारत योजना घोषित की है, जिसमें 10 करोड़ गरीब परिवारों को चिह्नित करने का प्रावधान है। अगर उस योजना में गरीबों को चिह्नित किया जा सकता है, तो इस योजना में क्यों नहीं? भाजपा की परेशानी का आलम यह है कि उसने सभी आचार संहिता और मर्यादा को ताक पर रखते हुए सरकारी अर्थशास्त्रियों को कांग्रेस के खिलाफ उतारना शुरू किया है। योजना आयोग के उपाध्यक्ष राजीव कुमार टीवी पर आकर कांग्रेस की घोषणा का मजाक बना रहे हैं। सरकार के प्रमुख आर्थिक सलाहकार संजीव सानवाल कांग्रेस के कार्यक्रम में छेद मिला रहे हैं। किसी भी सरकारी अफसर की मर्यादा और चुनाव की आचार संहिता के हिसाब से उन्हें किसी राजनीतिक दस्तावेज या घोषणा पर टिप्पणी करने का कोई अधिकार नहीं है। दरअसल, नोटबंदी के बाद से ही कोई भी समझदार अर्थशास्त्री भाजपा के साथ खड़ा होने के लिए तैयार नहीं है, इसलिए अब उसे सरकारी अफसरों का सहारा लेना पड़ रहा है। ये अर्थशास्त्री वित्तीय घाटे की दुहाई दे रहे हैं। सच यह है कि इस साल के बजट में भाजपा ने भी ठीक वही काम किया है, जिसका आरोप वह कांग्रेस पर लगा रही है।

राहुल गांधी को इस घोषणा से गरीबी पर सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक हो न हो, चुनाव की चर्चा ठीक दिशा में मुड़ गयी है। दिल्ली सरकार के सत्ता के खेल और टीवी चैनलों की टीआरपी की दौड़ के बीच अचानक एक फटेहाल गरीब खड़ा हो गया है। राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा का सवाल जो बालाकोट के बाद बड़े सवाल की तरह उभरा था, वह अब मिसाइल परीक्षण के बाद काट की हांडी जैसा लगने लगा है। लोग पूछने लगे हैं कि अब राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा के नाम पर अगला खेल क्या खेला जायेगा। दो हफ्ते पहले तक जो चुनाव एकतरफा दिख रहा था, वह अचानक खुलने लगा है।



आपके पत्र

बिमारू राज्यों को मिले विशेष दर्जा

संयुक्त राष्ट्र विकास कार्यक्रम (यूएनडीपी) 2018 की रिपोर्ट आ चुकी है। इसके अनुसार भारत पिछले 10 सालों में गरीबी से अच्छी तरह से संघर्ष किया है और गरीबी दर 55 फीसदी से घट कर 28 फीसदी रह गयी है। फिर भी यह विश्व में सबसे ज्यादा गरीब जनसंख्या वाला देश बना हुआ है। अब भी देश में 36 करोड़ से ज्यादा लोग गरीबी रेखा के नीचे जीवन यापन कर रहे हैं। इन गरीबों की सर्वाधिक आबादी चार बीमारू राज्यों बिहार, झारखंड, उत्तरप्रदेश एवं मध्यप्रदेश में है। इनमें से बिहार की हालत सबसे ज्यादा खराब है। पूरे मुल्क में उसका स्थान अंतिम पायादमी में आता है। इन राज्यों में सरकारें बहुत कुछ कर रही हैं, मगर सफलता हाथ नहीं लगा रही है। केंद्र को चाहिए कि सबसे पहले इन चार राज्यों को विशेष राज्य का दर्जा दे, यहाँ निर्माण के क्षेत्र में पूंजी निवेश को बढ़ावा देना जरूरी है। इन राज्यों की विशेष देखभाल करनी ही होगी।

जंग बहादुर सिंह, गोलघाटी, जम्शेदपुर

विदाई, सियासत के भीष्म की !

जिन लोगों ने सत्तर के दशक में होश संभाला है, उन्होंने भारतीय जनता पार्टी के जनक लालकृष्ण आडवाणी के रूप में सियासत के भीष्म की जीती-जागती तस्वीर देखी होगी। जिनका संपूर्ण जीवन राजनीति की खुली किताब है उस पर कोई बरस बेगानी है। भाजपा, जिसका प्रतिनिधित्व आडवाणी करते रहे, उसमें काफी दिनों से खामोश ज्वालामुखी की लौ सुलग रही थी। 91 वर्षीय आडवाणी के सक्रिय राजनीति से सेवानिवृत्ति की अपेक्षा गलत नहीं है, मगर हंगामे भरे चुनावी माहौल में चुपके से एक ध्रुवतारा का ओझल हो जाना, कतई अपेक्षित नहीं था। आडवाणी जी का राजनीतिक वनवास भले ही अचिभित न करे, मगर जिस सम्मान के वे हकदार थे, हासिल न होना निराश करता है। स्वच्छ राजनीति के युगपुरुष अपने ही नहीं बल्कि विरोधियों के बीच खड़े इस प्रकाश स्तंभ को आसानी से नहीं भुलाया जा सकता।

एमके मिश्रा, राठू, रांची

रोजगार दें, खैरात नहीं

राहुल गांधी के इस बयान पर कि 'जब हम सत्ता में आयेगे, तो देश के सबसे गरीब 25 करोड़ लोगों को छह हजार रुपये प्रतिमाह उनके खाते में जमा करके उनकी मदद करेंगे, उनके प्रतिद्वंद्वियों ने सवाल उठाने शुरू कर दिये हैं। मसलन इतनी बड़ी राशि कहाँ से आयेगी, खैरात में पैसा बांटने से निद्रुलापन बढ़ेगा आदि। प्रश्न यह है कि देश के अमीरों के लिए कर्ज के 3.50 लाख करोड़ रुपये माफ कर दिये गये, तब यह पैसा कहाँ से आया? सच है कि मुफ्त में पैसा बांटना स्थायी समाधान नहीं है, परंतु भूख से मरते आदमी को सबसे पहले रोटी देना जरूरी है। शिक्षा इतनी महंगी हो गयी है कि गरीबों के बच्चे इससे वंचित हो रहे हैं। अगर वे पढ़ते तो रोजगार पाने में भी सक्षम होते। फिर उन्हें छह हजार रुपये हर महीने खैरात की जरूरत नहीं होती। सभी को रोजगार उपलब्ध करा दिया जाये, तो देश पर अतिरिक्त बोझ भी नहीं पड़ेगा और इस तरह रुपये बांटने की जरूरत ही नहीं होगी।

निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद

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